Journal of Scientific Research in Arts

Language and Literature

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Vol. 22 No. 1, January 2021

English Section

Larger than life: Mythicizing the Life and Death of August Wilson's *Fences'* Hero

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Abstract

August Wilson's play *Fences* (1986) is part of the playwright's endeavor to dramatize the African American experience in the United States in the twentieth century. In fact, he grounded his plays in African and African American cultures to produce distinguished black drama. Wilson is trying in this play to put the African American experience on equal footing with that of the white culture and to promise hope in a better tomorrow. This research paper aspires to explore how Wilson employs the blues, the game of baseball and storytelling to explain the nature of the adverse world Troy Maxon had to face from birth to death. Additionally, it also intends to describe Wilson's endeavor to mythicizing the life and death of his protagonist and his persuasion that he deserves all respect despite his human mistakes, life defeats and small triumphs. August Wilson uses these three threads-the blues, basketball and Troy Maxon's skill of storytelling- to knit the heroic story of his protagonist.

Keywords: African American drama, blues, storytelling, baseball, American Dream

With the publication of *Fences* (1986) and other plays, many critics acknowledge that August Wilson (1945-2005) has established himself as one of America's finest African-American playwrights in the 20th century. There is no doubt that Wilson's total dramatic output celebrates his people's struggle since they were first transposed from Africa. He designed a dramatic scheme that can help him represent the entire black experience in the twentieth century in a decade by decade fashion. In fact, Wilson's dramatic endeavor to place his race experience in close association with American history is based on employing black folks' cultural forms and traditions, blues tales, slave narratives, black

community wisdom, storytelling and finally the failed chase of the American Dream as his dramatic feedstock. Indeed, two factors initiated an ever-growing scholarship on Wilson's works and brought his dramatic output under serious critical examination. These are his African American cultural commitment and his broad artistic and dramatic vision. The portrayal of characters and plot in Wilson's plays unveil the nature of the journey they make with reference to a particular historical moment. Further, in the dramatic world of Wilson, it is the blues legacy that holds together all other themes and joints all text threads in a well- seamed fabric. Not only that, but the blues unites all the apparently divergent characters into a passion that is well grounded into a common racial past. It is their awareness of this common past that holds them all together.

The aim of this research paper is to explore how Wilson uses African American culture, and the game of baseball, in mythologizing the life and death of *Fences'* protagonist Troy Maxon. The analysis of this process will present a description of how the playwright portrays Troy Maxon not only as an oppressed black family provider, and a community spiritual leader, but also as a defiant and sensible racial hero who deserves all respect for surviving an adverse environment. Again, there will be an attempt to further emphasize how Wilson uses storytelling as an African cultural technique to drive the action forward and to present the play's protagonist as a responsible family man despite all the adversities he squared up to. At last, the researcher will adopt a close reading technique and a diligently culture-based approach in analyzing the play *Fences* with an intention to exhibit how Wilson introduces his black folks as getting together to celebrate community rituals in the company of the community spiritual leader and that their struggle and survival deserve all respect.

In fact, many scholarly studies have made Wilson's dramatic works a target of investigation and close analysis. Mary L .Bogumil (1999), for example, focuses in *Understanding August Wilson* on the incompatible viewpoints of African American Christianity versus African spirituality. Joanne Gordon (1994) argues that Wilson is keen "to assert the African in his character" (p.29). That is to say, America asks African Americans to leave what belongs to their mother Africa at the door mat. Wilson, on the contrary, encourages his people to claim what is theirs. Indeed, many critics contend that Africa and race are at the

core of his canon in spite of the fact that this might not appeal to white American audience who may not be able to appreciate African elements like storytelling, folk rituals, blues tales, pagan religions and beliefs. Kim Pereira (1995) and Sandra Shannon (1995) introduced two more valuable studies to the ongoing Wilson's scholarship. These are *August Wilson and the African American Odyssey*, and *The Dramatic Vision of August Wilson* respectively. While, the former takes a culture and history-based approach to read Wilson's plays, the latter adopts a biography- oriented perspective to analyze his works. Pereira asserts that Wilson's dramatic attempt to reproduce the black American experience in the 20th century in ten dramatic works is simply an endeavor to write an authentically fictitious account of the African American odyssey in four centuries in America. Shannon, on the other hand, argues that Wilson made African American and mainstream white histories the feedstock from which his dramatic works are made. History is not the outcome of Wilson's project, it is basically the unprocessed material on which his project depends. He felt that despite all the hardships his people have gone through over the last four hundred years in America, they have come to the fore, visible and triumphant. In short, the two previously mentioned studies, push forward the exercise of reading the plays and add to the debate going on about the cultural resonance of Wilson oeuvre.

Similarly, other literary scholars have presented thorough and penetrative intuitions into his plays. Peter Wolfe (1999) has casted light on Wilson's iron-willed African American literary characters who always resist the continuing attempts of the dominant mainstream white culture to victimize them. Moreover, critics like Richard Pettingill (2000) and John Timpane (1999) have explored Wilson's utilization of history in his texts and they have come to the conclusion that Wilson is more interested in revealing how African American total way of life has sustained them and helped the black people survive their exploitative and discriminatory existence in America. Other critics have focused their attention on Wilson's creative and artistic influences. Mark Rocka (1994) has argued that Wilson had fallen under the spell of four African American eminent artists and writers. These are; the well-known blues singer Bessie Smith, the playwright and political activist Amiri Baraka, the short story writer Jorge L.Borge and finally the African American painter Romare Bearden. Hence, he called them Wilson's four B's. Additionally, more than one critic has

insightfully examined the employment of the blues in his texts. Paul C. Harrison (1991), for instance, has argued that the incorporation of the blues in the plays, being a reservoir of the black people's existence in America, is one of the authentic techniques Wilson uses to describe the African American experience there. Moreover, Houston Baker notes that the whole blues constituents operate like a dynamic network which he calls, "the blues matrix" (1984, p.3). He elaborates that this matrix is a process of ceaseless input and output that is always in a state of active productivity. He even adds that the blues is a dynamic synthetic composite that merges and combines a spectrum of African American musical, vocal and non-narrative forms that developed in the American South right after the American civil war (1861-1865).It came under the influence of church and minstrel-show music, work time songs, ragtime, field and plantation hollers, proverbial brevity, passionate expression of lament and sorrow, lay men philosophy, ribald, and bawdy humor and much more. They simply make an amalgam.

The main reason of using the blues in African American creative writings is to identify and highlight the presence of commonness in the African American existence and continuance in the States. Furthermore, it is an endeavor to reveal the mutuality they share and the common ground the entire community stands upon. Baker further holds that by summoning the blues to describe his people's experience in the States, Wilson sounds like a blues singer himself who historically used to entertain his fellow folks at crossroads and railroad junctures (1984, p.7). Moreover, Harry J. Elam's book *The Past as Present in the Drama of August Wilson* (2004) provides a through exploration of Wilson's entire oeuvre and casts light on how he blends the past and present time in his cycle of dramatic works. It is one of the few books that takes a retrospective analysis of Wilson's unprecedented project in American drama. He asserts that, "by considering the intersections and continuities across the cycle {of Wilson's ten plays}, I intend this analysis not only to provide insight into the individual plays but, more significantly, to explore how the cycle as whole makes meaning and to theorize how Wilson w (rights) history" (2004, p. xv). Besides, two more studies explore Wilson's relationship to other writers such as those written by Keith Clark (2002) and Margaret Booker (2003).They both focus on his thematic issues, aesthetics and the relationship between his art and his political views. Additionally, there are a number of essay collections on the playwright's

dramatic output such as Marilyn Elkins' *August Wilson: A Casebook* (1994) and
Alan Nadel's *May All Your Fences Have Gates: Essays on the Drama of August
Wilson* (1994). Despite all these studies, Wilson's unparalleled grand dramatic
project which he planned and fulfilled in twenty years still appeals for more
critical readings and analysis.

August Wilson asserts that black art "feeds the spirit and celebrates the life
of Black America by designing its strategies for survival and prosperity" (1997,
p. 495). This art tradition, he continues:

> Occurred when the African in the confines of the slave quarters sought to
> invest his spirit with the strength of his ancestors by conceiving in his art,
> in his song and dance, a world in which he was the spiritual center and his
> existence was a manifest act of the creator from whom life flowed. He
> then could create art that was functional and furnished him with a
> spiritual temperament necessary for his survival as property and the
> dehumanizing status that was attendant to that (Wilson, 1997, p.496).

To August Wilson, art is his people's way to connect with their grandfathers
and to empower themselves. As African Americans were denied any type of
self-definition in the States, it was in the folks' cultural zone that they felt their
self-worth and cultural security. The use of archetypal blues lexicon manifests
itself in many fashions in the plays such as singing, rapping, storytelling, call
and response, testifying and signifying. Surprisingly enough, Wilson set many
of his plays in the Hill District, his Pittsburg favorite black neighborhood. This
physical-turned virtual and dramatic setting amounts to the crossroads juncture
where the blues singer used to sing in the past. Accordingly, it is here that the
African American characters can perform and enjoy their communal blues
rituals and activities to connect and link to their forefathers. It is engaging in
these ritualistic rites that grants them spiritual empowerment from the ancestors
on behalf of God Almighty. That is a requirement which can help them defeat
adversities, conquer pain and overcome hard times. Wilson asserts that:

> There are some people who will say that black Americans do not
> have a culture…   that cultures are reserved for other people, most
> notably Europeans of various ethnic groupings, and that black

Americans make up a sub-group of American culture that is derived from the European origins of its majority population. But black Americans are Africans, and there are many histories and many cultures on the African continent (1997, p.494).

Therefore, coming together at the crossroads is their way to take pride in a culture that is usually devalued by White America. Wilson asserts that race is the most important group identification characteristic and that it is the most essential proposition around which race culture can build up. (Wilson, 1997, p.494).Additionally, he saw the blues as the uneducated people's cultural response that is deeply rooted in oral tradition. It was a response to a strange and aggressive world that they did not take part in its making. This world not only denied them their culture, but also detested their morals and ethos. In such foul circumstances, the blues was the banner carrier of identity search and self-definition. The commonly evoked themes of migratory displacement, parting of ways and reuniting in Wilson's plays are all recurrent ideas and topics in blues narratives, says Pereira (1995). Similarly, Sandra Shannon (1995) is in the belief that the blues Jargon is intuitively used by Wilson to describe the spiritual and cultural bonds and ties that connect the African Americans to their forefathers.

Fences (1986) is August Wilson's Pulitzer Winning play of 1987. The action is set in 1957 and covers the two decades of 1930s and 40s with allusions to specific events in the history of Negro league of baseball. The protagonist is called Troy Maxon and he is a garbage carrier from Pittsburgh who led his way to become a garbage truck driver after a struggle with his company senior management. He is, also, a former baseball slugger who is overwhelmed by embitterment for not making it to the major national league in America for racial reasons. Troy Maxon is married to Rose and is a father to Cory and Lyons. While the former is a biological son of Rose and Troy Maxon, the latter is Troy's unemployed older son from a previous marriage. Troy Maxon makes the best use of his Friday evening assemblies in the presence of his family members and longtime friend Bono to talk about his past personal life, work experience, prison days, and baseball. While two of the action drivers are Troy Maxon's cheating on Rose and, his refusal to let his son join college on a

scholarship, he is repeatedly speaking with his family members and his friend Bono about family responsibilities and life obligations.

Fences is one of Wilson's ten major plays. It also does play the role of a dramatic platform that he uses to discuss and investigate the blues presence in the black people's lives and how they convene at the intersection to grant each other spiritual empowerment. That power can reenergize the whole community to endure the misery and adversity they face on a daily basis in their life. In fact, Troy Maxon has a strong blues narrating voice and ability. It is the Friday-evening meeting at his house that acts as the railroad juncture where his friend and other family members get together to lend him an ear while he is narrating his blues stories. His family members; Rose, Cory, Lyons, Gabriel, and his friend Bono are his regular audience and listeners. Troy's narratives and powerful storytelling ability award them all spiritual power and strength. Early in the play, Troy Maxon makes a very important confession about the love he feels only in his community and how this leaves an impact on his decisions and way of thinking. In addition, he has got a strong opinion about his world and especially about how black Americans are treated in America. Furthermore, his stories, speeches and anecdotes are insightful and experience –based. In act one, scene one of *Fences* Troy Maxon and Rose, his wife, debate the following idea:

> Rose: There is a lot of people don't know they can do no better than they doing now. That's just something you got to learn. A lot of folks still shop at Bella's.
>
> Troy: Ain't nothing wrong with shopping at Bella's. She got fresh food.
>
> Rose: I ain's said nothing about if she got fresh food. I'm talking about what she charge. She charge ten cents more than A&P.
>
> Troy: The A&P ain't never done nothing for me. I spend my money where I am treated right .I go down to Bella, say, "I need a loaf of bread .I'll pay you Friday." She give it to me. What sense that make when I got money to go and spend it somewhere else and ignore the person who done right by me.? That ain't in the Bible.

Rose: We ain't talking about what's in the Bible. What sense it make to shop there when she overcharge?

Troy: You shop where you want to .I'll do my shopping where the people been good to me (Wilson, 1986, p. 7).

Troy Maxon considers the food shopping issue from a cooperatively communal viewpoint. He does not care about the ten cents extra charge at Bella's since he is granted extra customer credit. Troy and other black customers patronize and keep the enterprise going in the community and they receive extra spiritual value, respect and credit. His insistence to shop in the community assures us that black Americans should not lose their spiritual value while securing their material needs. He cares about being treated right and with enough respect. In reality, the 1950s presented many challenges to the African Americans in the United States. That decade witnessed strong popular black demands to abolish all kinds of discrimination against the blacks. In such very hard times, Wilson claims that it is the blues that made the black community people comfort and support themselves in multiple ways.

One more example of how Troy Maxon inspires those around him is when he boasts his confrontation with his white management to be promoted from the position of a garbage carrier to that of a trash truck driver. Though he is portrayed as an imperfect African American layman who cheated on his wife, spent some time in prison, and is somehow self-centered, he is capable enough of inculcating race pride in those around him. Troy Maxon contends: "Brownie don't understand nothing. All I want them to do is change the job description. Give everybody a chance to drive the truck" (Wilson, 1986, p. 3). In fact, Troy Maxon is teaching Bono, his friend and confidante, how to stick up for his attitudes and beliefs. In the same fashion, he explains to his son, Cory, that family responsibility precedes personal desires. When Cory asks his father to buy the family a new TV set, Troy Maxon seizes the opportunity to persuade him of his fatherly point of view. Cory tells his father that they can purchase a TV set for about two hundred dollars. Troy, on the other hand, informs him that it has been over ten years since they have last tarred the roof. And, if it is not maintained before the winter, there is a strong possibility that the winter snow may leak all over the house. Troy argues:

> Troy: Now if you have two hundred dollars, what would you do…fix the roof or buy a TV?
>
> Cory: I'd buy a TV. Then when the roof started to leak…when it needed fixing… I'd fix it.
>
> Troy: Where you goanna get the money from? You done spent it for a TV. You goanna sit up and watch the water run all over your brand new TV. (Wilson, 1986, p.32).

The significance of the conversational situation is clear; acknowledging one's family obligations is a type of spiritual maturity. Troy Maxon, says Ama Wattley (2010) "wants to teach Cory to prioritize, and to distinguish the necessities from the luxuries of life" (p.5). Though a TV set may bring with it some entertainment and joy, the roof maintenance, on the other hand, will surely protect the whole household from the elements. In spite of all Troy Maxon's weak points as a human being, Wilson presents him as an unbreakable father whose parental love is uncharitable especially with his male kids. Again , Wattley assures us that "Troy knows the world to be hostile, racist and unwelcoming place for black people, and he attempts to prepare Cory for such a world by behaving toward his son without tenderness or softness, as he will be treated in society" (2010,p.6). In another conversation with Lyons, Troy Maxon tells him about his grandfather's sense of family commitment. He says: "But I'll say this for him…he felt a responsibility towards us. Maybe he ain't treated us the way I felt he should have…but without that responsibility he could have walked off and left us…made his own way" (Wilson, 1986,p. 51). The point August Wilson is emphasizing here is that there has always been a tradition of family responsibility among black men. In fact, Wilson had to create, strong and responsible black male protagonists to counterbalance the mainstream white myth that black community males are idle, and spiritless.

Troy Maxon continues his stories to his audience to the extent that we feel that he is skeptical of the white people whose exploitation of the blacks is widespread. This apprehension of white Americans makes him refuse that Cory gets a college football scholarship because he cannot imagine that the whites will exploit his son as they have done earlier with him. Following that rejection, Wilson turns Troy Maxon's house front yard into a battlefield for his

confrontations with his younger son, Cory. He tells his son that, "the white man ain't goanna let you get nowhere with that football no way" (Wilson, 1986, p. 35). Totally unconvinced, Cory accuses him of intentionally putting a spoke in his wheel and impeding his education plans. He says to him, "you just scared I'm goanna be better than you, that's all" (Wilson, 1986, p. 53). Harry J. Elam, Jr., describes Troy's attempt to avert his son from engaging in school football games as a kind of descending into racial madness; that is to say psychosis. The idea is that long years of discrimination against the African Americans may have resulted in a type of a severe collective mental disorder which damages consistency and blurs connection with the real world. This is greatly manifested in Troy Maxon's inability to see that the spirit of the 1957 and the race situation is much better than 1930s and 1940s. Unfortunately, he is overwhelmed by his disillusionment. He wants his son to continue working at A&P or learn a vocation like auto mechanics or carpentry that can provide him economic security and self-respect. Ama Wattley (2010) argues that:

> Troy Maxon, the protagonist in August Wilson's *Fences* …finds…the American dream-'the promise of a land of freedom with opportunity and equality for all'- to be false when he finds himself shut out of an opportunity to excel and fulfill his aspirations due to racial discrimination. As a result, he directs his son away from the dream of success and toward the pragmatism of surviving and coping in a racial society (p.3).

Troy Maxon's vision of his son's future career is limited and fear-based. He tells Rose that he wants him not to follow in his footsteps. Troy Maxon's tendency to dominate his family almost wrecks his son's education and establishes an unequivocal relationship with him. He exclaims: "I don't want him to be like me! I want him to move as far away from my life as he can get" (Wilson, 1986, p. 39).

Furthermore, in act one, scene one, we meet Lyons, Troy Maxon's first and older son, who stops by his father's house on Friday nights to say hello and borrow ten dollars from his dad. His father always seizes the chance to instruct him about the importance of persistence and hard work. On one of those nights, when Troy is preaching the importance of earning one's own money and hard

work, Lyons suddenly outbursts in his father's face and accuses him of absenting himself from his family's life when he needed him most by stabbing someone to death at an attempted robbery and serving for 15 years in jail. Troy feels embarrassed and admits that: "I done learned my mistake and learned to do what's right by it. You still trying to get something for nothing. Life don't owe you nothing .You owe it to yourself. Ask Bono. He'll tell you I am right" (Wilson, 1986, p. 18). It is obvious that Troy Maxon feels sorry for the mistakes he had committed in his life and which prevented him from providing regular parental care and guidance to his older son at a time when he was in dire need for his father's mentoring. At the end of the play, we become aware that Lyons, like his father, has spent some time in jail as well. Indeed, Troy Maxon is always trying to convince his son that family responsibility has nothing to do with any standpoint towards one's society. Paradoxically enough, the incompatibility between these two poles in Troy's identity -family commitment and one's social or political point of view- is the cause of his refusal to let Cory join college on a football scholarship. Wilson, on the other hand, is so realistic in portraying Troy Maxon as a human being who encompasses in his personality the two sides of good and evil. Near the end of the play, Lyons informs his half-brother Cory that he started to appreciate his father's advice to take life as one package; in other words, he has to take the crooked with the straights. Further, he tells Cory, that he will fight inequality in America with the blues music. Lyons's approach to life has also changed at the end of the play. This time, Troy Maxon succeeds in repairing the damage of misunderstanding with Lyons. Further, Wilson seems determined to return to his protagonist some of his lost parental pride in this situation. Troy Maxon's win of Lyons' heart this time can be viewed as a small personal victory after many of his attempts failed on the road.

Troy Maxon's act of cheating on his wife put a strain on his relationship with her and made him lose the passionate and spiritual zone he enjoyed for a long time in her life and mind. As soon as he enters the house yard carrying his newly born baby, he finds Rose standing on the porch. Then, he cautiously initiates an appealing conversation with his wife and calls her with her name. He appeals to her saying: "Rose…I am standing here with my daughter in my arms…She don't know nothing about grownups' business. She innocent …and she ain't got no mama" (Wilson, 1986, p.78). Rose answers back in an

unwelcome tone telling him that what he was saying has got nothing to do with her. She then takes the whole situation to an indicative turning point by turning around and entering the house. Her attitude, pose and body language assure the audience that she has changed. By turning around and entering the house alone, Rose is empowering and re-enabling herself. Furthermore, she is restoring the space she has lost to an unfaithful partner. In act two, scene five and near the end of the play, she makes a significant confession about why her spiritual bond with Troy Maxon has failed at the end. She informs Cory who has come to attend his dad's funeral about her big mistake. She claims: "I married your daddy and settled down to cooking his supper and keeping clean sheets on the bed. When your daddy walked through the house he was so big he filled it up. That was my first mistake. Not to make him leave some room for me" (Wilson, 1986, p. 98). She even further tells him that: "by the time Ray Nell came into the house, me and your daddy had done lost touch with one another" (Wilson, 1986, p.98). Anne Blue Wills, (2017) comments saying that: "August Wilson's play *Fences* helps me understand the predicament of wives everywhere … {and} how culture has structured women's choices" (p.51). Therefore, from this moment on, Rose uses the porch whether symbolically or literarily as a platform for re-enabling herself and re-establishing her power and strength on all levels. When Troy Maxon begs her to take care of the baby girl because she has nobody else to do that, she tells him that she will but:

> Okay, Troy…you're right. I'II take care of your baby for you…cause…like you say…she's innocent…and you can't visit the sins of the father upon the child. A motherless child has got a hard time. (*She takes the baby from him.*).From right now…this child got a mother. But you a womanless man (Wilson, 1986, p.79).

The point is that Troy Maxon has to accept the fact that he has lost his leading role in the family because of his infidelity. Wilson is alluding to a long established tradition in the black family. When conflict arises, it is the black woman who usually takes the lead as she most probably is the chief psychological and emotional sponsor of the family. Once more, Wilson makes another detailed testimony about the rich character of Rose by describing how she deals with Troy Maxon's brother, Gabriel. In spite of the fact that some people in the community regard him as a person who is suffering from mental

impairment, she treats him with respect, understanding and with no condescension. In act one, scene two, Gabriel stops by her house to visit his brother. She asks him if he is hungry. He answers saying: "I'll take some biscuits .You got some biscuits? Did you know when I was in heaven…every morning me and St. Peter would sit down by the gate and eat some fat biscuits?" (Wilson, 1986, p. 26) .Rose assures him that: "Well, come on…I'll make up a batch of biscuits" (Wilson, 1986, p. 26). She tells Gabriel that she will prepare the breakfast he likes. Rose, in fact, spiritually associates with Gabriel though she is aware of the fact that he believes that he is one of God's angels. Harry Elam (2004) argues that:

> It is the characters who appear mentally or physically impaired, besieged by madness, unable to grasp the reality of the world around them, who represent a connection to a powerful, transgressive spirituality, to a lost African consciousness and to a legacy of Black social activism (p.58).

In fact, biscuits eating offers spiritual nutrition to Gabriel as it may have a biblical allusion to the body of Jesus Christ. The reference here is to the Book of Mathew or Mathew Gospel, verse 6, where Jesus says to his disciples: "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11). Furthermore, it may also allude to Verse 26 where Jesus tells his followers when they sat together: "Take it and eat it, for this is my body" (Mathew 26:26).Wilson is probably referring to the sacrifices of the black woman in African American history and that black Americans are also the sons of God.   Again, the reference to St. Peter is significant as he is the keeper of the keys of Heavens' gates and who can admit the faithful ones-like Troy Maxon - in and send the unfit to hell. Gabriel's language is strongly religious and may be carrying metaphysical guidance to his family and community .Wilson seems to have portrayed Gabriel as the African American angel that operates in the black community to alert the community against God's wrath. Once more, Gabriel shows up in the family house on the day of Troy Maxon's funeral. Ironically speaking, Gabriel tells Rose and Cory that he will ask St. Peter to open the gates for his brother. He even asks the soul of his dead brother if it is ready or not to enter the gates of Heaven. Wilson's expressive language invokes a feeling that Gabriel is a messenger between Earth and Heaven that is coming to offer his comfort and solace. He can not only speak to Rose and other family members, but also to the soul of his brother that

is waiting for a permission to enter the gates of Heaven. The final stage notes of the play describes Gabriel's futile attempt to blow the trumpet and his slow strange dance. Wilson continues to say that: "he finishes his dance and the gates of Heaven stand open as wide as God's closet" (Wilson, 1986, p.101). Gabriel may be alluding to the souls of all African Americans who passed away from the moment of removal from Africa to the present day. Troy Maxon is granted entry into heaven to join them all because he is symbolically a descendant of all his great forefathers and shares their values, customs and traditions. Simply, he is an earthly spiritual leader of the community.

Wilson's dramatic works depend on employing African American experience and African cultural elements as their raw materials. However, *Fences*, in particular, makes use of the game of baseball as a cultural white practice in order to describe a black experience in the last century of the second millennium. The goal is to highlight the black tradition of peaceful resistance and perseverance in life since slavery and to show that they dared to challenge the white man in his exclusive sport. Susan Koprince (2006) argues that by utilizing this white pastime cultural form, "Wilson artfully expresses Troy Maxon's double consciousness-his complicated experience as a black man in a white dominated world" (p.357). In fact, *Fences* is also one of America's great plays on baseball. In reality, this game in particular has been viewed for a long time as a metaphoric symbol of the American Dream .During the 1950s, baseball was presented to be a battlefield of the bravest, and the most masculine. In *Fences*, Troy Maxon is constantly envisioning himself as belonging to that muscular arena. Further, he is harboring a false conviction that he can go back and play as before (Susan Koprince, 2006, p.355). That is why, he maintains a defiant attitude to life throughout the play. He therefore declines to give in to all types of adversaries he meets in his life; death, work white manager, or the devil which Wilson associates with the white exploitative capitalism. Equally important, Robert Nowatzki , (2016) contends that, "Maxon often uses baseball metaphors in discussing non-baseball situations, which is fitting in that Maxon's opportunity to play major league baseball symbolizes the marginalization of African Americans in American society as a whole"(p.112). Consequently, the history of black involvement in the organized games of baseball and the literary writing of that, cannot be separated from the notion of double consciousness

that Du Bois introduced early in the twentieth century. They had to find a compromise between their competing racial and national identities, he asserts.

However, Wilson smartly alludes to the early unwelcome and invisible presence of black players in the white-dominated game of baseball in *Fences* to take issue with the elusive reality of the American Dream. Wilson's protagonist, who was also a former baseball player, is overwhelmed by disappointment and believes that a black man in America is usually born with an identifying mark of shame or a stigma. In act two, scene one, he tells Rose about the adversaries of black life in America saying, "But…you born with two strikes on you before you come to the plate…You can't afford to let none get past you. You can't afford a call strike. If you going down … you going down swinging. Everything lined up against you" (Wilson, 1986, p. 69). Throughout the play, Troy Maxon is set within the actual Negro League context and is made to reflect the despair of historical black baseball players who were impeded from proceeding to more prestigious baseball levels. It is this disillusionment in getting access to the American dream that triggered Troy Maxon to cheat on his wife. He himself confesses that frustration after eighteen years of hard work and no big reward, made him feel like he wants to steal again. He tells Rose what he felt when he saw Alberta. He says, "Do you understand after eighteen years I wanted to steal second" (Wilson, 1986, p.70). For Troy Maxon, the American Dream turned out to be an illusion with no visible reward after eighteen years of hard work. Accordingly, his life is one of masked frustration despite his unbreakable endeavor to adapt. In *Fences*, Rose and Bono state in a conversation with Troy Maxon that many people of color –such as Jackie Robinson-have jumped the color line in baseball. Indeed, Jackie Robinson is a historical African American player who actually made an unprecedented entry into the major League in 1947. But, Bono and Rose believe that the problem is that Troy Maxon came too early to the game. He answers them back in a displeased tone .He claims:

> Hell, I know some teams Jackie Robinson couldn't even make! What you talking about Jackie Robinson. Jackie Robinson wasn't nobody. I'm talking about if you play ball then they ought to have let you play. Don't care what color you were. Come telling me I come along too early. If you could play…then they ought to have let you play (Wilson, 1986, p.10).

Ironically speaking, Jackie Robinson, was not selected to be the first African American baseball player to make it to the major baseball League in America only for his sport competencies. In fact, he was known to be self-effacing and non-defiant. Furthermore, he had no retaliatory inclination whatsoever (Shannon, 1995). Troy Maxon, on the contrary, could not have made it by any means to the major league. Simply, he would not have taken any abuse without impulsively striking back. Further, Wilson portrayed the fictional Troy Maxon as having insufficient placatory disposition which can grant him the green light to such closed gates. (Koprince, 2006, p.351).

In fact, Troy Maxon, the defiant and iron-willed protagonist, has decided to look death straight in the eye and he would not give up at any moment in the fight. He will die fighting like a real man. He boasts to Rose saying that, "if you going down…you going down swinging" (Wilson, 1986, p. 69).Kim Pereira argues that Troy Maxon owns the spirit of warriors who insist to go into battles which they may or may not win for sure. Shortly, after Troy Maxon's death, Cory returns back home after seven years of absence. Unfortunately, he is still "harboring a great deal of anger and bitterness towards Troy" (Wattley, 2010, p.15). Therefore, he declines to be present at his father's funeral. It is Rose that reminds him of the truth that he is trying to ignore. She tell him:

> Rose: you just like him. You got him in you good.
>
> Cory: Don't tell me that Mama.
>
> Rose: You Troy Maxon all over Again.
>
> Cory: I don't want to be Troy Maxon. I want to be me.
>
> Rose: You can't be nobody, but who you are Cory (Wilson, 1986, p.97).

Cory decides that he will attend his dad's funeral when he asks his sister RayNell to change her shoes inside the house. That sounds like an acknowledgement of Troy Maxon's legacy inside him. The play is really progressive as Cory seems convinced to pick up on what his father had left. The presence of his seven year- old sister, RayNell, makes Cory take a second

thought on his mother's words and decides to attend his father's funeral. As he meets his half-sister for the first time, he understands the family task he owes her since his father died and left her to him to take care of. Simultaneously, they both burst out singing a song about their late father's Dog, Old Blue. The song is no doubt a kind of cultural heritage that was first innovated by Troy Maxon's father and which passed down from Troy to his descendants, Cory and RayNell. Wattley (2010) contends that, "the song becomes a cathartic release for Cory" (p.16). Both kids appear to represent the hope of the future of the African American community in America. Similarly, the song is a sign that they share with their father and grandfather the black traditions of hard work and conscientiousness. It is Troy Maxon who taught them both the song at different times. Certainly, he was keen enough to educate them about the heritage of their forefathers. Cory and RayNell sing together:

> Both: Blue laid down and died like a man
>
> Now he's treeing possums in the Promised Land
>
> I'm goanna tell you this to let you know
>
> Blue's gone where the good dogs go
>
> When I hear old Blue bark
>
> When I hear old Blue bark
>
> Blue treed a possum in Noah's Ark
>
> Blue treed a possum in Noah's Ark (Wilson, 1986, pp.99-100).

The reference to Noah's Ark creates a feeling of consolation, rescue and comfort. The new generation of black people is well educated in the culture of their forefathers and will overcome all discrimination in America. They will be saved from the flood of racism. Harry Elam (2004) argues that the children in Wilson's drama, "function simultaneously to reveal the past, to shape the present and also literarily to represent the hopes and dreams of the future" (p.75). In fact, Troy Maxon is the catalyst who unconsciously turns all other characters into spiritual leaders in the community. Wilson demonstrates in *Fences* that storytelling is one of the black community techniques to spiritually

empower itself and is a way to initiate the black young generation into the culture of their ancestors. He believes that spiritual and cultural empowerment can lead to economic empowerment in a society that denies them all their civil and other rights.

Since Wilson makes his protagonist die like a combatant fighter, his small dirt playing field is portrayed as a holy place that may provide life regeneration. Susan Koprince (2006) notes that, "by depicting Troy's final playing field as sacred space, Wilson is mythologizing his African American hero and celebrating Troy's warrior spirit-a spirit that would come to dominate the 1960s civil rights era" (p.357). She also believes that Troy's spirit of defiance has blown full in the 1960s and that it is baseball which has taught him to take life by the horns. African Americans have always been in the belief that the game of baseball is a potential land for the making of larger than life sports heroes. August Wilson has deliberately tried to mythicize Troy Maxon so as to associate him with all strong-willed African American heroes. He states in his popular art manifesto speech, *The Ground on Which I stand,* which he delivered in Princeton University in 1996 and was later reprinted in 1997 that:

> The Ground that I stand on has been pioneered by my grandfather, by Nat Turner, Denmark Vesey, by Martin Delaney, Marcus Garvey and the honorable Elijah Mohammad. That is the ground of the affirmation of the value of one being, an affirmation of his worth in the face of the society's urgent and sometimes profound denial…I felt it a duty and an honor to participate in that historic moment, as the people who had arrived in America chained and malnourished in the hold of a 350-foot Portuguese, Dutch or English sailing ship were now seeking ways to alter their relationship to the society in which they lived, and perhaps more important, searching for ways to alter the shared expectations of themselves as a community of people (Wilson, 1997, p. 494).

August Wilson is taking pride in all his precedent race pioneers. By attempting to mythicize Troy Maxon in *Fences*, he is trying to seek new ways to change his race relationship to the society that was denying his black people's presence. Furthermore, he is also describing their defiant endurance of all kinds of

discrimination and oppression in the United States. Despite all this social and economic inequality, African American men such as Troy Maxon have bravely fought against all odds and never ignored their family responsibility and obligations.

Troy Maxon's stories are mainly used to express emotions to his spouse, to guide his sons on social and life values, to state his doctrines about dealing with hard times and adverse circumstances, to instill family traditions and customs and to promote dreams for a better future. He can simply adapt his stories to respective situations. In fact, "Troy's stories may be interpreted as suggesting more cynicism about the idea of duty than Troy wants his family to understand" (Blumenthal, 2000, p.76). Troy Maxon sometimes feels that what he preaches is incompatible with what he is experiencing in white America. Additionally, in spite of his ability to tell stories and the admiration of his family members and friend of those stories and their moral or life messages, critics have polarized points of view on Troy's character. Joan Fishman (2000), for example, underscores what she calls, "Troy's personality limitations" (p.170).On the other hand, one sees Troy as a person whose abusive boyhood, early manhood adverse circumstances and his hostile environment have turned him partly into a passionately debilitated person. Cory accuses him of jealousy when he refuses to let him take the college scholarship. But Wilson is also dramatizing his protagonist's mistrust in the American Dream that promises hope and delivers disappointment. In the case of Lyons, Troy sounds more logical in spite of the fact that Cory's accusation is somewhat true. Anna Blumenthal (2000) argues that:

> Although his practical expectations may have been shaped by his encounter with racism and the world of work and opportunity, Troy has not been destroyed emotionally by early experience .Wilson suggests through Troy's stories that it may be as much Troy's day-to-day experience on the job in the racist white world, as it is his past experience which leaves him in a perpetual and exhausting struggle to maintain his own belief in the very values of hard work and responsibility that he preaches to his family (p.81).

Blumenthal (2000) believes that it is the daily struggle of the black and the accumulated impact of suffering and inequality in the white world that makes Troy Maxon skeptical of some of his convictions. Though the play is clearly an exploration of the barriers, and besiegement black people face in America on many levels in the pre-civil liberties struggle phase, the major goal of Wilson is kind of mythologizing the life and death of Troy Maxon the defiant community leader and race torch bearer. He, in fact, is the center of all action, and is the character to whom all others compare themselves. As Wilson's plays are usually based in African, and African American cultural elements, he uses story telling in *Fences* as his main technique to develop his action and build up characters. Wilson's main goal here is to educate his audience and readers about the authentic oral tradition of African culture. Sandra Shannon (1995) argues that Wilson by adopting storytelling in *Fences* as his main African cultural element is simply creating a spirit reminiscent of popular African tribal traditions that are still living in Africa (1995,p.173). Likewise, Mary, L. Bogumil asserts that employing storytelling as a technique to push forward the play's action is an attempt from the playwright to produce a unique African American drama and a recognition of the genuine nature of the forefathers' heritage and legacy (1999,pp.9-10).

Maxon is one of Wilson's most impressive, and inspirational story tellers. He has a disposition to merge his past life memories with his imaginatively invented tales. However, sometimes the time-related dissimilarity between the factual and the imagined memories fade in the stories. Rose, like Bono, sometimes feels that Troy Maxon's imaginative stories are farfetched and that the stories are nothing more than nonsensical utterances. Surprisingly, he has the skill to adapt his stories according to his type of audience like the West Africa griot who does that to maintain his oral narratives. Bono tells him in act one, scene one, that, "… I know you. I know you got some Uncle Remus in your blood. You got more stories than the devil got sinners" (Wilson, 1986, p. 13).It is in act one, scene one, that Rose asks Troy Maxon to stop repeating his tales. She even asks him to be quiet and to stop talking. She then interrupts him saying, "Troy, why don't you hush that talk" (Wilson, 1986, p. 11). In fact, Troy sometimes fails to strike a balance between audience satisfaction and other individual convictions of work ethic in such a racist society. This is simply the reason of his confusion and contradiction in some situations.

Anna Blumenthal (2000) believes that "Wilson makes Troy a persuasive story teller and family man only in so far as he can control his listeners' reception of his message" (p.88). When the messages of Troy Maxon's stories clash with each other, he becomes less convincing to his audience. However, Wilson sometimes keeps Troy Maxon's skepticism at bay. Though he is preaching work ethic and diligence, he himself does not enjoy equality in his work place. Wilson's employment of the narratives, via their mutually incompatible denotations, in dramatizing the barriers African American males face, makes Troy Maxon look and sound admirable despite his few defeats. Wilson portrays through the stories the inner composure of his black protagonist in a troubling world and the dilemma he finds himself in when trying to maintain his convictions. In short, Wilson describes not the intuitive distortion of one black individual, but a whole generation that Troy Maxon represents in such a society. Finally, the playwright has called upon his audience and critical readers to show respect to a black commoner who has confronted life, death, the devil, and more importantly racism in all its disguises and still sounds honest and looks strong.

In conclusion, *Fences* covers the 1950s in Wilson's ten-decade cycle of plays. It represents the life and death of Troy Maxon who has heroic qualities in a very hostile world. Noticeably, all the action revolves around him and he sounds inspirational to all other characters as well. Like the majority of his black American brothers, Troy Maxon's entire life is nothing but a whole chapter of suffering and struggle. In *Fences*, Wilson sheds light on the role of the blues and storytelling in empowering black Americans, their failure to attain the American Dream and the coping methods they have followed to avoid madness. Troy Maxon's disappointment drives him to prevent his son from getting a college football scholarship and seduces him to cheat on his wife. Sandra Shannon (2003) asserts that, "*Fences* makes a strong case for elevating the African- American experience to a grand scale and for erasing the color line long enough to make Troy Maxon's misfortune and pain more than simply one black man's predicament" (p.85).Shannon believes that Wilson is trying in the play to put the African American experience on equal footing with that of the white culture and to help abolish social injustice. Wilson brilliantly uses story telling as a narrative technique to drive the action forward and to develop his characters. Despite all his suffering, Maxon could maintain a very defiant

attitude towards life and is determined to fall down fighting .Simply, he is a legitimate black hero and a larger than life dramatic figure. Despite all the white man's endeavor to devaluate Troy Maxon's race and culture over four hundred years, August Wilson succeeds in introducing a character that can take a remarkable place among the memorable dramatic heroes of the American theatre. No doubt, *Fences* offers a lesson in hope not only for black Americans but also, for all mankind.

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LARGER THAN LIFE: MYTHICIZING THE LIFE AND DEATH OF AUGUST WILSON'S *FENCES*' HERO

المستخلص

تعد مسرحية "الأسوار" للكاتب الأفروأمريكى أوجست ويلسون جزء من مشروعه الدرامي الكبير لتصوير حياة الأقلية الأمريكية السوداء في الولايات المتحدة في القرن العشرين والذي يعتمد على أن تعالج كل مسرحية من مسرحيات المشروع العشر عقدا من الزمن في شكل درامى. وقد أسس اوجست ويلسون مسرحياته معتمدا على أستلهام الثقافات الأفريقية والأفريقية الأمريكية وذلك في محاولة لإنتاج دراما أمريكية سوداء مميزة تقدم تصويرا فنيا مؤطرا تاريخيا لتجربة شعبه في عقود القرن العشرين كلا على حدة. ومن الواضح أن الكاتب المسرحى يحاول في هذه المسرحية أن يضع تجربة الأمريكيين من أصل أفريقي على قدم المساواة مع تجربة الثقافة الأمريكيةالبيضاء. كما يعد بالأمل في غدا أفضل. وأخيرا وليس آخرا تطمح هذه الورقة البحثية إلى استكشاف كيفية توظيف أوجست ويلسون لحكايات البلوز، ولعبة البيسبول الأمريكية وأسلوب الحكى القصصى لشرح طبيعة العالم المعاكس الذي كان على البطل الأفروأمريكى تروي ماكسون مواجهته من المهد إلى اللحد. وأن كفاحه الإنسانى يستحق كل الاحترام على الرغم من أخطائه البشرية وهزائم الحياة وانتصاراته الصغيرة.

الكلمات الدالة: الدراما الأفرو أمريكية-البلوز-فن الحكي-لعبة البيسبول-الحلم الأمريكي.

The Revival of Radio Drama: A Narratological Analysis of John Dryden's *Pandemic* (2012) and Martin Millien's *COVID39* (2020)

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine Radio Drama as a rich art form with distinctive qualities that could address serious issues and have a far-reaching influence on listeners. The resurgence of Radio Drama can be attributed to the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic; however, there are a plethora of outstanding plays that tackle significant subject matters and are worthy of study. The researcher attempts the following questions: Can Radio Drama be considered an art form per se? Can Radio Drama be as influential as stage drama? The researcher compares two radio dramas: John Dryden's Pandemic (2012) and Martin Millien's COVID39 (2020). The first play predicts the future and visualizes the stages that have led up to the outbreak of a deadly pandemic across the world, and the latter tackles the mental, psychological, and socio-political repercussions of COVID-19 after the lapse of 20 years. To provide a theoretical framework for the plays under study, the researcher employs the theory of narratology and draws upon the works of Elke Huwiler who was the first to apply the latter theory to Radio Drama. The researcher proves that both Dryden and Millien through their compelling radio dramas unravel the social and political problems in connection with the pandemic. Dryden, on the one hand, unveils the unscrupulousness and indifference of governmental officials which act as determinants of the pandemic outbreak. On the other hand, Millien unfolds the incessant discriminatory experiences of racism in the United States of America.

Keywords: Pandemic, COVID-19, Radio Drama, Narratology, Acoustic signs

Introduction

It is the year 2020 during the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic when a lockdown was enforced throughout the whole world. People were terrified as everything turned topsy-turvy and they were deprived of the luxury of a daily routine. Ambulances roamed the streets with their blaring sirens, anxious voices of reporters broadcasted the pandemic news 24/7, and screams of a deceased coronavirus-infected patient's family, relatives, and friends were heard. People tried to grapple with that extremely difficult challenge in myriad ways and varied mental and psychological manifestations. Threatened by depression and mental breakdown, people had to find solace in something since going out was not an option. People started to read, watch television, settle down, attend to unfinished household chores, listen to each other, and listen to the radio.

Literature has long been the vehicle of amusement and relief; however, theatres were shut down, cinemas were deserted, and television was continuously broadcasting all pandemic-related news. The only alternative to this stalemate status was to transfer all activities from on-site to online in general. Unexpectedly, plays which were due to be performed during the lockdown as tickets were bought and seats were reserved had to be transferred to another medium to mitigate financial losses and help audience survive the global ordeal. Speaking in the same vein, Jeff Lunden remarks that theatres throughout the whole world had to close due to the outbreak of the pandemic and accordingly find other media to display their work of art. He adds that "Some have made archival video of productions available. Some have created Zoom plays. And some ... have returned to an old art form - radio drama, updated for the digital age" ("Theaters Return to an Old Art Form"). Accordingly, Radio Drama came the fore and was one of the invaluable alternatives to the cast aside forms of art.

The paper comprises two parts. The first part relates a brief overview of the historical background of Radio Drama, the elements and auditory signs of this art form, as well as the narratological methodology which sets the theoretical framework of the analysis. As to the second part, it analyzes the plays under study which were chosen in relation to the outbreak of a/the pandemic. The first radio drama is John Dryden's trilogy *Pandemic* (2012) in which he predicts the future and envisions what happened in 2020 and the second radio drama is Martin Millien's *COVID39* (2020) which examines the psychological repercussion of the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic after

twenty years. However, both Dryden and Millien apparently employ the pandemic as a subject matter to provoke listeners to reflect on the socio-political incessant problems respectively.

History of Radio Drama

In spite of the fact that the Italian Guglielmo Marconi (1874-1937) is known to be the inventor of radio, it is contended that the invention of radio has been the outcome of the work of scientists from different countries. The theories of James Clerk Maxwell (1831–1979), a physicist from Scotland were developed by the physicist Heinrich Hertz (1857-1994) from Germany (Hand and Traynor 5). Nevertheless, it was Marconi who developed the work of both Maxwell and Hertz and invented the system of wireless technology and commercially employed it (Klooster 161). As a result, radio was first known as 'wireless telegraphy' and 'wireless' for short. In 1906, the term 'radio' was then introduced in an international conference that was convened in Berlin (Coe 16). However, the term 'wireless' is used in Britain up to the present time.

The development of radio from wireless telegraphy to voice transmission was the main initiator of radio broadcasting whose precursors were David Sarnoff (1891–1971) and Frank Conrad (1874–1941). Sarnoff who worked for the American Marconi Company was the first to forward the radio as a recreational tool in 1916 as he declared: "I have in mind a plan of development which would make radio a household utility in the same sense as a piano or phonograph. The idea is to bring music into the home by wireless" (Qtd. in Maltin 2). Initially originated for military communication, voice transmission was further developed by Frank Conrad who worked for Westinghouse Electric Manufacturing (WEM) Company. Broadcasting oral communication and music emerged and a radio station was established by WEM company. (Coe 26) KDKA was the first radio station to operate in the USA in 1920 (Hand and Traynor 7). It was thus the first manifestation of radio broadcasting.

On the other hand, radio broadcasting debuted in the United Kingdom in 1922 through the British Broadcasting Company. The first radio station was established in Chelmsford whose aim was to broadcast on a global scale. More transmission companies emerged across the country and merged to form the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in 1925 which was then known as the British Broadcasting Commission (Burns 439). This commission was "a communications organization to be entrusted with the national interest: With a

monopoly of broadcasting …it was envisaged that the Commission would be given the greatest freedom for informing, entertaining and educating the nations populace by radio" (Burns 439). The BBC was thus established with the aim of catering for the needs of the people and is reckoned "The first working example of public service broadcasting" (Barnard 29). It remains the most popular radio broadcasting company.

The medium was established and therefore an art form evolved: Radio Drama. Rudolf Arnheim support the premise that Radio Drama must be perceived as an art form per se which narrates a story by incorporating acoustic elements (16). Hans Flesch advocates the notion of radio drama as an independent art form. Radio drama is "a specifically radiophonic art form, one that takes into account those aspects of radio broadcast that make it unique from these other artistic media" (Qtd in Gilfillan xxi). Radio Drama is mainly called 'radio pieces' (Huwiler, "Radio Drama Adaptations" 130). Nevertheless, "These radio pieces are nowadays mostly not called radio drama or Hörspiel [listening play] but Soundscapes or Audio Art, although at the beginning of the development of radio art, there was no such clear division" (Huwiler, "Radio Drama Adaptations" 130). The researcher uses the term 'radio drama' throughout the paper.

The first manifestation of Radio Drama was reading children books on air. To address the needs of a burgeoning audience, radio stations had to find appealing content to deliver. Asa Biggs describes the first form of Radio Drama as "'Children's Hour' programmes" which "were not only very good, but introduced genuinely new radio forms and developed new radio techniques" (262). Radio Drama developed during the 1920s and derived its broadcasting material basically from theatrical productions. In New York, Eugene Walter's *The Wolf* was the first drama to be broadcasted via a radio station in 1922. It is declared "the first 'on air' drama" by broadcast historian Howard Blue. (1) Whereas in the United Kingdom, the first radio play was Richard Hughes' *A Comedy of Danger* which was produced by the BBC in 1924 (Hand and Traynor 16). Radio Drama has developed from airing bedtime stories to plays.

From its nomenclature, radio drama reveals the strong affinity "between radio art and literary drama" as Huwiler expounds ("Radio Drama Adaptations" 130). Ever since its inception, Radio Drama has been the direct outcome of theatre. The radio drama-theatre relationship dates back to the Second World War when radio was a replacement to going to the theatre (Hand and Traynor

33). Radio heavily relies on adaptations of literary pieces of art. Radio Drama continued to prosper over the years. It was the 1950s that witnessed the US Radio Drama 'Golden Age,' but it did not last and was surpassed by television. In contrast, the British Radio Drama was endorsed by the BBC since it was operated by the government to avoid the mayhem resulting from many rival networks in the United States in America. "Although the BBC would develop its own television broadcasting after the Second World War, it did so while maintaining a commitment to radio" (Hand and Traynor 20). Hence, Radio Drama evolved from being a recreational tool of communication to a socio-cultural medium. "Radio was no longer isolated for functional one-to-one communication, nor was it for private recreational use…" as Noone remarks (15). He expounds: "It was now an important cultural medium that had taken its place in the family home, taking the national voice to a local level, into the living room of the people. It played an important social and cultural role on both national and local levels. A new form of community was born worldwide" (Noone 15). Radio Drama bloomed and enchanted people across the countries.

Apparently, Coronavirus pandemic has been a fundamental reason for the revival of Radio Drama. New channels of the latter art emerged as a replacement to live stage performances, namely, the Quarantine Theatre Radio and the Corona Radio Theatre, the Covid Island Drama episodes, and other other radio dramas (Hand and Traynor 33). In addition to the new pandemic-related theatres, many festivals have been held in 2020, such as the Lockdown Theatre Festival and the UK Radio Drama Festival (Hand and Traynor 33).

Ironically enough, radio is underrated and seems to have been surpassed by other gadgets; however, it has its own appeal as Hand and Traynor remark that "… its real strength is an ability to infiltrate the mind, to unleash the most powerful dramatic weapon of all: the imagination of the listener" (33). Likewise, Corwin, a renowned writer and producer of US Radio Drama, eloquently acclaims Radio Drama:

> First, radio is a stage with a bare set. This is not a deprivation, but an advantage, for a bare proscenium should be as inviting to a radio playwright or director as a bare wall is to a muralist, as a silent organ was to Bach. Not to be grand about it, but the features and dimensions of a place, of a room, of a landscape, are not, in a good radio script, described in so many words. They are perceived by

characters and brought out by speech, sound, by allusion. Obliquely. (Qtd. in Hand and Taynor 57)

Accordingly, Radio Drama must stand on par with other narrative forms which include but not limited to theatre and film.

Elements of Radio Drama

Radio drama comprises four elements: the script, the production, the broadcast and the listener. Nevertheless, the listener is pivotal. "The writer and the production team provide stimuli, but the conversion of that information into drama is entirely dependent on the imagination of the listener" (Hand and Traynor 33). Speaking in the same vein, Donald McWhinnie, a BBC radio director, in his book *The Art of Radio,* expounds that a listener has to "translate the sound-pattern he hears into his own mental language; he must apply his imagination to it and transform it" (25). Radio Drama is the drama of imagination as listeners visualize the play in myriad ways as he/she unleashes his/her imagination. It is reminiscent of bedtime stories as Gray remarks: "Like a bedtime story, it whispers in our ear. Without visual distractions, the smallest subtleties of the voice become apparent and seize the imagination; a snatch of song or the rustle of leaves takes on a significance impossible in the theatre or on film" (51) He adds: "As soon as we hear the word in a radio play, we are close to the experience it signifies; in fact, the sound is literally inside us" (51). As a result, the listener's imagination is of paramount importance.

'Anamnesis' is the formal description of the imagination as Augoyard and Torgue deftly remark. They expound that 'anamnesis' is "An effect of reminiscence in which a past situation or atmosphere is brought back to the listener's consciousness, provoked by a particular signal or sonic context. Anamnesis, a semiotic effect, is the often involuntary revival of memory caused by listening and the evocative power of sounds" (21). Hearing sounds which include but not limited to human voices, songs, and poems recall different feelings and memories: "The inherent power of the acoustic and the aural was made even more profound with the invention of a piece of technology that seemed quite miraculous to many in the generation that saw its inauguration . . . radio" (Augoyard and Torgue 21). Radio drama's vivid sounds ignite listeners' imagination.

Narratology and Radio Drama

Narratology is the lens through which Radio Drama can be seen and scrutinized. Bartosz Lutostanski in "A Narratology of Radio Drama: Voice, Perspective, Space" elucidates that "the fact that narratology is a *semiotic* discipline legitimizes a narratological examination of radio drama" (117). Radio Drama primarily relies on a system of signs both verbal and nonverbal. Verbal sign system is manifested through language and nonverbal ones through "voice, music, noise, silence, fading, cutting, mixing, the (stereophonic) positioning of the signals, electro-acoustic manipulation, and original sound (actuality)" as Huwiler expounds ("Storytelling by Sound" 51). Radio Drama is basically an audionarrative that is described as a "storytelling genre" (Crook 3). It is defined as "the acoustical art form that emerged from the development of the radio medium and in which stories are told or presented by means of electro-acoustically recorded and distributed sound material" (Huwiler, "Storytelling by Sound" 46). It relates a story by employing acoustic tools. "This narrative structure of radio drama acquires meaning gradually, with every individual event…can be comprehended only from the perspective of events already presented. Radio drama can therefore be conceived as narrative par excellence" (Lutostanski 119).

Narratology is originally a French word 'narratologie' coined by Tzvetan Todorov in his book Grammaire du "De´came´ron" in 1969 who propounded the science of narrative, namely "Narratology" (Qtd in Meister, "Narratology"). Narratology is defined in *The Living Handbook of Narratology* as "a humanities discipline dedicated to the study of the logic, principles, and practices of narrative representation" (Meister, "Narratology"). It could be traced back to Aristotle who tackled the difference between 'mimesis and 'diegesis' which are imitation and narration respectively (Manfred, *Narratology* 18). Chatman in his article "What Can We Learn from Contextualist Narratology" expounds that mimetic narratives include plays and films, whereas diegetic narratives comprise novels, short stories, and epic narratives (310). Nevertheless, Brian Richardson argues that "drama, like the novel, is and always has been a mixture of mimetic and diegetic representation, and that any theory of narration that ignores stage narration may be considered needlessly limited, if not seriously impoverished" (193). Moreover, a clear line of demarcation is drawn between mimetic and diegetic narrativity by Ansgar Nünning and Roy Sommer:

> Mimetic narrativity could be defined as the representation of a temporal and/or causal sequence of events, with the degree of narrativity hinging upon the degree of eventfulness. Diegetic narrativity, on the other hand, refers to verbal, as opposed to visual or performative, transmission of narrative content, to the representation of a speech act of telling a story by an agent called a narrator. (338)

Therefore, the relationship between drama and narrativity has been established by narratological theorists, such as Brian Richardson, Manfred Jahn, Roy Sommer, Monika Fludernik, and Ansgar Nünning.

H. Porter Abbott in "Defining Narrative" defines narrative as "the representation of an event or a series of events" (13). However, a distinction between 'narrative' and narrativity' is drawn by Ryan who purports that a narrative is a "semiotic object" whereas "narrativity" entails being able to inspire a narrative response" ("Theoretical Foundations of Transmedial Narratology" 12). Speaking in the same vein, Prince in *A Dictionary of Narratology* elucidates that narrativity is "the set of properties characterizing narrative and distinguishing it from nonnarrative" (65). Since its inception in the mid-sixties and its development through the eighties, narratologists focused on defining general narrative structures as "the set of general statements on narrative genres, on the systematics of narrating (telling a story) and on the structure of plot" (Ryan & von Alphen 110). More importantly, narratology developed into a theory (Prince, "Surveying Narratology" 1), "analytical procedure" (Meister "Narratology") and a "discipline" (Fludernik and Margolin 149). Nevertheless, narratology is best marked out as a discipline which entails both theoretical and analytical approaches.

Narratology is classified into postclassical narratology and structuralist narratology. (Huwiler, "Radio Drama Adaptations" 130). Postclassical narratology examines "the relations between narrative structure, its verbal, visual or more broadly semiotic realization, and the contexts in which it is produced and interpreted" (Herman, *Narratologies* 9). It is a method of analysis that is not limited to adaptation of literary texts as structuralist narratology, but "can be applied to a variety of areas, since people tell and listen to stories in many forms and contexts: From the description of lived events in the form of everyday accounts, to witness testimonies and accounts of personal injury, to the reception of fairy tales, short stories, novels, biographies, history books,

comics and films" (Nünning Qtd. in Huwiler, "Radio Drama Adaptations" 131). Speaking in the same vein, Meister expounds that "its [narratology] concepts and models are widely used as heuristic tools, and narratological theorems play a central role in the exploration and modeling of our ability to produce and process narratives in a multitude of forms, media, contexts, and communicative practices" ("Narratology"). Different types of narratology are therefore employed to analyze narratives.

The nineties marked a change in narratology from a "concern for a systematicity and logical coherence" to "a more pragmatically oriented theory of narrative" (Prince, "Surveying Narratology"2). Accordingly, the notion of 'narratologies' was advanced and comprises "contextualist narratology," "cognitive narratology," "transgeneric approaches" and intermedial approaches" (Chatman, "What We Can Learn from Contextualist Narratology" 310-311). Context is of optimum importance for narratology theorists who overrate context rather than structural elements of the subject being narrated. Chatman explains the term 'contextualised narratology" as it "… relates the phenomena encountered in narrative to specific cultural, historical, thematic, and ideological contexts. This extends the focus from purely structural aspects to issues of narrated content" ("What We Can Learn from Contextualist Narratology" 311). On the other hand, theorists of cognitive narratology acclaim and pinpoint the mental and emotional understanding of narratives as Fludernik expounds (223). She adds a further insight into this approach saying that it "is not restricted to literary narratives: "natural" everyday and oral narratives are considered to represent an underlying anthropological competence in its original form" (224). Moreover, the transgeneric and intermedial approaches "explore the relevance of narratological concepts for the study of genres and media outside the traditional object domain of text-based literary narrative" (Meister "Narratology"). They go beyond the conventional study of adapted literary narratives to focus on other genres and media forms. Hence, narratology has greatly progressed over the nineties.

Narratological analysis fundamentally relies on Radio Drama auditory signs which include "words, sounds, music and silence" as Hand and Traynor expound (40). In spite of the fact that words are the most important communicative factor, sounds and music play a complimentary role. Words, in Radio Drama, can be categorized as "theatrical," "textual," and "amanation" which could be explained as a dialogue, narration or unclear sound respectively

(Hand and Traynor 40). Moreover, spoken words "need to carry extra freight" as Andrew Crisell elucidates because more details should be added in radio drama to render the picture clear (146). From a semiotic vantage point, Crisell perceives words as 'primary signifiers' (146) since they have to delineate a detailed picture that communicates meaning which is pinned down as a 'transcodification' process by Crisell (146). This process is further explained by McWhinnie:

> I would defy anyone to judge by ear alone whether the feet in question are crossing the street or walking up the side of a house, or even to be quite sure that they are feet at all – they might, for example, be the sound of a methodical workman stacking bricks into heaps. 'Fade in the sound of Euston Station': the picture is clear enough to writer and producer, but to the listener it might well be Beachy Head during a storm; it certainly will not be Euston Station unless someone says so. (80)

Sound is another important element of Radio Drama which consists of "sound effects (sfx), acoustics, and perspective" (Hand and Traynor 44). Sound effects have a significant added value to Radio Drama since they evoke one's imagination and stand in contrast to the dialogue. They are sounds that transcribe the picture the writer attempts to draw. Rosemary Horstmann contends that sound effects "should be used with discretion to create atmosphere rather than as a primary vehicle of information" (41). The second sub-element of sound is 'acoustics' which is defined in the Encyclopedia Britannica as "the science concerned with the production, control, transmission, reception, and effects of sound. The term is derived from the Greek *akoustos*, meaning 'heard'" ("Acoustics"). It is further defined as "the nature of the space in which the drama occurs: the natural ambience of environment" (Hand and Traynor 44). Besides 'sound effects' and 'acoustics', 'perspective' is a principal constituent of sound. It describes the space between characters in radio drama; how far or near they are (Hand and Traynor 44). Consequently, all the sub-elements of sound are interrelated and complement each other.

Moreover, 'music' plays a pivotal role in Radio Drama as Shingler and Wieringa remark that "radio is a highly appropriate vehicle for hearing music, because we do not need images to make sense of it: our relationship with it is direct and personal (61). They elucidate that "As a dramatic device, it has

particular strength because of its emotional power. Music performs many functions in radio drama, which have been articulated by a succession of radio drama producers and theoreticians" (Shingler and Wieringa 61). In addition, Crisell elaborates on the functionality of music in Radio Drama, and remarks that it is employed as a linking element within the narrative (51-52). In Radio Drama, music is played when the curtain falls to announce the end of a scene and the beginning of another, so it acts as a connecting and organizational tool. Moreover, music portrays the mood of the play's character and summons certain feelings and emotions. Moreover, music functions "as a stylized sound effect" (Crisell 52), in other words, it could be more effective than sound effects. In addition, it has "an indexical function" (Crisell 52) which is actual music heard by people in real settings.

John Dryden's *Pandemic* (2012)

John Dryden is a British writer, radio producer-cum-director, and a dramatist. He wrote and produced *Pandemic* which was awarded the Writer's Guild Award for Best Radio Drama (Shelly). *Pandemic* is a trilogy set in the past, present and future about a universal outbreak of a virus. It consists of three parts, and each part is 43-minute long. It was broadcasted by BBC Radio 4 on March 26-28, 2012 (Shelly). Dryden declares that Radio Drama is "the theatre of the mind" (Shelly). He elaborates saying that "Creating images in the listeners' heads is what radio drama is all about. The most engaging radio dramas, in my opinion, do this not just with words but by realizing the world of the story through suggestion in words, sound and actions" (Shelly). Dryden has mastered the craft of radio drama and carved himself a distinguished niche in this arena.

Part 1 is titled 'The Present,' part 2 'The Future,' and part 3 'The Past.' An illogical chronological order of parts is displayed by Dryden. A normal temporal sequence should have been past, present, and future. However, Dryden commences his Radio drama with the part labelled 'The Present' then moves on to talk about 'The Future' and ends his trilogy with 'The Past.' In Part 1'The Present,' the main character is Dr. Jan Roldano, a microbiologist and advisor to the World Health Organization on contagious diseases, who was invited as a keynote speaker for a conference in Bangkok, Thailand. He was invited to the "Control Centre" to witness how they manage and control the spread of a bird flu. However, a new strain outbreaks and as a result, he is locked down in

Bangkok. Surprisingly, the play ends on an alarming note since Dr. Jan himself got infected with a new unknown virus while he has been helping the Thai government with the investigations. In Part 2 'The Future,' the action takes place five years after outbreak of a universal pandemic and revolves around Diane Harper, a British civil servant, who investigates the suicide of Dr. Robert Gilbert, a scientist affiliated to the government, and the disappearance of Amit Puri, the journalist who was in connection with the latter. Since she lost her daughter to the pandemic, Diane went on a persevering search for the reasons behind the global pandemic. However, the last part titled 'The Past' sketches a world of espionage and conspiracy in relation to the environmental ponders. It debuts with a conference about climate change in Copenhagen where Victor Klemant, a Swedish economist and environmental scientist gives a talk which is deceivingly praised by Anna to defame and drag him into a scandal. This part ends with a scene from Part 1 where Anna is found in Thailand and seemingly working on another operation. Dryden deliberately reshuffles the parts in an attempt to grab the listener's attention to the real story behind the pandemic. The researcher analyzes part 1 and refer to the other parts in relation to the latter.

Space in Radio Drama has long been overlooked (Lutostanski 121). Nevertheless, narrative theorists, David Herman and H. Porter Abbott, have altered this predetermined disregard to space (Herman, *Story Logic* 265). Accordingly, narrative theorist Melba Cuddy-Keane coined new terminology to be aligned with radio drama, such as "**soundmark** instead of landmark for reference object and **soundscape** instead of landscape or region for concrete space of action" (385). In Dryden's *Pandemic*, spatiotemporal aspect is fathomed through sound. Dryden employs authentic and electro-acoustically manipulated noises to render the action authentic. Listeners can discern different places through sound. They can hear the hustle and bustle of a big city when the characters are standing or walking down a street. Moreover, the peeping sound of a remote control that opens the car and the sound that accompanies the car opening reflect that it is our present time and that Sumi drives a modern car. In addition, they can hear the beeping sound of ventilators in hospital wards or intensive care units. Thus, the hospital can be perceived as the principal "soundscape" since the characters will keep going in and out of it and the ventilators and other medical machines are reckoned 'soundmarks.' In addition, the silence and loud echo of a microphone in a lecture hall where a

doctor delivers a lecture and the clapping of attendees can be heard to identify the university setting. Another relaxing scene at a hotel is reflected through the sounds of people jumping into a swimming pool as water splashes. "In radio drama, the different ambient properties of various environments (acoustics) can be recreated and used very effectively to communicate spatial dimension" (Hand and Taynor 47). 'Soundscape' and 'soundmark' are deftly employed by Dryden to replace stage directions and as a result all spaces can be easily visualized by listeners.

The main soundscape is the hospital which is reckoned the fundamental setting of the play. Dr. Jan is invited to visit the hospital to confirm that the Minister of Public Health in Thailand is competently handling the outbreak of the bird flu pandemic. He is then summoned to the hospital again after delivering his lecture at the university to examine a new patient who suffers from another emergent unknown virus that has hit the country and news reports similar cases throughout the world. Other places are not as significant as the hospital, for example the university and the hotel. The hospital is the main setting in the play as shown in the following different occasions:

> **SUMI**
> Sorry... Er... Would you like to see the hospital?
> **DR AHMAI**
> I'm honored you have found time in your busy schedule to visit our hospital.
> **LAKSAN**
> I understand you visited the control centre at the hospital this afternoon.
> **JAN**
> I'll ask Sumi to take me back to the hospital. (Part 1, 2012)

Since auditory signs are of pivotal importance in Radio Drama, a thorough analysis of each sign is conducted. Words come to the fore as they are channels of communication between the listener and the narrator. In addition, words carry ideas which immediately capture the attention of listeners. It is contended that "Like all great drama, the best radio drama isn't so much about words as ideas. For it to engage the audience it needs a great premise, interesting, well-defined characters with clear needs and wants, reversals and conflict at the heart of every scene" (Shelly). Dryden's play revolves around the story of a doctor who travels to Bangkok to give a lecture in a Thai university.

He is also invited to the "Control Centre" to witness the procedures carried out by the Ministry of Health to control the outbreak of a bird flu.

> **DR AHMAI**
>
> (Director of public health, responsible for surveillance and outbreak   control)
>
> This outbreak we are experiencing... We are familiar with the viral strain.
>
> It's an H5N…
>
> **JAN**
>
> Have you instituted an exclusion zone?
>
> **DR AHMAI**
>
> No, no. Only one small area is affected. And we have a vaccine. So a decision was taken with the Minister of Public Health to control this by local intervention...
>
> **DR AHMAI (CONT'D)**
>
> This is our virology laboratory facility... (Part 1, 2012)

Dryden makes deft use of scientific terminology which renders the story authentic. The play teems with words like "strain," "viral," "immunofluorescence," "nucleotide." "antigenic drift." "respiratory and multiorgan failure," "pathology," "infection control," "virologist, "infectious diseases," "viral haemorrhagic fever," and "ecchymoses." Verbal sign system sets the tone of the play. The method of narrating the story in Radio Drama is different from other forms as it primarily relies on words. Huwiler hails the importance of words in Radio Drama: "It is indeed difficult to come up with an alternative to the telling and the showing mode when it comes to audio art, as it combines telling and showing: on the one hand, more often than not, narrators are applied in a radio piece, telling us the story in words" (132). Similarly, Ryan declares that "It seems clear that of all semiotic codes language is the best suited to storytelling" (*Narrative Across Media* 10). Radio dramatists heavily rely on words to forward their message and tell their stories. Dryden has carefully selected medical terms to render the story real.

The narrative in Dryden's radio drama *Pandemic* is maintained through dialogues. Listeners can follow the line of action through well scribbled dialogues. There is no narrator in Dryden's *Pandemic*; however, discourse replaces conventional narrative. Adding a further insight, Manfred Jahn defines narration as "the telling of a story in a way that simultaneously respects the

needs and enlists the co-operation of its audience; *focalization* is the submission of (potentially limitless) narrative information to a perspectival filter" ("Focalization" 94). He adds that since 'focalization' is more in line with sight and vision 'perspectival filter' is related to hearing as listeners can formulate a certain point of view through voices heard ("Focalization" 94). Through dialogues, Dryden sketches an epitome of the coronavirus pandemic which appallingly hit the entire world in 2020. Not only does Dryden draw a similar picture of what happened in 2020 in part 1 of his trilogy, but he also identifies the place of the virus outbreak in Asia in part 2 through a dialogue between Diane and Father John as follows:

> **DIANE**
> The virus came... from here.
> **FATHER JOHN**
> What are you talking about? It started in Asia.
> **DIANE**
> Yeah... It was made in a laboratory in the UK... (Part 2, 2012)

More appallingly though, he accuses the government of deceiving the people and hiding facts as Father John declares: "Gosh, and all this time the government was lying to us (Part 2, 2012). Thus, dialogues "provide descriptive elements, which, alongside the sound effects and evocative music, work with the imagination to create 'spatial and temporal flexibility' (Shingler and Wieringa 88). In Dryden's radio drama, dialogues replace the narrative agent.

Another sign system that can produce narrative meaning in Radio Drama is 'voice' which stands on par with 'words.' Huwiler elaborates:

> The voice as a sign system generating meaning in its own right covers the tone of the voice, which also includes the idiolect of a character (individual linguistic choices and idiosyncrasies), as well as the way of pronouncing (accents, dialects) and the intonation (the structure of emphasizing words or so-called melodies within the uttered sentences). ("Radio Drama Adaptations" 133)

Each character has a distinctive voice intonation that unravels its social, psychological, and mental aspect. The sign system of a voice functions "as an indication of the attributes of a speaking person, such as gender, age and even social or regional background. But it may also indicate a subjective perception

or memory of a character's speech rather than representing the 'actual' speech of the character" (Huwiler, "Radio Drama Adaptations" 134). Listeners of Radio Drama can easily identify myriad aspects of each character through the voice.

Voice plays a significant role at both levels: story and discourse, in other words, what is said and how it is said. Hearing Dr. Jan Roldanus makes a listener feel that he is a man in his forties. His intonation sketches a humble, modest, and friendly man. At the level of discourse, he is a doctor who is not sophisticated and has no political agenda as he declares: "Yeah... well, I'm not really here in an official capacity. Just to speak at the conference..." (Part 1, 2012). He is a passionate doctor who loves his work to the extent that Dr. Kanya remarks: "Hmmm... I think you put your work before your family. One day you will regret it..." (Part 1, 2012). Another example is Sumi, the government representative, who is assigned to drive Dr. Roldanus and attend to his needs during his visit. He has an accent and his intonation unravels an obedient employee who blindly follows instructions and carries out orders. Likewise, Dr. Ahmai sounds like a follower who keeps up appearances and pretends that everything is under control. Another character that sounds the same is Dr. Padit Laksan, the Minister of Public Health, who elusively declares that "Everything is more than under control. Thailand is a safe country to come to, to enjoy yourself, to eat our food. There are no problems, not even with chickens..." (Part 1, 2012). On the contrary, Kanya, the doctor-to-be, has no accent "speaks English with barely a trace of an accent" (Part 1, 2012). She sounds young, smart, strong, confident, and not a follower. She has high self-esteem and sounds extremely confident. She contradicts Dr. Jan: "Surely the most dangerous viruses -are those that create no noticeable symptoms. If there are no symptoms, how can we tell who is infected?" (Part 1, 2012). Voice is an important acoustic element employed by narratologists to interpret radio drama.

Moreover, Dryden uses 'silence' as a distinctive sign system in *Pandemic*. He believes in the assertion propounded by R. Murray Schafer: "If we have a hope of improving the acoustic design of the world, it will be realisable only after the recovery of silence as a positive state in our lives" (259). Schafer thus perceives silence from a positive perspective and shuns away its negative connotations. In Radio Drama, McWhinnie asserts that "it is the contextualization of silence which makes it positive" (88). He adds that "silence, as a calculated device, is one of the most potent imaginative stimuli;

prepared for correctly, broken at the right moment, in the right context, it can be more expressive than words; it can echo with expectancy, atmosphere, suspense, emotional overtones, visual subtleties" (88). Dryden uses silence to reflect discomfort at some scenes. Dr. Jan feels uncomfortable when Sumi informs him that he has to go to the Control Centre to report that they are in full control of the bird flu outbreak.

> **SUMI**
>
> You probably heard about the small trouble we had with the bird flu... As advisor to the WHO we thought you would be interested to see how well we handle such…
>
> **JAN**
>
> Yeah... well, I'm not really here in an official capacity. Just to speak at the conference...
>
> **SUMI**
>
> Yes… They drive in silence. But Sumi is getting increasingly anxious.
>
> Actually doctor, the Minister is very keen for you to see our control centre. So you can report back that we are handling everything well.
>
> **JAN**
>
> Sure. No problem. Maybe, if there's time, after the conference...
>
> Another uncomfortable **silence**. (Part 1, 2012).

Norman Corwin expounds different types of silences and pins them down as "dread silences and spooky silences and heavy silences and restful silences. There's a whole vocabulary of silences alone" (Qtd. in Hand and Taynor 57). Silences clarify the mental and psychological status of characters. Silence also acts as a pause between scenes. Dryden employs silence to move from one scene to the other. Silence before embarking on a new scene provides listeners with a pause to cognitively connect the actions of the story. Silence in the scene below clarifies the debate that has started by Kanya against Dr. Jan during his lecture. She refutes one of his theories and the chairperson steps in to ease the air and stop Kanya from embarrassing the doctor.

> **Silence.** The Chairperson steps in.
>
> **CHAIRPERSON**
>
> But if there are no symptoms, what's the problem? Okay, next question please...

JAN

No let her explain. Kanya, isn't it? We met. (Part 1, 2012)

Through the skillful use of verbal and non-verbal sign systems, Dryden has managed to forward his message and warn people not only against potential pandemics, but also against the socio-political policies in relation to the environmental crises that would eventually lead up to universal disasters. Therefore, Josh Miller, a lecturer in the Sociology Department voices out his concern and elaborates on the inaptitude of politicians who do nothing but make money.

JOSH

Nothing's happening, Richard. That's the whole point. For the last fifty years people have been protesting about the state of our planet... G7, G8, protocols, accords - Does any of it make any difference? No. It's just businessmen and politicians flying around in planes. They pay lip service, but in their hearts - and in their wallets - they have no intention of cutting anything at all and in the meantime... in the meantime... (Part 3, 2012)

In a retaliation act, activists defame or kidnap scientists who are not true avid supporters of the Earth.

JOSH

We are living on borrowed time. The delicate balance has shifted. People - too many people - are suffocating our planet. Our friend, Dr. Kemant... and others like him, have hijacked the arguments to enrich themselves. They have given politicians an excuse to do nothing. But we are running out of time. Climate change, tsunamis, droughts, mass movement of people... worse is to come. Should we just sit back and allow our planet to die? (Part 3, 2012)

Therefore, Dryden did not pursue with a logical sequence of past, present, and future in his riveting Radio drama. In contrast, he has intentionally arranged his trilogy to start with the present, followed by the future, and ends by the past. Part 1 (The Present) ends on an alarming note where Dr. Jan gets infected with an unknown virus and declares "Oh God. I'm dead... aren't I?" (Part 1, 2012). Whereas, part 2 (The Future) ends on the arrest of Diane Harper who has been looking for the truth "Diane is thrown into the van. The door is shut. The siren comes on. It drives away" (Part 2, 2012). As to part 3 (The Past), it ends with a similar scene extracted from Part 1 where Anna declares with a hint of whine in

her voice: "Don't they know it's the end of the world..." (Part 3, 2012). A clear manifestation of prioritizing the present, reflecting on the future, and understanding the past. His award-winning Radio drama *Pandemic* which was written and produced in 2012 predicted the future. It was aired eight years before the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic throughout the whole world in 2020. Comparing the events in Dryden's radio drama to the events of the year 2020 reveal many resemblances and tolls a warning bell. Appallingly enough, a similar universal virus hits and lockdowns are enforced. Dryden's radio drama stimulates listeners to reflect and ponder about the reasons that might lead to future pandemics.

Martin Millien *COVID39* (2020)

Martin Millien, on the other hand, has started writing a compelling radio drama entitled *COVID39* on April 2020 after the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. The structure of this unconventional radio drama unfolds into 34 episodes. Each episode is entitled 'chapter,' and lasts from 10 to 18 minutes. Written, produced, and directed by Millien, *COVID39* documents the period of the 2020 lockdown, and examines the mental and psychological status of people after the elapse of 20 years. It is the story of a girl and a boy whose families were quarantined together, accordingly after twenty years, they are bound together and question their relationship. The first chapter commences with the following writer's notes:

> This series is intended to be a companion to people experiencing what we are all experiencing on a daily basis but provide some levity and beauty and a sense that none of us are alone via narrative. Something you could listen to after being depressed by your daily news podcast, but abounding with a hope that is hard to see right now. We hope it provides inspiration, hope and a little distraction to our collective chronicles.#covid39 #covid19 #coronavirus #quarantine #rona #quarantinechronicles #covidchronicles #coronachronicles #qibi. (Ch.1, April 2020)

Randi Morgan and Shane Phillips have rescued letters written by their parents during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. In an attempt to recuperate the psychological trauma of their childhood, Randi and Shane delve deep into the past (the year 2020) to reshape their future (the year 2039). Assisting them to overcome their childhood ordeal is psychiatrist Dr. Melissa Estrum. The story revolves around a call (probably through Zoom) between Dr. Estrum, the

psychiatrist and Randi and Shane, who seek professional help to re-examine their relationship by reminiscing about the past. Millien declares before listeners start the audio that "This is a fictional audio drama that points out the humanity of our fateful present and examines the future we are helping to create for our children" (April 2020). Nash, similarly, points out that narratives could be perceived in "the recollection of life events, in historical documents and textbooks, in scientific explanations of data, in political speeches, and in day-to-day conversation" (xi). Thus, Millien projects the repercussions of the 2020 universal outbreak on the coronavirus pandemic in his narrative.

Voice is one of the most significant semiotic codes employed by narratologists to analyze Radio drama. Genette perceives voice as "the subject that carries out or submits to or reports the narrating activity" (Qtd. in Lutostanski 122). Huwiler expounds: "The way the voice is used … as a means of signification shows how the acoustic elements of a radio play may perform a varying narratological role: voice serves not only to characterize the actants at the level of the story, but as a means of focalization at the level of the discourse" ("Storytelling by Sound" 54). The voice of Dr. Estrum is assertive, appeasing, and candid which shows a confident and professional doctor who attempts to placate Randi and Shane and help them reach a self-reconciliatory status. On the one hand, Melissa initiates the conversation by saying: "Well, I know this is difficult. You are … both of you are demonstrating a real commitment to growth by even contacting me…Randi has some concerns about moving forward and you Shane want to move forward …" (2020). Adding more mollifying comments, Melissa remarks that "You have to understand this is as common as the cold. I'm not worried about that" (2020). On the other hand, Randi's voice is shaky and perplexed while she describes her relationship with Shane: "Shane has been a part of me for so long. It's like when you lose a leg… you learn to walk again and eventually run… you come to depend on this prosthetic that makes you whole again, but you catch a glimpse of yourself and realize those aren't my toes" (Chapter 1 April 2020).

Conversely, Shane's voice reveals a rebellious, unsatisfied, and distorted person. He reluctantly endeavors to accept Dr. Melissa's analysis of their cognitive and psychological condition. Melissa believes that "you [Randi's] and Shane's relationship exists because as children your two families were quarantine together during the corona pandemic of the early 20s" (Chapter 1

April 2020). Melissa explicates the period of the 2020 coronavirus and its implications in reference to their complicated unresolved relationship:

> Near the beginning once the government was willing to admit how bad things were going to get, the health experts of the time partnered with public media organizations that were primarily funded by their listeners, they came up with a therapy of sorts that they thought would be helpful among all the social disruption they were experiencing; electronic text and audio files journaling their experience during the lockdowns. (Chapter 1 April 2020)

Melissa sketches an authentic picture of the time through her words which reflect the "secret states of mind, the inner world and private vision of the speaker" as McWhinnie point out (57). She elaborates:

> The Library of Congress archived all of it. The disconnection from one another was profound. You couldn't see it, but you could hear it and The Echoes of sirens rising and fading but persisting… increasing it started far away and then you knew someone who knew someone and then you knew someone. And then you loved someone. And they had it and you had to feel lucky even then. Millions of people lost their jobs those who kept them didn't know how long they'd have them. Rich and poor the bodies piled up and cold trucks … the size of shipping containers parked outside of hospitals. And worst of all no one knew how long it would last…There was only tunnel. No light. (Chapter 1 April 2020).

Similarly, Shingler and Wieringa pinpoint the supremacy of spoken word in Radio Drama: "Speech may be the primary code of radio… Without words, radio would be seriously disadvantaged, rendered obscure, ambiguous and virtually meaningless" (51). Adding a further insight into the significance of spoken word in Radio Drama, semiotician Andrew Crisell propounds that the spoken word carries "extra freight" (149) because it should "communicate additional information which would be visible to a cinema or theatre audience" (Qtd in Hand and Traynor 41). He explains that words are "primary signifiers" and maintain the process of "transcodification" (146) which is expounded by Hand and Traynor as follows: "When an object cannot be seen, then it must be heard, and if this sound alone does not communicate, then the function of words is to offer explanation" (42). Therefore, Millien heavily relies on verbal sign to narrate his story.

In addition, non-verbal sign systems, namely noise and music, play an important role in Radio Drama. "Non-verbal codes, such as noise and music, are still integral to the medium. They evoke radio's moods, emotions, atmospheres and environments. They provide a fuller picture and a richer texture" (Shingler and Wieringa 51). However, this has a little relevance in *COVID39* as the spoken word comes to the fore and occupy the whole audio scene. Listeners can hear very low background music when a character starts reading a letter; however, it does not invoke any feelings because listeners must concentrate to understand the letter which abounds in detailed information. 'Letters' can be perceived as the 'soundmark' throughout the play. It is what listeners yearn to listen to in each episode. They are letters written by the parents of Randi and Shane 20 years ago during the coronavirus pandemic lockdown. There is no 'soundscape' yet the letters are of paramount importance to the narrative.

These letters function as a contextualization of real life deftly employed by Millien to document the political, psychological, and social implications of the 2020 pandemic. One letter is read at each episode by either Randi or Shane which unravels the events that occurred back then. These letters are the "sjuzet" or the discourse narrative as Chatman explicates that the elements of a narrative comprises two parts, namely a story and a discourse. He asserts that "the structuralist theory argues that each narrative has two parts: a story (histoire), the content or chain of events (actions, happenings), plus what may be called existents (characters, items of setting); and a discourse (discourse), that is, the expression, the means by which the content is communicated" (*Story and Discourse* 19). In other words, the story is what is said and the discourse is how it is said. He states that "the story or fabula is the natural (i.e. linear, chronological) state but discourse or sjuzet is the temporal and spatial reconstruction of that story by the writer (or narrator) (*Story and Discourse* 19). Millien re-establishes the spatio-temporal structure of the story through a thread of letters.

Each letter narrates a significant event in 2020. Millien recounts the outbreak of the pandemic in relation to all socio-political events that took place in the USA. From the first letter, the word "black" saliently struck listeners' ears.

> **SHANE'S FATHER:** (Shane reading the letter)
> The coronavirus is infecting and killing **black** Americans at an alarmingly high rate… trips to the grocery store and pharmacy

should only be taken in emergencies. We've been watching the rest of the world suffocate, praying for Italy and praying to not to become Italy and now it feels like it's our turn to choke. The prime minister of Britain is in intensive care. Each day there are more people with masks when we take our walks, even here in Dallas. We politely cross the street half a block away from our neighbors who have become potential carriers… Majority **black** counties are dying at six times the rate of majority white counties. And we are just at the beginning. (Chapter 2, 2020)

From a narratological approach, Millien narrates the story from his own lens. Narratology proposes that "narratives [are] not merely a literary form or medium of expression, but a phenomenological and cognitive mode of self and world knowledge" (Nünning Qtd. in Huwiler, "Radio Drama Adaptations" 131). The word 'black' reiterates throughout the episodes. At the debut of the radio drama episodes, Millien points out that blacks are dying out of the virus at a greater rate than white people. He reiterates the same idea: "Our people are dying at a much greater rate than whites or POC, and so this virus has made us niggers again" (Chapter 15, 2020). In addition, the brutality of the police is pinpointed as such in Mara's letter: "We were poor growing up, but racism had ebbed into the subtlety of sledgehammers instead of the bloodlust tied to nooses. Redlining had refined itself into gerrymandering. But the police remained. Brutal and efficient" (Chapter 9, 2020). Stories of Breonna Taylor who was killed by the cops, Ahmaud Arbery who was shot by a white man (Chapter 34), and George Flyod who was cold-bloodedly killed by a white cop are enlisted (Chapter 34). Marcus writes in his letter which is read by Shane: "Today was George Floyd's memorial. Al Sharpton was there, of course. He beseeched those in earshot, America in this case, to get your knees off our necks…They set bail for the officers, the other three that were there when Floyd died, at $750,000" (Chapter 34). Not only does *COVID39* tackle the psychological impact of COVID-19, but also it revisits racial discrimination in the United States of America by documenting all outrageous incidents that occurred in concurrent with the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic. Millien has sketched an acoustic panoramic scene of segregation in America in line with the psychological and social ripple of the pandemic. In the last episode of the play, Millien declares that "She's [America] always been a stubborn kind of kid, convinced of her own nobility despite evidence to the contrary" (Chapter 34).

The last words of the play extend a sincere advice to listeners: "Trust yourselves, your family, and that America has not been subtle about her intentions" (Chapter 34). Millien mourns and announces that America is still plagued with segregation.

Conclusion

Radio drama is an acoustic medium of expression which demonstrates a concoction of mimetic and diegetic representation. It is an independent art form which stands on par with other art forms. As a result, Radio Drama should not be underrated when compared to stage drama since it has acoustic tools and auditory signs which could smoothly forward the dramatist's message. Both Dryden's *Pandemic* and Millien's *COVID39* are seemingly about the outbreak of a/the pandemic; however, they are deftly written radio dramas that pinpoint the socio-political concerns of their writers respectively. Dryden through mimetic narrativity has endeavored to shed light on the corruption and dissimulation of policy-makers and governmental officials in regards to the outbreak of a pandemic. A salient delineation of the causal arrangements of events that have led up to the outbreak of an unknown virus. On the other hand, Millien unravels the continuous manifestations of the deeply instilled racial discrimination in the United States of America through diegetic narrativity which has been rivetingly expounded. From a contextualised narratology standpoint, both writers have moved beyond the 'structural aspects' of radio drama to focus on the 'thematic context.' Through Radio Drama, both Dryden and Millien have motivated listeners to reminisce about the pandemic in relation to their social and political issues. Unlike other forms of art, Radio drama is the least studied and underestimated in spite of its rich acoustic elements and vivid sounds. Therefore, it must be further examined and delved deep into.

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إحياء الدراما الإذاعية: دراسة سردية تحليلية لمسرحية الجائحة (٢٠١٢) لجون درايدن ومسرحية كوفيد ٣٩ (٢٠٢٠) لمارتن ميلين

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المستخلص

إن الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو دراسة الدراما الإذاعية كشكل فني ثري له صفات مميزة يمكن أن يعالج قضايا هامة وله تأثير واسع النطاق علي المستمعين. إن إنتعاش الدراما الإذاعية يمكن أن ينسب إلي تفشي وباء الكورونا. فعلي الرغم من ذلك، هناك وفرة من المسرحيات الرائعة التي تناقش مواضيع تستحق الدراسة. ستقوم الباحثة بالإجابة علي الأسئلة الآتية: هل يمكن أن تكون الدراما الإذاعية شكل من أشكال الفنون القائم بذاته؟ هل يمكن أن تكون الدراما الإذاعية مؤثرة مثل الدراما المسرحية؟ لذلك فسوف تقوم الباحثة بمقارنة مسرحيتين ألا وهما مسرحية " الجائحة" للكاتب جون درايدن (٢٠١٢) التي تتنبأ بالمستقبل و تتصور المشهد والمراحل المختلفة التي أدت إلي تفشي وباء قاتل في شتي أنحاء العالم ومسرحية "كوفيد٣٩" للكاتب مارتن ميلين التي تناقش التداعيات الذهنية والنفسية والإجتماعية السياسية لكوفيد ١٩ بعد مرور عشرين عاما. وسف تستخدم الباحثة نظرية السرد لتوفير إطار نظري للمسرحيات قيد الدراسة و تستند علي كتابات إيلكي هيولر الذي كان أول من يطبق النظرية السالف ذكرها علي الدراما الإذاعية. تثبت الباحثة إن درايدن وميلين استطاعا من خلال مسرحيتهما الإذاعية الكشف عن المشاكل الإجتماعية والسياسية فيما يتعلق بالجائحة. فدرايدن أثبت أن إنعدام ضمير المسئولين بالحكومة واللامبالاة هما السبب في تفشي الجائحة وأن ميلين علي الجانب الآخركشف الستار عن الممارسات العنصرية المستمرة بالولايات المتحدة الأمريكية.

الكلمات الرئيسية: الجائحة، الدراما الإذاعية، السرد، إشارات سمعية

The World Reeling from a Global Pandemic: COVID -19 and Its Social and Psychological Repercussions

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic which has violently attacked the world this year has been more than a national and a global health threat owing to the multidimensional aspect of its impact. The pandemic has caused a collective trauma to the human race because its psychological residues are far reaching; it has infiltrated through layers of almost every aspect of life and in all of them has deeply affected human psychology and relationships. The social-distancing measures the pandemic has mandated and the fear of infection it has struck in humans have created distances between individuals. The aim of this paper is to reveal the impact of the pandemic on the psychology of humans and on their relationships. The paper examines those two issues through an exposition of several pandemic-related psychosocial stressors and aspects of life impacted and altered by the pandemic, such as education and the use of technology at work and in social life.

Key words: COVID -19, lockdown, social distancing, economic recession, infection, fear, stress, anxiety and depression.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic which has swept the globe this year has put the entire human race in the same predicament. Although people have suffered in varying degrees, this predicament has reminded us that we, humans, belong to one another; our ordeals, our trials and tribulations and our welfare are those of the whole species. In fact, COVID-19, with its indiscriminate harassment to the

human world has acted as a reminder to the human race that the lives and fates of humans are bound up together in an infinite string from creation to eternity.

The pandemic has shaken man's belief in his power. A little infectious bug has disturbed the whole earth, disrupted systems and habitual modes of life long taken for granted, disrupted life itself. Man stands powerless. The virus has killed almost two million people in the world, infected millions and struck fear in the rest of humanity. It has put economies, education, and every aspect of life in a state of paralysis and has caused stress, anxiety and depression to people across countries. A virus has changed concepts of psychology and imbued fear with new meanings. Fear of another is well known to humans; however, the pandemic has introduced to human psychology a new type of fear: fear of another and of oneself for the same other.

As people were falling sick, getting hospitalized, dying or surviving, others had to keep the wheels of life going. In order to do so, they resorted to man's colossal achievement in life: technology. The use of technology in the work from home policy, in online education, social gatherings and events has eased the state of paralysis that otherwise would have taken hold of man's life during the pandemic. However, if technology has been able to put us in a make-believe story that life could still go on during the pandemic—work, education, and even weddings could be done from home— unfortunately, it does not have the power to alleviate human misery, the grief over lost ones, the financial hardships humans have gone through, the social isolation and loss of human support, all of which are stressors the pandemic has brought in its wake and all of which have left deep imprints on man's psychology and relationships.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted human psychology in radical ways; it has left man not only with feelings of powerlessness, but also with feelings of loneliness and separation. The pandemic has shed bleakness on the world with all the pain it has caused humans. If man's psychology has been severely injured by the pandemic, his relationships have been more so. The social isolation the pandemic has mandated on man is a major part of his trials and tribulations. This paper tackles the COVID-19- induced psychosocial stressors, such as health and financial adversities, social isolation and home confinement, as well as aspects of life affected by the pandemic, such as education and technology. In all of those issues, my primary goal is to delve

into human psychology and relationships and to attempt to explore the change the pandemic has brought to them, and the direction in which they are moving.

Analysis

According to American research scientist, Edwin D. Kilbourne, a pandemic is an outbreak of a disease that usually spreads throughout the globe, afflicting millions of people across countries. A virus causes a pandemic when most people do not have a "preexisting immunity" to it, hence transmits easily from a person to another causing severe illness (Kilbourne 1977, 1227). Kilbourne points out that for a virus to spread widely it should also have an inherent capacity for transmission among humans. In his own words, "Although it seems clear that deficiency of antibodies in the human population is the cardinal requirement for pandemic spread of an influenza strain, the virus also must possess an intrinsic capacity to spread from person to person" (Kilbourne 1977, 1227).

The aforementioned words are a medical definition of a pandemic. However, a pandemic does not only cause sickness and present humanity with a health threat but also causes sufferings and a number of psychosocial stressors (Taylor 2019, 26). Similar to previous pandemics, COVID-19 has caused financial adversities, social isolation due to enforced social distancing measures, confusion of routine and collapse of healthcare systems due to overcrowding of hospitals. All of the aforementioned byproducts of COVID-19 have resulted in a human collective trauma featured by psychological morbidities among the infected and non-infected communities alike. Stress, fear, anxiety, insomnia, loneliness and depression are some of the psychological sequelae of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The foremost psychosocial stressor the pandemic has induced is the sickness it has inflicted on many people and the health threat it has presented for many others. Health care systems in most countries were not ready for such a lethal foe as the COVID-19 pandemic. In Italy, for instance, the pandemic fuelled catastrophic repercussions with respect to hospitalizations and deaths. The influx of the massive number of patients with COVID-19 into hospitals, which exceeded by far the capacities of the Italian medical healthcare system, including healthcare staff, intensive care units, as well as equipment such as

ventilators, became a grave psychosocial stressor, both to individuals and to the Italian national healthcare system. Between March and April, 2020, intensive care units in the region of Lombardy—the region hit the hardest by the pandemic, and home to a sixth of the Italian population of ten million inhabitants—treated almost ten times more patients than usual (Usuelli 2020, 86-87). Mortality rates were extremely high in the region, where they reached 10,043 deaths by March 2020 (Indolfi and Spaccarotella 2020, 1415), and 21,157 in the whole of Italy, a number which amounts to the total deaths in six European countries—Spain, France, Germany, UK, Switzerland and the Netherlands—by the same date (WHO 2020).

Healthcare workers and doctors in Lombardy were frontline victims of the COVID-19 tragedy; they paid a huge price in order to cope with the number of patients they tended to. Due to lack of personal protective equipment (PPE) and training in the proper use of PPE, 11,000 health workers were infected, and 100 died in March 2020 (Indolfi and Spaccarotella 2020, 1415). The reason for the Italian national health crisis—described as "the most serious event in Italian history after World War II"—is said to be that Italy, the first country in Europe affected by the Coronavirus, was "caught unprepared" for the disease and that it also initially underestimated its gravity, leading to a sluggishness in compliance with mandated health measures and containment of the virus (Indolfi and Spaccarotella 2020, 1414).

Another major psychosocial stressor the COVID-19 pandemic has induced is the economic recession the world has gone through, hence the financial hardships individuals, companies and businesses have suffered since the outbreak of the pandemic. In the words of economist Kalim Siddiqui, COVID-19 "has triggered the sharpest and deepest contraction of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) in the history of capitalism as globalization has gone into reverse" (2020, 25). Siddiqui asserts that 102 countries have approached the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for financial support so that they can cope with the pandemic-related recession (2020, 31).

The pandemic has hit many sectors, particularly private sectors, the sector of tourism, travel and entertainment, multinational enterprises (MNEs) worldwide, as well as workers and self-employed individuals, leading to bankruptcy and closure of many firms and factories, huge layoffs of workers

and a tremendous increase in unemployment rate. Economists predicted that the sudden stop in mobility and dealings could strike an even bigger blow to the global economy than the Terrorist attack of September 2011 (Semuels 2020, 38).

During the peak of the pandemic, as people would venture outside their homes only to buy extreme necessities—mostly food—countries worldwide have experienced a significant contraction in economic activity. By the first half of the year, the member states of the European Union witnessed a 22% drop in their economic activity, and the US a 14% decline. Many businesses, such as restaurants, bars and coffee shops were required to shut down; others had no "cash cushion" (Semuels 2020, 38). Studies reveal that by the second week of March, the revenues of some restaurants in the US had dropped by 85% and those of theaters by 95%. Companies and firms also underwent severe distresses. Goldman Sachs Group asserted "a historic economic contraction" and a job loss of 20 million people by July 2020, pushing the national unemployment rate into staggering figures. By the end of March 2020, 6.6 million Americans filed unemployment claims (Shawn, Joe, Reade, and Naughton 2020).

Those are only some of the adversities the pandemic has inflicted on the global economy. At the human level, they ring a bell of poverty and starvation, of lack of resources and bare survival. Workers around the world, particularly hourly workers who get paid only when they show up to work, have been severely hit by the pandemic. Self-employed individuals have equally suffered severe financial adversities. During the lockdown, and when it was later eased, people were not willing to risk their lives in order to carry out the regular life activities they used to be engaged in, such as having a haircut, exercising with a coach, going on an errand in a cab, checking a bad tooth at a dentist's, or even asking a regular home cleaner to come, to name only a few of the normal everyday life activities in the lives of some. Everything could wait for fear of contracting the virus, as long as all maladies were not related to COVID-19. Hence self-employed individuals who used to render those services to others were not in demand, a condition which profoundly injured their livelihoods. Those individuals did not only suffer the stress, panic and anxiety of contracting

the virus or infecting another, but also the fear, and often the reality, of not being able to provide for themselves and their families.

If developed countries and individuals with high income can recover from those economic recessions and emerge out of the pandemic unscathed, developing countries and low-income individuals will certainly be severely hurt. It is estimated that 55% of the people worldwide have no adequate social protection, therefore have no basic food security and nutrition (United Nations Development Program UNDP 2020), a reality that can only be exacerbated by a global pandemic such as COVID-19. A study conducted on the financial crisis induced by COVID-19 in four African countries, Nigeria, Uganda, Malawi, and Ethiopia, asserts that 55% of households in Nigeria had to reduce their food consumption in order to cope with the economic shock. In Uganda, 43% of the population tapped into their savings, and others borrowed money or asked for financial support from family and friends (Weber, Palacios-Lopez, and Contreras-Gonzalez 2020). The economic repercussions of COVID-19 on low-income countries are yet to be felt. World Bank studies show that COVID-19 could push 40 to 60 million people globally into extreme poverty, 27 million of whom live in Sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank 2020).

Those financial hardships experienced by many people around the world have aggravated the psychological stresses already induced by COVID-19. Studies reveal that the pandemic-related economic recessions have had a significant adverse effect on people's psychological and mental health, causing stress, anxiety and depression to many, at times pushing individuals into suicide. Researchers argue that suicide rates have increased particularly in developing countries where people are experiencing more severe crises than in developed countries and where the fragility of the mental health of some individuals play a role in driving them to extreme depression (Griffiths and Mamun 2020, 1). Although this is very true, the suicide of the finance minister of Germany's Hesse state, Thomas Schaefer, who was overwhelmed with worries over how to cope with the economic recession (EURACTIV 2020), proves that humans' mental endurance and suicidal thoughts may at times be a personal issue, rather than one related to creed or class. However, it remains true that economically disadvantaged people are more vulnerable, and therefore more prone to mental impairment, depression and suicidal thoughts, a fact

which explains the increase of suicide rates during the recession in countries such as India, Bangaladesh and Pakistan. In Pakistan, 16 cases of suicide out of a total of 29, occurring since January 2020, are related to the economic recession (Mamun and Ullah m2020, 4). Suicide pacts have also taken place in India, Bangaladesh and other countries. A young couple in Bangaladesh committed suicide in March 2020 due to poverty; the couple hung themselves in their home, leaving behind a 3-year old child (Griffiths and Mamun 2020, 2). The pandemic has had grave psychological repercussions, particularly for those with lowest incomes and least resources, some of whom were driven to the extreme limits of depression and suicide.

Sickness and economic recession are not the only stressors related to the pandemic; social isolation has proven to be as detrimental for many people around the world. Connecting with others is an inherent need in man; consequently, there is a marked relation between social connectedness and physical and mental health. Researchers assert that cultivating successful, enduring relationships is an invigorating process both physically and psychologically; they argue that developing successful relationships helps "boost self-esteem, sense of belonging, and reassurance as to one's social desirability" (Cornwell and Laumann 2013, 4-5). On the other hand, research has proven that social isolation and loneliness lead to adverse health consequences, including depression, poor sleep quality, poor cardiovascular function, cognitive decline and dementia in elders (Hawkley and Capitanio 2015, 3). In the words of Hawkley and Capitanio, intense feelings of loneliness are "the toxic players in persistent psychosocial problems and the slowly unfolding and unremitting physiological changes that can lead to clinical disease, disabilities and mortality" (Hawkley and Capitanio 2015, 2).

The Coronavirus has landed on this very busy planet to change its features, as it were, to bring everything to a halt. The enforcement of lockdown, curfews, social distancing measures, which entailed the closure of schools, colleges, shops and entertainment places, all those measures have changed the face of the earth, infringed on personal freedoms, and resulted in man's abandonment of his habitual mode of life. The bustle and hustle of cities surging with commerce, businesses and the challenges of technology, a mode which had given the new millennium its dominant character, has faded away and has not

come back even when those measures were eased. Paris, a city that used to glow with romance, has turned, during the lockdown, into an open prison, with deserted streets that were reminiscent of "the 1940 exodus from [the city] when the German army closed in" (Hussey 2020, 41). A few months later, Paris in October 2020 is still not the city of the past; the decline in the number of people who visit cafes, restaurants and tourist attractions—a whopping 40% decline—has left Paris with a wholly different vibe. World cities, such as London, New York and San Francisco, have turned from "peak cities to ghost towns" (Stevens 2020). As much as streets and places are deserted, people are "confined to their homes in densely packed neighborhoods" (Stevens 2020).

Home confinement has presented a dramatic change of lifestyle to humans. It has meant loss of social connectedness, and also of a whole world outside that used to offer engaging activities, such as eating out with friends, shopping, going to the movies or the theater, doing physical exercise, and many other countless activities. This new mode of life mandated by the pandemic, though tolerated by some, has been distressing for many people. A plethora of studies conducted in different parts of the world reveal that depression, stress and anxiety were outcomes of engaging in social distancing behavior during COVID-19. For example, participants examined for depressive symptoms in February and March 2020 by the center for epidemiological studies depression scale recorded that they suffered loneliness and often had "crying spells;" others recorded symptoms of anxiety and expressed feelings of "not being able to stop or control worrying," of being "nervous, anxious, or on edge" most of the time (Marroquin, Vine and Morgan 2020, 3).

Those emotions of anxiety and fear presently expressed by many individuals worldwide have been triggered by the pandemic which is acting like a colossal wave sweeping humanity on its way. Nonetheless, under this wave, as much as some people are experiencing anxiety and fear of different things - of death, disease and loss, to say the least – there are others who are experiencing calm and serenity. According to theories of fear and anxiety, individual variations among humans with respect to their responses towards threats and stressors are attributed to their biological and psychological constitutions (Jacofsky et al). Although fear and anxiety are both universal human, as well as animal, emotions, psychoanalysts and behaviorists affirm that those two

emotions have genetic biological and psychological components. Babies who are born with biological, genetic brain imbalances, specifically in the limbic section where the amygdala - which is responsible for the individual's emotional system – exists, are more sensitive to stimulation and stress than other babies (Jacofsky et al). They grow up with extra-sensitive temperaments, and are therefore at a higher risk for developing anxiety disorders. According to American psychologist and researcher, Edmund Bourne, who believes that fear and anxiety are brought about by various causes operating on numerous different levels, genetic dispositions in the brain are not the sole factors responsible for causing fear and anxiety; parental upbringing of a child is equally important. Inadequate parenting, whether due to neglect, abandonment or abuse, results in a profound sense of insecurity and shame that causes anxiety disorders and elevates an individual's sense of fear towards threats (Bourne, 42). In other words, early experiences can contribute to a psychological vulnerability, which partly explains why some people are more prone to experience anxiety than others are. Both biological and psychological predispositions are regarded as long-term causes of fear and anxiety, triggered by short term stressors such as significant personal loss or life change (Bourne, 42).

Along with heredity and upbringing, a person's belief system, which is his perception of him/herself and of the world – which I presume is also a result of childhood experiences and upbringing – is largely responsible for the levels of fear and anxiety with which he/she responds to stressors (Jacofsky et al.).The individual's belief system influences his/her appraisal of him/herself and of the stressful event or situation he/she is facing and therefore determines his /her perceived ability to cope with it. What matters is not the ability to cope with or to control the situation, rather the perception of the degree of control a person has of him/herself (Jacofsky et al.). Fear and anxiety are triggered when a person's belief system results in an overestimation of the threat and an underestimation of his/her ability to cope with it (Jacofsky et al.). It is the gap between the two which triggers an individual's anxiety. Therefore, those individuals who are unable to cope with the stresses of the pandemic are those who suffer biological and psychological vulnerabilities and whose belief systems and perceived control do not provide a positive outlook on their abilities to be in control in face of threats.

An ironic aspect of the current COVID-19 situation is that in the remedy part of the problem lies. The interventions most essential for pandemics, the social measures enacted for the containment of the virus disrupt by necessity social life and the social processes that support individuals and help them cope with stress during hard times. If social connectedness is fundamental to the individual's happiness and mental wellbeing, as afore-mentioned, the need for it is even more poignant in difficult times. According to scientific research, social support "helps individuals maintain a sense of control and mastery as well as access to coping resources during periods of strain," and, therefore, "network loss can reduce sense of control and decrease a person's ability to cope with stress" (Cornwell and Laumann 2013, 3).

However, at the other end of the spectrum, individuals whose emotional stability support them in the face of threats and stressors and also those who find inner peace in solitude, therefore can adapt to staying at home for long hours without being inflicted by loneliness, have not suffered as much the harshness of social isolation. In fact, some individuals have discerned hidden benefits in COVID-19; the new mode of life has meant for them relief from the stresses of the outside world, simplicity of routine, connecting with family, doing the human things they missed in the quick-paced, pre-pandemic life. The lockdown has therefore not entailed for them loneliness and misery, as it has for many others, rather a slower pace of life, less work, more bonding with kin and family, and more time for contemplation. The lockdown has compensated the shortcomings of modern life under the umbrella of a sophisticated technology, one which encapsulates the globe with a mentality of racing with time, a material-oriented mentality that favors the pursuit of earthly luxuries over the nurturing of the soul. Alosious, a poet from India, celebrates the fact that "nature returns to form" in the lockdown. In her poem, "Locked down…happiness?" she resents the quick-paced pre-pandemic modern life, a life empty of love and meaning:

 Rushing and running,
 Becomes the order of life.
 No time to stop and smile-
 At a friend,
 Or know a stranger,

Or, take time to analyse the situation,
To save time,
We consume junk diet,
Prepared by unknown,
Served at the cost of health.

Home falls secondary;
Family at stake,
Of losing relationship values.

For Alosious, life in the lockdown meant:

To cook variety at home and serve with love,
To spend full time with family,
To listen, to share,
To spread love.

Alosious finds humanity within the bounds of her home:

locked down,
are only the gates of the house.
neither the happiness,
nor the humanity in us. (Ryan and Silvest 2020, 12-13).

The COVID-19 pandemic has left remarkable psychological imprints on humanity at large, thereby affecting relationships and gearing human life in a new direction. Fear of infection and illness, of becoming another case as those who suffer in hospitals, battling with an overpowering disease either to win or to lose, has become a directive and guideline to human relationships, narrowing the individual's circles of connections and minimizing social connectedness at all levels. Social gatherings of friends, colleagues, relatives, etc., at any time of the day and at any place that serves food and beverages seems to be a past phenomenon. Not visiting friends and parents has become an act of love. Humanity is all on guard from one another; confused feelings of love for others and fear from them surge in the psyches of individuals. In fact, the pandemic

has stirred in humans feelings that are unfamiliar to them. Fear, as known to humans, has usually been a one-sided feeling, such as fear of death, of an evil person, or fear of a mysterious, unknown thing. Fear of another and of oneself for the same other simultaneously is, in my opinion, a new type of emotion that the pandemic has introduced to humans. Fear of infection is playing a crucial role not only in connectedness among individuals, but also in shaping the individual's psyche. If connecting with others has become a source of health threat, and if it is safer to stay within the bounds of the self, for some people the self may take precedence over others with respect to love and care. The self may become the center around which it revolves, thereby giving rise to selfishness, since the circle of connections is growing narrower, and is, ironically, becoming a source of danger. Reciprocal relationships of love and care among friends and others may consequently diminish with time if the current situation remains long. However, the consequences may take a different turn for others; deprivation of social connectedness and of the warmth of social support may result in a longing for others, in a sense of incompleteness without them. People who are socially active, for whom the company of others is of prime importance, and people who live on their own, are probably the ones who particularly suffer the bitterness of social isolation and loneliness. For them, the need for others may give way to longing for connectedness, to love and care for others, rather than to selfishness.

The current pandemic situation is a puzzling one where fear and anxiety play a crucial role in the psyches of individuals, move and guide their behavior, and most importantly, direct their relationships. A poem, entitled "Pandemicon" by Diane Seus sums up the present human situation in beautiful words: "This current situation in which what you touch can contain a little red spiked ball of death… We can kill who we touch, we can be killed by who touches us" (Quinn 2020, 137). Furthermore, "we almost have to stop living in order to save our lives" (Quinn 2020, 137). As the poem suggests, fear of contracting the virus by touching a contaminated object, or person, and fear of infecting another, impacts the individual's psyche, his/her sense of security and love for others. Fear of coming close to others, particularly loved ones, has not only left humans with feelings of loneliness and separation, but also with a marked sense of insecurity. The safest method to save our lives and the lives of others, as the

poem suggests, is to keep away from them, to abandon everything and stay home, preferably in isolation.

Fear of infection has resulted in a stay-at-home mode of life for many people, a mode that has given rise to a sort of home attachment, and a sense of safety related to home. Home has become the only refuge from the hazards of the outside world. On the benign level, home attachment has brought families together, as afore-mentioned. Members of the same family who, in the past, found social fulfillment and entertainment with friends outside home have become closer to one another owing to the new home attachment human mode. Families who are fortunate enough to have space for all members to co-exist simultaneously now bond together rather than spend time out with friends and colleagues. Fear of losing one another is an advantage to their love as it helps accentuate it, particularly in the face of the deadly enemy outside, the pandemic, which can choose to assault any of them. However, for less fortunate people, for those who suffer strained marital relationships, strained parent-children relationships, or for those who suffer home overcrowding and poor housing conditions, their homes have become places of confinement rather than sweet homes. For them, the new mandatory "home-sweet-home" epithet, has presented multiple problems. Recent reviews of violence and domestic abuse, currently called "intimate terrorism," manifest higher records worldwide than before. "Hotlines are lighting up with abuse reports," according to New York Times (Taub 2020).

This home-based situation which the pandemic has brought on humans has geared human life in a different direction from the one it had taken for years, hence impacting all types of relationships. In many world cities, and towns with a lesser degree, dating, for instance, was an existential necessity; couples used to kiss in public transport, outdoor areas, and go out for lunch or dinner in cafes and restaurants. In the wake of the pandemic, with the social distancing measures applied in most countries, online dating has become the new dating mode. Couples are using digital communications, such as texting and video chatting; new dating applications are designed, such as "Transer," a platform for transgender dating, and others (Transer). The loss of face to face interaction among young adults may make the process of getting acquainted to a future partner become fairly impeded in the present time. Ironically, the

pandemic is creating distances between individuals when relationships are most needed.

On a more minute scale, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted human psychology with respect to the individual's own sense of body. Fear of infection that has affected social connectedness and bonding with others has also had a considerable share in disturbing the relation between mind and body. This is due to the fact that fear triggers feelings of distrust between the individual and parts of his/her own body, particularly hands. On a close inspection of the number of times a person washes his/her hands, or disinfects them per day- after handling objects like banknotes, supermarket receipts, shopping items, door knobs, staircase rails, a friend's handshake by mistake, or even a person's own belongings like mobiles, eyeglasses, or clothes worn outside home- it becomes obvious that there is an uneasy, stressful relationship between the individual and his/her own body and belongings. This stressful relation is further aggravated by the fact that a person should avoid touching his/her own face, or nose, if outdoors as long as his/her hands are not disinfected.

If stress has been an inevitable part of contemporary life, which is characterized by the speed of its pace and the diversity of demands it puts on the individual, the COVID-19 pandemic has elevated stress levels owing to the new pressures it holds for the individual. Those afore-mentioned feelings of discomfort are symptoms of anxiety which is triggered by stress, as afore-mentioned. In the words of Bourne, "It is … stress which explains the increased incidence of anxiety disorders" (1995, introduction). Among those disorders is General Anxiety Disorders (GAD) which may develop at any age (Bourne 1995, 11) and which is known to be chronic anxiety that has persisted for six months and is sustained by "basic fears, such as … fear of death and disease" (1995, 11-12). From a medical perspective, the pandemic has afflicted individuals, particularly those with premorbid predispositions, with fears of contamination, disease, and death, fears which have elicited GAD within them. In fact, the pandemic may have also triggered or exacerbated Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) in individuals, since it has given rise to contamination obsessions and cleaning compulsions.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been far reaching; it is one that has left no aspect of life untouched. Among the crucial aspects that have been profoundly affected by the pandemic is education; not only has the regular systems of education been disrupted but also relationships within those systems, particularly teacher/student relationship.   As a result of the closure of universities and schools, teachers, students, and institutions had to rapidly respond to an unexpected transition from face-to-face to online education. The sudden transition was not an easy one, particularly for developing countries, due to limited access to technology and stakeholders' unfamiliarity with such a novel mode of education, problems that acted as significant stressors.

In developing countries where households have no access to digital technology and parents are illiterate, it is difficult to make online learning a successful experience. In Kenya, for instance, the incompatibility of students' socioeconomic environment with online education proved a major challenge. Although the Kenyan government responded to COVID-19 by offering the *Kenya Basic Education COVID-19 Emergency Response Plan* to ensure that children continued to receive instruction from home, the plan proved unworkable in the Kenyan household setting. The programs included in the plan were the Kenya Education Cloud (KEC), which hosts content for remote learning, and the Digital Literacy Program (DLP), which introduces primary school children to the use of digital technology in learning (Moyi 2020). Working out those programs turned out to be a total failure because many parents could neither provide the necessary e-learning technology, such as smartphones, laptops, Wi-Fi and hotspots, nor the support their children needed (Moyi 2020). Because school children have hardly received any education since March 2020 in Kenya, the academic year 2019-2020 was cancelled for them and declared a lost academic year by the Education Cabinet Secretary of Kenya (Moyi 2020).

For those institutions in developing countries which could financially afford access to technology, inexperience and lack of expertise in implementing it still acted as major challenges to them. A study conducted on medical education in Pakistan shows that in the new online environment of Google classrooms, videos, podcasts, virtual-reality teaching and computer simulations,

some teachers and students were coping well while others were overwhelmed with the complexity of technology (Aziz et al. 2020, 182).

In addition to the incompatibility of online education with the socioeconomic conditions of children in developing countries and the unfamiliarity with the new educational modalities, the teacher/student interaction that typically takes place in a traditional classroom is partially lost in online education. Teaching is a dynamic process which involves teachers and learners in meaningful, collaborative efforts. The physical presence of a teacher among students is of vital importance to the learning process. Physical interactions such as eye-contact, calling a student's name, raising hands, all of which are absent in online learning, result in a vibrant, engaging learning atmosphere that encourages students, stimulates teachers, and promotes the learning process.

Learning at a distance through the internet, though has proven successful in top quality, globally recognized institutions, has its marked shortcomings. Feelings of disconnection which ensue from being away from teacher and peers and watching a teacher through a screen may easily result in lack of students' concentration, inattention and loss of interest. The problem could be further aggravated if the environments in which students are located are not agreeable, if those environments offer distractions, for instance. According to a study on distant learning, the physical separation between students and teachers creates a divide that affects learning negatively (Christiansen et al 2017, 662). Nothing could be compared to a real classroom where a teacher and students are physically present, sharing the same space, engaging in live talks and side talks, manifesting feelings for one another, making the process of learning happen.

Teacher/ student physical interaction is even more fundamental to the learning process in elementary school education; for this reason, it is preschool and elementary school children who will be most impacted by online education. For this age group, school is an equally important institution as home; if adults can learn via a screen and not be impeded by detachment from instructor and peers, young children need the physical presence of a teacher, the spirit of camaraderie, and the effect of the real classroom engagement. Those factors help them achieve better learning results. Preschool and elementary school children are at the age of developing cognitive skills, of learning the basics of

language and math, such as recognizing letters, sounds, and colors, reading and writing letters and words, counting and adding etc., skills which demand the use of physical senses, such as seeing, touching, hearing and imitating the teacher. Acquiring those basic skills resembles a toddler's learning how to talk and walk, skills that cannot be acquired without a mother to physically assist the child during this stage. In addition, for the learning process to be successful from home, parents should get involved to assist their children, a fact that would put pressure on parents, and perhaps strain parent/child relationship.

Along with a child's cognitive skills which require face-to-interaction with a teacher, the development of his/her psychosocial skills also demand physical presence and interaction among teachers and peers, elements that are lost in internet-based learning. Scholars assert that in early childhood educational settings, students are more socially competent due to positive interactions with their teachers. According to Burchinal, Peisner-Feinberg, Pianta and Howes, both "the quality of classroom practices and the closeness of the teacher child relationships independently predicted children's language, cognitive, and social skills in preschool" (1997, 417). Peer interaction is equally important; it helps a child acquire coping mechanisms, such as blending in, working and cooperating with peers, making friends and fending him/herself against bullies. All those factors make the experience of school fundamental to a child's personal and social development.

Among the numerous factors, and perhaps one of the most significant, that makes school a much needed experience for a child is the relationship between teacher and child. A good teacher is not only an educator in the literal sense of the word; a good teacher is an educator of life. The impact a good teacher can have on a child may last a lifetime. A teacher may become an inspiration and a role-model to a child and the two may bond together in a relationship that is uniquely distinct from any other a child may experience in his/her life. On a side note, when we as teachers now remember our own favorite teachers, how we bonded with them, how they inspired us, as we now at times inspire our students, we realize we wouldn't have been here as academics and researchers without them. What is of interest is that as much as a child needs the love and appreciation of a teacher, a teacher reciprocally meets this with gratified love, with feelings of reward and fulfillment. It is certain that

both teachers and students will miss out on the human aspect of one of the most fulfilling and rewarding relationships in life, hopefully only for the present time.

An example of this teacher-student relationship missed out on in the time of the COVID-19 is beautifully expressed by an elementary school teacher, Rachel Pappas, in Texas who writes the following lines in prose: "It has been so hard… I am not designed to sit at a desk all day and talk to a camera." In poetry, she writes:

> Today, my classroom didn't lose a pencil,
> I didn't throw away any glue.
> I didn't help a child,
> Who didn't know what to do.
>
> Today, my crayons went unused,
> And the scissors stayed nice and sharp,
> But everywhere else,
> Things seemed to be falling apart.
>
> ……
> Today, I didn't hug my students
> Or tell them each I loved them. I didn't teach reading,

writing,

> Or how to decompose 10
> …..
> How many pencils I would give,
> Just to have my students back. (Melissa 2020).

One major issue the COVID-19 has impacted, in fact has stimulated to reach its full potential to meet the challenges the pandemic has presented, is technology. Had it not been for technology, modern society with its work sectors, businesses, education, medical services, social network etc. would have fallen apart with the outbreak of the pandemic. Modern technologies have accommodated for the loss of physical presence mandated everywhere by the social distancing measures the pandemic has made necessary to impose.

The pandemic has acted as "an accelerator for digital change" (Tags 2020) that was already undercurrent in many aspects of life, yet was not fully implemented. Technology had already offered humans colossal lifestyle changes over the past decades when it presented them with electronic communication, such as emailing, online booking and shopping, as well as social networking with loved ones on the other side of the globe on applications such as Facetime, skype, WhatsApp and others. Those products of luxury and convenience have not only eliminated the barriers of time and space, but also the need for physical presence. However, those services that technology had rendered man in the past are not all the cards it has on the table. The outbreak of the pandemic has pushed technology, as it were, to play all its cards, impacting relationships in novel ways.

The global, unprecedented experience of work from home in the pandemic era is one of the achievements and successes of technology which has saved institutions, businesses, employers and employees worldwide from going bankrupt. Tasks in work fields that require physical presence and co-working with colleagues side by side are accomplished through technology in several firms and businesses via video-conferencing, instant messaging, file- sending and sharing platforms (Tags 2020). At a more advanced level, employers and employees are able to work together in some companies while physically miles and miles away, by sharing the same virtual space in real time through VR (Virtual Reality) and AR (Augmented Reality)-"an environment which allows each participant to interact with 3D elements and find themselves within absolutely realistic simulations" (Tags 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has given rise to a new phenomenon wherein people will rely on tools like VR and AR for working, shopping (Joshi 2020) and consulting doctors through telemedicine.

Technology has also played a significant role in social life during the pandemic, and may continue to do so after the pandemic. People are becoming creative with virtual reality, substituting it for physical presence in meetings and social events, such as weddings and birthdays. Other technological programs, already known on a large scale, for e.g. zoom, are currently resorted to for the afore-mentioned purposes. Instead of the cancellation of wedding ceremonies, as was the case in most countries during the lockdown, zoom weddings are now

taking place in many parts of the world, thus bringing the party home instead of going to the party.

In India, a country known for its lavish weddings with cocktail partying, and elaborate feasting, a country where parents save money throughout their lives for this special day when a son or a daughter gets married, zoom weddings are taking place in the present time. Instead of the bride and groom walking the aisle together, a humorous story goes that Dang and Narang, each in his/her parents' home in cities far away from each other, and the priest yet in a third city, all appear on the screen and hundreds of guests logged on from their homes to attend the wedding (Rai 2020).

It seems that the pandemic has directed certain aspects of human life the ways countries and governments wished them to be- quite a coincidence. The Indian government had been trying for years to limit the rocketing extravagances of weddings, the expenses of hotel bookings, caterers, food and all the lavish paraphernalia that goes with weddings (Rai 2020). The pandemic has surprisingly done it all.

The pandemic has impacted human psychology and relationships in ways that have created distances between individuals. It has not only made necessary social distancing among people, but has also brought in its wake the concept of elimination of their physical presence. If work, education, dating, marriage and social relations can be done remotely, the need for being physically present seems to be on its way to becoming an obsolete concept.

The pandemic has brought new trends in its wake. The needlessness for physical presence has urged people to abandon cities, with their high living costs and polluted air, and to live in the suburbs. Many world cities that used to glow with life and with visitors from every corner of the world, such as London, New York, and San Francisco are now abandoned by many of their residents (Stevens 2020). The needlessness for physical presence will also impact relationships; distances may create mental and psychological distances between individuals. I think all we have to do at present is to wait and see which turns and bends human life will take after the pandemic.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has left true marks on human life, primarily because it has touched deeply on the human psyche and on human relationships. Along with all the minute details of the pandemic-related change that has recently occurred in human life, the fact remains that the pandemic has left people with a deep sense of loneliness and insecurity because it has disrupted habitual thought within them. The overturn of the shape of life on earth over such a short period of time has shaken the normalcy to which humans have long been accustomed to. In a six-month span, people have witnessed a dramatic change in all aspects of life, and, more importantly, have experienced loss in its deepest meanings. Loss of humans, money, jobs, and financial and emotional security on a global level have impoverished the mental and psychological health of individuals, yet have imbued life with new meanings. The wide-scale experience of loss which humans have gone through over the past months has brought new insights into human life on this planet. Our current togetherness in a new present—one in which we have survived a colossal wave, as it were, however uncertain we are of surviving another, of who will survive or get toppled by other consecutive waves, of who will remain on board the ship, not forever though but temporarily—should drive us to hold on to one another, to be kind to our fellow brothers, to give them, not a hand but, all our hands in order for the human journey to be a happy one, and in order for them not to fall off the ship prematurely.

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العالم يترنح من جائحة عالمية: كوفيد_١٩ وانعكاساته الاجتماعية والنفسية

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لقد كان مرض Covid-19 الذي هاجم العالم بعنف هذا العام أكثر من مجرد تهديد للصحة على المستوى الوطني والعالمي بسبب الجانب متعدد الأبعاد لتأثيره. لقد تسبب الوباء في صدمة جماعية للجنس البشري لأن مخلفاته النفسية بعيدة المدى. على غرار الأوبئة السابقة، غيّر Covid-19 الحياة المعتادة، وعطل الأنظمة والروتين، وتسبب في عدد من الضغوطات النفسية والاجتماعية للبشر، بما في ذلك المرض، والخوف من العدوى، والمحن المالية، والحبس في المنزل، والعزلة الاجتماعية. لقد تسلل الوباء عبر طبقات من كل جانب من جوانب الحياة تقريبًا، وقد أثر في كل منها بعمق على علم النفس البشري والعلاقات. تدابير التباعد الاجتماعي التي فرضها الوباء والخوف من العدوى التي أصاب البشر خلقت مسافات بين الأفراد. الهدف من هذه الورقة هو الكشف عن تأثير الوباء على نفسية البشر وعلى علاقاتهم. تدرس الورقة هاتين المسألتين من خلال عرض للعديد من الضغوطات النفسية والاجتماعية المرتبطة بالجائحة وجوانب الحياة التي تأثرت بها وتغيرت بسبب الوباء، مثل التعليم واستخدام التكنولوجيا في العمل والحياة الاجتماعية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: كوفيد ـ١٩، إغلاق، ركود اقتصادي، قلق، اكتئاب

Knocking at the Door of Hell: Utopian Dialogism in Hama Tuma's "The Case of the Illiterate Saboteur"

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Abstract

In the process of coming to grips with their national identity, post-independent African countries have experienced the traumatic repercussions of a series of civil wars, oppressive regimes and dreadful corruption. The shift from colonialism to independence has paradoxically proved to be distressing to the various African peoples, which continue to suffer from totalitarian systems of government. Such political upheaval could not go unnoticed by African writers, who attempt to record the horrific macabre image of successive corrupt regimes.

In the short story "The Illiterate Saboteur" from the collection entitled *The Case of the Socialist Witchdoctor* (1993), Hama Tuma depicts the morbid scene of an oppressive political regime and directs sharp criticism towards the political challenges of such a ruthless system. The suggested paper will principally examine the selected text at the intersection of utopian/dystopian fiction, while drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalesque. The latter unfolds the adopted narrative strategies to interpolate and subvert the harrowing conditions and atrocities suffered by helpless subjects at the hands of their despotic ruler. The grotesque and gruesome realm evidently reflects a Kafkaesque streak, whereby manifestations of tyranny and injustice are dominant, and oppressor and oppressed are inevitably entangled in a nightmarish conflict, reminiscent of an Orwellian dystopia.

Keywords: Africa; Mikhail Bakhtin; carnivalesque; counter-discourse; dialogism; discourse; dystopia; monologism; Hama Tuma; utopia.

Most African countries roughly obtained their independence from their former Western European colonizers during the fifties and sixties of the twentieth-century. At that point, a surge of nationalism swept across the Dark Continent as African peoples gained their independence and looked forward to a better future. However, being spared the devastation of colonialism, they soon found themselves suffering from dictatorships, civil wars and totalitarian regimes. In these budding African nation-states, the violation of basic human rights looms large, where chaos, corruption, torture and terror are dominant.

Such continent-wide oppression could not go unnoticed and rightly inspired African writers to record the tyranny of their respective oppressive regimes in dystopian works of fiction. Ethiopian writer Hama Tuma's *The Case of the Socialist Witchdoctor and Other Stories* (1993) is one such case. Hama Tuma (1949 -) is an Ethiopian poet, and a short story writer, who writes in both Amharic and English. He has been mainly living in exile as he has been considered a persona non grata by several consecutive Ethiopian regimes. Tuma's fictional world does not strictly conform to the dystopian genre, in the sense that his work does not necessarily present a grim futuristic vision, but more of a scathing critique of the state's so-called "socialist" project, one that develops into political oppression, corruption, and totalitarianism.

This paper examines "The Case of the Illiterate Saboteur", a representative story from Tuma's collection, which embodies a gruesome dystopian state of affairs. This is initially introduced by a principal anonymous narrator who acts as a witness to various legal cases, the culprit of which is a different Ethiopian citizen each time. The entire legal situation is subject to the narrator's gaze, as he notes: "where I could watch the lawyers, the judge and the accused" (8). Thus, the paper explores the court of justice, together with its judiciary body, as an expression of an Ethiopian hegemonic ideology, which carries a unilateral centralized discourse. From within the latter, emerges a carnivalesque rhetoric, which establishes a dialogue with its counterpart. It creates a counter-discursive "utopian space", which calls for an examination of the selected text in the light of the Russian thinker Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the carnival, so as to shed light on the embedded "utopian" aspect of this short story.

In a dystopian world, human beings are depicted as dehumanized "creatures". They are mere pawns in a newly emerging ruthless political system. In the present context, a dominant political ideology is instilled in the helpless Ethiopian subjects, whose unintended dissent is eventually aborted and ruthlessly penalized. In his introduction to the collection of stories, the renowned Kenyan writer, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, observes that there is a gap between Ethiopia, which exists in the African collective consciousness, that is, "the land of myths" and "biblical times," on one hand, and present-day Ethiopia, which suffers from regional strife, successive dictatorships and the local struggle for power (ix). In fact, in the "Author's Note", Tuma points out that "Ethiopian reality is stranger (and more horrible) than fiction" (vii).

Tuma's collection of short stories depicts a socialist despotic regime, which draws on the country's harrowing experience at the hands of Mengistu Haile Mariam, who ruled for fourteen hideous years (1977 – 1991). When he ascended to power, he ordered the execution of many aristocrats and officials, who were loyal to the overthrown royal regime. He is also well known for the "Red Terror Campaign", involving large-scale bloodshed, which aimed at eliminating his opponents. In the stories' fictional context, Ethiopia takes on mythical proportions, pertaining to absolute givens, which defy any form of potential dissent. Through his short narratives, Tuma attempts to dismantle the regime's terrorizing machinations towards its subjects, who are delineated as helpless insignificant beings bearing the brunt of rigorous oppression. The writer conjures up a world in which the human predicament is very much reminiscent of Franz Kafka's renowned classical novel *The Trial* (1925). The latter portrays the protagonist, Joseph K., as haunted by members of the jury and utterly ignorant of the reason for his arrest. In addition to his subsequent sense of alienation, he is entangled in a nightmare, the sole escape from which is to face the bitter reality that he is "like a dog," as expressed in his final words, before he dies. Tuma's story lends itself to comparison with Kafka's novel, which is equally classified as a work of dystopian fiction. In both texts, their respective protagonists are totally ignorant of their conviction and suffer from a great sense of alienation. Above all, both writers point their accusing fingers at an emerging totalitarian regime, whereby the helpless subjects are inevitably dehumanized and whereby their personal freedom is at stake. In fact, their dehumanization evokes an existentialist perspective, which the French thinker, Jean-Paul Sartre, addresses in *Being and Nothingness* (1943). Drawing on

Hegel, he points out that one cannot be aware of one concept, unless one is aware of its opposite. Hence, he establishes an ambivalent relationship between freedom and nothingness, whereby he argues that reflecting on one's freedom also presupposes conjuring up "nothingness" (37). In this light, and in her discussion of Sartre, Meghan Vicks notes that "man's essential freedom," ironically leads him "to consider and perceive nothingness" (Vicks 25).

It is principally argued that "the word `utopia' means no place or nowhere", but "has come to refer to a non-existent good place" (Sargent 21). On the other hand, dystopia is basically what is unanimously viewed as a "bad" "no-place" (Clayes and Sargent 1). Despite the fact that a dystopia is an imaginative and imaginary negative "no-place", it is a projection of the writer's apprehension of his present world and his speculation about the corrupt dire condition into which it could possibly develop in the future. Both utopia and dystopia are viewed in association with each other. Currently, and since the turn of the twentieth century, there has been a shift from "utopian optimism to dystopian skepticism" (Booker, *The Dystopian Impulse* 9). One can venture to note that utopia and dystopia constitute the two extremes of a social spectrum: "One might, in fact, see dystopian and utopian visions not as fundamentally opposed but as very much part of the same project" (15). It is deduced that "utopia and dystopia are no longer viewed as two clearly distinct, separate, and opposing genres" (Valentine 10).

Lyman Tower Sargent broadly distinguishes between two types of utopia. One manifests the horn of plenty and a hedonistic kind of existence, as well as "bodily pleasure" (28). It illustrates "the `world turned upside down'", which places it on the same par as the "tradition" of various types of festivities, among which is the "early versions of Carnival" (30). Such festive manifestations "place the poor and oppressed in positions of power and their supposed superiors under them for a day or a week" (30). The other type is mainly concerned with "social organization". The former is identified as "`the utopia of escape' and `the body utopia'" (30). The "social organization", however, is an ideal world, which runs amok; hence, developing into a dystopia.

Within such a context, Tom Moylan, a dystopian critic, observes that, in a dystopian world, "the text usually begins directly in the bad new world" (148). As a matter of fact, "it is precisely that capacity for narrative that creates the possibility for social critique and utopian anticipation in the dystopian text"

(147). In addition, Raffaella Baccolini notes: "the focus is frequently on a character who questions" the dystopian social framework (qtd. in Moylan 148). She further observes "that the text is `built around the construction of a narrative [of the hegemonic order] and a counter-narrative [of resistance]'" (qtd. in Moylan 148). What is significant is the language put to use, which reflects and marks the encounter between the oppressor and the oppressed, or a discourse and a counter-discourse. In addition, it is worthy of note that "discursive power, exercised in the reproduction of meaning and the interpellation of subjects, is a parallel and necessary force" (Moylan 148-149). In fact, "the official, hegemonic order of most dystopias … rests, as Antonio Gramsci observes, on both coercion and consensus" (Moylan 148).

Through his thorough and extensive examination of the concept of the carnival, its major proponent, Mikhail Bakhtin (1895 – 1975), addresses the idea of utopia and its counterpart. He argues that the carnival involves humour, as laughter is its distinguishing feature (Hawthorne 37). It is a "form of popular counter-culture" (Hawthorne 37), which initially began in medieval Europe. People were allowed to free themselves from daily social constraints by holding performances, in which they mocked authority, particularly the state and the church. Despite the brevity of the celebration, the carnival was deemed a subversive act and "contained a utopian urge", as it "displaced, even inverted, the normal social hierarchies" (During 382).

Bakhtin's view of human existence is based on an example of representation known as "grotesque realism", while principally relying on "the central image … of the grotesque body" (Morris 195). This image comprises, among other manifestations, "exaggerated bodily protuberances,…, the frequent physical abuse in the form of beatings and comic debasements" (195). Bakhtin goes on to point out that the setup of the carnival, "a ritual based on laughter", created a rift with "the serious official, …and political cult forms and ceremonials" (Bakhtin 197). This, in turn, established a dual aspect, that is, "a second world and a second life outside officialdom, …" (Bakhtin 197). In fact, in a footnote, Bakhtin observes that "laughter is no longer ambivalent; it has given way to irony and sarcasm" (Bakhtin 195). Granting significant attention to the body, he addresses what he calls "the material bodily principle, that is, images of the human body with its food, drink, defecation, and sexual life" (Bakhtin 204). Moreover, he argues that the production of laughter is generated

by the fact that "the essential principle of grotesque realism is degradation" (205). In other words, it is a process of "lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity" (205).

It is worth noting, however, that, in the present time, carnival, as a festive occasion, no longer exists, but has been metaphorically adopted as a literary form, a narrative structure, as it were, which still preserves its subversive nature. It is necessary to note, however, that, with the advent of the twenty-first century, the digital platforms have granted their users ("netizens") new territory to tread (Kan 32 - 34), whereby their production of memes on social media can be possibly deemed a contemporary form of carnival discourse (59 - 60). More significantly, the carnival discourse becomes effective by means of a mocking tone, as the narrative usually has a double function. It is both an "interacting and contesting discourse[s]" (Brooker 73). In fact, "Because of their obvious sensuous character and their strong element of play, carnival images closely resemble certain artistic forms, namely the spectacle" (Bakhtin 197). Bakhtin also argues that "Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people" (198). This idea is further endorsed by Julia Kristeva, who observes: "The scene of the carnival, where there is no stage, no `theatre', is thus both stage and life, game and dream, discourse and spectacle" (Kristeva 49). Carnival "breaks through the laws of a language … and, at the same time, is a social and political protest" (Kristeva 36). In her book, *Narratives of Nothing in 20th-Century Literature* (2015), Meghan Vicks significantly notes vis-à-vis the language of carnival that

> carnivalesque language is language cut loose from the rigidity of dominant modes of discourse, …, and thus allowed to play freely. Because it has been released from official hierarchies and controlling/limiting universal truths, the world of carnival, as well as carnivalesque language, is endlessly at play: ceaselessly inverted and inverting, collapsing oppositions, instigated and nurtured by a nothing – the non-existence of structure and rule. (51)

Thus, the depicted world in Tuma's story paradoxically oscillates between an allegedly utopian "social organization", yet hegemonic, hence, dystopian, and the play of a "utopian" counter-discourse. This, in turn, calls for

an examination of the two interacting forces from within the text, namely the centripetal and centrifugal forces, or centralization versus heteroglossia, respectively. In his *The Dialogic Imagination* (1975), Bakhtin notes that he approaches language "as ideologically saturated, language as a world view" (*The Bakhtin Reader* 74). In this light, he indicates centralization, which is "a unitary language", that "gives expression to forces working toward concrete verbal and ideological unification and centralization, which develop in vital connection with the processes of sociopolitical and cultural centralization" (74-5). Such "centripetal forces of the life of language" (75), as he calls it, operate hand in hand with centrifugal forces, or, heteroglossia: "Alongside the centripetal forces, the centrifugal forces of language carry on their uninterrupted work, alongside verbal-ideological centralization and unification, the uninterrupted processes of decentralization and disunification go forward" (75). In fact, "The process of centralization and decentralization, of unification and disunification, intersect in the utterance" (75). This validates Hegel's dialectic, stated above, and which argues that one concept presupposes an opposite "other".

The stories in the collection bear the respective titles of "The Case of the Illiterate Saboteur," "The Case of the Valiant Torturer," "The Case of the Socialist Witchdoctor", "The Case of the Criminal Thought", "The Case of the Queue-Breaker", "The Case of the Professor of Insanity", and so on. The titles of the stories already manifest a dialogical instance, as the language carries two clashing collocations or incongruous voices, where the noun and the adjective appear to be incompatible and strange, which is equally valid for the rest of the stories in the volume.

The depicted world of Hama Tuma's stories illustrates an Ethiopian regime, which emerges in the wake of a revolution, and establishes a sanctified national program, to which each and everyone is expected to bow. In the name of the Revolution, and by fueling people's sense of national identity, the ruler, to whom the narrator refers as "the Great chairman", and his retinue, implement miscellaneous practices of condemning their subjects and labelling them with various accusations. Thus, the state's discourse is replete with such recurrent words as "Red Terror," "anarchists," "fascists," "guerillas," "counter-revolutionary", and "enemy of the people," among many others.

Initially, the principal narrator acts as a mediator between the readers/audience and the characters/performers during the trial. He opens the curtains to a spectacle, where each story is presented as a performance, in which the judge, the prosecutor and the defendant's lawyer are common to all the stories. They are depicted as the principal actors in a performance and are raised on a platform to be mocked. The narrator elaborately portrays the "raised platform", which stages the judge, who is faced by the prosecutor and the defense lawyer; while "below the judge", there is a "witness stand" ("The Case of the Illiterate Saboteur" 7). The narrator begins each story by introducing the details of the legal case, which unfolds in the form of a futile tirade between accuser and accused. There is an apparent reluctance to allow people to have access to these trials, an act which they nevertheless resist. The narrator notes at the end of the prologue: "And your own narrator being temporarily unengaged (meaning unemployed), had nothing better to do than to go to the court in his own area to witness this historic event." (6) The so-called "historic event" is actually a staged event, as the various trials unfold as a source of entertainment. The narrator adds: "I was one of the first in line at the door. I managed to get a chair well in front where I could watch the lawyers, the judge and the accused more closely" (8). The tables are turned, whereby the figures of authority are "performing on stage" and become subject to the audience's sharp scrutiny. The set-up of the legal case and the setting of the court is subverted as it is depicted as a mere entertaining show in a popular marketplace or festive occasion. Ironically, the entertaining place, which is, here, a closed space, in fact a utopian "nowhere"/"no place" becomes part and parcel of the gruesome context, whereby the utopian interpolates the dystopian world.

More significantly, the narrator/mediator is a theatrical fool/clown, who "unmasks" the lies of the totalitarian regime in question (Valentine 27). The narrator notes that "the space left for the court audience was small" (7). Nevertheless, every morning, there is a scramble for seats to watch the trial: "The situation was later to lead to a new source of corruption – bribing the court guard to reserve a chair for you" (7). The trial is, thus, transformed into a chaotic circus-like performing context, which mainly functions as a means of entertainment. In each case, a citizen is accused of having violated antiquated laws, which are mere hurdles set by the regime to maintain its subjects in constant subjugation.

In the prologue, and later in the stories themselves, the narrator is a constituent element of the audience and acts as their mouthpiece, as well as a mouthpiece for the convict. In a sarcastic and predominantly cynical tone, he lays the basis for the "spectacle." As such, the voice of authority is pitted against the voice of the narrator. More significantly, the apparent seriousness of the cases being examined by the judge are at one and the same time subverted by the narrator, who pokes fun at the judiciary body.

The narrator introduces the ruler as the leader of "our All-Knowing Party" (6). Above the judge's chair, a large photograph of the Great Chairman hangs and below the photograph, there are two powerful statements: "'Revolutionary Justice is Swift and Firm!'" and "'No damage to the Revolution is slight and no punishment against offenders can be too severe!'" (9). Such terrifying slogans are put into question by the narrator, whereby the seriousness and firmness of the Chairman's slogans are challenged. The narrator introduces him by beginning: "Slogans and portraits you ask? What regime could call itself Socialist without an abundance of these?" (8) The latter implies that such a totalitarian regime is established with all its coercive paraphernalia. The series of rhetorical questions corroborate the theatrical set-up and highlight the rapport between the audience and the narrator/soliloquist. Above all, the questions embody the centrifugal force of dialogism, which is an "other" voice, defying the monologic discourse of authority. In fact, dialogism provides the subordinated with an outlet to dismantle authority (Brooker 73). The interpolating rhetorical questions, matter-of-factly raised by the narrator, highlight the hypocrisy of the regime and foreground its oppressive malpractices.

Initially, the discrepancy between the legal case, the accusations, the verdict and the so-called "committed crime" are subject to the narrator's ridicule, who is the fool of the "play". This is further elaborated by Tuma's carnival rhetoric, which establishes a contrast between the figure of authority and the convict of each case. While the former is ostensibly depicted in prestige and veneration, the accused, on the other hand, is portrayed as a totally annihilated "creature", deliberately decimated by monolithic laws. In fact, "This kind of scapegoating frequently occurs in dystopian fiction, whose governments typically enforce their intolerance of difference through persecution of specified marginal groups" (Booker 11). The contrast is so much exaggerated that it

blows each and every legal case out of proportion and, consequently, defeats the purpose of the conviction. There is constant use of grand words, which are capitalized, to refer to the absence of their content. The regime's monologic discourse reveals a centripetal force, which only acknowledges the power and authority of state institutions and their representatives. Accordingly, the terms which refer to them are capitalized so as to indicate unquestionable absolute givens that foreground the monologic discourse. For instance, the assigned judge is addressed by one of the defendants as "Honourable Judge of Our Fate" (29). Nevertheless, while the judge acquires divine attributes, the so-called "criminal", stands in a "Cage", with a capital "c", which foregrounds his sense of dehumanization. In fact, the language grants the helpless culprit additional weight and, in turn, solicits the reader/audience's sympathy.

The two conflicting discourses rely, on one hand, on an institutional body of state officers (the judge, the prosecutor, the lawyer), who convey a monologic centralized discourse. On the other hand, the fool/narrator juggles with the rigidity of the language and generates a centrifugal discursive force, that partially and indirectly supports the accused/victim. In fact, the narrator is a soliloquist, who appears to be opening the curtain to a spectacle. For example, this is how he portrays the judge:

> If you want a speedy trial get yourself a no-nonsense (…) judge. The judge … was none other than Major Aytenfisu Muchie. The major, a pot-bellied, baby-faced man in his mid-forties, had a Charlie Chaplin-type moustache which somehow brought to mind not the Little Tramp but the cruel man who authored `Mein Kampf'. ("The Case of the Illiterate Saboteur" 7)

Tuma's physical depiction of the judge focuses on his large frame, which dismantles the supposedly awe-inspiring authoritative position he occupies: "a pot-bellied, baby-faced man", "a Charlie Chaplin-type moustache" and "the cruel man who authored `Mein Kampf'" (7). In all these examples, there is a contrast between the physical size of the man and the figures to whom the judge is compared. Charlie Chaplin was a famous comedian, who directed his criticism towards the hegemony of an emerging capitalist world. This figure is, then, deliberately juxtaposed to the famous Hitlerian inhumanity.

Similarly, the defense lawyers are perceived by the narrator in the following manner: "the lawyers come with their big bags inside which, people say, you find few documents but many sandwiches" (8). This also applies to the prosecutor, who is equally depicted in a comic light. We are told, he "had never gone to law school though he had been a lawyer for some fifteen years" (9). The portrayal of contrasts, as well as exaggeration, is further elaborated:

> The prosecutor, …, was a short, plump man wearing glasses over his beady eyes. He was dressed in a flashy three-piece woollen suit, a red-blue-green tie which called to mind the curtains of the plush whorehouses frequently visited by African diplomats in our city. Two gold rings on his left hand, made-in-Italy platform shoes: in short, a short man trying to appear tall and to exude style and wealth. If you ask me, a stupid dwarf who flaunts his ill-gotten money (…), (…) (9)

The language carries various discrepancies, as the combination of attributes chosen by the narrator subverts the judge and the prosecutor's alleged prestigious position and power. The supposedly venerated prosecutor assumes an appearance and adopts an attire, which the narrator attributes to "the curtains of the plush whorehouses". Thus, the narrator subverts the assumed authority of the prosecutor by comparing him to an entity which stands in stark contrast to his apparent prestige. Hence, the carnival counter-discourse takes on the form of constant exaggeration of comparisons, which eventually dismantle the centripetal voice of authority. Over and above, the clown/narrator's all-encompassing mocking tone becomes the voice of dissent, which, at one and the same time, interacts and contends with the official voice, so as to eventually dismantle the power of authority.

Furthermore, the depictions of the characters' bodies rely on the carnivalesque (a caricature style), which manifests contrasting physical dimensions between the figures of authority and the culprit; while authority appears in large amplified forms, the culprit, on the other hand, is depicted in minimal size, so that he appears as a persecuted victim, rather than an actual convict or criminal. Initially, in the first legal case, which became known in the official documents as "The Case of the Illiterate Saboteur", the "defendant did no more than urinate unknowingly in a public place" (10). The defendant is accused of having urinated against the wall of a government building. Since he is illiterate, he was unable to read the sign which identifies it as a state property;

and so, he is accused of being a saboteur of public property. The prosecutor continues to point the finger of accusation at the defendant by addressing his "crime", while there is a sign that forbids the act. To that, the prosecutor raises a rhetorical question: "Can we imagine a more anarchistic crime?" (11). As such, overwhelming authority, which appears to loom large throughout the stories, is juxtaposed with helpless individual subjects: "The People's Socialist State versus Yishak Nasser" (10). This is taken a step further, as any offence committed by the accused is an "attack on the image of Mother Africa" (10). In fact, the judiciary body's injustice and oppression is dismantled by the stark contrast between the amplification of the accusation and crime, on one hand, and the culprit's total ignorance. This leads the exaggerated oppressive state discourse to fall on deaf ears and fails to achieve its condemning aim.

The discrepancy between the amount of power invested in the oppressive state, and the almost nullified presence of the accused subject, is highlighted and generates the carnival counter-discourse. In fact, Tuma relies on the use of defamiliarization, which consists of "metaphors and other figures of rhetoric to produce a semantic shift" (Macey 284). This, in turn, "makes the habitual appear strangely unfamiliar" (284). The technique of defamiliarization or *ostranenie* was proposed by the Russian formalist, Viktor Shklovsky, who suggests that "the goal of all imagery – is transferring an object from its usual sphere of experience to a new one, a kind of semantic change" (93). He also argues: "The goal of an image is not to bring its meaning closer to our understanding, but to create a special way of experiencing an object, to make one not "recognize" but "see" it" (88). In light of the concept of defamiliarization, one can perceive the function of dialogism in the story: "The door through which the accused comes into the court leads directly into the Cage. Yes, I was saving this to the last – the dock is built like a cage of birds, bigger, of course, and made of iron bars. … A policeman armed with an AK- 47 rifle stands guard at the door" (8). Accordingly, the narrator conveys the scene of the culprit's incarceration in a manner which highlights its oddity. Furthermore, the use of the interpolating phrase, "'Yes, I was saving this to the last" directs the audience, as well as the reader's attention, to the visual dimension of using an actual bird's cage for a prison. The vulnerability and utter helplessness of the accused is further intensified by the armed policeman, who is juxtaposed to the so-called culprit. The narrator's perception of the scene

ensures the reader's sympathy for the convict, as it veers the reader's attention away from authority and dismantles its evocation of terror.

In addition, the door is a recurrent motif in "The Case of the Illiterate Saboteur," as it underscores the sense of entrapment afflicted upon all subjects. In fact, it highlights their subjugation altogether. The narrator, for instance, rushes to the door to secure himself a seat to watch the "show": "I was one of the first in line at the door" (8). Furthermore, "The judge comes next entering the court from a door behind his chair" (8). The accused is primarily treated as an animal, which has to be cloistered so as not to harm anyone: "The door through which the accused comes into the court leads directly into the Cage …". Finally, "A policeman armed with an AK-47 rifle stands guard at the door" (8). Thus, the motif of the door emphasizes the closed space within the premises of which the trials take place. It sheds light on the sense of imprisonment suffered at the hands of this ruthless regime. One can venture to note that the culprit's Cage is a microcosm of another larger cage, in which all Ethiopian citizens live. The accused is cloistered in a cage within a cage so as to maximize his persecution altogether. Ironically, the narrator portrays the subjugation of all the subjects, who are all imprisoned within the framework of a hegemonic regime. Therefore, the bird cage becomes an objective correlative of the "other's" voice. It presents an instance of defamiliarization, as the culprit is not seen within the framework of a usual iron-barred cell, but an actual bird cage. The latter, therefore, causes a shift in perception, as it highlights the fact that the convict is deprived of his freedom. In fact, the state's ostensibly exaggerated power confronts nothingness. In his defense, Nasser's lawyer, unaware, argues: "'But who has noticed poor Ato Yishak and his trickle of urine. Practically no one! He is a non-entity, harmless in all aspects" (17). The bird cage, therefore, embodies the dialogic dimension, which creates a "utopia" within the dystopian world. The door opens to and is closed on a "no place" where both the dystopian hegemonic ideology and the utopian discourse of the carnival are pitted against each other. Ironically, the government does not have a substantial legal case against Nasser. The narrator's description of the accused in the Cage strikes a contrast with the security measures and the seemingly endless list of accusations. This incompatibility between the two adversaries is particularly underlined in the statement addressed to the reader: "Yes, I was saving this to the last …". The disruptive voice of the narrator shifts the focus of attention to the accused, who is left to singly confront an overwhelming heavy-handed state

power. He, consequently, vouches for him and causes the reader to equally sympathize with him.

Furthermore, the exaggeration of the culprit's crime is reflected in the long list of allegedly violated laws for which he is condemned. This, in turn, adds to the pettiness of the whole case, as the culprit is illiterate and does not comprehend the accusations. The prosecutor enthusiastically condemns the defendant, using formal rhetoric, to futilely elaborate on the various crimes the accused has committed:

> The accused is charged with violating a series of Articles of the Revised Revolutionary Penal Code. He has willfully violated Article 189 which forbids neglecting laws of socialist hygiene; Article 245 which makes it a crime to defile our glorious city; Article 764 which forbids attack of any sort on the image of Mother Africa; Article 79 which prohibits drinking alcohol during the day; Article 345 which makes it a crime to refuse consciously or unconsciously to be liberated from ignorance; and Article 622 which punishes those who do not confess their crimes'. (10)

The prosecutor also reminds him of the following:

> His tenacity to cling to his despicable illiteracy is in itself a crime … During the questioning a lot of electricity was wasted, the professional confession-miners had to spend so much time trying to dig out the truth, a police baton was broken by the defendant's body. In fact we could have added to the crime of refusing to confess, the Article on damaging state property. We refrained from doing so only after considering that all our bodies also belong to the State and there was some confusion as to whether the baton broke itself inadvertently or the body of the accused stiffened itself maliciously to damage the baton'. (14)

In the midst of all this "legal commotion," Nasser is a "nobody," who is unable to grasp the reason for the exaggerated precautions taken by the security forces against him. The exaggeration generates parody, which subverts the representation of authority and their power. The narrator creates a dialogic context, which comments on and dismantles the dominant monologic voice of authority. Furthermore, the poetics of futile physical and verbal amplification do not reflect any actual grandeur or importance on the part of authority, but indicate a mere void which, in turn, yields a sarcastic and humorous effect. It

equally produces a sense of estrangement, which is generated by the act of torture, whereby the culprit is to be penalised for breaking the "baton", while, in fact, he bears the brunt of the torture inflicted upon his body.

Moreover, the ridicule, which is addressed towards authority, is generated by the discrepancy between the complicated language used in the accusations and, on the other hand, the addressee's lack of receptivity, due to his illiteracy. The overwhelming tirade of accusations are simply incomprehensible to him, which emphasizes the futility of condemning him. Needless to say, the culprit is merely seen as a physical presence without a mind or soul of his own. During the defense, the lawyer outrightly states that the defendant "is a non-entity, harmless in all aspects" (17).

Thus, an instance of dialogism manifests itself in the existence of two different voices in the narrative. There is, on one hand, the voice of authority, which is illustrated by the rigid slogans and laws, referring to the state institutions and their adopted ideology as absolute givens. It is a centripetal force pointing towards centralization. On the other hand, the narrator's sarcastic and cynical tone allows him to poke fun at the state's rigid precepts. He is the culprit's spokesperson, speaking in the face of such accusations, the list of laws, restrictions and penalties, which await the helpless civilian. The latter's answer to his inquisition is mere negation; while the narrator sympathizes with him: "I felt sorry for this poor man in the Cage …" (21). The emphasis on the man's imprisonment, while assigning to him the attribute of "poor" becomes a different voice, which defies the centralized voice of authority.

Hama Tuma incorporates the discourse of the carnival within the dystopian narrative, which creates a break for leisure and recreation, while equally making of the hegemonic oppressive measures normal practices of everyday life. For instance, towards the end of the story, the verdict commits the accused to "fifteen years of corrective labor in a state farm during which [he] will also be taught to read and write" (21). The reaction of the audience to this unjust sentence is one of relief, as it is considered a relatively lenient type of punishment. At this point, the soliloquist addresses the reader or an imaginary audience beyond the framework of the stage and performance. His cynical tone directs its criticism at the malpractices of the state: "And we in the audience? Leave me out but let me tell you that they sighed in relief" (22). The cynical tone of his voice lies in what he does not say. In other words, together with the

elimination of the culprit's illiteracy, he implies that the penalty could have gone beyond the fifteen-year sentence of corrective labor. As such, the ruthlessness of such a dystopian world is based on the great contrast between the pettiness of the committed crime and the inflicted punishment, with which it is unjustly incompatible.

Hama Tuma's narrative reveals a dialectic relationship between the two extremes of the utopian spectrum. One can venture to note that the court's enclosed space is in itself a "bad no-place", a larger cage, as it were, within the confines of which two opposite discursive languages unravel; while one insists on a univocal ideology, the opposite language confirms the subversion of the monologic dimension and celebrates dialogism. Thus, the carnivalesque allows the subjugated voice of the narrator, who talks on behalf of the victim, to create a utopian interpolating space, which in turn, temporarily dismantles the terrifying voice of authority. The soliloquist's mocking tone underlines the futility of the trials as they are set against helpless citizens, who are unable to comprehend the accusations addressed to them. The narrator discloses the limitations and proves the failure of the judiciary body. He places the figures of authority on a make-believe stage, which discloses their blind allegiance to coercive rule. On such a metaphorical stage, the figures of authority are perceived acting like puppets, merely parroting absurd laws and regulations. For want of a true equal, they are rendered as Quixotic figures, futilely contending with illusionary adversaries. On the other hand, the persecuted citizen's annihilated plight is represented by his image entering the "cage of birds". It is a cage-within-a-cage. At this specific moment, his "essential freedom" is definitely at stake and embodies an existentialist condition. Yet, he is temporarily spared the stifling impact of his conviction as the carnivalesque makes space for a brief utopian interlude, which intercepts an incumbent dystopian nightmare.

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طرق أبواب جهنم: خطاب اليوتوبيا في قصة "قضية المُخَرِب الأُمِى" لهاما توما

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المستخلص

حصلت العديد من الدول الإفريقية على إستقلالها فى منتصف القرن العشرين بعد فترة طويلة من الإستعمار، ولكن سرعان ما وقعت تلک الدول فى براثن الحروب الأهلية والنظم الشمولية. ولفتت هذه الظاهرة إنتباه كثير من الكتاب الأفارقة الذين أرادوا توثيق هذا السياق بصورة إبداعية للتعبير عن إستياءهم مما آلت إليه أوطانهم بعد الإستقلال. ونتج عن ذلک النوع الأدبى الروائى المعروف بالديستوبيا والمعنى بتقديم صورة قاتمة لنظام سلطوى قمعى.

تصور قصة " قضية المُخَرِب الأُمِى" للكاتب الإثيوبى هاما توما ضمن مجموعته القصصية بعنوان قضية الساحر الإشتراكى وقصص أخرى (١٩٩٣) عالماً مظلماً يشوبه الظلم والتسلط والفساد. وتقترح ورقة البحث تحليل النص القصصى فى سياق أدب اليوتوبيا والدستوبيا ومن منظور مفهوم الكرنڤال كما يقدمه المفكر والناقد الروسى ميخايل باختين. فمن خلال جماليات السرد يكشف النص عن تلاحم أصوات متعددة مع الصوت الأحادى للدستوبيا فى محاولة دحض إفتراءات العالم المهيمن على بطل القصة، حيث أن ذلک الأخير يظهر وهو لا حول له ولا قوة. وتلقى ورقة البحث الضوء على جماليات المقاومة وخلخلة الخطاب المهيمن.

الكلمات المفتاحية: يوتوبيا، ديستوبيا، كارنڤال، الخطاب، الخطاب المضاد

Revisiting the Pandemic: Salvaging Hope and Capturing the Essence of Life in Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven*

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Abstract

The present paper is mainly concerned with one of the recent post-apocalyptic fictional narratives geared toward a pandemic outbreak, namely, Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven* (2014)*,* with the aim of demonstrating that the human condition and what makes life meaningful are what this novel is made for exploring. For this purpose, the study aims at going beyond exploring what life might be like in the grips of a global pandemic and the lengths humans will go in order to survive to get to the bottom of Mandel's philosophy, *Survival is Insufficient*, and probe her new imagined future.

To better frame the way Mandel establishes her post – apocalyptic setting, the present paper draws on two approaches – Tom Moylan's concept of *Critical Dystopia* and Evan Calder Williams' theoretical praxis named as *Salvage punk* to finally reach the conclusion that Mandel's *Station Eleven* tells more than just an apocalypse and chronicles more than just a pandemic. Perhaps paradoxically, it offers a way of finding comfort, envisioning hope, and capturing the essence of life through holding on to the best of what has been lost.

Keywords: Post - apocalypse — Pandemic – Critical Dystopia – Salvage punk – Emily St. John Mandel

The present paper is mainly concerned with one of the remarkable dystopian narratives geared toward pandemic outbreak, namely, Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven* (2014) as a case study engendering deeper contemplation of the COVID-19 crisis, with the aim of showing that the human condition is what this novel is made for exploring. For this purpose, this study

investigates whether *Station Eleven* as a notable example of *Pandemic Fiction* – administering Tom Moylan's and Calder Williams' approaches of *Critical Dystopia* and *Salvage Punk*, respectively – exhibits more nuanced, optimistic territories than many end-of-the world fictional narratives, internalizes applicable moral lessons, provides good food for thought and for finding our way through dystopian scenarios, and serves as a meaningful reflection through which humans can build a better future.

For this purpose, the study seeks to answer the following research questions: **First,** how would life be like in the grips of a global pandemic? Or, more precisely speaking, what are the politics of disaster in Pandemic Fiction? **Second,** in what way does Mandel's *Station Eleven* remind us that people are not just numbers- death rates or statistical reports? In other words, in what way is the featured pandemic in Mandel's novel a symptom of something different, something profound? **Third,** when reality becomes chaotic, what would survive or could be salvaged – according to Mandel – to recover a sense of normality, rebuild, and recreate the world a new? **Fourth,** by drawing on Tom Moylan's concept of *Critical Dystopia*, how does Mandel's *Station Eleven* – perhaps paradoxically– provide a way of appreciating the graces of everyday life, finding comfort, and envisioning hope? **Fifth,** in what way does Mandel's *Station Eleven* provide an example of what Calder Williams has termed as *Salvage punk*? **Finally,** amid this dreary scenario, does Mandel's *Station Eleven* succeed in rising above the gloominess of the usual post-apocalyptic novels, contribute to deconstructing nihilistic spirit, and assist in reconstructing alternatives?

To narrow the search on dystopian pandemic fiction, the researcher does not only seek to find a literary work that best represents this genre, but that best parallels what follow the COVID-19 crisis– a literary work that is tempered with just the right amount of hope. As such, the present paper examines Emily Mandel's *Station Eleven* (2014) – a novel that mirrors our current reality and captures the panic and anxiety of Corona virus as cities grind to a halt and death tolls jump through two distinct critical approaches: Tom Moylan's concept of *Critical Dystopia* and Evan Calder William's theoretical and aesthetic praxis named as *Salvage punk.* The aim is to find the revelations hidden beneath and demonstrate that the critical and emotional insights offered by the pandemic fictional world are made possible only through uncovering the terrors of the present.

The rationale or the basic underlying reasons behind choosing this area of study is the researcher's growing preoccupation with the apocalypse and the sudden outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. But what actually inspires the researcher even more is the rich narrative possibilities and ideological dimensions offered by such experiences. Moreover, the text under consideration is – according to the researcher's view – a proper choice for those looking for a pandemic novel that stitches truths about humanity into the fabric of its unfamiliar worlds. Thus, this paper – it is hoped –provides a lens for viewing the politics of disaster and the non-therapeutic dimensions of the fears associated with a pandemic. More importantly, the study attempts to foster social change, to incite a more ethical attitude toward ideologies that could speed up our psychological and social dystopias, and to implore us to work for a better world than the one the text so vehemently depicts.

Eventually, the researcher reaches the conclusion that in the backdrop of a pandemic where the world seems to shatter right before one's very eyes, it seems as though it would be very easy to simply accept it and give up. However, what Mandel has managed to assert that in the midst of this horror survivors require more than their basic needs met. In the midst of pandemic, decency will emerge, survive and endure, and humanity can triumph and preserve its virtues through all disasters as long as there is life.

Having considered the objectives, research questions, methodology, rationale, and significance of this paper, the researcher deems it appropriate to detail several threads that are relevant to the development of the paper's line of inquiry, for the sake of better framing the paper's analysis. As such, the present paper starts with reflecting on the millennial obsession with apocalypses, the threat of plagues that have shaped the psyche of humanity for times immemorial, and the aftermath of the Corona virus chaos. Once this ground work is laid, the paper then moves on outlining the tangible increase in attention to dystopian or post - apocalyptic fiction, and then considering the politics of disaster in an unremittingly bleak sub-genre of dystopian fiction, namely, *Pandemic Fiction* or *Outbreak Narrative*, that has recently gained a surprising momentum. The researcher then strives to lay a basis for understanding Dystopias through identifying the following: what is meant by Dystopian Fiction? what kind of social commentary do these fictional narratives make? what purposes do they serve? what sort of warnings do they present? what is Moylan's *Critical Dystopia* about? and in what way is Moylan's emphasis on

"uncovering" is similar to Evan Calder Williams' *Salv*age punk? and how both concepts are ,after all, appropriate frameworks and useful ways to approach Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven* and to look at the way her apocalyptic novel functions.

To start with, the humans' obsession with apocalypses is nothing new. For millennia– since the world's inheritance - many religions, cultures, superstitions, and ancient societies have been created on the basis of apocalypse and have been imagining and predicting the end of the world. Since the dawn of time, the pious people long proclaimed how they were messengers of God and those who would not obey them would be penalized in a harsh way by God Himself and that moment will be the Doomsday or Apocalypse. The opportunists, on the other hand, at the time of any catastrophe like war, famine or draught always unethically took immediate advantage and disseminated an incoming apocalypse so that the weak-minded crowd could easily be manipulated (Seidal 2019: n.p.). The difference between then and now is that humans then predicted the apocalypse to happen at around 1000-2000 years later, but lately humans have been predicting for an apocalypse within a few years (Harmon 1999: n.p.).

The world becomes apocalyptic when there is an overwhelming sense of chaos, uncertainty, fear, powerlessness and fatalism, and when the traditional values, beliefs, and societal constructions no longer resonate with the emerging spirit of our time. Accompanying large cultural and technological shifts, apocalypses are depressing. And it is not just because humans and non-humans are likely to wind up dead, but because apocalypses mark the end of an epoch, the loss of a former way of life, the loss of hope and control – of meaning itself. In an apocalypse, countless of human generations worth of innovation, problem-solving, altruism, and will end in nothing. Everything humanity has ever created will become futile, including man's smallest contributions (O'Leary 1994: n.p.).

> *A world of fear and treachery and torment, a*
> *world of trampling and being trampled upon, a*
> *world that will grow not less but more merciless*
> *as it refines itself.* (Orwell 1949: 279).

The apocalyptic landscape thus is one where the virtues of the individuals and societies are destroyed in the name of development and control.

The apocalyptic idea that this world is a constant threat is quite frightening. On the other hand, this same idea is kind of appealing to a lot of

people. So, why humans are so fixated with the end of the world scenarios? Actually, the fascination with 'the end of the world' gives humans a way to pursue what they are most afraid of, to survive against all odds, and to master and conquer death which is inescapable. Moreover, apocalypses help humans unite and face the end together. Besides, a little injection of apocalyptic scenarios would be alluring. Apocalyptic tales can lift us out of the boring everyday life and involve us into dangerous realities that have hair-raising – but happy – endings. Likewise, humans – in confronting something that is horrifying – are thus reassuring their survival. Nevertheless, while these apocalyptic scenarios sound very dramatic, they are psychologically comforting– they validate, and rationalize the psychological unbearableness of our our complete demise, and show us that there will 'always' be a happy ending, help us know our enemy well enough, and understand ourselves better as a whole. Eventually, they may serve another purpose – they wash away whatever atrocities we have committed on this planet and an each other by making a real world hard reset (Beebe 2013: 11-14).

The Apocalyptic narratives grow in the wake of WWI, WWII, and the cold war nuclear arms' race. They fall into two simple before – and – after categories: the apocalyptic and the post – apocalyptic. Both genres tend to follow characters usually tasked with navigating the death traps of an apocalyptic world and trying to survive a devastated landscape. Nevertheless, in the apocalyptic genre the disaster occurs during the course of the story in a catastrophic scale, and it usually ends with a miraculous salvation event, often sacrificial. Coming from the Greek *'Apo'* and *'Kalypto'* which means to 'take away' and 'to cover and hide', the apocalypse is a moment of punishment or a final judgment for human sin and hubris (qtd in Demerjian 2016:6). On the other hand, post- apocalypses signify a continuation of life after the apocalypse has already happened. Regardless of how horrible they may be, post-apocalypses are not ends, but struggles for continuation (Stringer 1996: n. p.). The common themes that govern these fictional narratives include circumstances that lead to mass disruption and wide spread demise. Among the apocalyptic scenarios: environmental mega-disasters, run-away climate change, alien invasions, cybernetic revolt, nuclear holocausts, gluttonous zombies, resource depletion, extraterrestrial collision, global wars, life- threatening pandemics and mutant viruses – are the most obvious symptoms (O' Leary 1994: n. p.).

In tandem with the millennial obsession with the apocalypse, the threat of plagues has always been humanity's major concern throughout the course of history. These infectious outbreaks – whether bacterial, viral or parasitic – have long claimed the lives of unthinkable number of people worldwide. Sometimes changing the trajectory of history, and other times, demonstrating the demise of entire civilizations, plagues – since pre-historic times till modern ones – "are like imponderable dangers that surprise people (6)," Gabriel Garcia Marquez maintained. "They seem to have a quality of destiny (6)." Malaria, tuberculosis, leprosy, small pox, plague of Athens (typhoid or typhus), Antonine plague, Plague of Justinian, Black Death, Measles, Cholera, HIV/AIDS, Sars, Mars, Zika, and Ebola are among the major life- threatening plagues that have long ravaged human populations (Oswaila & Kavita 2021: 5-8).

In the realm of the above – mentioned infectious diseases, a pandemic is the worst case scenario. Not a word to use unthoughtfully, a pandemic is an epidemic that has spread beyond a country's borders, affecting multiple countries or continents worldwide (WHO 2020: n. p.). That's when the disease is officially called a pandemic. Among the recent deadliest global pandemics - and rare among viruses- for its over whelming sudden global eruption, and devastating toll on human lives is the ongoing COVID-19. Shaking the whole world to its core, the uncontrollable world-wide outbreak of COVID-19 has touched every country, every sector and every individual. UN Secretary-General Antonio Gueterres conceived it as a global recession of "record dimensions" when he declared: "Our world faces a common enemy. We are at war with a virus" (UN News 2020: n. p.). The challenge for many countries was thus tremendous: Some countries struggled with a lack of capacity; some countries struggled with a lack of resources; while others struggled with a lack of resolve.

With the number of daily new cases, and with the propagation of fear, chaos, and despair, the whole world was instigated to carry out a combination of unprecedented precautionary hygienic measures to contain, trace and control the pandemic (BBC 2020: n.p.) These measures incorporated personal hygiene measures, rigorous testing, social distancing, stay-home orders, wearing masks, prohibiting mass gatherings, proclaiming over seas travel bans, creating quarantines and mandatory shutdowns of transportation systems, public offices, and other activities. Since the virus has diffused almost everywhere in the world, however, such procedures alone can't abort the pandemic. As it is logical that the larger the scale of an outbreak, the larger the impact and magnitude of its

sequelae. "There are decades when nothing happens and weeks when decades happen (Fareed 2020: n. p.). "

The millennial obsession with the apocalypse and the 21st century epidemics, sparing no one, rich or poor– Sars in 2002, Mers in 2012, Ebola in 2014, and recently the emergent COVID-19 pandemic –have thus inspired new forms of dystopian narratives about post – plague desolation, inchoate fears, looming demise, deserted cities, and devastated landscapes. Whether peering into a distant past or leaping into the future back to the present, some of these dystopian pandemic narratives beside serving as nightmarish articulations about what life might be like in the grips of a global pandemic and the lengths humans will go in order to survive — this study maintains – are ultimately hopeful narratives, and speak to more than our pandemic–frenzied moment. Though featuring imaginary bleak futures, some of these dystopian pandemic narratives evoke more than the weary feeling of life slipping away, tell more than just apocalypse stories, by weaving beautiful stories of human relationships amid devastations, genuinely making sense of chaos, and looking upon the world with different and optimistic eyes. Apart from exploring the feeble beauty of the world we live in, and questioning the structure that our society is built upon, these dystopian pandemic narratives are relevant case scenarios tempered with just the right amount of hope though they have all the stress and intensity of the typical dystopian tale.

Before embarking on explaining the features of the above-mentioned *Outbreak Narratives*, one has to outline, in the first place, what is meant by *Dystopias*. Dystopias are recognized as the negative counterparts of utopias: A form of prophecies offering a bleak vision of the future or near future, a combination of the Greek prefix (dys-), meaning "bad" and (topos), meaning "place", a dystopia thus literally means a place where the conditions of human life are extremely imperfect, where no one would want to live, where one's rights, freedoms and happiness would be gone, and where the environment would be devastated (Alihodižvić 2016: n. p.). As defined by the Encyclopedia of Science Fiction, dystopias depict negative views of the world we inhabit "to provide urgent propaganda for a change in direction (Stableford 1993: 360-362)." Dystopias – as pointed out by Margaret Atwood – are often "more like dire warnings than satires, dark shadows cast by the present into the future (94)."

Meanwhile, Dystopian fiction is a form of speculative story telling that comes as a response to Utopian fiction (Lepore 2017: n.p.). While Utopian fiction portrays what many would call a paradise – a perfectly organized, imagined society, free of war, poverty, oppression and environmental decay, Dystopian fiction – by contrast – depicts societies in cataclysmic decline, with characters battling environmental disasters, extreme suppression, lethal diseases, mass poverty, technological control, limited resources, totalitarian governments, or forever wars (Gottlieb 1994: n. p.).

The worlds of dystopian fiction do share many of the same features. They express their authors' concerns about issues of humanity and the inherent flaws and failures of those social systems previously considered ideal (Gottlieb 1994: n. p.) – the reason they are often considered as critiques by Margaret Atwood (Mead 2017: n.p.). Usually set in the near – rather than the far – future most dystopian settings are inevitably linked to a totalitarian state apparatus exercising strict control over all aspects of the lives of its inhabitants. These inhabitants – living in a dehumanized state, under constant surveillance, and deprived of freedom, information, and independent thought – thus come to recognize the negative aspects of the societies in which they live in. Hence, they often feel trapped and struggle to escape (Booker 1994: n.p.).

Having long had a place in the canon, Dystopian fiction has also provided a fertile ground for writers to create an enduring sub-genre named as *Pandemic* or *Outbreak Narratives* that have recently experienced a huge surge of interest. The course of *Outbreak Narratives'* is usually well – defined. Humans are at war: Man vs. microbe. Set against the backdrop of (historical or imagined) plagues or pandemics, Outbreak Narratives are cautionary tales that follow formulaic plots of disease emergence, identification, and containment. Epidemics "follow a plot line of increasing and revelatory tension, move to a crisis of individual and collective character, then drift toward closure (Rosenberg 1989:2)." Displaying the threats of mass destruction, limited control, overtones of divine retribution, wicked villains and innocent victims, novels featuring pandemics are thus real, but the narrative blurs fact and fiction. Every story of epidemic, Jill Lepore writes in *the New Yorker*, is a story of "man made brute (2020: n. p.)." But then –as Lepore affirms- the existence of these narratives, no matter how grim the tale, is itself a clue, verifying that "humanity endures, in the very contagion of reading (n. p.)."

A point worth mentioning, the perspectives of this sub-genre's writers vary and the human responses are just as varied: Scientific ingenuity, illogical paranoia, defeated acceptance, heroic sacrifice, or sheer survival at any cost. Omnipresent is the impulse to blame a segment of society for the outbreak, and stigmatize their behaviours and life styles that either carried or ran a higher risk of transmission (Self, 2020: n.p.). Among the best fictional narratives featuring pandemics are Albert Camus' *The Plague* – one classic of the genre, José Saramago's *Blindness*, Mike Chen's *A Beginning at the End*, Peng Shepherd's *The Book of M,* Lawrence Wright's *The End of October*, Rebecca Makkai's *The Great Believers*, Gabriel Garcia Márquez's *Love in the Time of Cholera*, Charles Wheelan's *The Rationing*, Ling Ma's *Severance*, Geraldine Brooks' *Year of Wonder*, Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven*, and others. Unsettling and memorable, these novels – ranging from the historical to the futuristic – carry the same uncertainty as our 2020 reality of COVID-19 (Self 2020: n.p.)

Though functioning as cautionary tales presenting alternative world scenarios and projecting a relatively worse dystopian social order than the current experienced one, some of these dystopian pandemic narratives are not completely pessimistic since they offer glimmers of hope through open-ended narratives, especially in the critical dystopias of this century. For one way of being anti- utopian is to be utopian: To keep imagining that things could get better, and moreover to imagine how they might get better. As Viera definitely maintains: "Dystopias that leave no room for hope do in fact fail their mission (2010, 17)", and it is especially the Critical or Open-ended Dystopia – a subset of dystopian fiction- that leaves fertile ground for utopian explorations.

A concept originated by Lyman Tower Sargent (1994:9), but once more introduced into the mainstream discourse by Tom Moylan in his book, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky* (2000), Critical Dystopia is

> *the uncovering of a non-existent society ...*
> *that includes at least one utopian enclave or holds*
> *out hope that the dystopia can be overcome*
> *and replaced with a utopia* (Moylan 2000: XV).

Unlike the traditional dystopia, Critical Dystopia - as a variant of Utopia's fictional discourse and one of its most important developments - is thus not preoccupied with the melancholy accounts of the degeneration (2000: 275-276). For what takes the precedence in between all the dreary events and societies it

portrays is the preservation of the utopian potential for renewal, radical change and a better future. Critical Dystopias thus endeavor to search for "traces, scraps, and sometimes horizons of utopian possibility (276)."

Though embedding a stubborn utopian ethos, Critical Dystopia mainly attempts to interrogate the ills of the existent order, uncover and condemn the terrors of the present, and exemplify what is needed to transform the status quo while enabling its characters to find and pursue potential ways out of the dystopian imprisonment (Moylan 2000: 198-199). Fortunati defines the concept – which he sees as crucial to our salvation – as "hope towards the unfulfilled, unachieved utopia, showing the reader a road must start in the present (qtd. in Vieira 2013: 29)." Though hopeful, Critical Dystopia is not a push for a utopia in the conventional political sense, nor is it a revival of the catastrophic systems that have plagued humanity. Instead, it is an acknowledgement of humanity's inherent need for improvement, while encouraging a practical approach to begin in the present. Hence, what is needed– as argued for strongly by Baccolini, Raffaella and Moylan– is reading Critical Dystopias as texts sustaining a utopian drive, and offering virtual possibilities to find and actualize. For classic dystopias maintain utopian hope outside their pages (2003:7). The present paper thus – by utilizing Moylan's concept of *Critical Dystopia*–investigates the way through which Mandel's *Station Eleven* makes something subtle and unusual out of the grim horror or dystopia. She offers hope – not through a reawakening of a worn out past, but through a new imagined future in which the traditional features and borderlines of relationships, values, identity, and society can be reshaped in "another world just out of sight (Mandel 2015:333)." Rather than mapping out the resulting chaos of the pandemic, *Station Eleven* articulates utopian possibilities and stresses the importance of personal and collective imagination for choosing among alternatives. This has been attained through Mandel's depiction of groups of survivals with fragmented personal experiences, in their attempts to come to terms with what they have lost, figure out how to rebuild, and recover a sense of normalcy.

Exercising the same emphasis on "uncovering" and incorporating the same transformative utopian impulse is Evan Calder Williams' *Capitalist Apocalypse* or *Salvage Punk.* As Williams puts it, the world is not heading for an apocalypse, the apocalypse has already happened: "The world is now irrevocably structured as an apocalyptic waste land (2011: 36)." As such, for Williams, current post apocalypse is defined by the distinctive kinds of probing,

uncovering, and thorough critique of the destructive realities … that have wrecked our lives. It is defined as well by the construction of a new world from sorting through its apocalyptic wreckage to unearth the revelations hidden underneath (Mark 2018:1-2).

Recognizing the apocalyptic nature of this epoch, Williams has invented a theoretical and an aesthetic praxis named as *Salvage punk.* This praxis – becoming one of the fundamental structures of thought that carve how we visualize future possibilities — takes the left overs of the capitalist mode of production, with the aim of recapturing utopia under the colossal junk of capitalism's throwaways. A post – apocalyptic vision, *Salvage punk* thus is a manifestation "of a broken and dead world," littered with both the dream remnants and "real junk of the world that was" (Williams 2011:19). In other words, *Salvagepunk* comprises picking through the "junk", acknowledging "left overs", encouraging "waste sorting and value recuperation", stimulating "repurposing, detouring, and scrapping (19-20)," and promoting a return to "the repressed idiosyncrasy of outmoded things (31)," while overlooking their monetary, or capital value. A key feature of *Savage punk* thus is that it takes place in "a world of stealing from the ruins, robbing the graves, and rearranging the left overs (70)." It recuperates or searches for value in what has already been destroyed. But the question is: why salvage? "Because we are wrecked (34).". Because we need a strategy for ruination – a strategy that "prevent (s) the ship from sinking" and "join(s) [the] realm of dead objects (34)." And, instead of reimaging these dead objects as something different from what they are, Williams maintains, actually existing objects are reconstructed into something new. Thus, *Salvage punk* is about "choice and construction (70)." This construction occurs by turning the remaining objects into what they are never meant to be, or by rendering them do what they are not intended to: Objects "weirdly incommensurable with the purpose for which they were designed (21)". So, basically punk is the invention of new rules, new values, new objects, new people, and discarding the old ones.

The praxis of *Savage punk* is thus– as maintained by Williams – the proper genre for the current epoch and the best mode of resistance to counter the imminent demise of our world brought about by our own hubris. It not only assumes that "it's already been burnt, already lost at sea (Jameson 2003: 76)", but it reckons that it is never really the end, by exhibiting how "we can only begin again from here (36),"and by demonstrating how punking people and

objects into something new might lead to something better. Or, as Mieville says in an interview, "It is too late to save, but we might repurpose (2018: n.p.)."

Though its punking expectations are scary and though it opens up possibilities for rebellion, Williams' *Salvage punk* or *Capitalist Apocalypse* thus looks for the alternate stories or the hopeful realities of this ruined world. Most importantly, *Salvagepunk* discards the past as taboo and forgotten, by struggling against "current trend lines of nostalgia, the melancholia of buried history," and permanent "mourning for radical antagonistic pasts (2011:20)." Accordingly, what is needed - Williams asserts - "… is an apocalypse… an end with revelation", a "lifting of the veil (5)"*,* "a work of construction", "a production of valueless times" (42) to see what values might emerge. Nothing is ever really junk, Williams puts it. The key question for "salvage-thought" is how can humans rebel against the historical metanarratives that have led them to this present reality, and how can humans repeat differently. Humans cannot stop repeating- Williams maintains-but they should be concerned with how to look for the possibilities and alternate stories within those metanarratives, and "how to make from the broken same the livelier constructs of something other (69)." The praxis of *Salvage punk* thus offers its readers the opportunity to trace all that capitalism works to conceal; acknowledge its remnants past their capital value; uncover hope in the junk heap of the past and the present; unlock a future that capitalism has rendered un imaginable; repurpose a new landscape with a locus of hope, and track down a utopia buried in dystopia.

Witnessing a resurgence in our days of COVID-19 panic, *Station Eleven* – Emily St. John Mandel's fourth novel, 2014 blockbuster hit, and long listed post apocalyptic text for a US National Bank Award – has acclaimed the Canadian author to literary stardom. Set in the days of civilization's breakdown, the novel opens on one snowy night where an aging, famous Hollywood actor, Arthur Leander, has a fatal heart attack, and drops dead on stage during a performance of Shakespeare's *King Lear* in Toronto. Jeevan Chaudhary, an ex- paparazzo and now a paramedic under training, attempts to save Arthur with CPR. Among the people on the scene is Kristen Raymond, an 8-year-old actress, playing a minor non- speaking role as one of Lear's children. The crew members of Lear's performance think about notifying Arthur's family, especially his young son Tyler who lives in Israel with his mom, Elizabeth Colton, and connecting with Arthur's lawyer. There is hardly time for people to grasp this shock when disaster happens in the form of a super – flu pandemic. Receiving a call from a

friend named Hua- a doctor alerting him to the imminent outbreak of a global pandemic, the Georgia Flu, Jeevan stocks upon supplies and survival equipment and goes to stay with his disabled brother, Frank (who later on commits suicide to allow Jeevan to travel in search of survivors and resources).

News of Arthur's death then spread to his former wives through Clark Thomson, an aspiring actor and Arthur's best friend. Happening to be on the same flight from New York city to Toronto to attend Arthur's funeral, Clark, Elizabeth and her son Tyler – having now nowhere to go – create a settlement in the airport with the other passengers. Meanwhile, Clark becomes the guardian of the Museum of Civilization, gathering antiquities such as i phones and laptop computers. Unlike the airport survivors who fit in their new life, Elizabeth and Tyler adopt religious fanatic attitude believing that the pandemic occurred for a reason and let off those who were good. After two years, they leave the airport with a religious cult.

As the novel alternates between depictions of the pandemic as it unravels and two decades later when the world is still reshaping, Arthur's emergence as an actor and Kristen's post pandemic life draw the attention of the narrative. Two decades after the eruption of the Georgia Flu and the destruction of civilization, there is no Canada, no United States. All countries and borders have disappeared. The novel then jumps ahead concentrating on the Travelling Symphony, a band of musicians and Shakespeare's performers roaming from town to town – the waste lands of what remain. Entertaining the people with musicals and Shakespearean performances – as this, they believe, what audiences prefer, the Travelling Symphony adopts a motto: *Survival is Insufficient.*

Joining the Travelling Symphony as a teenager and remembering little of her life before the pandemic, Kristen holds on tightly to a two-volume set of comics given to her by Arthur before his death, titled *Dr. Eleven*. Obsessed with actor Arthur Leander, whose death she beheld as a child, Kristen saves magazine clippings about Arthur that she finds in deserted houses. The clippings relieve Kristen because they place her in a simpler, easier, and more secure world to live in.

The novel then moves back to a time before the pandemic where we learn about Arthur's life, in particular his first marriage to an art school graduate named Miranda. We witness (the now deceased) Arthur and Miranda meet, fall in love, and get married. We learn that it is she who has written the *Dr. Eleven*

comics[*], working on them as a hobby over many years. She has once given a present of the first two issues to Arthur, who in turn has given them to small Kristen. Later, at a dinner party in Hollywood, Miranda meets Clark, and she realizes that her marriage with Arthur is coming to an end, as he is having an affair with a movie star in his current movie: Elizabeth Colton (who would become later on his second wife). Realizing this, Miranda then meets Jeevan, who works as a paparazzo and who has duped her into an unfavourable snapshot.

The novel flashes forward to the twenty – fifth year after the Pandemic where we witness the Travelling Symphony arrives at a town called St. Deborah to collect two members of their band, Charlie and Jeremy, who were missed two years ago. Upon arriving, the band is troubled to find that their friends are missing, that St. Deborah has changed, and is – now – under the tyrannical control of a dangerous and zealot man calling himself a prophet who kidnaps the young girls he claims as his 'brides'. Swiftly leaving St. Deborah and going off-route to the Museum of Civilization, a settlement where they believe they might find their lost friends, the band finds a young escapee who fled St. Deborah, as she was promised to the prophet as his wife. Later, the entire band has disappeared, leaving only Kristen and her friends August and Sayid (whom the prophet's men have been holding). Frightened, Kristen August and Sayid head to the Severn City Airport, hoping to be reunited with others. However, Kristen is soon tracked down by the prophet himself. Just before the prophet almost kills her, a younger guard kills the prophet. The trio finally get together with Charlie, Jeremy and the rest of the band. As to Clark, who has lived in the museum for two decades, recognizes Kristen, and the prophet –who is in fact Tyler Leander. Clark takes Kristen up to the watch tower of the airport, where there is a town to the south with electric lights, showing that civilization is beginning to be reconstructed. Later on, Kristen leaves with the Travelling Symphony for this town to the south. She gives a copy of her comics to Clark's museum before leaving.

Reading *Station Eleven* as a classic dystopian pandemic novel - where a lethal virus brings the world to an end, the recent study discerns that *Station Eleven* is a post-apocalyptic novel featuring a catastrophe of enormous

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[*] ***Dr. Eleven Comics:*** A story of humans who have fled earth just prior to its conquest by aliens. A human - made planet where people live in perpetual twilight, Station Eleven's civilization is plagued by 'the underworld," inhabited by dissatisfied individuals who want to return to earth under any circumstances and who snatches the residents of Station Eleven away from safety when they least suspect it.

proportions and overwhelming consequences. Set in a dystopian scenario, where everyone has died and everything has been brought to an end, *Station Eleven*'s radical social and economic disruption is not unlike our own COVID - stricken landscape. However, the post Georgian Flu world is much more drastic and dire: The pandemic here is not a gradually built, just immediate doom. Thus, *Station Eleven* is dystopian as it interrogates the present, offers warnings and provides prophecies about the future. It is dystopian, as well, as it evokes the weary feeling of life slipping away within the context of a fallen world. It is a world about pain, trauma and death.

> *No more pharmaceuticals. No more certainty of surviving a scratch on one's hand, a cut on a finger while chopping vegetables for dinner, a dog bite. No more flight* (37).

It is a world about absence, emptiness and loss.

> *No more internet. No more social media, no more scrolling through litanies of dreams and nervous hopes and photographs of lunch, cries for help and expressions of contentment and relationship – status updates* (38).

What remains in this diminished world and "over grown wilderness" are "ghost cit[ies]" (274), "ghost plane[s]" (280) whose passengers never disembarked, "[r]usted – out cars …abandoned where they'd run out of gas" (133), groups of travelers who are diverted, and quarantined in a remote air post, "ferals" who raid the Mexican restaurant for food and the gift shop for clean clothes and scented candles to light the bathrooms, and religious cults who threaten to usurp peaceful communities. The scale of the post – flu collapse and the remnants that fill the landscape, thus, don't just signify the end of the world these people themselves knew, but also the end of a much longer past of what Mandel calls the modern world. What is ending with the flu – Mandel helps us understand – is the capitalist world system. Through this dystopian setting, readers are thus shown how the novel's apocalyptic pandemic scenario is intertwined with this world system; and how – in a world wrecked by a disease – the survivors relinquish their hold on the planet, become fragile and just visitors. They are made to think, imagine and envisage how the present can change into something very unpleasant.

Reading *Station Eleven* through the lens of Tom Moylan's *Critical Dystopia*, one finds that *Station Eleven* – though considered among the classic Dystopian Pandemic narratives – pushes against the usual format of the dystopian genre. For, unlike many dystopian narratives that focus on the society's decline and the harsh struggle that immediately follows the collapse, *Station Eleven* is more concerned with scrutinizing the human aspects that come into view within the context of a cold, barren, bleak and disrupted pandemic world. It is more preoccupied with ushering in a utopian new world which makes sense of everything that happened before, and with probing the ways through which humans can interact with art, religion, civilization, memories, and relationships. Accordingly, *Station Eleven* – this study maintains – tells more than just an apocalypse and chronicles more than just a pandemic. Less interested in the specter of the end, Mandel's emphasis is on the present and its ethical value– the moment in which the survivors take choices that inform the future. Though showing that this flu has wiped out 99% of humanity in a matter of days, Mandel's novel bypasses the clichés of horror, chaos, dystopia, and the daily struggle of vulnerable human beings lacking the basic amenities of life. Undoubtedly, catastrophes have provided rich fuel for Mandel's fiction. "A disaster is a very efficient way to create a lot of drama (Hill 2020: n.p.)," she says. Mandel prefers, though, to allow world events to sit in the background of her work. Thus, though the portrayal of the end of all things is the novel's focus point, this end is used by Mandel as a literal 'Ground Zero', not as the only thing (Barnett 2016: n.p.). That's why her novel does not devote that much time to the details of its particular pandemic. We learn, as the novel progresses, that this flu causes respiratory failure, is highly contagious, and – within only three weeks – comes to grind the whole society to a halt: Air travel is banned, cell lines are jammed, electricity is cut off, internet is erased, and television stations have stopped. However, less interested in the "why" of the end, Mandel is more interested about the "what" it would be to live in the after math of the collapse, the "how" of what might actually happen, and the "how" of making sense out of chaos. Mandel has detailed so much the world of two decades after (when the worst is over and the few remaining survivors struggle to stick to civilization) and a few years before (when Arthur slowly succumb to the rot of fame). As such, Mandel renders her readers truly feel for the millions who are dying, instead of considering them as statistics.

Reading *Station Eleven* through Evans Calder William's notion of *Salvage punk,* the present study discerns that Mandel has managed to portray a post-apocalyptic world littered with endless layers of leftovers. And, while the effects of the Georgia Flu are devastating, the survivors are shown attempting to survive by picking through the wastes of the earth, the mountains of junk, and the remnants of history. Sifting the rubble, these survivors take what is useful and discard the rest, combine and repurpose objects, ideas and ideals from the past based on their value within hostile environments. Their aim is to uncover secrets from the pre-apocalyptic world – hidden in the rubble of catastrophe, and search for value in what has already been destroyed.

Mandel – recognizing the apocalyptic nature of the present, and rather than lingering on the devastation that follow the Georgia Flu – takes up the leftovers of the flourishing wastelands of late capitalism for the sake of seeking moments of beauty amid destruction, redeeming the pre-apocalyptic world, minimizing the capitalist apocalypse, and building a new better world. What was lost in the pandemic, Mandel believes, "almost everything, almost everyone, but there is still such beauty (Mandel 2014:57)." Aiming to prove that destruction comes in the guise of beauty, Mandel attempts – throughout the text – to pose these questions: what would life be like and what would survive in a scenario like this? Or, more precisely speaking, what remnants of the past or aspects of the pre-apocalyptic world that should be seriously sought and desperately yearned for? what needs to be redeemed, repurposed, or preserved after an apocalyptic event? And, what kind of salvage is envisioned?

Drawing on Evan Calder William's *Salvage punk,* Mandel calls for a "permanent visibility of the hidden (2011:156)." She seems to uphold – in *Station Eleven* – that there are things that are important than mere survival, and that last longer than the hyper-technological brief stage of human history. They are the things – Mandel maintains – that we think of as the highest and most exalted expressions of our culture: art, faith, civilization, memories, and human relationships. By keeping these aspects alive – Mandel believes – the virtues, modernization, and spirit of the collapsed civilization will be kept alive as well. Seeking to redeem these aspects is what distinguishes man from beast, what truly renders people together, and what enables them to have close familial bonds that would not have been happened had they just been together for hunting and seeking shelter. No matter how the extent of catastrophe is, Mandel has shown how the survivors need to have a means to alleviate tension, and to

have a way to salvage what is valuable for the sake of retaining their humanity. This is the strength of *Salvage punk.* Though scary as it leads to new objects, new people, and indicates new rules to follow, new directions to go, and new ways of being, *Salvage punk* – as manifested in *Station Eleven* – can find the "freewheeling creative force" (Williams 2018: n. p.), in the words of Llanso – in the detritus of the apocalypse of the present. And, the survivors – in their efforts of thinking about how to survive – consciously or sub-consciously start to bring together their old lives before the collapse and make them resemble the real thing as possible. However, they come to realize that they are not quite the same. As such, Mandel's *Station Eleven* focuses on such repurposing in what comes next.

Analyzing Mandel's Station Eleven in the light of the previously discussed theoretical sections, the present paper contends that Mandel sets up a major question about her world: What would survive – or can be salvaged and repurposed– in a scenario like this? In an attempt to answer this question, Mandel starts her novel in a modern world much like our own, filled with people struggling to determine their place in life. But suddenly a devastating outbreak destroys the global population. Outlining the aftermath of the chaos, Mandel – providing an example of what Evan Calder Williams has termed *Salvagepunk* and aiming to do something a bit different – strives to make the survivors figure out how to seek and create beauty; how to recover a sense of normality; and how to rebuild regardless of the catastrophic event that seeks to define them.

To begin with, as no 'end of the world' novel can avoid raising issues of survival, Mandel is interested on how people manage to survive in the aftermath. Thereby, she negotiates several aspects of surviving the flu. Some survivors are happy to embrace survival as a matter of luck - like Clark who assesses how lucky he is passing through contaminated airports and passengers; and Jeevan whose survival is attributed to a friend's warning call. Other survivors give themselves the right to determine who is saved and why- like the prophet who views the diverted flight as an archetypal Noah's ark saving people for a divine purpose. Meanwhile, others regard that survival can be attained through skill and decisions rather than through chance or purpose. Among of which is the hunter who provides food for those in the terminal; Kristen who tattoos and documents the people she has to kill upon her arm; Jeevan who reacts quickly to get food and blockade himself and his brother in an apartment; and Frank who sacrifices himself to assist Jeevan's survival.

Despite the afore-mentioned, the strength of Mandel's novel is that she disseminates the notion of 'living is not just survival', as the Travelling Symphony's motto points out, "Survival is Insufficient (Mandel,2014:61)" – meaning that there is more to life than just making it through the hard part; there is a whole world after it that needs to get rebuilt. Taking great lengths to know exactly what else is needed to fulfill our lives, and what cultural additives mean to us, Mandel maintains – throughout the text – that true survival is living a life full of art, faith, memory, passion and human connection.

> *In this unforgettable, haunting, and almost hallucinatory portrait of life at the edge, those who remain struggle to retain their basic humanity and make connections with the vanished world through art, memory, and remnants of popular culture* (Gilbert 2014:100).

Mandel's first way to maintain hope and repurpose life within the story is represented by her continuous stress upon the power of art. Through the grim backdrop where even electricity and technology vanishes, she has managed to demonstrate that the collapse of civilization caused by a fast – spreading pandemic cannot destroy the value of art. For art endures, adapts to, and transcends tragedy. Through *Station Eleven* Mandel thus offers her readers a way to consider what beauty, connection, human values are by claiming that the beauty we share through art and literature elevate our lives beyond simple survival.

> *It is the celebration of art and humanities. Art is such a human thing and it shines a light on the darkness of an apocalypse .... That is what Station Eleven is. It is a light on the darkness* (54).

Therefore, Mandel takes her readers on a journey that questions many facets of art. For the survivors in *Station Eleven,* whether it is with Kristen's acting or the prophet's manipulative speeches, art is a way of transcending surviving, a way of finding a new passion, a new purpose, a new direction, and a new way of remaining human because "survival is insufficient (58)." After a performance of *"A Mid Summer Night's Dream,'*

> *[t]he audience rose for a standing ovation. Kristen stood in the state of suspension ...a sense*

> *of having flown very high and landed incompletely, her soul pulling upward out of her chest. A man in the front row had tears in his eyes* (59).

In the above quote, there is so much feelings and a sense of euphoria because of a form of art. After the collapse as well, everyone has faced great loss, has experienced an absence of something that was once important or loved, and has felt a sense of urgency to fill that void. For many survivors after the pandemic, this alternative or filler is art.

Art is a source of happiness for Kristen, the young actor - twenty years after the pandemic ripped through society- and for the Travelling Symphony, who decorate their caravan with the Star-Trek phrase "Because survival is insufficient," and who tour America performing plays to the survivors left behind. What is weird is that the people watching Shakespeare's productions after the collapse, despite the hardships of their lives and the world they know they have lost, still feel themselves part of the human story. Besides, Clark's museum curation is not just concerned with artifacts, it has become art. Miranda as well creates her comics in the absence of an audience for the sake of doing art: "What's the point of doing all that work," Tesch wonders, "if no one sees it? " Mirada responds: "It makes me happy. It's peaceful spending hours working on it. It doesn't really matter to me if anyone else sees it (92)." Another proof of the purity and value of art is that Miranda doesn't even sign her work, using her initials, "M.C." instead. And twenty - five years after Miranda's death, we see Kristen and Tyler are still captivated by her art. Add to this, realizing that they cannot really rely on anyone, but what they can rely on is a script, a pencil, or a clarinet reed, the survivors thus find solace and relief in this dependency upon art and realize this too:

> *There were moments around campfires when someone would say something invigorating about the importance of art, and everyone would find it easier to sleep that night* (119).

As such, despite the immense loss from the pandemic, art – as Mandel claims – is the most important thing in life: Art will never die or fade away like families or memories. Remnants of art still exist and are used to help humans connect to the past, have a purpose, and move in a way that transforms and inspires. These remnants remind humans that they actually have not lost everything, are still

living, are still human, and can still feel beauty even in the most miserable of times. Overall, it is the amount of music, plays, paintings, and all forms of art in *Station Eleven* that measures how efficient and happy the society is. In the onset of the pandemic, art beings to decline (Arthur's death on stage is an indication) as society does. Nevertheless, when the Travelling Symphony begins to travel and share their arts, society begins to revive itself by returning back to its traditional ways while also embracing new customs.

Another way to maintain hope and capture the essence of life within *Station Eleven* is represented through Mandel's attaching importance to the role of faith. In the face of danger and struggle – Mandel shows – many characters turn to faith. Providing comfort and purpose and infusing continuity and persistence into a frantic changing world, faith becomes evident in the post – flu world as characters struggle to make sense of a catastrophe. Forgetting to look for a spiritual life as they went about daily life, these characters however are quick to find one when violently shaken by disaster. This is displayed in the ways the survivors value their various faiths and create their own belief systems in order to give meaning to their new world and bear the breakdown of their society. Amid the pandemic that leaves only a few survivors behind, the viewpoint that everything happens for a reason can be comforting, as it offers a justification for the mass death and mitigate the guilt of the survivors by making it clear that they deserve to survive.

Though faith can be the means of personal survival for some individuals, Mandel shows that it can become a means for power and control for others. Despite its many benefits, faith can also become extremely dangerous and can blind a character's judgment. Through the figure of Elizabeth, the murderous prophet and the rest of their cult, Mandel has offered a bleak example of the new religious order that twists the book of revelations and exploits the humans' need for religion to suit its own goals, exploit communities, gain political power, gather followers, take multiple young wives, and force will upon others. Nevertheless, through the (seeming) integration of Tyler's cult at the beginning as being "the light" and "the pure", Mandel illustrates the faith that Tyler brings – not only to himself but to his followers – in search of a better future. In praising the Georgian Flu as "the great cleansing," Tyler delivers hope for the survivors (the members of the town and the followers of his belief system as well). The prophet says, " We were saved" – his voice is rising – "not only to bring the light, to spread the light, but to be the light. We were saved because we

are the light. We are the pure (63)." Besides, the downfall of the prophet is significant. When the prophet finally catches Kristen and prepares to execute her, the youthful follower of the prophet – with the gun in his hands– decides that he cannot stand to follow the prophet anymore and shoots him, though this young boy knows nothing other than this is not how humans should live. Moreover, despite the obvious perversion of traditional faith as shown by the prophet, Mandel shows that this is only a minor example of human nature's need for a belief system outside of their own practical life. August, for instance, who religiously prays over the dead bodies he encounters, wishing them peace, constructs parallel universes to ease the burden of the life he is living. "We can not only remain hopeful," he says, "we have to assume that the situation will become more clear (23)", and later on the whispers: "Have faith (261)." Furthermore, despite the disappearance of organized or traditional belief structure, faith in *Station Eleven* is manifested as well in the survivors at the airport who do not share the religious faith of Tyler and his mother but hold all things in common. It is the same faith that urges the Travelling Symphony to present Shakespeare and look for friends in St. Deborah. It is faith in greater future and in something unnamed, almost divine, that would prevail.

What is also remarkable about *Station Eleven* and emphasizes its utopian dimension is its appreciation of the miraculous beauty of modernity along with its endeavour to restore and rebuild human connections. Living in a technology – driven age, Mandel explores contemporary civilization through different lenses. Believing that there is no better way to consider our reliance on the innovations of the modern world than to take them away, Mandel uses *Station Eleven*'s structure – with its intertwining story lines set before and after the collapse – to explore the contrast between life with and life without civilization.

Before the pandemic, civilization is shown as tedious, monotonous and even, suffocating or toxic. In the presence of civilization, humans are shown as 'zombies' sleep walking through life, completely severed from their environments and the people around them. Clark Thompson, for instance, interviews a young lady named Dahlia who finds faults in her boss Dan for his obsession with technology and corporate life. She clarifies how Dan – without realizing this – is wandering through life as a "high functioning sleep walker" and is thus living in a "corporate world full of ghosts" (161). Another clear example is the transition of Arthur and Miranda from their own small island to bigger cities where the disjunction between humans and nature is quite apparent.

Besides, the difficulty both Arthur and Miranda manifest in their description of their own island to others highlights the way civilization separates human beings from each other. Moreover, though shown as appealing to Arthur and Miranda, civilization in Toronto is shown as dreary: The stars are obscured by light pollution, unlike the night sky of Delano Island which was filled with stars. Looking back at this society, Mandel describes it in terms of our technology: "when it was possible to press a series of buttons on a telephone and speak with someone on the far side of the earth (36)."

On the other hand, in the world after the collapse, devices and technologies – taken for granted twenty years earlier and used to be regarded as tedious and boring – are suddenly revealed to be incredible and get preserved as antiquities in the Museum of Civilization. In this world, Mandel attempts to stress the fact that in the absence of technology – air planes, television, radio or internet – people are truly physically disconnected from each other, unable to know what is going on in the world or even in the nearby town. Moreover, the way the survivors think about the civilization that has vanished shows to what extent humans used to rely with full confidence on civilization and yet emphasizes how many of civilization's marvels were taken by for granted. Hence, what the reader finds in *Station Eleven* is not the knocking down of the unscrupulous old world and the ensuing prelude to a utopian new world, but rather a lamentation about the bygone "wonders of technology (288)" and the "splendors of the former world (231)." This lament is quite evident – twenty years after the pandemic – when the survivors spend a moment at the light button, imagining that it might once more light up the room, only half believing that this was once possible: "As always in these moments she found herself straining to remember what it had been like when this motion has worked: walk inter a room, flip a switch and the room floods with light (69)." The lament is discernable as well in Clarke's musing: "why in his life of frequent travel had he never recognized the beauty of flight, the improbability of it? (247)" – a lament which is also echoed in Kristen's memories about the urban landscape seen from a plane at night. "Clusters and pinpoints of light in the darkness scattered constellations linked by roads or alone. The beauty of it (135)." Though lamenting the lost wonders of technology and its conveniences, Mandel urges us not to take modernity's benefits for granted.

Mandel also makes it clear that hope can be maintained through people themselves. While civilization has made amazing technological miracles, it is

not technology that produces civilization – it is people. To those who undermine the people who develop our technologies; to those who bedim the material labour that serve as a foundation for the hyper connected globalized world, Mandel exhibits how the technological artifacts are human products, created by people.

> *We bemoaned the impersonality of the modern world, but that was a lie, it seemed ..., it had never been impersonal at all. There had always been a massive delicate infra structure of people, all of them walking unnoticed around us, and when people stop going to work the entire operation grinds to a halt* (254).

Clark's reflections on the snow globe placed in the museum traces the production process of this object.

> *Consider the mind that invented those miniature storms of snow, the factory worker who turned sheets of plastic into white flakes of snow, the hand that drew the plan for the miniature Severn City with its church steeple and city hall, the assembly – line worker who watched the globe glide past on a conveyer belt somewhere in China. Consider the white gloves in the hands of the woman who inserted the snow globes into boxes, to be packed into larger boxes, crates, shipping containers* (255).

Despite its advances, technology – as Mandel maintains in *Station Eleven* – kills relationships until nothing is left and causes severance with things that truly matter in life, without the individuals even realizing it. Though seemingly granting them independence, technology immerses the individuals in its obsession, undermines family values and relationships, breeds fewer face to – face interactions, and thus leads to miscommunication and detachment. And through Mandel's own creative use of storytelling and character development, the idea that modern civilization and its technology destroy human connection is conveyed. By showing how the connected world can attain such miracles, Mandel also expresses the irony that this very interconnectedness is what causes the demolition of civilization. It is because our civilization is so developed and

connected that the pandemic is able to expand rapidly and efficiently throughout the globe.

Mandel has managed to provide relatable insights into our fractured relationships through Dahlia's remark. Dahlia (the young woman interviewed by Clark) – once referring to this world as one full of ghosts – complains that people (like Dan) who are so obsessed with technology and lead their lives on their own have lost their ability to connect with others. A clear cut example of this isolation is further illustrated through Garett (one of the few survivors of the pandemic) who tells Clark about his past. Mandel quotes, "Garett had a wife and four – year – old twins in Halifax; but the last call he'd made was to his boss. The last words he'd spoken into a telephone were a bouquet of corporate clichés, seared horribly into memory (49)." Hence, Garrett's pre-occupation with the technological and corporate world has forced him – like many other people –to separate himself from his own family, without knowing it. That is not to suggest Mandel is advocating a return to the Stone Age. She is suggesting, instead, that technology should not be unreasonably used in our daily lives. She is reminding us how easy it is to be swept away by the flow of modern life, rarely recognizing that it is the relationships we build and not technological conveniences that truly enrich our lives and that sincerely need to be enhanced.

Jumping back and forth the Georgia Flu pandemic, Mandel has maintained another hopeful, utopian horizon by using memory as a frame work for her novel. Her aim is to create the idea that the past is very well embedded in the present. Believing that memory of the past would give way to the onset of the future, Mandel has rendered this notion true as the novel progresses, with more and more connections being drawn between Kristen and others around her. The connections between Kristen, Miranda, Arthur, Clark, and Tyler all come together once Kristen completes her journey to the Severn City Airport. Therefore, her journey is based on her desire to complete her ambiguous memories of the past.

Throughout *Station Eleven*, Mandel shows how memory can be a relief and a source of hope. Characters are thus shown as remembering and responding to their memories. This is quite evident when Kristen searches for books and gossip magazines in deserted homes to regain her memories of Arthur and the world she used to know to sustain her vision of that world alive. Likewise, the fact that Kristen even needs such memories testifies how losing one's memories can be a source of extreme anxiety. The Travelling Symphony, as well, are

shown as preserving memories of the past by performing only Shakespearean plays, since their audiences seem to prefer his plays over more modern productions. As one performer puts it, "people want what was best about the world (38)" – a fact that speaks volumes of the timelessness of these productions.

It is not only Kristen and the Travelling Symphony who memorize in the novel, it is also Jeevan Chaudhary who muses extensively on his previous career as a paparazzo, including his meetings with Arthur that have led Jeevan to question the integrity of his work. Jeevan's answer as to "why he left tabloid news (10)" – when the paparazzi chase him for details of Arthur's death – "I want to do something that matters (10) " affirms Jeevan's new found dislike for that field. Thus, it is clear that Arthur – whose life Jeevan has tried to save – has changed Jeevan's perspective on life. Clark, as well, keeps memory of the past with his Museum of Civilization. It is here (in the museum) that wrecked airline passengers collect electronics, newspapers, passports and other items considered outdated. The survivors who inhabit the airport, thus, reflect on the past and the "limitless number of objects in the world that had no particular use but that people wanted to preserve (258)." Hence, the museum makes the survivors appreciate the pre-pandemic world, teach children who were born after the pandemic about human kind's achievements and history, and offer them a haven for their nostalgia.

But, whereas all the above yearnings for the past may suggest a nostalgic appreciation for a life that can never be restored, what Mandel in *Station Eleven* aims at – is not a going back to the exhausted past but resisting the over whelming force of such memories. *Station Eleven* thus critiques those who would completely surrender to the past's comforting embrace. It emphasizes as well that by reminiscing the past people 'sleep walk' through this new life, miss its true beauty, just as they once did the old one. Kristen affirms this view when telling Diallo "the people who struggle the most … are the people who remember the old world clearly (195)."

Finally, Mandel's Station eleven offers another utopian possibility by suggesting that remembrance causes lack of fulfillment whereas imagination results in new possibilities. Hence, Mandel keeps on asserting throughout the narrative that imagination is something that humanity has in abundance, and that humanity has the desire not just to survive but to create new perspectives of the world. It is Miranda's comic book, *Dr. Eleven*, that suggests the value and

primacy of imagination over remembrance. It offers Miranda an escape from the control of the male figures in her life – her former boyfriend Pablo, then her husband Arthur – before the flu's outbreak, and gives the novel its optimistic aspect.

It is unsurprising, thus, to notice a strong relationship and eerie parallel between Mandel's *Station Eleven* and the current outbreak of the Corona virus. Beside serving as a model and test case for understanding the cultural response to an apocalyptic pandemic , *Station Eleven* is considered uniquely relevant to the COVID-19 situation. For its tale has featured the same — if not more — shocking pandemic tropes found in our current society: the hospitals overrun with victims, the halted businesses, and the abandoned airports. Besides, the pandemic —both in *Station Eleven* and in real life—reminds us that the social and cultural boundaries we use to structure our societies — are feeble and insecure, not stable and tight.

On the other hand, unlike the COVID-19 situation, the fictional virus featured in *Station Eleven* has flipped a switch from civilization to chaos, killing almost all who are infected; in addition to the cities that rotted away, the roads that gridlocked, and the electricity, internet, oil, and medicines that become non-existent. Besides, where the incubation period of the Corona virus takes weeks, the incubation period of the Georgian Flu in *Station Eleven* is mere hours; and within a matter of days the entire world has become infected. Moreover, while Corona virus and lockdown have stimulated a sudden increase in the use of technology, the Georgian Flu has led to a post-technology world. The few survivors of the pandemic have to rediscover how to generate electricity and how to operate smartphones and credit cards on which they once relied.

Hence, through the lens of fiction, Mandel has strived to take her readers inside a world devastated by a global pandemic — similar to the COVID-19 pandemic. Though highly suspenseful, her *Station Eleven* does not use the pandemic for its shock value. She thus renders world events to sit in the background of her work. The pandemic in Mandel's novel dramatically emphasizes to the survivors how to live with and emerge from the pandemic, and how powerfully interconnected they truly are — the same thing the Corona virus is doing to us .For this purpose, Mandel's fictional pandemic holds a distorted mirror up to our lives, with the aim of rendering us really question our faith, creativity and human relationships; long for the world we live in right now;

and better understand the way the pandemic sharpens complex, diverse, and multi-faceted fears about change (along with posing an immediate threat to our health) .

To sum up, though following the traditional politics of disaster of the dystopian pandemic fiction in wiping out much of the humanity, creating alternative realities and unfamiliar post-apocalyptic environments with re-imagined, complex social structures, and highlighting the fragility of our existence, Mandel is a bit different in creating a vision of the world in the grips of a global pandemic that astonishes in its simplicity and decency. She creates what is possibly the most thought-provoking post- pandemic novel by taking her readers beyond statistics of global deaths and degree of spread, to teach them about the effect of these deadly manifestations on humanity. In other words, looking at the fictional pandemic as a moment of disruption or as an epidemiological fact – Mandel believes – is to have a narrow view of the future. That is why, the therapeutic details of the destructive virus in *Station Eleven* are less important than the human condition this novel is made for exploring. With such accelerated Georgian Flu, there is no battling for resources, "no war to be fought, no mobilizing force to save humanity...There is simply life before the collapse, and the largely empty world after (2014:38)." The remaining, tiny human population becomes intensely interesting, and so Mandel focuses her story solely on them.

Managing to demonstrate how the featured pandemic in *Station Eleven* is a symptom of something different – something profound, this study thus draws on Tom Moylan's concept of *Critical Dystopia* and Calder Williams' praxis of *Salvage punk* as relevant approaches, modes of resistance to, and means of living through this epoch of catastrophe. In a reality that has become chaotic, these approaches help Mandel to think through the possibilities and potentials, and perhaps paradoxically– provide a way of appreciating the graces of everyday life, finding comfort, envisioning hope, and keeping a utopian spirit. In an attempt to provide a model for thinking about the ruins, Mandel demonstrates how the survivors will live through this pandemic and, will ultimately recapture, repurpose, and recreate the world anew out of the colossal remains of discarded utopias. Accordingly, Mandel suggests the essential factors that would survive, or could be salvaged, and seem to make a life worth living: The ways of how to make from the broken same the livelier constructs of something other.

Though vital, survival is not enough– according to Mandel. To survive – she maintains – humans have to do more than just living. They need more than to eat, drink and breathe. They need to thrive, explore, challenge, and question themselves. They need to live as well as survive. But what could be salvaged – according to Mandel – to make them recover a sense of normality, rebuild, and recreate the world a new?

Tapping into Tom Moylan's and Calder Williams's utopian possibilities of repurposing and recreating the world anew out of the wreckage that remains, Mandel maintains that human connection is among the fundamental aspects of life to be salvaged or to be considered necessary for survival in a time of societal chaos. The desire to be connected is manifested through the Travelling Symphony who band together to show people what was best about the world through their versions of Shakespearean plays. Tyler's leaving of the airport with his soon to be cult of 'religious wanderers' exemplifies as well how it is humans' nature to bond with those around and to yearn for a community to which one belongs. The establishment of the Severn City Airport as a place for a new community also demonstrates how the survivors prioritize the need to belong and be in the presence of others. Besides, the community of the airport helps Mandel highlight the importance of social ties in creating a fulfilling life and giving human lives meaning beyond a secluded existence.

Not only the people whom one loves and cares for are the ones who make life worth living. To lead a meaningful life – Mandel maintains – it is also important to live life for one's self: To be happy with the people in our lives and with ourselves. Miranda, for instance, does not find happiness until she begins to live for herself. The moment she realizes that she no longer has to shape her life around Pablo, her ex-boyfriend, she feels free. The same happens the moment she divorces Arthur: She feels then free enough to travel around the world and do things that she is interested in.

Purpose, faith, and the hopeful belief that tomorrow will be a better day are also crucial in making life worth living and in establishing a sense of self within the characters' lives. On analyzing each character, one realizes Mandel's genius. Clark, for instance, is among the survivors who look to new ways to define their world and who struggle to find purpose. At the beginning, he has gone through life as a ghost – just barely surviving. But it is not until the establishment of the Museum of Civilization that we truly see Clark happy. Tyler, as well, creates hope for himself though there isn't much to be hopeful

about. Becoming the prophet, Tyler believes that humans were saved not only to bring, spread, and be the light. They were saved for being – themselves – the light. And, by becoming the light, Tyler essentially obtains the hope he needs to survive – not only for himself but also for his followers. Kristen and the rest of the Travelling Symphony, likewise, make their lives worth living. Although they have undergone difficulty, music and art give them joy and purpose. Kristen, in particular, copes with her new unfortunate life, infuses it with passion and purpose, and does all that is in her power to make the best of it rather than grieve endlessly for what she no longer has, and what she cannot have.

What can also be salvaged and make life worth living– according to Mandel – is art. Acting as a reminder of what humanity is capable of, art provides so many nuances to human existence and can be the best means toward cultivating a civilization and preserving our humanity. The art that the survivors fight to preserve in *Station Eleven* is a comic book, a musical interlude, a museum display, Shakespearean plays and classical symphonies – the things that we think of as the highest and most exalted expressions of our culture. By performing these works of art, the members of the Travelling Symphony preserve an important part of pre-collapse life and – in a subtle way – remind others of their humanity. The particular power of art Mandel celebrates is not, however, the power associated with its creation or consumption; it is the power of sharing art – the fact that Miranda has no expectation that anybody else will ever see her work. For her, the most important thing is the work of art itself, not whether or not it is ever published. The Travelling symphony's goal, as well, is not simply to read Shakespeare's plays or perform them for one another; it is to share them with audiences who may not have heard or seen them before. Thus as Mandel has demonstrated, art – in all its forms – can extract emotion from us, bring us into connection with others, change, challenge, build, and offer hope for us. Art will always survive through all disasters.

Acknowledging, revising, and repurposing the spirits of the past are other means of making life worth living. The spiritual connection with the past of technology and man - made institutions – Mandel believes – is a cognitive reminder that the world was once a place of equilibrium, and facilitates the reader towards recognizing the true conditions of the present. Nevertheless, though extolling the value of the pastwh, Mandel manages to offer hope not through a re-kindling of an exhausted past, but through a new imagined future – in another world just out of sight.

To conclude, Mandel in *Station Eleven* –by administering Tom Moylan's and Calder Williams' utopian approaches– rises above the gloominess of the usual dystopian novels, contributes to deconstructing nihilistic spirit, and assists in reconstructing alternatives. Exploring in detail life during, before and after the deadly pandemic, alternating between stories, scattering timelines, and then weaving the narrative together, Mandel suggests that destruction, disorder and horror are not terrible sustainable ways of life; thus making it seems plausible that there will eventually be some kind of hope. It is not, however, the kind of hope where one would eventually restore and restart society all over again. It is a different sort of hope. It is about what is to be chosen, salvaged and repurposed, what makes life meaningful, what allows people to flourish, and what is needed to live for. Hence, to view *Station Eleven* only as a prophetic look into the future is to miss the message that underlies Mandel's work, namely, revealing what lies buried within the rotten core of our present societies, recognizing what is worth holding onto, dismissing not the utopian potential of imagining things differently, and salvaging what fulfills, sustains, and nurtures us back to our best selves.

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إعادة النظر فى الجائحة : إنتشال الأمل وإستخلاص جوهر الحياة فى رواية "المحطة رقم ١١" لإيميلى سانت جون ماندل

المستخلص

تختص الورقة البحثية الحالية بدراسة رواية "المحطة رقم ١١" (2014) لإيميلى سانت جون ماندل، بهدف التأكيد على أن كل ما يتعلق بالحالة الإنسانية وكل ما يجعل الحياة ذات مغزى — هما أهم ما كُتبت من أجله هذه الرواية . لذا، فإن التحقق من فلسفة ماندل — "البقاء وحده لا يكفى" والتعمق فى رؤيتها الآملة للمستقبل الواعد — هما الهدفان الأهم لهذه الدراسه، أكثر من مجرد التنقيب فى شكل الحياة فى خضم الجائحة العالمية والمدى الذى يمكن أن يصل إليه البشر من أجل البقاء. لذا تستند الدراسة الحالية إلى نهجين — "أدب المدينة الفاسدة النقدى" لتوم مويلان ونظرية "إنقاذ التالف" لإيفان كالدر ويليام فى محاولة لترجمة أفكار ماندل التوعوية .. لتستنتج الباحثة فى نهاية الدراسة أن رواية "المحطة رقم ١١" تستدعى ما هو أكثرمن مجرد الشعور المؤلم الذي تخلفه الجائحه بإنفلات الحياة ، و ذلك من خلال إنتشال الأمل وإستخلاص جوهر الحياة مع التمسك بكل ما هو قيم وفاضل.

الكلمات المفتاحية
الجائحة – نهاية العالم – نظرية "إنقاذ التالف" – مفهوم المدينة الفاسدة النقدى – إميلى سانت جون ماندل.

Framing the Serial Killer in Thomas Harris' *Hannibal Lecter* Trilogy: A Corpus-Assisted Critical Stylistic Approach

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Abstract

This paper uses a combination of corpus-based and qualitative approaches to investigate the 'framing' of criminals in fiction on serial killers, particularly in the works of the top-selling novelist Thomas Harris. These works feature detectives/psychologists and villains who tend to be psychopathic men involved in criminal actions that range from kidnapping to murder. Framing can be used to understand and explore how an entity is constructed, communicated and shaped. It can be defined as 'schemata' or repertoires of organized patterns of thinking which can be triggered by the framing devices presented in the text (Kitzinger, 2007). Using WordSmith5, the frequency of words related to 'killers' and 'murder' and the concordance lines of the names of each serial killer used as node words, are all extracted and examined. Concordance lines, which present 'the analyst with instances of a word or cluster in its immediate co-text' (Baker et al., 2008, p. 279), are examined qualitatively to identify linguistic patterns using the critical stylistic tools proposed by Jeffries (2010a) – including, for example, naming and describing, equating and contrasting, assuming and implying, prioritizing, representing actions/ events/ states, modality choices and metaphor. This paper, to a large extent, shows that the suggested corpus-assisted critical stylistic approach provides a comprehensive model for the study of the serial killers in the selected novels, and possibly, and more generally, for the study of characters in fiction. Indeed, the main achievement of this approach which involves a synergy of quantitative and

qualitative methods is the provision of a more comprehensive and systematic analysis of large amounts of data.

Keywords: Framing, Critical Stylistics, Corpus Linguistics, Crime Fiction, Serial Killers, Thomas Harris

1. Introduction

The term 'serial killer[1]' was coined in the 1970s by Robert Ressler, a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agent. The official FBI definition of the term 'serial killer' is a murderer who perpetrates 'three or more separate [homicides] with an emotional cooling-off period between homicides, each murder taking place at a different location' (Schechter & Everitt, 1996, p. 69). In other words, the 'serial killer' is a particular type of killer, encompassing any murderer who kills for personal satisfaction sequentially and whose motivation and behaviour are validated by their personal history, particularly child abuse. This type of killer tends to murder within his own ethnic group, to target a particular type of victim, and to employ the same *modus operandi* in all his murders as a kind of repetitive and highly ritualised homicidal behaviour. Statistically, serial killers are overwhelmingly male and their victims are women, sex workers, children, and gay males (Caputi, 1993; Simpson, 2001; Young, 1991). Hence, the serial killer 'represents an extreme of patriarchal *masculinity* and masculinity's valued traits of independence (loner mentality), sexual aggression, emotional detachment, affinity for violence and objectification and hatred of the feminine' (Caputi, 1993, p. 103).

The serial killers' pleasure is most often the sole source of motivation for their crimes (Ressler & Schachtman, 1997, p. 155).

> They [serial killers] don't kill as a means to an end, such as an armed robber would; they kill or rape or torture because they enjoy it, because it

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[1] Psychology of Psychopaths. https://sites.google.com/site/psychologyofpsychopaths4a/what-is-the-profile-of-a-serial-killer-1/what-are-the-different-types-of-serial-killers.

Psychology Today. https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/conditions/dissociative-identity-disorder-multiple-personality-disorder.

gives them satisfaction and a feeling of domination and control so lacking from every other aspect of their shabby, inadequate, and cowardly lives. (Douglas & Olshaker, 1997, p. 29)

Ressler & Schachtman (1992, p. 45) acknowledge that serial killers, and more particularly rapists and child molesters, possess their own rationale for committing crime, namely, their pleasure and satisfaction, their indulgence of pressing impulses, and their need for self-expression.

The serial killer has become a cultural icon around which a considerable media industry has evolved. Serial killers, who tend to be better known than their victims, are stereotypically featured in books, sensational films and TV shows as psychologically troubled single white males who are typically ordinary and barely distinguishable from others. Indeed, 'countless films and novels, both overtly and covertly, present the serial killer as sacred monster/hero' (Caputi, 1999, p. 150). More frequently, however, fiction about serial killers focuses not only on the serial killer but also on the detectives or psychological profilers who investigate the serial murder cases. Indeed, the 'mystification of the serial killer is accompanied by mystification of his 'rivals', elite members of the FBI whose job is to track him down, relying mainly on their 'special vision'' (Tithecott, 1997, p. 29-30). The rivalry between the detective or psychological profiler and the serial killer is popularised in fiction in order to make the story more interesting. The profiler is typically a police officer or expert in the field, who is called upon to formulate hypotheses and predictions regarding the identity and future behaviour of the unknown murderer. The profiler examines the evidence and clues left behind by the killer, detects the killer's pattern of behaviour, and eventually constructs a character sketch of the murderer. This sketch also includes an outline of childhood abuse suffered and/or a fractured personality which would provide a set of motives for the killer (Douglas & Olshaker, 1997; Ressler & Schachtman, 1992, 1997). Interestingly, however, the boundary between the killer and profiler is sometimes dangerously porous. This idea is encapsulated by what Schmid (2005, p. 280) calls the 'Lecter syndrome', which represents the tradition within the genre in which serial killers are consulted about other serial killers. This situation is depicted in protagonist-killer fiction, such as Harris's novels, whereby detained killers act as profilers and eventually lead to capturing other perpetrators.

According to the FBI profilers, serial killers are classified into two main categories: organised and disorganised killers. Organised killers tend to plan and hunt very carefully. They often have a repetitive pattern which is manifested in always using the same weapons, treating the bodies in a particular way, taking care of incriminating evidence, staging the crime scene and keeping trophies. They are intelligent and socially competent enough to charm their victims into accompanying them. They also tend to lead a double life which enables them to conceal their crimes for long periods of time. Disorganised killers, by contrast, tend to kill impulsively and opportunistically with no attempt to dispose of evidence or keep trophies. They tend to have a long history of institutionalisation, and to be unemployed, socially incompetent, and aggressive. FBI profilers[2] propose further classifications of serial killers, as shown in Table 1 below.

No.	Type of Killer	Definition		
1	**Hedonists**	They kill for fun or profit	**Subtypes**	
			Lust Killers kill for sexual gratification	
			Thrill Killers kill for the thrill of killing	
			Gain Killers Subtypes:	
			1	**Contract Killers** (Hired to kill)
			2	**Black Widows** (Females who kill their spouses)
			3	**Blue Beard Killers** (Males who kill their spouses)
			4	**Lethal Caretakers** (Kill patients for profit)
			5	**Cost Cutters** (Kill to save money)
2	**Visionaries**	They are psychotic, having hallucinations that they are ordered by God or the Devil to kill.		

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[2] https://www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications/serial-murder

3	**Missionaries**	They kill to "Clean-up" the world.
4	**Power Seekers**	They kill to exert power over strangers.
5	**Revenge Killers**	They kill for revenge.

Table 1 FBI classifications of serial killers

This study follows the path blazed by Gregoriou who has examined serial killers in a number of linguistic studies (see Gregoriou, 2007, 2011, 2017). In her works, Gregorio has studied the portrayal of the criminal in crime fiction and has used stylistic models of analysis to explore the poetic structure of the criminal's mind style (Gregoriou, 2007). She has also explored criminal ideology and the construction of criminal identity in serial killer narratives (Gregoriou, 2011). She has not only examined crime fiction but shed light on other types of crime and crime-preventing discourses (Gregoriou, 2017). This study, however, uses a corpus-assisted critical stylistic approach to explore the framing of serial killers in three novels by Thomas Harris, namely *Red Dragon* (1981), *The Silence of the Lambs* (1988), and *Hannibal* (1999). Thomas Harris is an American writer who is best known for a series of suspense novels about his most famous serial killer character, Dr Hannibal Lecter. The selected novels are all international bestsellers. They have been translated into many languages and have been adapted into films: *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991), *Hannibal* (2001), *and Red Dragon* (2002). These novels tend to provide stereotypical depictions of the serial killer. In Harris's novels, Dr Hannibal Lecter, a cannibal serial killer, is also a 'charismatic, intelligent, fascinating' and famous psychologist (Gates, 2006, p. 259). He is white, heterosexual, socially high-functioning, and leading a double life. In two of Harris' novels, however, there is a deviation from the normative and stereotypical presumptions about serial killers. For example, the serial killer Jame Gumb, a.k.a. 'Buffalo Bill' in *The Silence of the Lambs,* has attracted much critical attention, for his unique sexuality, as someone who is 'biologically' male but seeking to be female via crafting a 'woman suit' made from real female skin. This character reportedly set off a homophobic moral panic and generated protests by gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transsexual activists who argued that the representation of this character was offensive and had the potential to incite violence and hatred against people of non-standard genders and sexual orientations (Fuss, 1993). Another example is the serial killer Francis Dolarhyde in *Red Dragon* who is

depicted as being physically deformed, having a harelip and ugly teeth. *The Silence of the Lambs* and *Red Dragon* feature pairs of serial killers, with one less competent than the other. Respectively, the more competent and professional killer is   Hannibal Lecter; whereas the less competent killers include Buffalo Bill and Francis Dolarhyde.

In serial killer novels, the identity of the murderer is usually a mystery and the detective and/or psychological profiler attempt/s to solve it through analysing the evidence the killer leaves behind and that is revealed through autopsies of the victims. Sometimes, the identity of the killer is concealed until the very end of the story giving a shock revelation and a surprise since the killer turns out to be someone beyond suspicion.

2. Theoretical Approaches

2.1 Framing

This study uses 'framing' to explore the way serial killers are represented in the selected novels. Framing is widely used in the social sciences in disciplines such as sociology, culture studies, social psychology, political science, discourse analysis, linguistics, communication, media studies, journalism and so on (Benford & Snow, 2000; Hallahan, 1999; Mendes, 2011). It has been employed in a number of linguistic and literary studies (Hofling, 1987; Hufford, 1995; Tannen, 1986, 1993).

Framing is particularly useful for understanding and exploring how an entity is constructed, communicated and shaped. The notion of framing was first introduced by the social anthropologist Gregory Bateson who defined it as a means by which the human mind classifies and understands the world (Hallahan, 1999). A frame can be defined as 'a spatial and temporal bounding of a set of interactive messages' which serves to regulate people's understanding of the appropriate roles and rules guiding their behaviour in a particular context (Bateson, 1972, p. 191); as 'schemata of interpretation' (Goffman, 1974, p. 10)

which provide people with a context that enables them to 'locate, perceive, identify and label' (Goffman, 1974, p. 21) the information necessary for understanding a certain situation or event; as 'schemata' or repertoires of organized patterns of thinking which can be triggered by the framing devices presented in the text (Kitzinger, 2007); or as a central part of culture being institutionalized in a range of different ways which are 'used to organise codes, stereotypes, values, norms' (van Gorp, 2007, p. 62).

Robert Entman suggests that 'framing essentially involves selection and salience. To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text' (Entman, 1993, p. 53). Entman proposes that, within the communication process, there are four elements involved in the framing of any entity: the communicator, the text, the receiver, and the culture.

> Communicators make conscious or unconscious framing judgments in deciding what to say, guided by frames (often called schemata) that organize their belief systems. The text contains frames, which are manifested by the presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments. […] The culture is the stock of commonly invoked frames; in fact, culture might be defined as the empirically demonstrable set of common frames exhibited in the discourse and thinking of most people in a social grouping (Entman, 1993, p. 52-53).

This study is concerned with how characters, and more particularly, serial killers, are framed in a novel. The communicator in this context would be the author who is responsible for providing and organising the information that is conveyed to readers (receivers) through the text. The author intentionally frames his characters in a certain way through deciding what details about the characters to tell; which features and qualities to grant them; which features and qualities to emphasise or de-emphasise; which actions they should make, and so on. The author also deliberately makes the text more salient through the use of linguistic and rhetorical devices. The author's main aim is likely to attract readers' attention, influence their perceptions and make them more involved with the characters.

2.2 Critical Stylistics

The term *Critical Stylistics* was coined by Leslie Jeffries (2007) who considers it a development of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Jeffries adopts Fairclough's argument that CDA has three dimensions or stages which are 'description', 'interpretation' and 'explanation' (2007, 2010a). She argues that many CDA scholars focus on the third stage, i.e. explanation, by 'explaining how texts fit into the socio-political landscape in which they are produced or read' (2010a, p. 11). She adds that Critical Stylistics, which would take a strongly language-oriented stance, is interested in the first two stages, namely, description and interpretation. Critical Stylistics aims to 'assemble the main general functions that a text has in representing 'reality' and organising 'the world we experience', which can be 'demonstrable in the words and structures of the texts themselves' (Jeffries, 2010a, p. 14). In order to fulfil this aim, critical stylistics uses 'models of language, analytical techniques and methodologies from linguistics to facilitate the study of style in its widest sense' (Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010, p. 1).

Although CDA utilises elements of functional grammar inspired by Halliday (1985), and, more particularly, versions of modality and transitivity (Fairclough, 1989; Fowler, 1991), it is less concerned with detailed, linguistic analysis. Such disinterest in detailed linguistic analysis, according to Jeffries, results in a 'patchy' coverage of linguistic structures, and a lack of a clear, comprehensive toolkit for the analysis of texts (2010a, p. 6). Critical Stylistics, on the other hand, introduces a systematic model of analysis (Jeffries, 2007, 2010a).

The Toolkit of Critical Stylistics

I will briefly outline the tools of Critical Stylistics as presented by Jeffries (2007, 2010a). This combines linguistic features from critical linguistics (Fowler, 1991, 1996) and CDA (Fairclough, 1989, 1992). The toolkit addresses the functional aspect of text analysis in order to 'answer the question of what any text is 'doing'' (Jeffries, 2010a, p. 15).

Naming and Describing

This category, which is similar to the concept of 'referential strategies' and 'nominalization' in CDA (see for example, Fowler, 1991; Reisigl & van Leeuwen, 1996; Wodak, 2001), examines how entities and events are labelled and modified in noun phrases. It deals with the construction of noun phrases: a head noun, sometimes accompanied by premodifiers or postmodifiers, which construct the referent (Jeffries, 2010a, p. 17). Adjectives can be particularly useful in framing, whether attributive, occurring immediately to the left of the node, or predicative, occurring to the right following a copula verb. In my analysis, I have focused on the authors' choice of nouns used to refer to serial killers, and of modifying adjectives, either attributive or predicative, to describe them. These choices contribute to the construction and framing of the serial killers. The effect of selecting certain nouns to refer to the entities in question would be to 'package up' ideological content '*in the head noun itself*' (Jeffries, 2010a, p. 25). The head noun, however, can be post-modified or pre-modified, which further enhances the packaging up of ideas or information (Jeffries, 2010a, p. 19) and presents the propositional content of the noun phrase as an existential presupposition. Readers are unlikely to question such presuppositions and, rather, take them for granted. This allows authors to manipulate readers into adopting a certain perspective towards the entity in question.

Representing Actions/Events/States – Transitivity Analysis

This tool involves the analysis of transitivity choices, based on Simpson's (1993) approach to Halliday's functional grammar. Halliday proposes three 'metafunctions' of language: the interpersonal metafunction which is concerned with the social and power relations among language users, the ideational metafunction which is concerned with our experience of the outer world, and the textual metafunction which is language-oriented and is concerned with the production of cohesive and coherent text (Halliday, 1981, p. 328).

Transitivity is a system which construes experiences through a set of process types and relates them to the participants and circumstances involved in the production of the clause. The concept of transitivity developed by Halliday (1985) and further developed by Simpson (1993) 'assigns lexical verbs to a

number of different categories, according to the kind of process or state they appear to be describing' (Jeffries, 2010a, p. 40). The categories are classified 'according to whether they represent actions, speech, states of mind or simply states of being,' as material, verbalisation, mental and relational processes (Simpson, 1993, p. 88). Transitivity is particularly useful for observing 'who is doing what to whom' which is quite useful in the analysis of the types of actions performed by serial killers on their victims.

Equating and Contrasting

This category is concerned with how texts construct oppositional and equivalent meanings. Oppositional and equivalent meanings can be signalled via syntactic triggers, including co-ordinating and subordinating conjunctions (such as *and, but, or, yet* etc), semantic relationships or parallel clause structures. A recurrent example of equating is detected in the data, as shown in the analysis below: Thomas Harris tends to use appositional equivalence, which involves the juxtaposition of two NPs, in referring to serial killers. Opposition and contrasting, on the other hand, can be triggered by antonymy (which puts two events, states or existences into contrast with each other) and negation (which opposes non-events against events, non-states against states or non-existence against existence and thereby constructs 'unrealized worlds') (Nahajec, 2009, p. 109). The construction of opposites is at the core of constructing serial killers vs profilers and serial killers vs victims.

Implying and Assuming

This category, which is concerned with implied meanings in texts, relates to pragmatics (Jeffries, 2010a, p. 93). It can be realised by the processes of presupposition (Levinson, 1983) and implicature (Grice, 1975). Presuppositions assume the existence of an entity or event, or the occurrence of an action. For example, the use of the possessive pronoun 'his' in the NP 'his cold yellow eyes' (concordance 9) presupposes the existence of a male participant. In 'We'd have a goddamned stampede if people thought Lecter was out' (concordance 61), the adverb 'out' presupposes that Lecter is detained. Presuppositions are also 'preserved in negative sentences or statements' (Levinson, 1983, p. 177).

Implicatures, on the other hand, can be conversational or conventional. Conversational implicatures involve inferring implied meanings from the text when there is a flouting or violation of one or more of Grice's maxims (Jeffries, 2010a, p. 99). Grice (1975, 1978) introduced the Cooperative Principle, arguing that in communication people follow four co-operative maxims: quality, quantity, relation and manner. These maxims demand that one's contribution to the communicative situation be truthful (quality), informative (quantity), relevant (relation) and specific (manner) (1975, p. 47). Metaphors, for example, can be seen as a flouting of the quality maxim. Conventional implicatures, however, can be 'intuitively grasped' (Grice, 1975, p. 50) and 'are not derived from superordinate pragmatic principles like the maxims, but are simply attached by convention to particular lexical items or expressions' (Levinson, 1983, p. 127). A conventional implicature can be seen as a pragmatic presupposition. Jeffries tends to use both terms interchangeably (Jeffries, 2010b, p. 3). Indeed, both implicatures and presuppositions have a potential 'for impacting on the reader/hearer because [of] the relatively 'hidden' nature of these types of meaning' (Jeffries, 2010a, p. 102).

Hypothesising - Modality

Simpson (1993, p. 46) proposes that modality involves the expression of degrees of certainty or uncertainty in relation to propositions. He distinguishes three modal systems, namely: epistemic, deontic and boulomaic which refer to degrees of confidence in the truth of a statement, obligation and desirability respectively. Modality can be triggered in the text through using modal auxiliaries, lexical verbs, modal adverbs or adjectives and conditional structures (Jeffries, 2010a, p. 118). If a sentence does not contain any modality, it is described as categorical. Categorical sentences construct entities and events as given facts.

Prioritising

This tool relates to the ways in which attention can be drawn to certain information by making some pieces of information more or less salient. There are three main ways of prioritising in the English language: exploiting the conventions of information structure since new and important information tends

to be placed at the end of a sentence; the transformation of active into passive voice which is relevant to the salience of final clause elements; and the possibilities offered by subordination which allow us to place some pieces of information at a low level of sentence structure, where it will be less prominent.

2.3 Corpus Methods

In this paper, I use a corpus-assisted critical stylistic approach. Corpus-linguistic tools allow a researcher to deal with large amounts of data and facilitate detecting linguistic patterns. It is necessary to start with a brief introduction to some key terms. A corpus may be defined as 'collections of texts (or parts of text) that are stored and accessed electronically' (Hunston, 2002, p. 2). Specialised corpora represent 'a given type of text' (Hunston, 2002, p. 14), such as the selected novels of crime fiction which are the focus of this study. CL provides a *methodology* for systematically investigating such corpora using computer software tools (McEnery & Wilson, 2001, p. 2). CL incorporates both quantitative aspects, such as frequency measures and statistics, and qualitative investigation, especially in concordance analysis. This study uses a number of CL procedures including frequency lists and concordances.

Frequency

The corpus-linguistic software tool, WordSmith5, affords the creation of wordlists. Wordlists constitute the 'essential starting point for a systematic textual analysis' (Stubbs, 2005, p. 11). A wordlist displays all the words and the number of their occurrences in a given corpus, ordered either alphabetically or according to their frequency, starting with the most frequent words which are usually grammatical words (Baker, 2006, p. 47). I have used the Wordlist function in WordSmith5 initially to calculate the frequencies of the names of the serial killers and the words related to their crimes.

Concordances

WordSmith5 also affords the extraction of concordances, thus producing 'all of the examples of a search term in the context that it appears in' (Baker & McEnery, 2005, p. 202). A concordance, which is also referred to as 'key word in context' (KWIC), yields a particular node word within its immediate co-text,

which is usually whatever number of words is specified to the left and right of the node word (Baker, 2006, p. 71). Concordance lists constitute the starting point for qualitative analysis. In this paper, concordances of the names of the serial killers in the selected novels are used to qualitatively explore the framing of each serial killer through employing these critical stylistic tools.

Aim of the Study and Research Questions

This study aims to explore how serial killers are framed in the selected novels using a corpus-assisted critical stylistic approach. It attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. How can tools from corpus linguistics and critical stylistics be combined in the analysis of the construction of serial killers?
2. How are serial killers linguistically framed in the selected crime novels?

3. Methodology

This study combines tools from Critical Stylistics and Corpus Linguistics to explore the framing of serial killers in the selected novels. The corpus-linguistic tools are used to obtain the frequency and the concordance lists of the names of the serial killers, used as node words. This facilitates the application of the toolkit of Critical Stylistics, and hence, the detection of the linguistic patterns used in framing or linguistically constructing each serial killer. The methodology used in this paper involves the following procedures:

- The selected novels are prepared and saved as text files.
- The CL tool, WordSmith5, is used to extract wordlists and concordances.
- In each novel, the top 200 most frequent words are examined; and words related to murder, crime, and killers are identified.
- Concordances (the immediate context) of the name of each killer are examined to explore the critical stylistic tools employed to linguistically 'frame' these criminals.
- Special attention is dedicated to the following critical stylistic tools:
  - Naming and describing
    - Direct descriptions of physical appearance and manner
    - Specific forms of reference to killers
    - Attributes used to qualify killers

- ▪ Predicates (predicative nouns/adjectives) used to qualify killers
- o Representing Actions/Events/States
  - ▪ Transitivity analysis
- o Equating and contrasting
  - ▪ Apposition equivalence
  - ▪ Contrast and antithesis
- o Implying and Assuming
  - ▪ Implicature
  - ▪ Metaphors

4. Analysis and Discussion
4.1 Frequency

Repetition of certain words referring to characters and major events in the text helps to focus readers' attention on them. This is the reason behind the high frequency of names of the major characters in each book. The top 200 most frequent words are examined; and words related to murder, investigation and killers are identified, see Table 2 below.

Red Dragon	Freq.	*The Silence of the Lambs*	Freq.	*Hannibal*	Freq.
DOLARHYDE	289	STARLING	656	STARLING	657
LECTER	151	LECTER	308	LECTER	521
DRAGON	108	CATHERINE	144	MASON	311
FRANCIS	82	CLARICE	127	HANNIBAL	195
VOICE	80	BUFFALO_BILL	94	CLARICE	111
POLICE	79	GUMB	89	VERGER	97
TOOTH_FAIRY	74	FREDRICA	66	FBI	83
		BODY	65	BLOOD	49
		FBI	57	DEATH	48

Table 2 Frequency of words related to serial killers and crime (in top 200): Thomas Harris

The three novels have, among the most frequent words, the names of the major participants in the plot: the serial killers ('Dolarhyde', 'Lecter', 'Dragon', 'Francis' and 'Tooth fairy' in *Red Dragon*; 'Lecter', 'Buffalo Bill' and 'Gumb' in *The Silence of the Lambs*; 'Hannibal' and 'Lecter' in *Hannibal*), the FBI agents/profilers ('Lecter' in *Red Dragon*; 'Starling', 'Lecter' and 'Clarice' in *The Silence of the Lambs*; 'Starling' and 'Clarice' in *Hannibal*), victims ('Catherine' in *Silence of the Lambs*) and police forces ('Police' in *Red Dragon*; 'FBI' in *The Silence of the Lambs* and *Hannibal*).

Other frequent words include the word 'voice' in *Red Dragon* since Dolarhyde has auditory hallucinations in which he hears the voice of a dragon ordering him to kill and cleanse the world. 'Fredrica' is the name of the first victim in *The Silence of the Lambs* who provides the main clue that leads to the capture of Buffalo Bill[3]. The words 'Mason', 'Verger', and 'death' are frequent in *Hannibal* since Mason Verger, the arch-enemy of Dr Lecter in that novel who has been maimed and disfigured by Lecter, plans to have Lecter tortured to death.

4.2 Concordance Analysis

Concordances, using the name of the serial killer in each story as a node word, were extracted and examined qualitatively to detect linguistic features using the Critical Stylistics tools. The extracted concordances are listed and numbered to simplify cross-referencing in the analysis, see Tables 3-5 below.

Francis Dolarhyde, in *Red Dragon*, suffers from what can be referred to as 'Dissociative Identity Disorder'[4], formerly 'Multiple Personality Disorder', which is a condition wherein a person's identity is fragmented into two or more distinct personality states often because of severe child abuse. He experiences a psychological conflict having hallucinations that he is controlled by a great Red Dragon that orders him to kill (18-30). Dolarhyde, then, as a serial killer is organized and can be also classified as both a visionary, since he hears voices, and a missionary, since he believes that he kills in order to cleanse the world. The FBI resorts to Dr Hannibal Lecter, a detained convicted serial killer and

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[3] She was the only victim he took time to weigh her body down in the river. Although she was the first victim, she was the third to be discovered. This motivated the detective to search for a clue at Fredrica's hometown suspecting that she might be an acquaintance of the murderer.

[4] https://www.webmd.com/mental-health/dissociative-identity-disorder-multiple-personality-disorder#1

previously a renowned psychologist, to help them profile the killer (31, 32, 35, 36, 40).

Through the tool of naming and describing, the physical description of Francis Dolarhyde is provided using a series of nouns and adjectives. Dolarhyde is described as 'shy' (3), 'deformed' (10), 'ugly', and 'impotent' (32). There are also references to his cold 'yellow eyes' (9, 13), being 'deformed' (10), and to his having 'a harelip' (16) and ugly 'teeth' (12). To further frame Dolarhyde in the readers' minds, apposition equivalence is employed in a series of references to Dolarhyde as a 'damned murderer' (5), 'forty-two years old' (11), 'a psychopathic slayer' (38), and 'the bastard' (63).

The character Dolarhyde is framed by his suffering throughout the novel and, more particularly, when he falls in love with Reba. He experiences an internal conflict between the Dragon's desire to get Reba killed and his own love for her and desire to protect her from the Dragon (18, 19, 26, 27, 28). Dolarhyde's suffering is sometimes depicted metaphorically, and hence, it is framed through the tool of implying. Readers are able to grasp the implicatures created by metaphors, which are considered flouts of Grice's quality maxim. Dolarhyde has a difficulty in pronunciation since 'The plosive G defeated him' (14) and this is likely to reduce his self-confidence. When he is jealous to see his beloved Reba with another man, Mandy, 'pain shot through Dolarhyde' (1), and it even increases when Reba kisses Mandy which 'stabbed Dolarhyde deep' (6).

Features of Dolarhyde's character are depicted through the use of material, mental and relational processes. The fact that he is physically deformed and psychologically unstable appears in the processes 'covered the mirrors' and 'wore no mask' (2), 'Dolarhyde is trembling' (4), and 'Dolarhyde felt like a child' (7). In his childhood, he spent a few years in an orphanage (15) and was abused by his Grandmother (17). The processes also frame his interest in the media's coverage of his crimes: he keeps buying the newspaper, the 'Tattler', and keeps paper clips of the news items covering his crimes, 'Tattler were scattered where Dolarhyde had clipped it' (8); he abducts the journalist who branded him as *the Tooth Fairy* and bad-mouthed him in the Tattler (33) and tortures him to death 'I am the Dragon and you call me insane' (29). In his *modus operandi*, he bites his victims and leaves marks of his crooked teeth on their bodies (34).

No.	Concordance
Dolarhyde	
1	Sharp pain shot through Dolarhyde, pain and terrible
2	snake. It covered the mirror. Dolarhyde wore no mask.
3	it with her fingers. Shy Mr. Dolarhyde. She was perfectly
4	yes Do you feel me now? yes Dolarhyde is trembling. His
5	the way back. As she slept, Dolarhyde, damned murderer of
6	Reba kiss Mandy had stabbed Dolarhyde deep. Then the pain
7	he looked like Grandmother. Dolarhyde felt like a child
8	Tattler were scattered where Dolarhyde had clipped it for
9	with his cold yellow eyes, Dolarhyde understood her anger
10	mother. He told Mrs. Dolarhyde about the deformed
11	of the house where Francis Dolarhyde, forty-two years old
12	the glass containing his teeth. Dolarhyde always puts in his
Francis	
13	looked into the yellow eyes of Francis Dolarhyde and fear
14	The plosive G defeated him. Francis strangled easily on
15	And mother Dolarhyde called for Francis at the orphanage and
16	together and told them that Francis was a harelip but the
17	child of the Devil after all, Francis. You are my good boy.
Dragon	
18	How could he be sure the Dragon then would leave her a
19	he keep from giving her to the Dragon? One way kept nudging
20	his death would affect the Dragon, now that he and the Dragon were Two?
21	He was Becoming and the Dragon was his higher self.
22	WHO IS ACCEPTABLE? the Dragon asked.
23	LOOK AT ME. The Dragon glowed from the wall.
24	From the beginning, he and the Dragon had been one. He was
25	WILL BE CLEANSED OF YOU, the Dragon said effortlessly.
26	to give Reba McClane to the Dragon. He thought about what
27	if he were not as strong as the Dragon, Reba would die. He kn

28	against the headboard. The Dragon wants you, Reba. He al
29	warmed in him now. I am the Dragon and you call me insane
30	He knew it was the voice of the Dragon. This new twoness with the Dragon disoriented him.
Fairy (the Tooth Fairy)	
31	you help us stir up the Tooth Fairy, Doctor? A lot of people
32	He speculated that the Tooth Fairy was ugly, impotent with
33	I really bad-mouth the Tooth Fairy in the Tattler and then
34	was unconscious when the Tooth Fairy bit him?
35	to some chairs. The Tooth Fairy had to have a van or a
36	in the picture. The Tooth Fairy kills the pet first, is
37	An FBI trap to catch the Tooth Fairy backfires and a veteran
38	their search for the Tooth Fairy, a psychopathic slayer
39	head the hunt for the Tooth Fairy. What went on in this
40	Lecter would draw the Tooth Fairy, Jack. I say the

Table 3 Francis Dolarhyde, the serial killer in *Red Dragon*

In *The Silence of the Lambs*, Dr Lecter, still a detained convict, helps the FBI agent Clarice Starling to capture the serial killer, Buffalo Bill, who abducts women and skins them, by providing a psychological profile for him. To construct the profile, Lecter speculates about the motives behind Buffalo Bill's crimes, selection of victims, *modus operandi* and pattern, and even anticipates the killer's future acts (41, 42, 43, 44, 73, 79, 84). Through profiling, readers know that the killer is 'not a sadist' (43), 'can sew' (44, 56), 'has a two-story house' (48), kills women and skins them to make a vest of their real skin to fulfil his fantasy of becoming a woman (49, 57, 104), 'would start scalping' his victims (52), is 'obsessed with moths' (54), and was a friend of Fredrica, the first victim (55).

The tool of naming is used in referring to the killer as 'Buffalo Bill' (41-53), and 'MOTHER FUCKER' (45). The tool of describing, on the other hand, is employed to provide the physical description and personality features of the killer as a 'white male, thirty-four' years old (58), and as being 'meticulous' (59). The material processes ascribed to the killer further frame his character. The *modus operandi* in his crimes is revealed, readers know that he 'skins his

humps' (50, 51), and uses 'women' (49). In addition, his transgender inclinations are manifest through the material process 'Gumb toweled himself pink' (57). Buffalo Bill, an organized serial killer, can be regarded as a particular type of gain killer, since his goal is to obtain women's skins rather than money from his crimes.

No.	Concordance
Buffalo Bill	
41	Take the knowledge of Buffalo Bill you got from Lecter
42	ford, he's promised he'll name Buffalo Bill in exchange for
43	!" "Dr. Lecter, why do you say Buffalo Bill's not a sadist?"
44	" "Good, Jerry, listen I think Buffalo Bill can sew. He cut
45	WAIST. MOTHER FUCKER CAN SEW. BUFFALO BILL'S TRAINED TO
46	the laundry room. She took the Buffalo Bill file, a four-inch
47	d to leave the Academy to hunt Buffalo Bill, a lot of
48	saved lives. Clarice?" "Yes?" "Buffalo Bill has a two-story house
49	job is--" "How many women has Buffalo Bill used?" "The police
50	e. Do you know why he's called Buffalo Bill?" "Yes." "Tell me
51	"They call him Buffalo Bill because he skins his humps
52	impressed that he could predict Buffalo Bill would start scalping
53	that you do all the time-- hunt Buffalo Bill?" "I do it all I
Gumb	
54	Raspail told Dr. Lecter that Gumb was obsessed with moths,
55	her alive? Worst, Fredrica and Gumb truly were friends to
56	cational Rehabilitation taught Gumb to be a tailor during
57	but he decided they would do. Gumb toweled himself pink and
58	m door. In the shower was Jame Gumb, white male, thirty-

	four
59	vering the ceiling lights. Mr. Gumb was meticulous in the

Table 4 Buffalo Bill, aka Jame Gumb, the serial killer in *Silence of the Lambs*

Dr Hannibal Lecter helps the FBI to capture other serial killers, by providing a psychological profile for the killer and speculating on the motives behind his crimes, selection of victims, his pattern and his next moves. The character of Dr Lecter gives rise to a tendency in both reality and fiction to seek the help of detained serial killers in capturing other serial killers, a tendency deservedly branded as 'the Lecter Syndrome'. Indeed, profiling is intensively employed in the processes of catching serial killers. The police investigation of serial murders involves accumulating a file on the killer for the purposes of profiling that killer, as evidenced in Harris' novels (46, 133, 158).

In *Red Dragon*, the FBI agent, Will Graham, shockingly realises that Lecter is the serial killer they have been chasing and that, unlike other serial killers who keep trophies i.e. parts of their victims' bodies, Lecter has preferred to eat his trophies (71, 114). After a violent confrontation between both Lecter and Graham, Lecter is arrested and declared insane by the court (85). While being detained in an asylum, Lecter continues to help the FBI in profiling other killers. He has helped in profiling both the Red Dragon and Buffalo Bill which consequently led to the disclosure of their identities (41, 42, 43, 54, 96). Indeed, Dolarhyde, the Red Dragon, metaphorically perceives Lecter as selling him to the FBI (60). However, Lecter has never forgotten his grudge against Graham, which is clear in the material processes ascribed to Lecter who has given Graham's address to the Dragon (63, 65). Later, Lecter is approached by Agent Clarice Starling and he helps her to capture Buffalo Bill (129). He grows fond of Clarice and monitors her progress in the FBI even after his escape to Florence. Lecter's emotional attachment to Clarice can be accounted for by facts from his past. He was born in Lithuania and was orphaned when very young, just like Clarice (130, 131). Clarice, in turn, is fascinated by Dr Lecter. She could not tolerate the idea of Mason Verger torturing Dr Lecter to death. Mason Verger, a wealthy sadistic paedophile who was mutilated by Lecter before his detainment, plans to avenge himself by assigning a large bounty to any person who helps in capturing Lecter (116, 122, 127, 141, 145, 146, 148, 149, 152). He devises a

sadistic plan to have Lecter 'eaten alive' (111) and 'consumed in two sittings' (136) by wild pigs starting from his feet upwards (124). Clarice Starling attempts to save Lecter after his capture by Verger (140). However, she gets injured and Lecter saves her by carrying her outside the barn away from the wild pigs (132, 139).

Employing the tool of describing, Lecter's physical description is framed as having 'small white teeth' (72, 144), 'a sleek dark head' (75), 'tearing teeth' (87), a very powerful sense of 'smell' (88, 159), 'red lips' (101), not much 'sweat' (103), and as being strong (137). Lecter's intelligence, brainpower and eloquence are foregrounded. He is described as 'intelligent' (64), 'so lucid, so perceptive' (67), 'not crazy' (68), 'smart' (118), and not having 'emotions' (128). Actually, he is charismatic and powerful enough to penetrate people's minds and influence them. His charismatic nature is evidenced in an incident with his fellow inmate, Miggs. After Miggs insulted Clarice Starling by throwing semen at her (99), Lecter talked to him all night and led him to kill himself (90, 91, 154). Lecter is quite enigmatic and hard to understand. The 'psychiatric community questions whether Dr Lecter should be termed a man' (142). He is also described as 'malicious' (81), 'polite to the last' (98), 'erect and graceful' (105), 'erect as a dancer' (138), 'armed and dangerous' (147), and having 'perfect manners' (153). Indeed, he is attractive even for the media. Lecter is 'known in the tabloids' and all the newspapers covering his case dub him 'Hannibal the Cannibal' (69, 70). Actually, the media continue to adore Lecter and prefer to publish news about him even more than celebrities (92, 97, 157).

The tool of equating, via the use of appositional equivalence, is also employed to frame Dr Lecter in readers' minds. He is referred to as 'Dr. Fuck Face' (76), 'the new Memphian' (77), 'Prisoner' (86), 'murderer of nine' (100), 'the psychiatrist' (106), 'the fugitive' (110), 'American serial murderer' (114), Hannibal the Cannibal (114, 119), 'the lethal madman' (117), 'veteran of prison' (120), 'goddamned Lecter' (126), and 'known murderer of ten' (150).

Dr Lecter's violence and physical power is framed via the material processes used to describe his actions: 'Dr. Lecter killed nine people' (78), 'Lecter killed Raspail' (82), 'Dr. Lecter killed two policemen' (89), 'He tore a nurse up' (94), 'Dr. Lecter savaged the nurse' (102), 'Dr Lecter removed a slice of Krendler's prefrontal lobe' (134), 'Dr Lecter made Miggs swallow his tongue'

(154), 'the nurse whose tongue Dr Lecter had eaten' (155), and 'the bow hunter Dr Lecter had killed' (156).

Lecter's long confinement and imprisonment as well as people's immense fear of him are emphasised (61, 62, 66, 74, 80, 112, 113). However, he manages to escape in *The Silence of the Lambs* after killing two police officers. After his escape (86), he is put by the FBI on the list of 'the Most Wanted' (83). For many years, the FBI cannot get any information about Lecter's whereabouts (125) since he has 'fled to Florence. Plop. Hannibal Lecter was Dr Fell' (115). Lecter successfully assumes the identity of Dr Fell, curator of the Capponi Library in Florence, due to his wide readings and vast knowledge of Art.

Lecter is not depicted as an ordinary killer but as a phenomenon whose history needs to be written and studied (93, 108) for being a 'gifted psychologist' (95), an exceptional criminal profiler (96), a gentleman 'polite to the last' (98, 105, 153), a musician (123), a ferocious killer (78, 82, 89, 94, 100, 102), and a cannibal (69, 155). Dr Lecter is an organized serial killer, however, it is rather difficult to classify him into one type of serial killer. It is likely that he can be regarded as a hedonist, and more particularly a thrill killer, since he finds pleasure in killing people. He can also be seen as a power seeker, since he exerts power on his victims and, arguably, believes he absorbs their power through eating them. Indeed, Dr Lecter can also be classified as a revenge killer since he killed some of his victims for revenge including Paul Krendler and Rinaldo Pazzi, among others. However, Dr Lecter's classification as a revenge killer is more in evidence in Harris's novel *Hannibal Rising*, where he kills the men who had killed and eaten his sister, Mischa, in his childhood.

No.	Concordance
Red Dragon – Lecter	
60	look at a mail drop to see if Lecter had sold him. If he co
61	We'd have a goddamned stampede if people thought Lecter was out.
62	Crawford told Graham where Lecter was held, how the note
63	your home address. Lecter gave the bastard your home address
64	not as intelligent as Hannibal Lecter. He promised to provide
65	think you might lose Will after Lecter published his home address

66	and shiny. You know, when Lecter was first captured we
67	so rare to get one alive. Lecter is so lucid, so perceptive
68	he liked it. Still does. Dr. Lecter is not crazy, in any c
69	nearly killed him. Dr. Lecter, known in the tabloids as 'Hannibal the Cannibal'
70	"Freddy Lounds? I covered the Lecter case for the Tattler.
71	you were the one who nailed Lecter three years ago.
72	morbid. He laughed. Dr. Lecter has small white teeth.
Silence of the Lambs – Lecter	
73	peace. "Tell me his name, Dr. Lecter, " Starling said. "Dr.
74	to Pembry after they had Dr. Lecter secure in his cell. "H
75	bars ribbed the walls. Dr. Lecter had a sleek dark head.
76	've killed her, Dr. Fuck Face. Lecter knew some more and I c
77	words, Starling shuddered. Dr. Lecter, the new Memphian. Sta
78	air from his nose. "Dr. Lecter killed nine people we
79	you can see that all the Lecter information, yours and
80	suite seemed enormous to Dr. Lecter after his long confinement
81	knew what the malicious Dr. Lecter would say, and it was
82	include the final session, when Lecter killed Raspail. More i
83	on it. The Director's putting Lecter on the Most Wanted. Ja
84	profile she'd gotten from Dr. Lecter, it had to help her wi
85	Lecter. Years ago, when Dr. Lecter was declared insane, t
86	down. Prisoner is missing. Lecter is missing. Outside po
87	between the tearing teeth. Lecter shook his head like a
88	checked the cuffs again. Dr. Lecter could smell Petnbry's
89	io just had the bulletin-- Dr. Lecter killed two policemen a
90	The overnight orderly heard Lecter talking softly to Miggs. Lecter knew a lot about Miggs
91	overnight couldn't hear what Lecter said. Miggs was crying
92	news conferences. Dr. Hannibal Lecter was catnip to the media
93	did you? We tried to study Lecter. We thought, 'Here's a
94	Picasso drew him, thanks to Lecter. He tore a nurse up in
95	useful from Dr. Hannibal Lecter. Lecter's a gifted psychologist
96	Remember the Red Dragon? Lecter turned Francis Dolarhyde

97	supermarket press. They love Lecter even better than Prince
98	little Starling." Hannibal Lecter, polite to the last, d
99	it was semen, not blood, and Lecter was calling to her,
100	up from her briefcase. Dr. Lecter, murderer of nine, had
101	even know what it is. Dr. Lecter pursed his red lips be
102	been in effect ever since Dr. Lecter savaged the nurse, and
103	him didn't work last time. Dr. Lecter doesn't sweat much." "
104	What does he want her for, Dr. Lecter?" "He wants a vest with tits on it," Dr. Lecter said.
105	from her lap. "Please," Dr. Lecter said, erect and graceful
106	"The psychiatrist-- Dr. Hannibal Lecter," Crawford said
Hannibal – Hannibal	
107	Starling, are doing to catch Hannibal Lecter, what could I
108	cites him. When the history of Hannibal Lecter is written, a
109	Mason Verger about how to catch Hannibal Lecter. General
110	warning the fugitive Hannibal Lecter that he was in danger
111	began his arrangements for Dr Hannibal Lecter to be eaten alive
112	middle of the cell where Dr Hannibal Lecter had spent eight years
113	of this view on the wall of Hannibal Lecter's cell. Did
114	American serial murderer, Dr Hannibal Lecter. Hannibal the Cannibal. Lecter
115	it lands in a thickening pool. Hannibal Lecter had fled to Florence. Plop. Hannibal Lecter was Dr Fell.
116	Pazzi also had a chance to sell Hannibal Lecter to Mason Verger
117	interview the lethal madman Dr Hannibal Lecter, dubbed by the newspaper
118	believing he was as smart as Hannibal Lecter, had made the
119	she was trying to interrogate Hannibal the Cannibal in the
120	sleep beneath the painting. Dr Hannibal Lecter, veteran of prison
121	as the policeman who caught Dr Hannibal Lecter? For a police

122	Once he had decided to sell Hannibal Lecter to Mason Verger
Lecter	
123	'Yquem on his candle stand, Dr Lecter plays Bach. In his
124	The first day, Mason wanted Dr Lecter to watch them eat his feet.
125	here's no reference RFLP on Dr Lecter, he escaped too long a
126	About that goddamned Lecter, no, I'd have notified
127	Verger is trying to capture Dr Lecter himself for purposes
128	Hannibal Lecter does not have emotions
129	They exchanged information. Dr Lecter gave her insight on
130	We knooowww Hannibal Lecter was born in Lithuania.
131	to the sister. The point is, Lecter was an orphan, like Clarice
132	night watchman. Now he became Lecter the Protector of her
133	security of the FBI files on Lecter. Margot had to keep he
134	resembling a tonsil spoon, Dr Lecter removed a slice of Krendler prefrontal lobe, then another, until he had four.
135	the prime dates for catching Dr Lecter. Despite their failure
136	sympathy. Carlo, I want Dr Lecter consumed in two sittings
137	always surprising to watch Dr Lecter lift a body; size for
138	the rifle in the hay. Dr Lecter, erect as a dancer and
139	the barn and into the night. Dr Lecter, holding Starling, was
140	could not abide the thought of Dr Lecter tortured to death; she
141	Mason wanting to kill Hannibal Lecter. If he had done it him
142	psychiatric community that Dr Lecter should be termed a man
143	of the FBI in the pursuit of Lecter. He only shared inform
144	of propriety, but just. Dr Lecter smiled, with his small white teeth
145	Mason would pay extra to see Dr Lecter butchered alive, even
146	Carlo knew he could butcher Dr Lecter and have his head and
147	the standard warning about Dr Lecter being armed and dangerous
148	posted the reward after Dr Lecter escaped from custody
149	they say. I don't remember. Dr Lecter broke my neck with the
150	seven years since Dr Hannibal Lecter, known murderer of ten

151	she had always wanted to chase Lecter. The truth was more co
152	The prospect of death for Dr Lecter pleased him mightily.
153	and thought a moment. Dr Lecter had perfect manners,
154	Do you know why Dr Lecter made Miggs swallow his tongue
155	of the nurse whose tongue Dr Lecter had eaten during an at
156	photograph of the bow hunter Dr Lecter had killed years ago.
157	ground, and he thought of Dr Lecter as a sort of media bog
158	where they maintained a Hannibal Lecter Room. The college had
159	chairs cranked back until Dr Lecter can smell their hair

Table 5 Hannibal Lecter, the serial killer/profiler in *Red Dragon*, *Silence of the Lambs* and *Hannibal*

Serial killers tend to be metaphorically depicted as monsters since monsters are the stereotypical icons of horror. In Harris' novels, Hannibal Lecter, can be implicitly seen as a monster due to his cannibalism. The metaphor of 'hunting' with the FBI agent or even others, such as Mason Verger and his men, as a 'hunter' and the serial killer as 'being hunted' is quite prevalent in *Red Dragon*, *The Silence of the Lambs* and *Hannibal* (37, 39, 47, 53, 107, 109, 121, 135, 143, 151).

4. Conclusion

Framing encourages readers to construct these fictional serial killers and perceive them in a certain way. Hence, it assists authors to capture readers' attention and make them more engaged with their novels and more emotionally attached to or disturbed by the killers. Thomas Harris frames his serial killers using multiple linguistic devices. The concordance analysis conducted in this paper provides sufficient evidence that such linguistic devices are captured, to a great extent, by the Critical Stylistics toolkit including: naming, describing, equating, implying and representing actions, events and states. Information about the killers are provided through a series of predicative nouns, attributive and predicative adjectives, epithets and appositions. It should be noted, however, that this information tends to create a negative stance towards the killers. An exception to this tendency would be Hannibal Lecter whose construction

constitutes a mix of qualities that evoke both disgust and fascination at the same time. The analysis of the transitivity processes has revealed some significant similarities between the killers. Material processes expressing violence are ascribed to all of them. In addition, their patterns and *modus operandi* are always revealed by these processes. Metaphors are also used to frame not only the serial killers but the whole process of committing crime, crime investigation, profiling and arrest.

This paper has used a corpus-assisted critical stylistic approach to study the framing of serial killers. This synergy between corpus linguistic procedures (which have facilitated dealing with the three novels in question and focusing on the framing of the serial killers), the notion of framing (which explains the construction of the serial killers) and the Critical Stylistics tools (which have provided the toolkit to detect the linguistic devices used for framing the killers), to a large extent, provides a comprehensive model for the study of the serial killers in the selected novels, and possibly, and more generally, for the study of characters in fiction.

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Reimagining African Identity through Afrofuturism: A reading of Nnedi Okorafor's *Binti* (2015)

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Abstract

Afrofuturism is a flourishing contemporary movement in African and African American studies. It has attracted black diasporic writers, artists, musicians, and theorists. Afrofuturism has been described by cultural critics as a way of looking, navigating and imagining future conditions of life through a black lens. Afrofuturists illuminate up-to-date issues by placing them in fantastical contexts; more specifically, they address themes and concerns of the black people that have been otherwise neglected in the western futurist canon. One of the most prominent afrofuturist authors, with a close connection to Africa, is Nnedi Okorafor. Her novella *Binti* (2015), a space travel adventure through an Afrocentric lens, deftly explores questions about the cultural identity in a futuristic world. Accordingly, the study aims to explore the theme of the African identity in Okorafor's novella, focusing on selected visionary references rooted in African culture to signify a new image for the African in a new environment, where blackness is technologically managed. In so doing, the paper highlights the mix between the incredible myths of the Himba people and technoculture, which make it possible for Okorafor to challenge the stereotypical view of the African identity, put a black face on the future, and mark the novella as an African-inspired futuristic work.

Keywords: Afrofuturism, Nnedi Okorafor, African identity, African myths

Introduction

Afrofuturism is mainly considered the new black speculative fiction. It is chosen as the best umbrella that encompasses "sci-fi imagery, futurist themes, and technological innovation in the African diaspora" (Nelson 9). What's especially important about Afrofuturism, separating it from other genres in future context, is that it is rooted in

ancient African traditions, creating a contrast between the past and the future expressed in realms with futuristic technology that all come from the minds of black people. Based on a literature review on Afrofuturism, the paper will be organized as follows: The first part provides a brief introduction to the concept of Afrofuturism as an aesthetic and a cultural movement, followed by a general overview of Okorafor's black imagination. This, in turn, offers a framework for the analysis of Okorafor's novella *Binti* (2015) which takes place in the second part of the paper. In this context, the study views Okorafor's *Binti* (2015) as an afrofuturist imagination, being expanded by an African female voice in an attempt to redefine the identity of her African descent for today and the future.

Mark Dery, the American cultural critic, coined the term "Afrofuturism" in 1994 to refer to speculative fiction that deals with African-American futuristic themes, expresses the anxieties and distresses of the African-Americans in the 20th-century technoculture context, and explores the real world through unreality. In this regard, David Wyatt defines speculative fiction as a literature that is completely different from the real world, which helps the writer to break the chains of conventional thought, and the reader to find himself/herself in the imaginary space. This freedom acts as the main catalyst for redefining the image of black people in a more positive light. Besides, Wyatt has captured the role of imagining "different futures, as well as, different pasts and presents of the societies and cultures in which they inhabit in multilayered ways' (1-2). In the same vein, Ytasha Womack expresses that the strength of the human spirit lies in the gift of imagination, which is appraised by Afrofuturism as a power of creativity, reshaping culture and transcending social limitations.

Furthermore, Dery perceives Afrofuturism as a way to explore different stories about black peoples which address their culture, technology, and future. Hence, by endorsing a visible and necessary black presence in the future, Afrofuturism is one form of resistance that escapes proclivities to problematize or victimize blackness. Similarly, Womack considers the black imagination as "a tool of resistance" by which black artists, with the power of technology, "have more control over their image than ever before" (25). Furthermore, Lisa Yaszek notes, in her article "An Afrofuturist Reading of Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man", that Afrofuturists fight for equality and black people's right to find a place in the future that must not be defined by a white frame of reference (300). In this sense, it can be said that Afrofuturism is a language of rebellion, blending African culture, mysticism, and technology, in a way to change

negative stereotypes and reconsider new roles for the black in the future. This is similarly mentioned by other scholars such as Charles R. Saunders, who notes that this is "a genre that purports to transcend convention and stereotype" (398).

Most notably, Womack defines Afrofuturism as "an intersection of imagination, technology, the future, and liberation" (11) and finds it "a journey of self-discovery". Regarding the afrofuturist narrative, Womack holds that "combines elements of science fiction, historical fiction, speculative fiction, fantasy, Afrocentricity, and magic realism with non-Western beliefs"(14). Thus, it is only through this combination that hope for freedom of expressing self-identity can be expressed.

This type of fiction has been a space to call home for many black women writers like Octavia Butler, LA Banks, and Tananarive Due, to tell their stories while paving new pathways of black and diasporic imagination. Throughout history, the voices of black diasporic women in speculative, science, and fantasy fiction have often gone unrecognized and not given their acclamation. However, today, black women's lived experiences in an increasingly globalized world are profoundly presented in popular Afrofuturism fiction, offering black women writers, such as Nnedi Okorafor, creative freedom, "a free space … to be themselves… to express a deeper identity and then use this discovery to define blackness, womanhood, or any other identifier in whatever form their imagination allows" (Womack 100-101).   Thus, as previously mentioned, the study attempts to explore how Okorafor, through Afrofuturism, commands freedom in reimagining the Africa identity by mixing multiple elements, including Himba myths and legends with the far-reaching future.

Nnedi Okorafor's afrofuturistic imagination

Nnedi Okorafor (1974-), the award–winning, Nigerian-American author, whose fiction has been celebrated by the American and African SF communities similarly. Alexandra Alter, in his review "Nnedi Okorafor and the Fantasy Genre She Is Helping Redefine", asserts that the last decade has perceived Okorafor as one of the most pioneering and imaginative Afrofuturist writers. Most of her stories, which are often set in West Africa, use the background of fantasy to explore serious social matters, such as, racial and gender inequality and dehumanization (Alter). She is one of the nontraditional writers who have achieved success by giving African history and culture

a fantastic, futuristic, and feminist style to influence her work. Moreover, T.E. Barber, N. Gaskins, and Guthrie hold that, Okorafor's speculative fiction draws upon elements of mythology, magic realism, and dystopian horror. In her article "Organic fantasy", Okorafor shares with her readers the working of her imagination in the pushing of the reader's imagination and the provision of different African role models. Okorafor herself categorizes her writing simply as "organic fantasy," which "blooms directly from the soil of the real" (Organic fantasy 278). For her, "fantasy is the most accurate way of describing reality" (Organic fantasy 279). Critics such as Donald Haase, holds that fantasy is treated as an extensive genre, borrowing traits from myth, epic, romance ….mystery, science fiction, and other genres" (331).

Regarding her novella "Binti", Okorafor, in her talk at TEDGlobal 2017 conference in Tanzania, explains that her protagonist's journey and alteration represents one of the central principles of Afrofuturism, which leads to a new way to look at the genre of speculative/science fiction. She adds that the theme of leaving homeland in search for self-discovery and finally asserts identity is at one of the cores of Afrofuturism, which is completely different from science fiction. That is why, the paper chooses Okorafor's Binti as an example of an Afofuturist work of art drawn on the real, the magical, and the fantastic worlds, through "the use of some form of magic, portals to another world or to the past…self- aware and coming of age, supernatural beings or events… , [and] Time travel" (Sinclair 5).

An overview of *Binti* (2015)

When *Binti* was first published in October 2015, it earned a considerable amount of accolade from critics and readers who bestowed it with the Hugo and Nebula Awards for Best Novella. The novella and its reception call attention to how speculative and science fiction themes are presently being used to explore black survival in the future. In the novella, a sixteen-year-old 'Himba'[1] girl, Binti, is the first person narrator and the title character. She is a gifted mathematician, scientist, and inventor. The plot-driving incident is her invitation to study at a prestigious intergalactic university called Oomza Uni. Her intelligence is an instance of extraordinary African preeminence. She is taught by her father over three hundred years of oral knowledge about circuits, wire, metals, electricity, and math current. Being the first of her tribe to leave her people's home, she runs away during the night and boards a ship, known as

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[1] The Himba tribes are descendants of a group of Herero herders. They are rustic people and resist change and adhere to their traditions and cultural heritage which is rich, unique and immersed with meaning, significance and harmony. (Goyal 9)

"Third Fish". The ship is attacked by the "Meduse", the jellyfish-like alien species, who is described by Binti as "blue and translucent, except for one of its tentacles, which was tinted pink like the waters of the salty lake beside [her] village" (*Binti* 15). The reader learns that the "Meduse" has an old war with the Khoush, a fictional pale-skinned ethnic group, who are the dominant and privileged ethnic group on Earth, have absolute control on space travel and view Binti's people as near slaves. After killing all of the passengers by the "Meduse", Binti, the only survivor, escapes to her room and is eventually able to take down the invaders because of a piece of an ancient artifact called "an edan". She stays on the ship for five days until she reaches her destination.

As seen in the previous synopsis, Binti, the protagonist, goes off on a mission to uncover a strange new world. Okorafor's depiction of Binti's journey on a spaceship to Oomza university planet, hundreds of light-years away, increases the intensity of the reader's response to the fantasy of a futuristic text and produces a typical life-changing quest through a non-stereotypical image of the African woman endowed with fantastic potentialities. The Himba girl becomes a pioneer for space travel and exploration, in hopes of changing her tribe's inner exploration beliefs which, "is obsessed with innovation and technology, but [does not] like to leave Earth, [and prefers] to explore the universe by traveling inward, as opposed to outward. No Himba has ever gone to Oomza Uni" (*Binti* 6).

Okorafor's story is set in a new imaginary world; however, it still borrows some of its consistency from the reader's acquaintance with the real world. This is shown, initially in the story when the reader is confronted with Binti's vivid accounts about the belief system of her people when she says, "We Himba don't travel. We stay put. Our ancestral land is life; move away from it and you diminish" (*Binti*7). This is also evidently revealed in Binti's distinctive African outfit, which is represented by "the thin metal rings" around each ankle that "jingled noisily", the "long red skirt", "thin leather sandals", her "anklet", and her "thick", "plaited hair" with "fresh sweet-smelling otjize". Her clothes, hairstyle, and jewelry are all of particular significance to the Himba and are part of their tradition and culture. These cultural images from homeland show us an Afrocentric and non-western cosmology, which revisits Womack's view of the aesthetics of afrofuturism which embraces Afrocentricity with "non-Western beliefs".

Okorafor's depiction of Himba myths in a future context

Okorafor seizes upon Himba culture to reinvent the African identity that has been neglected in western science/speculative fiction canon. That is why, *Binti* is full of reverence for the protagonist's African knowledge that offers a repositioning of Africa's location in futurist fiction and serves as a vehicle through which to imagine the black power. This is revealed in her words about her family: "I come from a family of Bitolus; my father is a master harmonizer…We Bitolus know true deep mathematics and we can control their current, we know systems" (*Binti* 10). When Binti decides to leave her homeland, she takes along with her three main objects, her astrolabe (a multi-functional device that also stores all information about a person, including possible futures), her oil clay on her skin in the form of "otjize", and her edan (a mysterious and ancient artifact) and most importantly, her culture and her home.

Regarding Binti's "astrolabe", an apparatus resonant of ancient astronomers and navigators, it is represented as a personal device that holds all the details of one's life and all possible forecasted futures, and the ability of mathematical sight. Binti uses it as a map, "in binocular vision to see things up close" and as a communication tool that allows her to communicate with the deceased's family. It regulates her body and allows her to hinder anxiety and panic attacks. It was built by her ancestors and she herself built an advanced version with her extensive math skills. Praising her African history, Binti asserts that, her ancestors are the creators and builders of astrolabes. They use math to create the currents within them. She adds that "the best of [her people] have the gift to bring harmony so delicious that we can make atoms caress each other like lovers" (*Binti* 28).

Historically, the astrolabe is the best and most important analog computer available to Islamic astronomers. Jonathan Powell holds that astrolabes were developed in the medieval Islamic world. Though al-Fazari is the first Muslim to have helped build an astrolabe in the Islamic world in the eighth century, Mariam Al-Astrulabi was known in the tenth-century as the female astronomer and maker of astrolabes in Aleppo, Syria (Ansari), who is most likely to have an impact on Okorafor's portrayal of her protagonist, Binti. On one hand, making the astrolabe the central piece of technology in the story both reaffirms the obliterated place of the Islamic world in Western depictions of scientific history and denotes a presence of the past, if only in name. On

the other hand, Okorafor makes the Himba culture artisans of futuristic communication technology as deriving not from the western Greek and Roman thought, but from the ancient Islamic world. In other words, the past represented by the astrolabe furnishes new material for the present and future.

Okorafor shifts from past references to future by referring to the spaceship she takes to travel to Oomza University. This spaceship is described as "a magnificent piece of living technology" (*Binti* 10), an organic ship that is made of plant-like fibers to withstand space and regarded as one of the most amazing biological technologies Binti had ever read about. This imaginary description of this living spaceship, where black people hadn't been perceived to be, aligns with the notion of the black imagination of the future (Kelley) and marks the work as an African-inspired futuristic work. Okorafor, in her depiction, emphasizes how black people can imagine new worlds and inverts the stereotypical view about the black identity and controls the imaginary scheme.

The alien - encounter is by far one of the most recurring elements of futuristic and science fiction. Much of the horror of the hellish nightmare of this encounter is preoccupied with how everyone aboard the spaceship is killed by the "Meduse" except for Binti who narrates, "I took a quick look around the giant hall. I could smell dinner over the stink of blood and Maduse gases… Images of my friends Olo, Remi, Kwuga, Nur, Anajama, Rhoden crowded my mind" (*Binti* 10-11). To connect with the aliens, Binti uses "treeing"[2] (a mathematical method used by her ancestors), which allows her to send out blue beams enhanced by her "edan", an ancient metal technology, that Binti carries with her from her homeland. Okorafor presents the mystical power of treeing as a psychological meditation when Binti needs to calm herself and as a symbol of knowledge and superiority of her people. Binti narrates, "when you do math fractals long enough you kick yourself into treeing just enough to get lost in the shallows of the mathematical sea. None of us would have made it into the university if we couldn't tree, but it's not easy' (*Binti* 22). In this regard, Okorafor makes Binti's technological skills and mythical background inextricable from one another, showing little difference between mathematical advancement and the pervasiveness of historical myths that give Africa its exceptional identity.

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[2] Steven Shaviro, in his review "Nnedi Okorafor's Binti series", defines the term "treeing" as "a process of envisioning mathematical equations, such as the formula for the Mandelbrot Set (which produces infinitely ramifying fractals)". Review on Nnedi Okorafor's Binti series by Steven Shaviro http://www.shaviro.com/Blog/?p=1473

Amid the Meduse wave of destruction, Binti remembers how none of her people wanted her to go to Oomza Uni. Even her best friend Dele did not want her to go. At that moment, she recalls a joke made by Dele. He asks her not to worry if she travels on board the ship and meets the Meduse; she will never be noticed by them. Then he laughs and laughs. Ignoring his silly joke is the only way for her to keep going. The irony in the above-mentioned quotation is a clue to understanding the African experience. Ironically, Dele's joke speaks to the history of the Himba's forced colonial marginality in which they are only seen as exotic crutches without agency. At the same time, presenting Binti as a confident and stubborn girl in the context of afrofuturism revisits Womack's view of "afrofuturism" as a free, literal and figurative world for women to assert themselves and to express a deeper identity and, consequently, use this freedom to redefine the black or African identity in whatever form their imagination permits.

Returning to the Himba myths as the source material of *Binti*, Okorafor engages the reader's attention to "edan" which carries an old current: First, it is described as "a stellated cube… a device too old to know it functions, so old that they were now just art" (Binti 17). But, as the story unfolds, it mysteriously protects her from the Meduse attacks. Binti's edan produces a bright blue deep beam within its black and grey gaps, which reminds Binti of "the bioluminescent snails that invaded the edges of [her] home's lake" (*Binti* 25). Shuddering with fear when confronting the Meduse, Binti prays to the mystery metal, which she does not know what made it a weapon, to protect her. Thus, this device guides the protagonist and becomes her mythical Africa that offers exponential potentialities. This metal artifact not only protects Binti, but later in the story, it acts as a translator that allows her to communicate with the Meduse. Again, Binti's unusual mastery of science here via the spiritual apparatus "edan" envisions a future that overturns prejudiced notions of primitive Africa while maintaining a tribal African aesthetic. Moreover, empowering this mythical object recalls Walter Mosley's view about the power of fantasy that breaks reality by altering the logic. One would notice that Okorafor creates an atmosphere that reminds us of Womack's term "The African Cosmos" (73), which appraises the power of ancient knowledge, dissolves the boundaries of normative identity, and advocates for self-definition and identity. Therefore, through Okorafor's lens, her amalgamation of past (Himba tradition), present, and future (the pioneering use of 'astrolabe' and 'edan' as technological instruments in space travel) advocates racial uplift and paves the way

to what African people could do. In other words, Okorafor's exploration of the past through tradition, beliefs, and mythology attributes Africa a place in the future.

Okorafor's continual use of ancient artifacts with technological empowerment creates what Daniel Kreiss calls a "mythic consciousness" of authorized racial identity that would enable blacks to recreate and invent technologies and construct Utopian societies on outer space landscapes" (58). This is shown in Okorafor's depiction of another object from the African culture, "otjize". It is a paste extracted from the Himba red soil which women apply from head to toe. It serves, both as a cosmetic and a health enhancer for the Himba people. Throughout the novella, Binti rubs the reddish paste, "otjize", over her body and hair when she yearns for home. Describing the value of otjize, she says "the weight of my hair on my shoulders was assuring my hair was heavy with otjize, and this was good luck and the strength of my people, even if my people were far far away" (*Binti* 20). The red color of the clay is, therefore, a symbol of the earth's red color which indicates Binti's strong connection with her homeland that represents her identity. Later in the story, when the Meduse realizes the value of the otjize in healing their tentacles that shrink when exposed to Binti's edan, they respect Binti and ask to take this powerful paste. She refuses to give them her red clay saying that taking it from her is like taking her soul. Through the use of otjize, Okorafor shows that African culture can be reimagined with futuristic technology to assert black power, identity, self-worth, and the ability to interact with the other.

Eventually, the story has in no way reached its resolution upon Binti's arrival at Oomza University. Her space adventure, stepping away from all that she knows into an unfamiliar world, is only the beginning of her struggle to assert her place in the outer world. However, it is her African heritage that provides her with the first opportunity to build a bridge between herself and the other. In this regard, Binti's journey is perceived, then, as a free space for her to feel empowered.

Conclusion

On the whole, Afrofuturism proves to be a promising type of fiction that African writers can use to reimagine the identity of Africa. *Binti* (2015) proves that this genre is no longer indistinguishable or shallow. Overall, Okorafor, in *Binti*, provides an empowering intersection of imagination, technology, the future, and liberation. It mixes African tradition with technology that smoothly blends the past, the present, and

the future. Okorafor expertly combined traditional African artifacts tied to mysticism along with space travel and alien encounter, "to bridge the idea of an African origin with the transference of culture and family values into a space-friendly future" (Womack 12). Hence, *Binti* is "a free space" which signifies a new wave of future-African fiction that is generating vivid and original new futures while giving the reader access to an African-centric outlook. This allows Okorafor to reexamine her heritage and reimagine the future in a cross-cultural context.

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