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"AT HEAVEN'S COMMAND" THE FORMATION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY DISCOURSE AS PRESENTED IN JAMES THOMSON'S "RULE, BRITANNIA!"

Abstract
My research focuses on the formation of specific national identities through an analysis of the lyrics of the nationalist song, "Rule, Britannia!" by James Thompson. The work will focus on how Exceptionalism and Imperialism in the socio-political space of the British Isles have been intertwined, both presiding over the national discourse in various forms and mediums. My method of analysis will take two primary directions: firstly, I will explain the relationship between the main concepts, that of nation and identity; and secondly, and how they operate in the lyrical discourse of the case study. The relevance of such interdisciplinary research is evident, in the socio-political context of the world, and especially in Great Britain, one resounding effect of such rhetoric which could come to mind being Brexit. Thus, my analysis brings to attention the need for studying popular cultural products which could potentially impact our worldviews.

Exceptionalism and Imperialism in the socio-political space of the British Isles have been close friends historically, both presiding over the national discourse in various forms and mediums. However, the most adamantine expressions of Imperialism and consequently Exceptionalism started to propagate in the public discourse following the Industrial Revolution. This work focuses on the peculiarly interesting discourse produced by James Thomson's 1740 text, "Rule, Britannia!", which is an epitome of the construction of national identity and a form of discourse still present in today's socio-political scene. I argue that this text still contributes at a conscious level to the creation and emergence of a certain type of identity and it creates a new nationalist spirit based on the conservation and grievance of the 'old Britannia,' as one can see from public manifestations such as the Last Night of the Proms, and, of course, the more globally salient product of Imperialist discourse, Brexit. Before I start discussing the actual Imperialist tropes present in Thomson's text, I feel obliged to explain the concepts and terms I will use. Therefore, the first part of my analysis will explain national identity as created by this cultural manifestation and I will discuss why such a representation remains engraved in the national unconsciousness of its audience while shaping their perspectives. Simply put, to follow Easthope's example, "I am interested in nation as an identity that can speak to us even when we may think we are speaking for ourselves" (1999: 4).

To take them one by one, firstly I will explain the connection between two of the main concepts of my analysis, namely nation and identity, looking at how they operate at a discursive level in forging the narrative of a country through the power of representation. I would like to mention beforehand that I am aware of the

'dichotomic' nature of a nation and an empire. Should we take Gellner into consideration, who regarded the two concepts as "antithetical" (qtd. in Kumar 2015: 31-46), because, of course, the idea of absolute hegemony of a singular entity intrinsically suppresses the very notion of a nation, be it an imagined community or a materialized group, as it functions precisely on the apocryphal dictum "L'État c'est moi". However, in this case, we should leave the Dauphin in his century and focus on the connection which "closes the gap" (Kumar 2015: 31-46) in our modern times, nationalism, as Krishan Kumar points out in his book *The Idea of Englishness: English Culture, National Identity and Social Thought*:

> Nationalism, argues Gellner, closes the gap. It insists that the only legitimate political unit is one in which the rulers and the ruled share the same culture. Its ideal is one state, one culture. Or, to put it another way, its ideal is the national or the "nation-state," since it conceives of the nation essentially in terms of a shared culture linking all members. (2015: 31)

We should be aware that this conceptual conjuncture, this 'gap' between nation and empire is made possible when considering a certain parallelism of the historical context at the beginning (the Industrial Revolution) and at the end (The Second World War) of the modern period (Kumar 2000: 575-608). As such, "in this account, empire and nation are not set against each other but appear as twin expressions of the same phenomenon of power" (Kumar 2015: 33). Moreover, we should also consider the problem of Britishness, as an opposed identity from Englishness, but for the sake of demonstrating the preservation of the Imperialist attitude in our contemporary context, we shall leave these constituents aside for now and consider them facets of the same coin.

However, coming back to the problem of identity versus nation, we have to consider what they mean conceptually and the mental strains they effect. Identity is a very complex, and one could affirm, a rather discombobulating concept which has puzzled, rightly so, the minds of numerous thinkers, for it finds its roots in the metaphysical, never-ending search of humans for the self and its reason, or as G.A. Cohen puts it "'nothing is more essentially human' than 'the need for self-identity'" (qtd. in Easthope 1999: 14). This strange confusion has arisen from the plurality of meanings and perspectives that surface when attempting to define this abstract idea. Brubaker and Cooper consider that "'Identity' […] tends to mean too much (when understood in a strong sense), too little (when understood in a weak sense), or nothing at all (because of its sheer ambiguity)" (2000: 1-21). They argue that the fluidization and multiplications of the concept of identity can diminish the whole purpose and individuality of identity politics and that this proliferation of the word identity could become dangerous for its potential of setting off means of political and social manipulation, while the important hard dynamics are misconstrued and sometimes totally obliterated. The need for people to use the term 'identity' loosely is an attempt to "conceptualize 'identities' as something that all people have, seek,

construct, and negotiate", which can produce a "blunt, flat, undifferentiated vocabulary" (2000: 1-21).

One may wonder why those softened elucubrations are a problem. As Brubaker and Cooper point out throughout their work, language functions at a cognitive level, thus "'[s]oft' constructivism allows putative 'identities' to proliferate" and "[i]f identity is everywhere, it is nowhere" (2000: 1-21). In other words, the fluidization of conceptual paradigms will inevitably create conceptual knick-knacks which could consequently dissolve the initial importance of said ideas. Although I agree with the supposition that blurring the boundaries of a concept can become a problematic practice, I do believe that there is indeed a need to explicitly exemplify identities and ideologies in order to understand the processes generated by this ambiguous problem.

Moreover, identity should not be understood as a single-class act. I believe that we should make a separation between belonging and partaking, for there is a matter of 'conscience' that has to be taken into consideration. What I mean by that is that there are identifications we are offered (of which we belong involuntarily, such as families, ethnic communities and so on) and which we integrate ourselves into. We are parts of multiple identities, not only social but psychological, from familial identities to moral and so on, this idea having been promoted by Easthope, who states that "[t]he individual, [...] is an effect of multiple identifications" (1999: 23). This is important in our case for it could improve our understanding of the propagation of the Imperialist and Exceptionalist national identity into contemporary discourse and why this identification has been prominent for this case.

When it comes to the idea of a nation, the conceptual obstacle is similar to the aforementioned one. There are multiple iterations that impede our understanding of this concept. One such example could be the discrepancy produced by the mere emergence of the concept of the nation. For Easthope, "[n]ational identity is a product of modernity" (1999: 3) while Gellner attributes this formation to its "uneven diffusion" (1994: 61) at that time. For Giddens, the nation seems to be more of a bounded materialization, "unified administrative reach" (1994: 34-35), while Benedict Anderson thought the nation to be a form of "imagined political community" which is "inherently limited and sovereign" (Anderson 1991: 6). These delimitations by no means facilitate our understanding. However, one must conclude that it is exactly this complexity what makes the nation such a fascinating concept. In the ode analyzed, the nation is a mental space created by the Exceptional character eulogized from the beginning. We could even argue that the extolment happens from the title itself (i.e. "Rule, Britannia!"), which is an observable call to glory.

When it comes to the creation of national identity, Thomson's text is a perfect example of a Foucauldian "will to truth" capable of exerting "pressure" and "power of constraint" (Foucault 1990: 55) helped by the discourse it creates. Cultural representation is a powerful tool in forging cultural (and not only) identities. Hall

explicitly considered culture as a catalyst for societal modification and, at an unconscious level, culture works as a shifter of focus and as "the ground on which cultural and societal transformations are worked" (qtd. in Franz & Smulyan 2012: 2). Considering this, one could take into account even the semiotic approach proposed by Lipsitz when it comes to the integration and metamorphoses of the social paradigm at an unconscious level while under the force of an 'image,' He believed in the intrinsic capacity of art as discourse and art as a shifter of focus: "to speak someone else's words [...] meant hiding one's own identity" (Lipsitz 2001: 5).

Of course, I am not trying to shift the focus of my analysis to a semiotic approach to the importance of cultural identity, but to point out that the discourse proposed by artistic representations has just as much power to orchestrate the minds just as any other such transmission. That being said, we could conclude that in the case of "Rule, Britannia!" the discourse follows a pattern of creation of national identity. Bringing to our attention the Foucauldian paradigm again, all discourses have the capacity to influence the minds, as "all language had value only as discourse" (Foucault 2002: 48). About this interesting instance, the best explanation of the relationship between discourse and its power is rendered by Chris Weedon in her book, *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*:

> Power is a relation. It inheres in difference and is a dynamic of control and lack of control between discourses and the subjects, constituted by discourses, who are their agents. Power is exercised within discourses in the ways in which they constitute and govern individual subjects. (1987: 113)

Now that I have explained the interconnectedness of our concepts and how they operate at a subliminal level, I shall try to correlate these ideas with James Thomson's ode and I shall try to analyze how this popular rendition has the power to shape identities even in our age. Before moving on to the analysis, let us see how this ode came to be. Apparently sung at the fête of the Prince Frederick of Wales on August 1, 1740, the ode was performed in a masque dedicated to Alfred the Great, intended of course to praise the British Imperial spirit and the glory of the old times (Musical Times Publications Ltd. 1900: 228–31). The verses of "Rule, Britannia!" have been attributed to James Thomas, this being the official variant I shall analyse. Itis considered by many as "James Thomson's […] most lasting expression of this conception" (Armitage 2000: 173) and most likely an ode dedicated to the spirit and fervour of that time.

The intention of the song is quite clear: it is a eulogy of Imperialism and the Exceptionalism of Britannia, imbued with a mercantile fragrance and a colonial attitude. The song has been altered by many other interesting political figures of the time, such as Lord Bolingbroke, and adopted as a "folk-song" (as Beethoven called it) in all of the colonies (Musical Times Publications Ltd. 1900: 228–31). There may have been other hidden intentions for the promotion of the song at the masque, other

than the birth of Princess Augusta that, however, I can only speculate about, thus for the sake of accuracy I shall stop here with the historical background of the song.

In terms of its lyrical discourse, as we shall see immediately, the purpose of the text is to praise 'old Britannia,' which "at Heaven's command" (Thomson 1908: 422-423) earned by taming its "haughty tyrant(s)" (Thomson 1908: 422-423) enemies. Its predilection to commemorate the great British fleet and the Exceptional oceanic triumph of the Empire is the centerpiece of its creational discourse. David Armitage reminds us, in his book *Ideas in Context: The Ideological Origins of The British Empire* (2000), that this is one of the most important ideological achievements of old Britannia, and one could definitely attribute this to its formidable ability to manipulate discourse. Thus the national identity of the time was surely defined by a certain type of rhetoric, that of the "blessed" nation, "divinely ordained isle" (Armitage 2000: 173), where the "Muses" sing, "Blest Isle! With matchless beauty crown'd" (James 1908: 422-423). As Armitage points out:

> A major achievement in the ideological history of the British Empire would be the creation of just such a pan-British conception of the Empire as an oceanic entity, equipped with its own historical foundations and destiny, though this would not come to full fruition until the late 1730s, in Bolingbroke's Idea of a Patriot King (1738) and James Thomson's 'Rule, Britannia' (1740), for instance. (2000: 102)

Another interesting image portrayed by Thomson's text is connected with the rising political rhetoric of mercantilism and feverish libertarianism, for Britannia is deemed to vanquish "The nations not so blest as thee" (Thomson 1908: 422-423) and created a continuation and a justification for the discourse of colonialism: "While thou [Britannia] shalt flourish great and free." (1908: 422-423). The pre-set identity of the country thus "defined Britain and the British Empire […] as Protestant, commercial, maritime and free" (Armitage 2000: 173). The role of the divine savior is described by Kumar as a "missionary identity of the British" (Kumar 2000: 576) who take upon themselves the role of the educators and the "standard bearers of modernity and progress, the carriers of the civilization to the 'lesser breeds without the law'. They took up the 'white man's burden'" (Kumar 2000: 576).

This sense of exceptional power and nature could easily be described as a discourse capable of creating a sense of national identity, in this case, to bring about Anderson's theory, it has the potential to construct an imagined community, a configuration which fabricates a specific narrative for its subjects' collective identity who are "willing to die for such limited imaginings" (Anderson 1991: 7). The British Empire "has been bound up with English identity for a long time" (Kumar 2015: viii) and it sought to distance itself from the continental burden, therefore this cloistered attitude could have created "colour conceptions of national identity" (Kumar 2015: 6) with such rhetoric capable of justifying and even extolling this type of identity discourse.

When it comes to the relevance of the discourse throughout history, we should observe more instances of its propagation and the type of identity it promotes. To take them chronologically, let us observe the 1900 edition of *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*. Dedicated to this very text, the article opens with a particularly interesting account of the great Richard Wagner: "The first eight notes of 'Rule Britannia!' typify the British character" (Musical Times Publications Ltd.1900: 228–31). It continues with the promulgation of the greatness of the tune and the importance of its historical popularity:

> Thus [...], spake Richard Wagner. And who will say him "Nay"? The fine old tune has so triumphantly ridden upon the waves of recent national rejoicing that no apology is needed for a few words concerning its history. (Musical Times Publications Ltd. 1900: 228)

The popularity of Thomson's verse spread its Exceptionalist discourse far and wide, creating in this way a 'community' following the ideas analyzed above, and therefore keeping alive the idea of the old sovereign power for decades, for it became the "national utterance of the people" that, as Southey said, "will be the political hymn of the country so long as she maintains her political power" (Musical Times Publications Ltd. 1900: 228–31). The terms used by this particular news article in describing the cultural importance of the song are quite unique. Beethoven called it a "folk-song," conditioning the state of the song in the cultural subconscious of its audience. The idea of a 'folk' song gives this piece a certain familiarity and creates a natural space for the propagation of its discourse. William Barclay Square called it "perhaps the finest national song possessed by any nation" (Musical Times Publications Ltd. 1900: 228–31) it plays the role of "national utterance of the country" (Musical Times Publications Ltd.1900: 228–31).

Finally, should you doubt the impressive abilities of this specific text to mentality of its audience and to mould the national identities. I will now look at another, more recent instance where "Rule, Britannia!" was recycled. In our current times, the song is performed in the aestival Late Night Prom concerts, a festival dedicated to classical music, which has as its purpose to bring the world of the classics to anyone, or rather to open an opportunity for select entertainment at inexpensive prices. Apparently, "Rule, Britannia!" has its special place at this festival, being one of the tunes sung on the final night of the concerts. This piece of information reveals to us that this pre-setting of a national identity through discourse might have the capacity to actually produce materialized effects and taking a closer look at the socio-political context of current Great Britain, we can see that there has been a propagation of this Exceptionalist and Imperialist discourse, found naturally, dare I say, in the rhetoric of the present-day Conservative Party.

One resounding effect of such proliferation which immediately comes to mind is Brexit, as anticipated. Of course, I do not attribute this a complicated and historically significant occurrence to a simple song, for that would be reductive.

However, what I am pointing out is the ability of discourse to become a tool of political guidance and an instrument fully capable of defining one's identity.

Lastly, we have to understand that when powerful words are used to create a specific rhetoric, a specific type of discourse there is no wonder we are inclined to believe it and especially to manufacture our subconscious selves as rapidly as the tune reverberates, for we are following its rhythm. Hence, we can logically deduce why this prolific text has been reiterated so much throughout history, why it brought with itself the remnants of forgotten (or not so much) times and ideologies and why it had the capacity to shape the British identity.

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THE CIVILISED AND THE UNCIVILISED
A POSTCOLONIAL APPROACH TOWARDS THE ROLE REVERSAL BETWEEN WESTERN AND EASTERN EUROPE IN CONTEMPORARY TRANSNATIONAL THEATRE

Abstract
The disproportional West-East relationship is an issue which has become more and more visible lately, proving how the consequences of colonial waves did not cease to impact the symbolic segmentation of geographical territories based on power dynamics. However, contemporary politically engaged art offers new solutions for fighting against the remains of colonial thought with a new type of discourse. Therefore, this paper aims to discuss two instances of transnational political theatre, the British-Romanian production *Guilt,y* (2020) and the Moldavian-German collaboration *Symphony of Progress* (2022), attempting to discover how they raise awareness of the inequalities between Western and Eastern Europe. In conversation with critical works by Edward Said, Sara Ahmed, and Jan Cohen-Cruz, this analysis shows how the two productions place well-known stereotypes in contrast with the reality of economic migrants and refugees who face discrimination and exploitation in Western states considered to embody ideals of civilized societies.

The disproportional West-East relationship is an issue which has become more and more visible lately, proving how the consequences of colonial waves did not cease to impact the symbolic segmentation of geographical territories based on power dynamics. However, contemporary politically engaged art offers new solutions for fighting against the remnants of colonial thought with a new type of discourse. Therefore, this essay aims to discuss two instances of transnational political theatre, the British-Romanian production *Guilt,y* (2020) and the Moldavian-German collaboration *Symphony of Progress* (2022), showing how they place well-known stereotypes in contrast with the reality of economic migrants and refugees who face discrimination and exploitation in Western states considered to embody ideals of civilized societies.

Attempting to discover how the two productions raise awareness of the inequalities between Western and Eastern Europe, this analysis will take into account the following aspects: Monica Prendergast and Juliana Saxton's notion of "applied theatre" as a method of discussing pressing matters through artistic performances, the act of engaging the audience through dialogue as depicted by Jan Cohen-Cruz, the importance of performances addressing difficult and emotional matters in order for the audience to gain more awareness, as explained by Sara Ahmed, colonization as the starting point for the construction of a symbolic image for the West and the East, in relation to Edward Said's postcolonial study of orientalism, the influence of the political past and the current globalization process on the perception of the West

as a model of civilization as explained by Alan Dingsdale, Stephen Castle's understanding of the process and motives behind labor migration, and Jeanne Park's depiction of the differences between economic migrants and refugees, and the manner in which they are treated by Western states.

Firstly, it was not until the twentieth century that a different type of awareness could be observed in the artistic domain, resulting in new issues being approached by artists in their works. Such is the case of the theatre world, whose division was based on the intentions regarding the artistic product. Very possibly influenced by Augusto Boal and Bertolt Brecht's concept of art that prioritized the social and political rather than the aesthetic value, researchers Monica Prendergast and Juliana Saxton (2009) distinguish between traditional mainstream theatre and a new category called applied theatre. In the introduction to their book, *Applied Theatre: International Case Studies and Challenges for Practice* (2009), Prendergast and Saxton offer a proper definition of the term, while also describing its aims:

> Whereas traditional mainstream theatre is most often centered on the interpretation of a pre-written script, applied theatre, in contrast, involves both the generation and the interpretation of a theatre piece that in performance may or may not be scripted in the traditional manner. (2009: 7)

In other words, the main aspects which differentiate applied theatre from other types of theatre performances are its openness to conversation, to improvisation and its willingness to adapt to the necessary, relevant topics of discussion within certain communities. Moreover, it offers audiences the chance to experience theatre "in spaces that are not usually defined as theatre building, with participants who may or may not be skilled in theatre arts" (Prendergast and Saxton 2009: 7). As a result, members of the audience are able not only to witness, but also to be a part of the dialogue, resulting in a less pretentious, inclusive and politically engaged theatre experience.

The British-Romanian production *Guilt,y* (2020) and the Moldavian-German collaboration *Symphony of Progress* (2022) both make use of similar techniques and instruments in order to intervene in the political world and raise awareness of the inequalities between Western and Eastern Europe. Playwrights Sînziana Koenig and Nico Vaccari created *Guilt,y* as a way for people to experience the harsh reality of migrants and refugees facing the violent and unjust life they have to live. The limited stage design, props and resources allow audiences to direct their attention towards actress Oana Pușcatu, who takes turns speaking Romanian and English, embodying both the oppressor and the oppressed throughout this solo performance. However, among the techniques used by the performer to determine people to gain more awareness, the dialogical format of the play could easily be considered the most efficient, as it invites the public to take action and enter the conversational space.

As a supporter and practitioner of applied theatre, Jan Cohen-Cruz explains the benefits of resorting to dialogue in order to intensify the effects of such

performances on the audience. In her book, *Engaging Performance: Theatre as Call and Response*, Cohen-Cruz states that "dialogic aesthetics call for face-to-face exchange between actors and spectators through an ever-expanding set of techniques" (Cohen-Cruz 2012: 44). Whether it is directly asking the audience to read something out, react to a piece of information or provide an answer to a question, such practices offer people who consider themselves powerless the chance to become involved in relevant discussions and gain a sense of agency. Pușcatu manages to achieve this outcome by not only engaging in conversation with the audience, but also adding an element of surprise: singing the "Ode to Joy" along with them. The song is clearly intended to hold symbolic value, to accentuate the contrast between the peaceful coexistence the European Union proposes and the harsh conditions in which the less privileged have to lead their lives. Having to sing the song themselves, members of the audience are forced to consider the words more carefully, consequently, becoming aware of the discrepancies between reality and the ideal world described throughout the verses.

This dialogic technique is also maintained in Nicoleta Esinescu's *Symphony of Progress*, a performance in which actors Artiom Zavadovsky, Doriana Talmazan and Kira Semionov share different experiences of economic migrants working in Western Europe, through music ingeniously created with the use of mechanical tools. Aside from holding their monologues, the performers regularly add questions meant for the audience to ponder upon. What these questions illustrate is how the East has unjustly been associated with violence and lack of education, which gives way to discrimination. The actors prove this point through various examples such as migrant workers not being allowed to wear pockets in order not to receive tips or the decision to produce yoghurt with less fruit for Eastern Europe due to differences in taste. After making each of these statements, the actors ask the audience the rhetorical question: "This isn't violent, is it?" The contrast between preconceptions and reality is thus accentuated. While these questions remain unanswered by the actors, it is the public's turn, after watching the performance and considering its message, not only to find a proper answer, but also to continue the interrogation process meant to reveal truths regarding the inequalities between the West and the East.

Facing these pressing issues can be difficult for the audience to process at times, which is why, for a long time, the theatre world chose not to deal with such tough, emotional topics. However, it is of uttermost importance for performances to include relevant pressing issues in the conversation, which is precisely what the two productions do. The concept of "killjoy," theorized by feminist writer Sara Ahmed, is at the core of *Symphony of Progress*, having a major influence on its intentions as a performance. What it refers to is the necessity to discuss difficult matters and raise uncomfortable questions that are due to change a viewer's perspective towards the reality they witness. As Ahmed explains, the process of gaining awareness requires witnessing the pain of others, since "experiences of dysfunction (such as pain)

become lived as a return to the body, or a rendering present to consciousness of what has become absent" (Ahmed 2004: 26). In other words, even though the experiences portrayed by the performers on stage may not necessarily always coincide with those of the audience, they remain valid and relevant, as they reflect a side of reality not everyone has access to.

Another important element in gaining awareness is the process of tracing the evolution of the relationship between the East and the West throughout time, in search of the starting point for the construction of the stereotypes which guide this relationship. Postcolonial critic Edward Said explains that the only solution to prevent further discrimination against any social category is by acknowledging and documenting their historical and cultural background (2019). In the case of the Western understanding of the world, it can be observed how the colonial past of many states continues to influence their perception towards other cultures, which is limited to the features that they have attributed to them, any complex and complete knowledge still being out of reach. The dynamic between the West and the Orient, which is depicted by Said, is similar to the one between Western and Eastern Europe, as, in both cases, the former has tried to reduce the latter's access to the same rights and especially to knowledge. As Said states, the Oriental is transformed in "a subject race, an example of an 'Oriental' mentality, all for the enhancement of the authority at home" (Said 2019: 44). Therefore, it is clear that, for a long time, Western civilization was satisfied with reducing Oriental cultures to stereotypes and, nowadays, similar stereotypes are attributed to Eastern Europeans.

Moreover, this constructed image of Eastern Europe was also determined by other significant events in its historical past, especially the Soviet Union's totalitarian influence. In his article, "Redefining 'Eastern Europe': A New Regional Geography of Post-Socialist Europe?", researcher Alan Dingsdale describes how, until 1989, all Eastern European countries aside from Albania and Yugoslavia, were governed according to the system of rules promoted and imposed by the Soviet Union. After the total rejection of communist ideologies, by the end of the twentieth century, Eastern Europe had already gained a reputation which would then influence the way in which the West regarded the majority of its states. Being associated with the lack of education, resources and, implicitly, prosperity, Eastern European societies became a place for the West to invest in and impose its ideals on. As Dingsdale explains, "globalization and internationalization are thus affecting Eastern Europe mainly in the form of corporate foreign investment, the spread of western cultural forms, and lifestyles" (1999: 207). Therefore, Western states made a purpose out of integrating the East into the capitalist system they regarded so highly.

Being aware of this, Koenig and Vaccari integrate this topic into the script *Guilt,y* is based on, through the monologue of a trainer for entrepreneurial skills, who promotes the capitalist mindset, which, in his perspective, has no limits and, therefore, offers unlimited freedom. Wisely making use of a whiteboard placed on stage, the actress also writes the words "no limits" as she speaks to the audience, in

order for them to consider their meaning throughout the entire performance, but also to serve as a constant reminder of the capitalist influence over the society they are part of. This idea is also approached by the three performers in *Symphony of Progress*, who mock the capitalist society promoting various spiritual practices instead of viable, practical solutions for people dealing with poor living conditions. The notion of self-care as a marketing device is especially brought to discussion, showcasing how consumers are being encouraged to get a gym subscription or buy certain products and devices to make their lives easier, when in fact they are led into the trap of consumerism. As a result, the audience can come to the realization that the promoted Western lifestyle and values are in fact illusory, only designed for profit and for maintaining the power dynamic between the West and East.

However, having acknowledged the imperfect status of the Western space, what is it that determines people to migrate and attempt to find employment there? This is a highly complex matter, which can indicate multiple reasons, depending on the social, political and economic context, on the migrant's life conditions. In his article dedicated to depicting the evolution and motives of guest workers throughout time, Stephen Castles explains that the process of labor migration has its origin in the nineteenth century, due to the fast industrialization in the West. Despite the increase in the number of people leaving to work abroad, the countries of origin "accepted the system of temporary migration because they saw it a palliative for unemployment, as well as a source of foreign exchange for their own economies through workers' remittances" (Castles 1986: 770). Such is one of the cases presented in *Symphony of Progress*, as the actors tell the story of a Romanian woman who decides, in need of more money, that she would find a job for the duration of the summer in a Western country, only to later find herself and her co-workers isolated, overworked, underpaid and discriminated against. Similar cases determined Castles to affirm that "the unplanned nature of this process, in a situation of crisis and racism, leads to marginalization of the migrant population" (1986: 771). The inclusion of this story in the theatre performance offers the audience the chance to wonder how countries which consider themselves models of civilization are capable of treating migrant workers in such uncivilized manners, neglecting even basic human rights.

A similar treatment has been observed in the case of refugees who attempt to integrate themselves into the working field within Western society. However, the distinction between them and economic migrants is relevant for observing the circumstances which determine people to leave their countries of origin. In her article, "Europe's migration crisis," the deputy director of the Council on Foreign Relations, Jeanne Park, explains how, while refugees are forced to move their homes for an unknown period of time, due to a crisis which puts their lives at stake, "an economic migrant, by contrast, is a person whose primary motivation for leaving his or her country is economic gain" (2015).

Instead of migrating with the specific intention of finding a job, refugees find themselves being forced to work in any condition, in order to provide for themselves

and their families, in lack of any sense of certainty regarding the future, aspects visible in the solo performance *Guilt,y*. Wearing a factory worker's uniform and a protective mask, the actress reads a letter filled with the bitter irony of a person who is aware of their dependency on a job whose poor conditions damage their health and only barely provides them with a decent income:

> It is an honour to know that your children's asthma and your parents' cancer help reduce the carbon emissions in Western countries. It is an honour to know your country is the factory of the world. It is an honour to know that without your country, the world would fall apart. (Koenig and Vaccari 2020: 31)

The main purpose of this speech is to shed light upon the exploitation of refugees and migrant workers in order for Western states to make a profit and gain prosperity. However, at the same time, what it is achieved is a role reversal, as the performer shows the fact that the economy of the West depends on workers from the East. This is cleverly illustrated through the use of props, more specifically, the kiddie pool which could symbolize the boat which brings migrants overseas. Even though the pool might represent a neglected category considered inferior, it is intentionally placed in the middle of the stage, as the elephant in the room, the issue which has to be addressed. Moreover, acknowledging that at the very core of Western societies is the input of refugees and economic migrants also changes the superior-inferior dynamic, as it once again showcases the dependency of Western Europe on the East.

To conclude, this analysis serves as proof of how theatre can become involved in the political world, by reflecting parts of reality and categories of people that have been neglected. The inequalities between Western and Eastern Europe are visible in multiple ways, especially in the working field, which is why it is essential to acknowledge the exploitation of workers who have to leave their country of origin due to political or economic issues. The British-Romanian production *Guilt,y* and the Moldavian-German collaboration *Symphony of Progress* offer a voice to Eastern Europe, a category which has been discriminated against for a long time. By opening the conversation with the audiences on this difficult, emotional matter, the two productions succeed in showing how the constructed images of the civilized West and the uncivilized East do not coincide with reality. This proves that, through clever writing and ingenious use of stage design and props, theatre can raise awareness of pressing issues, determine people to reconsider their perspectives on the world and gradually change the status of certain power relationships.

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MENTAL ILLNESS AND 1990S GENETIC ESSENTIALISM IN MARK Z. DANIELEWSKI'S *HOUSE OF LEAVES*

Abstract
In the 1990s, a resurgence of genetic determinism swept the United States, facilitated by the efforts of the Human Genome Project. Scientists investigated the potential influences of genes on human behavior, including searching for genetic causes of mental illnesses like schizophrenia. Due to the public prominence of this research, the gene emerged in the public sphere as a powerful force with the ability to control individuals' futures, behaviors, and identities. This popular image of genetic essentialism is portrayed in Mark Z. Danielewski's novel *House of Leaves* as an inaccurate and reductionist idea that can inflict immense damage upon people with mental illnesses and their family members. Through the stories of Pelafina—a person with schizophrenia—and her son Johnny, *House of Leaves* questions both the ethics of promoting the omnipotence of genes and the ability of scientific developments to understand—let alone predict—the behavior of individuals.

In the 1990s, an ambitious project known as the Human Genome Initiative emerged and sought to determine how individual genes impact not only biological problems like cancer, but mental illnesses as well (Porter 2018: 346). This project changed conversations about genetics among both scientists and the general populace (Nelkin and Lindee 2004: 5). Throughout the 1990s, genetics "entered the vernacular" of the public and popular culture, imbuing the gene with "a cultural meaning independent of its precise biological properties" (Nelkin and Lindee 2004: 1-2). This cultural conception of genetics presents "the gene as powerful" and "deterministic," which reinforces an ideology that Dorothy Nelkin and M. Susan Lindee refer to as "genetic essentialism:" an idea that "equat[es] human beings, in all their social, historical, and moral complexity, with their genes" (2004: 2).

The characters in Mark Z. Danielewski's (2000) novel *House of Leaves* struggle beneath the weight of this popular conception of genetics. The novel follows Johnny Truant, a lonely young tattoo artist's apprentice who finds a manuscript at the apartment of a dead man named Zampanò. The manuscript appears to be Zampanò's academic thesis about a documentary that does not actually exist. As Johnny transcribes and edits the manuscript, he becomes increasingly paranoid and lost in recollections of his own past, especially his memories of his deceased mother Pelafina, who was institutionalized in a mental asylum called Whalestoe when Johnny was a child. Throughout the novel, Danielewski uses complex and unusual typography, ranging from streams of seemingly nonsensical text to the inclusion of an appendix at the end of the novel containing Pelafina's letters to Johnny. Through Johnny and Pelafina's struggles with mental illness, and the novel's typographic innovations that complicate them, *House of Leaves* criticizes genetic essentialism.

House of Leaves situates its characters within the popular mindset of genetic essentialism. Both Johnny and Pelafina attribute various traits to genetic causes. For instance, they both refer to schizophrenia as "crumbling biology," which indicates that they believe mental illness is caused by biological means (Danielewski 2000: 325, 587). Also, their specific reference to a failure in 'biology' rather than the mind suggests that this cause is innate and found elsewhere in the body—like their genes. Furthermore, they present their "crumbling biology" as contradicting and even destroying their individual identities. In a letter to Johnny, Pelafina writes, "Remember your mother loves you, despite her crumbling biology" illustrating the changes she will undergo through the course of her mental illness as distinct from her identity as Johnny's caring mother (Danielewski 2000: 587). Likewise, Johnny speculates that his "crumbling biology" could be the cause of his paranoia and nightmares, rather than Zampanò's manuscript. He describes this possible onset of mental illness as "burning holes through the fabric of [his] mind, dismantling memories, undoing even the strongest powers of imagination and reason," and wonders: "How then do you fly from that path?" (Danielewski 2000: 326). Thus, Johnny presents schizophrenia as destroying his self-identity, with no possible way for him to escape its rampage. Johnny and Pelafina view the onset of genetic mental illness as a force that derails their individual identities. Despite their personal self-concepts, they believe they will unavoidably become what their genes decree.

For Pelafina, a mother with a potentially genetic condition, genetic essentialism brings another consequence: "the guilt of passing on bad genes" (Nelkin and Lindee 2004: 143). This explains why she attempts to strangle the seven-year-old Johnny: "her thoughts at that time had entirely deteriorated," and "[t]he burden of life seemed too much for her to bear and therefore, in her mind, an impossible and even horrible burden to impose upon a child, especially her own" (Danielewski 2000: 380). The emphasis on the child being 'her own' not only highlights her emotional connection to Johnny, but her genetic one. 'Her own' child potentially carries her genes for schizophrenia, predisposing him to the 'deteriorated' mental state that prompts Pelafina's depressed outlook on life in this moment. Moreover, Pelafina wanting to spare Johnny from 'the burden of life' seems to specifically refer to a life with schizophrenia. She makes the judgment that life would be too difficult for Johnny to cope with based on her own experiences, and having to live with schizophrenia significantly impacts this experience and makes it more difficult. However, schizophrenia's symptoms do not typically manifest until adulthood (Ochoa et al. 2012: 2). Thus, Pelafina cannot know for sure, based on the manifestation of symptoms, whether her seven-year-old son has inherited her condition. Consequently, her attempt to murder him demonstrates her conviction in genetic determinism—her belief that her son must become what her genes suggest he will become—and the immense guilt and fear it inflicts upon parents.

For Johnny, Pelafina's "guilt of passing on bad genes" manifests as fear and resentment towards his mother. As he descends into paranoia, Johnny is plagued by

nightmares he cannot remember, until he finally recalls one in which he is a "deformed" being wandering through a maze of tunnels when a "frat boy" attacks him with an axe (Danielewski 2000: 404, 403). This dream references a theory about the minotaur myth that Zampanò proposes in his manuscript: "King Minos did not build the labyrinth to imprison a monster but to conceal a deformed child—his child" (Danielewski 2000: 110). Zampanò claims that his theory inspired a play in which Theseus is portrayed as a "frat boy" (Danielewski 2000: 111). Thus, Johnny's dream presents him as being like the minotaur: imprisoned—and hunted down—because of a genetic flaw.

However, Johnny's deformity does not only consist of minotaur-like traits, such as "hair covering strange lumps of flesh" (Danielewski 2000: 404). His hands also "look melted, as if they were […] dipped in boiling oil" (Danielewski 2000: 403). As Johnny's hands in reality have scars from Pelafina spilling boiling oil on them, this presents her as the source of the genetic flaw that lands Johnny in the labyrinth. Moreover, in Johnny's dream, Theseus transforms into a "strangely familiar" woman whose identity Johnny cannot place (Danielewski 2000: 405). However, she seems to be Pelafina. Johnny, in his dream, is also "unable to resurrect" the memory of Pelafina spilling oil on him, suggesting that she is currently blocked from his memory (Danielewski 2000: 403-404). Furthermore, Johnny claims that the woman's "eyes communicate in a blink an understanding of all the gestures [he has] ever made, all the thoughts [he has] ever had" (Danielewski 2000: 405). Earlier, he describes Pelafina as having a similarly strong ability to understand him when he writes that she "tenderly catch[es] [his] history in the gaps" of information about his life in his letters to her (Danielewski 2000: 325). In the dream, Pelafina hits Johnny several times with the axe. Wounded and dying, he reflects that his death "will put an end to the far more terrible ache inside [him], born decades ago, long before [he] finally beheld in a dream the face and meaning of [his] horror" (Danielewski 2000: 405-406). As Johnny is in his twenties, his birth seems to be the originating moment for this "horror" that was "born decades ago." This—heightened by the fact that, in Johnny's dream, he is imprisoned for a genetic abnormality inherited from Pelafina, and she murders him to spare him from it—suggests that the "horror" which Johnny believes he can only escape through death is his genetically inherited schizophrenia.

After Johnny identifies his fears of inherited schizophrenia as the cause of his nightmares, his feelings about Pelafina change. Earlier, he declares that "[he]'d sell body parts before [he]'d consider taking cash for" a locket left to him by Pelafina (Danielewski 2000: 351). However, he claims that "something about that dream [he] remembered changed [him]," and now "looking at the dull silver made [him] feel like there was this horrendous weight around [his] neck" (Danielewski 2000: 411). Not only does he sell the locket, but he claims that "the idea of getting rid of it was no longer enough, [he] had to hate it as [he] got rid of it" (Danielewski 2000: 411). Johnny's fears of his genetic fate direct blame towards his mother. Her locket, once a treasured possession, becomes a symbol of the burden he believes she has passed to

him through her genes. Pelafina thus becomes a victim of genetic essentialism. In Johnny's mind, she and all her previously appreciated complexity become nothing more than the genes she has passed to him.

Although Johnny and Pelafina believe in and are affected by the popular idea of genetic essentialism, the structure of the novel questions whether mental illness, behavior, and human identity can really be reduced to the sum of genes. For instance, it questions the validity of a hallmark symptom used to diagnose schizophrenia in the 1990s: "disorganized speech," including "severely disorganized" and "nearly incomprehensible" speech known as "word salad" (American Psychiatric Association 1994: 279). Pelafina and Johnny seem to exhibit this symptom. In fact, when Johnny describes the symptoms used to diagnose Pelafina, he specifically lists "word salad" (Danielewski 2000: 379). In her letters, Pelafina writes phrases like, "sea prolix tide norths spoons eels" and "Dearest everything and remarkably elegant seraphim's truth Johnny oh heaven's near nearing you" (Danielewski 2000: 633, 620). However, while this former phrase is never explicitly assigned a meaning within the narrative and could be a symptom of Pelafina's schizophrenia, the latter phrase—which sounds just as much like schizophrenic word salad to an outside reader—is actually a coded message to Johnny, in which the first letter of each word spells out the phrase, 'Dearest Johnny'. The reader can understand this latter message because in Pelafina's previous letter, she tells Johnny to "use the first letter of each word to build subsequent words and phrases" (Danielewski 2000: 619). Without this instruction from Pelafina, this code phrase would appear like meaningless word salad when read by anyone other than its intended recipient. Pelafina's other disorganized-sounding phrase is also in a letter addressed to Johnny. He, not the reader, is the intended recipient, so it is impossible to tell whether this phrase contains meaning meant only for him or if it is a schizophrenia symptom.

A similar instance of initially disorganized-sounding speech occurs with Johnny and the phrase, "Known some call is air am" (Danielewski 2000: 72). He initially describes this phrase as "Incoherent—yes," but "Without meaning—I'm afraid not" (Danielewski 2000: 71). Here, Johnny explicitly calls into question the relationship between incoherence and meaninglessness, even though his phrase, on its own, cannot be understood by an outsider, he asserts that it still contains meaning. Indeed, he later explains that this phrase means "I am not what I used to be" (Danielewski 2000: 72). Furthermore, the phrase "[n]on sum qualis eram" appears in one of Pelafina's letters (Danielewski 2000: 602). As this phrase means "I am not what I used to be" in Latin, Pelafina's inclusion of it in her letter reveals how Johnny's seemingly incoherent sentence is actually him sounding out this Latin phrase (Merriam-Webster n.d.). This revelation being rooted in Pelafina's letters demonstrates how phrases that seem incoherent to outside parties actually form communications between Johnny and Pelafina that only they understand. Their phrases that sound like 'word salad' to the reader are not meaningless, they just are not being read by their intended audience.

When reading a love letter written by one of the characters Zampanò analyses in his thesis, Johnny comments that "the greatest love letters are always encoded for the one and not the many" (Danielewski 2000: 393). Although not in the romantic sense, Pelafina's letters illustrate her love for Johnny by giving him the support he needs to cope with life in the foster care system after she is institutionalized. He describes her letters as "tenderly catching [his] history in the gaps" of information he left in his letters to her, which shows her affection, love, and deep understanding of Johnny (Danielewski 2000: 325). Johnny's narrative can likewise be read as a love letter to Pelafina. Not only does he express fondness in this description of her, but at the end of his narrative, he travels to Whalestoe and his childhood home, recollects the day his mother was taken away to Whalestoe and remarks that he "couldn't stop crying" that day and is still "crying now," and, finally, delivers an anecdote of maternal love through the story of a mother who stays with her dying baby for three days without sleeping or eating (Danielewski 2000: 503-504, 517, 518-521). This presents Johnny and Pelafina's sections of *House of Leaves* as love letters 'encoded for' each other and not the reader. Indeed, the first line of *House of Leaves*, written in the courier font that marks Johnny's point of view, bluntly informs the reader that "[t]his is not for you" (Danielewski 2000: ix). The reader is not Johnny's intended audience; his sections are an 'encoded' love letter that the reader is not meant to fully understand.

House of Leaves thus questions the accuracy of diagnosing schizophrenia based on a symptom like word salad. If the diagnosing psychiatrist is not the patient's intended audience, how can the doctor know if the patient's words contain meaning? The doctor can fall into the same pitfalls as readers who dismiss Johnny's "Known some call is air am" as a sign of the onset of mental illness. A doctor's inability to understand a patient's interiority, motives, and 'encoded' messages renders their diagnoses questionable. It is impossible to know which behaviors signal mental illness and which contain meanings to which the psychiatrist is not privy.

This problem became more pronounced during the 1990s' shift to biological conceptions of mental illness. Increased federal funding for research into "new neuroimaging technologies" made researchers hope that tools like MRI and PET scans would produce a better understanding of mental illness (Harrington 2019: 248). However, these technologies were not as helpful as researchers hoped. Their results "varied across studies and proved hard to replicate and interpret" and "failed to have any appreciable impact on how the overwhelming majority of patients were diagnosed" (Harrington 2019: 249). Johnny emphasizes this inability to meaningfully understand brain scan results when he wonders about the "biological examination" his doctor would have given him to test for schizophrenia if he had been able to afford it (Danielewski 2000: 379):

> run[ing] an MRI on my brain to see if the lateral and third ventricles were getting larger? Maybe he'd even take a peek at my delta activity on the good old electroencephalogram (EEG)?

> What sort of data streams would be generated and how conclusively could he or his specialists read them? (Danielewski 2000: 379)

Johnny's comment about enlarged ventricles references a theory, based on CT imaging, that people with schizophrenia have enlarged ventricles (Harrington 2019: 248). However, the researcher who founded this theory acknowledged that this trait's significance "was unclear" (Harrington 2019: 248). Thus, Johnny references another trait that, like Pelafina's word salad, scientists believed was a sign of schizophrenia but did not necessarily understand the meaning behind. Additionally, Johnny questioning the doctors' ability to "conclusively […] read" the scans calls to mind the 1990s researchers' inability to 'interpret' their findings. Doctors seem just as unable to interpret brain scans as incoherent—but personally meaningful—streams of words. Advances in technology do not change the fundamental diagnostic problems of turning people into 'data streams'—of seeing them as nothing more than the sum of biological processes or collections of abnormal behavior. This is the same problem at the root of genetic essentialism, in which human beings are reduced to merely their genes. Moreover, by questioning the diagnostic criteria for mental illnesses, *House of Leaves* casts doubt on researchers' ability to predict them. How can researchers tell who will develop a specific mental illness if they cannot even unequivocally determine whether a person has that illness in the first place?

House of Leaves not only demonstrates the psychologically damaging effects of genetic essentialism, but also questions the core principles of its beliefs. If genetic essentialism seeks to erase human complexity, then *House of Leaves* demonstrates how that very complexity allows people to retain pieces of their identities and interiorities that doctors, machines, and genome sequencing can never truly understand. Thus, it presents genetic essentialism as fundamentally reductionist. As in the era of the Human Genome Initiative, genes remain prominent in both public and scientific spheres today. For instance, through services like *23andMe*, consumers can personally obtain data about their own genes. However, *House of Leaves* acts as an important reminder that the cultural status of genes can dangerously expand to the point of erasing the human being who possesses them. Both in medical and interpersonal spaces, it is important to remember that the 'love letters' people use to share their interiority with those whom they are close to are too complex to be spelled out with only the nucleotides A, T, G, and C.

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GRAMMATICAL INTERFERENCE IN TENSES IN LATE RUSSIAN-ENGLISH BILINGUALS' SPEECH

Abstract
My research studies Russian-English interference in late bilinguals using questionnaires, c-tests, visual stimuli, free inquiries in both Russian and English languages in order to find out which changes occur most often and in which part of an interview. Right now, I have found possible areas of interference, and compiled statistics on where interference occurs most often and how this can be explained. Writing tasks have a very important role in this research because it allows us to see whether it is interference in languages or just lack of knowledge. As a result, I conducted 20 interviews and found 84 irregularities in the usage of the grammatical tenses. These irregularities were then grouped into five categories: sequence of tenses, the past perfect tense, the past simple tense and the present simple tense. I also divided these categories into subcategories: absence of auxiliary verbs, absence of -s/es or –ed endings.

Interference in languages is a very popular topic nowadays. Due to the effects of globalization and the ability to travel around the Earth, a lot of people come into contact with each other more frequently than before. This leads us to the fact that many people start learning languages even more than before, which makes research in the field of Second Language Acquisition, interference, language contacts, multilingualism and bilingualism very important these days. I, as a Russian-English bilingual, have always been interested in processes that flow in people's heads when they speak different languages and switch codes in conversations. Therefore, knowing how confusing it might be when you speak a completely different language, especially in terms of grammatical structures, I decided to conduct research on both languages that I speak and find out more from bilinguals about interference, which usually accompanies bilinguals and multilinguals.

Interference and irregularities

Before I present my results, it is essential to understand what interference and irregularities are. The first phenomenon, interference, is "those instances of deviation from the norms of either language which occur in the speech of bilinguals as a result of their familiarity with more than one language" (Weinreich 1966: 27). In broad strokes, we understand this definition to involve irregularities that appear in the speech of bilinguals or multilinguals under the influence of other languages that they know. It is very common when a grammatical structure of the mother tongue influences the grammatical structures of other languages that bilinguals or

multilinguals use. Usually, the more different the languages are, the easier it is to see. For example, in Russian, there is a somewhat free word order because of the cases in grammar that allow a speaker to see what an object is and what a subject is.

(1) RU: Раму моет мама.
EN: Mom washes a frame.

In example (1), Раму is the object of the sentence, and, even though it assumes the first position in the sentence, we can say that this is an object because of the ending of a word that helps us to determine the case and tell it is the object. The same grammar rule applies to the word мама. In English, there are no cases and we can see what an object is and what a subject is because of the word order Subject-Verb-Object. Therefore, we can sometimes meet interference in English under the influence of Russian language when Russian-English bilinguals start changing the word order and say something like a frame washes mom.

The second phenomenon is an irregularity. Alexander Gode discussed this phenomenon in his works about Interlingua. The scholar defined irregularities as "deviation from rules in grammatical constructions" (Gode & Blair 2011: 65. Basically, interference is the entire phenomenon when deviations appear, whereas the irregularity is word order in a sentence. Due to abundance of such effects and due to the fact that I am myself a Russian-English bilingual, my aim is to undertake detailed research on this topic and to explain what the reason might be for interference and irregularities that appear in bilinguals' speech.

Methodology

For the research, I have interviewed 20 late bilinguals that live in English-speaking environments in both languages and I got roughly 30 hours of material. All interviews consisted of four parts: motivational and attitudes questionnaire, C-Test, visual stimulus, and free questionnaire. All informants that were interviewed live in English-speaking countries and are older than 18. They all use both languages to communicate and when I speak about English-speaking environment, I mean all countries where English is used on a daily basis: the USA, the UK, the UAE, Ireland and Australia.

The first part of the interview consisted of motivational and attitudes questionnaire, where I gathered biographical information and ask questions about their attitudes towards countries where they were born and where they live now. This is needed in order to ask about their background: how they learned the English language, what language they use more often and what they think about both countries. All questions were shown to the informants and they were able to choose the answer from a list. The questionnaires that were used for the English part of the interview were constructed by Merel Keijzer for her research (2007: 109) The only thing I changed for my research are names of the countries presented in the work.

The second part of the interview consisted of a C-Test. Such tests are effective assessment tools that measure the level of foreign language proficiency globally in writing: "C-test (C-Test) is a gap-filling test belonging to the class of tests with "reduced redundancy" (Cloze-Test), which are used both to determine the general indicator of foreign language proficiency and to monitor a certain amount of material covered"(Schmid 2011: 20). This helps us define what exactly can be considered an irregularity when bilinguals speak about interference or incomplete language acquisition. Generally speaking, a C-Test (Cloze-Test) is a paragraph-long test in which the second part of every second word is omitted (depending on linguistic purposes, there may be other options). Participants in such a test reconstruct words by restoring the deleted parts of words. C-Tests are considered to be a short form of quick assessment, as tests have the ability to access many features of the language at once, such as vocabulary, syntax, morphology, and spelling. This allows people to compile a general scale of language proficiency. C-Tests are easy to use and evaluate. The development of such tests and the approval of their interpretations based on the results of the performed C-Tests, however, require rigorous verification.

For the English part of the interview I also used tests that were constructed by Merel Keijzer. As for the Russian one, I had to do my own versions in the Russian language. Shortly, my team and I took several texts that fit the C-Tests requirements, then processed them by deleting parts of words, and after that we tested them with native speakers who study or work in the universities so that we could check the ceiling effect of these texts. A ceiling effect occurs when too large a percentage of participants achieve the highest score on a test. In other words, when the scores of the test participants are all clustered near the best possible score, or the "ceiling," the measurement loses value (Nikolopoulou 2023). The problem of this effect is that tests have no value if many participants reach higher results and it leads us to the fact that tests are not able to show the real statistics. When the verification was completed, we distributed five texts that fit all the requirements in the ascending difficulty just like in the English tests. We also prepared Microsoft Forms so that participants could fill in and send us the results that we could check.

The third part of the interview is a visual stimulus. In this part of the interview, I showed our informants two videos depending on the language they were interviewed in. For the English interviews, I showed an extract of Charlie Chaplin's movie called *Modern Times* (1936). We took the idea from the research on acquisition of Spanish as the second language (Mitchell et al. 2008). With regards to this film, the informants were given a narrative task with questions about the extract: e.g. "What happened in the movie?" We also performed the same procedures with an extract from Russian movie called *Wake up Lenochka* (1934) and asked the same questions in Russian. My team found that film and checked that it did not contain any voice and was black and white, and, more importantly, it was comic, since it not only does not provide informants any language material that they can use when they answer my questions, but it also helps them find moments they can include in their retelling and

easily cling onto that for more commentaries. In this part, we check how bilinguals use their language with reliance only on visual stimuli without our help and any text on their screens.

The last part of the interview is an open-question questionnaire. Here we spoke with the participants in the interview on free topics and bilinguals only relied on their own vocabulary and knowledge of the languages. This part was intentionally included at the end of the interview, after the more demanding textual part and after the comic element, so that the participants would feel more comfortable speaking about their life. Finally, all participants are asked if they want their name to be included for public presentations and research.

Analysis of data

After the interview, I analyzed and identified all the grammatical irregularities associated with the formation of aspect-temporal constructions in the English language. The formed sample helped to identify the areas where irregularity in the spontaneous speech of bilinguals most often manifests itself. In total, 84 sampling units were identified in the interference that occurs in the spontaneous speech of bilinguals. The data was divided into 5 categories: sequence of the tenses, present perfect, past perfect, present simple and past simple.

The sequence of tenses group of irregularities makes up 52% of the sample units. The most notable examples are the following sampling units:

(2) Charlie ate when the policeman got there
(3) "He fell from his bike… they are gathering
(4) He saw a girl, that is going
(5) Till today I thought I will not speak it

We believe that this kind of irregularity seen in examples 2-5 manifests itself in speech due to the appearance of additional rules in the use of tense structures in the English language. In Russian language, there is no concept of 'the future in the past,' 'simultaneous actions in the past' and the very structure of the grammatical category of time is much narrower than in the language which they study. Thus, perceiving the second language through the prism of their native language, bilinguals do not have the opportunity to present a grammatical equivalent, which is why interference occurs in this case.

Another group of irregularities related to the Present Perfect tense accounted for 20.7% of the sampling units. The most notable examples are the following units:

(6) I never seen a…
(7) What I already said, they never got…

Like in the previous group of irregularities, examples 6 and 7 show that the category of the perfect is uncommon for a native speaker of Russian because there is no

equivalent grammatical category in Russian, so Russian-English bilinguals tend to replace the perfect with the simple past tense.

The next group of irregularities was related to the Past Perfect and contains 13.6% of the sample units. Some examples that occurred in the interviews were the following: "

(8) I lived in Poland, it was after I moved…
(9) Oh, maybe the idea was already voiced before he went to…

The Past Perfect is an infrequent construction that is used in the speech of English speakers. This construction occurs in complex sentences, which is not typical for English speakers, let alone Russian speakers. We believe that in this case, irregular usage happens due to the lack of a grammatical equivalent in the native language.

The next group of irregularities was related to the Present Simple. 10.6% of the sample units were included therein. The examples found in the speech of bilinguals turned out to be the following:

(10) He notice…
(11) He steal…

These irregularities were mostly personal in nature, but we assume that synthetism for agreement with the form of the main verb or an auxiliary verb and the subject of a sentence is required only in the third person singular form, so bilinguals could have simply slipped there.

In the last group, I included the rarest type of irregularity - only 3.1% of all sample units. Consider the following example:

(12) We spend three hours to arrive…

This irregularity is phonetic in some way, since the past tense form of the verb spend requires a /t/ sound at the end. We assume that this irregularity was caused not by interference, but by an informant's fatigue.

I also analyzed in which part of the interview most of the irregularities occurred and it was the part with a open questionnaire. This can be explained by the fact that none of the informants could use any visual stimuli, text or other help when they were speaking spontaneously.

As for C-Test results they were as follows: the average result in the English C-Test was 67%; the highest result in the English C-Test was 89%. For Russian, the average result was 82%, and the highest score in the Russian C-Test was 95%. With these tests, I have reached a lot. First of all, these tests are proven to be good when used in checking the level of bilinguals. Secondly, these tests showed me that all the bilingual informants were competent enough to participate in my research, because there were no people who scored under 50%.

Discussion

In the future, I plan to analyze the C-Tests to check the relationship between language proficiency and the number of irregularities that appear in the spontaneous speech of bilinguals. This analysis will help separate incomplete language acquisition from interference, and I will be able to answer the question whether there is a connection between the number of grammatical irregularities and language proficiency.

As for the grammatical interference in aspect and tense forms of the verbs, I want to cover more and add the articles to see a wider picture of irregularities in grammar in general. Since I have only managed to interview 20 people so far, I am looking forward to expanding my research, which this will allow me to clarify what interference looks like in the Russian-English pair of languages. In the future, I can also check the shifts in the language so I can analyze how language changes with time and do research on heritage speakers of Russian.

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A "WOMAN-SCAPED" DISCOURSE
A GENDERED ANALYSIS OF KATE CHOPIN'S "THE STORY OF AN HOUR"

Abstract
In the first part of the present twofold paper, I recontextualize an ecocritical idea—the term "landscape" unites two different ontological levels in a single word—and I argue that a similar compound structure may lie at the heart of the notion woman. Under patriarchal socio-cultural circumstances, women's actual existence is deliberately mistaken for inherently tendentious representations of them. I propose to use the coinage "woman-scaping" as a critical tool that may avail us in destabilizing this method of domination within patriarchal discourses. The second part of my paper puts into practice the above-mentioned theoretical considerations by offering the gendered analysis of Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour."

Jeff Malpas, an eminent theoretician of ecocriticism, considers that the term landscape is equivocal because it "can refer to a mode of presentation or 'representation,' such as a painting, as well as to that which is presented, namely a place" (2011: 5). In other words, in English the term landscape may refer both to the representation and the represented itself. Now, a thorough scrutiny, I believe, comes upon a similar stratification in the term woman. Under patriarchal socio-cultural configurations, every phenomenon is measured against masculine values and interests. That is to say, an event that matches the masculine interpretative frame fits inside there only because some of its features can be coerced into male categories—or, limiting this statement to the lingual paradigm, I agree with Hélène Cixous's militant account: "the deaf male ear […] hears in language only that which speaks in the masculine" (1975: 420). Everything that is inconsistent with the male representational system is either considered non-existent, or to be of a trivial nature. That which lies outside this system constitutes the "peripheral," the "impure," and the "deviant" Other in phallogocentric binary oppositions. Not only does this mean that representation becomes more fundamental than the reality of things, but it also means that the ones represented are to be shaped to conform with virile categories. If this is so, it becomes clear why there is always a discrepancy, in a patriarchal frame of reference, between what women actually are, would want, or aspire to achieve, and what they "should" be, what they "should" think and feel, what they "should" aspire to achieve. And this discrepancy signals that something shines through the patriarchal interpretation of the term woman.

For the purposes of the further inquiry, I introduce a new concept to define the mechanism revealed before. Etymologically speaking, the suffix -scape is tantamount to the suffix -ship, which has its origins in the Old English scapan "to

shape, to form, to create" (Online Etymology Dictionary 2021). Therefore, "woman-scape" could be used as a verb to denote and disclose the disconnecting gesture regarding women that is characteristic of the masculine representational system. If we say that a discourse is woman-scaped, we mean that it methodically strives to replace women's actual condition with fictitious and self-legitimizing narratives (cf. Cixous 1975: 419).

Every system implicitly posits the strategy of its own opposition as well. Such an antagonistic counterstrategy, however, is purely reactional owing to the fact that it does not transcend the binary logic assumed by the system. To put it differently, an anti-system composed only of countermoves is one of the means of keeping a system intact: "Reactional countermoves […] have no effect on the balance of power" (Lyotard 1984: 16). But in spite of all the limiting (i.e. structuring) gestures that a system expresses, it cannot rule out unpredictability completely. An unanticipated move is more than just a countermove. Having no pre-planned counterparts, unexpected actions provoke no immediate reactions, and so they prefigure an imbroglio within the system. Correspondingly, should the so-called "gaps" or "fissures" become inexistent within woman-scaped representational structures, the very probability of implementing unexpected actions—the potential of changing the system—would be rendered absent.

Representational systems are only possible if man looks at the Other as an It, in the Buberian sense of the word. This It is a list of its own features, nothing more than man's instrument, means, object, something securely separated from and external to the Cartesian subject (cf. Buber 2022: 73). But, as expected, representation cannot be total. The list of Its attributes can be continued ad infinitum. No structure can possibly capture the "essence" of It: "Men say that there are two unrepresentable things: death and the feminine sex" (Cixous 1975: 424). Man cannot represent something that shatters his moulds when encountered. And women's writing can be, in its every aspect, this subversive practice because writing is "the very possibility of change, the space that can serve as a springboard for subversive thought, the precursory movement of a transformation of social and cultural structures" (Cixous 1975: 419).

Drawing on women's creative powers, such a writing aims to devise an inclusive language for those experiences and phenomena which were excluded from the masculine framework. It will, *ipso facto*, always surpass the phallocentric discourse (Cixous 1975: 422). Women's writing reintroduces unpredictability and uncertainty into masculine structures and shows the strategies of woman-scaping. It undermines, via constantly excelling categorization, the distance that was established by male detaching gestures between the represented woman and the actual woman. Fissures are women writing: women finding ways to suspend the logic that wantonly confuses them with their representations. And where representation ends, meeting is initiated. For Martin Buber, an I–Thou relation, as opposed to an I–It instrumental relationship, means an encounter among two

uncategorizable and wholly present beings (cf. Buber 2022: 50). From this perspective, one could argue that woman-scaping is man's domination technique that acts through forcing the free, limitless, and unstructured Thou-She into a structured, object-like It-She. In the Derridean paradigm, this means that a woman-scaped discourse restricts the domain of play of the Thou-She by assigning Her a transcendental signified: the It-She (cf. Derrida 2001: 354). This not only creates a permanent sense of qualm about every transgression from the controlled territory of It to the field of Thou's unlimited potential, but it also tries to reduce the heterogeneity of the self to an illusionary monad-like, monolithic unity.

Now, after having discusses the theoretical mainstay of this paper, I focus on a woman who writes literature, and therefore discloses how incommensurable the Thou-She is relative to the It-She. In the present context, however, if I wish to champion—to put it in Cixous's words—women's "*new insurgent* writing," I cannot be satisfied with the trend of orthodox literature, which by definition conceals social and cultural circumstances, and replaces them with aesthetic reveries (1975: 419). Subversive writing is meant to be a way of emancipation; it is inseparably entangled with political stances, and defies the extant powers (cf. Selyem 2022). Subversive writing is meant to ideate and bring about new strategies for sharing each other's company: "it will be up to man and woman to render obsolete the former relationship and all its consequences" (Cixous 1975: 428). Chopin's short story sets out in this exact sense to overtly exhibit a segment of Mrs. Mallard's life in a highly woman-scaped space.

As stated earlier, in woman-scaped discourses certain voices are subdued, certain relations are predetermined. For instance, Mrs. Mallard should obligatorily mourn her late husband, and expire in a completely unironic bliss when she finds out that her spouse is, in fact, safe and sound. In her monograph, Emily Toth derives this actual abrupt 'twist' in the plot from the authoritative construction of widowhood prevalent in the 1890s. We learn here that "The Story of an Hour" is virtually based on real-life events: Chopin's mother, Eliza O'Flaherty, did get widowed (Toth 1999: 9-10). Nonetheless, "a story in which an unhappy wife is suddenly widowed, becomes rich, and lives happily ever after […] would have been much too radical, far too threatening, in the 1890s" (Toth 1999: 10). Which is to say, even if Chopin got inspired by a factual case, her fiction could not report it as it happened. Rebecca N. Mitchell sums up concisely how deeply rooted woman-scaped structures were: "the veneer of fiction [was not] always thick enough to make palatable the possibility that a woman might feel relief after her husband's death" (2013: 601). In this regard, it is not a far-fetched conclusion that Chopin's present work functions as a zero-sum game: what she offers, what is at stake in her writing, is what she herself must disown in order to reach the invariable normative resolution—and in order to get published in the first place.

Continuing the enumeration of manifest woman-scaping in the short story, one must not gloss over the status that Mrs. Mallard holds in her marriage: her

humble and undisputable obedience to her husband is taken for granted. Indeed, in the nineteenth-century United States "marriage […] was a form of slavery" (Basch 1979: 355). Or, another aspect of woman-scaping is the expectation built upon "women's natural sensibility:" Mrs. Mallard may make herself literally ill by succumbing to extremely powerful sentiments. As a matter of fact, Lawrence I. Berkove carries out a full-fledged interpretation based on this expectation, pathologizing Mrs. Mallard's figure and labelling her "an immature and shallow egoist," who "is sick, emotionally as well as physically" (2000: 158, 156). In his view, Mrs. Mallard is the epitome "of extreme self-love" (2000: 157). Yet, what he fails to acknowledge when asserting that "this story is not about society or marriage, but about Louise Mallard," is that, first of all, structural-level problems do affect individuals even if their implications are ignored; and, secondly, that he reiterates the normative mechanism that measures women against "normal" virile categories (2000: 153). The simplicity with which the Leibnizian Berkove attests Mrs. Mallard's "dissatisfaction with *the best that life has to offer her*" (2000: 158, my emphasis) perversely resembles the exceedingly ironic final phrase of the narrative: "the joy that kills" (Chopin 1894). This conclusion, it seems to me, gives away more about Berkove's scandalously poor understanding of women's condition than it does about Louise's character.

A thorough examination of the text body constitutes my first interpretative step. It is rather unlikely that merely aesthetic reasons motivate the way the story is textually structured. A gendered analysis cannot overlook the fact that basically two events—the purported death of Brently Mallard, respectively his utterly unanticipated return—frame Mrs. Mallard's own ephemeral story. And so, Mrs. Mallard is found inside a masculine cosmos: her story is literally squashed between his-stories. This textual disposition suggests that in woman-scaped discourses women's stories unavoidably begin and end with men. What is more, it also unveils the modus operandi of categorization: the masculine frame attempts to keep her within its (and also Its) strict boundaries, limiting her domain of play. That is why Mrs. Mallard, as an It-She, appears only in the light of her medical condition at the beginning of the story: "Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble, great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband's death" (Chopin 1894).

Moreover, neither are names chosen at random. Let us not omit the fact that Richards, a man, whose name means "brave/firm ruler," is the one who causes the fatal misunderstanding by mistaking two different men with one and the same name (Online Etymology Dictionary 2017). Thus, unknown until the last sentence to both characters and readers that only for a nonce, Mrs. Mallard ceases to be an It-She only as a result of the dominant party's accident. However grim such an external and transitory suspension of woman-scaping may seem to us now, these disclosures of domination were the forerunners of texts like Cixous's—texts that actively and

directly promote the internal and definitive disestablishment of gender-based hierarchization, maltreatment, and misrepresentation.

Now follows the section in which feminine existence manifests itself as a Thou-She. Louise's assertive deed — "she would have no one follow her" (Chopin 1894)—is not a symbol of her freedom. It is her freedom as a woman. She retired to her room, and "there stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy armchair. Into this she sank, pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul" (Chopin 1894). It is rather beguiling to read the subsequent passages symbolically, and echo such automatic statements as "finally separated from male abstract categories, Louise's concrete freedom is reflected in the unmediated and unlimited presence of nature." I did find such symbolic interpretations. For instance, S. Selina Jamil writes that "Chopin make[s] Louise's flooding emotions vitalize the landscape, […] she […] makes the latter's emotions create a meaningful, purposeful landscape: it symbolizes the […] dynamic forces of life" (2009: 218). Or, in Annetta M. F. Kelley's words: „Mrs. Mallard has just received a freedom which she has long craved, and her senses are bursting with promise of a new life, like that of spring" (1994: 340).

An ecocritical consideration, however, stopped me from offering another similar interpretation. On the one hand, I would reproduce the logic that I have intended to expose so far, only in a different context (I would mistake nature for its socio-cultural construction). On the other hand, as an idiosyncratic symptom of anthropocentrism, I would find a socio-cultural equivalent for every non-human Other. It is strenuously difficult and disconcerting to welcome the idea that there are loci in reality, and therefore in texts as well, that are not about us humans, that are not inherently human. But there is another aspect that such an interpretation conceals as well. Namely, that "women's inclusion in the sphere of nature has been a major tool in their oppression" (Plumwood 1993: 19).

Nevertheless, it can be perceived more obviously that the language of the narrative changes here as Louis is ravished by that joy that is not joy, that not-category, that event that shuns all prearranged forms, that Thou which is "too subtle and elusive to name" (Chopin 1894). It is worth noting that her first name is mentioned only in this in-between section. Mrs. Mallard dies: Louise is born. "Louise" we say if we are to provisionally describe a singularity happening in a woman-scaped structure. Louise is the hitherto discarded as trivial. Louise is union and attachment. Louise is freedom. Louise is the voice that speaks herself: "'Free! Body and soul free!' she kept whispering" (Chopin 1894). Woman-scaping does not speak instead of her anymore. In light of these, the ending of the narrative is extremely ironic, since two incommensurable modes of being clash in a single word: joy: "When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease—of the joy that kills" (Chopin 1894).

Given the normative values that it produces, the absence of woman-scaping is, from the patriarchal perspective, deprivation and loss. Its re-establishment is

making up for a "temporary accident." Its re-imposition, which also means re-imposing the It-She upon the Thou-She—this has to happen because her condition is medicalized again, it is man's genuine joy, however self-congratulatory and self-glorifying that may be. But this joy has nothing do to with the elusive experience that Louise has had only moments before, save for literally killing it. It would not be enough to claim that woman-scaped joy is distinct from this latter, elusive joy because the category of "distinctness" cannot express, nor perceive, for lack of a better word, the distance between the It-She and the Thou-She. The fact that patriarchal interpretation dismisses her story as a singular and deviant case exemplifies that history as his-story dealt for too long a time only with the It-She—hence the cruel irony of "the joy that kills," of Louise's "dissatisfaction with the best that life has to offer her."

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SECOND-PERSON PLURAL FORMS YOU ALL AND Y'ALL IN PRESENT-DAY SPOKEN AMERICAN ENGLISH
A CORPUS-BASED DIACHRONIC ANALYSIS

Abstract
This paper investigates the change in frequency of *You all* and *Y'all* in present-day spoken American English. Since these forms are used in colloquial English, this study adopted the TV corpus and the Movie corpus, which have much information about spoken English. From this corpus-based diachronic research, an increase in *Y'all* is found. This paper concludes that one of the factors that caused the increase of *Y'all* is that *Y'all* is easier to pronounce than *You all*.

In the Old English (OE) period, the second-person pronoun inflected according to its number and case (see Table 1). This system has gradually disappeared through its history, and *You* which derives from *eow* in the OE has come to be mainly used as a second-person pronoun in both the singular and plural today. Due to the disappearance of the distinction between singular and plural, various second-person plural forms such as *you guys* and *you all* have developed in many dialects of English in order to distinguish between the singular and plural (Galiano 2020: 30; Molina 2016: 8). Using The Corpus of Historical American English (COHA), Galiano (2020: 33) shows that the frequency of '*You all*' is the highest among other second-person plural forms, and the frequency of '*Y'all*' has been increasing since the 1950s. Also, *You all* and *Y'all* are chiefly used in Southern American English (Quirk et al. 1985: 344). For these reasons, the present study will examine the change in frequency of *You all* and *Y'all* diachronically focusing on American English (hereafter: AmE).

	Singular	Dual	Plural
Subjective	Þu	git	ge
Genitive	Þin	incer	eower
Dative	Þe	inc	eow
Accusative	Þe	inc	eow

Table 1. Inflection of the Second-Person Pronoun in OE (Lass 1992: 117)

Literature Review

Galiano (2020) investigated second-person plural forms in World Englishes mainly from the pragmatic perspective. Her study grouped different second-person plural forms into three categories: morphological (e.g. *Yous(e)*), analytic (e.g. *You all*) and

double marking (e.g. *Yous(e) all*). The study showed the pragmatic functions of *You all* and *Y(')all* respectively, and concluded that these expressions are undergoing pragmaticalization (Galiano 2020: 190-225).

Galiano (2021) studied suffixed second-person pronouns such as *Yous(e)* and *Yiz* which were grouped as a morphological category in Galiano (2020: 24). The study found that suffixed second-person pronouns have been undergoing grammaticalization and pragmaticalization in the same way as second-person pronouns in an analytic category mentioned in Galiano (2020: 190-225).

Some representative grammar books state that *You all* and *Y'all* are typically used in the Southern AmE (Biber et al. 1999: 1123; Quirk et al. 1985: 344). This was demonstrated by Molina (2016), who investigated the distribution of second-person plural forms in the United States. This study also revealed two notable findings. First, *Y'all* is spreading across the United States, and it is becoming a universal second-person plural form. Second, *You all* has become obsolete in the Sothern AmE although it is still used in the Midwest. The former has already been mentioned in Tillery et al. (2000) who have researched the spread of the use of *You all* and *Y'all* in the outside of the Southern area. One of the conclusions of the study is that the spread of *Y'all* (spelled *Yall* in the literature) is due to its usefulness, i.e. *Y'all* is a form of single lexeme. This morphological feature is discussed in the Results and Discussions section.

In summary, it has been recognized that *You all* and *Y'all* have spread outside of the southern area of the United States, and that these forms have been undergoing pragmaticalization. However, to the best of the author's knowledge, there have been few attempts that aim to demonstrate quantitatively the extent to which the frequency of *You all* and *Y'all* has changed, and to analyze these changes comprehensively from the point of view of phonetic and morphological change. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the change in the frequency of *You all* and *Y'all* in AmE and to analyze the factors that have caused the change from the perspectives of phonetics and morphology. The final section analyzes the pragmatic features of *Y'all*.

Methodology

Since it is difficult to collect historical spoken language data, dialogues of fictional books and plays were the main source of historical spoken language data in the previous studies because the dialogues reflect the spoken language of the time as closely as possible (Galiano 2021: 87). In order to examine *You all* and *Y'all*, however, it is appropriate to use the corpora that contain enough amount of information about colloquial English, because the second person plural pronouns (i.e., *You all* and *Y'all*) are typically used in colloquial, spoken language (Galiano 2020: 23). Galiano (2020) used the Corpus of Global Web-Based English (hereafter: GloWbE) in order to study second-person plural forms in World Englishes. However, Davies and Fuchs (2015:

25) state that: "… GloWbE, where there is no spoken data (although the 60 percent or so of texts in GloWbE that come from blogs do provide fairly informal language)." Although about the 60 percent of the data in GloWbE comes from blogs, it seems that using GloWbE to investigate second-person plural forms which are typically used in spoken language lacks validity. In order to collect more reliable information about *You all* and *Y'all* than previous studies, the present study adopted *The TV Corpus* (hereafter: TV) and *The Movie Corpus* (hereafter: MV) to diachronically investigate the change in frequency of *You all* and *Y'all* in colloquial English. Mark Davies (2019) introduced both corpora as follows:

> The Movie Corpus and the TV Corpus (part of the corpora from English-Corpora.org) are the largest available corpora of informal English. The TV Corpus contains 325 million words in 75,000 very informal TV shows (e.g. comedies and dramas) from 1950-2018, and the Movie Corpus contains 200 million words in 25,000 movie scripts from 1930-2018.

Although the amount of data that TV and MV contain may be less than GloWbE, TV and MV would provide more reliable information about *You all* and *Y'all* than previous studies because the information contained in these corpora focuses on spoken English. The next section presents and analyzes the results from these corpora.

Results and Discussions

The Results of TV and MV

The results obtained from TV and MV are shown in Tables 2 and 3 and Figures 1 and 2. Tables 2 and 3 present the frequency of *You all* and *Y'all* per million words (pmw) in TV and MV, respectively. Figures 1 and 2 show the diachronic change of the ratio of *You all* and *Y'all* in TV and MV respectively.

However, there is an issue with these data. In TV and MV corpus, *You all* was counted as the personal pronoun *You all* in sentences such as 'Are you all right?'. Therefore, the actual frequency of *You all* is likely to be lower than that shown in Table 2 even though this issue does not affect the fact that *Y'all* has been increasing in spoken AmE over the decades. Here are the examples of the non-personal pronoun *You all*:

(1)
a. Oh, Your Majesty! Are *you all* right? (The Royal Bodyguard: TV corpus)
b. I listen to *you all* the time, except when you talk. (Bewitched: TV corpus)
c. I've been calling *you all* day. We have to talk. (Making the Grade: Movie corpus)
(Emphasis added by the present author)

	1930s	1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s

TV			164.17	183.76	173.58	198.01	177.85	138.31	136.5
MV	165.24	138.96	138.47	121.39	160.72	174.17	164.62	144.43	125.57

Table 2. The Frequency of *You all* in TV and MV (pmw)

	1930s	1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s
TV			4.83	4.00	18.31	14.72	26.14	41.62	71.92
MV	10.2	5.2	5.65	7.91	31.77	35.34	65.86	90.86	79.61

Table 3. The Frequency of *Y'all* in TV and MV (pmw)

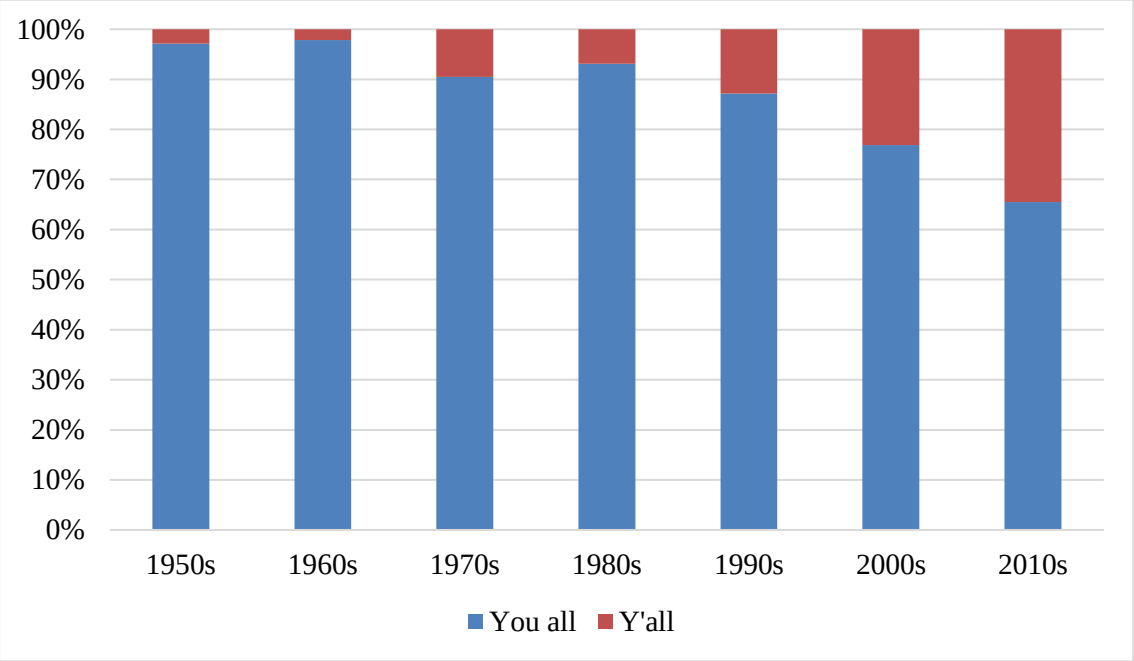

Figure 1. The Diachronic Change of the Ratio of *You all* and *Y'all* in TV

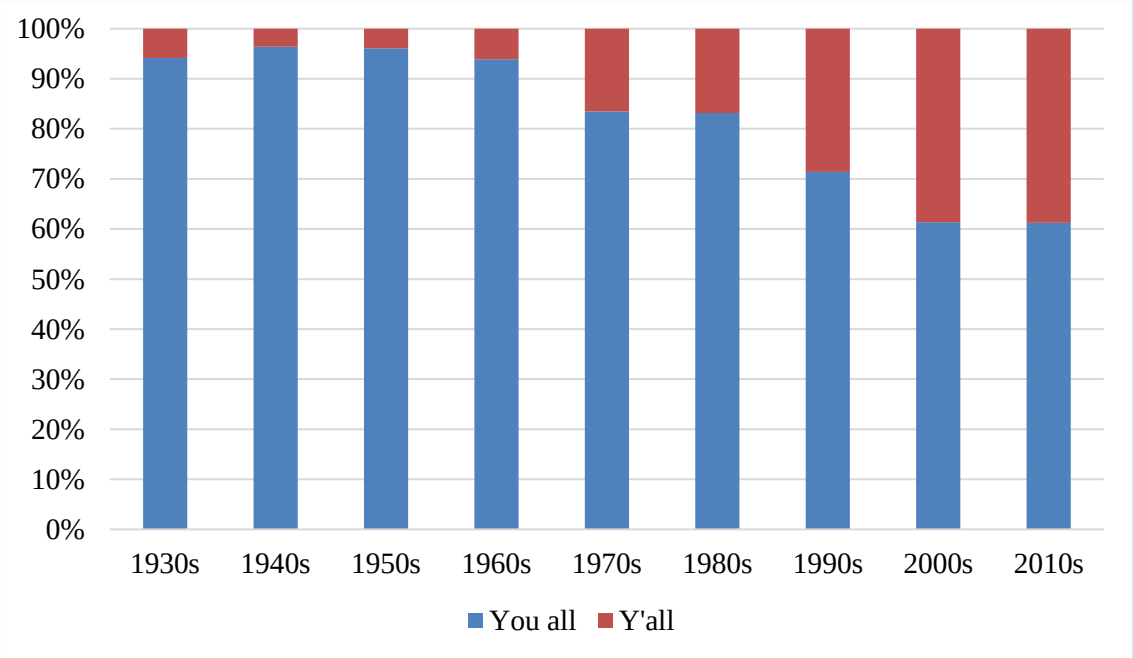

Figure 2. The Diachronic Change of the Ratio of *You all* and *Y'all* in MV

Figures 1 and 2 show that the ratio of *Y'all* has been increasing over the decades. Although the proportion of *You all* is still higher than that of *Y'all*, *Y'all* accounts for about 40 % of both TV and MV in 2010s. The next section discusses the factors that have caused this increase.

An Origin of Y'all and its Phonetic and Morphological Change

Much attention has been paid to an origin of *Y'all* (Bernstein 2010: 107; Tillery et al. 2000), and it is important to consider its origin in order to discuss the factors that have caused the rise of *Y'all* in spoken AmE. As Wales (2003) says, there is no general agreement on the origin of *Y'all*. However, *Y'all* seems to be derived from *You all* i.e., *Y'all* is a fused form of *You all*. This view is based on Wales (2003), who insisted that the '*You'* in *You all* was elided into '*all'*.

Also, Tillery et al. (2000: 290) emphasized that "*yall* is best understood not as a product of contraction but rather as a consequence of fusion." *Fusion* is defined as "the merger of two or more forms across word or morphological boundaries" (Hopper & Traugott 1993: 40). '*Be going to'* has been fused into '*gonna'* in the process of grammaticalization (Hopper & Traugott 1993: 41), and the use of *gonna* has been increasing in the United States for decades (see Table 4). One of the reasons for the increase in *Y'all* is that *Y'all*, a fused form, is easier to pronounce than *You all*, an unfused form. In conclusion, it is predicted that the frequency of *Y'all* will continue to increase in the future, as will the frequency of *gonna*.

	1930s	1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s
TV			1469.65	1108.32	1762.89	2060.75	1991.55	2399.77	2866.87
MV	933.72	799.63	976.17	887.31	1565.31	1744.30	1702.03	1835.51	2074.09

Table 4. The Frequency of gonna in TV and MV (pmw)

Pragmatic Functions of Y'all *in TV and MV*

In this section, the pragmatic functions of *Y'all* are analyzed with reference to Galiano (2020) in order to examine *Y'all* from a qualitative point of view.

In Galiano (2020), two pragmatic features of *Y'all* were shown: an attention getting and co-occurrence with greeting expressions. In the literature, the definition of 'an attention getting' is explained as "an attention getting, which indicates the strategies adopted by the speaker in order to obtain the interlocutors' attention (Galiano 2020: 77)." According to Galiano (2020: 207-208), an attention getting is the most frequent pragmatic function of *Y'all*. The instances of an attention getting and co-occurrence with greeting expressions from the literature are as follows:

(1)
a. But y'all! I have to drive the Beltway around DC for this little trip. (US G)
b. It's national crisis, y'all. (US B)
c. Hey, y'all. Just wondering whether or not I have a 'faulty' unit. (GB G)
(Galiano, 2020: 206)

First, one-hundred sentences were randomly selected from TV. Only nine cases of an attention getting and two cases of co-occurrence with greeting expressions were found in the one-hundred sentences from TV. However, twenty-six cases were found in which *Y'all* is used in interrogative sentences. The examples of the interrogative sentences in which *Y'all* is used from TV are shown in (2).

(2)
a. Hey, hey! Where *y'all* going? Unh-unh. You losers are our new practice partners. (Black-ish, 2017)
b. Did *y'all* see that thing on Claire Johnson's head? (The Dead Zone, 2003)
c. Who *y'all* talking about? Someone die? (Longmire, 2015)
d. What are *y'all* doing? What… Hey, hey, hey! What the hell? (Friday Night Light, 2008)
(Emphasis added by the present author)

Second, one-hundred sentences were randomly selected from MV. In MV, sixteen cases of an attention getting and three cases of co-occurrence with greeting expressions were found in the one-hundred sentences from MV. Twenty-seven cases in which *Y'all* is used in interrogative sentences were found. The instances of the interrogative sentences in which *Y'all* is used are shown in (3).

(3)
a. How *y'all* doing? Very good. (Joyride, 1997)
b. How do *y'all* - - do *y'all* all write your songs? (Shut Up & Sing, 2006)
c. *Y'all* ready? Here we go. Death! (A Band Called Death, 2012)
(Emphasis added by the present author)

In summary, it was found that *Y'all* tends to be used in interrogative sentences although the pragmatic functions of *Y'all* that are mentioned in Galiano (2020) were hardly found in my corpus-based research. Further research is needed to investigate what this tendency means.

Conclusions

In this study, the second person pronouns, *You all* and *Y'all*, were investigated from both a quantitative and qualitative perspective. In the quantitative viewpoint, there has been an increase in the frequency of *Y'all*. This study concludes that one of the factors causing this increase is an ease of pronunciation of *Y'all*. In the qualitative point of view, the pragmatic functions of *Y'all* were analyzed. In both of TV and MV, it was found that *Y'all* tends to occur in interrogative sentences.

Further studies are needed in order to verify that You all has been grammaticalized and fused into *Y'all*. There are also two limitations to this study. First, the methodology of this study should be brushed up in order to avoid the issue mentioned at the beginning of the Results and Discussions section. Second, the definition of 'an attention getting' should be clear in further study.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF QUEER REPRESENTATION IN *HEARTSTOPPER*

Abstract
This paper focuses on the importance of queer and genderqueer representation in both Alice Oseman's webcomic/graphic novel and Netflix series, *Heartstopper*. I will talk about the impact that it has for the audience to see gay, lesbian, bisexual people, as well as transgender people in TV series and books, focusing on *Hearstopper* and how well it depicts teens being messy with regards to love. I will also point to the importance of representing queer and genderqueer people realistically, as sometimes messy, disturbed and anxious and not just happy people, as they have typically been depicted. I will also refer to the importance of kids and teens having this available, as there is nothing sexual going on in either the novel/webcomic or the series.

Alice Oseman's *Heartstopper* has easily become one of the most beloved TV series ever since its first airing back in 2022. It is based on the comics of the same name published by Oseman in 2019. The question remains why people gravitated towards it and what Oseman's success as the creator is grounded in. In this essay I will talk about the importance of good queer representation, the relevance of graphic novels and comics, the lack of sexual education in Romania and its effects, toxic queer relationships, bi-erasure, queerbaiting, lesbian women's role in the AIDS & HIV crisis of late 20th century US, AAPI hate crimes in the US during the Covid-19 Outbreak, the importance of casting queer actors for queer roles and the rise in trans hate crimes. I will also use the pronouns based on the novel's character, mentioned in the last pages of each volume, as well as actor's preferred pronouns when speaking about them. I will use both the graphic novels and the TV series interchangeably as points of reference, because both use the same storyline with very minor dialogue changes. I will talk about each character of the story and their social impact as human beings, queer or not.

I will begin by defining my version of "importance" applied in the queer context. The importance of having a good queer representation of reality in either a novel or a TV series, as is the case here, has a lot to do with relatability and correct portrayal of queer people. In TV series/movies, queer characters have historically been either totally excluded, or created in a way which conveys stereotypes of queer people, such as Damian from *Mean Girls* (Waters 2004), who is always happy, which sums up all the representation a queer themselves could see on TV around that time. Importance is an individual aspect of how we relate to a character's qualities and flaws. Too many of either qualities or flaws will often depict a distorted reality. Going from the always-happy gay best friend to having a full queer teen-love novels/series is all due to queer people fighting for their rights.

Next, I want to talk about the importance of seeing graphic novels/comics, as pieces of literary and educational texts. I firmly believe that they are of the same importance as any given literary text, as Brenner states in *Handbook of Research on Children's Young Adult Literature*: "While the later generations, especially those who were kids in the 1960s, are more aware of comics' breadth, only the most recent generations of comics readers come to the medium without the 'comics are for kids' preconception" (2010: 262). But not everybody feels that way. Brenner also states that:

> Adults in the United States still consider comics as a juvenile medium, unaware that comics have, for the past 30 years, been primarily aimed at adult readers, not children or teens. On the flip side, adults worry that comics are wildly unsuitable for their children, full of either pornographic sexuality or excessive violence, startled by pages taken out of context. (2010: 262)

The problem with this is that it plays too well into the narrative that sexual identity and sexuality cannot and should not be talked about until one is 18 years old. One of the main problems of this is that, for instance, in Romania, in a study published by Salvați Copiii România (2022) and verified by the National Institute of Statistics, 731 girls under the age of 15 became mothers in 2020, and those are only the recorded cases. We lack sexual education and whose job is it then to teach safe sex?

In *Nick and Charlie*, another graphic novel containing the two protagonists of the show, Charlie is 17 and Nick is 19, yet Nick does mention that they have sex (Oseman 2020: 30) and later, in another scene, Charlie is grabbing a condom out of a drawer (Oseman 2020: 153). Out of context, seeing Charlie, as a 17-year-old boy, grabbing a condom can be seen as problematic perhaps, but Alice Oseman does a beautiful job at telling the reality of safe consensual sex. Of course, I do not believe that all the 731 girls mentioned became mothers at their own will, nor do I believe that all of them were forced to become mothers, but the lack of sexual education, as well as the lack of teaching consent, is something that writers like Oseman try to fix.

A relationship between an openly queer person and a closeted one is a very touchy subject because, from the outside, it looks like someone's doing more and someone's doing less work, thus creating more problems. One of the threats to a relationship like that one is bullying applied only to the out and proud person. Charlie is just 15 years old and faces bullying for being openly gay, more specifically for being outed. Now this is a problem that does not apply to any such relationship, but it does exist, and it is worth mentioning. Charles "Charlie" Spring, portrayed in the Netflix series by Joe Locke, could be considered the main character, as we hear his perspective of the story, and mostly follow him in the most personal way. A Year 10 student, fifteen years old, openly gay, battling mental illness, bullied and in an abusive relationship with his boyfriend at the time, Benjamin "Ben" Hope, who is 16. This brings forth the fact that gay relationships are not all glitz and glamour and are still as "normal" as heterosexual ones.

The problem, however, that heterosexual couples do not face does not stem from the fact that Ben is bisexual, but with the way in which he manages his bisexuality. Their relationship began a term after Charlie's sexuality was found out by the school, when Ben approaches him and congratulates him on his bravery. Being together with Charlie and seeing him only in private, whilst ignoring him in public, kissing a girl for the public eye, tells the story of people who do not want to accept their sexuality. Closeted people are not to blame, as it is immoral to out someone against their will, a topic I will discuss later.

However, closeted people cannot expect openly gay people, who are already marginalized by society, to lower themselves into a pit of abuse, as is Ben's case. Being with a closeted person is not abuse, but Ben's treatment of Charlie is abuse because he wants to get all Charlie's attention and at the same time not care to give any to Charlie. In one scene, Ben accuses Charlie of being afraid of getting caught (Oseman 2019: 75), to which Charlie's response sounds defeated and angry. His response to Ben is: "Why would I be scared? Everyone in the school already knows I'm gay!" (Oseman 2019: 76), after which, Charlie finally has the power to stand his ground and call out Ben on his lack of caring about him, while also mentioning how he would have been there for Ben, while he figured out his own sexuality and come to terms with it (Lynn, 2022, E1 Meet: 19:49-19:57). Ben, however, gaslights Charlie into believing that he is the only one who would ever be with Charlie, basically cornering him psychologically, after which he does this physically, forcing Charlie against the wall and non-consensually kissing him (Oseman 2019: 79), a moment in which Nick Nelson, a 16 years old friend and sometimes classmate of Charlie's, on whom Charlie has a crush, comes and pushes Ben away, which also marks the first time Charlie's and Nick's strong friendship which will end up blossoming into a beautiful relationship.

Nicholas (Nick) Nelson, a 16 years old student and a classmate of Charlie's is the character of the series and first two novels, who shows the largest degree of character development, not only through his coming to terms with his bisexuality (Oseman 2019: 253), but also through the friendliness and compassion which he shows Charlie, even before they are a couple, including him in activities, such as the rugby team (Oseman 2019: 41), but also through protecting Charlie from Ben (Oseman 2019: 83) and coming out to his mother about his relationship with Charlie (Oseman 2019: 549).

Kit Connor, the actor who portrays Nick, has unfortunately been the victim of bi-erasure. Kit Connor, as said before, plays a bisexual cis teen-boy in the series, yet his sexual orientation was not made public until the 1st of November 2022, when, in a Twitter post, Connor came out by saying "i'm bi. congrats for forcing an 18-year-old to out himself" (qtd. in DaSilva 2022), after being accused by numerous fans of queerbaiting and later deactivated his entire Twitter account. Queerbaiting is an act in which one presents themselves as queer to attract various benefits, and by being accused of not being bisexual, Kit Connor's pointed reaction is extremely valid.

Regardless of the age of a person or of an actor's openness about their own sexual orientation, it serves no one right to force a person into coming out. It brings out the idea that bisexual people must prove their bisexuality in the public eye. A person should be allowed to come out on their own terms, regardless of their fame.

Kit Connor's coming out via Twitter also brings up the idea of bi-erasure. Bi-erasure is what the complete forgetfulness, carelessness and stigma which people, including the queer community, show through the exclusion of bisexual people and the disbelief in their existence. *Heartstopper* does a beautiful job, at creating a safe environment for Nick as a bisexual and as well as for Ben, highlighting once again, that even queer people have flaws and can be toxic, manipulative (Ben), but also loving, kind and compassionate (Nick) and it also underlines that bisexual people are visible and valid.

In an article written by Melissa Allen (2022), entitled "'In a Romantic Way, Not Just a Friend Way!:' Exploring the Developmental Implications of Positive Depictions of Bisexuality in Alice Oseman's *Heartstopper*," she argues that using narratives like that of Nick in *Heartstopper* aids in identity exploration and is crucial to ensure young adults who are questioning their sexuality are not only engaging with media where bisexual characters are depicted as untrustworthy, less than queer, and hypersexual, that is if they are even clearly depicted as bisexual at all. She also explains the sexual binary which is often forced upon bisexual characters and at points out all the biphobia in the novel that comes from other character's lack of understanding of bisexuality, as well as Nick's. I agree that there is a lack of understanding when it comes to understanding anything queer.

As mentioned before, bisexual people are usually forced to just choose a side, and *Heartstopper* depicts a crucial moment of Nick's understanding of bisexuality. As can be seen in a scene in which Nick is looking up "am I gay test" (Oseman 2019: 190), he does not a 100% mark, and afterwards, in a scene, when coming out to Charlie about his sexuality, Nick tells him that "I've liked girls before … but now … I like you" (Oseman 2019: 315) and "I don't know what I am now" (Oseman 2019: 319), to which Charlie responds "Well… you could be bisexual? o-or something else! There are lots of other sexualities other than gay and straight!" (Oseman 2019: 320). Allen, as a bisexual woman, has a great explanation for the lack of knowledge of people who consider themselves heterosexual, and who start developing feelings that are not heterosexual. I would not call Nick ignorant, because sadly, there really is a lack of knowledge coming from cis-het people in general towards these kinds of things, and I think that the blame is on heteronormativity imposed by society itself, either through complete erasure of our queer culture or through stigmatization and fetishizing.

In the novel and series, what helps Nick overcome his fear of coming out, is also to the openness of Tara Jones and Darcy Olsson. They have been introduced by becoming friends with Elle Argent, who I will discuss next, and who is a friend of Tao Xu, a friend of Charlie's. Nick had a crush on Tara when they were 13 and met

her again at one of Charlie's bully's birthday party, the one in which Nick also confesses his feelings towards Charlie. Tara and Nick meet, and Tara also introduces her girlfriend to Nick. Just to point out something, Tara is also the first person to whom Nick himself had come out, besides Charlie. Tara and Darcy beautifully and unapologetically live their lives as a lesbian couple and one can easily detect that they were the ones to give Nick the courage of coming out to Charlie. Lesbian erasure, just like bi-erasure, is also one of the problems society has been facing over the years, thanks to misogyny found both in the cis-het world, but also in the queer one. In the queer community is, lesbians are often overlooked or ignored. While gay characters still did appear on TV in the past, though in an extremely stereotypical way, lesbians were completely non-existent in the eyes of movie producers.

The support that lesbians gave this couple in *Heartstopper* echoes how lesbians helped gay men in the AIDS crisis of the 1970s and 1980s America. In Maggie Shackelford's thesis, titled *Unsung Heroes: Lesbian Activists in the AIDS Epidemic in North Carolina and California*, in which she states that lesbian women, despite the separatism created between them and gay men in the 20th century, have helped gay men in the AIDS crisis. She also talks about how little to no research is done in this aspect of queer history, once again highlighting how unspoken the work of women is. So, it is Tara and Darcy whom Nick owes the thanks, for once again, history repeats itself in different contexts and mysterious ways.

Another important couple in the series is that of Tao Xu and Elle Argent. Tao Xu's appearance in the show is a testament to a diverse cast, but inclusivity is not everything that I want to point out. Having an Asian character on a TV series aimed at young adults, in the time of Covid-19, was extremely important. During the beginning of the Covid-19 Outbreak, Horse, Jeung, Lim, Tang, Im, Higashiyama, Schweng, and Chen, in "Stop AAPI Hate National Report" (2021) state that from March 2020 to June 2021, around 9 thousand incidents of AAPI (Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders) hate crime happened in the US. In "Anti-Asian Racism and Racial Justice in the Classroom," Shin, Bae and Song point out how important it is for educators to speak up against race inequality. I would further press on their idea that this should always apply to any inequality, be it race, gender, religion and anything that should not belong in a classroom.

Next, I will to focus on the character of Elle Argent. Elle Argent is a trans girl of color, who has freshly moved into an all-girl school. She is Tao Xu's girlfriend, who is a friend of Charlie's. In the series, Elle is played by Yasmin Finney, an actual trans woman of color. Having cast a trans person for a trans character showcases the well-thought process behind the casting. It is important for an actor to be able to fully embody a role, to portray a more realistic image for the viewer, and Yasmin Finney does that wonderfully. Aside from that, casting queer people for queer character roles is something that not every show does, nor any show necessarily should, would that show not want to portray inclusivity and relatability. The downsides of not casting queer people in queer roles are that most often the actors are out of touch

with how queer people live their lives, but that can be avoided, as seen in *Call me by your name* (Guadagnino 2017), with Timothée Chalamet's portrayal of Ellio. What cannot be avoided is that it further instigates the problem of queer people not being accepted in jobs.

Although it is lovely to see that Elle in *Heartstopper* is having a lovely time, trans hate crimes are at an all-time high. According to the statistics made by the police for www.gov.uk (Flatley 2022), around 43 hundred hate crimes against transgender people have happened between 2021-2022 alone. In relation to this, I want to bring up a recent death in the LGBTQIA+ community, which is that of Brianna Ghey. According to an article about her, Brianna Ghey was a trans girl and a year 11 pupil at Birchwood Community High School, UK, who was murdered by two 15-year-olds, yet the investigators were not sure it was a hate crime (Hurst 2023). The Trans Safety Network accused many news outlets of transphobia, such as *The Times* deadnaming Brianna Ghey and not calling her a girl (2023).

Using the correct pronouns and name that someone chooses are essential in aiding that person's gender identity journey. Language, out of everything, is one of the most fluid things in our world. Words go in and out of use on the daily, yet some people still cannot respect someone's gender identity without turning it into an actual problem. It is trivial-considered things like these, deadnaming and exclusion, that also kill. In a study done by Austin, Craig, Souza and McInroy (2020), entitled "Suicidality Among Transgender Youth: Elucidating the Role of Interpersonal Risk Factors," they state that "82% of transgender individuals have considered killing themselves and 40% have attempted suicide, with suicidality highest among transgender youth" (add reference) so seeing a trans woman in a trans character role in a series and comics aimed at young adults helps those individuals feel seen and heard, safe and represented. The UK Government website (Flatley 2022), states that transgender identity hate crimes rose by 56 per cent, whilst sexual orientation hate crimes rose by 41 per cent. We still cannot say that in 2023, we are doing a better job of stopping hate crime altogether, but having queer people claiming their space, whether that is on TV or in a comics series or real life, is crucial in aiding the fight against sexual orientation and gender identity hate crimes.

In conclusion, through *Heartstopper*, Alice Oseman brings forth a set of various sexual orientations, gender identities, ethnicities and backgrounds as well as problems faced by the queer community and aids in the fight against homophobia, transphobia, racism, by showcasing inclusivity and diversity, while *Heartstopper*'s success is granted due to Oseman's relatability and clear references to the reality that queer people live in.

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BREAKING AN ALL-OF-A-KIND AMERICA DOWN INTO ONE-OF-A-KIND COMMUNITIES
INSTANCES OF CULTURAL ASSIMILATION AND PLURALISM IN SYDNEY TAYLOR'S *ALL-OF-A-KIND FAMILY* SERIES

Abstract
This paper will offer an overview of how the Jewish American identity is constructed within Sydney Taylor's *All-of-a-Kind Family* book series, providing a definition of cultural assimilation and pluralism mean in an American context and how these situations get to shape the intra- and inter-group relations belonging to the depicted family. In a compelling space of both nostalgia and fervent hope, the main characters will be seen oscillating between conformity and individuality, tackling the American dream through a twofold cultural lens, and ultimately attempting not just to pave the way for a natural transition from old to new values, but also to find their distinctive meeting point.

When speaking of the United States, we may visualize a nation that has been defined and constructed by people who came from various backgrounds, but we also encounter a place which still encapsulates plenty of debates centered around cultural assimilation and pluralism. In this context, the way in which immigrants get to contribute to America's image is an intriguing matter to delve into. The present paper will look at how such cultural processes work in the American context, further exemplifying them in some of the most illustrative scenes from Sydney Taylor's *All-of-a-Kind Family* book series, featuring a Jewish American family that learns to refine its identity according to its inherent values and the environment its members live in.

Cultural assimilation comes across as a widespread approach through which minority groups incorporate into their lives the customs of the predominant culture they are technically part of, in order to better integrate into society. In the United States, assimilation can be easily likened to what is famously known as Americanization, providing a bidirectional route, in the sense that one such situation can unfold both outward and inward. Given the major global power that the United States has shown for a long time, Americanization can be frequently associated with globalization itself, thus giving rise to people's potential fear that their cultures may risk being not only overshadowed, but even thoroughly "concealed" or effaced because of the export of American products and culture overall. This worry, however, has been combated gradually through what is called "glocalization," a term made famous by sociologist Roland Robertson (1995) and which alludes to a mixture of globalization and localization, suggesting the essential idea that globalization persists because mainstream products are always adapted to local audiences. The same pattern is to be applied to Americanization, since trends and items coming from

the United States work like a blueprint, as well, and, in smaller contexts, people end up inserting their own changes, so as to have such products appeal even more to their local circumstances.

As previously indicated, Americanization also appears within the United States, more particularly in situations where immigrants need to adapt to the American lifestyle. As anticipated, all of this easily comes with another tricky possibility, found at the core of cultural assimilation: how damaging is it to actually promote the notion of the "melting pot" to minority groups? It should not be omitted that America benefits more from taking on a malleable identity, being open to receiving various connotations from native inhabitants or newcomers. This entails a form of cultural pluralism through which minorities have the freedom to preserve and cherish their traditions and values, while also respecting those belonging to the predominant culture. Inevitably, this offers a more exciting area to work in, as Charles Hirschman implies in his article entitled "The Contributions of Immigrants to American Culture:"

> Persons with multicultural backgrounds have multiple frames of reference; they can see more choices, possibilities, interpretations, and nuance than persons who are familiar with only one culture. When combined with great talent and determination, a multicultural perspective may allow for cultural innovation. (Hirschman 2013: 42)

The quoted cultural innovation does rely on the cultural and ethnic diversity found in the United States, one that paves the way for a more democratic society that encourages individuality.

Additionally, individuality can dictate a continuous oscillation between assimilation and the preservation of one's own culture, which is visible in the children's book series that was mentioned at the beginning of the paper, Sydney Taylor's *All-of-a-Kind Family*, published from the 1950s up until the end of the 1970s. Within the specified family, the readers get to meet five sisters of all ages, going by the names of Ella, Henny, Sarah, Charlotte and Gertie, living with their parents (and, towards the end of the first book, their new-born brother) in Lower East Side, the neighborhood that used to be inhabited particularly by Jewish immigrants in the 1910s. Taylor's decision to focus on that period of time, in the 50s, is admittedly intriguing, since she created a literary place of refuge and nostalgia for Jewish readers, but also a place of valuable insight for the non-Jewish audience. The respective family is seen taking part in Jewish celebrations, varying from Hanukkah and Yom Kippur to Purim and Simchat Torah, within a domestic space that resembles a "family altar" (Eichler-Levine 2013: 59), essentially a form of light and perseverance in what was usually deemed as a dirty Lower East Side.

The author herself does not refrain from offering the following description of the Jewish neighborhood (in the first novel of the series, *All-of-a-Kind Family*):

> The East Side was not pretty. There was no grass. Grass couldn't very well grow on slate sidewalks or in cobble-stoned gutters. There were no flowers except those one saw in the shops of the few florists. There were no tall trees lining the streets. There were tall gas lampposts instead. There was no running brook in which children might splash on hot summer days. But there was the East River. Its waters stretched out wide and darkly green, and it smelt of fish, ships, and garbage. (Taylor 1951: 23)

The evident signs of scarcity are, nevertheless, honed by the community's liveliness and plentiful stacks of products at the local market. It is mentioned that Yiddish is the only language spoken in the area, designating what Taylor calls "a foreign land right in the midst of America" (1951: 46). The readers get to witness the five sisters as "foreigners since they alone conversed in an alien tongue – English" (1951: 46). In other words, they are coming forward as young second-generation immigrants whose connection to their native culture, however, is not thoroughly affected by them not having learnt to speak Yiddish, because Taylor portrays them as being constantly eager to participate in their Jewish festivities.

While these depictions are overt – but never brought forth with a didactic tone – what is subtly introduced in the background is an assimilative process which establishes how the story is not merely about being Jewish, but also about becoming American. It is significant to note how this process would not unfold as naturally if it weren't for the parents' own openness to what the American environment has to offer. For instance, they seem to be perfectly aware of what Rachel B. Gross remarks in her book entitled *Beyond the Synagogue*. *Jewish Nostalgia as Religious Practice*: "While poverty in Jewish immigrant characters' country of origin is represented as a reason for immigration, poverty in the United States is a temporary state that immigrants can overcome" (Gross 2021: 122). What this specific observation indicates is the family's general surge of optimism, a strong belief in new opportunities in the American space, while being carefully balanced by their acknowledgement of and respect for their past.

Further on, what seems to ignite a different trajectory for the characters is the birth of the first son in their family. This does not come down just to a shift in a female-centered household. The father hopes for a son that would carry on his name and join him in the synagogue, but this aspect blends in with his proposal to name the boy not just after his grandfather, but also after a close family friend, an American man called Charlie. At the junk shop he owns, the father often spends time with peddlers of various nationalities, but none of them happen to have the same impact as Charlie does. At one point, he is the one transforming Independence Day into a truly special occasion for the Jewish family members, symbolically standing for novelty, opportunity and a different kind of enjoyment:

> The time passed slowly for the impatient children. What could be better than a bonfire, they asked each other. They were consumed with curiosity. When finally Charlie reappeared with an even bigger box this time, they fell upon him like a bunch of puppy dogs. […]
> 'See, kids! This is a Roman candle. There's one for each, but I'll shoot them off.' […]

> Faces uplifted in awed wonder, the astonished children followed the flight of the globes of flame against the dark sky. […] Soon around the family there gathered an ever-increasing audience. Here was a display there could watch for nothing. […] Mama's children felt proud because it was their Charlie who was giving everybody such a good time. (Taylor 1951: 92-94)

Given these circumstances, the newborn may seem to be predestined to bear Charlie's name, revealing the father's first official step towards assimilation, in a sense.

What may come off as more surprising is that the second name, belonging to the grandfather, is never used to refer to young Charlie, signaling how a living, unrelated person prevails over a departed relative. Consequently, one such decision reflects a slight break from Jewish customs, in order to honor an American person and symbolically bestow his traits on the child. This signals a change in the family's path, even down to the parents' increased willingness to move out of the Lower East Side, following an epidemic in the neighborhood (towards the end of the third book, *More All-of-a-Kind Family*). The new setting in the Bronx grants much larger access to the American life, as if the whole process of acculturation has to be broken down into small, gradual pieces, for a smooth transition to ensue. Readers may already notice how the focus is slowly shifted onto Ella, the eldest daughter, who starts a relationship with a Jewish boy, Jules. In the wake of the First World War beginning, Jules enlists to join the Army, justifying his prompt decision as a sign of acute patriotism and a sense of debt to the older generation:

> 'It's not your duty – not till you're twenty-one!' Ella argued.
> 'Maybe not. It's hard to explain. […] Our parents, yours and mine, found the first real freedom they ever knew right here. By coming here, they made sure that their children would be free also. We can't let anyone take that freedom away, can we? […] We're Jews. You know tyrants have always tried to destroy us. In exactly the same way Germany is now trying to destroy little Belgium. Tyrants must be stopped – the sooner the better.' (1958: 54)

To a certain extent, the boy's acculturated self seems to link the past and the future, pointing out how he wants to preserve the same freedom for his children. Ella gets perhaps the clearest glimpse into what it means to be situated between two cultures and find a way to merge them.

New questions arise thus regarding how one can serve the nation that hosts them. A first change of perspective occurs in the fourth book of the series, *All-of-a-Kind Family Uptown*, in a chapter suggestively entitled "Out of the Frying Pan" and reminiscent of the expression 'out of the frying pan into the fire' (which implies that a person is going from a bad situation to a worse one). At a surface level, the chapter references the youngest sisters of the family, Charlotte and Gertie, attempting to cook pancakes. As soon as a pancake falls out of the girls' frying pan, the two sisters resort to going out for an ice-cream soda (1958: 60), which actually becomes a prominent symbol of America. We are provided, therefore, with an emblematic shift from a domestic environment to the outside world, anticipating Ella's own oscillation

between two such spaces in the last novel of the series, *Ella of All-of-a-Kind Family*, an oscillation that will be addressed shortly.

Going along the lines of the above-mentioned figurative expression – 'out of the frying pan into the fire' – it is imperative to ask if the characters are truly jumping into worse conditions. This is not the case, for the new context (the Bronx neighborhood) does, in fact, make room for a more emphasized form of pluralism or a conversation among cultures. For instance, the all-of-a-kind family and its new Catholic neighbors become each other's guests during Hanukkah and Christmas. This leads to Ella and her new friend, Grace, to mutual revelations, namely how Hanukkah and Christmas are similar to one another or how certain celebrations have common elements:

> 'You know,' Grace mused, 'it's odd how much your Hanukkah is like our Christmas. The candles, singing of special holiday songs, and the children getting presents…'
> 'Yes,' agreed Ella, 'there are many things that are alike about our holidays. For instance, eggs are important in your celebration of Easter. Well, eggs play a big part in our Seder service at Passover. Then you have Lent when you fast and deny yourselves the eating of certain foods. During Passover week, we also deny ourselves eating of bread and other year-round foods. There are lots of other similar things like that.'
> 'That's so,' Grace said thoughtfully […]. 'I guess all religions have many things in common. Not just holidays, either.' (1958: 91)

These shared thoughts can ultimately provide Ella with a helpful nudge in the future, shaped in the last book of the series, where she is supposed to choose between working in a vaudeville theatre or marrying Jules and singing in a local choir. The vaudeville circuit has her compromise her own dreams, raising a significant question: should the American dream be dictated according to general American standards or individual ones? Ella gets to indirectly answer that towards the end of the story, by opting to step away from vaudeville and stay true to her innermost desires. In the same fashion as Jules, she does acknowledge the respect she owes to her mother, the older generations and a distant past, but, simultaneously, she realizes that she has the liberty to see to her own path:

> 'It's Mama I'm mostly worried about. She had this dream of a great career for her daughter. To make up for her own lost chance, I suppose. But actually I don't think she was too happy about vaudeville. […] My studying has given me a better understanding and a greater joy in music than I ever would have had. And besides, I can still sing for people. […] We'll be able to sing together in Temple. Won't that be wonderful? And some day I'll be able to sing to my children.' (1978: 102)

In this situation, Ella does not show signs of resignation or fear in front of America's challenges. Within the oscillation between acculturation and individuality, she demonstrates, on the one hand, that she has access to the best of both worlds (as she progressively constructs her twofold identity) and, on the other, that assimilation is to be countered by a multicultural viewpoint, one that makes it possible to give your

own cultural meaning to the American dream. This essentially entails a way of bridging the gap between the old and the new, as it is also suggested through the parents of the all-of-a-kind family, who end up attending a synagogue service with prayers in English and beardless rabbis, going against the traditional picture. The mother's statement that "the world has to move on," with "new times" requiring "new ways" (1954: 86), prompts a crucial change of heart in the father's case, who eventually chooses to walk on the same road towards the future alongside his children, without the fear that their Jewish identity may be suppressed at some point.

To conclude, this paper has sought to highlight some of the most important scenes that uncover traces of acculturation from the *All-of-a-Kind Family* characters and their methods of securing pluralism in an American context. Apart from contributing immensely to the firm establishment of the Jewish American identity and family relations into the mainstream culture, Taylor's book series proves to be echoing the timeless cultural assimilation-pluralism debate, uniquely underlining the need for multiple one-of-a-kind communities in an all-of-a-kind America, one that is inherently meant to treasure the many cultures it hosts and allow itself to be constructed and comprehended through them.

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BECKETT AND PINTER
REDEFINING SUBJECTIVITY

Abstract
The subject of interest for the two writers analyzed in this paper is the individual living in a post-war society, more specifically, the changes the subject goes through in order to adapt to the new social climate, and to the emergence of a widespread belief in the meaninglessness of existence. Like the Existentialists before them, these playwrights try to answer the question "How can one exist in a meaningless world?". The essay will focus on how literary innovation is used to mirror the changes that the subject undergoes, taking a close look at Martin Esslin's influential work on the topic The Theatre of the Absurd, as well as a reinterpretation of this piece by Michael Bennett, and other critical readings of the two authors.

In both *Wating for Godot* and *The Birthday Party*, Beckett and Pinter seek to find out what remains of the self when human mind is stripped from the comforting belief that life has an inherent meaning. The world that they write about is a world that had undergone multiple changes in a short period of time, a world turned upside down by the recent events of two world wars, where people had started having an increasingly more pessimistic outlook on life. Both plays should be read and understood within this specific context of social change. Despite the fact that they renounce the literally conventions of realism, both authors share an interest for the human condition with the great writers of psychological realism. Therefore, while the methods they apply are different, ultimately their topic is the same: subjectivity and how it defines itself. However, the same way it would be impossible to look at these plays outside of the limits of their social climate, it would be impossible to look at the individual without analyzing the changes that he has undergone as a result of living in the 20th century. Thus, both writers take an in depth look at how the self had been altered by what went on around it.

"The achievement of *Wating for Godot* is that like no other play it crystallizes inaction into dramatic action," says Ronald Hayman (1968: 4) and sums up perfectly the attitude that the playwright takes towards the complexities of living in a post-war society. Faced with the meaninglessness of life, the modern reader is in need of a new approach to existence in a world that no longer offers comforting beliefs as an antidote. Beckett's world is a bleak one, one that leaves its protagonists with no other options but inaction. This inaction takes a particularly important form in the play. It becomes a stance against existence itself. In his work *The theatre of the Absurd* (add year), Martin Esslin coins the term 'absurd theatre' with regard to a group of writers amongst whom are Beckett and Pinter. He theorizes that this form of theatre is a

response to the absurdity of existence and of finding meaning in it, makes the comparison between the ideas of Existentialism and those of the Theatre of the Absurd, and relates it to Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942) by relating the plays to the question Camus asks himself, the only question worth asking according to him: Is there a reason to go on living, fully aware that existence is meaningless and the search for meaning is futile, or is the only thing left to do to seek escape in suicide (Esslin 2001: 23)? However, as Michael Bennett (2011: 12) points out, Camus does answer this question in his essay, he does not leave it open ended as Esslin seems to imply, and the answer Camus gives the reader is a negative one. Despite the meaninglessness of life, he argues that there is much to live for, that looking for meaning is indeed excruciating, but the acknowledgement of the universe's purposelessness is actually freeing in that it allows one to just live. He ends his essay with the phrase "One must imagine Sisyphus happy" (Camus 2000: 111). The essay does not end on a bleak note, but an encouragement for the reader to summon his strength and face the absurdity. Except, as it turns out, one cannot quite do that. What we have in *Wating for Godot* are two characters stripped of their ability to act.

Vladimir and Estragon contemplate suicide, and they decide to do it, but they get so entangled in their incessant web of dialogue they forget what they were doing, and they remain stuck in their status quo. And so, their only sliver of an impulse to act dissipates and their chance to escape is lost. Suicide represents the escape, it represents action, and so of course they cannot do it, because they have been reduced to inaction, since acting in a meaningless universe would be in and of itself devoid of meaning. This is the answer the theatre of the absurd promises, the new response to the same old riddle: passiveness. The reader, or the audience, inevitably grows frustrated as they wait for something to happen, not knowing that in truth, nothing can happen. Estragon himself fuels this frustration by proposing to Vladimir that they go, as if that could ever be an option available to them, only to be reminded by Estragon that they cannot leave since they are still waiting.

"Beckett is close, naturally, to another great poet of inertia, Chekhov. Their plays share a feeling of inconclusiveness" (Fletcher & Spurling 1972: 57) but while Chekhov gives the characters an answer which they ultimately cannot choose because they tragically cannot bring themselves to act, the universe presented in *Wating for Godot* is far bleaker. The characters are never given a real choice. Whether they wait for Godot, or whether they decide to not, the only option presented to them is inaction. Their fate is a tragic one, and it reflects a universe where one, according to Camus's essay, has recognized that suicide is not the answer, but facing the universe head on is. Passiveness becomes the only form of freedom, inaction the only way to be free but if that is the only choice it becomes plain to see that the self is captive. Therefore, in his search for the self, Beckett arrives at the terrifying conclusion that the self is actually powerless and out of control. He does not give his protagonists the option to choose passiveness, he reduces them to passiveness, and

in doing so he creates an image of the self in which the modern reader sees themselves.

Secondly, in both texts, the self appears as unreliable and depthless, subject to change despite any opposition. In *The Birthday Party* only the present matters, and whatever is asserted about the past becomes true: "For Pinter, the past histories of the characters like their off-stage lives and their social backgrounds, couldn't matter less" (Hayman 1970: 8). When Stanley asserts about his past that he was a renowned piano player, his past becomes that. No reason to doubt him is ever given, but at the same time, no reason to believe him is given either. What he asserts about his past is the only thing the reader has to go on, and so he must believe that. The play is not interested in untangling the web that is Stanley's past and so he is allowed to assert whatever he wants.

But by being so flexible, one's image of himself can also be tampered with by the outside world. The theme of most of Pinter's plays is the fear of invasion. This theme goes hand in hand with the name that has been given to Pinter's comedies, coined by David Campton (1958), Comedy of Menace. Most of his plays feature a "safe haven, menaced by an intrusion from the cold outside world" (Esslin 1973: 75) Here, it is a quiet seaside boarding house which is threatened by two strangers who show up on its doorstep uninvited, disrupting the balance of the repetitive lives lead by its inhabitants. However, as the play progresses, and it becomes clear that they are there for Stanley, the invaded "safe haven" turns into a metaphor for the self which is now under threat by outside pressures. The self proves to be incredibly weak against what others assert about it, and so Stanely becomes unable to contradict anything that is being affirmed about him.

All Meg has to do is simply affirm it is Stanley's birthday, and the visitors believe her, not him. As Meg maintains this idea, that becomes the only truth worth believing for everyone in the household. Eventually, it no longer seems to matter what Stanley has to say. She not only manages to convince everyone that it is indeed his birthday, but she, perhaps, manages to mould the truth as she wishes because the truth, in Pinter's plays, is mouldable. Once everyone believes in that truth, and acts according to it, once the party itself in brought into existence, does it really matter anymore that Stanley firmly maintains that it is not his birthday? Once the wheels are in motion, does he really have any strength to impose his own views on reality, on his own perception of his self? Is his word worth more than what the others have to say about him?

Pinter's representation of subjectivity becomes incredibly vulnerable to outside forces. This same idea can be seen in the interrogation scene where the two men shout accusations at Stanely without giving him a real chance to respond and defend himself against them:

"In the accusations that follow, however obsessively uttered and apparently meaningless, we detect a common thread: Stanley's assertions about his past are destroyed systematically, becoming replaced by a new reality" (Baker, Tabachnick,

1973: 61). Over and over, it seems that what Stanley knows to be true about himself holds no power. One thing that his interrogators repeat about him is that he is dangerous and depraved: "With his attempts on Meg and Lulu, he acts out the drives and passions of which Goldberg and McCann accuse him" (Baker, Tabachnick, 1973: 58). However, he does not seem to display such violent behavior before the interrogation, which seems to suggest that once again, his self was altered, and he was moulded into what was believed to be true about him, despite what he himself affirmed about his self. Furthermore, in the end, Stanley becomes a fully changed man: "When Stanely appears in the last act, the very sight of him indicates the intruders' triumph and his conformity" (Dukore 1988: 37).

Clearly, the nature of what is considered to be true is called into question by Esslin, and the self appears to be in a losing battle with external pressures. It becomes obvious, that in a world increasingly more interested in surface values, in superficial opinions coming from the other, the individual can no longer stand his ground to defend even the most basic of truths, he cannot even defend his own identity. He becomes what he is seen as and there is no way he can oppose that. Hence why, the new Stanley is one whom society deems desirable, well-groomed, and well dressed, no longer an artist but a respectable individual. In his approach to representing postwar society in literature, Pinter paints a picture of a world which, after having renounced its beliefs, places its trust in surface values and, as a result, forces the individual to conform.

In Beckett's *Wating for Godot* the self is also unreliable because it is unstable. An individual's self-image is based on memory, but in *Wating for Godot*, memory itself appears to be unreliable, as the characters cannot remember anything that is asked of them. In the first act, the two tramps cannot remember if they were at the meeting point the previous day, the next they have forgotten the last, the messenger boy cannot remember if he has seen them before, Pozzo is unsure if he has met the protagonists before, and they themselves, while sure at first, become unaware if they have seen him before. Nothing that happens seems to be a certainty for the characters, "each line obliterates what was said in the previous line" (Esslin 2001: 85). As Ronald Hayman suggests, the explanation is the fact that "the perceiving mind is itself not quite the same from one day to the next. [...] The subject has died-and perhaps many times- on the way" (Hayman 1970: 16). Therefore, the memories of an individual are not even his truly but belong to a version of subjectivity that existed previously, and which is now lost forever. And so really, one cannot even rely on his memories to give an accurate recollection of the past. What is more, the self is not even able to perceive the present since "[t]here is no direct and purely experimental contact possible between subject and object, because they are automatically separated by the subject's consciousness of perception" (Hayman 1970: 17).

The self becomes isolated in itself, and since it cannot trust itself to verify its experiences because it cannot exist outside of its own subjectivity it is in need of an external force to come in and act as a witness to verify its experiences. And so, being

confronted with the evanescence of existence, Beckett's subject, no longer knowing how to comfort itself, loses its self-trust and is again forced to seek refuge outside. This uncertainty creates a jarring effect, where the self can no longer safely define itself. This exact idea is presented by Dafoe in his novel *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) in a scene where Robinson finds a pair of footprints in the sand, and he wonders if he is the one who has left them there. The only way for him to resolve this issue is to measure his own foot against the print in the sand. Therefore, he is unable to solve his problem by using just his perception, his memory fails him, and he can only see things subjectively, he is lost, he is disconnected from reality, same as Beckett's subject, the late-20th-century man.

Lastly, both these texts can be read as an allegory of the individual living in 20th century society and a statement about the self and how it is forced to reinvent itself and create new definitions for itself. They represent the struggle that one faces when realizing that one is alone and must fend for oneself, create one's own system of values, one's own foundation as one can no longer rely on the past, on what one knew to be true up until that point. It becomes clear that the world one was prepared to live in and the one one now finds oneself in are not the same. The jarringness, the abruptness of this realization is bound to be terrifying; it is bound to feel like being shaken awake and being ripped away from a safe haven. Therefore, the metaphor at the root of the Comedy of Menace becomes deeply personal for the 20th century individual. "On another level *The Birthday Party* might be seen as an image of man's fear of being driven out of his warm place of refuge on earth" (Esslin 1973: 83), especially in the context on the post-war world, when everyone was indeed driven out of their comforting places on earth.

The world presented in both these plays is a bleak one, where one is bound to feel alone and abandoned, whether that be through the sheer emptiness of the stage and the unsettling atmosphere of it all like in *Wating for Godot* or the self-centred conversations of *The Birthday Party* where no one shows any genuine interest in anything outside of themselves, where asking others to understand you on more than a surface level is futile and depressing. The world is out of joint, and it becomes an uncomfortable place to live in. Both Beckett and Pinter share the "conviction that the world and the theatre have deteriorated to such an extent that the only apparent response is to scream" (Kalb 1989: 159). Interestingly enough, that is exactly what Stanley does, he screams. Stanely is the human that is no longer allowed to find refuge in his comforting fantasies, that is forced by the outside to face reality, to stop hiding and feel in full the "metaphysical anguish at the absurdity of the human condition" (Esslin 2001: 24). The self that both authors analyze, is a self that is creating new parameters for itself, redefining itself out of necessity.

This struggle of redefining is represented in writing in more ways than one, both in content and in form, with literary innovation becoming a representation of the invocation that is happening on a personal level, as subjectivity takes on new forms in order to adapt. In the same way that the self is redefined, the conventions

of literature are pushed to their limits and the main way in which this becomes obvious is in language. The point that Esslin makes about Absurd Theatre in the introduction of his piece (Esslin 2001: 20-23) is that it takes the idea that existentialists write about in their essays, but it commits to the idea both in form and in content. Essentially, writing about the absurdity of human existence in a thought out, analytical and rational way is not only in and of itself contradictory but also cowardly. It is refusing to commit to the pointlessness of it all. On the other hand, what the Theatre of the Absurd does is drive the point across both in form as well as in content by no longer being concerned with staying within the limits of rational human discourse. This renouncing of logic is very present in *Wating for Godot* where the characters respond in ways seemingly unrelated to what was said before. In fact, Beckett commits to this idea of meaningless so much that the play has arguably no plot. The way Pinter uses language in subversive ways is more subtle than Beckett's. Logic and rational thought are present in *The Birthday Party*, but communication is still breaking down. Pinter uses language to show how self-involved and superficial society has become. He pushes the conversations to the limits but never leaves the realm of the plausible. While they are not technically answering anything outrageous or unfitting, the conversation as a whole has the same feeling of absurdity because each side is only focused on what they have to say, "instead of any inability to communicate there is a deliberate evasion of communication" (Esslin 2001: 244). Absurd Theatre, the same as the individual, needs to create a new context in which it can exists. The world has changed and the old "well-made play" (Esslin 2001: 22) can no longer successfully accommodate it, same way the old self no longer can accommodate itself.

To conclude, in their search for the self, Beckett and Pinter find it to be powerless, vulnerable, and unreliable and most importantly under constant change, both imposed upon by the outside world and enforced from within. As all the previous ways of understanding the world clash with the new realities of existence, with the difficult to accept truth that life has lost is apparent purpose, subjectivity must be reformed. These two plays perfectly encapsulate exactly that effect, that forced reformation of the self which leaves the individual feeling lost and distraught and unable to fully comprehend the world anymore. By pushing the boundaries of the "well-made play" (Esslin 2001: 22) both authors create a new context in which to write about reality by having one foot outside of it. It would be a mistake to criticize these innovative plays by the same rules that were in place before them, the same way that the world can no longer be experienced by following the rules that existed before the 20th century. These plays therefore are, like Absurd Theatre in general, a turning point in literature. What Beckett and Pinter manage to do is reframe the previously existing understanding of the individual.

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THE BEAT GENERATION AND THE MUSIC OF THE 1960S

Abstract
The present study focuses on investigating the strong connection between the works and influence of the Beat Generation poets and the music of the 1960s on the emergence of counterculture and socio-political activism in the that decade. The revolt and radical vision of Allen Ginsberg in particular found the best means of expression when accompanied by Bob Dylan, Paul McCartney or simple jazz accords. The two artistic representations, literature and music, share the rejection of imposed patterns and norms as a prolongation of social ones. The alchemy of their blending comprises the deep changes which occurred in the American space after the two world wars. Changes which are still echoing to this day.

Postmodernist poetry is a movement or an indulgence: "To be poetry in the postmodern age, it does not have to be anything or any form in particular; it only has to be. Postmodernism is the age of literary indulgence, when anything anyone wants to say - in whatever way they want to say it-is just as much literature as anything else" (Jacoby 2000: 1). In other words, it can also be explained as, "a type of poetry that has been explored since about the 1960s and is often noted for a few stylistic and thematic aspects. This poetry is often written in a way that is quite free form and meant to reflect the process of thought or organic speaking through a stream of consciousness style" (Wiesen 2024). Free form however has its own detractors who call it "perhaps more unforgivably than anything, just simply lazy" (Smith 2005). The poetry of this century has graduated from mere seeking after beauty and truth (Keatsian) to a process in which everything is pared down taken apart and examined mercilessly to create what Veronica Forrest-Thomson calls a "poetic artifice" (1978). She calls for a special understanding of this when she writes that "[t]he poetry of our century particularly requires a theory of the devices of artifice, such as apparently non-sensical imagery, logical discontinuity, referential opacity and unusual metrical and spatial organization" (Forrest-Thomson 1978: 59).

In the light of these varied portrayals a clear image of postmodern poetics becomes gradually visible, postmodern poetics is primarily poetry that strives to achieve more than modernist poetry, its literary ambitions are wider and all-encompassing though not necessarily deeper than modernist poetry which is variously accused of being patriarchal as well as feminist, colonial as well as European, artificial as well as real, neurotic, insular, imagist, symbolic and open-ended. Postmodern poetry however is all this and more, not necessarily a branch or offshoot of Modernism, Postmodernism is more of a derivative of Modernism. As Dunn elaborates "by defining itself against modernism, postmodernism has achieved a nebulous meaning. It remains unclear whether this development

represents a decisive break with modernism or is merely a continuation, extension or conclusion of it" (Dunn 1991: 111). But however one views it, it is obvious that Postmodernism has come into its own and nothing reveals this better than postmodernist poetry, and rightly so as poetry to date continues to hold the title as a true reflection of the society: "The characteristics of Postmodern Poetry include many modernist themes and many modernist themes taken to new levels" (Hamilton 2006).

In the absence of a single dominant style, other characteristics include "mix of image with narrative, mix of image with discursive, precise observation, philosophical reflection, open-ended juxtaposition, multiple stories, alterations in Point of View, digressions, no coherence or closure, and unexpected jumps & disjunctive thinking" (Baum 2003: 2647) with "an apprehension of the invisible world, fragmentation" (Bam 2003: 2646), and a style that appears to be a "poetic diary or journal" (Baum 2003: 2646). Postmodern poetry provides a more active role for the reader and is not bound by rules of form or content which leads us to another greatly debated concept of Postmodernism, which is relativism.

Most definitions of Postmodern poetry tend to identify one general characteristic of postmodern poetry which is that it exemplifies relativism. The *Historical Dictionary of Postmodernist Literature and Theater* (2016) defines relativism "as theories that values don't exist except in relationship to the mind of an individual who values them, or a culture that values them" (Mason 2016: 492). While postmodern poetry is undoubtedly drenched in relativism, it is also so because of poetry's innate nature to respond to the world and the society that it finds itself in: "Postmodern poetics respond to the condition of the world. In an age of instant telecommunications and metropolitan life, the postmodern attempt to accommodate the overwhelming diversity of messages and the lapse of a grand order is replaced by an arbitrary personal order" (Chen 1998). This "arbitrary personal order" or, to use a suitable postmodern term, relativism is one of the key defining elements of postmodern poetry, in response to the historical period when the trend appeared. Tim Woods (1999:64) elaborates, Postmodernism is "often used as a periodizing concept to mark the literature which emerged in the 1960s Cold War environment, it is also used as a description of literary formal characteristics such as linguistic play, new modes of narrational self-reflexivity, and referential frame within frames."

In fact, in the political realm, Truth is a rapidly degenerating idea. In 2006, Stephen Colbert coined a new term, 'truthiness,' defined as "the belief in what you feel to be true rather than what the facts will support" (qtd. in Keane 2016). In the year 2016 we were faced with truth in a different garb - Post-truth. "Truth is dead' begins the article in the Washington Post announcing the selection of Post-truth as the word of the year: "It's official: Truth is dead. Facts are passe" (Wang 2016). We have truly moved on from the days and beliefs of Goethe and Keats as when Goethe said, "Wisdom lies only in truth" (Goethe 1906/2010), and Keats famously wrote, "Beauty is truth and Truth is beauty that is all you need to know on earth" (Keats 1819/2024).

Today relativism is the also flavor of postmodernist poetry. As Shepherd envisions, "[j]ust as anthropologists have recognized that there is no such singular and universal thing as culture, we in the literary world should acknowledge that there is no such unitary thing as poetry" (2007). Instead, the call is for a poetic relativism modelled on Marshall Shalin's definition of cultural relativism, which does not "exclude judgement, but postpones such judgment until the poem has been understood on its own terms. It is only then that one can determine one's position toward those terms, to evaluate whether what was done was done well or badly, and to decide whether it was worth doing at all" (Shepherd 2007).

Reflecting these ideas, a few of the common literary elements that are a hallmark of postmodern poetry are its use and appropriation of techniques like fragmentation, intertextuality, bricolage, iconoclasm, and relativism. These are present in the works analyzed in the next section as well.

The Beat Generation Writers: Kerouac, Ginsberg, Burroughs

Postmodernist American poetry is the echo of the two world wars and an economic depression which had shaken the U. S. A. in the first half of the 20th century. In the 1940s, people lived a time of extraordinary insecurity, fear and personal purposelessness. The individual was losing itself, incorporated in mass society, while technology and science were capable of dominating humans and their environment to the point that a great fissure occurred in the American psyche, un uprooting of family relationships, of the sense of place and community. John Clellon Homes, reflecting on the late thirties and early forties, offers the image of the broken circuit, to suggest the lack of connection to the immediate present felt by the members of his generation (add reference). The result was a feeling of apathy, paralysis, frozen energy, impossibility to act and make decisions of the individual. The emergence of mass society overwhelmed the private sphere of existence.

In the1940s, a poetic group emerged, called the Beat poets, a name which resonates with the idea of a musical pattern, of pulsating energy, of heartbeat. Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, Lucien Carr and William Burroughs started meeting in coffeehouses and jazz bars, sharing ideas about their life experience which would later be converted into the Beat philosophy. The Beat Generation is credited with writing the books that would kickstart a worldwide phenomenon, which included the Beatniks, the Hippies, the drug culture and the sexual revolution, along with popularizing the spiritual movement of Buddhism in America. The commonly told story of the Beat Generation is that it is a literary and cultural movement that occurred from 1944 to roughly 1961 and included mostly "white" men who decided to write about the underclasses of America, while promoting the music they enjoyed: jazz. The Beat Generation would then dissolve into the Hippies and other counterculture movements and that would be the end of their story, like the Lost Generation before them.

Much of the scholarship on the Beat Generation focuses only on this specific time period and only with certain key figures like Kerouac, Ginsberg, Burroughs, and sometimes Gregory Corso. Kerouac, Ginsberg, and Burroughs make up what is considered "The Beat Trinity," but as Gregory Corso said, "[t]hree guys don't make up a generation" (qtd. in Beatdom n.d.). There were literally dozens of writers, poets, and artists that were part of the Beat Generation, such as Gregory Corso, Gary Snyder, Lew Welch, Michael McClure, LeRoi Jones, Kenneth Rexroth, Neal Cassady, Jo Anne Kyger, Diana Di Prima, Joyce Johnson, and Anne Waldman. One of the unique characteristics of the Beat Generation was its inclusiveness. Everyone could be Beat. Black, white, Jewish, Buddhist, man, woman, rich or poor, all were allowed. The Beat Generation is a name synonymous with wild cross-country road trips, drugs, and open sexuality. In essence, the Beat Generation is considered the precursor to the counterculture of the 1960s.

While it was indeed a large movement, it was spearheaded by three men in particular: Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, and William S. Burroughs. These three writers all wrote works that challenged the term "literature" in mid-20th century America. Kerouac's *On the Road* (1957) sent a thousand teenagers hitchhiking across America in search of the "IT" that is the soul of America. Ginsberg's "Howl" is considered "the poem that changed America" (Shinder 2006: 3) through its confessional tribute to his friends whom he considered the "best minds of my generation" (Ginsberg 2007: 57). William S. Burroughs' *Naked Lunch* (1959) offers a brutal look at a junkie's world and represents a scathing criticism of America at the same time. Two out of three of these works were challenged in open court for being "obscene." Both "Howl" in 1956 and *Naked Lunch* in 1965 faced obscenity charges and were put on trial to determine if they were actually "literature." In the end, two different state courts did not consider these texts obscene and the barrier between obscenity and literature was forever blurred, giving birth to a wave of publications that challenged America's view of drugs, sexuality, and social consciousness.

But the question arises: what exactly is the Beat Generation? Trying to define the Beat Generation is like trying to define what it is to be an American. The concept of being "Beat" differed from individual to individual, and that gave it its power and fluidity of definition. In the late 1950s, Allen Ginsberg was asked about the Beat Generation, and according to Ginsberg the definition of Beat is "[e]xhausted at the bottom of the world looking up or out, sleepless, wide-eyed, perceptive, rejected by society" (qtd. in Charters, 1992: xviii). In the 1980s, Gary Snyder, a prominent Beat poet from San Francisco, defined the Beat Generation as "[a] particular state of mind within a definable time frame, sometime in the early 50s up until the mid-60s when jazz was replaced by Rock N' Roll and marijuana was replaced by LSD. It is a new generation of youth that jumped on board and the word beatnik changed to Hippie" (qtd. in Charters, 1992: xvi). Jack Kerouac is credited with the actual naming of the Beat Generation based on his observations of the overworked, underpaid American

working-class man and the outlaws of society like Neal Cassady, car thief, hustler, and all-around ladies' man.

One of the major achievements of the Beat Generation was its ability to break through literary barriers and bring literature to the streets. They did this in a number of ways, by holding poetry readings where the poems could be heard and appreciated in coffeehouses and art galleries around the world, by disregarding the academic models for writing poetry and literature, and by practicing a more lyrical prose that mixed in musical rhythms as well as the common speech of the times. Hustlers, drug dealers, and misanthropes became the archetypes for the Beat protagonist and the plots became the lives of these characters. Because of this attention to an America that was not being portrayed in much of the literature and poetry of the times, the Beats became an underground phenomenon and a part of the mainstream consciousness as symbols of the changing face of America and the world in the mid-20th century: "The Beat movement was a crystallization of a sweeping discontent with American virtues of progress and power. What began with an exploration of the bowels and entrails of the city-criminality, drugs, mental hospitals-evolved into an expression of the visionary sensibility"(Tytell 1977:4). They were able to grasp to danger behind the new progress and tried to give warning about that through their writing, in a prophetic premonition of the total breakdown of Western culture.

Like all visionaries who reject the norm, the poets were dismissed as madmen, they faced obscenity charges and found it difficult to get their work published. The Beats saw themselves as outcasts, even outlaws, paria, exiles within a hostile culture, rejected artists writing anonymously for themselves:

> It is now clear that during the forties and fifties the Beats were operating on a definition of sanity that defied the expectations of their time but proved potently prophetic. In other words, it was not only their writing that was important, but the way they chose to live. In the face of the asphyxiating apathy of the fifties, the Beats enacted their desires, seeking a restoration of innocence by purging guilt and shame. (Tytell 1977: 10)

The Beat poets recognized madness as a better option to staying sane in the public sphere, they wanted to keep it real and this did not mean conformism to the norms. Actually, the latter was the most dangerous state for them, so instead, they opted for drugs and the pursuits of ecstasy to the verge of suicidal excess. Madness was a retreat from a meaningless, mechanically ordered society, an act of resistance and disobedience. As Ginsberg wrote in a poem "On Burroughs' Work:" "A naked lunch is natural to us,/ we eat reality sandwiches./ But allegories are so much lettuce./ Don't hide the madness."

It may seem that the Beat poets made a deliberate choice to live their lives intensely, as if trying to burn more rapidly their vital resources. A long life of conformism would not have served anybody, anyway: "They used madness - which they regarded as naturalness - as a breakthrough to clarity, as a proper perspective from which to see. At times temporarily broken by the world for their disobedience, they developed, as Hemingway put it in *A Farewell to Arms*, a new strength at the

'broken places'" (Tytell 1977: 11). When reading the biographies of Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg and William Burroughs, one can detect that they were on the move a lot, constantly leaving and returning to New York, San Francisco, New Mexico, and Africa, in a sort of self-imposed exile. From all their destinations, the big city remains the best option for them, always coming back to its bars, restaurants and lateral streets. The urban setting provided the necessary anonymity of disappearing into the crowd or entering some obscure crowded place. The big city includes everything and everybody, the margins and the core coexist, offering the possibility to move around a varied urban panorama. Common man in the new reality after the war is anonymous, invisible to the others but mainly to the state institutions. The Beats lived and wrote mostly in New York, the city which nurtured their addictions and issues but it also gave them the chance to be around people.

Music and poetry

Music and poetry were the main influences which shaped the emergence of the counterculture in the 1960s. Political and social activism in the U.S.A. was the result of a challenging perspective brought forward by the Beats and Bob Dylan. Allen Ginsberg, in particular, embraced music as a free, personal and unbiased form of manifestation and perception. Ginsberg has provided numerous instances of his readings, under the form of recordings which are now available on YouTube. The primordial form of existence was the word and Ginsberg goes back to this spontaneous type of communication just to set himself free from the boundaries of the written form: the audience can be heard bursting into laughter or applauding. The spectators become part of the poetry itself, Ginsberg breaks the limits of the formal role as a poet by letting the others inside the mechanism of creation. He allows free participation of non- elitist citizens to literary production happening the streets of the city, in parks, cafes and later online.

Ginsberg acts like a stand-up comedy guy, exchanging simple and genuine human experience on topics of general interest. His humor stems from the irony and sarcasm which he brilliantly uses to criticize the hypocrisy of the system. The poet sounds like a prophet who warning people against the dangers of modern lifestyle: destruction of the human spirit, pollution of our planet, alienation and corruption. What remains is solitude and fake humanity under the shadow of war and manipulation.

Allen Ginsberg turned to music to emphasize the message of his poems and he accompanied his verse and prose by musical notes: "A Supermarket in California," "Kaddish," "America" and "Howl" are still available and their musical adaptation is quite unique for their time and a timeless legacy for the future generations. Using the light form of the blues, the poet is trying to soothe the emotional pain of his generation who had no other option than to live their under the label 'existence is suffering.' Music becomes an alternative, a form of therapy and

at the same time a means of speaking their mind in a tolerable form to the others. Music stems from human empathy, just like poetry.

In an interview on Bob Dylan, Allen Ginsberg confessed that he wept the first time that he heard Bob Dylan's song "Hard Rain" because he realized that "[t]he torch had been passed down to the next generation - from earlier bohemian Beat illumination and self-empowerment" (2005). The lyrics of Dylan's song tell the story of a prodigal son who has wandered and has gathered experience . The question-answer organization of the stanzas provides a simple yet meaningful allegory of life as a travel. The repetitive question is: "Where have you been my blue- eyed son?/ Where have you been my darling young one?" The responses gradually reveal the humanitarian tragedy one could witness back in the 1950s and even at present: "the seven sad forests, a dozen dead oceans," "the pellets of poison are flooding their waters speak of the pollution of our planet." A highway of diamonds with "nobody on it" refers to the development of infrastructure and materialism which did not lead to better human relationship, but to alienation. The destination reached after walking is a place "Where the executioner' sface is always well- hidden/Where hunger is ugly, where would are forgotten/ Where black is the color, where none is the number."

The singer's responsibility is to speak about it to the others, a type of "blowing in the wind" just not to become an accomplice of the system:

> And I' ll tell it and think it and speak it and breathe it
> And reflect it from the mountain so all souls can see it
> Then I' ll stand on the ocean until I start sinking
> But I' ll know well my song before I start singing.

The voice carries more than speech acts, it transmits complex and subtle messages who need to be decoded by the audience. Thus, the relationship between the orator/ singer and the crowd is essential to build meaning.

Songs are a free artistic expression, a type of universal language of mankind. In the 1950s and the 1960s, music became increasingly popular and it influenced the way young people generally manifested themselves. It contributed to creating a particular fashion of the young generation as opposed to their parents', thus it influenced the forging of a new identity for the young who were searching for a new direction. Music appealed to individuals as a common denominator which brought everybody together, in a form of deep empathy for human suffering and as a total rejection of any form of violence. No justification of violence is allowed in poetry and music, both forms of art reject political reasoning and manipulation. For instance, Ginsberg makes reference to America's use of the atom bomb just like Bob Dylan criticizes the military involvement, for whatever "humanitarian" cause it was designed for.

The Beatles, Bob Dylan, the Beats and Allen Ginsberg used their verse and lyrics as a peaceful form of protest .Young people were inspired by them and they opened the door to self-empowerment, leading to an essential shift in the social

sphere. Bob Dylan's video "Subterranean Homesick Blues" tackles the social conformism imposed on individuals by the government. It tells the story of the average citizen:

> Johnny s in the basement, mixing up the medicine
> I' m on the pavement, thinking about the government
> The man in a trench coat, badge out, laid off
> Look out kid, it's s somethingyou did
> Godknows when, but you're doin' it again
> You better duck down the alley, lookingfor a new friend
> The man in the coon- skin cap in a pig pen
> Wants 11 dollar bill-you only got 10

Bob Dylan describes the limitations of the individual who has no active social role, a misfit and always under pressure, forced to stay in the basement, on the pavement, in the alley. He refers to the hipster illustrated in Ginsberg's poems who inhabits the big city streets.

Similarly, the poet produced his own variant of the same message in a song called "Stay Away from the White House."

> Stay away from New York City, it costs money to live there,
> Stay away from the country, the banks all own the air
> Stay Away from their electric, it'll whiten your beard hair
> Stay Away from smoking cigarettes, stay away, stay away, Stay your handfrom off
> your Marlboro , stay away, stay away,
> Stay Away from nicotine and beer, it'll make you old and gay.

The prejudice and slogans which were part of the manipulation of masses are revealed by Ginsberg in a humorous, ironic form sprinkled with explicit lyrics, as a personal touch.

In 1976, Allen Ginsberg recorded the album *The Last Word on First Blues* but Columbia Records "refused to release the results, considering the songs obscene and disrespectful," as later confessed John Hammond (qtd. in The Allen Ginsberg Project 2021). At the same time, the latter expressed his determination to "present disrespectful music like this as often as possible" (qtd. in The Allen Ginsberg Project 2021). The album, finally released in 1983, contained an impressive list of songs: "Going to San Diego," "Vomit Express," "Sickness Blues," "Broken Bone Blues," "Stay Away from the White House," "Prayer Blues," "Hard- On Blues," "Guru Blues," "Father Death Blues," and many others. Under such evidence, we cannot simply ignore Ginsberg's songs when considering his poetry as a Beat Generation representative. His collaboration with Bob Dylan and Paul McCartney also shows his involvement in the musical area and the blending of the two- poetry and music into an act of protest.

The featuring of Bob Dylan on "Vomit Express" brings more emphasis to the common core of their message: they unite their voices for the same cause. This song

is about the radical transformation that was taking place in the U.S.A. in terms of infrastructure and architecture of the urban areas, as well as the growing mirage of consumerism. The title indicates Ginsberg's reaction of rejection under the effect of emotional nausea while the reference to the express as fast and modern means of transport illustrates the hectic modern lifestyle.

The fantasy of going on a vacation by "the midnight plane" is shadowed by "the suitcase pain" which accompanies the traveler. The leitmotif / chorus of the song portrays an image inspired by a commercial of an advert which proposes a new type of leisure activity, namely going "down to Puerto Rico" "over Florida s deep- blue end." Going on an "ancient vacation" symbolizes moving on to the next level of social rank, a fake success image.

The lyrics bear similar message with Bob Dylan's s "Hard Rain." There is even reference to the rain: "Go out, walk up on the mountain, see the green rain imagine that forests finds, get lost, sit cross- legged and meditate on old love pain, watch every old love turn to gold." The tone is nostalgic about the past and the loss of valuable connections while the present is about "raindrops," "mudroad," "empty mind, U.S. smog," "war again." Life as a journey ends with the final destination which is the revelation of utter human suffering. People who want to turn their eyes away from the sight of disaster are cowardly giving up their right to protest and react. Instead, modern lifestyle emphasizes indifference to one another and selfish pursuit of individual "happiness" among general misery.

Conclusion

The Beat Generation and the Music of the 1960s greatly influenced the shaping of social and political activism in the U.S.A. by bringing public awareness on topics like pollution, war, materialism, and conformism. Allen Ginsberg and Bob Dylan contributed to the development of this modern consciousness by challenging their audiences both in the written and the spoken form: poetry and songs, to a point where it is impossible to differentiate between the two. As a final argument in favor of this idea is the Nobel Prize in Literature awarded to Bob Dylan in 2016, "for having created new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition."

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