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Notes on Contributors

Law Alsobrook is Assistant Professor of Graphic Design at Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar (VCUQatar) where he primarily focuses his teaching on design thinking and visual communication. His background and research stem from a passion in narrative and visual story telling. His bookbinding experience comes from an accumulation of years spent learning traditional printing techniques and paper making.

Antarleena Basu, PhD is a research scholar at the University of Hyderabad, India.

Ashok Bhusal is a PhD student in rhetoric and composition at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), USA. He teaches first-year composition courses at UTEP. He completed his first MA in English from Tribhuvan University, Nepal in 2002 and his second MA in rhetoric and composition from Eastern Illinois University, USA in 2010. His research interests focus on critical race theory, social justice, multilingual writing, multimodality, and genre theory.

Eugenia Charoni (PhD, University of Cincinnati, 2013) is Assistant Professor of Romance Languages and Coordinator of the Language Program at Flagler College, Florida.

Raphael Foshay teaches in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Athabasca University, Canada. He holds a PhD in English from Dalhousie University, and his research interests are in the areas of literary and cultural theory, continental philosophy (especially Derrida, Levinas, Heidegger, Habermas, Adorno, Nietzsche, Hegel, Schelling, and Kant), social theory (especially the Frankfurt School) psychoanalysis, comparative philosophy of religion and English literature.

Angeliki Monnier (PhD, Université Paris 3 – Sorbonne Nouvelle) teaches at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Lorraine, Metz. Her research interests include collective identities (online and offline); media practices; social networks; diasporas and discursive identities. She is also a member of the editorial board of the *Journal Questions de communication* (since 2011).

Bernard Elphas Sakala is a PhD student at the Department of Commerce and Development Studies, University of Africa (UoA), Lusaka, Zambia.

Introduction

We live in an age when technology has transformed knowledge into a consumer good and, as such, the question of knowledge is now a question of politics. Ever increasingly, schools, colleges and universities are becoming providers of a commodity and, in consequence, education is gradually turning into the stuff of commerce. Inevitably, given the nature of this consumer good, standards drop in the scuffle to acquire a larger share of available customers.

In this turbid atmosphere, where public funding for education is diminishing, it becomes the responsibility of educators and researchers in the humanities to identify the implications of this present-day environment and unearth the hierarchy of convictions that define modern society's order of priorities. It is also a matter of urgency that academics continue to think analytically, to detect and diagnose developments in this environment in order to place themselves and their endeavours in a position to challenge and contravene political and mercantilist interpretations of knowledge.

Knowledge based on political or mercantilist concerns focuses intellectual inquiry on the world *as it is*, which is not devoid of merit, but we in the humanities expand that inquiry's purview to account for a particularly human activity: our persistent envisioning of the world *as it should be*. Evidently, this activity brings with it an immense redemptive energy that engenders beneficial transformations at all levels of society.

I mean to propose, then, that in this period in history we need the humanities to see us safely through the death traps of a world fascinated with technological advancements, a contented world of mind-numbing gadgets that provide instant gratification, a world that, by the bye, can self-destruct at any moment. This unbridled canonisation of technology, of the practical, of profit, of financial strategy and the ever faster fulfilments of virtual worlds corrodes the very foundations of the freedoms that made technological advancements possible, leading us to a post-human age where our capacity to envisage a better tomorrow will be thoroughly compromised.

The selected articles in this issue of the *IAFOR Journal of Arts and Humanities* were chosen because they are illustrative of current research trends or, conversely, because they represent novel approaches in humanities research. Law Alsobrook discusses asemic writing, a wordless form of textual communication, with semantically open content left to the reader's interpretation; Raphael Foshay situates the interpretation of Plato in its 2500-year trajectory toward a significant change in the mid-twentieth century, away from the attempt to establish Plato's metaphysical doctrines to a recognition of the intrinsic value of their literary-dramatic dialogue form; Antarleena Basu explores how, through the amalgamation of images and words, India's historical events have been represented within the frame of the graphic narrative and how these narratives serve to uphold the principles of the "history from below" type of historical narrative, thereby providing counter-narratives to the more dominant, so-called "historical facts"; Angeliki Monnier formulates a theoretical proposal, that of considering the uses of information and communication technologies (ICT), particularly social media, as "*habitus*", inspired by Pierre Bourdieu's Field Theory. Monnier's thesis draws on research conducted on the professional network LinkedIn; Eugenia Charoni analyses two plays in which migrant characters remain silent, immobile and/or unable to react to or communicate with Spaniards. Charoni considers how the silence and immobility of migrant characters makes them an essential point of reference in both plays, their moral appeal eventually overpowering the Spanish protagonists' shallow discourse; Bernard Elphas

Sakala's paper finds that although there have been several efforts to improve youth entrepreneurship development on the African continent, many approaches ignore the family as primary institution and as a key stakeholder in youth entrepreneurship. Sakala's work also reveals that, although the family remains ignored, there are opportunities that are found within the family that can help to steer youth entrepreneurship forward; and Ashok Bhusal analyses just how United States anti-miscegenation laws contributed to the social exclusion of minority groups, how their design furthered the preservation of the "purity and superiority" of whites, and how they ultimately guaranteed the whites' privileged access to financial matters.

It is hoped that these articles will contribute to a reassessment of the importance of the humanities for the future of critical resistance.

Dr Alfonso J. García Osuna
Editor

The Title of This Paper Is ୦୦୦୮:୨୨୩
On Asemic Writing and the Absence of Meaning

Law Alsobrook
Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar
Doha, Qatar

Abstract

Asemic writing is a wordless form of textual communication, with semantically open content left to the reader's interpretation. By contrast, graphic designers are taught to conceive of text as image in order to compound meaning through graphic representation and typographic nuance. Graphic designers consider the linguistic container beyond its semantic substance, in effect, and attempt to expand the sematic load of language with visual modulation. Analogously, in *Empire of Signs*, Roland Barthes contemplates Japanese culture as a series of signs that exist in relative ataraxia with their signifying instance, where the alliance of sign and signification mingle as meditative components in a relative yin-yang balance as exemplified by the society within which they exit as philosophical constants. For Barthes, this notion confronts a Western temperament wherein a Platonic ideal seems to foment a continual search for the existence of pre-eminent signs that function as pinnacles of signification. However, when signs are devoid of intentional meaning, what can we glean from the mechanics of sign operations that attempt to establish and create, especially with regards to visual narrative and the heterotopic and temporal devices used by writers, artists and designers, a sense of "otherness?"

This paper examines the heterotopic relationship of asemic writing as a mediated agent of narrative in our post-literate society.

Key words: asemic, narrative, otherness, hypermediacy, heterotopia

Introduction

As a child, I loved the Sunday comics; a supplemental section of the weekend newspaper devoted to games, trivia, and of course, cartoons. I could while away the morning trying to make sense of the crossword puzzle or word search, but I especially enjoyed reading and re-reading my favourite funnies. My favourite comic was *Peanuts*, a beloved American comic strip, featuring the antics of a prepubescent Charlie Brown, his best friend, Linus, and Charlie Brown's dog, Snoopy, among other characters. There was a character in the *Peanuts* that I found both curious and baffling: Snoopy's best friend, Woodstock, a feisty, little yellow bird of indeterminate species. Woodstock was unique in that he rarely, if ever, spoke, but on those occasions when he did, Woodstock-speak was usually rendered as chicken scratch—a series of small, hand drawn, marks that looked like exclamation points without their terminating dots. Of course, I could never understand what Woodstock was saying, yet Snoopy was always able to decipher what was being said.

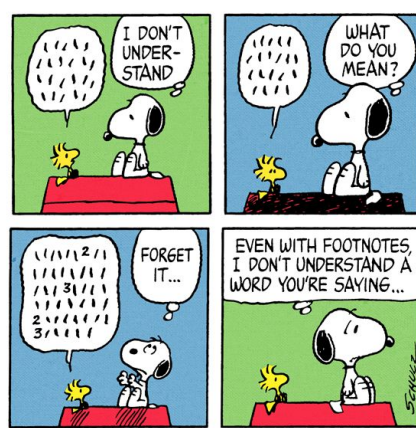


Figure 1: *Peanuts*

Woodstock's ability to communicate, as impossible to decipher as it is, was possibly my first, inadvertent, introduction to the study of typography where the rendered forms of letters lend visual cue, or interpretation, to the meaning or content of the physicality of language. As utterance, Woodstock's words are devoid of meaning because, though rendered for visual transmission, they carry no semantic load for the audience. Woodcock's signifying marks can only be deduced through the responses and actions of Snoopy, or those around Woodstock who are able to understand what he is communicating. The marks depict the appearance of language, but only insofar as they approximate an expectation for how a language should look. As an example of mediated utterance, coupled with expectation, they create a semblance and believability of intelligence evinced within the visual confines of typography. Or what passes for typography.

Woodstock's speech is an example of asemic writing which is roughly defined as text, "having no semantic content" (Gaze, 2000) a term coined by the Australian artist Tim Gaze, who identified this phenomenon as a post-literate art form along with the American poet Jim Leftwich between 1998–2000. As Leftwich noted in an earlier letter penned to Gaze, "A seme is a unit of meaning, or the smallest unit of meaning (also known as a sememe, analogous with phoneme). An asemic text, then, might be involved with units of language for reasons other than that of producing meaning" (Leftwich, 1998). To which Gaze further posits:

Writing does not just contain semantic information. It also contains aesthetic information (when seen as a shape or image) and emotional information (such as a graphologist would analyze). Because it eliminates the semantic information, asemic writing brings the emotional and aesthetic content to the foreground. (Huth, 2004)

The word asemic itself originates from the word *asemia*, an aphasiac medical condition wherein the afflicted are incapable of understanding or expressing themselves using any signs or symbols.

This paper considers the art of asemic writing as part of a broader investigation into storytelling and visual narrative through the lens of graphic design, typography, and hypermediacy, particularly with its emphasis on self-conscious seeing. Further, this paper explores asemic writing as an atemporal condition that exists between text as image and image as text, where the liminal threshold of meaning elides with utterance. In considering this gap, it examines the heterotopic relationship of utterance as a mediated agent of narrative. If the orthographic markings of written language capture the intangibility of spoken language (for preservation, transference, and translation), asemic writing challenges this hegemony and the various systems of meaning ascribed to the written word. Asemic writing highlights aspects of written media and the narrative forms they inhabit as part of the mechanics of communication and visual narrative.

Asemic writing attempts to recognize and replicate visual forms of communication without creating or capturing inherent meaning within the text itself (the semantic load written words transfer to an audience). In effect, asemic writing atomizes the written word, suspending the audience between looking and reading. This suspension is not unlike encountering a foreign language for the first time where one observes the graphic form but has limited access to the meaning contained therein. Texts once thought to be impenetrable, and therefore absent of meaning, include Egyptian hieroglyphs, Linear A, the Voynich Manuscript, and the Codex Seraphinianus. For the former, this was proven to the contrary when Jean-François Champollion deciphered hieroglyphics in 1824 using the Rosetta Stone. To this day, Linear A, presumably used by Ancient Minoans and thought to be one of the precursors to Modern Greek, and the Voynich Manuscript, a mysterious manuscript penned in the 15th century, both remain largely unintelligible, though most scholars believe them to contain substantive meaning. In part, scholars take this stance because the specimens appear to function as language; it is only our inability to unlock and retrieve the information contained within that makes their meaning inaccessible.

The notable exception to this list is the Codex Seraphinianus. Written and illustrated by Luigi Serafini between the years 1976–78, it seemingly describes an imaginary world using an imaginary language. Indeed, the 360+ page manuscript of pictures and text is totally devoid of linguistic content, a fact recently confirmed by the artist himself during a talk in May 2009, at the Oxford University Society of Bibliophiles (Stanley, 2010). His intent, he explains, was to produce in the reader the same awe and bafflement children experience during the preliterate phase before learning to read. For children, letters represent a threshold of mystery, that place inhabited by adults that allows them to encode their world and control it. Children, lacking the necessary tools for unlocking the meaning of letters (until taught to read), are confident (if not over-awed) that letters hold the key to this adult power. It is this same confidence (that letters possess access to meaning) we experience when faced with a written language, however fictive, that intelligence may be uncovered where none may be found.

Inscrutable visual depictions of language are not uncommon in the realm of modern art, where text began to make incursions into the visual world with artists like Wassily Kandinsky, Joan Miró, Cy Twombly, and Paul Klee. Perhaps where asemic writing has had a more far-reaching effect is in the realm of science fiction and fantasy. For it is within these genres where the depictions of language provide a means for inducing an “authentic” sense of otherness, where the curious sensations for encountering and exploring the unknown are key to the narrative construction and implication. When we are presented with entities alien to us through their physical form, or their outright “alien-ness” in action or culture, we more readily accept the certainty of their difference when presented with a writing system that indicates, or signifies, intelligence (one usually vastly superior to our own). We “recognize” as language the depictions we are presented with, but we cannot understand them. Like children, we are rendered helpless when confronting these peculiar orthographies, yet awed and fascinated by their representation and implication.

These depictions challenge the idea of *differance* as put forth by Derrida (Derrida, 1973), in his formulation of deconstruction because the text in these particular cases privileges the physicality of language over the intangibility of its production during speech. Which is to say, the confirmation of meaning in its written form takes precedent over verbal utterance. This visual “otherness” found in such works of fantasy and science fiction grants credibility to the narrative they are a part of because the visual tangibility of the language supersedes verbal understanding. From a hypermediated standpoint, we, as audience members, are made acutely aware of our position outside of the narrative because we, unlike many of the protagonists of the story, often have no recourse for reading the text with which we are confronted. We can enjoy such texts for their formal qualities, but we cannot fathom their intent. It is through the rendering of graphic letterforms (in both denotation and connotation) that this hegemony is called into question. For although we appreciate the text as a container of information, in truth the text in these instances are merely images bereft of functional meaning other than to suggest something they do not contain. The meaning we receive is a mirage.

Where text seeks to capture and contain verbal productions (its first and foremost function), it is the visual conundrum of text that contains no meaning where notions of difference begin to falter. While it can be argued that the contention to challenge linguistic philosophies is not the chief concern of these works, nor do all such narrative efforts go to such extremes to convene and maintain this state of otherness, those narratives that do, often rely on visual manifestations to create a sense of reality that is more familiar and therefore more believable. For this reason, and much like the children we are invited to become, we suspend our sense of certainty in order to become immersed in the story the visual narrative weaves. Because these systems are graphic and appear complex in pattern and configuration, they mimic what we understand language to look like. The tangibility of these alien configurations we take to be language makes the narrative space in which they occur more veracious. We cannot read these languages, but we do infer that there is intelligence behind their façade. Thus, there is an implied semantic load where one does not exist, and the visual representation becomes the privileged means of accessing meaning. For Barthes, the *ataraxia* he finds in the Japan of his *Empire of Signs*, is perhaps most akin to that here. To quote:

If I want to imagine a fictive nation, I can give it an invented name, treat it declaratively as a novelistic object . . . so as to compromise no real country by my fantasy (though it is then that fantasy itself I compromise by the signs of literature). I can also – though in no way claiming to represent or to analyze reality itself (these

being the major gestures of Western discourse) – isolate somewhere in the world (faraway) a certain number of features (a term employed in linguistics), and out of these features deliberately form a system. It is this system which I shall call: Japan (Barthes, 1982).

When confronted with signs the way Barthes is, we may only contemplate these signs as philosophical constants without ever gaining clear insight into their ultimate signification. The system we create relies on the narrative world in which we participate as mediated passenger.

While asemic writing is fairly novel, and its status as an art form only recently established (there are websites and Facebook groups devoted to the subject), examples abound in the various media forms that science fiction and fantasy generate, especially when they seek to create veracity of otherness. Comic books and graphic novels, as unique forms of art that rely heavily on the visual and pictorial to achieve narrative, were perhaps the first such modern media to depend heavily on these visual devices, as can be seen in early panels from Superman. The caped crusader is illustrated penning his thoughts on a rather grandiose scale of stone tablets in his Fortress of Solitude, but does so in his native tongue in order to obfuscate the nature of his message. Why the superhero would need to commit anything to pen and paper may beg the question of his super abilities and his super memory, but what we observe in the panel verifies what we have been assured simultaneously – we will never know what secrets are contained within these enigmatic letterforms (though we are superficially informed vis-à-vis his soliloquy) (Miller, 1958). Again, we are cast outside the narrative matrix of the story because while we can see what is being written, we have no way of accessing its implication. There is undoubtedly little danger of anyone ever reading this text (or comprehending it) because the message only appears to have meaning where meaning is in fact absent.

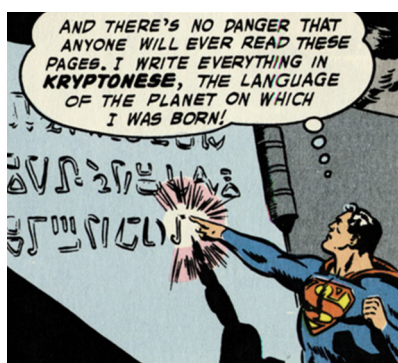


Figure 2: *Superman*

To borrow examples from the mediated worlds of the believably unreal, the Star Wars universe spawned a staggering number of alien species for our media consumptive contemplation. While the first movie in the trilogy introduced us to worlds and creatures beyond our imagining, it was during the third installment, *Return of the Jedi*, where we first glimpse the alien script that passes for language on a monitor screen aboard the second Death Star. Confirmed as gibberish by fans and linguists since its first appearance, Aurebesh, as the alphabet was later labeled, has since been developed into a full fledged alphabet (including punctuation marks), and surfaces throughout the franchise, most notably in video games where players are tantalized with visual fragments throughout game play. Again, these

instances are relatively meaningless, but they do bolster the illusion of worlds and creatures that surely must understand what the amalgamation of glyphs convey.

Knowing full well that that curious audience members will often attempt to decrypt what they discover during the course of entertainment, writers and artists will often play games with loyal followers by using what appears to be asemic writing in their works, but are in fact simple substitution codes. Two examples for this popular form of encoding come from the British television show *Dr Who* and the American cartoon *Futurama*, where what seem to be alien languages are in fact enciphered forms of English. So, while the language in question is not asemic (because it ultimately contains meaning), it is a visualized form of language that lends mystery, or an element of fun, to narrative composition. The intent here is twofold. One intention is to give the illusion of “alienness” to the storyline, vis-à-vis a visually graphic indicator; the other is to increase the entertainment value between the media and the audience by providing a message that can be shared by diligent audience members, no matter how much it makes them aware of the media in which they are participating. In so doing, however, it does strengthen the bond between audience and the narrative medium because the “game” of decipherment allows the audience to “virtually” participate in a world to which they have become attached. This, too, creates an interesting sense of heterotopic otherness because those who have uncovered the meaning of the text now possess knowledge that in some way sets them apart from their confreres. They now belong to a distinct group of audience members in the know (so to speak), yet still excluded from the narrative reality of the mediated world they observe.

Where asemic writing lacks meaning beyond its visual orthographic presentation, something akin to abstract art some have argued, constructed languages, or conlangs, stand out in contradistinction because they attempt to produce meaningful languages using linguistic structures and rules, some going so far as to produce letterforms and visually typographic representation. Conlangs are endeavors at creating a language from scratch, sidestepping the cultural and evolutionary tactics such activities usually must undergo in order to produce a facsimile of a functioning language. For this reason, conlangs are purely artificial in that they do not have as users any natural born speakers in the group, nor do they have historical reference of use or origin – they are pure products of invention. Many conlangs are often experimental attempts made by linguists, or the linguistically curious, to test hypothesis concerning the nature of language and communication. These can include constructions that can test temporality, infixing, and/or agglutination to name a few constructions. Esperanto is perhaps one of the most well-known conlangs in popular use, as well as an example of an agglutinative construction.

While Esperanto may have been an attempt at constructing a politically neutral language (however naïve that may seem in retrospect), it is not asemic because it relies on an existing alphabet to encode information. For the consideration of conlangs, perhaps the most famous to enter into popular culture is the Elvish tongue Quenya (and its derivations) created by the linguist and writer J R R Tolkien, for the *Lord of the Rings* series. The languages Tolkien developed for the Ring cycle were experiments in linguistics (and orthography) long before the actual story came into being, in effect, the languages created what we conceive of as Middle Earth. Early Quenya was asemic in nature because at the time of its publication, only Tolkien knew what the written text explicated. However, since its insertion into our mediated environment, it has seen tremendous growth over the last sixty years, especially amongst ardent and dedicated fans who have helped craft and broaden the language of a fictional time and place, going so far as to create a dictionary and further grammatical elaborations of the

Elvish tongue based on Tolkien's rudimentary notes and examples (Tolkien, 2004). This graphic conlang has become quite popular; we can now not only buy clothes and cards with Elvish inscription, we can even adorn our bodies with Elvish tattoos to show our allegiance and belonging to a fictional world. Interestingly, we now have evidence of a few heterotopic insertions from within a visual narrative spawning a new reality, at least amongst die-hard fans that chose to learn the language and incorporate it into their quotidian lives.

Another example of a media captivating conlang, if somewhat dissonant in its guttural production, is the language of Klingon developed for the Star Trek universe. As a way to engender authenticity in an alien culture, what began as no more than a few barked and growling commands spoken by Chief Engineer Montgomery Scott in the 1979 Star Trek: The Motion Picture, Klingon has since become a full-fledged language consisting of its own alphabet, language lessons, and dictionaries to help interested parties learn this otherworldly form of communication. The Klingon alphabet does not encode by substitution, as seen in previous examples above, but gives typographic form to the actualities of the Klingon language. What is most salient about the letterforms of Klingon are the semblances they share to the weapons favored by this most warlike of alien creatures, particularly the bat'leth seen several times during the course of the various franchised TV shows and movies. From a graphic design point of view, this derivative process is a fundamental design procedure where some item is used in an iterative fashion to create semblance and cohesion within a design environment. This is clearly the case here when one makes a visual inventory from within the various narratives of the Star Trek universe and, consequently, begins to see the progressive development of the visual language in conjunction with the expanding variety of weaponry that the Klingons seem to have. What is particularly fascinating from both a design and linguistic perspective is the number of typeface varieties in design and use for Klingon. This not only indicates the powerful influence visual connotations have for the seriously vested fan in promulgating the visual narrative of mediated utterance; it also provides evidence of where *differance* and difference elide within visual narrative confines. Here we can see the development of language concurrent to the visual form it manifests, oftentimes the visual representation preceding the verbal utterance.

The most recent visualization of alien speech comes in the form of coffee ring-type blotches as circular linguist signifiers from the movie *Arrival*. In a film wholly devoted to the interpretation and understanding of an alien language (albeit fictionalized), the director and artists involved (including a linguist) go to great lengths to outline how the process of unpacking meaning found in extraterrestrial languages might work. Aliens have traveled to Earth to ask for our help, but in order to render our aid, we must first learn to use their language, a tool that deforms time to the users' reality. Debates of the merits and demerits of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis aside (the notion of linguistic determinism and one's primary language affecting one's reality), what is of particular interest here is that in order to explain how the language comes to mean something is akin to the magician explaining away his tricks. We are invited to understand their world by using the very thing that helps them communicate with us – their language. The believability of their arrival is predicated on the one thing that brings verisimilitude to their narrative – the codification of their written word.

What makes codes and conlangs germane to this discussion is that while these are no longer strictly asemeic in the purest sense, they do offer a rich deposit for the self-conscious seeing that hypermediacy avails itself of when confronting the impact of technology on our expanding art forms. Hypermediacy calls to attention that moment when technology divides the audience from the entertainment it enjoys (much like Barthes and his notion of Japan),

creating a self-awareness that delineates and separates the technology and the media it conveys. In effect this rupture of the narrative flow obliges us to become self-conscious of our position outside and apart from the reality created within and by the narrative. This is striking given that the very thing that goes into creating veracity within the narrative also produces the very thing that can shake us out of our mediated reverie because we cannot access the meaning it seems to imply.

When discussed in conjunction with asemic writing, conlangs offer interesting comparative features for heterotopic analysis, or that split between the otherness that the unknown provides in visual narrative. Asemic writing deliberately interrupts this paradigm by causing us to pause and reassess our involvement with media. We cannot, nor will we ever know what is underneath the meaning of the text with which we are presented, and therefore we stand apart from it and its significance. In point of fact, the role of asemic writing can be seen as the betrayal of text in favor of image. Conlangs seem to serve two purposes. One, they are used by linguists to ascertain various facts about the nature and construction of languages in order to better understand how languages operate in describing the world or for uncovering the mechanics behind how and why a language functions the particular way it does. The other use is similar but rather than understand the nature of language, in general, conlangs of this variety attempt to create and establish the nature and construct of the society that uses them in order to produce a narrative environment we can come to believe in and trust as an alternate reality.

To further illuminate this distinction, graphic designers are taught to conceive of text as image (words devoid of their linguistic representation), in order to later compound the meaning inherent to what the text stands for by marrying words to graphic representation (colour, image, etc.) and typographic nuance (typeface choice, spacing, etc.). In crafting communication, graphic designers consider the linguistic container beyond its semantic substance, in effect, attempting to expand the semantic load of language using visual modulation. While designers create intentional meaning through formal concessions, asemic writing produces the image of textual abstraction where meaning is an occluded facsimile.

Asemic writing, and those that are its practitioners and adherents, ask that we consider the typographic container of language as a façade for semantic substance. As an art form, it can be debated that this post-literate form is somehow an extension of abstract art, where modern and contemporary art have increasingly relied on words to impart the meaning beneath the surface. Asemic writing asserts that the emotional and aesthetic content are enough. That whatever ataraxia this imposes, we are given pause to contemplate the significance of meaninglessness as a meaningful pursuit.

Conversely, when used to bolster the portrayal of the “other,” especially in science fiction and fantasy media, this heterotopic container requires us to accept the visual manifestation of language as demonstration of meaning above and beyond our own understanding. Suspended between true comprehension and graphic appreciation, we are lulled into the mediated state of believability necessary for our acceptance of the extraordinary. We cannot know what is not there, but we take great pleasure in trying.

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Corresponding author: Law Alsobrook

Contact email: lcalsobrooki@vcu.edu

**Plato at the Foundation of Disciplines: Method and the *Metaxu* in the
Phaedrus, *Sophist*, and *Symposium***

Raphael Foshay
Athabasca University, Canada

Abstract

This paper situates the interpretation of Plato in its 2500-year trajectory toward a significant change in the mid-twentieth century, away from the attempt to establish Plato's metaphysical doctrines to a recognition of the intrinsic value of their literary-dramatic dialogue form. I discuss the lingering presence of doctrinal interpretation in the Nietzschean-Heideggerian tradition of Plato interpretation as it manifests in Derrida's reading of Plato's *Phaedrus*. I then give two examples of the transformative power of attention to the literary-dramatic structure of the dialogues in the work of two quite different but mutually confirming kinds of contemporary Plato interpretation, those by Catherine H. Zuckert and William Desmond, respectively. The Plato that emerges from their work confirms the growing recognition that the tradition of Platonism does not represent the thinking embodied in Plato's dialogues.

Keywords: Plato, Platonism, Socrates, doctrine, interpretation, dialogue, drama, character, method, logic, inquiry, discourse, genre, *eros*, *metaxu*, the between, metaxology

In a 1996 essay entitled “The State of the Question in the Study of Plato,” the American Plato scholar Gerald A. Press offers a remarkable overview of the 2500-year history of scholarship and interpretation of the works of Plato. Focusing on the traditions of interpretation of the Platonic dialogues themselves, Press notes the unique difficulty they present in comparison to any other body of work in philosophy, as compared to the comparatively straightforward structure of the philosophical treatise that, in more recent times, dominates the genre of philosophical writing from Aristotle to Aquinas, Descartes and Spinoza to Kant and Hegel, and onward to Husserl and Wittgenstein. Nor are Plato’s dialogues even comparable to those of other writers of philosophical dialogues like Cicero, Hume or Berkeley, whose characters are mere masks and mouthpieces for opposing doctrines and points of view. Rather, Plato’s works can be compared more readily to certain of the pseudonymous writings of Kierkegaard or Nietzsche, where, through the adoption of fictional authorial voices, the writer makes it difficult to ascertain any decided philosophical views on the part of the author himself. However, no philosopher in the history of philosophy has maintained the kind of thorough anonymity, throughout the entire body of his work, that Plato has with regard to personal philosophical views and commitments, a fact the more striking given his founding rôle in the tradition of philosophy in the West. Other than in a handful of personal letters, some of debatable authenticity, not a single time in his 35 formal writings does Plato, with any degree of certainty, step out from within or from behind the many characters that populate his dialogues to speak discernibly in his own voice. Not even through the character of his teacher Socrates, who appears in 33 of his 35 dialogues, does Plato unambiguously reveal his own philosophical commitments or doctrines.

In the history of Plato scholarship, Press argues that interpretation of the dialogues is consistently organized around overcoming and dispelling Plato’s persistent authorial anonymity. “Throughout most of its history,” Press (1996) writes:

Interpretation of Plato has oscillated between two poles. For the most part, it has been what may be called dogmatic or doctrinal; that is, it has been assumed that Plato's thought consists of a more or less systematic body of doctrines which it is the primary function of the dialogues to communicate along with the arguments that Plato believes to show the truth of these doctrines. The crucial point is that the focus of such interpretations is – even (and especially) when the interpreters disagree – on discovering Plato's doctrines. The other pole, the skeptical, emphasizes the inconclusive endings of many dialogues, Socrates' perpetual questioning, and the wealth of inconsistencies, ambiguities, and apparently weak or invalid arguments, and claims that Plato does not have any settled doctrines, but always remains in doubt or open to further inquiry and argument. It is worth noting that, as an anti-dogmatic position, the skeptical is nevertheless defined by the concept of dogma and is, therefore, essentially dogma-centered. (p. 508)

After a thorough canvassing of the shortcomings and contradictions of the dogmatic and skeptical approaches, Press describes a fundamental shift in Plato scholarship in the mid-twentieth century, away from preoccupation with the presence or absence of Plato’s supposed doctrines to the literary implications of his sustained anonymity in the dialogues, that is to say, from the attempt to read the dialogues as if they were disguised treatises to reading them as a philosophical-literary genre that draws on dramatic form, employing a unique blend of literary and philosophical technique and intentionality. “One could sum it up by saying”, Press observes, “that the question had changed [by the mid-twentieth century], from something like”:

- (1) What were Plato's doctrines and how did they develop, as revealed by analyzing the arguments alone in the dialogues taken to be essentially treatises?

to something like

- (2) Should we take literary and dramatic aspects of the dialogues into consideration in trying to understand Plato's thought? (p. 511)

By 1965, for instance, Stanley Rosen, one of the most generative of Plato interpreters in English of his generation, observes as a given that most students of Plato now accept in principle that “the dramatic structure of the dialogues is an essential part of their philosophical meaning” (pp. 452–453). Nevertheless, the millennial sway of doctrinal Platonism persists well into contemporary Plato interpretation, even among those who readily agree that Plato himself was no representative of the Platonism that came to represent him, that such doctrines as those, for instance, of the Forms and of knowledge as *anamnesis*, are not consistently defended in the dialogues, and that the Socratic irony in the dialogues, recognized, for instance, by Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, may extend in any given passage or dialogue as a whole to the authorial persona of Plato, embedded as it is in the many levels of dramatic structure, character and narrative voice. One of the most instructive examples of such an admixture of persistent Platonist doctrinalism in readings that show genuine awareness of the importance of literary structure in the dialogues is in a pivotally important monograph-length essay by Jacques Derrida on Plato from the late 1960's, entitled “Plato's Pharmacy,” an essay central to the formulation of his career-long projects of grammatology and deconstruction. Demonstrating over the 100+ pages of “Plato's Pharmacy” a comprehensive familiarity with the full range of the Platonic *corpus*, as well as his characteristically nuanced engagement with the texts, Derrida focuses on the notion of *pharmakon* in Plato's *Phaedrus*, and its use in the myth of the invention of writing by the god Theuth that Socrates relates toward the end of the dialogue. It is useful to recall here Derrida's interpretation of the notion of *pharmakon* in this monograph as an illustration of the persistence of doctrinal readings of Plato even in conjunction with advanced levels of recognition of the literary and dramatic properties of the Platonic dialogue.

In Plato's *Phaedrus*, Socrates is engaged with the student of rhetoric Phaedrus in a discussion of rhetorical argumentation and the qualities that make for a successful speech, whether in oral or written form. At the opening of the dialogue, Phaedrus is engaged in the memorization of a speech by his teacher Lysias, with Socrates eager to hear it. After doing so, Socrates is persuaded by Phaedrus to provide a better speech than Lysias's on the same topic. After Socrates provides not one but two speeches on opposing sides of the issue in question, he attempts to draw Phaedrus toward a recognition of the necessity of philosophical dialectic as a determining factor in the composition of effective speeches. After doing his best to convince Phaedrus of the greater importance of philosophy over rhetoric, Socrates concludes with one of the mythic stories that play such a conspicuous and perplexing role in Plato's dialogues. The story he relates to Phaedrus of the invention of writing by the Egyptian god Theuth (or Thoth) is designed to provoke a better understanding on the part of Phaedrus of the nature and greater importance of dialectic in the pursuit of truth, which after all, Socrates has argued, should be the genuine goal of any speech worthy of its purpose. In the story Socrates relates, Theuth presents his invention of the gift of writing to the Thamus, king of the Egyptian gods, saying: “O King, here is something that, once learned, will make the Egyptians wiser and will improve their memory; I have discovered a *pharmakon* [translated into English here as “potion”] for memory and for wisdom” (274e). However, Thamus

criticizes Theuth's invention of writing in the following words: "O most expert Theuth, . . . since you are the father of writing, your affection for it has made you describe its effects as the opposite of what they really are. In fact, it will introduce forgetfulness into the soul of those who learn it: they will not practice using their memory because they will put their trust in writing, which is external and depends on signs which belong to others, instead of trying to remember from the inside, completely on their own. You have not discovered a *pharmakon* for remembering, but for reminding; you provide your students with the appearance of wisdom, not with its reality" (275a). Socrates goes on to underline to Phaedrus that spoken discourse is crucial to the nature of dialectic, that a teacher, mindful of the philosophical purpose of communication, will choose to speak to his students in person, face to face, rather than commit to writing words "that are as incapable of speaking in their own defense as they are of teaching the truth adequately" (276c). "The dialectician," Socrates emphasizes to Phaedrus, "chooses a proper soul and plants and sows within it discourse accompanied by knowledge . . . Such discourse makes the seed forever immortal and renders the man who has it as happy as any human being can be" (276e–277a).

Derrida's interpretation of the *Phaedrus* in "Plato's Pharmacy" turns on the ambivalence of the notion of *pharmakon*, capable as it is of signifying either "medicine" or "poison." Because a *pharmakon* can be either helpful or harmful, medicine or poison, its meaning is dependent on context. But this is inherently lacking because it pre-dates the laws of philosophical discourse, the logic of both the excluded middle and of contradiction, so it is dangerously unreliable and "impure" in Plato's eyes – Derrida argues – in the pursuit of truth. Its equivocal vacillation must be contained. Referring to the play of opposed meanings as a "game", Derrida observes:

It is part of the rules of this game that the game should *seem to stop*. Then the *pharmakon*, which is older than either of the opposites, is "caught" by philosophy, by "Platonism" which is constituted by this apprehension, as a mixture of two pure, heterogeneous terms. And one could follow the word *pharmakōn* as a guiding thread within the whole Platonic problematic of the mixture. Apprehended as a blend and an impurity, the *pharmakōn* also acts like an aggressor or a housebreaker, threatening some internal purity and security . . . The purity of the inside can then only be restored if the charges are brought home against exteriority [e.g., of writing] as a supplement, inessential yet harmful to the essence, a surplus that ought never to have come to be added to the untouched plenitude of the inside . . . In order to cure the [*logos*] of the *pharmakon* and rid it of the parasite, it is thus necessary to put the outside back in its place. This is the inaugural gesture of "logic" itself, of good "sense" insofar as it accords with the self-identity of *that which is*: being is what it is, the outside is the outside and the inside inside. Writing must thus return to being what it *should never have ceased to be*: an accessory, an accident, an excess. (p. 128)

By identifying the *pharmakon* as a vehicle in Plato's discourse of the containment of ambivalence by a univocal logic of non-contradiction, Derrida finds as the underlying mechanism of the arguments carried in the *Phaedrus* by Socrates the presence of a doctrinaire Platonism, an ontology or logic of being which holds referentiality firmly in place as a polarity of meaning, as non-contradiction and non-equivocity. As attentive as Derrida can be to the literary and dramatic elements of the *Phaedrus* and the many other dialogues which he cites at various points in this long essay, Derrida reads Plato after the fashion of Heidegger (1998), and before him of Nietzsche, who had founded their entire interpretations of the

history of Western philosophy on the onto-theo-logical constitution of metaphysics, of being as presence, identity, or inwardness, or in Nietzsche's terms as nihilism (Rosen, 1988).

Derrida does not encompass, in the argument of "Plato's Pharmacy", the textual and hermeneutical layer constituted by Plato's authorial distance from the myth of the origins of writing given in the *Phaedrus* to the character of Socrates. The irony that resonates through the textual layers, however, is palpable. Socrates, both in the historical record and in Plato's literary characterization, is the philosopher who writes nothing, and we meet him in the text of the dialogues rendered by the philosopher that we know only through his writings . . . writings, what is more, that he casts in a dramatic structure in which he renders anonymous his own philosophical voice. Derrida reads Socrates's teaching in the *Phaedrus* in the traditional doctrinal fashion to be the teaching of Plato himself, since this supports his Heideggerian-inspired critique of the ontotheological structure of metaphysics, of being as presence, extended in Derrida's own adaptation of Heidegger's analysis¹ toward the deconstructive hermeneutic of a grammatology that sees within the Western tradition a systematic bias toward the priority of the presence and immediacy of speech over the absence and delay of writing. In a recent article entitled "Derrida and Ancient Philosophy: Plato and Aristotle," leading Derrida scholar Michael Naas gives to "Plato's Pharmacy" a pivotal place in the lifelong trajectory of Derrida's writings, proposing, he writes "to make a claim that . . . among all of Derrida's engagements with Ancient Philosophy a single figure, Plato, and a single dialogue of Plato's, the *Phaedrus*, indeed a single scene within that dialogue – Socrates' critique of writing – played a central and unparalleled role in Derrida's work from the beginning right up until the end" (p. 231).

I have taken time to demonstrate in some detail the persistence in Plato scholarship of the long tradition of doctrinal interpretation well into the current period in which the literary structure of the dialogues is given priority. However, the instance of Derrida's reading of Plato is more than a mere case of hermeneutical controversy, since the interpretation of Plato in the Nietzschean-Heideggerian tradition purports to be an interpretation not merely of Plato alone, but rather of the whole tradition of Western philosophy. Moreover, such interpretation includes the founding differentiation of disciplinary boundaries between the discourses of philosophy, religion, literature, and politics, so conspicuous in the text of a dialogue like the *Phaedrus*, but also by implication of those of history, mathematics, and the sciences across the body of the Platonic dialogues as a whole. The import and traditional authority embedded in these disciplinary boundaries persists in the kind of scholarly and hermeneutical traditions that we find in the interpretation of a figure like Plato, so that to observe fundamental changes in such hermeneutical models, has, with respect to our reception of thinkers of the stature of a Heidegger or a Derrida, more at stake than a mere point of technique or correctness in Plato interpretation.²

¹ In "We Other Greeks" (2010), Derrida describes his close involvement with Heidegger's thought throughout his reading of Plato and development of grammatology and deconstruction: "I constantly had to thematize an explication vis-à-vis Heidegger (and from the beginning a deconstructive explication – interior and exterior, and thus always folded onto itself . . . – having to do in particular with his "epochal" framing of the history of philosophy and of the history of being, his interpretation of Nietzsche, of Aristotle, his way of situating the Greek and the Greek language, *theos* and *theon*, the principle of reason, *mimesis* (and also truth, and, most especially, *khôra*)" (pp. 21–22).

² See Heidegger's attribution to Plato of a founding misdirection of "truth as correctness" in his "Plato's Doctrine of Truth" (1998): "The ambiguity in the determination of the essence of truth can be seen in a single sentence taken from the section that contains Plato's own interpretation of the "allegory of the cave" (517 b7 to c5). . . . From now on this characterization of the essence of truth as the correctness of both representation and assertion becomes normative for the whole of Western thinking" (pp. 177–178).

My intention in the above is to have cleared the ground for the appreciation of the gains achieved in the work of the following two representatives of the literary-dramatic approach to the interpretation of the Platonic dialogues. The works, respectively, of Catherine Zuckert and William Desmond embody two quite different but mutually reinforcing approaches to interpretation of the work of Plato. In her 2009 *Plato's Philosophers: The Coherence of the Dialogues*, Catherine Zuckert achieves a comprehensive new reading of the whole structure of the Platonic *corpus*. In jettisoning two principal theories attached to the traditional doctrinal reading of the dialogues, namely, the theory stemming from the early nineteenth century with Schleiermacher of the development of Plato's thought in three distinct stages, and also the philological and stylometric analyses that attempt to demonstrate that development at the textual level. Zuckert challenges both of these longstanding and still widely followed models in arguing for a fundamentally different approach to the presence or absence of an organizing principle within the dialogues as a whole. Beginning from the pervasive rôle of the character of Socrates throughout the Platonic *corpus*, Zuckert looks to internal evidence in each of the dialogues for the stage it represents in the life of Socrates, beginning with his early years as a student of philosophy in the *Parmenides*, to his mature rôle as a teacher in such dialogues as the *Republic*, to his eventual trial and death at the hands of the governing class of Athens, in the *Apology* and the *Phaedo*. She argues that the dialogues demonstrate convincing evidence that Plato's goal in those dialogues in which Socrates appears is to represent and communicate the life of his teacher as a philosopher up to and including his own understanding of his death as presented in the *Phaedo*. She does not claim that the historical references and details within the dialogues are intended to be precisely accurate – the dialogues are works of dramatic fiction after all – but, rather, that they are designed to show the unfolding thought of Socrates over his philosophical lifetime, and are focused on Socrates as a character who embodies true philosophy, rather than as a holder of philosophical doctrines. Zuckert emphasizes that, consistent with the dramatic form of the dialogues, “Plato only shows; he does not state or say anything in his own name” (p. 7). However, she writes, if we look at “the dramatic dates (the indications Plato gives of the time at which readers are to imagine the dialogue having taken place, not the much later and more speculative time of composition) . . . we see that the dialogues represent incidents in one overarching narrative. They depict the problems that gave rise to Socratic philosophy, its development or maturation, and its limitations” (p. 7). Taking as point of departure Socrates's own account of the four stages of his development as a philosopher given in his final hours in the *Phaedo*, Zuckert undertakes systematic readings of the 35 dialogues, exploring how a focus on the character of Socrates positions each dialogue in relation to the overall narrative of the philosophical thought and practice of Socrates, contributing to a coherent reading of each dialogue, while shedding light on what can and cannot be reasonably surmised regarding Plato's authorial intentions.

With regard to what Aristotle attributes to Plato with respect to that most contentious Platonic doctrine of the ideas or forms, Zuckert argues that Plato does not ascribe to Socrates anything beyond its status as an hypothesis, that is, its mere persuasiveness or probability, and its superiority to other existing explanations of knowledge, while at the same time admitting to its incompleteness: in particular, Socrates acknowledges his inability to explain how particular things participate in the Forms that make them intelligible. Zuckert explains:

Socrates's hypothesis [of the Forms] explicitly abjures any consideration of the *archē* or its consequences. Participation in the ideas explains only why things are as they are. It does not explain how any thing or set of things comes to be . . . His argument about

the ideas is explicitly presented not merely as provisional but as an incomplete account of the character of the whole. (p. 189)

This provisional nature of the key Socratic theory of the forms underwrites Zuckert's emphasis that, as Socrates argues in major dialogues, such as the *Symposium*, the *Republic*, and the *Phaedrus*, philosophy is an erotic pursuit of wisdom; the philosopher is wisdom's lover, not its possessor, since that claim is proper only to a god, not a human being (278d). In the *Symposium*, Socrates declares that the only thing he understands is "the art of love" (177e), relating that he was taught that art of love by a Mantinean priestess by the name of Diotima, who emphasized that the erotic nature of knowledge is that it avoids choosing between opposing terms, like ugliness and beauty, good and evil, knowledge and ignorance: "Correct judgement," he learned from her, "has this character: it is *in between* (*metaxu*) understanding and ignorance" (202a). As Zuckert glosses this important passage: "Diotima persuaded Socrates to change his understanding of eros by asking him to examine his own opinions, the way Socrates later asks his interlocutors to examine theirs. She thus provided him not only with the content of his knowledge (*ta erōtica*) but also, by means of example, with the method of acquiring it" (pp. 192–193).

This emphasis on the erotic desire in and for philosophy foregrounds the temporal, spatial, embodied character of the philosopher, that the love of and desire for knowledge arises out of awareness of a *lack* of wisdom, of the inherently temporal and mortal condition that, as Heidegger was to explore, defines and circumscribes our situated-ness as human beings as *Dasein*, there-being. The conceptual description of this erotic condition as the *metaxu*, the between, informs the whole approach to philosophy by William Desmond, whose relationship to Plato is that of a creative philosopher rather than as the interpreter we find in Zuckert. In a career so far spanning 40 years and showing no sign of flagging, Desmond has unfolded an original philosophical *corpus*, grounded in his early work on Plato, an approach he names *metaxology*, the logic of the between. He has written (to my knowledge) only a single essay exploring detailed interpretation of a Platonic dialogue, a remarkably original reading of the *Sophist*, early in his career, preferring he comments in a recent interview to think from out of Plato's work rather than within the detailed exegesis that characterizes the kind of specialized Plato scholarship that tends to dominate the field. I can give here only a brief example of the Platonist thinking that characterizes the impressive sweep of Desmond's philosophical enterprise.³

In the early essay on the *Sophist* just mentioned, a dialogue in which Socrates is present but does not participate, Plato gives the leading rôle to an unnamed philosopher, a student of Parmenides, visiting Athens from Elea. The Eleatic Stranger chooses the young and untrained student of philosophy, Theaetetus, as his interlocutor, in an attempt, as the title of the dialogue indicates, to capture more precisely the difference that marks the sophist off from the philosopher, a difference that Socrates has often tried to define in earlier dialogues (by "earlier" of course, in Zuckert's sense, I mean earlier in Socrates' life, not Plato's). Desmond emphasizes that the Stranger's choice not to debate with Socrates arises because the Stranger does not want a serious opponent who will engage him in genuine debate, preferring Theaetetus because he will allow him to turn the exchange into as much of a monologue as possible, choosing as he does the eristic logic of division to chase down the precise characteristics of the sophist.

³ For a representative sampling of Desmond's work, see Desmond (2012). And for explication and critical commentary, including a bibliography of Desmond's work to 2007, see Kelly (2007).

The Stranger's argument founders on the ontological question of whether the non-being that is the opposing term to being has any status, is an empty signifier, or has a strange kind of existence of its own. This question raises the issue of the *metaxu*, the between that Socrates has described in the *Symposium*. Desmond argues that the silent presence of Socrates to the dialogue of the Stranger with Theaetetus is meant by Plato to accent the contrast to Socrates' character as a philosopher, as one who grasps that the nature of the between-ness of such opposing terms as being and non-being is not responsive to the eristic method used by the Stranger, whom Desmond points out:

insists that terms [like "sophist"] have a fixed, univocal meaning, separable from their opposites . . . Socrates on the other hand has no method, for there is no *techne* of talking . . . The contrast between Socrates and the Stranger, then, is intimately connected with the meaning of Plato's philosophical art. This seeks to mediate between the logical and the artistic, the conceptual and the imaginative. (pp. 401–402)

Desmond's reading of Plato's work places it between the literary and the philosophical, neither wholly one nor the other, both literary and philosophical, so as to enable a portrait not of philosophy but of the erotic pursuit of philosophy, of how the philosopher lives from out of his or her inquiry, rather than from a set of doctrines or methods they hold to or oppose. In being both literary and philosophical, and in being neither in their later opposing sense, Plato's work stands at the origin of Western academic traditions, demonstrating that truth has no generic or discursive property or exclusivity, but rather inheres in the way genres and discourses are used as modes of inquiry, not as claims to the possession of univocal, non-provisional, non-revisable truth.

Conclusion

My purpose in this essay is to point to the generativity of an epochal change in the understanding and interpretation of the Platonic *corpus*. The long tradition of Platonist doctrinalism, however, persists in its powerful hold over the way philosophy is constructed as a discourse and a discipline, even among many modern and late modern philosophers who grasp the vital need for a new understanding of philosophy, and of its rôle among the disciplines.

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Corresponding author: Raphael Foshay

Contact email: rfoshay@athabascau.ca

Representation of History in the Indian Graphic Novel: An Analytical Study of History through the Frame of Graphic Narratives

Antarleena Basu, PhD
Research scholar
University of Hyderabad, India

Abstract

In this research paper I attempt to explore how, through the amalgamation of images and words, India's historical events have been represented within the frame of the graphic narrative and how these narratives serve to uphold the principles of the "history from below" type of historical narrative, thereby providing counter-narratives to the more dominant, so-called "historical facts". History in the graphic narrative is a persistent theme as "the visual dimension of the graphic novel contributes substantially not only to our understanding of history but also to a larger question of how history can be represented" (Nayar 2016, p. 14). By primarily focusing on texts like *This Side That Side: Restorying Partition*, curated by Vishwajyoti Ghosh (dealing with the Partition of India in 1947 and its aftermath), *Bhimayana*, by Srividya Natarajan, Durgabai Vyam and S. Anand (dealing with the caste system by tracing the life of jurist, economist, politician and social reformer Dr B. R. Ambedkar), *Delhi Calm*, by Vishwajyoti Ghosh (portraying the Emergency of 1975–76) and *Munnu*, by Malik Sajad (the national crisis in Kashmir). By also drawing references to graphic narratives across the world like Spiegelman's *Maus*, Satrapi's *Persepolis* and so forth, this paper aspires to identify the omissions, loopholes and discrepancies in established history and seeks as well to question and counter dominant historical narratives, thereby revealing the different manner in which history can be represented within the graphic narrative. Hence, this paper attempts to analyze and understand history and its representation through the "visual-verbal literacy" (Hirsch, 2004, p. 1212) of the graphic narrative.

Keywords: history, Indian graphic narratives, historical documentation/facts, representation, de-centering

Introduction

One of the most controversial themes for which writers and artists of graphic narratives seem to have a consistent penchant is that of history. As the subversion of sanctioned analytical narratives of the historical past seems to be a constant in their work, their interest can be considered a product of a socially/politically insubordinate stance. In this ever-altering and ever transmuting age of technological modernity, writers and artists are ceaselessly searching for new mediums that can reach out to the reader in the most intimate and most effective way possible. Speculating on this contemporary age of “Archives and Collectors”, Jared Gardner observes that “it is the structural affinities of the comics form with the “database” aesthetic that has contributed to the increasing visibility and relevance of the comics form in the 21st century” (cited by Baetens and Frey, 2015, p. 218). In this regard, Marianne Hirsch had also proposed that the medium of graphic narrative can capture the “visual-verbal literacy [that] can respond to the needs of the present moment” (2004, p. 1212). Graphic narrative can be defined as a medium that amalgamates words and art to represent the world around and is said to “embody a seriousness of purpose that goes against the essential lightness of the cartoon mode” (Orvell, 1992, p. 111). Coined in 1964 and popularized by the American legend Will Eisner, the term “graphic novel” was initially synonymous to “expensive comic books”, “adult comics” and even “alternative comics” (Hatfield, 2005, p. x). Despite the “inauspicious welcome” the genre received, to quote Jan Baetens and Hugo Frey:

. . . the graphic novel, as an idea and a publishing phenomenon, has endured and has had a significant impact on comics, literature, film, and many other media besides . . . Today, the graphic novel has escaped the cultural exclusion of much of the comics’ universe and has gained great respect... (2015, p. 2)

This obsession for representing history through graphic narratives began in the 1980s with the publication of Art Spiegelman’s graphic narrative on the Holocaust titled *Maus* (1986; 1991), which has since then inspired artists and writers globally to represent the unspeakable, repressed and alternate histories using this medium. Consequently, this paper attempts to explore how, through the juxtaposition of images and words, India’s historical events have been represented within the frame of the graphic narrative and how these narratives espouse the “history from below” philosophy, providing counter narratives to historical documentation or “historical facts”. The Indian graphic novel, which is in itself an emerging genre and is said to have initiated with the publication of Orijit Sen’s *The River of Stories* (1994), “possesses all the qualifications of a literary text (the construction of self-contained worlds, character development, plot, metaphoric use of visual and verbal language, among others) but adds the visual dimension to the narration” (Nayar 2016, p. 7). In the Indian context, to call the rise of historical graphic novel writing a recent phenomenon would be misleading, as it would downplay the significant role played by early comics such as *Amar Chitra Katha* (this can be roughly translated as “Immortal Picture-Tales”), first published in 1967, and the numerous graphic representations of Indian mythology (see Figure 1). To elaborate, the Indian graphic novel, from its very inception, has manifested an inclination to bring to the “surface issues under-reported in conventional news media”, thereby serving to unravel an alternate history (Gravett¹).

¹ This quote has been extracted from an interview of Alan Moore with Barry Kavanagh on 17th October, 2000. It is found online at: <http://www.blather.net/projects/alan-moore-interview/northampton-graphic-novel/> [Accessed: 7th February, 2017].

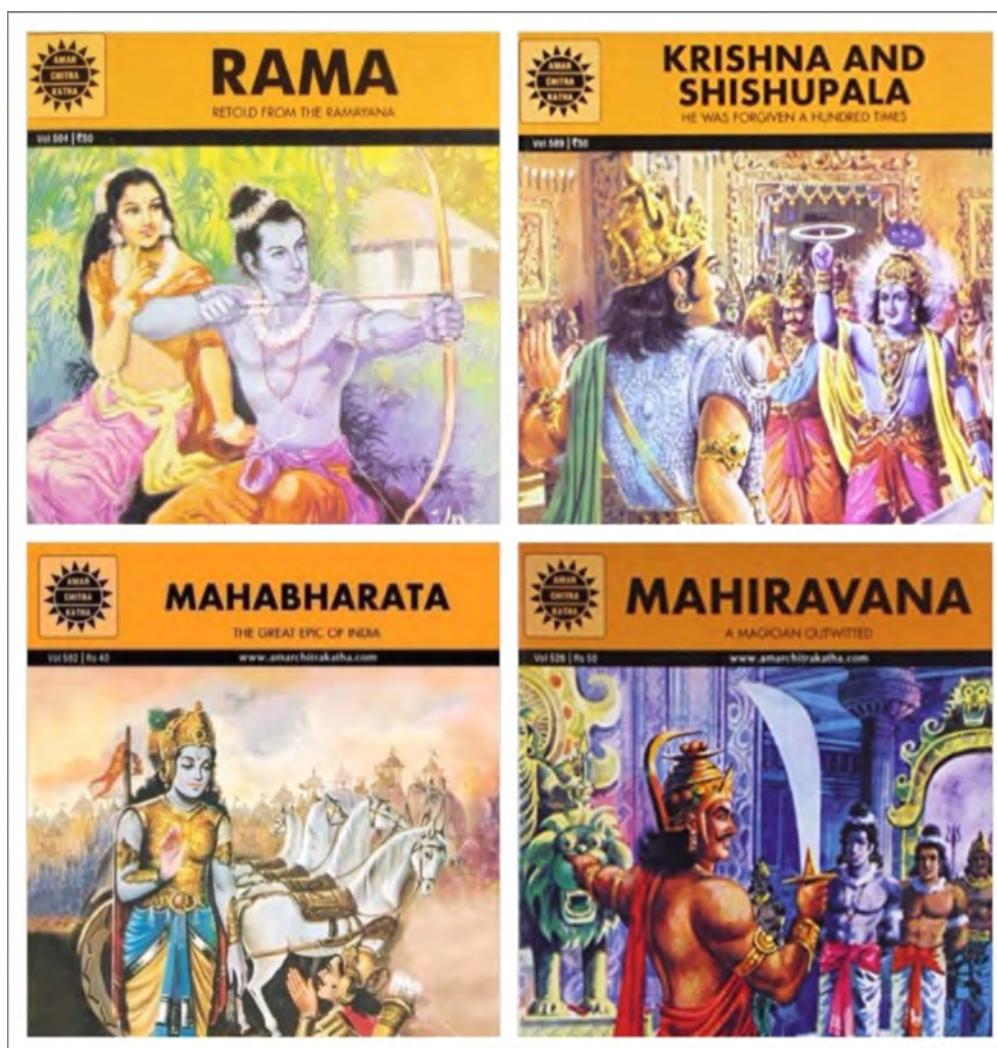


Figure 1: Indian mythology through graphic representation in *Amar Chitra Katha*

Consequently, Orijit Sen's *The River of Stories* (1994), which is arguably the first graphic narrative in India, outlines the impact of constructing the Sardar Sarovar Dam on the local people of Narmada valley; Vishwajyoti Ghosh's *Delhi Calm* (2010) canvases the Emergency of 1975–77 that thwarted the democratic system; *Bhimayana: Experiences of Untouchability* (2011) written by Srividya Natarajan and S. Anand, reiterates the story of untouchability through the biographical graphic account of Dr B. R. Ambedkar; *This Side That Side: Restorying Partition* (2013), curated by Vishwajyoti Ghosh, turns to the Partition of India and its ongoing legacy; Malik Sajad's *Munnu: A Boy from Kashmir* (2015) paints the horrors perpetrated by the government and the trauma of dwelling in a conflict zone. The list is long. These graphic narratives engage in constructing a new historical narrative, questioning, contradicting and often satirizing historical documentation in this sub-continent, thereby contributing to the global "graphic novel movement"² of the 21st century. Thus, this type of narrative, in English, spreads "Indian social imageries among the English-speaking classes to which it offers alternate readings of Indian history, draws attention to the lacunae and follies of our cultural practices and makes visible hitherto taboo subjects" (Nayar, 2016, p. 7).

² The "Graphic Novel Movement" is explained by Paul Gravett in the abovementioned article.

Taking this cue from critics like Gravett and Nayar, this paper analyzes how the Indian graphic narrative engages in representing history through the visual-verbal interaction in the graphic narrative by primarily drawing references from graphic narratives that engage with the history of the subcontinent. Additionally, references to other historical graphic narratives written across the world will also be made in order to enhance the discussion. The following section will elaborate on this category of graphic narrative by focusing on primarily four tropes through which history is represented in the graphic narratives: firstly, de-centering the center of historical facts/ documentation; secondly, amalgamation of the public and private spheres of history; thirdly, projecting history through the frame of irony and satire; and finally, history through the canvas of nostalgia and memory.

“De-centering” the ‘Center’ of Historical Facts/ Documentation

Indian graphic narratives have displayed a recurring tendency to disclose untold history by, to use Derrida’s term, “de-centering” the center of prevalent historical facts or documents through the mode of visual and verbal interaction. What is meant here is that graphic narratives tend to question established history by producing a counter-narrative that often engages in narrating a “history from below”,³ thereby subverting official narratives on history. In this regard, J. Spencer Clark, who had proposed to teach history in classrooms through graphic narrative, writes:

. . . there have been an ever-growing number of graphic novels that emphasize historical events and individuals. Many of these provide detailed coverage of historical situations and conflicts that are sparsely covered in the traditional history curriculum. (2013, p. 490)

Through the graphic and the textual dimension of the narrative, the writers and artists aspire to create a historical text that does not sulk away from portraying the unutterable, insufferable and abominable events. It is intriguing to note that besides the textual layer that helps in advancing the plot forward, the text’s visual dimension adds a category of meaning by embedding a multi-layered narrative in the artwork itself. To quote Nayar, the visual dimension

. . . generates the critical literacy by making us aware that history had witnesses who responded in different way to the event, whose emotions writ large on their faces should convey to us the scope and nature of the events and thus alert us to the subjects of that history, the social and individual dimensions of the larger historical process (2016, p. 14).

Our histories are strewn with incidents of discrimination based on class, caste, gender and race where those who wield power often victimize the powerless. Those victimizers are often the same people who compose history. However, graphic narratives unabashedly unravel the ugly face of discrimination by embellishing texts with art, thereby creating a multi-layered narrative.

As a first example, the first chapter of Sarnath Banerjee’s *The Barn Owl’s Wondrous Capers* (2007), titled “The Dark Armpits of History”, can be construed as an insubstantial tale about

³ Extracted from the abstract of ECAH 2017 [Accessed site: <https://ecah.iafor.org/> Date of access, 22 June, 2017]

colonial Calcutta (the capital city of the state of West Bengal in India, presently called Kolkata), revolving around petty duels and liaisons. Amidst all the pettiness, the only notable historical tales are silently narrated by fringe characters like servants and maids of the British officials. Beside the presence of servants and workers in almost every page of this chapter, Banerjee acknowledges these unsung heroes of history by devoting an entire page (p. 8) for the forgotten individuals who contributed in their own way for the proper functioning of the society.



Figure 2: *Barn Owl's Wondrous Capers* (Page: 8)

In this Figure 2, the readers are introduced to the varieties of servants (nine panels all showcasing the 9 different types of servants) who worked at the British officials' house: "chobedars" or stick holders, "jammadars" or sweepers, "khandutgars" or waiters, "hajaam" or Muslim barbers, "buxie" (presently, bakshi) or paymaster, "musselchees" or kitchen-helpers, "ayahs" or nursemaids (nannies), "punkah coolies" or fan-bearers, and "head bearers". Historical documentation mostly never pays heed to the minor figures of the social structure. However, Banerjee's graphic narrative introduces the readers to historical figures dwelling in the fringes of society, heralding them by providing them the center-stage of his narrative for their contribution in the functioning of colonial Calcutta.

Again, historical documents have very often failed to produce knowledge that focuses on women as much as it considers men. Gender bias is a recurring phenomenon when one considers historical facts, firstly because history is mostly represented through men's perceptions and, secondly, because throughout history women have been subjugated into a position of inferiority. In the global front, Marjane Satrape's *Persepolis* (2000; 2001) offers an autobiographical tale of growing up and surviving in Iran during the Islamic Revolution, thereby serving as a narrative that transmits women's perspectives amidst a largely patriarchal society. In India, female artists and writers like Malini Gupta and Dyuti Mittal,

among others, have created a space for women protagonists by carving powerful female characters who do not hesitate to crawl out of their shallow existence in history and carve a niche for themselves in a man's world. Their story "The Taboo" (anthologized in *This Side That Side: Restorying Partition* [2013]) chronicles the journey of a refugee woman who, through her efforts and the income from her own garage, is able to leave behind the "nightmare of Cooper's Camp" (2013, p. 246), "which is one of the largest refugee transit camps in West Bengal" (2013, p. 238) from the time of the Partition of India.



Figure 3: *This Side That Side: Restorying Partition* (p. 246, 247)

The above images (Figure 3), through an intricate artwork that refrains from employing panels or frames, basically showcases a world of women where their expressive faces are blended with the landscape. The circularity of the art is extended over the two pages where Lily, who refused to remain a "faceless refugee, disliked, disowned" (2013) is given the center-stage of the narrative by foregrounding her face upon the backdrop of the shabby Cooper's Camp. "The Taboo" showcases a world where the men give up on their dreams of escaping a gruesome past while the women folk strive on, even if it means leaving one's husband and surviving as a "taboo". Hence, this graphic narrative re-inscribes history and offers a counter-narrative of Partition.

Not only does a graphic narrative de-center historical documentation but they have also engaged in dethroning the very idea that historical facts are indisputable by showcasing the "constructed nature of all history" (Nayar 2016, p. 26). The question that exists at the very heart of historical graphic narratives is: "who gets to tell history?"

In "An Old Fable" (anthologized in *This Side That Side: Restorying Partition*), Tabish Khair and Priya Kuriyan create a Partition narrative by employing the fable of King Solomon and

the two women who both claimed that the child was theirs. Here, the “woman in green” (symbolic of the Muslims) as well as the “woman in saffron” (epitomizes the Hindus) claimed that the child was hers. The graphic narrative showcases how history is often a mediated narrative that is manipulated at all junctions through the presence of the silhouettes of Muslims and Hindus who “shouted on their behalf” (pp. 18–19). The graphic content contains empty speech bubbles, implying how the colonial ruler never actually paid attention to their needs, as expressed through their horrified faces (p. 20). What is interesting here is how the King’s courtiers interpreted for the King, writing down the complaints in “convoluted petitions full of legalese” (p. 20) and how their interpretations were blatant misrepresentations of what the women actually wanted.



Figure 4: *This Side That Side: Restorying Partition* (pp. 20–21)

The images above (Figure 4) showcase the King’s courtiers with grim and smug faces noting down the “crowd’s complaints” (p. 20) in terms that befitted and benefitted their cause. The gist of the petitions shows in three distinct paper slips: 1 – “The saffron crowd wants my son promoted”; 2 – “The green crowd wants you to invest in my business” and 3 – “Both the crowds want you to order a perpetual scholarship at Oxford for my family” (p. 21). This clearly shows how history is largely an apparatus for justifying the positions and perpetuating the entitlements of the powerful and the privileged.

Amalgamation of the Public and Private Spheres of History

In the Indian graphic narrative, which goes on to deal with socio-political issues, the public and the private spheres interact incessantly until, much like the real world, one becomes inseparable from the other. In graphic narratives published in other parts of the world like Spiegelman’s *Maus* (1986; 1991) and Delisle’s *Burma Chronicles* (2007) among others, it is this fusion of the two spaces that allows for the realistic representation of socio-political history and “it is not trauma on a macro-scale that haunts the pages of graphic narratives such

as *This Side That Side*, *Bhimayana* or *Delhi Calm*, but the impact of the national trauma on common lives” (Nayar 2016, p. 21). For instance, in *Delhi Calm*, Ghosh portrays how the sudden declaration of emergency was firstly perceived as a threat to the individual’s economic and social security, and then as a hindrance to the development of a democracy.



Figure 5: *Delhi Calm* (p. 3)

As seen above in Figure 5, the protagonist Vibhuti Prasad, who is seated in the very private domain of his own room, is connected to the public sphere through his transistor, which astounds him (note the question marks shrouding his face in the second panel) with the jarring information that the “President has proclaimed Emergency” (2010, p. 3). What is interesting is that, instead of speculating on the crisis of the nation, he immediately recoils into his private life. For him there is a “bigger crisis”: “It’s the end of the month. Bloody hell – my salary?” Hence, it is through personal histories that graphic narratives give way to national histories, thereby humanizing a historical event that otherwise would have remained as historical documentation devoid of human content.

Again, in Srividya Natarajan and S. Anand’s *Bhimayana*, the biography of B. R. Ambedkar is narrated with the purpose of introducing the readers to the larger social history of segregation based on caste or the practice of untouchability prevalent in India during those times. In *Book I* titled “Water”, the writers trace the journey of a young Ambedkar, along with his brothers, to Goregaon, showing how they were not given a ride by the cart-man simply because they belonged to the lower caste of *Mahars* (p. 36). They were allowed to ride the cart only when they were willing to drive the cart by themselves and pay double fare.

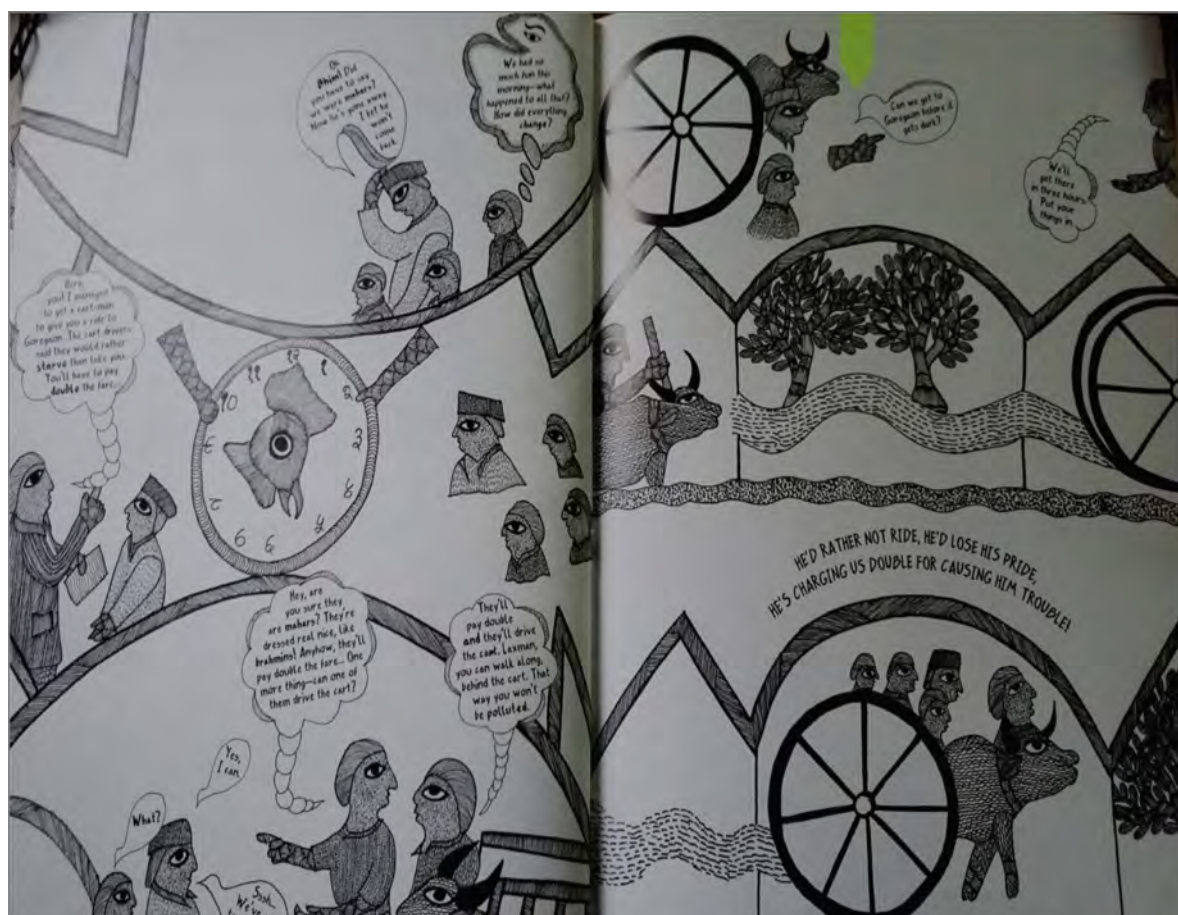


Figure 6: *Bhimayana: Experiences of Untouchability* (p. 36, 37)

The images above (Figure 6), which are devoid of panels or frames and seem to flow seamlessly (much like the practice of caste system that went on for hundreds of years), shows how the cart driver would rather starve than “lose his pride” (37) by giving a ride to lower-caste people. The flow of water, the turning of wheels and the clock at the center of the page are symbolic of the timelessness of caste system, representing the history of suffering among the lower caste people. It is intriguing to note how the speech bubbles of the upper caste people are marked with a hook resembling a sting, symbolizing their harsh and barbaric attitude towards the Mahars. Hence, through the personal story of Ambedkar’s journey, the readers are familiarized with the larger spectacle of the dehumanizing effects of untouchability, thereby humanizing history through the frame of graphic narrative.

Projection of History through the Frame of Irony

Since time immemorial, graphic satire has been adopted as the mode to represent the defects of an individual or a society and also for illustrating the shortcomings of diverse versions of a nation’s history or even, more comprehensively, the follies of human civilization. In India, cartoonists like K. Shankar Pillai, R. K. Laxman and Manjul, among others, have not only used graphic satire to display the deficiencies inherent to the political system and its leaders, but also to expose the social, economic and cultural drawbacks of the narratives about the national past. In a similar approach, the authors of the historical graphic narratives use the medium of political cartoons, sketches and images to satirize and bring to light the unutterable issues that shroud the history of the nation. The tendency to amplify the effect of the socio-political issues on the readers by using satiric caricatures and cartoons can be

observed in the works of Malik Sajad, Vishwajyoti Ghosh and Sumit Kumar, among many others. Underscoring the contrast between conflicting versions of events, situations and personalities also serves to buttress the satirical power that characterises graphic narratives. Economic contrasts between the rich and the poor have also been an important element of graphic narratives. Observing this trend in Indian graphic narrative and taking his cue from Medhurst and Desousa, Nayar remarks:

Contrast between wealth and poverty, competing ideologies, present and past or between popular perceptions and the visual forms, reveal the differences, schisms, and just plain extremes in a socio-cultural form, and it is a key feature of the political graphic satire The contrast is meant to direct us to two Indias: one belonging to the politicians, fundamentalists, wealth and immoral people and one belonging to the poor, honest, low-caste/ minority people . . . (Nayar 2016, p. 156).

In Sumit Kumar's *Amar Bari Tomar Bari Naxalbari*, both the visual and verbal modes interact vigorously to spotlight the exploitation of the tenant farmers by the landlords in pre-Independence India. In the figure below, the author critiques the zamindari system,⁴ which was legally abolished in 1951, by drawing a contrast between the landlord and the tenant farmer through his powerful amalgamation of images and words, creating a Juvenalian satire.

⁴ The Zamindari System was introduced by Lord Cornwallis in 1793 through the Permanent Settlement Act, and was primarily established in the provinces of Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Varanasi. Under this Permanent Settlement System, zamindars (landowners who lease their lands to tenant farmers) were recognized as rightful owners of lands and invested with the right to collect rent from the peasants. The realized amount would be divided into 11 parts. 1/11 of the share belonged to zamindars and 10/11 of the share belonged to the East India Company. Hence, it was the tenant labourers/ farmers who became the victims of this gruesome policy for generations.



Figure 7: *Amar Bari Tomar Bari Naxalbari* (p. 32)

As can be seen in Figure 7 above, the zamindar's extravagant lifestyle, clothing and sturdy physique is contrasted with that of the bare and starved body of the tenant farmer and his family. The abnormally disproportionate division of food grains (where the zamindar keeps the bulk of grains giving only a handful to the farmer) also highlights the wealth gap between the oppressor and the oppressed, which finally leads to the revolt of the peasants (the Naxalite movement, a Maoist insurgency that began in 1967). The page, which is devoid of panels and shows a distinctive rope (noose, firstly for the farmers and then for the landlords, as many of them were killed by the Naxalites) snaking across the page, its end burning next to a farmer's face in the foreground, his fiery eyes displaying the sickle and hammer as he embraces the Naxals. Hence, through satire, events in history are rendered straightforwardly for the readers in the graphic narrative.

Often, the brutality of historical events is best revealed through irony; one of the most commonly used tools to expose cruelty and violence is that of the child protagonist. The irony is a function of the child's perception of the dreadful situation, set in contrast to the thought processes of adults. In *Munnu*, Sajad contrasts the innocence of childhood with the barbarous treatment of Kashmiri civilians by the government.

Figure 8: *Munnu* (p. 12)

As can be noted in the detailed figure (8), Munnu speculates that the “entire process [of crackdown] will last from dawn to dusk” and that this will give him “plenty of time to draw on woodblocks without papa’s interruptions” (Sajad 2015, p. 12). Thus, the satire is evident when Munnu’s innocent perception is contrasted with the surrounding brutality.

History through the Canvas of Nostalgia

History is often written by individuals who have had no direct experience of the historical event. However, they may have inherited memories of that event so strongly that they are compelled to pick up their pens and give vent to their pent up thoughts. Photographs, letters, etc. are devices through which history is passed on to future generations. It is Marianne Hirsch who terms this phenomenon of “inherited memory” as “post- memory” (1992–1993). In this regard, Spiegelman’s *Maus* is a direct projection of post-memory, where the author Artie inherits the memories of the Holocaust from his father Vladek. Interestingly, if one puts the sub-title of the two parts of *Maus* together, it reads:

“MY FATHER BLEEDS HISTORY”.

“AND HERE MY TROUBLES BEGAN”. (1986, p. 3)

Hence, the protagonist makes it clear that *Maus* is the result of inherited intergenerational trauma. Among Indian graphic narratives, and in agreement with Pramod K. Nayar, *This Side That Side: Restorying Partition* can be held as the most potent work on memory and graphic history. For instance, “Water Stories” by Appupen and Arundhati Ghosh is an astonishing projection of how traumatic memory haunts the one experiencing the event and how it is passed on from one generation to another. The textual narrative opens with the phrase: “In all her father’s stories about the land he came from, there was water” (2013, p. 130).

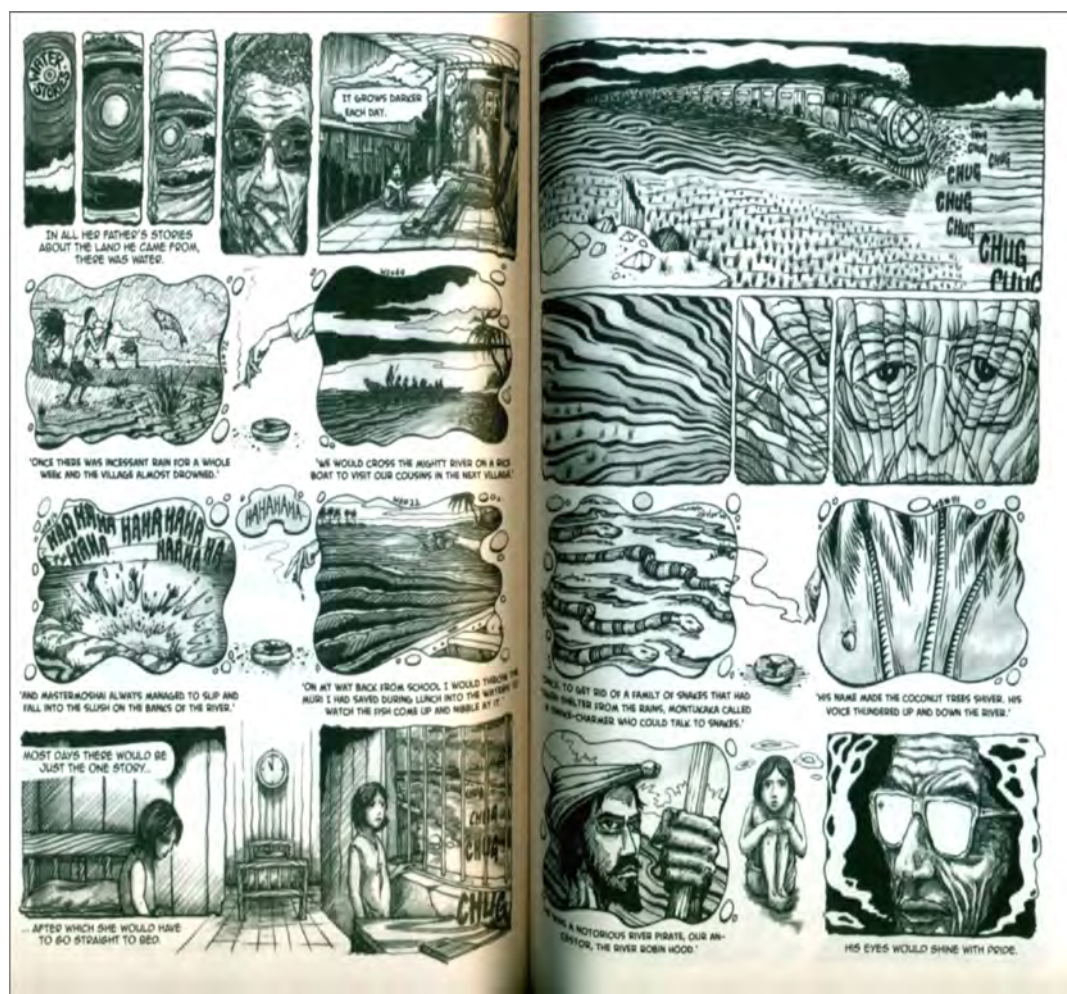


Figure 9: *This Side That Side: “Water Stories”* (pp. 130-131)

As can be perceived in the first panel of Figure 9, the iris of the eye (with “water stories” scribbled on it) gradually magnifies into the face of the man who is seen smoking a cigarette while a small child, sitting on the floor, is engrossed in listening to her father’s stories. In fact, the panels resemble a fragmented frame, thereby symbolizing the partition of India and the fractured existence of the people displaced. The child is seen engrossed amidst the water narratives as her father becomes the water with quivering waves shrouding his face, his eyes oozing pain (panel 4, p. 131). His memories of his homeland are entangled with the river Padma, which has “made and ruined many lives” and has also submerged his own mother. In the final page, it is seen that the daughter goes “looking for the river in the other land”, and as she touches it, she slowly “becomes the river” (p. 135) that, somehow, had flowed within her through her father’s narrative all the while.

Conclusion

I hope to have demonstrated that the Indian historical graphic narrative, with its unique voice, is gradually carving a concrete niche for itself in the global realm of graphic narratives. The paper has explored the mechanisms through which Indian history is represented and how this aesthetic work can compete and even challenge established historical “facts” and documents that claim a monopoly on truth. More specifically, by focusing on the microcosm, that is, individual suffering, the graphic narrative flows up into the crisis in the macrocosm, that is, the national, social crisis. The past finds a new dimension in the present world through the

non-linear, multi-layered language of the graphic narrative that draws readers across disciplines with its captivating projection of history.

Thus, with the increasing number of published graphic narratives that deal with history, we may conclude that the popularity of the historical graphic narrative is not a passing fad; it is an emerging trend that has trenched deep into the domain of Indian writing in English. Indeed, as the title of Paul Gravett's article (2015) reads, "The Indian graphic novel is here to stay".

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Corresponding author: Antarleena Basu

Contact e-mail: Antrleena@gmail.com

Different Histories, Different Narratives: ICT Uses As “*Habitus*”?

Angeliki Monnier
University of Lorraine, France

Abstract

History forms narratives, narratives form media uses? The present paper formulates a theoretical proposal, that of considering the uses of information and communication technologies (ICT), particularly social media, as “*habitus*”, inspired by Pierre Bourdieu’s Field Theory. My thesis draws on research conducted on the professional network LinkedIn. It examines the way two discussion groups, held by Greek and French migrants respectively, use this platform. The comparative approach raises the question of *habitus* as *praxis* related to situated and ideologically charged socio-historical representations of migration. The online discursive practices of each group suggest the existence of an *illusio* common to their members regarding the relevance and the objective of the discussions. Different forms (*eidos*) of *illusio* seem to operate as different symbolic capitals that shape the groups. Following Pierre Bourdieu’s theory, my ultimate assumption is that these divergences are related to the positions that Greece and France hold within the international migration field.

Keywords: habitus, social media, migrants on line, Greek diaspora, French diaspora, migration field, narratives, history, field theory

Introduction

History forms narratives, narratives form media uses? The present paper formulates a theoretical proposal, that of considering the uses of information and communication technologies (ICT), particularly social media, as “*habitus*”, inspired by Pierre Bourdieu’s Field Theory. I employ the term “*habitus*” referring to a set of unconscious practices conditioned by the social, cultural and political context that permeates their users (obviously also determined by the strategic prescriptions and the technological characteristics of the media). It is through the users’ “*illusio*”, “dispositions” and “symbolic capital” that this context can be identified. Pierre Bourdieu’s Field theory is in the centre of my theoretical framework.

My thesis draws on a research conducted on the professional network LinkedIn. It examines the way two discussion groups, held by Greek and French migrants respectively, use this platform. The comparative approach raises the question of *habitus* as *praxis* related to situated and ideologically charged socio-historical representations of migration. The online discursive practices of each group suggest the existence of an *illusio* common to their members regarding the relevance and the objective of the discussions. Different forms (*eidos*) of *illusio* seem to operate as different symbolic capitals that shape the groups’ narratives.¹ Following Pierre Bourdieu’s theory, my ultimate assumption is that these divergences are related to the positions that Greece and France hold within the international migration field.

The Theoretical Framework

Introducing the Collective Dimension of the ICT Uses

To understand the significance – but also the originality – of this proposal for ICT studies, it is important to retrace the main approaches that have shaped the analysis of ICT uses until today. This research domain emerged at the intersection of the Theory of Diffusion and Cultural Studies, following the Uses and Gratifications approach (Maigret, 2003, pp. 260–264). More specifically, I will focus on three important traditions that have fueled research directions in this area during the period 1980–1995 (Jauréguiberry & Proulx, 2011, pp. 32–84). The first landmark drew on Everett M. Rogers’ (1962) work on the diffusion of technical innovations and considered uses as activities of consumption. The second was related to the development of the Engineering Sciences, which in the 1940s analysed the design of technical devices and the relationship they establish with humans in terms of ergonomics and use. Within this approach, several scholars (e.g. Akrich, 1987; Bardini & Proulx, 1999; Jouët, 1993; Thevenot, 1991) insisted on the prescribing role of technical devices, in the Foucauldian sense of the term, and placed the concept of “affordance” (Bardini, 1996, 141–142) in the center of their research. Bruno Latour’s work on the sociology of science and technology, which advocates interobjectivity as an analysis frame (Latour, 1994), fell within this posture. A third contribution came from research on media reception, with frequent references to Michel de Certeau’s (1980) “arts of doing”.

Undeniably, these works have shed light on the complexity of the relationship between humans and machines, yet they have their weaknesses and limitations. Francis Jauréguiberry and Serge Proulx (2011) point out the tendency to overestimate the autonomy of users or to consider technologies as exogenous to society, having their own logic, often opposite to that

¹ We will not be delving here into the meaning of “narratives”. There is abundant literature on this topic and a recent, very thorough text to which we can refer by Baroni, 2016.

of individuals. More recent works in this area try to overcome these flaws. Nowadays, ICT uses are considered as “(more or less) brief forms of passages [that agents perform] between different logics of action and different regimes of engagement” (p. 101). In this vein, to understand the uses of communication technologies within contemporary societies, we must first apprehend their underlying logics of action: a logic of integration and recognition in a system of reticular and technological affiliations; a utilitarian logic of gain and power in a system of competition; a detachment and empowerment logic in a system of individualization and subjectivity (Jauréguiberry & Proulx, 2011, p. 106).

However, as Jauréguiberry and Proulx (2011, pp. 96–97) point out, the research often fails to highlight that ICT uses are also rooted in a set of structures: discursive formations, cultural matrices and systems of social relations of power. The latter forge individual routines and generate patterns of use. In this sense, the uses are embedded in an already established history of social and communication practices. Andrew Feenberg (2004, p. 55) notes, for example, that the use of technical devices entails a social significance that opens to cultural and political horizons. Christine Servais (2009, p. 11) argues that the relation between individuals and technologies is adjacent to the articulation between the singular and the collective dimension of mediation, which should also be analyzed. Finally, Jauréguiberry and Proulx (2011, p. 82) remind us that it seems “impossible to imagine a process of appropriation which would be exclusively individual. The integration of technical objects in our daily practices necessarily presumes a set of common experiences among users”.² Jauréguiberry and Proulx highlight that, since the early 2000s, the formation of online “communities” is one of the most significant dynamics in the field of ICT uses (pp. 69–70). When it comes to social networks, Nikos Smyrnaio (2011) notes that:

The sociological and cultural particularities of the public as consumers decisively influence their choice of social networks. The different uses of these networks develop out of these particularities and are therefore also varied. To further demonstrate these behavioural differences, it is interesting to compare social network use across different countries. In Asian countries such as Japan, China and Korea, the main service offered by social networks is online gaming, which is merely complemented by certain aspects of sociality; in India, it's the matrimonial aspect of social networks that ensures their success, especially amongst diaspora Indians. In Brazil, users tend to have a vast network of friends, with an average number of 360 contacts, whereas in France the latter is much more modest with only 95 contacts. Finally, even the amount of time spent connected to online social networks differs across geographical regions. For example, in Europe, connection time varies considerably from country to country with the average time at around six and a half hours a month in Italy, which is almost three hours more than in Germany.

Obviously, the figures given above refer to average trends. Nevertheless, they show that beyond the individual characteristics, the collective factor cannot be ignored; hence the need to introduce here an approach based on the concept of *habitus*.

The Heuristic Value of the Concept of *Habitus*

The heuristic value of Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* lies in the fact that it helps consider online activity beyond its individual dimension. Bourdieu defines the *habitus* as “incorporated history”, “reactivation of the meaning objectified by the institutions”,

² All translations of French texts were conducted by the author.

“standardization of the experience”, “common code”, or ultimately “subjective but not individual system of internalized structures, common patterns of perception, conception and action, which are the condition of any objectification and any perception” (Bourdieu, 1980a, pp. 94–101). This approach puts emphasis on the *habitus* as a set of relatively homogeneous practices and shared meanings within a group. It does not advocate the acceptance of an absolute determinism which leaves no margin for individual creativity; these margins prove, however, limited, often predictable by the *habitus* itself. “Like any art of inventing, the latter can produce an infinite number of practices, relatively predictable (like their corresponding situations), but limited in their diversity” (Bourdieu, 1980a, p. 93).

The idea of the existence of a transcendent referent “above” individual human practices was strongly criticized by Bruno Latour (1994) in his actor-network theory. The author argues that any action is local and always “flatly” arranged, woven into objects, through the mediation they provide:

The fact that an interaction has the contradictory form of a local frame and a muddled network, does not mean, however, that we should leave the solid ground of interactions to move to ‘some next level’, that of society. Both levels exist, yet their connection cannot be demonstrated. (p. 41).

Bruno Latour’s theory on interobjectivation stresses the key role of the materiality of the objects in our relationship with technology. Nevertheless, the defense of a socio-historically situated subject helps not only to humanize this relation but also to maintain its richness and depth. As Olivier Voirol (2013, p. 178) points out, “regardless of how humans are related to non-humans, it is always humans that encounter non-humans to which they endow a sense and a value of use or exchange”. The heuristic value of *habitus* becomes significant here.

The concept of *habitus* was developed by Pierre Bourdieu in the late 1960s to analyze the field of artistic activity, creative genius and revolutionary innovation. It was further explained in *Esquisse d’une théorie de la pratique* [Outline of a theory of practice] (1972) and formalized in *Le sens pratique* [Practical reason. On the theory of action] (1980), where it was mainly associated with social class. Explaining different *habitus* as conditioned by “a particular class of the conditions of existence”, Pierre Bourdieu defines them as

systems of durable and transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is to say, as principles generating and organizing practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aim of purposes or intentional mastery of the operations necessary to achieve them, objectively ‘regulated’ and ‘regular’ without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of an orchestra chief. (Bourdieu, 1980a, pp. 88–89)

Habitus, as “internalization of externality”, is the “grammar” available to individuals to adapt and cope with social life. This grammar is learned, often unconsciously, and is therefore not innate, but its uses may be malleable and allow varying degrees of improvisation. Because of the structuring power of every acquisition (lived and/or learned: history, norms, behaviors, patterns of perception, etc.), *habitus* limits the scope of an idealist subjectivism which focuses on the creative action of the subject. Being a set of possibilities available to individuals within the limitations inherent to the conditions of its production, it also puts into perspective

the power of an absolute structuralism that sees only mechanical causal relationships between the structure and the subject. In *Méditations pascaliennes [Pascalian meditations]* (1997), Pierre Bourdieu refines and clarifies his thoughts:

One of the major functions of the concept of habitus is to prevent two additional errors intrinsic to the scholastic view: on the one hand, the claim that action is the mechanical effect of the constraints imposed by external causes; on the other hand, the teleology, especially within the theory of rational action, that agents act freely, consciously and, as some say, in a utilitarian perspective, ‘with full understanding’, the action being the product of a calculation of chances and profits. (p. 200)

In other words:

Dispositions do not automatically result in specific actions: they are revealed and are accomplished only in appropriate circumstances and in relation to a situation. They may therefore remain in a state of potentiality, just like warlike courage in absence of war. (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 215)

In this frame, considering ICT uses as *habitus* entails raising the larger question of the contribution of Field Theory to the study of communication phenomena.

Field Theory to Study Communication?

Habitus renders human discourse and behavior meaningful, through their inscription in broader socio-historical frameworks, whose logics and functioning influence, in subtle and often unnoticed ways, spontaneous individual practices. *Habitus* carries the trace of the ideologies by which it was forged. The latter are to be found in the various fields of social organization (school, state, church, politics, etc.) and in their articulation.

Developed by Pierre Bourdieu in parallel to that of *habitus*, the concept of field focuses on the position occupied by a social agent, individual or collective, within the system of relations which circumscribes an area of activity. Various *habitus* emerge depending on the different positions occupied by agents in a field. Initially applied in the domain of artistic creation, the field reveals a relevant concept for analyzing power relations and implicit laws that underlie the organization of human societies on professional, political, etc. level.

In this frame, communication processes can be analyzed not only as messages, codes, transfers or simple binary relations, but also in terms of the positions occupied by the production instances or the communicating agents within the social space. These positions reflect – but also engender – different stakes that are contextually situated: “Symbolic activity is socially conditioned” (Champagne & Christin 2004, p. 48). Indeed, the points of view of the social agents

depend, in terms of content and symbolic force, on the position that those who produce them occupy; it is only through a *situs analysis* that these points of view can be reconstructed as such, i.e. as partial views taken from a point (*situs*) within the social space”. (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 264)

Every field generates a *habitus*, based on a set of resources, the “capital” (economic, cultural and social) available to its protagonists. It is characterized by the existence of an *illusio*, i.e. a form of its members’ conviction in its relevance as a social space meaningful for them, both

challenging and engaging. *Habitus* becomes a form of capital, as it embodies unconscious learned patterns of perception and thought, and as “it contributes to varying degrees, to do, undo and redo space” (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 264).

The concepts of field, *illusio* and capital complement the heuristic value of *habitus*. They form a conceptual framework whose implementation in the field of communication technologies and new media can provide new insights. What I will try to show in this work is that the use of digital platforms can – and should – also be understood in terms of the various *habitus* that users develop online, and whose logic, beyond the question of their creative appropriations – as was advocated by Michel De Certeau (1980) and crystallized in his famous formula “arts of doing” – carries the traces of their socio-historical conditioning. These traces are identified in the users’ underlying *illusio* regarding the meaning of their online activity. My hypothesis is that the latter functions as a form of symbolic capital, which is related, among other things, to the articulation and the hierarchies of the international migration field within the international geopolitical sphere.

To empirically demonstrate this thesis, my study will adopt a comparative approach between LinkedIn discussion groups held by Greek and French migrants.³ More specifically, a *situs analysis* will show that when these expatriates come together online on a professional networking site, their practices are not the same. Their divergences can be apprehended based on the relation that each group has with migration. This relation proves to be historically and politically shaped and functions as a form of symbolic capital, which impacts the presumed objective of each group and the contents published.

A Case Study to Illustrate the Theoretical Proposal

Understudying LinkedIn Migrant Groups

One of the characteristics of social media is “homophily” (Siapera, 2012, p. 198). The term refers to the tendency of these platforms to bring together individuals who resemble each other in terms of tastes, beliefs, behaviors, etc. giving rise to virtual spaces called “communities” based on “weak social ties” (Granovetter, 1973). Members of these online gatherings do not necessarily know each other (Cardon, 2011), but achieve, through networking, a better flow of content (Mercklé, 2004, pp. 47–49). Obviously, this type of activity is not unique to social media sites; long before the arrival of the latter, several forums and other participatory platforms were grounds for the negotiation of collective identities (Byrne, 2008). According to Pierre Bourdieu, homophily reflects, in general, the agents’ efforts to maintain or reproduce a state of the social world or a field allowing the expression, the demonstration or the update of their dispositions:

The agent tries to update the potential inscribed in his body in the form of capacities and dispositions shaped by the external conditions. [. . .] This is one of the major principles [. . .] when it comes to daily choices of objects or people: guided by sympathies and antipathies, affections and aversions, likes and dislikes, people build an environment in which they feel ‘at home’ and where they can fulfill this absolute accomplishment of their desires called happiness”. (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 216)

³ Parts of this work have been published in Koukoutsaki-Monnier, 2015, but within a different theoretical scope, as to illustrate a theoretical model regarding the symbolic constructions of nationhood.

LinkedIn groups are presented as places of public visibility, networking and content monitoring. They result from the desire to anticipate the platform's uses and to increase the time spent on the site. In this sense, they promote the "informational capitalism" that lies at the core of the participatory web, insofar as it is the contributors-members of groups that produce content for these platforms and increase their economic value. At the same time, they carry with them the promise, but also the paradox, of the emancipation of users as "empowerment", "ability to act" and "power to act" (Proulx *et al.*, 2011). Eric Delcroix (2012, pp. 83–84) defines LinkedIn groups as spaces generally related to the professional realm (industry, entrepreneurship, professional association, skill or job), based on specific common interests, where professionals and experts publish content, ask for advice, offer or seek employment and "network" with others. Commonly seen as ancillary services of this kind of platform, whose main interest lie in the creation of individual profiles (Mésangeau & Poveda, 2013), LinkedIn groups are nevertheless considered by some experts as Web 2.0's heart in terms of online professional strategy (Delcroix, 2012, p. 82).

Like in other social media discussion forums, the contents published on LinkedIn groups are not homogeneous. The latter include publication of one's personal skills, "data curation" (sharing of journal articles, study results, career opportunities, etc.) and debates. Nevertheless, despite the hybrid nature of these spaces, argued exchanges occupy an important place. The display of the participants' names and status reinforces the deliberative aspect of the interactions. Discussants generally respect a kind of netiquette avoiding personal quarrels and insults, contrary to what often happens in anonymous forums (Amossy, 2011). In this sense, it is also possible to consider these collective spaces as public spheres in the traditional, Habermasian, sense of the term.

In the frame of the platform's objectives, at the intersection of a utilitarian and an integration logic (Jauréguiberry & Proulx, 2011, p. 114), LinkedIn migrant groups rarely espouse private goals (i.e. maintaining emotional ties with family and friends), for which other platforms exist (e.g. Facebook). They are supposed to pursue professional aims marked by the importance of the social capital and impregnated by the logic of personal branding. To paraphrase Bourdieu (1980b, p. 2), LinkedIn migrants are supposed to join LinkedIn discussion groups in quest of a set of actual or potential resources linked to the possession of a durable relationship network of more or less institutionalized acquaintanceships and acknowledgments.

Indeed, the importance of e-networking for migrant populations has been clearly demonstrated by Mihaela Nedelcu (2009). Drawing on the case of the mobility of Romanian professionals, this researcher pointed to the centrality of reticular processes in the accumulation of migratory resources. She showed that social network is in the basis of the economic, social, political or cultural mechanisms that guide migration trajectories, professional projects, exchanges and material and symbolic circulations between migration poles (Nedelcu, 2009, p. 167). LinkedIn migrant groups fit into this logic: groups according to the place of origin, according to the place of installation, according to the presumed identity of their members. Here follow some examples: *British expatriate networking group*, *British expats in the USA*, *Expats in Germany*, *Canadian German expatriates*, *German Irish expatriates*, etc. Just typing the abbreviation "expat"⁴ on the internal search engine reveals more than a thousand groups.

⁴ For this paper, I use the terms "expatriation" and "migration" with no semantic distinction. Ambiguities exist, however, as for their meaning and connotations (Koch, 2013).

Comparing LinkedIn Migrant Groups in Terms of their Underlying *Illusio*

The present paper draws its main thesis on the results of a comparative study between two LinkedIn migrant groups: in the first, migrants are of Greek origin, in the second, their origin is French. Both groups are “private”, i.e. not accessible to non-members. This is the reason for which I prefer, in order to respect the privacy of their members, neither to reveal their exact designations nor to provide quotes from their participants. Indeed, Guillaume Latzko-Toth and Serge Proulx (2013, p. 41) point out the problematic distinction between “public” and “private” sphere when it comes to online discussion forums. The authors highlight that discussants are not always aware of the degree to which they are publicly exposed when exchanging on the Internet and point out that a sudden visibility of such groups, even within a scholar work such a scientific article, amounts to “turn the spotlight on what was in the darkness” (Latzko-Toth & Proulx, 2013, p. 42).

About 200 “threads of discussion” for each group were extracted and registered in June 2013, covering the period of approximately a year. They were first examined in relation to the practices and profiles of the discussants (the roll-out of the discussions, the types and the intensity of the participants’ engagement, the gender and the geographic location of the latter), then in terms of the messages conveyed (speech acts and referents). A content analysis including a categorical semantic approach (L. Bardin, 1977) was a main part of the project. For the present paper, which aims at demonstrating the heuristic value of the Bourdieusian approach when it comes to ICT uses, I will only present results that are relevant to the article’s main point and refrain from thoroughly displaying the project, which goes beyond the comparison of these two groups as it is presented here.

The Greek group, established in 2007 by a Greek expatriate, aims at “bringing together Greek communities around the world and exchanging business opportunities”. The discussions are not visible to non-members, and admission is granted on request. Three administrators (two of them located in Greece, the third abroad) are reported. On the 4th of February 2013, the group had 4,993 members. Most discussants display a location in Greece (see Figure 1).

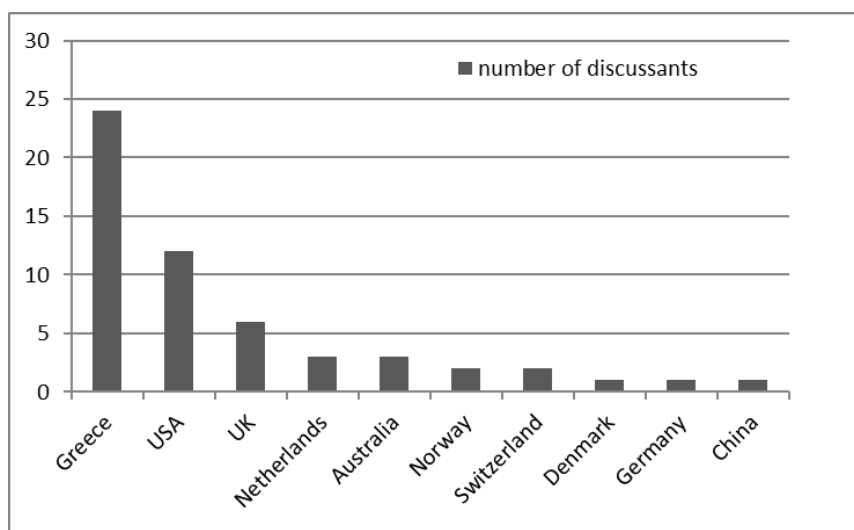


Figure 1: The geographic localization of those who initiate discussions within the Greek group.

The French group announces itself as a non-profit network, created in 2010, which aims at addressing French expatriates to provide “community services and media” and “facilitate the

expatriation”. On the 4th of February 2013, it had 1,089 members. Almost have of the participants display a location in France (see Figure 2).

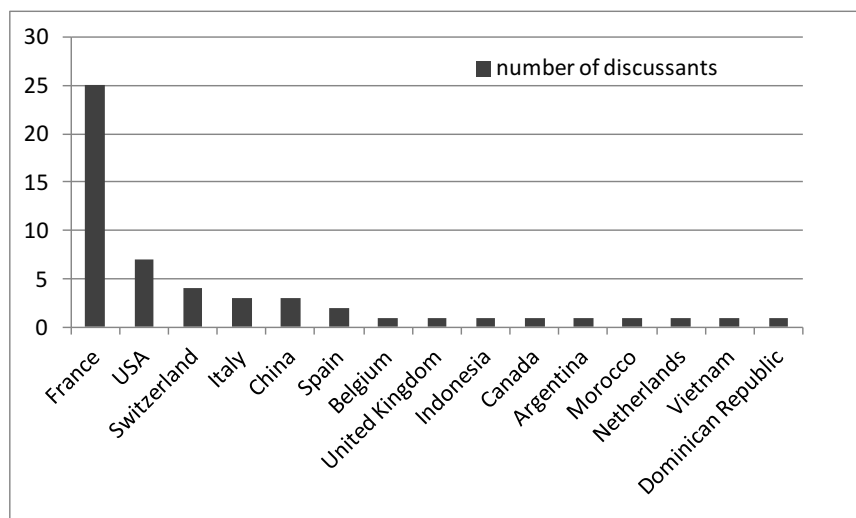


Figure 2: The geographic localization of those who initiate discussions within the French group.

Analysis of the Greek group reveals that Greece is the main referent in the discussions (Figure 3); and referring to Greece entails exchanging about the Greek crisis. The group becomes a field where participants share the latest news, display their knowledge in economic, historical, political, etc. issues, provide analyzes and forecasts, agree or argue (more or less) politely on what seems to have become the great “trauma” of contemporary Greeks. They seek to identify those responsible for the crisis, its victims, and its consequences for themselves and for others. They point to the irresponsible governance of the country during the recent decades, but also to the role of international organizations (EU, IMF, etc.) and the geopolitical stakes in which a small country like Greece is trapped. They return to the past and question the very meaning of “Greekness”, the legacy of ancient Greece, Byzantium, etc. They criticize the mentality of an inhuman materialism and individualism that seems to have transformed contemporary Greece into a cold society. Sometimes they compare themselves to other countries, questioning the inevitable hierarchies built and lived between different societal groups. They finally raise the issue of the role or even the duty of the Greek diaspora and explore the horizons of action available to them.

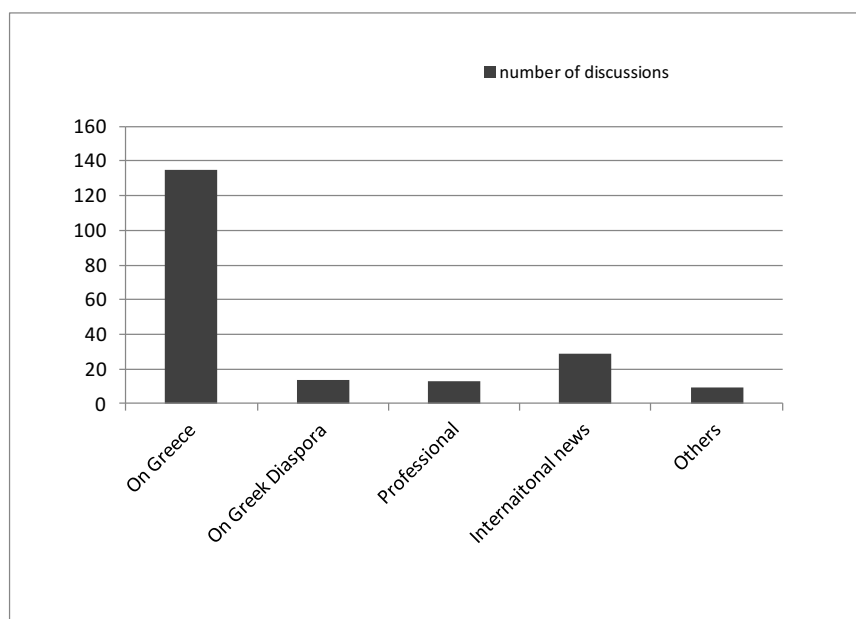


Figure 3: The referents of the discussions within the Greek group.

The main referent within the French group, the issue that unquestionably dominates the discussions, is that of expatriation (Figure 4), addressed both in its practical, functionalist aspects, as well as in terms of its identity repercussions –and discussed almost exclusively in French (only 10 posts are written in English). Some lexical fields are significant: “shock”, “risk”, “hardship”, “investment”, “cultural”, “tax”, “tax exile”, “mobility”, “experience”, “profit”, “added value”, “prepared”, “coming back”, “optimize”, etc. The use of the platform as a support to promote business is much more pronounced than in the Greek group; some participants explicitly appear as specialized consultants in expatriation.

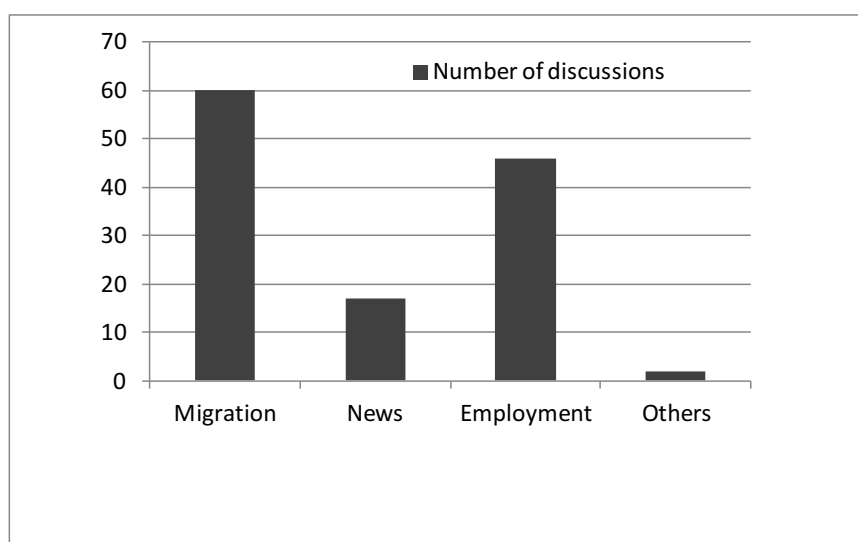


Figure 4: The referents of the discussions within the French group.

Concerns about self-image are not formulated in the same way between Greeks and French. For the former, the question is the image of the country, tarnished by the current crisis. For the latter, it is the direct contact with the Other, on the background of the French colonial past, which colors the discussions. The pride of the “nation” and the “origins” still transpire through the contents published, but France is not an issue to debate; it does not structure the narrative construction that underlies the discussants’ exchanges, as it is in the case of the

Greek group. It is the human being, the migrant, who is positioned at the center of the narrative; it is the experience of migration that builds the main story. For Greeks, the need is to assert membership; for French, it is about exploring an individual experience.

The fact that Greek and French migrants perceive differently the objective of an “ethnic” group on a professional social media may be linked – and it is this thesis that I defend *in fine* in this paper – to the *illusio* that unites them and renders their participation meaningful. The use of the platform is thus conditioned, beyond the technical, economic and social prescriptions of the device, by a certain belief about what constitutes the *relevant question* for the group, the stake of the exchange:

To begin to argue, one must be convinced that arguments worth the discussion, and must believe, in any case, in the merits of the exchange. The *illusio* is not an explicit principle, one of those theories that are raised to be defended, but an action, one of those routinized things we do, because they are always done like that [. . .] When asked about the reasons for their visceral involvement in the game, the participants have ultimately nothing to answer and the arguments that can be invoked in such cases are merely *post festum* rationalizations intended to justify, to oneself as well as to others, an unjustifiable investment. (Bourdieu 1997, p. 147)

My argument in this paper is that the representations and patterns of thought that determine how Greek and French migrants invest a professional social media should be associated to distinct *habitus*. Indeed, between France and Greece, the relation to expatriation is not the same: neither in the past nor today; neither as to the reasons for the departure, nor in terms of destination countries. This relation was forged through history and continues to be reproduced in everyday life. It entails the construction of a certain self-image, the image of one’s native country or country of origin, of one’s membership (“national”, cultural, etc.) and of the Other. Greeks and French join online migrant groups in a differentiated manner because they are impregnated with these socio-historically determined representations, which are associated to the position that their countries hold in the international migration field.

Promises and Pitfalls of the Analytical Framework

Did You Say “Disposition”?

Analyzing online practices in terms of “dispositions” forging *habitus* entails focusing on the *modus operandi* of the social “agents” (Pierre Bourdieu rejects the term “actors”, see Bourdieu, 2013, p. 81). It means examining the way they seem to have incorporated several *doxa* and to have developed a specific *ethos*. However, analyzing online migrant practices in terms of “dispositions” may sound as an *oxymoron*. Migrant populations are supposed, by definition, to incarnate the hybridity that characterizes contemporary societies: to what extent can the behavior of a Greek or a French migrant be attributed to his/her alleged “Greekness” or “Frenchness”? We can reply to this question by arguing that adherence to an “ethnic” group, as a conscious and rational individual act implies a certain acceptance of the collective identity the group claims. According to social psychology (Jacquemain *et al.*, 2005–06), it is not because individuals can combine various belongings that the intensity of them is weaker. Furthermore, we should not forget that the constitution of the groups of our empirical study is far from being purely “transnational”. As shown before, in both cases examined, most of the discussions are initiated by individuals located in the country of origin (Greece and France, respectively). Far from generating non-territorial spaces, the platform favors a rather concentric organization of migrant populations. The role of the center reveals to be important

because it establishes the dynamics of each group and fixes its agenda. Of course, other discussants can significantly influence the flow and the content of the messages conveyed. However, their activities seem to be “isolated cases”.

Has the center the right to speak on behalf of migrants? Isn't there an ethical issue? Indeed, the center may not be legitimate to speak for them, but it can *address* itself to them. Those who initiate and carry the discussions function, in many ways, as “leaders” in the sense given to the term by the anthropologist Christian Geffray (1997). According to this author, the words of the leaders are not autonomous speeches but should be understood within the community they address:

The leader speaks and what he says, the object of his words, cannot be regarded as irrelevant to the public around him [. . .]. The leader [. . .] must be able to offer his voice and develop his speech, so that the members of the population that he addresses will recognize, in one way or another, the expression of a point of view they share”. (Geffray, 1997, p. 5)

In this frame, “disposition” is linked to *habitus*. It reflects what is significant for the discussants – though not necessarily for all members – of the group. Our last concern will be to demonstrate how, in this study, online migrants' *habitus* are associated to their countries' position within the international migration field.

Linking *Habitus* to the Field

The concept of migration field, inspired by Pierre Bourdieu's theory, has been developed in geography. According to Gildas Simon:

The migration field can be defined as a transnational space that unites – regardless of their distance – places of origin, of transit and of installation. It refers to a space structured by stable and regular human migrations as well as by other flows (material, ideational) induced by this movement. The usefulness of this analytical tool is that it applies to all geographic and cultural combinations, and that this social construction is characterized by its fluidity and its potential for spatial recompositions, while maintaining long term stability. This concept has the advantage of being located at the articulation of the concept of field, whose generative fertility was shown by Pierre Bourdieu, and the concept of migration space, understood as a social space produced by the actors of the geographical scope. (2008, p. 15)

Migration field is a “space under tension because it is invested as a carrier of migrant hopes, utopias and myths, imaginaries deeply rooted in collective mentalities, in the shifting borders between identity and otherness” (Simon, 2008, pp. 15–16). It carries the symbolic charge of the act of crossing political boundaries that remain more than ever a reality in a world inhabited by security concerns, as well as issues related to social mobility (Simon, 2008 p. 19). The social migration field, as a product of history subtended by the economic, political, etc. imbalances which determine the flow of people on a global scale, shapes, through the trace it leaves on the public institutional policies – including State and school – the way the members of a society understand their relation to themselves and to others. In this sense, it becomes symbolic capital, as “transfiguration of a balance of power into meaning” (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 347). Understanding the migration *habitus* developed in two different societies entails questioning the way each of them addresses, through its history and by its

institutions, the issue of migration. Inevitably, it involves investigating the role that these societies hold in the migration field.

In 2012, according to data provided by the French government, 1,611,054 French were officially registered at French consulates outside the country (which counts over 66 million habitants), including 42.2 percent of “bi-nationals”. Cédric Duchêne-Lacroix (2005) highlights the bias that the French system of consular registrations engenders, but also notes that, from a historical standpoint, French emigration proves “numerically small compared to many other European countries, which, owing to several demographic and economic crises, have fueled strong migration flows to America and within the continent” (Duchêne-Lacroix, 2005, 847). French emigration also proves to be limited compared to the waves of immigration that France, traditionally an “immigrant country in a continent of emigrants” (Blanc-Chaléard, 2001, p. 9), has encountered.

On the contrary, Greek diaspora, one of the oldest in the world, refers, according to 2009 data provided by the General Secretariat for Greeks Abroad, to five million people, which corresponds to almost 50 percent of the population of the current Greek State (around 11 million). It spreads all over the globe except for a large part of the Asian continent (east of the Middle East), with more than half of it in North America (Bruneau, 2004). These calculations are of course quite generous to the extent that they try to take account of the descendants of Greeks from mixed marriages. However, Greek diaspora has undeniably a long history. Over the years, the country’s several structural problems and its economic and political dependency on the “great powers” have fueled a rather idealistic rhetoric of migration. From the 1980s, with the improvement of the living conditions in Greece, the migratory movement declined considerably and the rhetoric of “extramural success” relatively faded. Nevertheless, the crisis in which the country has collapsed since 2010 seems to have revived both. Since 2011, some speak of “exodus” and “brain drain”, related to the problem of unemployment in Greece, which peaked in 2012 and continues (in 2012, unemployment averaged 55 percent in youth under 25 years and 21 percent for the general population [OCDE 2013]).

In this sense, in France, a country of immigration by definition and former colonial power, the relation to migration is not the same as in Greece, traditionally country of emigration, seen even by some as a “crypto-colony” of Western Europe and the United States (Herzfeld, 2013, p. 492). It would thus be illusory to ignore the imbalances of the migration field and the way they are reflected in the “common sense”, the narratives that share the members of a society, transformed into “culture”, “webs of significance” (Geertz, 1973), and symbolic capital. The latter forge the collective *habitus* in the form of “schemes of perception, thought and action” based on a certain definition of the world, or a way of looking at it by making it “exist as a relevant issue by reference to a particular way of questioning reality” (Bourdieu, 1980a, p. 89).

In this frame, a society’s relation to migration is to be apprehended in connection with the position it occupies in the migration field, which is subject to domination rules and games within the political and economic international sphere. To summarize, we can advance the thesis that the topography of the (international) migration field, both in its diachronic (historical) and synchronic form, affect the symbolic constitution of national fields (in terms of narratives of self-image, relation to others, etc.). The latter shape – to varying degrees of course, according to their historical temporality – the *habitus* of social agents, which in turn reproduce or restructure the immigration field.

Conclusion

Understanding ICT uses through the prism of *habitus* is the challenge that inspired this article. It led us to examine how Greek and French migrants invest in a professional online networking platform, because of their own relationship to migration. I tried to show that this relation is socio-historically determined, related to the positions occupied by Greece and France in the international migration field. These positions generate representations and narratives that operate as dispositions and symbolic capital for each group. Obviously, linking the micro-social to the macro-social level, that is, trying to explain behaviors through their social and historical inscriptions, may prove misleading, lead to shortcuts, reproduce stereotypes. However, the need for *historicizing* collective behaviors seems to be an essential prerequisite for their understanding. In this sense, Pierre Bourdieu's Field theory is of heuristic value as it helps to analyze communication processes bearing in mind the time and space in which they are realized.

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Corresponding author: Angeliki Monnier

Contact email: angeliki.monnier@univ-lorraine.fr

**The Migrant Protagonists in Ignacio del Moral's *La mirada del hombre oscuro*
and José Moreno Arenas' *La playa***

Eugenia Charoni
Flagler College, St. Augustine, USA

Abstract

The constant movement of populations in search of a better standard of living is a phenomenon that has always defined the human condition. In recent decades, Europe has been facing a relentless migratory wave that has been transforming its social, political, cultural and economic dynamics. Spain has experienced the impact of this movement by accepting migrants from Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe. In an effort to better portray the migratory situation in the Iberian Peninsula, Spanish playwrights have been staging characters who are either torn by stereotypes confronting the unknown *Other* or who turn their backs to the cruel reality of drowned bodies.

Ignacio del Moral in *La Mirada del hombre oscuro* (1991) and José Moreno Arenas in *La playa* (2004) endow their Spanish characters with sharp and provocative language while at the same time questioning their assumptions regarding the *Other*. In both plays, migrant characters remain silent, immobile and unable to react to or communicate with the Spaniards. This paper aims to discuss the silence and immobility of migrant characters and portray how they actually become an essential point of reference and eventually overpower the Spanish protagonists. José Moreno Arenas and Ignacio del Moral invite the audience/reader to reflect upon the accuracy of certain judgments toward the *Other*, to reexamine the way in which we perceive ourselves and the ones around us, and to gain a deeper understanding of human commonalities.

Keywords: immigration, Spain, silence, drowning, beach, Africa, theater, stereotypes

Introduction

The movement of migrant populations to the Iberian Peninsula has been of special interest in Spanish theater since the end of 1980's (Doll, 2013, p. 17). Spain became a member of the European Union on 1 January 1986; that integration had, by most accounts, a positive impact on Spain's economy. Numerous employment opportunities attracted immigrants from Africa, Latin America and European countries who came with the expectation of finding a job and a better life. As seen in Figure 1, in January of 2001 there were 1.3 million registered foreigners, while in 2010, 5.7 million were registered, a number that represents an increase of 319%. According to the National Center for Statistics, Spain's migrant population went from a 2% share of the country's population in 2002 to approximately 12% in 2011. Figure 2 depicts the migrant population's countries of origin as of 2012. The largest number of European immigrants comes from Romania. Morocco is the African country with the most immigrant representation because of its proximity to Spain. As expected, due to common language and religion, there is also a large representation of Latin Americans, with the most numerous being citizens of Ecuador followed by those of Colombia.



Figure 1: Immigration in Spain 2001- 2010.¹



Figure 2: Immigrants' countries of origin (2012).²

In the two plays to be discussed in this presentation, *La Mirada del hombre oscuro* written by Ignacio del Moral (1957 –) in 1991 and *La playa* written by José Moreno Arenas (1954 –) in

¹ <http://www.ine.es/>

² <http://migracioneseuropeas.com/inmigrantes-en-espana-de-la-acogida-a-la-comunion>

2004, the migrant characters are Africans. They either do not speak at all or they speak in their native language, which does not allow them to communicate with the Spaniards. In both cases the Spanish characters describe the immigrants as dangerous, uneducated and poor in moral values. This rejection results from an ongoing fear of the *Other*. The Spaniards are not only unable to speak the language of *Other*, but they also hesitate to come closer to get to know them better. Their attitude is historically justified. During most part of the twentieth century and until 1975, the year when General Franco passed away, Spain was not attracting immigrants due to its political and economic situation, which means that Spaniards were not exposed to people of other ethnicities. The migrant wave forced Spanish society to reconsider a homogeneity that until that time was actively promoted by the Franco regime (Doll, 2013, p. 19). Initially the Spanish reacted by adopting ethnocentric attitudes and creating stereotypes that led to racist and xenophobic public narratives. The presence of new ethnicities in the Iberian Peninsula inevitably led to radical changes triggered by interracial relationships, cultural and linguistic influences and, above all, new ways of understanding or rejecting the differences that the “Other” brought to the social fabric.

This paper aims to draw attention to the silent migrant characters who become victims of unfair and false accusations and are not given the right to speak and defend themselves. From a humanistic point of view, the literarily or metaphorically silent African immigrants become the plays’ indispensable point of reference, as they come to epitomize the entire migrant population. Moreover, and despite their silence, they explicitly stand up to all types of discrimination and implicitly invite readers and audience to evaluate the Spaniards’ spiteful and condescending comments.

Migratory Policies

To better understand the social context within which the plays were written, it is imperative to outline the Spanish government’s actions upon the arrival of migrant populations. The first initiative was taken in 1994 when the Cabinet Council (Consejo de Ministros) approved a plan called *Plan para la integración social de los inmigrantes* (Plan for the social integration of immigrants). Its aim was to assess the constant movement of immigrants and help them integrate into Spanish society. There was not a specific budget to fund the plan, and all activities were monitored by the *Observatorio Permanente de Migraciones* (Permanent Observatory of Migrations) and the *Foro para la Integración Social* (Forum for Social Integration).³

In 2000 the Interior Ministry presented the plan *Programa común de regulación y coordinación de la extranjería e inmigración*, (Common Program for the Regulation and Coordination of Immigration Policy), better known as *Plan Greco*, based on the following four principles: first, the migratory wave should be seen holistically as part of a global phenomenon, one that was welcome in Spain; second, to promote the integration of foreign residents with measures such as improvement of the procedures for citizenship, equal rights of employment, care for vulnerable immigrants and resistance against any type of discriminatory, racist and xenophobic actions; third, to monitor the migrant wave to guarantee the balanced coexistence of immigrants and Spaniards in the Iberian Peninsula; and fourth, continue the system of protection for refugees and displaced populations.⁴ In September 23, 2011, the Spanish Ministers’ Cabinet approved the *Plan Estratégico de*

³ Source: https://elpais.com/diario/1994/12/03/espana/786409207_850215.html

⁴ Source: <https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2001-8154>

Ciudadanía e Integración (Strategic Plan for Citizenship and Integration), simply called PEI.⁵ Based on the launching of programs and informative seminars for the protection of human rights, the program focused on equality, proscribed discrimination and fostered citizenship and intercultural understanding.

In September 27, 2013, and in an effort to overcome the recession, Spanish authorities implemented the *International Mobility Section of the Entrepreneurial Support and Internationalization Act*; it was amended in 2015 and is currently in effect. Its main objective is to attract professionals and highly skilled immigrants to “increase the competitiveness of the Spanish economy and the ability of Spanish companies to compete in a global environment”. This “transformed Spain's management of immigration . . . [as] . . . in previous years, migration had focused on meeting the needs of a labor-intensive job market, often unqualified.” The plan has proven vital for the Spanish economy, as “the investment generated by all categories over the next five years is expected to reach EUR 694 million and generate around 12,685 new jobs (8,581 direct and 4,104 indirect).”⁶

The budget for the implementation of above plans is of great interest. From the 308.5 million euros that were earmarked in 2009, the allocation dropped to 166 million euros in 2010 as the result of the economic crisis. In 2014 it was 139.89 million euros, as the economy was still affected by the crisis, and for 2017 it will be increased to 373.35 million euros. It is estimated to reach 428.35 million euros thanks to funds from the European Union.⁷

Plot Synopses

In *La Mirada del hombre oscuro*, del Moral situates the action in a beach in the south of Spain. It is in southern Spain because African immigrants set off from Morocco to reach the Iberian Peninsula by boat, since the distance that separates Spain from Morocco is only fourteen kilometers. In the play a Spanish family of four, the parents and their two kids, looks for shells on a beach. Their daughter encounters Ombasi, an African immigrant who arrived in Spain by sea, illegally. Alone (a friend who accompanied him drowned), tired and afraid, he hopes for the Spaniards' mercy and help. He talks to the family to explain his situation, but because he speaks in his native language communication fails, leaving him practically mute. From that point on constant misunderstandings, false stereotypes and misleading beliefs deepen the cultural and linguistic gap between the two parties. By the end of the play, fear conquers the Spanish family. The Father refuses to allow Ombasi in his car and acts violently against him. Ombasi reacts the same way confused by the Father's erratic behavior. At the last scene the dead body of his drowned friend appears on stage, foresees the future and informs the Daughter about each characters' fate. As a result of the fight, the Father is blinded in one eye. His wife and kids will abandon him. Ombasi will be taken by the Guardia Civil and will die sometime later of pneumonia. The “other side” that was so promising and in which, according to the immigrant, nobody would be at risk of death by pneumonia due to the high quality of health care, will be the one to condemn him to death.

⁵ http://extranjeros.empleo.gob.es/es/destacados/Open_to_talent.pdf

⁶ http://extranjeros.empleo.gob.es/es/destacados/Report_on_the_Implementation_of_the_International_Mobility_Section.pdf.

⁷ <http://www.laregioninternacional.com/articulo/espana/presupuesto-secretaria-general-inmigracion-emigracion-asciende-373-35-millones-euros-2017/20170427133827252475.html>

Although Ombasi speaks in his native language, Ignacio del Moral writes the text, including Ombasi's lines, in Spanish, as this is the only way for the readers to understand the plot. However, in the movie *Bwana* (1996), which is based on the play, Ombasi indeed speaks in his native language. This helps the viewer to better sense the frustration and misunderstandings generated by the language barrier and become compassionate for Ombasi, whom the Spanish family sees as an intruder and predator.

In the one-act play *La Playa*, Moreno Arenas also chooses a beach in southern Spain as a backdrop. The play is the soliloquy of a Spanish beachgoer apparently speaking to a motionless African immigrant who lays on the beach in silence, although he never shows up on stage. The Spaniard intends to initiate a dialogue with him, “dirige la palabra a alguien que-se supone-descansa sobre la arena” [speaks to someone who is – supposedly – resting on the sand] (Moreno Arenas, 2014, n.p.). The beachgoer does not know that he is an immigrant that, as the end of the play reveals, has drowned. Despite the lack of response, the Spaniard starts a long soliloquy, a “perorate” [boring speech] in which he gradually unfolds his bitter sentiments towards immigrants.

In a provocative manner, he insists that none of his accusations have anything racist or xenophobic: “Yo no soy racista” [I am not a racist] he repeats over and over. Using the same false stereotypes and calling the immigrants uneducated, dangerous and unfit for Spain, the beachgoer gradually reveals surprising personal information. An immigrant himself, he left Spain for a country somewhere in Europe many decades ago, and he claims to have been a person of good quality, unlike today's immigrants. This is a reference to the massive migratory wave of Spaniards in the twentieth century toward other countries in Western Europe and in Latin America. Soler-Espiauba explains that during the twentieth century more than seven million people left Spain to look for a job and they never returned.⁸

“A lo largo del siglo XX más de siete millones de personas salieron de España para buscar trabajo y muchas no regresaron más.” (Soler-Espiauba, 2004, p. 7)

He respected the country to which he went because he did not enter it illegally at night and he did not steal anybody's job. His soliloquy is a direct attack against every immigrant, the result of the superficial understanding he has of the *Other* and what this entails.

Motifs and Themes

In the theater, language is unmistakably the key means of communication between characters. It is also the means for characters to give detailed information about other characters or about themselves, undertaking an explicit self-presentation (Pfister, 2000, p. 124). The characters' speech in *La Playa* and *La Mirada del hombre oscuro* indeed reveals not only details about themselves but also about the other characters. The theatrical gambit, in both plays, rests upon the effort to give each immigrant character a collective implication, an ecumenical quality that will touch the unconscious of the Spanish audience. As such, the “other characters” refer collectively only to one core character, the *Other*, one that will represent the whole migrant body of people that fled their countries looking for a better future. The expressive function of speech needs to be understood as a mutual exchange of information

⁸ For further information, refer to the documentary *El tren de memoria* (2005), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8xgeGuPmhTs>

based on the same language. This is not the case of speech in *La Mirada del hombre oscuro* because Ombasi, by not speaking Spanish, cannot be understood nor can he communicate with others. Speech is a one-way activity in *La Playa* as well, as it is a soliloquy.

There are cases where the inadequacy of language – its occasional role as *impediment* to communication – can be overcome through the use of non-verbal devices that can be informative in nature (Pfister, 2000, p. 120). Yet even those same non-verbal devices fail in *La mirada del hombre oscuro*, as Ombasi tries to explain who he is and what he wants with gestures but is not understood. Those non-verbal devices are not operative in *La Playa* either, as the drowned immigrant lies lifeless on the beach, is never on stage with the Spaniard and is never part of the action. It is for these reasons that both immigrants remain practically mute. Their silence provokes empathy in the reader and audience, who immediately sense the injustice that will fall upon two people who are basically unable to react.

Furthermore, the fact that neither José Moreno Arenas nor Ignacio del Moral gives these migrant characters an actual voice derives from their stated objectives in writing these plays. Del Moral explains that it was a mixture of personal concerns and questions that led him to write the play.

. . . en el caso de *La mirada del hombre oscuro*, hubo un detonante concreto que, con preocupaciones y preguntas que ya bullían en mi cerebro, me llevó a componer esta fábula de la incomunicación (del Moral, 2007, p. 11).

[. . . in the case of *The Gaze of the Dark Man*, there was a concrete determinant that, along with the anxieties and questions that swirled in my mind, led me to compose this fable based on the lack of communication.]

Moreno Arenas tries hard not to show his analytical standpoint regarding the events he depicts, allowing his characters a wide berth. Thus, he seems to be simply depicting events from a distance. The idea behind this strategy is to give the sense that the characters are autonomous agents not directly under the playwright's control. Accordingly, his protagonists seem independent, rich and influential, truly lacking in compassion, in sympathy and understanding. Secondary characters are also given a degree of autonomy: these are people of low socio-economical class, rejected socially, weak, innocent and needful, like the drowned immigrant.

Se concretan en protagonistas poderosos, ricos, influyentes . . . que originan en el receptor rechazo y animadversión. Frente a ellos se ubican los miserables sociales, quienes nos provocan, si no afecto, sí una relativa atracción o cierta complicidad. Este grupo lo constituyen los mendigos, los desheredados, los inválidos, los inocentes, incluso algún cadáver, o sea, los necesitados de lo que sea. (Moreno Arenas, 2004, p. 15)

[They are embodied in powerful, rich, influential protagonists . . . that produce feelings of rejection and animosity in the audience. Facing them are the social outcasts who provoke, if not affection, an uncertain attraction or sense of complicity. This group consists of the beggars, the disinherited, the invalids, the innocent, even a corpse, that is to say, those in need.]

Manifestly, the lack of verbal communication or the failure of the attempt to communicate facilitates the playwrights' intention to point out western society's unpreparedness to dialogue with the *Other*. The false accusations against the immigrants call for further discussion not only because of their bold content, but also because of the immigrants' reactions. But does this reaction exist? Do Ombasi and the drowned African immigrant defend themselves? Do they have a chance to confront the Spaniards and present their own point of view? It is only just that the accused to have access to proper defense, but is this the case in these two plays? And what about the real world? Do immigrants have a voice for themselves or do they remain silent like the characters in these plays? A closer look at the plays along with survey data could answer these questions, although the findings can only be indicative of the situation and not necessarily representative of attitudes, reactions and behaviors that depend on each individual and in no way portray a society holistically.

In *La mirada del hombre oscuro* the Spanish family confronts Ombasi with suspicion, fear and bias. When Ombasi approaches them telling in his native language that he is hungry, the Father and Mother refer to him as “*éste*” [this one].

El padre: (*llama a la madre.*) ¡Dori! ¿Queda merienda?

La madre: ¿Para qué?

El padre: Para dársela a éste.

La madre: ¿Y para qué le vas a dar a éste la merienda? (del Moral, 2007, p. 25).

[The Father – (*calling The Mother*) Dori! Are there any snacks left?

The Mother – What for?

The Father – To give to this one.

The Mother – And why are you going to give this one the snacks?]

The word *éste* is pejorative and reflects the couple's already negative disposition toward Ombasi and, consequently, the *Other*. Ombasi in turn tries in vain to tell them that he is hungry, introducing himself in his native language and using the non-verbal device of tapping on his chest: (*Se señala el pecho*). “Ombasi, me llamo Ombasi” (Del Moral, 2007, p. 22). Later on he continues:

Ombasi. Tengo hambre... (*Se vuelve a señalar el pecho*). Ombasi. He venido nadando. Tengo hambre. Mi compañero se ha ahogado. Está muerto. (del Moral, 2007, p. 23).

[Ombasi. I'm hungry . . . (*He again taps on his chest*). Ombasi. I swam here. I'm hungry. My buddy has drowned. He's dead.]

His effort to communicate to the Spanish couple his basic need for food and the fact that a human being has drowned is unsuccessful. Both Spaniards are overwhelmed by the mechanical failure of their car and the appearance of someone who, according to their son, wants to eat their daughter.

Ombasi: La niña se ha caído, pero no es nada. Tengo hambre. Me llamo Ombasi. (*Para hacerse entender, señala a la niña, se señala a sí (mismo, hace gesto de comer)*).

El niño: ¡Dice que se quiere comer a la niña! (Del Moral, 2007, p. 23).

[Ombasi – The girl fell down, but she’s OK. I am hungry. My name is Ombasi. (*To make himself understood, he points to the girl, points to himself, and gestures as if he were eating.*)

The Boy – He says that he wants to eat the girl!]

This begins the miscommunication that characterizes the exchanges and that Del Moral accentuates with humor, as the above scene shows. When the Father desperately tries to find the missing spark plug to start the car and lead with his family away from Ombasi’s supposed threat, the Mother refers to Ombasi as “he”. Although several times Ombasi has stated his name, no one has made an effort to understand what he was saying. The Mother also accuses Ombasi of having stolen the spark plug: “A lo mejor la tiene él” (Del Moral, 2007, p. 29). When the Father tries to communicate with Ombasi and explain that he is looking for a spark plug, the Mother in a diminishing way, asks her husband if he really thinks that Ombasi is going to understand him: “Pero, tú crees que te va entender?” (Del Moral, 2007, p. 29). Significantly, she does not say that the lack of understanding is due to the fact that they do not speak the same language, but because Ombasi has not seen a car in his life (“¿Lo ves? ¡Este no ha visto un coche en su vida!” (del Moral, 2007, p. 30). Later on their son asks if Ombasi comes from the jungle, and the Mother answers “or from thereabouts”: (El niño: ¿Viene de la selva? - La madre: O de por ahí) (del Moral, 2007, p. 30).

Ombasi, in an effort to bridge the gap between him and the Spaniards and to convince them that he has good intentions, repeats several times “Viva España”. The sentence triggers the daughter’s curiosity and she asks her Mother why Ombasi always repeats the same thing. The Mother answers that this is the result of a lack of education in people of color, referring in this case to African immigrants whom she calls “personas incultas”, or uneducated people. That statement subsequently triggers the following question: what does it mean to be uneducated and how is this determined?

La Niña: Por qué siempre dice lo mismo?

La Madre: Porque a lo mejor no sabe decir otra cosa.

La Niña: ¿No sabe hablar más?

La Madre: No.

La Niña: ¿Por qué?

La Madre: Porque estas personas negras son muy incultas (del Moral, 2007, p. 33).

From the beginning of the play, del Moral creates a tragic dialectic by placing the characters in antithetical positions, positions from which they cannot budge because of the lack of communication. On one side there is the “good, innocent immigrant” and on the other “the mean, biased Spanish family” that believes it has the right to reject any *Other* that looks different and comes from a developing country. The family’s reaction is justified up to a certain point, as Spanish society at the time the play was written had not been exposed to the *Other*. But could this have changed ten years later? Maybe, although statistics show that the attitude towards the immigrants varies depending on their country of origin. According to a survey conducted in 2003 by CIS (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas = Center for Sociological Research) (Figure 3), it is evident that Spaniards prefer Latin Americans (specifically Argentinians) to Moroccans and Americans. This preference has historical, political and cultural connotations and cannot be generalized.

Tabla 6.1. Actitud de los españoles hacia nacionales de diferentes países

| | "Simpatía que le despiertan los..." | | | | | | "Confianza que le despiertan los..." | | | | | |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|----------|------|---------|------|------|--------------------------------------|----------|------|---------|------|------|
| | Mucha | Bastante | Poca | Ninguna | N.S. | N.C. | Mucha | Bastante | Poca | Ninguna | N.S. | N.C. |
| Brasileños | 11.3 | 54.1 | 16.9 | 3.9 | 11.7 | 2.1 | 6.1 | 44.7 | 23.9 | 7.8 | 15.5 | 2.0 |
| Franceses | 7.1 | 45.7 | 29.6 | 7.5 | 8.6 | 1.4 | 6.0 | 42.6 | 27.6 | 9.6 | 12.3 | 1.9 |
| Colombianos | 5.6 | 41.7 | 29.4 | 10.6 | 10.8 | 2.0 | 3.9 | 32.5 | 32.6 | 14.9 | 13.9 | 2.2 |
| Cubanos | 11.2 | 51.8 | 19.4 | 6.4 | 9.3 | 1.9 | 6.0 | 41.7 | 26.9 | 9.6 | 13.6 | 2.2 |
| Italianos | 10.8 | 56.6 | 17.5 | 4.8 | 8.6 | 1.6 | 6.5 | 49.2 | 22.6 | 6.9 | 12.9 | 2.0 |
| Mexicanos | 11.9 | 56.0 | 16.1 | 4.1 | 10.2 | 1.7 | 7.3 | 48.6 | 21.7 | 6.5 | 13.9 | 2.1 |
| Marroquíes | 4.5 | 29.2 | 32.9 | 23.7 | 8.4 | 1.4 | 3.3 | 23.3 | 32.1 | 27.4 | 11.7 | 2.2 |
| Peruanos | 6.9 | 50.3 | 22.4 | 7.1 | 11.4 | 1.8 | 4.8 | 40.8 | 27.8 | 9.4 | 15.1 | 2.1 |
| Venezolanos | 7.9 | 53.7 | 19.6 | 4.5 | 12.4 | 2.0 | 5.1 | 45.1 | 25.0 | 7.5 | 15.1 | 2.1 |
| Estadounidenses | 4.9 | 35.0 | 32.2 | 16.1 | 9.8 | 1.8 | 4.1 | 32.6 | 31.0 | 17.1 | 13.1 | 2.1 |
| Argentinos | 14.9 | 58.6 | 13.3 | 3.5 | 8.0 | 1.8 | 8.8 | 51.2 | 19.9 | 5.7 | 12.2 | 2.2 |
| Alemanes | 8.1 | 50.3 | 22.7 | 7.6 | 9.4 | 1.9 | 6.7 | 46.1 | 23.3 | 8.6 | 13.1 | 2.1 |
| Chilenos | 8.0 | 51.5 | 20.4 | 5.7 | 12.5 | 1.8 | 5.2 | 44.9 | 24.7 | 6.9 | 15.9 | 2.3 |

Fuente: CIS, Estudio nº 2.545. Barómetro de noviembre 2003.

Figure 3: Spaniards' attitude towards citizens of different nationalities.⁹

Ombasi's first encounter with the Spanish family is through their daughter. The curious little girl wanders along the beach behind the dunes, where she spots Ombasi and his drowned friend. Scared by the unknown man she runs to find her parents, but trips and falls. Ombasi, without hesitation, picks her up and takes her to her parents who, surprised and afraid, immediately reject his genuine attempt to help the child and misinterpret it. This is a tender, human scene that reveals his sensitive nature. Later on, by nightfall the temperature drops, the children are cold and insist on staying by the fire that Ombasi has built. The antithesis of cold and warm aligns with the opposing emotional state of each side. It also creates the hope that the warmth of the fire – an obvious parallel to Ombasi's warm personality – will overpower the coldness that the family emanates and the two sides with eventually merge. Eventually the parents allow Ombasi to help them, by necessity accepting the help of a person who up until that moment was begging for theirs. The momentary proximity is abruptly interrupted, as the parents refuse to befriend him; hope immediately evaporates. The parents are ungrateful and unappreciative of Ombasi's survival skills and inviting nature. The audience, who unavoidably will feel empathy and compassion for him, cannot overlook the African's attitude.

In the same scene around the fire, Ombasi offers the family clams, using the father's knife to open them. The Spaniards continue their insulting comments, accusing him of being an AIDS carrier. Once again Ombasi, with his calm personality and unable to understand the accusations, shares a few aspects of his own culture and evokes his dead friend, with whom he used to share his food. This is a very touching moment, as it reminds everyone that friendship, collaboration and companionship can enhance human relations and overcome challenges.

Subsequently the Mother notices that her son is sleeping by Ombasi's side. She comments that she does not want her son so close to "him" for fear of lice, ringworm or leprosy, very

⁹ <http://digital.csic.es/bitstream/10261/93165/1/LA%20INMIGRACI%C3%93N%20EN%20ESPA%C3%91A%20%282000-2007%29.pdf>

common in “those countries that are infected”. Once again her superficial explanation is nothing more than an indication of a lack of education and of basic information:

La Madre: No me gusta que el Niño esté tan pegado a él. A lo mejor tiene piojos, o la tiña, que creo que en esos países la tienen mucho. Hasta la lepra (del Moral, 2007, p. 58).

In *La Playa* there are similar accusations against the immigrants, although, as already mentioned, no interaction between the characters exists. The Spaniard beachgoer seems to be very sure of himself and has control of what he says. He justifies all the accusations against the immigrants based on personal beliefs and explains that his “logical and irrefutable arguments” have nothing to do with racism:

Sí, sí . . . por supuesto.. antes de dar a conocer mis lógicos e irrefutables argumentos, siempre lo hago . . . Siempre, siempre . . . ¡Yo no soy racista! .. Si he de serle sincero, se trata de una táctica, ¿sabe . . . ? . . . No me queda más remedio que hacerlo porque – créame lo que le digo – hay mucha leche en este lado del estrecho. (Moreno Arenas, 2014, p. 140)

[Yes, yes . . . of course . . . before making known my logical and irrefutable arguments, I always do . . . Always, always . . . I'm not racist! . . . To be honest, it's a tactic, you know . . . ? . . . I have no choice but to do it - believe me - there is a lot of milk on this side of the strait.]

He speaks about a lack of interest in what people say; he adds that people can manipulate words to make things appear different than what they really are:

. . . Y antes de que te des cuenta, sin que nadie se haya interesado siquiera lo más mínimo en saber lo que realmente ronda por tu coco, te manipulan las palabras, te tergiversan las declaraciones, te interpretan – lo de interpretar es por utilizar una palabra suave y agradable para los oídos – hasta el tono de las expresiones y consiguen que aparezcas antes los demás como lo que no eres... (Moreno Arenas, 2014, p. 141)

[. . . And before you know it, without anyone being slightly interested in knowing what really goes around in your head, they manipulate your words, they misrepresent your statements, they interpret you – to interpret is to use a word that is soft and pleasing to the ears – even the tenor of the expressions, and get you to appear before others as what you are not . . .]

Ironically, this postulation describes his own attitude, as everything that he says about immigrants projects a false image of what they really are. He accuses them of ruining Spanish society. In addition, he blames the media and young people for Spain's downfall. Thanks to freedom of speech, they advocate “wrong” ideas that contradict his “correct ideas”, moreover, they are more open to the *Other* and embrace differences. He gets upset by the fact that young people are receptive to African music without thinking of the negative consequences, but he ignores the fact that, historically, Spain has been a repository for diverse cultures, such as the Arab culture, and also the transmitter of its own culture to Latin America.

He describes the African immigrants in the same pejorative way that the Spaniards in *La mirada del hombre oscuro* do. They call Ombasi “negro” and they refer to all immigrants as “negros”. Similarly, here the beachgoer feels pity for those with dark skin color and calls for compassion, as the immigrants cannot escape from the negative consequences that their color brings to them. According to his words, they are poor creatures of God who need to accept living with this pigmentation that is a gift poisoned by a despised and cruel reality. “. . . Pobres criaturas de Dio . . . que han que resignarse a vivir pigmentados con el tinte más oscuro del color gris, ese regalo envenenado de una naturaleza despiadada y cruel” (Moreno Arenas, 2014, p. 144).

He differentiates himself from the *Other* by repeating several times that he is “white, completely white, truly white . . . why cloud the issue?: “En realidad, yo soy blanco... ¡Blanco . . .! ¡Enteramente blanco . . .! ¡Completamente blanco . . .! ¡Absolutamente blanco . . .! ¡Para que andarnos por las ramas . . .?” (Moreno Arenas, 145).

His persistence in the white color, “proof” of his superiority, confirms the absurdity of his so-called “logical and irrefutable arguments” and makes the reader/audience wonder who, in the final analysis, needs compassion. He is biased against any *Other* who does not look like him, who plays a different type of music or who tries to survive doing odd jobs like selling clothes, jewelry or purses in the streets. His accusation that immigrants are responsible of Spain’s unemployment is also unfounded. Figure 4 clearly shows that foreigners who live in Spain are at a higher risk to lose their jobs than Spaniards.



Figure 4: Comparison of the possibility of Spaniards and foreign citizens losing their job.¹⁰

Later on he expresses even more bitter feelings when he calls immigrants ignorant when it comes to human rights. They demand to be seen and treated equally in the country to which they immigrate, when in their countries they do not dare to do so for lack of resources and of a stable government. His contradictory arguments unraveling, he shares that when he was himself an immigrant somewhere in Europe more than thirty years ago, he felt inferior to the local people because they believed that they had more rights than him and his fellow Spaniards. For this reason, they all came together to support each other, in the same way that

¹⁰ http://www.revistasice.com/cache/pdf/ICE_854_3748__C50F00870BEC39801219B8CA4588DB.pdf

immigrants everywhere still do. He fails to see this tendency as the result of the basic human need for support and contact with other people in times of necessity and loneliness:

Allí éramos todos como una piña . . . ! Todos para uno y uno para todos . . . ! Se lo puede imagina Había que defenderse con algo más que uñas y dientes de la altanería y de los improperios de aquellos cabronazos que se creían con más derechos que nosotros (Moreno Arenas, 2014, p. 157).

[There we were all of a piece ! All for one and one for all . . . ! You can imagine We had to defend ourselves with something more than tooth and nail from the haughtiness, disdain and disrespect of those bastards who believed themselves to have more rights than we had.]

His words portray two opposite sides, “aquellos” [them] and “nosotros” [us], that are separated by a wall of misunderstandings. That wall is not that different from the one that he has presently built between himself and the immigrants. What is surprising, though, is that he does not realize that his past is a reflection of the present that he so sharply criticizes. Having been an immigrant himself, he was once on the “other side” and was seen as a lesser human being. He acknowledges that his feelings were hurt back then, but that experience did not teach him compassion. Today he perceives the immigrants in the same negative way in which he was perceived back then.

His ignorance, arrogance and refusal to accept the *Other* is so evident that he does not even try to approach the immobile immigrant to check on him. In reality he is also dead, devoid of even the most diminutive sign of humanity or sensibility (Doll, 2013, p. 113). At the end of the play the silence of the immigrant staggers the audience as it is revealed that the person is dead. According to Eileen Doll, the silence serves as a witness for the racism that the Beachgoer refuses to acknowledge in himself (2013, p. 225).¹¹ The audience recognizes the human value of the prostrate immigrant who remained silent while being accused and disparaged. Unexpectedly, the mute, immobile man now becomes the point of reference and the main protagonist. Moreno Arenas thus invites the audience to evaluate the Spaniard’s accusations, respect the human dignity of the migrants, and question the boundaries between the *Us* and the *Other*.

Conclusion

Since the early 1990’s the Spanish government, by way of migratory policies, plans and informative efforts, has attempted to decrease the cultural gap between Spaniards and immigrants. The Spanish playwright Jerónimo López Mozo in his article *Emigrantes y exilidados en mi teatro* (2008) acknowledges that Spaniards, though most deny it, are racist. He adds that they are not the only racists in Europe, and explains that individuals who reject the accusation of being racists (like the beachgoer in *La Playa* who claims “Yo no soy racista”) are the ones who are more racist than anyone else:

Los españoles somos racistas, aunque lo neguemos, somos racistas. No somos los únicos en Europa, desde luego. Con frecuencia, quiénes rechazan la acusación más airadamente, lo son en mayor medida, aunque lo ignoren. (López Mozo, 2008, p. 5)

¹¹ Original citation: “El silencio del Otro sirve de testigo del racismo que tanto deniega el Bañista.”

The process of assimilating immigrants into a new society is long and arduous. Educational programs and equal treatment in the professional and social spheres are keys for acculturation and coexistence. Furthermore, human relationships based on friendships or love can bring people together.¹² Mixed marriages have also facilitated the process not only practically but culturally as well, as they unite two people of different linguistic, ethnic and even religious backgrounds. In 1996 there was only a 4.13 percent of mixed marriages in Spain; in 2005 the percentage increased to 10.8%. That same year (2005) the children born of mixed couples represented 11% of the total births.¹³ These numbers are a clear indication of the ongoing contact between Spaniards and citizens of other countries; additionally, this rising percentage could certainly decrease cultural differences and erase the fear of the *Other*.

Whether Spaniards or any other people are racists and xenophobic has not been the topic of this article. What has been touched upon is the impact of xenophobic attitudes on society and the manner in which these attitudes are depicted in literary works. Silence and voice, tolerance and intolerance, rejection and acceptance, compassion and insensibility are contradictory terms that are abundant in both plays; they are used profusely because they explain separation, disjoining, and the bitter sentiments of not belonging that racism and xenophobia occasion.

In *La Playa* and *La mirada del hombre oscuro* none of the Spanish characters reflected on their own flaws, yet they judge the African immigrants based only on stereotypes and false beliefs. The silence of the immigrants calls for a closer inspection of what the Spaniards say, and this, of course is deliberate: The playwrights invite us to evaluate what is being said in an effort to highlight the need to reestablish a level of dignity and tolerance in a world that seems progressively silent on the matter.

¹² *Memoria fotográfica* (Beth Escudé y Gallés) and *Harira* (Ana Diosdano) are plays based on friendship between immigrants. The film *Las cartas de Alou* (1990) portrays mixed relationships based on true love.

¹³ <http://digital.csic.es/bitstream/10261/93165/1/LA%20INMIGRACI%C3%93N%20EN%20ESPA%C3%91A%20%282000-2007%29.pdf>

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Corresponding author: Eugenia Charoni

Contact email: echaroni@flagler.edu

Youth Entrepreneurship Support Interventions in Africa: The Role of the Family: A Critical Review

Bernard Elphas Sakala

PhD. Student, Department of Commerce and Development Studies

University of Africa (UoA)

Lusaka, Zambia

Abstract

Unemployment Poverty and Inequality (UPI) are some of the key challenges facing youths in Africa. In response to this, African countries have made several efforts to help deal with challenges facing the youths. These efforts include the promotion of youth entrepreneurship development using various strategies and policies with particular emphasis on improving the business environment so as to make it easier for youths to start and run their own businesses. Entrepreneurship has been recognised as one of the main strategies to overcome these challenges. As such, in recent years a growing awareness of the importance of youth entrepreneurship for economic development has triggered research on the fundamentals of entrepreneurship in developing countries. This realisation has given rise to a number of entrepreneurship support interventions with many stakeholders coming on board to ensure that entrepreneurship succeeds. This paper explains the role of the family in youth entrepreneurship development in Africa. It explains how the family influences the development of youth entrepreneurship on the continent of Africa. The paper has found that although there were several efforts to improve youth entrepreneurship development on the continent, many approaches ignore the family as primary institution and as a key stakeholder in youth entrepreneurship. The review has also revealed that although the family remains ignored, there are opportunities that are found within the family that can help to steer youth entrepreneurship forward. This paper recommends that entrepreneurship support interventions should not just focus on the youths, but on family as well.

Key words: youth, family, entrepreneurship development, stakeholders, Africa

Introduction

The formal employment sector is unable to meet the employment demands of the growing young population in Africa. For millions of young Africans, creating their own enterprises is the only avenue open to them for employment (Kew, 2015, p. 7). In tacit acknowledgement of this phenomenon, governments have adopted a wide range of policies and programmes aimed at facilitating entrepreneurship. However, such interventions must be informed by a solid understanding, based on reliable data that accurately describe young people's aspirations, their challenges, and how they can overcome the obstacles inherent in establishing and running viable enterprise. Interventions must also be informed by a solid understanding of which stakeholders are key in youth entrepreneurship development. This paper considers the African family as central to youth entrepreneurship development on the continent. It recognises the family as one of the key stakeholders in youth entrepreneurship development. Based on a review of the literature, this paper discusses the role of family in youth entrepreneurship development in Africa.

According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (United Nations, 2015, p. 1) there were 1.2 billion youths aged 15-24 years globally in 2015, accounting for one out of every six people worldwide. The United Nations states that the number of youths is growing rapidly in Africa. In 2015, 226 million youths aged 15-24 lived in Africa, accounting for 19 per cent of the global youth population. By 2030, it is projected that the number of youths in Africa will have increased by 42 per cent. Africa's youth population is expected to continue to grow throughout the remainder of the 21st century, more than doubling from current levels by 2055. Gyima-Brempong & Kimeyi (2013, p. 6) state that the youth population in Africa is large (about 200 million, which is 20 percent of its population of more than 1 billion). According to Ashford (2007, p. 1), several measures were needed in order for the continent to reap demographic dividends from such a population. Ashford further states that Africa's young people will be the driving force behind economic prosperity in future decades, but only if policies and programs are in place to enhance their opportunities.

Among the greatest challenges facing many countries today are inadequate human capital investment and high unemployment rates among youth. In particular, young people should acquire the education and skills needed to contribute in a productive economy, and they need access to a job market that can absorb them into its labour force. The African Economic Outlook (2012, p. 28) observed that Africa's youth population is not only growing rapidly; it is also getting better educated. However, it was also observed that formal educational qualifications did not always help young people when it came to solving problems, assessing opportunities or taking risks. Evidence from Zambia show that many youths come out of the school system with formal qualifications but without the skills needed to provide a stable livelihood. Zambia's Technical Education Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Authority (TEVETA, 1996, p. 1) estimates that about 200,000 youths come out of the school system annually without any opportunity for acquiring skills for productive life. This confirms that formal qualifications are in themselves not sufficient to deal with the challenges facing youths.

Entrepreneurship

Globally, there is no agreed-upon definition for the terms “youth” or “entrepreneurship” (Zambia National Youth Policy, 2015, p. 2; Stokes & Wilson, 2010, p. 33). In terms of youth self-employment (a proxy for youth entrepreneurship), there is no agreed definition (Green, 2013, p. 1; Stokes & Wilson, 2010, p. 33, Nandamuri & Gowthami, 2013, p. 1). Ahmad & Hoffman (2007, p. 1) observed that where there are policy references to entrepreneurship, most simply equate it with small and medium sized enterprises in general or even numbers of self-employment. As such, what one understands entrepreneurship to be is not always viewed and understood equally by all. According to Ahmad & Hoffman, the lack of internationally agreed definition presents general ambiguity relating to entrepreneurship. In the context of this study, *youth entrepreneurship will be used to mean the process by which a youth or a group of youths knowingly or unknowingly undertake(s) risk and start a business activity in order to make a profit and improve his/her (or their) welfare and/or the welfare of others. The term entrepreneurship will be used as a proxy for small businesses.*

According to Mulenga (2016, p. 10), youth entrepreneurship is being advocated for because it tackles the triple challenge of Unemployment, Poverty and Inequality (UPI). Entrepreneurship offers a pathway for young people to emerge from unemployment. To achieve this, there is a need to encourage young people, to instil a spirit of entrepreneurship from early on in life (Vassiliou, 2013, p. 4). This role can be played by various stakeholders including the family because children are born in the family and later move on to enter the larger society. Achieving this is not possible without the involvement of multiple stakeholders. These include government, Non-Governmental Organisations, youths, the church, private entities and the family where youths come from. It is important to not only target youth, but also important role models for youth such as parents (Habisky, 2015, p. 8). This confirms that family plays an important role in entrepreneurship development. According to Schoof (2006, p. xiv) mobilisation and engagement of all major stakeholders is highly recommended. Family being one of the major stakeholders should therefore not be ignored.

Youths

The African Youth Charter defines a youth as someone who is aged between 15 and 35 years of age. Despite having the continental body and youth charter definition, the continent still lacks a universal description, as different countries have different definitions. This study recognises that there is no universal definition of youth (Gyima-Brempong & Kimeyi, 2013:4). As such, the definition provided by the African Youth Charter was adopted. “Youth” is traditionally defined as a period of transition from childhood to adulthood. In the *African Youth Report 2009* (UNECA 2009), “youth” are defined as people between 15 and 39 years of age. However, several African countries define their youth population differently. For example, Ghana, Tanzania and South Africa define the youth population as those between 15 and 35 years of age; Nigeria and Swaziland define it as those between 12 and 30 years; and Botswana and Mauritius define it as those between 14 and 25 years. Zambia changed its age range to 15 to 35 years in the year 2015 in order to align its definition to the African Youth charter. These varying definitions of the youth population make it difficult to effectively discuss issues affecting youth in Africa generally and to compare information across countries. Africa is the youngest continent in the world, with about 70 percent of its population 30 years of age or younger. Although Africa’s youth population is relatively large, throughout the continent there are regional and country differences in the size of the youth

populations and in the rates at which these populations are likely to grow. The youth bulge is larger in North Africa than in sub-Saharan Africa, but the growth of the youth population is likely to be higher in sub-Saharan Africa than in North Africa because of differences in the dynamics of the populations across regions and countries. Different chronological ages are used to define youths in Africa (Gyima-Brempong & Kimeyi, 2013, p. 28) as shown on the table below.

Table: 1

| ORGANISATION/COUNTRY | AGE RANGE |
|---|-----------|
| United Nations (UN) | 15–24 |
| Common Wealth Youth programme (CWYP) | 15–29 |
| African Youth Chapter (AFC) | 15–35 |
| Zambia's 2006 National Youth Policy | 18–35 |
| Zambia's 2015 National Youth policy | 15–35 |
| Malawi's 2013 National Youth Policy | 10–35 |
| South Africa's 2013 National Youth Policy | 14–35 |
| Nigeria | 12–30 |
| Mauritius | 14–25 |
| Tanzania | 15–35 |
| Ghana | 15–35 |
| Swaziland | 12–30 |
| Botswana | 14–25 |
| Sierra Leone | 15–35 |

Definitions of Youth by Age (Source, Author, 2017)

Family

The term family refers to a unit consisting of people who are related to one another either biologically by blood or legally by marriage (Kirby, et. al., 2000, p. 86). Kirby et. al. state that the term family also refers to a unit consisting of people who are related to each other: they can be related either biologically by blood ties or legally (for example by marriage or adoption). Giddens (2006, p. 206) defines it as a group of persons directly linked by kin connections, the adult members of which assume the responsibility of caring for children. According to Giddens, families can broadly be classified into nuclear and extended families. He described a nuclear family as one in which a couple lives together with their own children or biological children. On the other hand, Giddens described an extended family as one in which close relatives other than the married couple and their children live either in the same household or in a close and continuous relationship with one another. An extended family may include grandparents, brothers and their wives, sisters and their husbands, aunties, uncles and nephews and nieces. Giddens (2006, p. 206) defines kinship ties as connections between individuals established through lines of descent that connect blood relatives or are established through marriage.

According to Mahajan (1988, p. 124), family is by far the most important group in society because every person is born into a family. Kirby et. al. (2000, p. 86) state that family is often considered by non-sociologists to be one of the few natural institutions in society. According to Kirby et. al., people regard healthy families as being good for society. However, Kirby and friends did not elaborate exactly what a healthy family was, what it looked like or what its characteristics were. The Summit of Heads of State and Government adopted the African Youth Charter at their Summit in Banjul in July 2006. Article 8 of the Africa Youth Charter recognised family as the most basic social institution, one that should enjoy the full protection and support of States Parties (States Parties are countries that have adhered to the World Heritage Convention) for its establishment and development. The article also notes that the structure and form of families varies in different social and cultural contexts. This implies that characteristics of family were not the same across Africa.

Africa is a multicultural continent and has various forms of family. Cultural diversity refers to the way groups in society have different lifestyles or cultures and one aspect of this may be the way they construct their families (Giddens, 2006, p. 205). These include nuclear and extended families, polygamous or monogamous families. However, Giddens argues that the family set up is under threat due to globalisation. He contends that traditional family systems are little altered in Asia, Africa and the Pacific Rim. He further states (2006, p. 166) that, in modern societies, most early socialisation occurs within a small scale family context. Giddens also observed that conservative writers argue that family was dangerously undermined in modern society. The conservatives also see the decline of the family with more traditional forms of a family life. This means that assistance to non-nuclear family members is likely to be reduced.

Youths are a resource that needs to be developed and harnessed as part of African governments' comprehensive strategies to foster economic growth and development. To effectively address the challenges of youths would require assessing policies as well as the related institutions and strategies (Gyima-Brempong & Kimeyi, 2013, p. 4). While several options have been proposed to improve the institutional capacity of many organisations dealing with youth empowerment, these options do not propose ways of how to improve the family as an institution which is also important for youth development. Neglecting the family is in itself neglecting the institution that offers initial support to every person.

Family is recognised as a very important stakeholder in the development of youth entrepreneurship on the African continent. Nandamuri & Gowthami (2013, p. 5) state that family has been recognised as the most important institution that enhances one's awareness about entrepreneurship. Citing Chrisman et. al. (2003), Nandamuri & Gowthami point out that involvement of family in entrepreneurship creates a profound opportunity for understanding how entrepreneurial qualities and perceptions develop among the offspring. There is a general agreement among researchers that wealth is created over generations. This means that wealth created by parents/guardians has the potential to improve the welfare of youths currently or later in their lives. This can be done by either parents or guardians giving resources that can be used as capital to the youths or youths acquiring resources in the form of an inheritance from their parents or guardians. Spouses can also obtain such capital from their husbands or wives. However, many youths fail to obtain this assistance because of parents'/guardians' failure to manage succession. Burns (2001, p. 368) states that the usual approach to managing succession is to ignore it and do nothing. Burns further cautions that it was as if parents/guardians were in denial about ever leaving this world or their business, to the point where many of them do not even wish to discuss this important issue. According to Burns, if not

managed properly, succession can be very traumatic, stressful and threaten the welfare of surviving persons at present or in future.

Citing Perrino et. al. (2000), Mokomane (2012, p. 4) states that stable and functional families have been shown to contribute to youth social empowerment by providing many of the factors that protect young people from engaging in risky sexual behaviour, drug use and abuse, delinquency, and other anti-social behaviours. In a very general sense, therefore, negative family experiences like poor child-parent attachment, a chaotic, dysfunctional, abusive, neglectful, or impoverished family environment may directly or indirectly hamper the youth's social and economic empowerment. For example, explanations have been offered at several levels as to how poverty may increase youth's susceptibility to socio-economic and health disadvantages. Mokomane also points out that many research findings have shown that, at its core, poor childhood is associated with weak endowments of human, capital and financial resources such as low levels of education and literacy, few marketable skills, low labour productivity, and generally poor health status — all of which can exacerbate young people's socioeconomic and health vulnerabilities, including HIV infection. With regards to the latter, it was also argued that many poor young people often adopt risky sexual behaviour not because prevention messages do not reach them, but because such messages were often irrelevant or inoperable given the reality of their lives. As Eaton et. al. (2003) found in South Africa, for young people struggling for daily survival, protection from possible future illness may be a lower priority than meeting immediate economic needs. Immediate needs drive many young entrepreneurs to become necessity entrepreneurs, something that was widespread in Africa (Brixiova et. al., 2013, p. 21). As such, failure by families to play positive roles deters its individual members from realising their full social and economic empowerment.

In Africa, as in many other developing regions, the extended family is a long established institution which provides its members with a sophisticated social security system, an economic support to meet their basic needs for food, shelter, and clothing, and a wide circle of relatives on whom to fall back in times of crisis, unemployment, sickness, poverty, old age, and bereavement (African Union, 2004, p. 3). Indeed, the African Union asserts that the continent's development thus far can be largely attributed to the strength of the family, as large families were traditionally a source of labour and prosperity, and the extended family ensured that poor families were generally supported by the better-off.

The Role of the Family in Youth Entrepreneurship

Family capital provides enabling resources and strengthens the capacity of individual family members to function and attain their current and future goals and objectives (Mokomane, 2012, p. 3). Even with large numbers of youths in Africa, Ashford (2007, p. 1), without stating the type of institutions, points out that positive outcomes can be attained provided that institutions are strengthened and viable economic policies are in place. Being an institution as recognised by Mahajan, it is important that African families are strengthened in order to produce youths who can make effective entrepreneurs on the continent. Because of easy-to-find resources, children born from economically stable families find it easier to venture into their own businesses. However, this is possible where people have extra income to save. Where people do not have sufficient resources to save, people may live in poverty. The problem of chronic poverty associated with indigenous groups also implies that some indigenous people may not have enough capital required to start new ventures. This is a common feature with many families in Africa that live in poverty and do not save. Galbraith

(1979) in Beer & Swanepoel (2000, p. 2) argues that savings in many developing countries are spent on means of survival and not invested in productive enterprises. Galbraith also points out that poverty in developing countries or Third World countries like those in Africa is excessive, so many people are *visibly* poor; this is “mass poverty”. According to Beer & Swanepoel 85% of the people who live in absolute poverty are found in Third World countries including Africa. This means that finding resources to venture into entrepreneurship might be difficult, though people may end up being necessity entrepreneurs as explained by Brixiova et. al. (2013, p. 21).

Perception of Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurial culture determines the extent to which entrepreneurship is encouraged or perceived in a particular context. Differences in entrepreneurial culture are increasingly understood to account for differences in the level of entrepreneurial development across context (Ellies & Williams, 2011, p. 21). This is because the entrepreneurial culture in a particular context affects the attitude that an individual has towards entrepreneurship, the likelihood of choosing entrepreneurship as a career, the ambitions to succeed and also to start again after failure. Higher levels of entrepreneurship are therefore likely to be found in an environment where entrepreneurship is respected and valued and where entrepreneurs enjoy greater levels of legitimacy. In other words, societal attitudes influence someone’s perception of entrepreneurship. According to Ellies Williams, the World Bank (2008) contends that promoting an entrepreneurial culture is one of the most essential and neglected components of entrepreneurship development.

Building an entrepreneurial culture among youth is critical to help them understand the role of entrepreneurs in society and to help them develop a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship. This will increase youth’s perception that entrepreneurship is feasible and desirable. Many actors across the continent of Africa are working to overcome the negative historical views towards entrepreneurship, but current efforts are small in scale and uncoordinated. In doing this, it is important to not only target youth, but also important role models for youth such as parents (Habisky, 2015, p. 8). Family occupation and parental role-modelling has been found to be the most prominent factors that affect early socialisation and hence the formation of attitude towards entrepreneurship (Matthews & Moser, 1995 in Nandamuri & Gowthami, 2013, p. 4). Mathews and Moser observed that an entrepreneur whose father was self-employed provides strong inspiration for his children because, at an early age, the independent nature of self-employment is deeply rooted. This explains the important role of the family in entrepreneurship development. Therefore, omitting family in any entrepreneurship development strategy is a missed opportunity to effectively tackle youth challenges.

It Moulds Character

Family has the potential to pass on competitive behaviours that are central to the concept of entrepreneurship (Stokes & Wilson, 2010, p. 33). Without these behaviours, it would be difficult for an entrepreneur to succeed. Youths and any other person can therefore acquire these behaviours through the process of socialisation. Giddens (2006, p. 166) identifies family as one of the main agencies of socialisation, while Kirby et. al. (2000, p. 88) identify socialisation as one of the key functions of the family. Mahajan (1988, p. 125) states that family moulds the character of its members through the impression of both organic and mental habits. In other words, family has tremendous influence on all its members including

youths. According to Burns (2001, p. 29), entrepreneurs possess a certain, recognisable set of characteristics. These characteristics can be passed on from parents or guardians. This confirms Mahajan's statement that family moulds children's character. According to Nandamuri & Gowthami (2013, p. 7), Krueger et. al. (2000) state that parents act as initial role models and influence the future entrepreneurial intentions through altering attitudes and beliefs. The parental role models and exposure to self-employment are considered to influence entrepreneurial attitudes and behaviour (Dyer & Handler, 1994 in Nandamuri & Gowthami, 2013, p. 7). Once a family has children, they need to be socialised so that they know how to behave. This helps children to develop a particular character depending on the type of environment to which they are exposed.

Source of Capital

Families exist primarily to take care and to nurture family members (Burns, 2001, p. 359, Mahajan, 1988, p. 125). In doing this, the family performs economic functions to its members. As such, some family members give their members capital to start or enhance their businesses in order to improve their livelihood. According to Nandamuri & Gowthami (2013, p. 5), existing research shows that growing up in a family business environment provides people with family capital – social, human, and financial, that gives them a comparative advantage in starting a new venture. Furthermore, the family business occupation shapes the attitudes and willingness of people to start new ventures. Zimmerer, Scarborough & Wilson (2008, p. 467) state that most people including youths look to friends and family for capital. Calopa, Hovart & Lalic (2013, p. 4) refer to such sources as the 3Fs (family, friends and founder). Kew (2015, p. 8), an associate professor at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, in his study *Africa's Young Entrepreneurs: Unlocking Potential for a Brighter Future*, observed that own funding and/or funding from family or friends were the primary sources of financing for young people throughout sub-Saharan Africa. According to Kew, the majority of the young entrepreneurs surveyed for this report raised the start-up capital from their own or family savings, rather than approaching formal institutions or agencies. However, such sources provide very small amounts of start-up capital, hence the need for extra funding. However, youths must be prepared to “toe the line” and deliver the kind of results that can be as examples of good practice, commitment and dedication. Sutton & Langmead (2013, p. 14) profiled some major firms in Zambia and found that Trade Kings, one of the leading firms in the country, was initially funded by members from the same family.

According to Scarborough (2013, p. 423), the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), a study of entrepreneurship trends across the globe reveals that family members and friends were the biggest source of external capital used to launch new businesses. Furthermore, Scarborough states that although investments from family and friends are an important source of capital, the amounts invested were typically small. Even though family and friends can help someone launch his or her business, Scarborough points out that it is unlikely that they can provide enough capital to sustain the business over the long term. As such, one needs to establish a relationship with other sources of credit if the business is to survive and thrive. However, Burns (2001, p. 90) cautions that in the early days of any business, it does not pay to be over-burdened by high interest payments. Zimmerer, Scarborough & Wilson (2008, p. 467) point out that family members are more patient than other sources of investment and are less meddlesome in a business than any other type of investor.

Demands on its Members

The family makes continuous and greater demands than any other association (Mahajan, 1988, p. 125). In many parts of sub-Saharan Africa, Kew (2015, p. 38) states that every job counts, and it was not unusual to find a self-employed person supporting a large family and enabling those around him/her to have a better life. This is partly due to a very high dependency ratio between those who work and those who do not. Homes headed by young people are common in Africa due to HIV/AIDS. Such arrangements have the potential to impede entrepreneurship development as it reduces re-investments and income available to individuals. However, in order to survive, the increased demands also drive people into becoming necessity entrepreneurs.

It Provides Informal Learning and Apprenticeship Opportunities

Many young people in developing economies began their working lives engaged in family businesses (Kew, 2015, p. 17). This provided youths with learning opportunities thereby gaining valuable experience. In other words, such opportunities enabled skills transfer from parents/guardians to youths.

It Provides Motivation

Goel, Vohra, Zhang & Arora (2007, p. 7) cite Jackson and Rodkey (1994), who concluded that socialisation had an impact on an individual's attitude towards entrepreneurship. Socialisation took place at home, at the place of education, and in other spheres of interaction for the individual. Socialisation includes messages about what is good and positive, what lends status and what is valued by others. According to Jackson and Rodkey, early communication received and imbibed by an individual impacts career choices by inducing individuals to choose a career in which they are seen in positive light. A report prepared by Brixiova et. al. (2013, p. 17) on *Opportunities and Constraints to Youth Entrepreneurship: Perspectives of Young Entrepreneurs in Swaziland*, Djankov et. al. (2005) pointed out that empirical studies of factors influencing entrepreneurship in other countries assign high importance to family background and in particular to having relatives who are entrepreneurs. In China and India, it was argued that societal attitudes towards entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship are important determinants for future entrepreneurial activity. These attitudes would be impacted by the family background of an individual and entrepreneurial development in the region an individual comes from. It was hypothesised that more positive attitude would be seen in (i) people from entrepreneurial backgrounds, and (ii) entrepreneurially more developed regions (Goel, Vohra, Zhang & Arora, 2007, p. 1).

It Enhances Entrepreneurial Orientation

Fostering entrepreneurial awareness and positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship are high on the policy agenda of several economies (Nandamuri & Gowthami, 2013, p. 1). These economies seek to enhance entrepreneurial orientation. According to Nandamuri & Gowthami, entrepreneurial orientation is the individual's inclination to take up entrepreneurship. They state that entrepreneurship depends on an array of external factors like socio-cultural traditions, supporting financial institutions and certain latent socio-demographic factors also are equally responsible. Some of these latent factors are passed on from the family to youths.

Conclusion

This paper highlighted how family can influence youth entrepreneurship development in Africa. Given this background and the evidence of insufficient economic strength in many families, it can be said that it is imperative for governments in Africa to put in place programmes and policies that will focus on both youths and families. Focusing on youths while neglecting the family is detrimental when dealing with youth entrepreneurship development. This paper recommends that the capacity of African families be strengthened as part of youth entrepreneurship development.

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Corresponding author: Bernard Elphas Sakala

Contact email: bernsakala@yahoo.com

The Rhetoric of Racism and Anti-Miscegenation Laws in the United States

Ashok Bhusal

The University of Texas at El Paso, USA

Abstract

Systemic discrimination against minority groups in the United States' justice system has been unremitting, abetted by a veil of rhetoric that demands a closer look at the stark social and historical realities that produced it. State anti-miscegenation laws were the product of entrenched beliefs born of white supremacist notions. Such legislation endured because the Constitution of the United States left the regulation of marriage under the jurisdiction of individual states. In this muddled scenario, state laws differed substantially concerning the severity of the punishment for interracial couples. In the present article, I review some cases and questions that predated the Supreme Court ruling on this matter (1967), discuss the rationale for the creation of anti-miscegenation legislation along with the effects of anti-miscegenation laws on the couples, and suggest new approaches in the struggle against racism. Herein, I propose to analyze just how these state anti-miscegenation laws contributed to the social exclusion of minority groups, how their design furthered the preservation of the "purity and superiority" of whites, and how they ultimately guaranteed the whites' privileged access to financial matters.

Keywords: race, racism, anti-miscegenation, justice system

Introduction

The white-dominated American legal system has consistently discriminated against minority groups in differing ways. State anti-miscegenation laws were the product of a belief born from white supremacist ideas. The Constitution of the United States left the regulation of marriage under the jurisdiction of individual states, which accounts for the fact that state laws greatly differed concerning the severity of the punishment for interracial couples. Two types of arguments were introduced when dealing with the issue of interracial marriage. Interracial married couples made arguments that the Fourteenth Amendment's due process in addition to its equal protection clauses allowed them to get married, while opposing parties, especially state courts, held that the states' anti-miscegenation laws did not violate the equal protection clause or the due process clause. In this article, I review some cases and questions which predated the Supreme Court ruling on this matter, discuss the rationale for the creation of anti-miscegenation legislation and the effects of anti-miscegenation laws on the couples, and suggest ways to combat racism. I argue that these state anti-miscegenation laws, which further contributed to the social exclusion of minority groups, were carefully designed for the express purpose of maintaining the purity, superiority, and high access to financial matters of the white (Caucasian) race. Interracial couples fought a long time for their marriage rights. In order to fairly address the issue of interracial marriages, the whole country had to wait for the United State Supreme Court's ruling in *Loving v. Virginia* (1967): to forbid marriages between persons solely on racial classification violated due process and the Fourteenth Amendment's equal protection clauses.

Anti-Miscegenation Laws and Racism

In "The Miscegenation Issue in the Election of 1864," Kaplan (1949) explains the term *miscegenation*. Miscegenation is the mixing of two or more races. Miscegenation came from the Latin *miscere*, to mix and *genus*, race. The term was first coined in 1863 in a seventy-two-page pamphlet entitled "Miscegenation: The Theory of the Blending of the Races, Applied to the American White Man and Negro," published during President Lincoln's reelection (Kaplan, 1949). The idea of creating anti-miscegenation laws is born during the early colonial period: "The Maryland and Virginia assemblies led the way in legislating against miscegenation, beginning in the 1660s" (Bardaglio, 1995, p. 51). During the years following the U.S. Civil War, state and federal courts upheld that anti-miscegenation laws were not discriminatory to minority groups, and that those laws those laws violated neither due process nor the Constitution's equal protection clauses.

Pace v. Alabama (1883) was a case in which the US Supreme Court ruled that the anti-miscegenation laws were constitutional and established unequivocally that, since anti-miscegenation laws apply equally to both races (whites and nonwhites), these laws are not discriminatory against any particular race. A black man, Tony Pace and a white woman, Mary J. Cox, residents of Alabama were arrested for their sexual activities, which showed contempt for the Alabama statute. The court ruled that "whatever discrimination is made in the punishment prescribed in the two sections is directed against the offense designated and not against the person of any particular color or race. The punishment of each offending person, whether white or black is the same" (*Pace*).

McLaughlin v. Florida (1964) overturned an interracial cohabitation law in Florida that ruled that "any negro man and white woman, or any white man and negro woman, who are not married to each other, who shall habitually live in and occupy in the nighttime the same room,

shall each be punished by imprisonment not exceeding twelve months, or by fine not exceeding five hundred dollars" (*McLaughlin*). The ruling in *McLaughlin v. Florida* also overturned the Supreme Court's earlier decision in *Pace v. Alabama*. Though this case was one step further to providing rights to interracial couples, it did not invalidate the law against interracial marriages.

In *Loving v. Virginia* (1967), Mildred Loving, a black woman, and Richard Loving, a white man, were sentenced to prison for a year for their interracial marriage. Their marriage violated the anti-miscegenation law of the state, the Racial Integrity Act of 1924. Mildred had become pregnant in June 1958, and the couple went to Washington DC from Virginia to marry. After their marriage, they returned to Virginia. Mildred Loving thought that showing the police, who had burst into their home when they were sleeping in bed, the certificate that declared her marriage to Richard Loving official would be enough to deter legal proceedings. She was wrong. The case was filed against them because they violated the Virginia code, which restricted racially mixed couples from entering marriage contracts in other states and coming back to Virginia. The punishment was a sentence of from one to five years' incarceration.

Loving v. Virginia came after some positive developments for minority groups in different spheres of life. *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) affirmed that the "separate but equal" principle does not apply in the field of education. In "The right to marry: *Loving v. Virginia*," Wallenstein (1995) observes that at the time of *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court was ruling on various issues of privacy. He discusses some cases and affirms that some questions of privacy were seriously discussed before *Loving v. Virginia* (1967). What degree of control should a person have over his or her life? What are the boundaries of the state's jurisdiction over a person's life? Which "fundamental rights" (p. 39) does a person possess? As a result of these deliberations, some problems were solved. Rights improved after the Supreme Court ruled that people have the right to teach a foreign language to their children (*Meyer v. Nebraska*, 1923). In the 1925 case *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, the Supreme Court declared that all people have the right to choose to allow their children to attend private school. Similarly, the court outlawed the provision of sterilizing people convicted of certain categories of crimes. Likewise, Wallenstein notes that in *Griswold v. Connecticut* (1965), the Court declared that married people have a right to use or not to use birth control devices to prevent pregnancy. In the wake of all of these achievements, the Supreme Court of the United States, in *Loving v. Virginia*, declared the Virginia anti-miscegenation law unconstitutional, and with this ruling all race-based legal constraints on marriage ended throughout the country.

Chief Justice Warren very clearly said that the purpose of the Fourteenth Amendment is to "eliminate all official state sources of invidious racial discrimination" (*Loving vs.*). He was well aware of the cases of civil rights. He states: "We have consistently denied the constitutionality of measures which restrict the rights of citizens on account of race. There can be no doubt that restricting the freedom to marry solely because of racial classifications violates the central meaning of the Equal Protection Clause" (*Loving vs.*). Chief Justice Warren very powerfully noted: "The Fourteenth Amendment requires that the freedom of choice to marry not be restricted by invidious racial discriminations. Under our Constitution, the freedom to marry or not marry a person of another race resides with the individual and cannot be infringed by the state" (*Loving vs.*). Finally, the discriminatory laws were scrapped when rights were given to people who had interracial marriages and to those who would like to have interracial relationships.

Laws regarding relations between blacks and whites have been chiefly discussed here because a larger number of cases were filed regarding black-and-white couples. However, anti-

miscegenation laws also discriminated against other groups of people, including Native Americans, Asians, and other non-Caucasian groups. Sohoni (2007), in “Unsuitable Suitors: Anti-Miscegenation Laws, Naturalization Laws and the Construction of Asian Identities,” examines how state-level anti-miscegenation laws affected Asian Americans in the period between the Civil War and the civil rights movement of the 1960s. He mentions that Nevada was the first state to prohibit interracial marriage between Asians and whites. He points out that one reason Asians were discriminated against was to problematize their competition with whites in the job market.

The Yale Law Journal Co., Inc. (1949), without mention of the author, published an article, “Constitutionality of anti-miscegenation statutes” that explains that the belief by whites in nonwhite inferiority and inability was the broad and largely uncontested rationale used to justify discrimination. Legislative prohibitions against intermarriage were the result of the myth of white superiority and provided a legal framework for the preferential treatment of whites in the economic sphere. “Evidence” drawn in support of anti-miscegenation laws concluded that blacks are physically and mentally inferior and that children of mixed races are less intelligent. The idea of blacks being intellectually inferior was based on blacks’ low intelligence-test scores when compared with the scores of whites from the same geographical area. This article emphasizes that it is not because of their lack of potential that blacks performed poorly on the intelligence tests, but rather that the scores are a result of environmental factors. To make this point, it should be noted that the World War I era Alpha Test discovered that the median score of blacks was higher than that of southern whites, and the same kinds of results were shown in other geographical areas. Black children in Los Angeles who were educated with white children had slightly higher intelligence test scores than the white children. Similarly, the widespread myth that blacks are more susceptible than whites to diseases such as pneumonia-influenza and tuberculosis has no basis in fact. Interestingly, while tuberculosis rates at the time were greater among blacks than whites, tuberculosis had been more prevalent among whites than among blacks before the Civil War. The belief in “Negro inferiority” has been described as a reason for anti-miscegenation laws. The abovementioned Yale article states that some whites believe that miscegenation occurs among “the dregs of society” and that their offspring are more likely to be burdens on society. However, the research shows that miscegenation occurs among people at all educational levels, and especially among people at higher educational levels.

Due to discriminatory laws, interracial couples faced different kinds of punishment. States varied regarding the severity of the punishment inflicted on interracial couples. Barnett (1994) provides a list of states and their provisions regarding the punishment of interracial couples. Some states voided marriages and also imposed fines and penalties, and other states only charged fines and penalties. Alabama, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and West Virginia, for example, voided interracial marriages and charged fines and penalties. The punishment ranged from a \$100 fine in Delaware to ten years of imprisonment in several other states.

There were some hidden reasons behind the restrictions on interracial marriages. One main reason was that, through the anti-miscegenation laws, whites wanted to preserve racial purity, as Sohoni (2007), in “Anti-Miscegenation Laws, Naturalization Laws, and the Construction of Asian Identities,” has highlighted. The second reason was that racial mixing would give social and economic privileges to minority groups, and whites did not want to lose the privileges they had enjoyed for so long. On the other hand, Sohoni points out that in some cases, in order to have access to economic opportunities, white men have married Native American and Mexican women.

Ways to Combat Racism

Many scholars have focused on the importance of personal narratives to help the dominant group realize the negative effects of their racism. Lawrence III (2012), in “Listening for Stories in All the Right Places: Narrative and Racial Formation Theory,” states that “race is constructed for a political purpose” (p. 248). Since the dominant group formed the prevailing concepts that formed our ideas of race, it is the responsibility of minorities to challenge the status quo, to create opportunities to share their voices, and to open venues to express solidarity with other minorities in order to begin to expunge such ideas. Further, they must challenge the political motives of the dominant group. Lawrence firmly believes that minorities must come together to fight racism and white supremacy. He asserts that minorities should know what to study, what stories and data to gather, and how to interpret those stories. He adds that “The meanings of Black, White, Asian, Latino, or biracial may change, but they change within a history and politics of competing struggles to maintain or resist racial subordination” (p. 249). What we can deduce from Lawrence’s argument is that to combat racism successfully, we have to actively take part in sharing our stories in order to highlight the injustices of racism and promote the call for equality.

Education also plays a vital role in changing society. Payne (1984) argues that since racism in American education has had a horrifying effect on Americans, “its results cannot be removed simply busing or by providing so-called equal opportunity” (p. 124). The writer adds that theoretically, the legal system might provide equal opportunities to all people regardless of color, but, in reality, it might not provide equal chances to people of color. Payne asserts that multicultural education can be one of the means towards eradicating racism. However, as the author indicates, there is insufficient research on how multicultural education and racism are interconnected. There is, therefore, a challenge for scholars to design the appropriate curriculum that is supportive of creating reciprocity among all racial and cultural groups. If a possible avenue towards a solution lies in multicultural education, the question becomes: is multicultural education needed in high school or only in universities? Is multicultural education required in each department or only in certain departments? These might be research questions for future scholars.

The first phase of racial history was very painful for minorities, as the court cases and the Constitution itself did not safeguard the rights of all people equally. Racism has been abolished legally but still exists in practice. Although Bell (2005), a key figure in critical race theory, believes that racism is “permanent” (p. 309), we still must strive to find the means to foster respect for every race and culture and to weaken discriminatory practices. Bell saw the horrible effects of racism in the twentieth century and believed that racism would continue to be a problem in the twenty-first. Today, it is the task of critical race theory students to combat racism in this twenty-first century by helping empower the downtrodden by insisting that their voices be heard. Accordingly, African Americans, Mexican Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and other racial groups must express themselves through their narratives. There is also a need for all minorities to join for the greater purpose: to fight against racism and white supremacy. Gómez (2012), in her “Looking for Race in All the Wrong Places,” encourages her colleagues to center race and racism in their research in response to the rapidly increasing population of nonwhites. She points out the necessity of doing more comparative research on race. She urges researchers to design more studies that compare how race and racism among racial groups align with whites and subgroups of whites.

Though Critical Race theorists like Bell, Lawrence, Gómez, and others have tried to address the problem of racism in the United States, all those writers believed that there is not enough research done on the interconnectedness between race, racism, and law. Though we can readily understand Bell's frustration, the results of his protests against racist practices in academia have given Gómez optimism about uplifting the condition of racial minorities. If we compare today's world to the world of one hundred years ago, we see many improvements in terms of the respect shown for people of differing races in the United States. What is necessary at this point is, with the tools offered in critical race theory, is to complete a deeper study of minorities and bring their stories, their voices, into academic scholarship. Using personal (counter) narratives, increasing exposure to multicultural education, and incorporating the study of all minorities in critical race theory may prove to be effective practices in the effort to overcome the racism that many say is still prevalent in American society.

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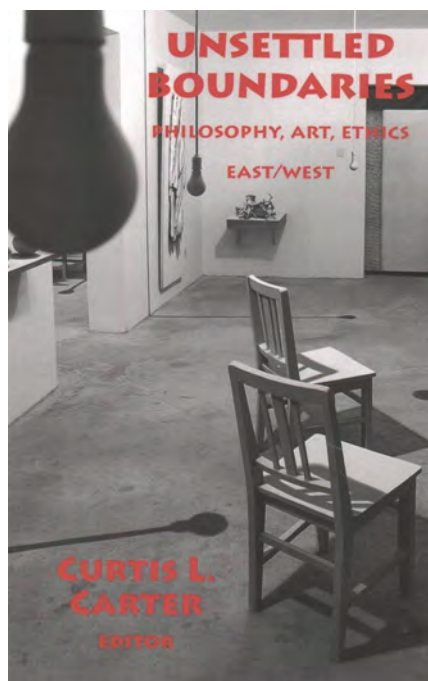
Corresponding author: Ashok Bhusal

Email: abhusal@miners.utep.edu

Book received:

Curtis L. Carter. (Ed.). (2017). *Unsettled Boundaries: Philosophy, Art, Ethics East/West*. Milwaukee: Marquette UP

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Not to be confused with Robert E. Ficken's *Unsettled Boundaries* (2003), this is a selection of papers presented at a conference held at Marquette University in October of 2011. Edited by Curtis L. Carter, the volume seeks to explore how "Chinese and Western authors mutually attempt to integrate ideas from their respective Chinese and Western aesthetic theories and art practices into their respective contemporary theories". The text is divided into three parts; I: Philosophy and Art; II: Art and Society, and III: Art East and West. Notable among the essays included are those by Jason Wirth and Richard Shusterman which focus on various themes that link western aesthetics to Chinese aesthetics, while Chinese researchers Peng Feng, Liu Yuedi, Cheng Xiangzhan and Wang Chunchen address dominant issues in contemporary Chinese aesthetics with a view to their relationship with Western analogues. "Both sets of essays draw upon the traditional Chinese aesthetics referencing Confucius's teachings in conjunction with western analytic philosophy and pragmatism".

In a volume that brings together disparate conference papers, labored ligatures are usually conceived to articulate sundry essays into a cohesive whole. Having been composed *latu sensu* to explore "common themes running throughout past and contemporary views on philosophy, art and ethics" and ascertain "developing connections emerging between eastern and western philosophical and artistic cultures", the volume reflects the tensions and the difficulty involved in focusing dispersed energies and piloting them into coincidence. Yet in spite of this, the editor has managed to put together a relatively consistent text with essays that address the general outcomes expressed in both title and introduction.

This volume raises an issue of methodology. Quantifying "the aesthetic" in diverse cultures in order to "find common ground between western and eastern aesthetics and art practices"

can be an unenviable task, one where the researcher discusses communities of aesthetic judgment (eastern; western) and then fetches authors and material to offer as archetypes (Confucius; Marx; Wittgenstein) in order to make a case. There are two inherent drawbacks to this method: 1 – In Kant, for example, aesthetic judgment is subjective and in no manner linked to an absolute concept; aesthetic judgments are articulated with the belief that others *should* agree with them. The community of universal agreement with regard to aesthetic judgment (*sensus communis*), then, remains entirely virtual because empirical aesthetic communities are, at the very least, problematic, and 2 – Mazhar Hussain and Robert Wilkinson, when editing *The Pursuit of Comparative Aesthetics: An Interface Between the East and West* (Burlington, VT, Ashgate, 2006) warn us that “In general, claims to have identified *the* Indian or Chinese (and so forth) attitude to or way of conceptualizing phenomenon *x* are to be viewed with the greatest circumspection”. Perhaps this is their acknowledgement of the fact that, in the broad-spectrum critical approach that is inherent to texts – especially composite ones like this – that deal with comparative aesthetics, writers must rely on a typology of cultural archetypes in order to formulate interpretive criteria. My trouble with this analytic approach is not just that I am not an enthusiast of purposive prototypes, but that I am distrustful of paradigms used to decipher and compare millenary cultures such as the Chinese over long periods of time. There is a methodological supposition behind this approach, that in some way archetypes hover over creative activity and even regulate the reading and meaning of distinct cultures and their artifacts.

Having said this, I should add that these essays, wisely curated by Professor of Aesthetics Curtis L. Carter, generate the type of dialogical environment that is – or at any rate should be – the salient characteristic of Aesthetics analysis. The essays’ discrete character yields a productive tension that encourages intense debate and a more comprehensive reflection regarding the nature of comparative aesthetics and, more broadly, comparative philosophy. In his essay, Jason Wirth summarizes the importance of this deliberation when he asks: “After all is said and done, what is comparative philosophy? Is it merely the art of lining up our philosophical apples and oranges? (p. 16).

Recommended.

Dr. Alfonso J. García Osuna
Editor

