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Introduction

In reviewing the articles included in this issue of the *IAFOR Journal of Arts and Humanities*, what comes to mind is that there is a growing preoccupation among scholars about the future of the word. By this I do not mean to say that there is an articulated expectation that, at some unspecified time in the future, we will all communicate with hand signals or with ideograms and emojis appearing on our phone screens. The abstract foreboding that one senses here is grounded upon a more circumspect deliberation, one that considers sea-changes in a socio-political infrastructure that is the critical circuitry in the creation of meaning. Therefore, and considering the “fake news” debate that currently – and vociferously – invades deliberation on the Fourth Estate, the disquiet stems from the suspicion that the intricate semantic webs created by language are being undermined in the public sphere, that the value of words as carriers of meaning, agents of “truth” and enablers of social cohesion is being nullified in current social, political and cultural contexts.

In her article, Angeliki Monnier identifies the topical repertoires, the underlying schemas that structure the fake news debate. She focuses attention on the mainstream French press, from the election of Donald Trump to the presidency of the United States on November 8, 2016, until his inauguration on January 20, 2017. In her view, the narratives elaborated in and by the French media regarding the dysfunctions of the contemporary information landscape indicate a utopian vision of the role of journalists and reproduce the linear information model. Furthermore, by blaming the dysfunctions of social media for the flaws of the information environment, public actors tend to forget to take thorough interest in the reasons that lead people to fall prey to fake news.

Er-Win Tan suggests that the advent of the Internet and the Information Age, initially hailed as ushering in a new era of transparency and interconnectivity in binding the world closer together, has also brought a proliferation in the phenomenon known as fake news, a trend that is set to continue for the foreseeable future.

Lily Halpert Zamir focuses her study on the works of three different groups of writers who dared to write in Auschwitz-Birkenau, where anyone caught with a piece of paper or a pencil stub was immediately sentenced to death. It is evident, judging from the harsh penalty imposed on those caught writing, that the criminals who ran the camps were very fearful of the written word, of its majestic power to reveal truth.

Isra Daraiseh and M. Keith Booker analyse Tayeb Salih’s *Season of Migration to the North* (1967), which they consider one of the best-known Arabic novels; its English translation, moreover, is probably the most widely read Arabic novel in English. Their analysis reveals that *Season of Migration to the North* is in many ways a classic postcolonial novel, concerned both with the British colonization of Sudan and with the postcolonial legacy of British rule. It also engages in direct dialog with British literature.

Isabel Pascua Febles aims to make a contribution to the ongoing project of establishing the normative foundations for a critical theory of ethical translation. By defining her efforts and purposes in this manner, she recognizes that she enters difficult terrain, for the interpretations of the word “ethical” can be unstable and even arbitrary. In view of this complication, and in the interests of aiming attention at specific objectives, she states that what drives this effort is a politically-inflected manner of looking at the issue of translation based on progressive, emancipatory values and post-colonial theory. As such, interest in culture, diversity,

otherness, identity and other social factors that can define the connotations of the adjective “ethical” has guided the research; it contemplates an engagement with notions such as the type of impact the Western translator’s socio-cultural baggage has on their translation of a text that is the product of a non-Western sensibility.

Alyssa Acierno seeks to provide an archetypal instance of the problematic phenomenon of film remaking. In analyzing Fellini’s *8½* and Marshall’s remake of it, *Nine*, the article defines film remaking as a variable concept pulled in every direction by the remaking director’s acumen and their views on the film’s role in the world of local cinematic industries, critics and audiences. It also seeks to address a fundamental critical issue in the discussion surrounding the remake: the cultural differences between the source film’s audience and the remake’s target audience. This article takes an interest chiefly in the manner in which cultural and historical differences that separate the source film (*8½*) from the remake (*Nine*) determine the director’s expectations regarding the film’s target audience. And, moreover, how those expectations are instrumental in the film’s fundamental characteristics.

My Editor’s Essay emphasizes the continuing decline of the word, as it wages a dignified, albeit unequal battle for supremacy against the frenzied mishmash of thrills provided by today’s technology. It is hoped that the reader will find these articles compelling and that they will serve to provoke stimulating reflection.

Thomas G. Endress reminds us of the power of words when set to music. Exactly fifty years ago, 1968 – nestled between the Summer of Love (‘67) and Woodstock (‘69) – was known as the year of revolt. From Vietnam protests and Civil Rights marches, to the assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, American culture, like that of countries around the world, was awash in struggle yet alive in activist ideology. In particular, Classic Rock of the era served as a reflection of the times, a call to action, and eventually offered enduring insight into the qualities of effective protest music.

Alfonso J. García-Osuna
Editor

Narratives of the Fake News Debate in France

Angeliki Monnier
University of Lorraine, France

Abstract

The objective of this article is to identify the topical repertoires, the underlying schemas that structure the fake news debate. Attention is focused on the mainstream French press, from the election of Donald Trump to the presidency of the United States on November 8, 2016, until his inauguration on January 20, 2017. The narratives elaborated in and by the French media regarding the dysfunctions of the contemporary information landscape indicate a utopian vision of the role of journalists and reproduce the linear information model. The impact of this doxa is threefold. First, it forwards a certain vision of journalism, based on fact-checking, naively considered to be the solution to the post-truth problem. Journalists are the main victims and at the same time the main perpetrators of this perception. Second, on an epistemological level, it brings back into the agenda the long-ago abandoned concept of “masses”. Finally, from a political standpoint, the rhetoric on media’s superpower is far from promoting the democratic enhancement of societies. By blaming the dysfunctions of social media for the flaws of the information environment, public actors tend to forget to take thorough interest in the reasons that lead people to fall prey to fake news.

Keywords: fake news, journalism, narratives, French press, post-truth

Introduction

Disinformation is not just a problem of our times (Bloch, 1999; Huyghe, 2016; Ploux, 2001). Long before the recent emergence and propagation of fake news on social media, questions related to “trapped” contents (propaganda, rumors, hoaxes, trolls, etc.) had caught the attention of scholars (Dauphin, 2002; Froissart, 2002, 2004; Lebre, 2014). However, since the United States presidential election of November 2016, the issue is regularly discussed in the traditional offline and online media as well as on social networks. In France, debating fake news in public arenas became a “discursive moment”, according to the expression forged by Sophie Moirand (2007), giving rise to spaces and practices of expression by different actors (media representatives, politicians, ordinary citizens, etc.). Starting from this observation, our thesis in this article is based on the following postulate: the discourses generated in relation to the dissemination of fake news crystallize some of the underlying topoi that form contemporary societies. This approach draws on works by Marc Angenot, according to whom discourses circulating within given spatiotemporal frames reflect a certain “state” of society.

Therefore, in this article, we will not analyze the process of the production, circulation and reception of fake news – topics on which academic literature already exists (e.g. Allcott and Gentzkow, 2017; Berger and Milman, 2012; Zubiaga et al., 2016). We will not explore the relation of modern media with virality, nor will we denounce the phenomenon of disinformation adopting a socio-critical approach – even though disinformation is indeed reprehensible. The objective of our approach is to identify the topical repertoires, the underlying schemas, which occur when using this expression, as emblematic signs of common doxa. To put it shortly, we are interested in the way fake news is discussed, and we would like to shed light to the narratives that structure the debate. We will focus our attention on a micro-corpus coming from the mainstream French press: from the election of Donald Trump to the presidency of the United States on November 8, 2016, until his inauguration on January 20, 2017. Even though fake news was part of the public agenda long before that time (e.g. Brexit), it abundantly occupied the media arena in the aftermath of the American presidential election.

It is commonly understood that fake news emanates from various motivations and can espouse different formats: humoristic pastiches, inaccurate information, sensationalist topics seeking to reach a large public, and so forth. Defining fake news is certainly an issue of major importance and several analyses have tried to discern the inherent characteristics of the concept, as well as its nuances in comparison to other terms similarly employed (hoaxes, rumors, etc.). However, undertaking such an operation entails confronting serious epistemological and long debated questions related to the meaning of truth – and the “fundamental tension that inhabits it” (Ricœur, 1955: 156) – objectivity, newness, and counterfeit (Post, 2014). Having in mind that our interest lies in the narratives of the fake news debate and not in the fakeness of the news themselves, these questions go beyond the scope of this paper.

Public Narratives Mirror Society

This work adopts the archaeological approach advocated by Marc Angenot. This author, through a situated analysis of specific discourses, seeks to identify the eventual topoi which characterize public doxa. Narration is at the center of Angenot’s concerns. In a synthesis of his work put forward in 2006, the author explains that his goal is to “identify the eventual discursive invariants, the common premises, the dominances and the recurrences, the

homologies and the regulations hidden behind the apparent discursive diversity and cacophony” (Angenot, 2006, p. 3).

The author does not dissociate the “content” and the “form”, that is, what is said and the way it is said. His approach echoes the theories about the “myths” (Barthes, 1957), the “frames” (Goffman, 1991), the social representations (Abric, 1994; Moliner, 1996), and so on, which are often used in the study of media and political discourses. But it goes beyond these postures by adopting a “gnoseological” perspective, which aims at shedding knowledge on the ways the world can be narratively schematized on linguistic materials at a certain moment.

For Marc Angenot (1978), this schematization is not only the result of the internal functions of the text. The author argues that the narrative cement of a discursive production lies in – and reveals – its underlying ideological maxims (Provenzano, 2006). In this sense, it constitutes a reflection of a “state of society” as social praxis. Indeed, far from sticking to a formalistic or a structural-functionalist approach, Marc Angenot is interested in the social dimension of discourses. One can note here a certain proximity to Michel Foucault’s concept of “discursive formation” (1969, p. 56), but also to the Critical Discourse Analysis stand (Van Dijk, 1977; Wodak, 1989), as well as to Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of “fields” in relation to symbolic productions (Bourdieu, 1982, 1992). To put it in a nutshell, Angenot focuses on discourses as communication phenomena. The latter are understood as representations – symptomatic of a specific era – as performative productions, but also as topoi embedded in time and space. This is the conceptual frame that has guided our work.

On the Empirical Study

For the purposes of this work, we used a media aggregator, the Europresse platform¹, allowing access to the archives of several media outlets, online and offline. Our focus concerned the three French titles that traditionally represent the main political areas: *Le Figaro* (right), *Le Monde* (center), *Libération* (left). Both printed and online versions of these three newspapers were included in the analysis. Our research protocol used the key words “false information(s)” [*fausse(s) informations*] and “false news” [*fausse(s) nouvelles*] (singular and plural), which are the French equivalent for “fake news” – even though the term “fake news” was ever since established as such in the French public sphere. As explained before, our investigation was circumscribed within the period starting from the American presidential election (November 8, 2016) until the inauguration of President Donald Trump (January 20, 2017), that is, 2.5 months. It turned out that only thirty articles corresponded to the criteria initially set, forming the corpus of our analysis. Sixteen journalists signed their articles (next to nine unsigned articles), each of whom accounting for up to three publications. The full list of the texts with the details of the publication (date, name of the newspaper, newspaper section, journalists’ names when mentioned) is provided in the appendix.

As Figure 1 reveals, *Le Monde*, mostly in its online version, published half of the articles produced in the period under review. *Libération* devoted the least amount of space to the topic, but in a balanced way between the printed and the online version. *Le Figaro* is positioned between the two, with a clear prevalence of the online publications.

¹ <http://www.europresse.com/en/>

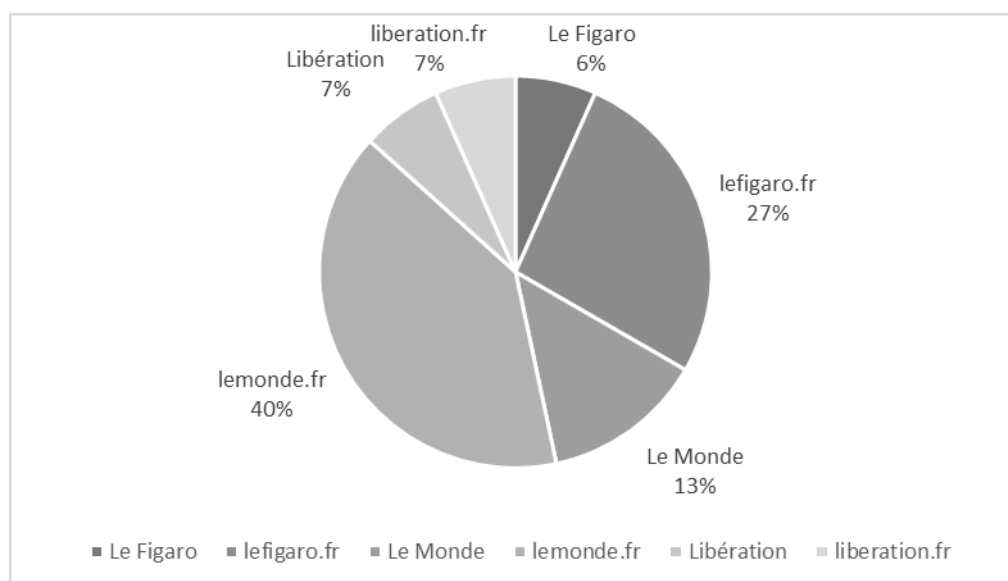


Figure 1: The distribution of the fake news debate in three French mainstream newspapers, from the American presidential election (November 8, 2016) to the inauguration of President Donald Trump (January 20, 2017).

Given the limited extent of the data analyzed, this work should be apprehended only as an exploratory research. Its goal is to identify the narratives of the fake news debate within the French mainstream media arena: the underlying symbolic schemas, the actors involved and their roles. Our approach entailed different operations: a thematic content analysis was conducted, and texts were classified based on semantic criteria; the chronology of their publication was established in relation to the hosting newspapers; relevant semantic occurrences were located; narrative universes were identified; underlying ideological maxims were, in an interpretative process, explored. Far from claiming that discourse represents “reality”, our assumption is that it at least reveals human thought: visions of the world, which, through their performative effect, can lead to the construction of this reality.

This approach has obviously a lot to do with the researcher’s interpretation capacities. It is a fact that we fully assume, and which seems to us fundamental in any research process:

Texts are the result of an intention on behalf of actors and the object of interpretation on behalf of the analyst. How can the latter conduct the interpretation? [...] One could compare the classes obtained with the results of an electrocardiogram; the interpretation of the curves or the choice of a surgical intervention always rests with the surgeon ... It is not possible to interpret the classes by considering only the apparent meanings to which the words refer. (Fallery and Rodhain, 2007, p. 25, see also Compagno, 2017)

To support our analytical posture and ensure an unbiased approach to the texts beyond subjective readings and interpretations, we resorted to certain functionalities proposed by Tropes,² a language processing and semantic classification software (8.4 version). Tropes was initially developed by Pierre Molette and Agnès Landré, based on the work of the French psychologist Rodolphe Ghiglione. It uses the grammatical proposition (subject, verb, predicate) as the principal unit of division and carries out a complex Cognitive-Discursive

² <https://www.semantic-knowledge.com/tropes.htm>

Analysis process (CDA). Each proposition of the text is thus allotted a score, depending on its relative weight, its occurrence order and its argumentative role. The propositions are then sorted out according to their respective scores, which makes it possible to identify the *Remarkable propositions*, in other words “the most characteristic parts of the text”, “without any previous interpretation” (Fallery and Rodhain, 2007, p. 12). These propositions introduce the main themes or characters, and express the events that are essential to the progression of the story (causal attributions of consequences, results, aims). Furthermore, the *References* function brings together into “equivalent classes” closely related common and proper nouns (for example, “Moscow” and “Kremlin” are grouped together into the “Russia” class). This makes it possible to quantify the referential universes of a text, only significant references being displayed. Finally, Tropes displays the relations between these various references. *Relations* indicate which classes of equivalents are frequently associated (i.e. encountered within the same proposition). *Relations* leave little room for chance. Indeed, it is rather unlikely for two classes of equivalents to be persistently connected, in the same order, within the same text – with the exception, of course, of compound words, for example “post-truth”, or common associations such as first names preceding last names, for instance “Donald Trump”.

Brief Chronology of the Fake News Debate

In the corpus examined, the first articles related to fake news appeared approximately a week after the election of Donald Trump, on November 15, 2016, in “LeMonde.fr”. Two of them referred to the role of Facebook in the American election and its impact on the readers’ behavior in a broader way; the third concerned the use of false information in the Syrian war. The question of the measures taken by Google and Facebook to fight against the production and dissemination of fake news occupied “LeFigaro.fr”, the following day (16/11/2017). The printed version of *Le Monde* raised the same issue a day after, on 17/11/2017. The topic remained in the news with at least one publication (and up to three) every two to seven days (Figure 2; for the titles of the publications see appendix).

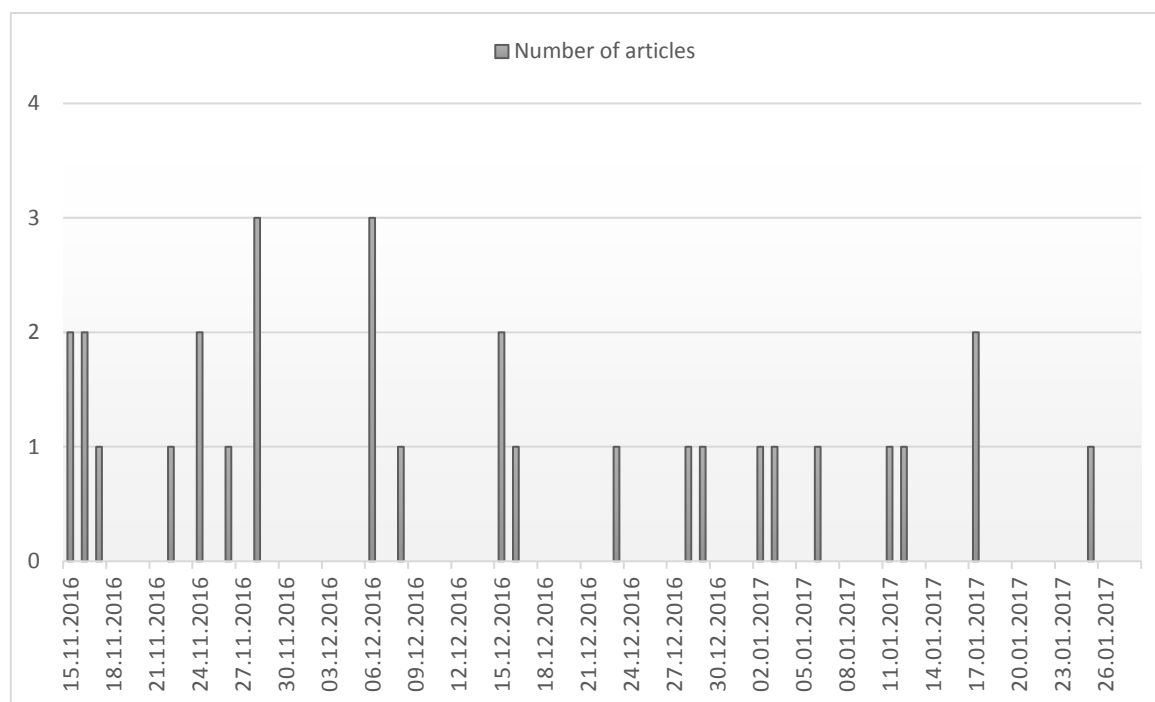


Figure 2: The chronology of the fake news debate in three French mainstream newspapers, from the American presidential election (November 8, 2016) to the inauguration of President Donald Trump (January 20, 2017).

A second series of articles appeared at the end of November 2016. It focused on specific cases of fake news (the stock market impact of false information disseminated about the Vinci group, a building and civil engineering company in France; comments erroneously attributed to Marine LePen, President of the National Rally political party – previously named National Front). At the same time, some articles opted for a more distanced, analytical approach (“Do Fake News Harm Democracy?”, “LeMonde.fr”, 26/11/2016, republished, with a different title, “On Democracy by Algorithms”, two days later, in *Le Monde*, printed version).

At the beginning of December 2016, the subject was back in the news with the Pizzagate scandal, an online rumor associating a small neighborhood restaurant with presumed activities by the Democrat candidate Hilary Clinton (published on “LeFigaro.fr”, “LeMonde.fr”), but also other cases of “brainwashing” [intox] disseminated on the web (treated on “Liberation.fr”, and “LeMonde.fr”). The second half of December was again occupied by the measures undertaken by Facebook, and the aftermaths of the Vinci case, but also provided a more distanced analysis on the “information war” (*Libération*).

In January 2017, *Le Figaro* recounted Donald Trump’s counter-attacks about fake news, and then probed Facebook’s social responsibility, through an interview (published simultaneously on *Le Figaro*’s web and printed versions) with Sheryl Sandberg, Facebook’s Chief Operating Officer. *Le Monde* (online and printed) and *Libération* offered reflexive articles on the information process in contemporary societies.³

³ The article of 6/1/2017 (“lemonde.fr”) is only weakly related to erroneous information, mentioning, among other things, the risks of using fake images in the fight for the protection of animals.

Brief Typology of the Fake News Debate

The attribution of the articles (Figure 1) reveals the importance that the issue took in the newsrooms of *Le Monde*. This newspaper (online and printed version) accounts for 16 articles in total, more than those published in *Le Figaro* (10 articles) and much more than those of *Libération* (4 articles). The texts' distribution also highlights the importance of the Internet in this debate, which hosted most articles that came out (22 out of 30). What are the articles about fake news talk about *specifically*? An initially manual thematic analysis, supported and verified by Tropes, revealed three referents (Figure 3).

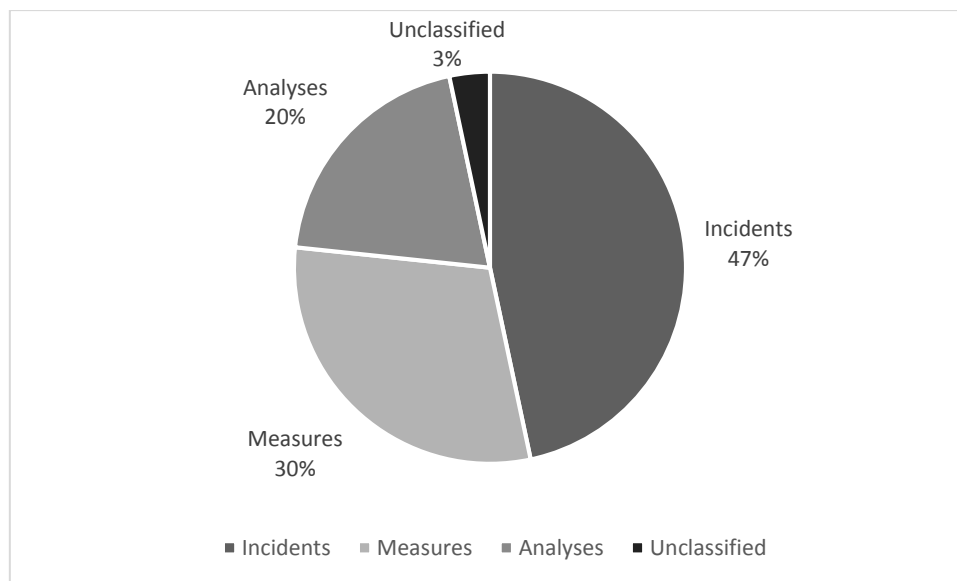


Figure 3: The typology of the fake news debate in three French mainstream newspapers, from the American presidential election (November 8, 2016) to the inauguration of President Donald Trump (January 20, 2017).

A first series of articles, rather significant (14), recounts incidents and discourses due to the circulation of erroneous information. These are descriptive texts related to the uses of fake news (e.g. “the attack against Vinci” or the “Pizza Gate”) that present the course as well as the immediate and tangible effects of an online rumor, of a malicious information, and so on. Two of the articles come from *Libération*’s fact-checking section named “Désintox” and aim at debunking erroneous information. In general, incidents are mostly posted online (Figure 4). A second series of texts (9) focus on the measures taken by the media to combat false news. Here, facts prevail as well but the overall approach is linked to an underlying question about the regulation of the media system. Texts refer to social networks, mainly Facebook, as well as other giants of the Internet, such as Google. Incident and measures are often published in the newspapers’ economic column. Finally, a final series of articles, notably published by *Le Monde* (Figure 4), provides reflexive approaches to the phenomenon, its causes and especially its repercussions for contemporary societies. The angle here is more distanced and the tone speculative. However, no definition of the expression “fake news” is provided in these texts.

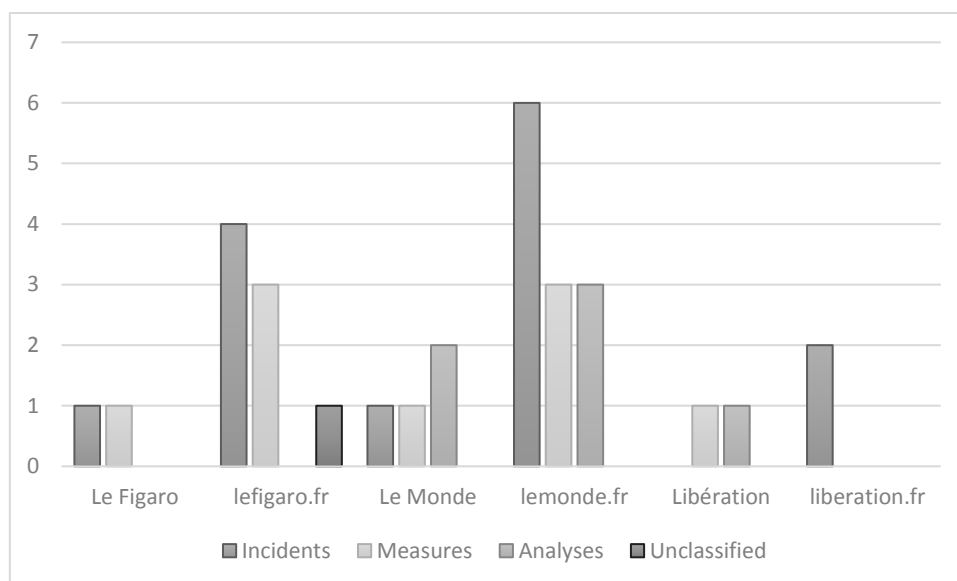


Figure 4: The fake news articles as distributed in three French mainstream newspapers from the American presidential election (November 8, 2016) to the inauguration of President Donald Trump (January 20, 2017).

The three referential axes of the media coverage of the fake news phenomenon correspond to the three levels of information ethics advocated by Daniel Cornu (1994, p. 116 sq., following Otfried Höffe's typology of justice, Höffe, 1991, p. 133). The first is descriptive and concerns practices. The second is normative oriented because it refers to the deontology and the regulation of practices. The third is positioned on a more abstract level and has a reflexive dimension. Drawing on this author's theses, we propose the following categorization of the coverage of fake news.

Level of coverage	Content
Descriptive	Incidents and discourses due to the circulation of erroneous information
Normative	Actions to undertake (measures), regulation of practices
Reflexive	Perspectives, analyses, reflections

Table 1: The Coverage of the Fake News Debate

It comes perhaps as no surprise to find that descriptive articles (incidents and measures) occupy almost half of the texts of the corpus (Figure 3). Indeed, as it has so often been highlighted, "information" is first about "reporting the facts": "what happens or what has happened" (Charaudeau, 2005, p. 121 sq., see also Esquenazi, 2002). Here are the facts reported:

- A false statement, sent to several media by e-mail, claimed that Vinci had been the victim of an accounting fraud which obliged the company to revise its accounts and caused the dismissal of its financial director (4 publications).
- A man opened fire on Sunday in an American pizzeria following a rumor born on the Internet about a pedophile network involving Hillary Clinton and the restaurant in question (2 publications).
- Donald Trump denounces the "fake news" linking him to Moscow.

- German diplomacy rests “puzzled” at Donald Trump claiming to be the victim of methods of denunciation worthy of Nazi Germany.
- Désintox debunks a video that denounces, by means of erroneous calculations, the social regime of self-employed workers in France.
- The “Anti-Trump demonstrators use buses” thesis is fake news.
- The president of the National Front (Marine LePen) never said that “Hitler did less damage in France than [François] Hollande”. This quote was falsely attributed to Marine LePen.
- More than 93% of French are not ready to vote for Marine LePen in the 2017 presidential election. This statement is the result of intentional misinformation.
- The victory of the Syrian army on the rebels in Aleppo on Tuesday, December 13, was accompanied by false images and brainwashing (coming from both camps)
- False images do not serve the fight against the savage slaughter of animals in French slaughterhouses.

Texts related to the 2nd and 3rd categories (measures, analyses) are also very present in the media discourse. For these two categories, the study of the frequently associated “equivalent classes” discloses the contents dealt with and the questions raised.

<i>Category "Analyses"</i>	<i>Category "Measures"</i>
democracy-algorithm	arbitrator-truth
Facebook-election	fight-false information
Facebook-maker	Facebook-arbitrator
Election-maker	Facebook-fight
war-information	Facebook-false information
information-democracy	Facebook-information
risk-post-truth	Facebook-game
risk-society	Facebook-earnings
strategy-obscurity	Facebook-set of measures
	google-earnings
	information-social network
	internet-weapon
	internet-propaganda
	earnings-information

Table 2: Relations between References (more than two occurrences)

Narrative Universes of the Fake News Debate

It has been shown that most of the articles examined are of factual nature: they recount facts related to past events, as well actions to be taken (categories “Incidents” and “Measures”). The reflexive analyses of the phenomenon (category “Analyses”), which began, as was pointed out above, at the end of November, remain a minority. Nevertheless, these discourses attract our attention, because they reveal the interpretive angle through which the fake news phenomenon is understood.

The study of the “Analyses” using Tropes exposes their main “references fields” (Figure 5). The latter disclose the narrative of the fake news phenomenon universe provided by its different analyses: its spatial anchorages (“world”); its temporal circumscriptions (“year”, 2016 or 2017); its actors, both human (“Trump”, “President”, “American”) and non-human (“company”, “media”, “social network”, “Facebook”); its stakes (“Democracy”, “fake”, “facts”, “challenge”, “post”, “new”, “information”, “war”).

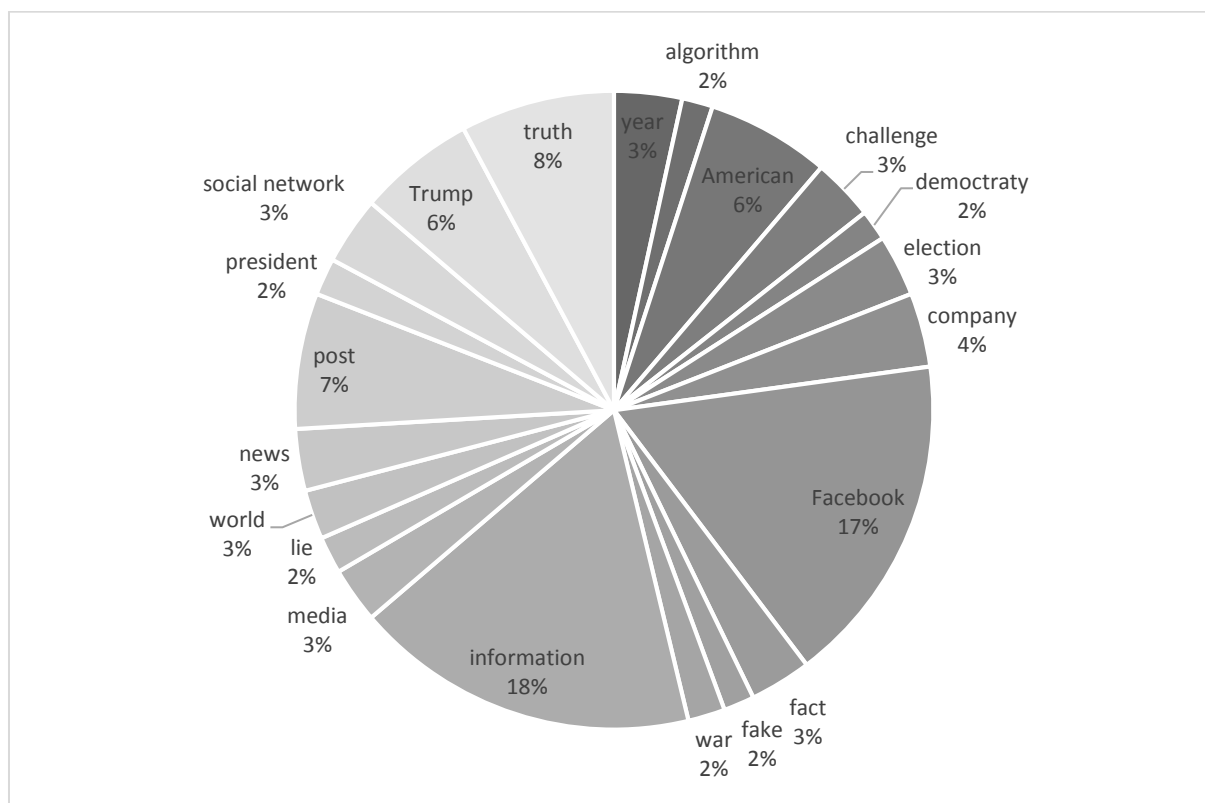


Figure 5: The reference fields of the analyses of the fake news phenomenon, as registered in three French mainstream newspapers, from the American presidential election (November 8, 2016) to the inauguration of President Donald Trump (January 20, 2017).

Like any narrative (Holstein and Gubrium, 2012), the symbolic construction of a social phenomenon – especially of a public problem – leads to the designation of actors endorsing positive or negative roles and forging the reality discussed (Palma, 1980). What are the actors involved in the narrative universe generated by the phenomenon of fake news? It is primarily the media, especially social networks (Facebook), but also the technological platforms in a broader way (Google), that emerge as actors “despite of their will”. They determine the emergence and proliferation of fake news, because of their technical characteristics (the principle of algorithms and the subsequent amplification of “filter bubbles”) but also the economic logics that underpin them. The question of whether social networks constitute media organisms, in the traditional sense of the word, that is subject to editorial logics and therefore responsible for the content they publish, is at the core of the debate. Analyses also point to the malicious role of those who make fake news as well as those who profit from their spread. The latter can be actors “from above”, notably politicians aiming to discredit their opponents. Donald Trump or the extreme right are mentioned here. Fake news makers are also actors “from below”, anonymous people, such as young Macedonians or Georgians, who seek to profit financially by creating and disseminating erroneous information that is likely to generate clicks. Finally, the users of the media themselves contribute to the

expansion of the phenomenon by their incredulity, their irresponsibility or their indifference. Despite their often-good intentions, the emotional approach through which they approach reality and information, as well as the search for self-promotion and empowerment, restrict their horizons instead of enlarging them. The following excerpts illustrate these narratives:

Post-truth information [...] addresses an ethical challenge to those in charge of technology companies such as Google, Facebook, Twitter, which convey fake news, and have, very lately, started to react. These companies contribute, without necessarily looking for it, to a collective consumption of information, through “cognitive bubbles”, where each one locks oneself in one’s own convictions (Editorial, *Le Monde*, 3 January 2017).⁴

In the era of post-truth, also called “post-fact”, information, truth is no longer always the basic value. The facts are not henceforth fundamental. Public figures can now announce false news in full knowledge of the facts, without any regard for the truth – and benefit from it (Not signed, *lemonde.fr*, 2 January 2017).

The investigators of the major newspapers went to the sources of fake news. Occasionally, the *New York Times* ended up to unexpected places in Georgia (the Caucasus) or Macedonia, where idle but creative and technologically agile young men have explained them how they made up fake news that they released in the river of the Web; how they then watched them, marveled, flourish, become “real”, massively followed, and paying off, because each “click” increases their market value in terms of advertising space. Today, even the production of fake news operates offshore ... (Sylvie Kauffmann, *Le Monde*, 28 November 2016).

It is not the corrosive force of “misinformation” that must be held responsible for the dereliction of democracy, but the fact that those who rejoice in listening the most infamous arguments, the most vulgar projections, the hysterical calls to “burn the witch”, and the most scandalous untruths ... admit that these are spectacular enormities, or that it is normal to exaggerate when one is in campaign, or that everyone can commit deviations from proprieties, or that online forum discussions will be forgotten once the election has passed (Albert Ogien, *Libération*, 23 December 2016).

[Fake news] is not always a thoughtful or planned process, with a political or financial afterthought. Sometimes it is an unlikely combination of circumstances, the addition of misinterpretations, bad faith and bad luck (Luc Vinogradoff, *Le Monde*, 22 November 2016).

The first observation in the light of these elements is that the phenomenon of fake news concerns all the instances of the traditional communication scheme: transmitters (those “from above” but also those “from below”), receivers and, of course, channels. The communication process, as the foundation of democratic societies, is thus disrupted. Second observation: all the actors mentioned so far turn out to be “opponents” (in the actantial sense of the term, Greimas, 1966) to this process: politicians who spread false information for ideological

⁴ Translations in English were conducted by the author.

purposes, anonymous people who make them up based on pecuniary motivations, publics who consume them in credulity or indifference, media organisms which by their logics and characteristics let them happen. Last but not least: the only actors to be able to *remedy* the problems generated by fake news – or at least fight against them – are journalists and, to a lesser extent, the online social media. The duty of the first to promote a quality investigative journalism is underlined.

In other words, although several actors are responsible for the production and dissemination of fake news, solutions can apparently only be found in the media world (journalists, social networks). It is upon this discursive configuration that the metanarrative (Lyotard, 1979) of fake news builds, giving rise to two utopias in regard to information.

From the Narratives to the Metanarrative: The Utopias of the Informational Process

Beyond the democratic ideal in which the fake news debate is inscribed, its analysis within a actantial narrative framework (Greimas, 1966) – seeking to identify the “actants”, and their roles – leads to two observations. The latter crystallize common perceptions, utopias of the informational process – which the narratives highlighted here merely consolidate.

The first perception is linked to the role of journalists and the margins provided by their working conditions. As if operating outside the media system, journalists are supposed to be the guarantors of truth and objectivity, without being seriously affected by the dysfunctions of the production and the circulation of information. The injunctions concerning their duty to fight against misinformation – even though they do fall within the ethical framework of the journalistic practice (Cornu, 1994) – also reproduce fantasies in regard to investigative journalism as the remedy to the evils of Society and the deficiencies of the media system (Hunter, 1997). On a more realistic level though, the working conditions of journalists, marked by precariousness, compartmentalization, the need for immediacy, and of course the race for audiences and profits, make investigation at least difficult, if not impossible. It is not our purpose here to excuse or defend media professionals, but to remind the multiple parameters that shape the media system and the constraints in which journalists evolve (Mercier, 2006; Neveu, 2013); and to note, in passing, that it is not certain that the emphasis put on the promises of investigative journalism serve the image of journalists themselves, often considered not to live up to their mission.

The second perception concerns the media power. Subject to considerable debates for decades, the paradigm of media’s superpower tends to obscure the role of people in the communication process. From the “Two-step flow of communication” (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955), the “Uses and Gratifications Theory” (Katz et al. 1973-74) and the “Spiral of silence” (Noelle-Neumann, 1974), to the more recent understandings of the information and communications technology uses (Jauréguiberry and Proulx, 2011), several works highlight the limits of media power. However, although the latter constitute established epistemological acceptations (Maigret, 2003), public narratives seem to reproduce the linear information model. A fundamental question is often skipped or at least less explored when evoked: why people fall for fake news?

The ease with which “hoaxes” circulate raises indeed questions about the numerical transformations of the political debate. But it is not proscribed to wonder about the reasons why millions of Americans wanted to believe in it and elected Donald Trump. If the “hoax” and “post” campaigns in favor of the

Republican candidate were of no interest to anyone, Facebook's algorithm would probably have given them less importance: is Facebook responsible if its users consciously share lies intended to discredit the candidates they do not like, and which comfort their own vision of the world? (Michaël Szadkowski, Damien Leloup, *Le Monde*, 15 November 2016).

The impact of this doxa is threefold. First, it forwards a certain vision of journalism – whose professional perimeter seems, by the way, already uneasy to circumscribe (Ruellan, 1992) – based on fact-checking, naively considered to be the solution to the post-truth problem (Vargo et al., 2017). Second, on an epistemological level, it seems to bring back into the agenda the concept of “masses”, long ago abandoned. For Patrick Chastenet (2017, n.p.), “this is doubtless a difficult reality to admit: public opinion needs propaganda, because in an increasingly complex and anxiogenic world, propaganda orders, simplifies and reassures by designating the camp of good and that of evil”. Third, from a political standpoint, the rhetoric on media's superpower is far from promoting the democratic enhancement of societies. By blaming journalists and the dysfunctions of certain media for the flaws of the information environment, we forget to take thorough interest in the reasons that lead people to fall prey to fake news; and by doing so, we also reproduce a moralizing attitude towards individuals who, in this context, feel despised by a dominant discourse that they do not understand, and whose anger only serves the interests of extremist political currents.

Indeed, as Pascal Froissart (2002, 2004) has underlined, the success of trapped contents and misinformation has also a lot to do with people's emotional and cognitive dispositions: when the latter really wish for something to exist, it ends up “real”, at least in the eyes of the observers concerned. Other analysts also insist on misinformation's resonance with people's fears and hopes (Lecoq and Lisarelli, 2011). As sociologist Gerald Bronner pointed out

there are four categories of the actors who circulate false information: those who do it knowing that information is fake, just to put a mess in the system; those who do so by ideological militancy as to serve their cause; those who do so to promote political, economic or even personal interests; finally, those who do it believing information is true, and it is about them that the question of “post-truth” arises (Bronner, quoted in Hirschhorn, 2017, n.p.; see also Bronner, 2013).

It is for this reason that Gerald Bronner doubts the efficiency of devices destined to help users identify the least reliable information, which are only “just a drop in the ocean” (Bronner, quoted in Hirschhorn, 2017, n.p.).

In other words, by implying the centrality of the journalists' power in establishing truths, common discourses may promote a rather simplistic vision of news, enhance shortcuts and impoverish reality from its inherent complexity. In this sense, they fail to reinforce individual empowerment as one's capacity to be aware of one's own responsibility to keep a critical eye on public discourses.

Conclusion

In this paper, it has been argued that the narratives proposed in regard to the dysfunctions of the contemporary information landscape convey a utopian vision of the role of journalists as remedies to the problem. We have discussed the limits of this perception and the pitfalls it

induces. Of course, it would be wrong to forget that these results fall within the given spatiotemporal – and certainly limited – framework of the present study: the mainstream press French, during the first weeks of President Donald Trump’s election. Are there other underlying framings of the fake news phenomenon? Debates on public issues are struggles over meaning (Angenot, 2006) that depend on the public arena in which they are carried out. Analysis of social media could, for example, reveal how ordinary people understand and comment on the fake news phenomenon. Voices coming mainly from academia progressively shift the focus of the fake news debate. The latter insist on the complexity of the phenomenon, the role of people’s cognitive attitudes (Bronner, 2013; Pennycook and Rand, 2017) as well as the economic dimensions of it (Allcott and Gentzkow, 2017). Even “Decoders”, *Le Monde*’s fact-checking section⁵ has recently revised its policy: except for extreme cases, it is ultimately for the readers to exercise their critical capacity to evaluate the reliability of an information and thus regulate the cognitive market. However, the problem remains unsolved: by putting into broader perspective our relation to truth and reality (Pouivet, 2017), don’t we end up corroborating the constructivist postulate that fueled fake news in the first place? The debate is more open than ever.

⁵ <http://www.lemonde.fr/les-decodeurs>

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Appendix

N°	Date	Newspaper	Newspaper Section (if available)	Article Title	Author(s)
1	15/11/2016	LeMonde.fr		Facebook, maker of the American election?	Michaël Szadkowski, Damien Leloup
2	15/11/2016	LeMonde.fr		Facebook's indecisions on false information.	
3	16/11/2016	LeFigaro.fr	Economy – Newsflash	Google and Facebook cut ad revenues from fake news sites.	
4	16/11/2016	LeMonde.fr		Facebook accused of playing Donald Trump's game.	Michaël Szadkowski, Damien Leloup, William Audureau
5	17/11/2016	Le Monde	Economy and Business	Facebook opens the hunt for false news.	William Audureau, Damien Leloup, Michaël Szadkowski (republishing of the 16/11/2017 article)
6	22/11/2016	LeMonde.fr		Trump and the protesters, or how a tweeted false information becomes credible.	Luc Vinogradoff
7	24/11/2016	Liberation.fr	Futures	Vinci: "Counterfeiters have shown great creativity".	
8	24/11/2016	Le Monde	Economy and Business	Hackers plunge the Vinci share price	Philippe Jacqué
9	26/11/2016	LeMonde.fr	Chronic	Do fake news harm democracy?	Sylvie Kauffmann
10	28/11/2016	LeFigaro.fr	Stock exchange	Prudente, the Paris stock exchange hesitates on the direction to take.	
11	28/11/2016	LeMonde.fr		A quote falsely attributed to Marine Le Pen on Francois Hollande and Hitler	Adrien Sénécat
12	28/11/2016	Le Monde	The world - Chronic	On democracy by algorithms.	Sylvie Kauffmann (republishing)

					of the 26/11/2016 article)
13	6/12/2016	LeFigaro.fr	Tech & web	Politics, pedophilia and misinformation: how the “Pizza Gate” rots the life of a small American restaurant.	Elisa Braun
14	6/12/2016	LeMonde.fr		« Pizzagate”: from an online rumor to the gunshots in a pizzeria.	Luc Vinogradoff, Violaine Morin
15	6/12/2016	Liberation.fr	Detox	RSI: life and death of a 5-million-views Facebook fake news	
16	8/12/2016	LeMonde.fr		« 93% of French citizens ready to vote Marine Le Pen”: the trajectory of a far-right fake news.	Adrien S��n��cat
17	15/12/2016	LeFigaro.fr	Tech & web	Facebook tests a new tool against false information.	
18	15/12/2016	LeMonde.fr		False images and propaganda of the battle of Aleppo.	Samuel Laurent, Adrien S��n��cat
19	16/12/2016	LeMonde.fr		Facebook announces a series of measures to fight against false information.	
20	23/12/2016	Lib��ration	Ideas	The war of info is declared.	Albert Ogien
21	28/12/2016	LeFigaro.fr	Economy-Business	The attack against Vinci shakes the Paris stock market.	Bertille Bayart
22	29/12/2016	Le Figaro	Business	The attack against Vinci shakes the Paris stock market.	Bertille Bayart (republication of the 28/12/2016 article)
23	2/1/2017	LeMonde.fr	Editorial	The risks of the “post-truth” society.	
24	3/1/2017	Le Monde	Editorial	The risks of the “post-truth” society.	Republication of the 2/1/2017 article
25	6/1/2017	LeMonde.fr		The crusaders of the animal cause.	Pierre Sorgue
26	11/1/2017	LeFigaro.fr	International news	Furious, Donald Trump denounces the “false information” linking him to Moscow.	Etienne Jacob

27	12/1/2017	LeFigaro.fr	Newsflash	Trump: German diplomacy “perplexed”.	
28	17/1/2017	Le Figaro	Tech	“Facebook does not want to be the arbiter of the truth” Sheryl Sandberg	Lucie Ronfaut (also published online)
29	17/1/2017	LeFigaro.fr	Tech & web	Sheryl Sandberg: “Facebook does not want to be the arbiter of the truth”	Lucie Ronfaut (also published in print)
30	25/1/2017		Event	Internet releases its anti-fake news weapons.	Pauline Moullet

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Overcoming the Challenge of Fake News

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Abstract

The advent of the Internet and the Information Age was initially hailed as ushering in a new era of transparency and interconnectivity in binding the world closer together. Yet, the Information Age has also brought a proliferation in the phenomenon known as fake news, a trend that is set to continue for the foreseeable future. In this, the potential impact of fake news on international relations should not be underestimated, particularly given the extent to which the phenomenon has been exploited by various entities, from political ideologues and political partisans to government espionage agencies, to skew the media narrative. This article will examine what fake news is and the challenge that it poses to civil society, before moving on to discuss the various types of fake news that have begun to emerge in recent years. Based on this discussion of the threats posed by the fake news phenomenon, this article will conclude by examining how educators, civil society and other stakeholders may respond to the challenges posed by fake news.

Keywords: fake news, Internet, information age, ontology, epistemology

Introduction

Although the phenomenon of fake news is not new,¹ the advent of the Information Age and the Internet has led to its proliferation on an order of magnitude. More significantly, the extent to which distorted media narratives arguably tilted the 2016 US Presidential Elections in favour of Donald Trump stand as a reflection of how a failure to maintain a centrist media narrative can have far-reaching consequences for international relations. The importance of an inquiry into the subject of fake news and its implications is further accentuated by the author's experience as a mid-career university educator that has seen increasing numbers of university students turning to the use of the Internet as an inexpensive, yet highly convenient, means of undertaking research in the social sciences. Whilst the author acknowledges the extent to which Internet sources are an important and effective means of data collection, he also emphasises that the proliferation of agenda-driven websites and purveyors of conspiracy theories underscores the necessity of sensitivity to the threats posed by fake news to civil society and caution in utilising the Internet for data collection.

This analysis shall be outlined in the following three sections, beginning with an effort to separate facts from analysis and why this distinction is important. In so doing, this section shall lay down the groundwork for identifying the online opportunities available for exploitation by purveyors of fake news. A second section examines in more detail how and why the advent of fake news poses a threat to civil society and democratic political institutions. The third section shall conclude this article by examining how civil society, educators and other stakeholders can address the challenges posed by fake news.

Separating Facts from Analysis

Facts are derived from the Latin term *factum*, denoting something that has been done. In the period since the Enlightenment, facts have increasingly been understood to refer to something that has actually occurred (as a past fact), something that has an actual existence (in the present tense), or a phenomenon whose proof is derived from an objective reality. Facts can be seen as empirically provable data, such as statistics, historical events, quotes and documentary evidence, such as diaries, memoirs and government statements. In this sense, the importance of facts and data is underscored by its criticality as the “raw material” with which observers engage in analysis of facts – in the overwhelming majority of various fields of study, it is difficult to imagine a situation in which an observer can engage in meaningful analysis without using facts as a starting point of analysis. At the same time, however, whilst there is a certain allure for facts that speak for themselves to reveal a self-evident truth, such a situation is not only tautological, but also runs contrary to the spirit of intellectual inquiry. Facts do not speak themselves – were this the case, the process of social science inquiry would be reduced to a sequence of using Google to find data that is copied and pasted. Needless to say, such an approach is unprofessional, demeans the intellectual dignity of the observer involved, and fails to make a meaningful, value-added contribution to the subject being studied. There are simply too many facts that may be relevant (directly or indirectly) to

¹ As an early example after the advent of print media during the Industrial Revolution, in 1835, the *New York Sun* published a series of articles that falsely claimed that the astronomer Sir John Herschel had, with the aid of a newly designed telescope, observed strange fauna on the surface on the moon, including unicorns and bat-winged humanoid creatures. See Stephanie Hall (2014). Belief, Legend, and the Great Moon Hoax. *Library of Congress*. <https://blogs.loc.gov/folklife/2014/08/the-great-moon-hoax/>.

a given phenomenon under study. To illustrate the limitations of presenting facts as truth, a brief hypothetical example of a university student is used here.

In writing up an essay for his final exam on US foreign policy (as an example), the student may be tempted to turn to Google, copying and pasting material from the Internet as a short-cut solution to submit an essay before a fast approaching deadline. Such an approach is, however, bound to backfire on the student, given the sheer quantity of news articles, academic journal articles, analytical commentaries, media interviews and other sources of data. To this mix of information available on the Internet (which may or may not be accurate), the problem of fake news sites, such as purveyors of conspiracy theories and satirical websites, further reflects the perils of taking online sources at face value. Nor is the use of Wikipedia acceptable for such a student, given the ease with which Wikipedia pages can be edited by anyone – including Internet trolls with a particular axe to grind. Under such circumstances, the student in our hypothetical example is apt to submit a final exam paper based on a mish-mash of raw data pieced together without any meaningful analysis, lacking any intellectual coherence, is analytically superficial, and which fails to add any value to the student's grasp of US foreign policy. The result is that the student in question, even if his essay were to pass scrutiny by the convener for his course, will complete his university degree and graduates without the ability to draw independent analytical conclusions. Thus, as the late futurist and author Alvin Toffler noted, "the illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn". (Toffler, 1970, p. 414) Such a person's ability to offer a meaningful value-added contribution to the knowledge is extremely limited and belies the underlying purpose of a university education in developing and refining the human skills of analysis. In short, facts do not speak for themselves; rather, they must be evaluated, critiqued, reviewed and analysed to have any meaning to a relevant audience.

Seen in this light, if facts constitute the raw data through which observers attempt to understand their world, analysis can be seen as the process through which raw data is evaluated for the purpose of drawing out conclusions for the wider audience. Although analysis and opinion overlap with facts, it is necessary to emphasise the differences therein. Analysis is an appraisal of given facts, and is reflected in a person undertaking cause and effect analysis in evaluating facts to express an opinion on a given subject. The conclusion of an effort at analysis is derived from a person's review of the facts that are available to him or her. In this sense, whilst it may be more appropriate to view facts as an ontological issue ("what is knowledge"), analysis may be seen as reflecting epistemology ("how do we acquire knowledge"). Such distinction is made evident in the taxonomy of learning that was outlined by Benjamin Bloom's work during the late 1940s and 1950s. Bloom's taxonomy was notable for drawing a distinction between lower-level learning outcomes such as knowledge and understanding, on the one hand, and higher-level learning outcomes, such as applying acquired knowledge, analysing the implications of such knowledge, synthesising different components of the process of analysis, critical evaluation and the ability to create new knowledge on the other. In this sense, these higher-level outcomes represent the ultimate objective of the learning and educational process – the ability to apply, analyse and review factual data for the purpose of creating new knowledge. Whilst such analysis cannot realistically be undertaken when there is a dearth of facts, it is even more important for educators and scholars alike to bear in mind that facts, in their own right, do not constitute analysis.

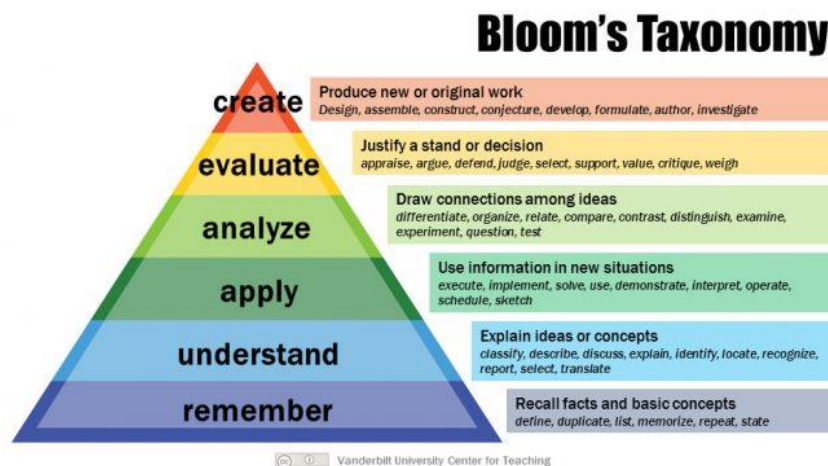


Figure 1: Bloom's Taxonomy (source: Armstrong, P. (2001). *Bloom's Taxonomy* Vanderbilt University. Revised edition, Retrieved from <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/blooms-taxonomy/>).

The importance of this distinction is highlighted if we return to our hypothetical example of a student working to submit an essay assignment. Rather than succumbing to the temptation of a shortcut offered by copying and pasting from the Internet, the student instead engages in source triangulation – a process of inquiry in which data and analytical perspectives from a range of different sources is sought. The effective use of source triangulation thus allows data to be gathered from a range of reputable online sources (such as newspapers and research think-tanks) as well as published books and journal articles from his university library. In addition, acknowledging that data is not particularly useful without analysis, the student who triangulates can evaluate the meaning of the data that he has collected, ensuring the employment of cause-and-effect analysis in linking the facts that he has collected to the conclusions that he has reached in his essay assignment. Although such an end-result is more painstaking and requires more effort than a simple copy-and-paste exercise, the result is that the student completes his degree program more capable (and therefore confident) in his own ability to gather information, to critique and analyse facts in-depth, and to be self-reliant as an independent learner. Such a graduate is all the more ready to take on the challenges of the workplace. The distinction between facts and analysis is evident based on the following table.

	Ontological	Epistemological
Type of knowledge	Facts	Analysis
Implications for research in social sciences	What is knowledge?	Theory of knowledge: how do we acquire knowledge
Examples	i) Primary documents, diaries and memoirs ii) Quotes iii) Statistical data iv) Historical relics	i) Debates concerning the origin of the Nazi Holocaust ii) Is the denuclearisation of North Korea possible?
Its necessity to social science inquiry	Data as the “raw material” for undertaking analysis	Analysis of facts as the “value-added” characteristic of human analysis of social science.

Table 1. The Distinction between Facts and Analysis

Ontologically, it is possible to see how factual inaccuracy may result from a careless recording of an event, or due to the actions of an observer who was acting without the benefit of hindsight. As an example, during the 1948 US elections, the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, a pro-Republican newspaper, was so confident that Republican candidate Thomas Dewey would defeat President Truman that they published their headline on November 3 as “Dewey Defeats Truman” (Cosgrove, 2014).

That said, it should be emphasised that such an instance can in no way be described as a deliberate attempt to mislead the general public through fake news. Whilst the editorial staff of the *Chicago Daily Tribune* may have been carried away by pro-Dewey enthusiasm, their erroneous reporting was not in any way a deliberate attempt to misinform the general public. As the following section indicates, however, the advent of the Internet and the Information Age has created virtually limitless opportunities for purveyors of fake news to deliberately distort the general public’s understanding of world events.

The Threat of Fake News

As the academic study of fake news is still in its infancy, it is unclear precisely how many different variants of the phenomenon may come to shape media narratives in the 21st century. Nonetheless, based on a brief reading of the history of print media since the 20th century, and more so in the Information Age, it is possible to identify the following seven forms of fake news (some of which overlap with one another) that stakeholders must be on guard for in the Information Age.

Threat 1: Deliberate forgeries

An early form of deliberate factual inaccuracy predates the Internet, with two notable instances occurring during the 20th century. During the late 1970s, Konrad Kujau, an East German who had fled to West Germany and made a living through petty crime, released the “Hitler Diaries”, a set of manuscripts that he proclaimed to be the long-lost memoirs of the Nazi leader. Although a hoax, the level of realism and detail that went into the Hitler Diaries was sufficient to convince the distinguished British historian, Hugh Trevor-Roper, of their

authenticity. Although Kujau was driven by pecuniary objectives rather than political ones, the subsequent revelation that the Hitler diaries were forged inflicted significant damage on Trevor-Roper's academic credentials.

A rather more insidious instance of the deliberate forgery of documents occurred earlier, in 1903, when the Tsarist Okhrana secret police released the so-called "Protocol of the Elders of Zion". The Protocol was pieced together from various anti-Semitic texts to claim the existence of a global Jewish conspiracy to dominate the world, and released as a pretext to justify the Tsar's anti-Jewish pogroms. It is notable that the document had impacts that reached far beyond Russia's borders and long after the Tsar was deposed. From 1920 to 1922, the American industrialist Henry Ford sponsored the publication of some 500,000 copies of the Protocol (Ford, 1920s).

In 1930s Germany, amidst severe unemployment and the general disillusionment of society amidst the Great Depression, the Nazi Party found the Protocol as a useful means of redirecting internal nationalist anger towards Jewish communities as a scapegoat for Germany's socio-economic ills (Bytwerk, 2015). In so doing, the Nazis' willingness to adopt a well-publicised instance of fake news to tap into latent anti-Semitism in 1930s Germany contributed to an incremental rise in ultra-nationalism. Within such a highly-charged socio-political environment, there was little to stop the passing of the Nuremberg Laws or the Nazi Holocaust, during which an estimated six million Jews perished. Yet, even though the Protocol of the Elders of Zion has been conclusively proven to be a forgery, the existence of this document continues to be cited in the present day by various anti-Semitic entities as justification for their hostility against the state of Israel, as well as anti-Semitic violence in general (Anti-Defamation League, 2002).

Threat 2: Cherry-picking the facts

A further means through which fake news may enter into the media narrative arises when commentators on a given event deliberately engage in the selective use of facts. Such selectiveness is far more insidious than an editorial decision to summarise an event for reasons of brevity. Rather, such a calculated decision to project a one-sided narrative of events is driven primarily by the desire to promote the commentator's own ideological agenda. The implication of such cherry-picking is all the more serious when the commentator projects such a skewed narrative to the masses through the use of political demagoguery. This can be further accentuated by the choice of language in order to promote a given media narrative.

This much is evident in multiple aspects of the Trump Administration. Since coming into office, Trump and several of his advisors and officials have established a clear track record of deliberately selective portrayal of facts in order to advance their own agenda. As early as the 2016 Presidential campaign, Trump had identified white, working-class Americans in the Rust Belt as the section of the electorate most hostile to his Democratic opponent, Hillary Clinton, whilst at the same time being most easily swayed by irresponsible rhetorical demagoguery (Jacobson, 2018). At the same time, without feeling any sense of responsibility or accountability to the voting public, Trump was all too willing to cherry-pick data to portray an image of white, working-class Americans as being threatened by immigration and the narcotics trade from Latin American countries, crime perpetuated by African Americans, Lone Wolf terrorism by Middle Easterners, and unfair trade practices by China and other industrialised nations (Kessler and Lee, 2016). Although such a portrayal of demographic and sociological trends had little basis for reality, the projection of such an exaggerated image of

a dystopian American future raised alarm bells in voting districts that had historically supported the Democratic Party, which ended up voting for Trump in November 2016.

Such a deliberate distortion of facts has continued to characterise the Trump White House. Shortly after entering office, the Trump Administration attempted to ban citizens from various Middle Eastern and North African countries from entering the United States, on the grounds that such persons posed the threat of Lone Wolf terrorism in the country. Yet, it is notable that of the countries that Trump targeted in his “Muslim travel ban” under Executive Order 13769 in 2017 – Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen – none had citizens who were involved in the 9/11 terrorist attacks, or any of the various terrorist attacks against the US since 2001 (Cordesman, 2017). Moreover, Trump’s one-sided responses to terrorist incidents further highlights his deliberate stigmatisation of Muslims as the primary terrorist threat to US security, even though such a perspective overlooks the fact that home-grown, white supremacists are statistically far more likely to be the perpetrators of Lone Wolf terrorist attacks in the United States (Hassan 2018). Such deliberate bias was evident during the “Unite the Right” rally that took place in Virginia in August 2017, during which a white supremacist named James Alex Fields drove a car into a group of counter-demonstrators, killing one person and injuring 19 others. In spite of the blatant nature of the xenophobia behind this action as well as the presence of white supremacist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan engaged in rioting during the rally, Trump blamed “many sides” for the violence in Charlottesville, and pointedly refused to acknowledge the culpability of white supremacist organisations for the violence (Merica, 2017).

More recently, in 2018 Trump has increasingly seized on the image of Latin Americans fleeing violence in their homelands to seek asylum in the US as an imminent criminal “infestation” (Klein and Liptak, 2018). Furthermore, Trump’s divisive discourse has been further aided by Fox News hosts adopting language that downplays the humanitarian catastrophe inflicted by the Trump Administration on Latin American families fleeing violence in their homelands – as an example, Fox News host Laura Ingraham referred to the detention facilities used to hold Latin American refugees as “summer camps”, a term that is directly contradicted by well-publicised evidence pointing to the forcible separation of Latin American children from their families, and the use of small, cramped cages used to implement these family separations. Such a portrayal of non-Caucasians entering the United States again played to the emotional fears of the white working-class Americans who had supported Trump in 2016, in casting Trump as a figure willing to use authoritarian methods to maintain the demographic status quo.

Such deliberate distortion of news, however, has multiple effects. Not only is the image of Latin American migrants as criminals definitively disproven by statistical evidence (Ferriss, 2018), it also overlooks the fact that agricultural industries in the United States are heavily dependent on migrant labour from the Latin American region (Dudley, 2018). Moreover, in engaging in such irresponsible demagoguery without any regard for the reality on the ground, such willingness to project a distorted media narrative that dehumanises non-Caucasians has also emboldened racists, xenophobes and bigots at the grassroots level into engaging in vigilante attacks as well as verbal and physical abuse of Latin Americans, African Americans, Middle Easterners and other persons deemed to be “un-American” in the eyes of Trump’s working-class supporters (Graham, 2018).

Threat 3: Conspiracy theories

Closely related to the cherry-picking of facts is the emergence of websites and blogs that promote conspiracy theories. Often founded and run by self-proclaimed “investigative journalists” not beholden to corporate interests, such websites and webpages appear to be more legitimate in the eyes of an uninformed public that has become disillusioned with mainstream media. Such a development is all the more so given the desire held by the masses for a rigid interpretation of freedom of speech, even if this results in a situation in which irresponsible demagogues are placed in a position to deliberately inject falsehoods into the mainstream media narrative. In so doing, however, the operators of such sites are in a position to promote conspiracy theories as an “objective truth” that the mainstream media is attempting to suppress, as part of a wider effort to skew media narrative discourse into following a given ideological agenda (Fish, 2018).

This much is evident based on the activity of Info Wars and Breitbart, to name but two particularly notorious purveyors of conspiracy theories. Both websites have a long track record of promoting far-right views that include Islamophobia, bigotry and xenophobia towards non-Caucasians, and support for a rigid interpretation of the Second Amendment in granting uncontrolled access to firearms for the general public. The willingness of such websites to exploit the news to advance their own cynical agendas was reflected following the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting that saw the death of 20 young schoolchildren and six teaching staff. Although the moral outrage over the carnage contributed to growing momentum in support of gun control legislation in the United States, Alex Jones, the founder of Info Wars, portrayed the school shooting as an event fabricated by the Obama Administration as part of a covert strategy to dismantle the Second Amendment, thereby preventing Second Amendment enthusiasts from averting a secret Federal Government plan to impose dictatorial powers in the country (Cooper, 2018). Such cynical disregard for reality is all the more shocking given the extent to which Jones’ deliberate injection of his conspiracy theory forced the families of the victims of the Sandy Hook shooting to re-live the trauma of the loss of their loved ones.

Threat 4: Justifying morally reprehensible perspectives

A further instance through which fake news attempts to skew the mainstream media narrative is reflected in attempts to justify morally reprehensible perspectives, either through adopting a revisionist interpretation of a known, controversial period of history, or otherwise through a cynical invocation of freedom of speech. This issue has become increasingly prominent in the context of the ongoing debates over the issue of statues of Confederate States of America (CSA) generals from the American Civil War. Apologists for the CSA point to idealised portrayals of CSA generals such as Robert E Lee as honourable patriots defending the sovereignty of their home state, in an attempt to gaslight the widely-held view that the system of slavery in the CSA itself was a racially-driven arrangement of economic exploitation of African Americans. Such an idealisation of Lee has been rejected by the majority of historians. Although it is accepted that Lee was not particularly committed to the institution of slavery, it is also notable that he did nothing to oppose its continued implementation in the Southern states. Furthermore, given the extent to which Lee’s skilled generalship contributed to the prolongation and carnage of the American Civil War, the image of Lee as an “honourable gentleman” who was fighting for the wrong side obscures the fundamentally racist underpinnings of the CSA’s existence. Equally notable was that, in the aftermath of the Civil War, Lee opposed the extension of political rights to newly-freed African Americans (Fortin, 2017).

Threat 5: Agent provocateurs

Yet a further means through which fake news can enter and skew mainstream media discourse is through the presence of agent provocateurs who exploit existing social faultlines to further sow discord and polarisation in society. Although not a new phenomenon, it has become increasingly prominent in light of the continuing racial tensions in the United States due to repeated instances of law enforcement personnel's disproportionate use of violence and lethal action against African American, even over trivial misdemeanours and, in multiple cases, the complete absence of any criminal wrongdoing whatsoever.

Following the acquittal of George Zimmerman over the shooting death of African American teenager Trayvon Martin, the civil society activist group Black Lives Matters (BLM) has gained growing momentum, a trend in tandem with the increasingly public instances of police abuses of power against African Americans. A particularly notable instance took place in 2016, following the shooting death of Philando Castile in Minnesota, an event that was captured on video and went viral on the Internet. Amidst the growing outcry from BLM activists, the Russian Government, already at loggerheads with the United States, saw an opportunity to exploit the heightened tensions in the United States race relations in an election year. The Internet Research Agency, an Internet troll group based in St Petersburg, Russia, and believed to be linked to the Russian Government, set up a series of fake Facebook groups such as "Don't Shoot" and "Blacktivist". Posing as the black civil rights movements protesting against police brutality in the United States, yet lacking any authentic sense of commitment and civic responsibility in ending police brutality (O'Sullivan, 2018), such sham organisations had the effect of instigating African American anger against law enforcement officers in the United States, whilst simultaneously feeding the fears of white working class Americans about the prospect of racial violence spreading into their hitherto peaceful neighbourhoods.

Threat 6: Deliberate Audio and Visual Mislabelling

Further instances that reflect the ability to generate a skewed media narrative is reflected in the willingness of people to deliberately adopt misleading labels as captions to accompany audio and visual representations of the news. One recent instance of this has been reflected amidst the efforts of Second Amendment supporters in the United States to counter the growing momentum in support of gun control legislation. In the aftermath of the death of 14 students and 3 teachers during the Stoneman Douglas High School shooting in Florida in February 2018, the survivors of this incident have embarked on a well-publicised nation-wide effort to demand gun control and thereby mitigate the threat of gun violence in the United States, founding the "Never Again MSD" movement. Among the leaders of the latter is Emma Gonzalez, who became notable for her oral charisma and distinctive buzz cut hairstyle. With the growing media profile of the MSD movement, firearms enthusiasts and conservatives began focusing their attention on a photograph of a young woman with a similar-looking buzz cut hairstyle supposedly vandalising the vehicle of a Second Amendment supporter, clearly in an attempt to discredit the MSD movement. Closer investigation revealed that the photograph was taken in 2007, and showed pop star Britney Spears (who had a buzz cut at the time) in a drunken rage (Chen, 2018).

Threat 7: Deliberate audio and visual distortions

In a similar light, it has become increasingly easy to generate a deliberately distorted portrayal of the news through software technology. Such attempts to generate fake news was rather more difficult during the Industrial Age, given that mainstream media in that era was dominated by the printing presses, as well as radio and television studios, all of which were

generally in the hands of established media corporations that could be held accountable through their board of trustees. The advent of the Information Age has, however, upended such assumptions. The proliferation of inexpensive computers as well as easy-to-master software such as Photoshop, Adobe After Effects and FakeApp means that it is now possible for comparative amateurs to generate realistic-looking news sources that may be taken by the untrained eye as legitimate news.

Such was the case following the devastation inflicted by Hurricane Harvey that struck Texas in 2017. As illustrated in the Figures 2, 3 and 4, Trump supporters used Photoshop to create images that made it appear as though Trump was directly involved in rescue efforts. For the purpose of comparison, the original photographs are placed alongside their Photoshopped versions, thereby reflecting how effectively Photoshop can be used to distort the media narrative.



Figure 2: Source: Snopes, 2017.



Figure 3: Source: Snopes, 2017.



Figure 4: Source: Snopes, 2017.

Whilst such images have the effect of portraying Trump as an exemplary leader willing to put his own life on the line as part of his civic responsibilities, such an image is not particularly convincing, given Trump's lack of track record for public service (*The Independent*, 2016).

Nor is such deliberate distortion of the media narrative restricted to still photographs. In response to the growing proliferation of fake news, in April 2018, film director Jordan Peele released a video which, combined the use of Adobe After Effects and FakeApp, enabling Peele to capture the oral and visual likeness of Barack Obama, making it appear though the former President had just delivered an expletive-laden personal attack on Trump (Vincent, 2018). Although Peele's video was intended to deliver a point on how fake news can be generated, the implication is clear: anyone with access to a computer and inexpensive computer software is capable of generating a realistic-appearing media narrative that may be taken as legitimate news by uncritical and unsuspecting audiences.

Conclusion: Responding to the Threat of Fake News

Based on this discussion, it is apparent that the growing phenomenon of fake news is an increasingly worrisome threat to civil society on many levels, and one that is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. In so doing, fake news will likely pose a continuing potential threat to civil society as underpinning basis for democracy. The latter, as a cornerstone of the post-1945 liberal world order, is based on the freedom of speech to stimulate public debate and thereby ensure the public accountability and transparency of elected government officials to their constituents. Yet, the injection of fake news into the media narrative undermines objectivity in the presentation of facts before the members of civil society. Worse still, when wilfully manipulated and distorted by politicians, journalists and other public figures willing to project their own spin onto the unthinking masses, existing faultlines of social and demographic polarisation become further internalised. Fake news, in appealing to the masses' confirmation bias, results in an echo chamber that prevents meaningful, constructive conversations and debate in addressing national policy challenges. This problem is further accentuated by the emergence of such a highly charged atmosphere, within which increasing numbers of self-appointed vigilantes have taken it upon themselves to engage in various acts of verbal and physical abuse towards people of opposing viewpoints, or different ethnic and religious backgrounds (Mathias, 2017).

In addressing the challenge posed by fake news, it is necessary to recognise that there are no quick fixes. Although it may be tempting to regard state censorship as one possible means of

filtering fake news out of the mainstream media narrative, there are limitations to such an approach. To some degree, a certain level of censorship is useful in preventing demagogues from inciting their followers into engaging in violence against ethnic and religious minorities. Such has been the case of Singapore, which introduced legislation in the 1960s authorising media censorship to prevent demagogues from abusing the freedom of speech to incite communal violence (Arnold, 1996). However, the power of censorship, if left unchecked, is open to abuse by government authorities that may be tempted to turn to such methods to serve their own political ends (Gall, 2018). Furthermore, even in fully-functioning democracies, the use of censorship may backfire on the government. Such has been the case of Germany, which has legislation banning hate speech targeting ethnic and religious minorities, as well as Holocaust denial or glorification of the Nazi regime. Although such measures worked well in the aftermath of 1945 due to the recentness of historical memories of the Nazi regime, more recent attempts to invoke such legislation to counter the activities of the far-right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) party have been less successful. Given the history of censorship and authoritarianism in the Nazi-era and in the former East Germany, the AfD has been able to point out that the present-day German state's attempts to enforce censorship under the Network Enforcement Act (NetzDG) of January 2018 is a hypocritical attack on democracy (Kinstler, 2018). In addition, given that attempts to enforce censorship in Germany do not change the growing concerns held by many ordinary Germans over the long-term feasibility of German Chancellor Angela Merkel's liberal asylum policies for refugees, attempts to enforce censorship are all the more likely to arouse further, long-term resentment that plays into the AfD's hands.

A more productive means of countering the implications of fake news is to be found in the promotion of a culture of civil discourse and a willingness to agree to disagree peacefully, as well as in ensuring that educational curriculums support efforts to the fostering of such civil society. As Russell Roberts noted,

We like simple stories without too much nuance – stories that often demonize the other side and its conflicting vision of the truth ... So we convince ourselves that the evidence speaks so loudly, so emphatically, that we have no choice but to declare our allegiance to a particular tribe. But it rarely crosses our minds to notice that the tribe we are in determines the evidence we notice and accept ... The result is an unjustified confidence in one's own side of the debate ... This means an end to not just civilised conversation, but often to any kind of conversation at all. (Roberts, 2018, n.p.)

Such an outcome is unsatisfactory for many reasons. At best, it prevents meaningful civil society debate in addressing challenges like climate change, gun violence, racism, immigration and other pressing issues; at worst, it can cause basic policy disagreements to degenerate into violence. In counter to this, the fostering of a culture of civility may, by providing an environment conducive for civil conversation and an ability to agree to disagree, offers a more constructive basis for debate and decision-making (Morant, 2018).

In addition, in order to mitigate the impact that fake news may have on an increasingly digitised society faced with a growing array of Internet websites (more than a few of which are purveyors of fake news), it is all the more important to ensure that the youth of the future are provided with an appropriate curriculum. The latter has to reject the type of intellectual superficiality arising from the use of Wikipedia, but instead embraces a culture of fact-checking for accuracy. In combination with source triangulation, an observer trained in the

culture of fact-checking for accuracy has a better chance of mitigating the impact of bias and fake news found on the Internet.

Whilst the author emphasises that such approaches should not be seen as a panacea that eliminates the problem of fake news, it may be considered a step in the right direction. Amidst the growing polarisation of society in the United States due to the proliferation of fake news and conspiracy theories, the criticality of generating a culture in which policy disagreements can be debated in seeking a constructive solution to society's challenges is manifest. In this sense, it may be helpful to recall the following observation by Charles Spurgeon:

Wisdom is the right use of knowledge. To know is not to be wise. Many men know a great deal, and are all the greater fools for it. There is no fool so great a fool as a knowing fool. But to know how to use knowledge is to have wisdom.

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Written in Auschwitz
Case Study: Works Written in Auschwitz by Sonderkommando Participants,
Polish Political Prisoners and Lili Kasticher

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Abstract

This study focuses on the works of three different groups of writers who dared to write in Auschwitz-Birkenau, where anyone caught with a piece of paper or a pencil stub was immediately sentenced to death. Accordingly, inmates produced virtually no written material (Shik, 2012), with certain rare exceptions: (1) The *Sonderkommando*, who documented everyday life at the camp, concealing their records in jars that they buried near the crematoria in the hope that someone would find them after the war, as indeed occurred. (2) Certain Polish political prisoners, who kept records in Auschwitz and managed to save their works. (3) Lili Kasticher, the only woman known to have written at Birkenau who did not belong to any organization; all her writings thus constituted her own private heroic initiative. She risked her life by stealing pieces of paper and pencil stubs to write poetry and encouraged her friends to do so, offering them a prize, a portion of her bread ration. Her writings were concealed on her person until her liberation in spring 1945.

Keywords: *Sonderkommando*, political prisoner, Auschwitz-Birkenau, death camp, writing

Introduction

Three unique and precious written sources created in Auschwitz-Birkenau constitute the core subject matter of this paper: The first and most detailed source consists of the writings of the *Sonderkommando*, who documented everyday life at the camp, concealing their records in jars that they buried near the crematoria in the hope that someone would find them after the war, as indeed occurred.¹ The second comprises works by Polish political prisoners. This well-organized group had the benefit of being Polish in a camp built on Polish soil and conducting its everyday operations in its native language and culture. Most had the additional advantage of being non-Jewish.² Third are the poems and social manifesto³ written by Lili Kasticher, who may well be the only individual inmate who had written in Auschwitz-Birkenau, knowing that she was risking her life, as the possession of a piece of paper or pencil was forbidden in Birkenau. Anyone caught with such contraband was immediately sentenced to death.

Jewish inmates were ordered by the Germans to write postcards to their relatives, describing the “decent” living conditions in their “new place of residence” (O. D. Kulka, 2013, 10).⁴ In *Moments of Reprieve*, Primo Levi describes a love letter that a gypsy inmate asked him to write, indicating that he endangered both their lives doing so, just to gain half a portion of bread.⁵ This type of writing in Auschwitz, however, was ordered by the Nazis and consequently is not the subject of this study.

The Writings of the *Sonderkommando*

The *Sonderkommando* who wrote in Auschwitz-Birkenau despite the risks, left rare and precious documentary material that details the lives and daily routine of the prisoners who did the most horrifying work of all at Auschwitz: Accompanying the victims to the gas chambers, searching their bodies after their extermination, transporting corpses to the crematoria and grinding the bones that were not entirely burned. They even photographed the transport of the victims to the gas chambers, collecting the bodies, examining them, cutting off the women’s hair, extracting teeth and dental gold, bringing bodies to the crematorium and handling the ashes. They documented everything, at imminent risk to their lives. Officially, it was a serious infraction to possess paper and writing implements. Nevertheless, these intrepid men persisted, realizing that they were the last witnesses to tell the story of the annihilation of

¹ Some of the *Sonderkommando* used those same jars to conceal poetry or diaries, such as the diary of Zalman Gradowski that was discovered among the Auschwitz crematorium ruins. These *Sonderkommando*, who faced certain death as a consequence of their documentation, were also members of the Underground that planned the revolt.

² Most of the information about the Polish political prisoners’ writings was kindly contributed by Dr. Wojciech Polosa, Archives Director at the State Museum in Auschwitz-Birkenau, Oswiecim, June 22, 2016.

³ Known as *The Rules of Behavior*.

⁴ These postcards included cryptic references warning their addressees not to believe the ostensibly optimistic messages. For example, they might say: “Every day, we welcome Uncle Hlad (Czech: Starvation) or Uncle Mavet (Hebrew: Death).” The cards were sent by inmates of a Birkenau camp populated by families dispatched there from Theresienstadt. They were dated March 25, but the people who wrote them were annihilated on March 7, over two weeks earlier. The entire family camp was wiped out in July 1944.

⁵ Postcards were given only to those who could write German. Primo Levi knew German well but the gypsy did not, so Levi took a chance and wrote a postcard that was not his own.

European Jewry and knowing that in any case, they would eventually be slaughtered along with the rest, except those with jobs that required professional knowledge and skills, such as oven tenders, expert mechanics and “room service” providers.⁶ Every few months, it was necessary to annihilate them and keep their dark secret, because they were witnesses and partners to all particulars of the Final Solution. The *Sonderkommando* acquired their writing equipment from *Kommando Kanada*, that was in charge of handling the possessions of the victims and sorting them before shipment to Germany. In his testimony, Shlomo Dragon,⁷ a “room service” provider,⁸ reported that as part of his job, he made sure that Zalman Gradowski⁹ had a particularly well-lit pallet, so he could devote himself to documentation after working hours, as well as thermos bottles in which he could hide the written material.¹⁰ Gradowski was one of five *Sonderkommando* participants¹¹ who understood the historic mission imposed on them. Documentation of their work was of particular significance because of the horrifying tasks they performed at the crematoria. They documented their lives before Auschwitz, the ghetto from which they were dispatched, the precarious and dreadful journey to Auschwitz and the horrors that had become routine.¹² Nevertheless, when addressing the bold records kept by the *Sonderkommando* in Auschwitz we refer primarily to the first three: Gradowski, Leventhal and Langfus, who was also called the *Maggid* (Hebrew: Preacher), who worked in Crematoria I and II, where the living conditions were slightly more bearable, explaining their moral and physical strength to concentrate on writing despite their labors in the crematoria. The three received considerable assistance from their comrades, such as better pallets and brighter living space, paper, ink, a camera and regular updates on all that was happening. Furthermore, some of their comrades kept watch while the three were writing, as they would surely be executed if caught (Gradowski, 2012, p. 266). The three belonged to the Underground, that launched the well-known revolt on October 7, 1944. Gradowski, a leader of the revolt, was captured during the fighting and hanged, but not before the Nazis tortured him and smashed his skull, as Shlomo Dragon reported, having witnessed it with his own eyes. Dragon also attested how people like David Nenzel¹³ smuggled paper to Gradowski and his associates so that they could continue writing. Nenzel, for his part, risked his life by tearing strips of paper from cement sacks and concealing them on his person.

Zalman Gradowski, born in 1910 in Suwalki. In November 1942, he and his family were deported to the Kielbasin Transit Camp near Grodno and from there, in cattle cars, with sojourns in Treblinka and Warsaw, they arrived in Auschwitz on December 7-8, 1942.

⁶ The *Sonderkommando* unit responsible for the German quarters, their regular maintenance, including food service, upkeep and the like (as Rudolf Hess attested at his trial in Warsaw). For more extensive information, see Gutman & Berenbaum (2002).

⁷ Shlomo Dragon's testimony is discussed at length in Greif (2004, pp. 195-199).

⁸ An assignment that saved his life because he was not sent to the gas chambers like his comrades after a few months.

⁹ Who was in charge of writing and documentation and was among the planners of the October 7, 1944 revolt.

¹⁰ Gradowski told Dragon where he hid the material. Right after the war, Dragon recalled the location and pointed it out to the Red Army liberators, who excavated near the crematorium, under Dragon's instructions, until they found what they were looking for. Shlomo was assisted by his brother Avraham, who was also among the few *Sonderkommando* participants who survived.

¹¹ The five were Zalman Gradowski, Zalman Leventhal, Dayan (Rabbinic Judge) Leyb Langfus, French Jew Chaim Herman and Greek Jew Marcel Nadjari, who survived and provided testimony following his liberation (Gradowski, 2012, p. 265).

¹² For a more extensive description by Nathan Cohen, see Gutman & Berenbaum (2002, pp. 551-565).

¹³ See Nenzel's testimony, Yad Vashem 03/6014.

Following “selection”, his entire family was annihilated. Then, on December 9, after elimination of the previous *Sonderkommando* group, Gradowski was assigned to the new group being formed. To his good fortune, he did not have to become involved with the murder of his family, that had been sent to the gas chambers a day earlier. First, he worked with a subgroup called *Schreiber* [German: Writer, scribe], responsible for clerical work at Crematorium I. Subsequently, he was transferred to Crematorium IV at Birkenau, where he transported the victims to the gas chambers and then brought the bodies to the crematoria, where he would make sure to enwrap every corpse he “handled” in a *tallit* (prayer shawl) and recite the Mourner’s *Kaddish* prayer.¹⁴

Gradowski began writing in 1943. Six of his diaries were discovered near the crematoria in Birkenau between 1945 and 1970. Gradowski’s poetically styled Yiddish texts provide more testimony than mere documentation: “At least a minimum of truth will reach the world and then you, O world, will exact revenge, revenge for everything ... If we cannot weep for them (his slaughtered family), then at least a foreign eye may shed a tear for our loved ones” (Gradowski, 2012, p. 108).

Gradowski’s first manuscript was found on March 5, 1945 near the Birkenau crematoria by a delegation of the Soviet Extraordinary State Commission; it was stored in a German canteen sealed with a metal lid. Each page comprised 20-30 densely handwritten lines, along with a letter that Gradowski wrote in September 1944. The manuscript describes deportation to Kielbasin, then to Auschwitz via Treblinka, selection at Auschwitz and parting from his family, whom he discovered later had been sent to the gas chambers that same day. He also described the joy experienced by those who, like him, were chosen to live and assigned to living quarters. Gradowski’s imagery-rich language, said Nathan Cohen, reminds one of Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, a work that the writer must have known well (Gutman & Berenbaum, 2002, p. 553). On the first page of the notebook, Gradowski wrote in Polish, Russian, German and French “Read this document. It has a rich supply of material for historians” (Ber, 1978, p. 145). Concluding his notes, Gradowski asks readers to “study his writings intensively before they judge the *Sonderkommando*.”

In summer 1945, Chaim Wallerman was searching among the remnants of the ovens when a Pole offered him a canteen. Wallerman bought the canteen from the Pole and was amazed to find that Gradowski’s writings were inside. This is Gradowski’s second manuscript, published by Wallerman in 1977, in Yiddish, calling it *In Hartz fun Gehennom* [last letter unclear in original – English: In the Heart of Hell]. It was divided into three chapters: *White Night*, *The Czech Transport* and *Departure* (order determined by Wallerman; for a more extensive description, see Gutman & Berenbaum, 2002, p. 554 and note 7 on page 563).

First, Gradowski appeals to the moon with complaints against the bitter fate of the Jewish People that he saw and experienced, accusing it of indifference, wondering how it can shine above Auschwitz without getting involved in the destiny of the people put to death there below. He concludes this chapter by declaring that the dark night is his friend, weeping is his

¹⁴ Testimony by Lemke Plisko, in an interview with Gideon Greif, August 9, 1993, Givat Hashlosha, filed in Greif’s private archive.

song, the sacrificial fire his light, the smell of death his fragrance and Hell his home (Gutman & Berenbaum, 2002, p. 555; original Yiddish version, p. 24).

In the second chapter, Gradowski bewails the annihilation of the first group deported from Theresienstadt in September 1943, relocated at the family camp at Birkenau and eventually exterminated in March 1944, but not before the victims were ordered to write postcards¹⁵ to their loved ones in which they described their good life in their new location. In December of that year, a second group of Jews arrived, only to be annihilated six months thereafter. Their records bore the abbreviation SB6 (*Sonderbehandlung* (“special treatment”) [after] 6 months). Then another two groups came, each allotted six months to live, as indicated by the “SB6” next to their names (Gutman & Berenbaum, 2002, pp. 427-428). This “special treatment” is described as well: Gradowski notes that once the six-month period was over, it took less than 20 minutes to move people from the family camp to the death camp, where they were summarily annihilated. Gradowski wondered about the Czech Jews quietly walking to their deaths and their indifference to a cruel fate that was known in advance.

Parting, the third and final chapter of the manuscript, describes the life of the *Sonderkommando*, Gradowski’s disappointment with their silence when 200 of their comrades were sent to their deaths and the clear realization that they are living on borrowed time. He expresses amazement at the psychological barrier that prevents him and his comrades from taking steps and committing suicide, for which they excuse themselves, calling the taking of one’s own life a mortal sin.

Zalman Leventhal was born in 1918 in Ciechanów, Poland, from which he was deported with his entire family on December 10, 1942. On January 10, 1943, he was assigned to the *Sonderkommando*, following elimination of the previous group. His manuscript was discovered in 1962 in a glass jar hidden near Crematorium III. There were more than a hundred unnumbered pages, but unfortunately most were illegible because moisture penetrated the jar and destroyed the paper and ink.

Leventhal asks how much time is required for a person to accept the fate of his loved ones. He attested that he and his comrades were “too weak to struggle for the will to exist” (Gutman & Berenbaum, 2002, p. 557), explaining how they could perform the horrible tasks to which they were assigned. In the same breath, however, he indicates that there were those who behaved differently, like Gradowski or Langfus, who kept their traditions and humanity in spite of all and expressed severe opposition to the Polish and Russian inmates who belonged to the International Resistance but delayed the revolt, claiming that the war would soon be over and they would be liberated.

On October 7, 1943, Leventhal was detained at Crematorium III and was not present at the revolt. Hence one may assume that from that day, his reports are no longer as precise as they had been. His manuscript is signed October 10, 1944. The date and circumstances of his death are unknown.

¹⁵ The cards were dated March 25, two weeks after the writers had already been slaughtered.

The third person in this group of writers is Warsaw-born Dayan Leyb Langfus,¹⁶ Langfus worked at decontaminating women's hair and preparing it for shipment to Germany – a job that was considered “easy” on the *Sonderkommando* scale. He was an intelligent man, admired by his friends, who appreciated his assertiveness and prestige as a religious adjudicator and ritual leader, according him relatively convenient conditions for writing. Like Leventhal and Gradowski, he was active in the Auschwitz-Birkenau Underground and did not support passive acceptance of one's fate of annihilation. Along with this, however, as a religious man, he believed that one should not challenge God's will and people should go silently to their deaths in fulfillment of Divine justice. Langfus began writing his Yiddish-language diary in Auschwitz in 1943 and completed it on November 26, 1944 in Belzec. The diary was discovered by a search party dispatched by a Polish political party in the area of Crematorium III in 1942. One part of the manuscript describes events that the writer witnessed with his own eyes, written in a dry, journalistic style, only occasionally expressing a personal opinion. The final part was his will, written in the first person.

Langfus wrote another three documents – two of them reports on the extermination of 600 children and 3,000 women and the third a list of names of inmates gassed to death between October 9 and October 24, 1944 at Crematoria II, III and V. In his descriptions of selection, there is great similarity between his writings and Gradowski's.¹⁷ Langfus describes events that took place in the infamous “locker room,” such as his description of the wife of the Rebbe of Stropkov, who asked God to forgive the Rebbe of Belz who calmed and misled the Jews of Hungary at the time that he himself and his followers escaped to Palestine. Another description relates to a group of Hassidim from Hungary who recited the confessional prayer before entering the gas chambers and invited the *Sonderkommando* to join them in drinking *Lechaim*. The incident so shocked one of the *Sonderkommando* participants that he murmured: “That's enough! We have incinerated Jews. Let us destroy this accursed place and die as martyrs” (Gutman & Berenbaum, 2002, p. 561; Ber, 1978, p. 223).

Langfus described the arrival of a group of children from Šiauliai in November 1943 that shocked the *Sonderkommando*, who had ostensibly already seen and heard anything. This was when one of the children asked one of the *Sonderkommando* people how he, as a Jew, could send other Jews to their death, in collaboration with the murderers, just to save his own life (Gutman & Berenbaum, 2002, p. 561; Ber, 1978, p. 222).

The principal and last composition, including testimony from Belzec, was written on November 26, 1944. It included a description of the dismantling of the ovens in Belzec to send them to Germany. Post facto, we are aware that they were sent to Sachsenhausen and Mauthausen. At the end of his diary he wrote that he is being taken along with another 170 *Sonderkommando* members to the gas chambers, referred to as the “showers” by the murderers to conceal their true purpose.

¹⁶ Langfus lived in Maków Mazowiecki and married the daughter of the local *Dayan*, from whom he inherited the title. His friends also called him the *Magid* because he was a prayer leader and rabbinic judge.

¹⁷ Apparently attempting to ensure that their testimony would be precise and reliable, Nathan Cohen claims that they may have compared versions (Gutman & Berenbaum, 2002, p. 558).

The Writings of the Polish Political Prisoners

In a letter to the Director of the Archives of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum dated June 22, 2016, Dr. Wojciech Polosa indicates that the Archives include documentation of the writings of a minuscule number of political prisoners, most of them Poles, that were written in Auschwitz. First among them is Wincenty Gawron, inmate no. 11237, a Polish political prisoner who arrived in Auschwitz after his arrest in April 1941 for clandestine activity. He managed to obtain paper and pencils from other Underground members and produced black and white drawings and caricatures of camp life for inmates. Thanks to his connections with the Underground, he escaped Auschwitz in May 1942 and smuggled his works out with him.

Another Polish political prisoner, Jerzy Pozimski, was given the serial number 1099-work, meaning he was assigned to the section responsible for classifying inmates according to the various types of work they are able to perform at Auschwitz. This is how he was able to obtain paper and writing implements and to document realities at Auschwitz in his typed diary from June 24 to December 31, 1940. Pozimski used his connections with various inmates and with *Kommando Kanada* to obtain food and at times even medicines for other prisoners. On January 18, 1945, he was transferred to Mauthausen-Melk and released on May 5, 1945, but wrote in no camp other than Auschwitz, where his connections with other political prisoners of Polish origin apparently helped him (according to Document No. 997209, based on a report by the Claims Committee, the ITS Archives and the Red Cross). In 1989, Jerzy Pozimski was awarded a posthumous Righteous Among the Nations medal by Yad Vashem, in a touching ceremony attended by several of the people who survived the Holocaust thanks to him.

A third Polish political prisoner, perhaps the best known of all among those who wrote in Auschwitz (according to Dr. Polosa's report dated June 26, 2016), was Tadeusz Borowski, inmate no. 119198, who was arrested on February 24, 1943. Borowski was forced to work on the ramp at Auschwitz, where his job was to direct the Jews to their death. Despite the difficult assignment and his precarious emotional and physical states, however, Borowski was a political prisoner whose conditions were far better than those of the camp's Jewish inmates. For example, he was allowed to write to his family (in German, of course, with every word subject to strict censorship) and even to receive postcards and packages from them. As he requested in his postcards, the packages contained food and bars of soap (Drewnowski, 2000, pp. 17-30). Like Pozimski, Borowski was in contact with other political prisoners and when he was sent to the Birkenau infirmary in autumn 1943 with a case of pneumonia, he used the infirmary's typewriter to compose his poem *Tango Teskonty* (Tango Longings), that was handed over to his friend Mieczysław Szymkowiak, who hid the text until liberation by the Red Army on January 27, 1945.¹⁸

While Borowski was hospitalized, he sent letters to his fiancée Maria Rundo, a political prisoner of assimilated Jewish origin who was incarcerated in the women's camp at Birkenau. Both of them were connected with Underground members and other political prisoners who provided them with the supplies needed for writing and also transferred letters back and

¹⁸ The original Polish text is at the Auschwitz Archives.

forth.¹⁹ This correspondence was not preserved in its original format, but reconstructed almost entirely by Borowski following liberation. Signs of his attempts to contact his beloved and receive signs of life from her are evident in Borowski's letter to his mother, dated March 5, 1944.

By late 1944, Borowski had been transferred to Dautmargen and from there to Struthof, from which he was dispatched to Dachau in a roofless cattle car. Even in Dachau, he managed to write, as is evident from the content of his first letter to Toshka, his love, from Munich, dated January 12, 1946 (Drewnowski, 2000, pp. 91-92). Borowski was liberated from Dachau by the Americans on May 1, 1945. Following liberation, he worked as a journalist and writer and processed the traumas he experienced into literary works (see Bibliography). He married Maria on December 18, 1946. In July 1951, they had a daughter, but the traumas of the past never left him and he took his own life by inhaling toxic gas only three days after she was born.

A letter from Dr. Polosa mentions that the Auschwitz Archives include two handwritten poems of unknown authorship. The first, in Polish, discovered in 1958 at Auschwitz Camp no. 1 during maintenance work, is very brief, while the second, in Russian and somewhat longer, was found at the same camp around the time of liberation in 1945. Neither poem bears a date, signature or other means of identifying their authors.

The Auschwitz writings of Lili Kasticher

Lili Kasticher was born in 1923 in Petrovaselo, Yugoslavia and subsequently lived in Novi Sad.²⁰ She was deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau in April 1944 and had the K. C. number 8965 tattooed on her arm. From there, she was assigned to Gross-Rosen, where she worked at the Lorenz factory until liberation in May 1945. In December 1948, she immigrated to Israel, where she remained until her death in November 1973.

In Auschwitz,²¹ Lili wrote five poems with date-bearing headings and two – *The Song of The Camp* and *Where Is Our Homeland* – whose headings mentioned only the location: Auschwitz. *The Song of the Camp* describes the women's yearning for the landscape of the Danube and their "homeland," whereas *Where Is Our Homeland* opens with the eponymous question and concludes with a prayer for success in finding that homeland, where they will be free and where "mother is waiting to be hugged and kissed." The two poems appear to have been written about the same time, as their themes are similar and no mention is made of the camp and its hardships.

¹⁹ Some of the reconstructed letters are at the Adam Mickiewicz Museum of Literature, Warsaw, thanks to the generous intervention of Dr. Wojciech Polosa, Director of the Archives of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

²⁰ (annexed by Hungary in 1941).

²¹ In spite of the severe prohibition against possession of writing utensils and paper scraps in Birkenau (Shik, 2012), Lili insisted on writing and even encouraged her fellow inmates to do so as a means of maintaining a last shred of human dignity.

Her first poem, *One Night in Birkenau*, was written on May 31, 1944, not long after Lili's arrival, on a piece of paper filched from the office with German writing on the other side. The poem's content expresses the tortures of life in the *Lager* (camp), with all its terror, loneliness and hopelessness. The inmates lived with their nightmares, in which they see their children asking for a cup of chocolate milk. Then, the alarm signals the start of the work day and the reality of being separated from their children, who were slaughtered in the gas chambers. To the left of the poem is a miniature illustration of the muddy camp and its wooden barracks.

The second poem, *To the Doctor at Auschwitz*, was written on June 15, 1944 in the same manner – in pencil on a piece of used paper, with a miniature sketch in the upper left-hand corner depicting tiny women raising their hands towards heaven. The poem was dedicated to a Jewish woman doctor who risked her life by tearing a piece of cloth from her smock to bandage a wounded inmate. The poem describes the inmates' physical and mental torture and their yearning for words of encouragement:

Stand strong! We shall overcome ...

Lili's third poem, *The Parade is on the Way* (July 30, 1944), describes the women's marching repertoire, fulfilling the Germans' order that inmates, men and women alike, must sing on the way to and from work. It was sung to the tune of a well-known march, *Mariska*, describing the inmates' lives with much humor and irony:

The parade is on its way, out of the gate
Whoever stays in place gets a kiss on "the place" ...
Oh, how wonderful is our fortune of plenty

This poem includes a miniature illustration of marching women at its upper left corner.

The fourth poem, *The Women of the Camp* (November 11, 1944) expresses joy that another week has passed and all are still alive. It tells us of the horrifying starvation that the inmates suffer, yearning for bread as they listen to the sounds coming from their empty stomachs.

Spring 1940 (December 3, 1944) was Lili's fifth and probably last poem written at Auschwitz. Unlike all the others, it describes the horrible historical events of Spring 1940 that she had witnessed, in which people killed one another as the Danube flowed peacefully through the beautiful green forests typical of springtime in Europe. Lili's postwar notes call the poem *Dreaming of Novi Sad 1940*. Its most remarkable feature is the absence of any reference to the misery of Auschwitz, focusing instead on Lili's account of the Third Hungarian Army's butchering of Serbs and Jews as it passed through the region. This event preceded the mass shootings along the Danube in winter 1942, known in Serbian history as "the Cold Days."

The Rules of Behavior,²² a guidebook influenced by Lili's socialist views, is a piece of undated prose in which she declares that the only way to survive the hell of Birkenau is to act

²² A handwritten manuscript found in Lili's diary. Lili's granddaughter recalled her mother's informing her that *Rules of Behavior* was written in Birkenau (Sela Ben-Ami, personal communication 2007).

as a mutually supportive group that adheres to the moral values on which its members were raised: “Here, there is no longer “I,” there is only “we.” And as “we,” we will be saved if we behave sincerely, sacrificing ourselves for others, displaying good will, never bearing grudges or reporting others. Only thus can we maintain human dignity,” concludes Lili (Kasticher, 1951), illuminating her personality as a socialist leader and revealing the true purpose of her writing initiative: to preserve a modicum of humanity, for herself and her friends.

Another piece of information left by Lili is a poem dedicated to Berta, describing hunger. It bears no name, date nor signature, but its content and handwriting indicate that it was most likely written by Lili. It begins with the verses: “I feel ashamed/but I am hungry / I should have been given more food.”

Lili’s Auschwitz works reflect starvation, humiliation, beatings, hard labor, crowding, fear of death and uncertainty, but also expressed hope for a much better life in Israel after liberation, as exemplified by the final lines of *Homeland*:

Those who suffered
Will rejoice again one day.

Conclusion

This study indicates that the common feature among the three groups is writing at the risk of one’s life, with the intention of leaving traces behind on the one hand and remaining human beings whose spirits have not been subjugated by the Nazis on the other.

Sonderkommando documentation, including photographs, constitutes one of the most important and detailed non-German sources we have today regarding what took place in Auschwitz-Birkenau. The materials were written bravely and coherently, their writers all too aware that they would not survive and hoping that after the war, several Jews might remain in the world who must be told what happened to their brethren and who might perhaps seek revenge on the Nazis.

The conditions under which the Polish political prisoners’ heroic writing was produced were the least harsh of all. These works surrounded a concept and ideology that helped them not only with practical organization work but also with emotional necessities. Thus they remained united, loyal to one another and functioning well on their own soil in their own language.

Lili Kasticher, by contrast, was alone. She too acted in fulfilment of an ideology and upheld freedom of thought, even though it was clear to her that at any moment she was liable to get caught and pay for her writing with her life. But for her, life without meaning was not worth living in any case. While the *Sonderkommando* and the political prisoners had connections that provided them with a supply of paper and writing utensils, Lili found a unique way of obtaining these materials. She read the palm of a *Kapo* who rewarded her by ordering office supplies, including pencils and writing paper.²³

²³ In an interview published in the Hungarian-language Israeli newspaper Uj Kelet (New East) on February 23, 1951, Lili explained how she stayed alive, revealing the ways she obtained pencils and crayons in Birkenau. She

Those who wrote in Auschwitz-Birkenau mentioned in this article constitute proof that the human spirit and freedom of thought were more important than life itself and more powerful than any oppressor's decree.

had once read a book on palmistry and would read palms for the inmates. One day, she was approached by the Kapo, who asked to have her palm read. Excited by Lili's reading, the Kapo asked her to analyze letters from her boyfriend at the front, wanting to know if he really missed her. Subsequently, the Kapo asked Lili to write and illustrate her letters to her boyfriend. That is how Lili obtained writing implements.

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Tayeb Salih and Modernism's Season of Migration to the South

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Abstract

Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* (1967) is understandably one of the best-known Arabic novels, and its English translation is probably the most widely read Arabic novel in English. This paper demonstrates that *Season of Migration to the North* is in many ways a classic postcolonial novel, concerned both with the British colonization of Sudan and with the postcolonial legacy of British rule. It also engages in direct dialog with British literature. For example, it has been frequently seen as a sort of rejoinder to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. But *Season of Migration to the North* is a sophisticated literary work that has much in common with works of European modernism, even as it writes back to them. In fact, Salih's novel has a particularly large number of points of contact with the work of James Joyce – perhaps the greatest of all European modernists but also a postcolonial writer in his own right.

Keywords: Arabic literature, Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, modernism, postcolonial literature, Tayeb Salih

Introduction

Torn by coups and civil wars through much of its postcolonial history, Sudan is known in the West largely as a land of famine, war, human-rights abuses, and general misery and backwardness. And it is certainly the case that, on the whole, Sudan has remained on the margins of the modernizing impulses within Arab culture. On the other hand, the Sudanese novel *Season of Migration to the North* (1967), by Tayeb Salih, is one of the most widely admired novels ever written in the Arabic language. In 2001, for example, it was named by a panel of Arab writers and critics as the most important Arab novel of the twentieth century. Moreover, its English language version, translated by Denys Johnson-Davies in consultation with the author, is almost certainly the most widely known and read English translation of an Arabic novel, partly because the novel is so frequently taught in American and British universities.

There are a number of reasons for the popularity of this novel as an object of study in the West, including the very practical consideration that it is quite short. Probably the central reason for its popularity in Western literature classes is the fact that it has been so widely evoked as a sort of counter-text to Western Orientalist or colonialist literature. As a result, the text is often taught in dialogue with such colonialist narratives, presumably producing numerous opportunities for comparison and discussion. In addition, *Season of Migration* is a sophisticated text that resembles numerous texts of Western literary modernism in both its thematic concerns and its aesthetic strategies, making its literary merit easily recognizable to Western readers.

Season of Migration to the North as Postcolonial Text

Though Sudan as a whole has hardly been prominent among discussions of postcolonial literature in the West, *Season of Migration* is in many ways a classic postcolonial novel. For example, the novel specifically thematizes the encounter between England and Sudan, especially through the story of Mustafa Sa'eed, a young Sudanese who goes to London to complete his education, then undertakes a brilliant academic career as an economist, only to have it derailed when he kills his white English wife, Jean Morris, only one of a sequence of self-destructive white women with whom he has sexual liaisons that drive them to their ruin. Most critics have seen Mustafa's encounters with English women as a sort of postcolonial revenge for the damage wrought on Sudan by England during the period of British colonial domination there (1898–1956). At the same time, while the book's narrator (and, presumably, its author) acknowledges the damage done to Sudan by colonialism, he actually approaches this phenomenon dialectically, granting that the British also brought certain modernizing influences that have ultimately had a positive effect. The most obvious of these are the water pumps that chug away through the text, making irrigation from the Nile much easier for the local farmers. Similarly, we also learn that the British brought schools to the region, with Mustafa taking it upon himself to enter one such school at a young age, despite the lack of parental encouragement, his father having died before his birth and his mother seemingly having little interest in the boy. That Mustafa's self-motivated enrollment might be controversial, though, is made clear in his revelation to the narrator that many families in Sudan at the time were staunchly opposed to the notion of having their children attend British schools, which they saw as a "great evil" that threatened their traditional way of life as much as the "occupying armies" that brought them (Salih, 1969, p. 20).¹

¹ Henceforth cited in the text simply by page number.

Mustafa, though, is a brilliant student who soon finds that the academic life, however much an element of the British domination of Sudan it might be, is very much his element as well. His life, in fact, is intricately caught up in the phenomenon of British colonialism even from the time of his birth. The effective British colonial rule of Sudan, for example, began after the decisive Battle of Omdurman (near Khartoum) on September 2, 1898, roughly two weeks after Mustafa's birth in Khartoum. Mustafa has thus grown up a colonial subject, his life lived in the shadow of the colonization of Sudan. Indeed, the book's narrator is at one point told by a man he meets on a train that Mustafa's family belonged to a tribe that supplied guides for the British forces led by Herbert Kitchener in his recapture of Khartoum and the rest of Sudan, after much of the area had fallen to Mahdist rebels in 1885 (p. 54). Furthering this link, this same man tells the narrator that, as a young boy, Mustafa had begun his education as a star pupil at Gordon Memorial College (p. 52), named, of course, for the famed British colonial general Charles George Gordon, who was killed during the fall of the British garrison at Khartoum to the rebels in 1885.² This institution, in fact, was opened by Kitchener in Khartoum in 1902 to commemorate Gordon. Such a brilliant student that he quickly outstrips the ability of Gordon College to educate him properly, Mustafa soon moves on to Cairo and then to London, moving further and further into the heart of British hegemony with each stage of his impressive educational career. Apparently the first Sudanese to win a scholarship to study in England (and later the first Sudanese to marry a white Englishwoman), he ultimately earns a doctorate in economics there and becomes a successful academic, authoring books with such clearly anticolonial titles as *The Economics of Colonialism*, *Colonialism and Monopoly*, *The Cross and Gunpowder*, and *The Rape of Africa* (p. 137).

Mustafa is presented very clearly as the product of historical forces in his time, much like the "typical" characters associated by Georg Lukács with the greatest European realist writers, such as Balzac. Such characterization, per Lukács, helps realist writers to capture the process of historical change in a rapidly modernizing Europe. One might say the same of Salih, except that, while there is a clearly allegorical dimension to Lukács's notion of typification,³ the characterization of Mustafa is more overtly allegorical than the characterization of Balzac characters such as Eugène de Rastignac. Indeed, Mustafa is so symptomatic of the colonial history of Sudan that his characterization immediately recalls Fredric Jameson's controversial argument that it might be useful to try reading all "third-world" literary narratives as "national allegories": "All third-world texts are necessarily," Jameson argues, "allegorical, and in a very specific way: they are to be read as what I will call *national allegories*, even when, or perhaps I should say, particularly when their forms develop out of predominantly western machineries of representation, such as the novel" (1991b, p. 86). In short, third-world texts, Jameson concludes, "necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory: *the story of a private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society*" (1991b, p. 86, his emphasis).

Jameson's logic here is based on the premise that, in the "third world," that is, the postcolonial world, public and private experience remain connected in organic and direct ways that have now been lost in the West. In other words, he is to an extent arguing that contemporary postcolonial texts retain a connection between private experience and political history of a kind

² Gordon's downfall is dramatized in the Hollywood film *Khartoum* (1966), which features Charlton Heston in the role of a heavily heroized Gordon. This film, perhaps the most prominent Western cultural product about Sudan, presents the Mahdist rebels essentially as bloodthirsty religious fanatics, though the Mahdi himself, played by distinguished British actor Sir Laurence Olivier in blackface, is presented as a rather dignified figure who becomes an admirer of Gordon.

³ On the allegorical nature of Lukács's notion of typification, see Jameson (1981, p. 33).

that was present in the high realist European texts of authors such as Balzac. Mustafa, on the other hand, is radically alienated from his roots in Sudan, to which he retains no real connection. He can therefore be seen as a national allegory, but of a kind that is virtually the reverse of that indicated by Jameson: he illustrates not the ongoing connection of private individuals with public communities in the colonial and postcolonial world but precisely the breakdown of this connection. The narrator, on the other hand, is a similarly allegorical figure who retains stronger roots in Sudan despite his own Western education and whose experience more directly reflects that of the Sudanese nation. To an extent, in fact, one can best appreciate the allegorical characterization of Mustafa and the narrator by seeing them as different, dialectically interrelated, aspects of the same character, showing both the importance of community in Sudanese society and the embattled nature of that community under the impact of colonialism.

In still another illustration of the dialectical treatment of colonialism in *Season of Migration*, Salih's narrator relays to us an overheard exchange between a young Sudanese university lecturer and an Englishman, Richard, employed in the postcolonial Sudanese Ministry of Finance. The Sudanese declares that "you transmitted to us the disease of your capitalist economy. What did you give us except a handful of capitalist companies that drew off our blood – and still do?" The Englishman then responds, "All this shows is that you cannot manage to live without us. You used to complain about colonialism and when we left you created the legend of neo-colonialism" (p. 60). For his own part, the narrator delivers an ambivalent judgment on the matter: "The white man, merely because he ruled us for a period of our history, will for a time continue to have for us that feeling of contempt the strong have for the weak." Noting that Mustafa reversed this power dynamic by coming to England as a "conqueror," he concludes that "their own coming too was not a tragedy as we imagine, nor yet a blessing as they imagine" (p. 60).

Meanwhile, the political commentary of *Season of Migration* is aimed not just at the colonial period, but also at the postcolonial period in Sudan. Indeed, the text conducts a critique of Sudan's postcolonial doldrums that might have virtually been lifted from Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961).⁴ For example, Fanon emphasizes that decolonization was only a first step toward true liberation, warning that no such liberation could be achieved in postcolonial African nations if those nations simply replaced the former ruling European colonial bourgeoisie by an indigenous African bourgeoisie, while leaving the basic class structure of the societies in place. In fact, Fanon argues that the African bourgeoisie might be even worse than their European predecessors, because the African bourgeoisie are mere imitators of their Western masters, who themselves had already become decadent by the time of their full-scale colonization of Africa in the late nineteenth century. According to Fanon, the African bourgeoisie thus

follows the Western bourgeoisie along its path of negation and decadence without ever having emulated it in its first stages of exploration and invention. ... It is already senile before it has come to know the petulance, the fearlessness, or the will to succeed of youth. (1968, p. 153)

⁴ The many echoes of Fanon in *Season of Migration* are probably no accident. In an interview available on Youtube (at <https://youtu.be/PK9of6f6qGw>, in Arabic), for example, Salih identifies Fanon as a great thinker who influenced his work, along with Wilhelm Reich and Herbert Marcuse. In particular, he notes Fanon's pioneering theorization of the emasculating effects of colonialism on colonized men, a motif that is of great relevance to *Season of Migration*.

Salih, in *Season of Migration of the North*, criticizes the decadent behavior of the postcolonial African bourgeoisie in much the same terms, though this critique is complicated in this case because it is filtered through Salih's narrator, himself a European-educated (low-level) member of that bourgeois class who works as a civil servant in postcolonial Khartoum. He is nevertheless able, though not without a certain irony, to recognize the corruption and decadence of his own postcolonial ruling class. On a visit to his native village of Wad Hamid, he responds to his old friend Mahjoub's complaints about the estrangement of the new ruling class from the real problems of postcolonial Sudan with an account of a conference he recently attended of postcolonial rulers from all over Africa. These men, he says, are

smooth of face, lupine of mouth, their hands gleaming with rings of precious stones, exuding perfume from their cheeks, in white, blue, black and green suits of fine mohair and expensive silk rippling on their shoulders like the fur of Siamese cats. (p. 118)

The narrator then goes on with an extensive account of the luxury in which these postcolonial bourgeoisie live, mimicking their former European masters by erecting impressive edifices (designed in London and built of marble imported from Italy) in which to hold the conferences in which they seek to impress each other with their splendor while ignoring the poverty of the people. Granted, he notes, the typical postcolonial African leader gives lip service to overcoming the disease of bourgeois decadence among the people of postcolonial Africa, but only as he himself "escapes during the summer months from Africa to his villa on Lake Lucerne and his wife does her shopping in Harrods in London, from where the articles are flown to her in a private plane" (p. 120). "Such people," the narrator concludes, "are concerned only with their stomachs and their sensual pleasures" (p. 120).

Importantly, while the narrator is insightful in his diagnosis of the decadence of the postcolonial bourgeoisie in Sudan and elsewhere, he himself does nothing to correct the situation, protesting that he is merely a lowly functionary with no real power to change things (p. 121). This sort of inaction is, of course, typical of his character throughout the text, most obviously in his decision to do nothing to prevent the forced marriage of Mustafa's widow Hosna to the elderly Wad Rayyes, an inappropriate match that leads to the violent deaths of both partners. Salih thus subtly suggests that the travails of postcolonial Africa are due not merely to the shenanigans of corrupt leaders, but also to the inaction of those who recognize this corruption but do nothing to oppose it, choosing the more comfortable option of silence and inaction, while themselves profiting from the corrupt system.

Salih's Fanonian engagement with issues related to colonialism and postcolonialism resembles that to be found in numerous other colonial and postcolonial novels. One of Salih's key predecessors, for example, is René Maran, the French Guyanese writer whose somewhat autobiographical 1947 novel *Un Homme pareil aux autres* ("A Man Like Others") provides some of the key material for Fanon's discussion of the sexual dynamics between black men and white women in the third chapter of *Black Skin, White Masks*. Maran's novel features the story of Jean Veneuse, a black intellectual from the French Antilles who comes to France at a young age and is educated there. Alienated from his white fellow students, he takes refuge in the world of books and becomes a successful scholar. In the meantime, his French upbringing and education alienate him from his colonial origins as well, origins that contribute to his feelings of inferiority and insecurity. He falls in love with and desires to marry a white French woman, musing to himself that black men "tend to marry in Europe not so much out of love as for the satisfaction of being the master of a European woman." Further, he wonders to himself

“whether I am attempting to revenge myself on a European woman for everything that her ancestors have inflicted on mine throughout the centuries” (as cited in Fanon, 2008, pp. 69–70).

The parallels between Jean Veneuse and Salih’s Mustafa Sa’eed are extensive and clear, both in terms of this motif of a vengeful assault on white women and in terms of their double alienation from both their indigenous cultures and the metropolitan cultures in which they have been educated. In England, for example, Mustafa compensates for his sense of not fitting in by outrageously playing up his exotic Africanness, building on a number of Orientalist stereotypes as a technique for seducing English women. Fabricating stories about his exotic African home – and at one point claiming that his house in Sudan was so close to the Nile that he could dangle his arm out his bedroom window and dip his fingers in the running water of the river (p. 39) – he burns incense and sandalwood in his room in London to enhance the exotic effect (p. 31). He also plays upon the ignorance and gullibility of the women he seduces, playing with them like a cat with a mouse while feeding them exotic stories that mix materials drawn from Arabian desert lore and the mysteries of the darkest African jungles, knowing that they are little able to distinguish one bit of exoticism from another.

In this way, Salih effectively dismantles Orientalist stereotyping a decade before Said’s *Orientalism*. Meanwhile, if in London Mustafa creates for himself a den of seduction decorated with exoticist stereotypes, in Wad Hamid he creates for himself a den of Britishness in which he can relax in bourgeois isolation, immersing himself in European cultural artifacts and in his impressive library of Western tomes that includes “not a single Arabic book” (p. 137). Even his copy of the Quran is an English translation, emphasizing his Westernization and estrangement from his native culture. Far from being a sophisticated hybrid who feels at home in both England and Sudan, he is a radically alienated outsider who feels at home in neither.

Season of Migration also resonates with a number of near-contemporary postcolonial novels in its Fanonian exploration of postcolonial decadence and corruption. For example, particularly relevant to the Muslim context of Salih’s novel is Ousmane Sembène’s *Xala* (1973), whose protagonist, El Hadji, “undergoes experiences that make his personal story a sort of allegory of the history of the Third-World bourgeoisie, who are presented in *Xala* very much in the same terms as in Fanon” (Booker, 2000, p. 138). A formal anticolonial activist, El Hadji has turned, in the postcolonial era, to a ruthless pursuit of wealth that brings suffering on the very poor whom he once championed; he serves now as little more than an agent of Western capital⁵ and very much resembles the smooth-faced postcolonial bourgeoisie of Salih’s Sudan.

Season of Migration also anticipates the Ghanaian Ayi Kwei Armah’s *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968) in its analysis of the African postcolonial condition. Published only one year after the publication of Salih’s book, *The Beautiful Ones* critiques the corruption of Nkrumah’s postcolonial Ghana in an overtly Fanonian mode.⁶ Armah’s novel even includes an alienated intellectual (“Teacher”) who is somewhat of a double of the book’s unnamed narrator (“the man”), thus replicating a key structural component of Salih’s novel. Like Mustafa, Teacher is an insightful thinker who understands the dynamics of colonialism in a very

⁵ For more on this aspect of the text, see Booker (2000, p. 139).

⁶ Armah has openly acknowledged the influence of Fanon on his work. In his essay “African Socialism: Utopian or Scientific?” – which serves as a useful gloss on *The Beautiful Ones* – Armah specifically recommends the work of Fanon as an alternative to Nkrumah and other postcolonial African leaders and as example of the kind of revolutionary thought that true African socialism needs to draw upon (1967, pp. 29–30).

Fanonian mode. However, also like Mustafa, he essentially withdraws from the world and fails to follow Fanon's injunction for intellectuals to provide leadership in the liberation of the people of Africa.⁷

Finally, by making Mustafa an intellectual who engages in a concerted analysis of colonialist economics, Salih also places his novel in dialogue with nonfictional studies of colonialism. Fanon's work is the most obvious of these, but one might also note that, among the texts that the narrator finds in Mustafa's private room in Wad Hamid after the latter's death is *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization*, by Octave Mannoni, first published in French in 1950. Mannoni's pioneering text was one of the first seriously to consider the psychological consequences of colonialism (for both colonizer and colonized) and so is certainly appropriate reading for Mustafa as part of his scholarly work. It also resembles *Season of Migration* in its emphasis on the psychological effects of colonialism. However, its vision of the attitude of dependency effected by colonized subjects as mask for their resentment of the colonizer and their own innate sense of inferiority (which predates colonialism, essentially leaving them in anticipation of conquest, desiring to be dominated) is one to which Mustafa might be expected to object. Fanon raises a similar objection in the fourth chapter of *Black Skin, White Masks*, where he insists that any sense of inferiority on the part of colonized subjects was a consequence of colonialism, not an anticipation of it. Indeed, Mustafa's campaign to master English women might be taken almost as a direct attempt to refute Mannoni's assertion, though of course one could also read this campaign (and Mustafa's overachievement as a student and scholar) as an attempt to compensate for his feelings of inferiority.

***Season of Migration to the North* as Modernist Novel**

Of course, the single text to which *Season of Migration to the North* has been most often compared is Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, a key work of colonialist fiction to which Salih's novel has often been seen as a sort of postcolonial response. Thematically, the juxtaposition of these two texts makes obvious sense. Conrad's text features a European, Marlow, who travels to colonial Africa and undergoes soul-searching experiences in the course of which he becomes fascinated with Kurtz, a European intellectual who preceded Marlow to Africa. Salih's text, meanwhile, features a Sudanese (the book's unnamed narrator), who has been educated in England and who becomes fascinated with the story of Mustafa Sa'eed, who preceded him in Europe. Put differently, Salih's narrative centrally involves an African narrator figure who undergoes a voyage of self discovery by seeking to understand an enigmatic African who travels to Britain and is there corrupted into savagery, partly through his exposure to the indigenous culture, much as Conrad's Kurtz seems to have his own most savage impulses activated by his exposure to Africa.

Season of Migration can thus be seen as a sort of mirror image of and critical reversal of *Heart of Darkness*, as numerous commentators have noted. Edward Said is typical of such critics when he concludes that Salih's Mustafa "does (and is) the reverse of what Kurtz does (and is): the Black man journeys north into white territory" (Said, 1993, p. 30).⁸ Indeed, the many ways in which Salih seems so intentionally to reverse Conrad would seem to make the relationship

⁷ See Booker (1998, p. 106)

⁸ On the other hand, Mohammad Shaheen (1985) has argued that Salih essentially attempts (but fails) to replicate Conrad's achievement in *Heart of Darkness*, a reading that entirely fails to comprehend the critical distance between the two novels. It is thus no surprise that Davidson has declared Shaheen's reading to be "naïve" and "woefully inadequate" (Davidson, 1989, p. 397).

between these texts quite obvious – were it not for the fact that this relationship is actually far more complex than it at first appears to be.

Structurally, for example, Salih's Mustafa might seem to be a counterpart to Conrad's Kurtz, while Salih's unnamed narrator is a counterpart to Conrad's Marlow. However, both *Season of Migration* and *Heart of Darkness* contain layers of rhetorical complexity in their narrative voicing that cannot be matched up in any table of simple one-to-one correspondence. For example, Marlow is *not*, in fact, the narrator of *Heart of Darkness*, but merely the conveyor of a nested narrative that is actually presented to us by another narrator, who is unnamed. At the beginning of *Heart of Darkness*, we find Conrad's Marlow aboard the *Nellie*, a cruising yawl moored in the Thames. There, he tells the story of his venture into the heart of darkest Africa in search of the mysterious Kurtz to an audience composed of an allegorical who is who of London society, each identified only by his professional function within that society: a Director of Companies, a Lawyer, an Accountant. Interestingly, the actual narrator of Conrad's novel, the one who relates to *us* what Marlow related to *them* aboard the *Nellie*, is the only one of the group who remains entirely unidentified by either name or profession, a fact that further complicates the already complex rhetorical structure of this classic proto-modernist forerunner of high modernist fiction.

Salih's rhetorical structure is both more and less enigmatic than Conrad's. *Season of Migration* begins as the narrator addresses a completely unidentified audience: "It was, gentlemen, after a long absence – seven years to be exact, during which time I was studying in Europe – that I returned to my people" (1). Just who these gentlemen might be is unspecified in the text, and we are free to imagine, according to our preference, that he is simply addressing the readers of the novel, as might the narrator of a Western novel, or that, *hakiwati*-style, he is addressing an oral narrative to a live audience (perhaps composed of the village elders, in the mode of Marlow's audience). In any case, as Davidson notes, "as quickly as it is aroused, this question of audience fades, for the narrator moves directly into the story he has to relate" (1989, p. 386).

The identity of this audience is, in fact, only one of many questions that are left unanswered in *Season of Migration* – such as the ultimate fate of Mustafa Sa'eed, who disappears from Wad Hamid without a trace during flood season, leaving it as a matter of conjecture whether he drowned in the Nile by accident, drowned by suicidal design, or merely decided to take advantage of the flooded river to skip town, knowing most people will assume he must have drowned. The narrator himself is not only unnamed in the text but has an uncertain fate of his own, ending his narrative thrashing about in the river and yelling for help as the text ends. Even when we are given information, it is often indirect or unreliable. All we know of Mustafa's adventures in England, for example, is relayed to us through the narrator. We have no way of knowing whether Mustafa was truthful in the account he gave to the narrator or whether the narrator conveyed the information to us accurately – just as we know of Marlow's adventures in Africa only through the narrator's second-hand account of what Marlow told his audience on the *Nellie*. Meanwhile, the narrator also collects additional information about Mustafa from "third-party" sources, some of which is almost certainly unreliable, just as the additional information Marlow gets about Kurtz from sources such as a rag-tag Russian sailor seems to be of uncertain usefulness.

Hassan argues that, in *Season of Migration*, Salih "perfected" the use of the "unreliable narrator," a technique he had already begun to use in his early short stories, such as "So It Was, Gentlemen" ("Hakadha ya sadati"), the very title of which anticipates the beginning of *Season of Migration* (Hassan, 2003, p. 25). Indeed, once one realizes that the narrator is not entirely to

be trusted, a great deal of the meaning of *Season of Migration* becomes unstable. It is clear, for example, that the narrator to some extent envies and distrusts Mustafa, a man whose accomplishments as a student and scholar abroad in Europe dwarf the accomplishments of the narrator himself, who had formerly thought his acquisition of a doctorate in literature while studying in England to be a feat unparalleled in the history of the inhabitants of Wad Hamid. This being the case, one is tempted to wonder whether some of the negative depiction of Mustafa (as when he is portrayed as a vicious misogynist who seeks revenge against English women for the British colonization of Sudan) might be exaggerated. Similarly, one wonders whether there is a subtle agenda at stake in the way the narrator relays to us the opinion of the Englishman Richard that Mustafa had not been a “reliable economist” (p. 57). In addition, at least as conveyed to us by the narrator, Richard goes on to suggest that much of Mustafa’s academic and professional success had been due to the fact that he served as a sort of token for the left-leaning British intelligentsia, who could congratulate themselves on their tolerance and liberalism by treating him like one of their own (pp. 58–59). In this sense, the rhetorical structure of *Season of Migration* again resembles that of *Heart of Darkness* in that there are clear tensions between Marlow and the frame narrator that add an extra layer of uncertainty to the interpretation of the narrative with which we are presented.

But other rhetorical uncertainties abound in Salih’s text as well. For example, when Mustafa expresses a positive opinion of the narrator’s ninety-year-old grandfather, Hajj Ahmed, early in the novel, the narrator accepts the assessment as an obvious one: “And why not, seeing that my grandfather is a veritable miracle?” (p. 10). Through the remainder of the novel, the narrator offers nothing to contradict this verdict directly, though one can perhaps detect a certain ironic bitterness when he relates the grandfather’s outburst, late in the text, “God curse all women! Women are the sisters of the Devil” (p. 123). After all, the grandfather is here referring directly to Hosna, with whom the narrator had been in love and who now lies dead after a horrific encounter with her new husband, Wad Rayyes, who had violently attacked and attempted to rape her. In addition, the narrator’s characterization of his grandfather as a “miracle” is significantly ironized when *Season of Migration* is read through Salih’s early short story “A Handful of Dates.” As Hassan notes, it is clear from Salih’s later novel *Bandarshah* that the narrator of *Season of Migration* is actually named “Meheimeed” and that he is an older version of the same person as the boy protagonist of “A Handful of Dates.” Further, the grandfather who figures prominently in the story is Hajj Ahmed. Yet this story basically relates Meheimeed’s loss of innocence as he learns with disgust that the grandfather he had so admired can be selfish, ruthless, and cruel in his treatment of others. Meheimeed learned early on that his grandfather was not the “miracle” he had once thought him to be.

In short, *Season of Migration* is invested with many of the same kinds of ironic and interpretive uncertainties that we have come to associate with modernist narratives, and one of the most important things the novel has in common with *Heart of Darkness* is that Conrad’s novel displays some of the same modernist characteristics. Of course, Conrad’s novel, while perhaps itself not quite fully modernist, is a sort of transitional text that serves as a clear forerunner of later modernist novels. Indeed, one reason why *Season of Migration* and *Heart of Darkness* seem so much like companion novels is that both not only deal with similar cross-cultural encounters, but both are also written in a sort of eccentric modernist mode, resembling but not quite belonging to the canonical texts of European high modernism.

While Salih draws extensively upon traditions from Sudanese oral narratives, *Season of Migration* is clearly a key example of what Benita Parry has called “peripheral modernisms,” “understood as the aesthetic forms generated beyond capitalism’s cores” (p. 27). For Parry,

such modernisms arise from areas of the world that were “co-opted or coerced into capitalism’s world system,” generally via the experience of colonization (p. 30). Associating modernist cultural production specifically with the historical phenomenon of modernity, Parry argues that these areas of the world also participated in modernity, however unwillingly or in however subaltern a fashion, so that the aesthetic production from these areas might also be expected to show certain characteristics of modernism. *Season of Migration to the North* is, in fact, the principal example that Parry uses to illustrate her notion of peripheral modernisms. In particular, Parry notes that, while Salih’s novel is profoundly rooted in its specific real-world historical context, it goes well beyond that context in its style and in the excessive and “outlandish” fictional world created in the novel, thus defeating any attempt at a straightforward realist reading (p. 38).

Season of Migration is intensely engaged with a number of political issues related to colonialism and postcolonialism, and it is strongly embedded in its Sudanese historical context. It is therefore clearly important to recognize that the novel arises from a different cultural point of view (and from a different time period) than do the texts of European high modernism, which can be seen to end roughly with the deaths of Joyce and Woolf in 1941, but which reached its zenith in the 1920s. 1922, the year of publication of both *Ulysses* and *The Waste Land*, is often seen as the *annus mirabilis* of modernist literature, thus placing the peak of that phenomenon nearly half a century before Salih’s novel – though one might note that 1922 was also apparently the peak year of Mustafa’s success in seducing English women, he having, at the end of that year, found himself living simultaneously with five of them (p. 35). It was also an important year in Arab history, marking the nominal end of British colonial rule in Egypt, though such rule would continue in Sudan until 1956. In any case, numerous formal and stylistic aspects of *Season of Migration* clearly resemble those typically associated with modernist fiction, including its complex, nonlinear narrative structure; the complex rhetoric of its narrative voice; and an overall texture of irony and ambiguity that defeats any attempt at final and authoritative interpretation.

It is little wonder then, that numerous critics, in addition to Parry, have identified *Season of Migration* as a modernist text. Susan Stanford Friedman describes *Season of Migration* as a key example of “postcolonial” modernism “within the canon of twentieth-century modernisms” (S.S. Friedman, 2006, p. 435). Comparing Salih’s novel with *Heart of Darkness*, she finds that the former is *more* modernist than the latter, that “Even more than Conrad’s novel, *Season of Migration to the North* is a narrative of indeterminacy, of mysteries, lies, and truths; of mediating events through the perspectives of multiple narrators, of complex tapestries of interlocking motifs and symbols; and of pervasive irony. Stylistically speaking, Salih’s novel is, for Friedman, “high modernist,” having moved even further than Conrad from the conventions of realism (S. S. Friedman, 2006, pp. 435–36).

Saree Makdisi similarly sees *Season of Migration* (along with Ghassan Kanifani’s 1963 novel *Men in the Sun*) as a key example of “Arab modernism,” while at the same time warning that “this is *by no means* to suggest that Arab “modernism” simply recapitulates an earlier European modernism; but there are certain similarities between these two political-cultural tendencies that suggest the existence of continuities as much as discontinuities between these radically different experiences of modernity as a crisis, continuities mediated through the violent dialogical process of imperialism itself” (Makdisi, 1995, p. 105). In particular, for Makdisi, *Season of Migration* and other texts of Arab modernism demand a new way of conceptualizing modernity as something not that the Arab world is moving toward, but as something that has already arrived; however, Makdisi continues, due to the impact of colonialism and neo-

colonialism, Arab modernity arrived differently from European modernity and must be grappled with on its own terms (1995, p. 105). Thematically, even the engagement of *Season of Migration* with issues so clearly related to colonialism and postcolonialism does not necessarily set it apart from the texts of European modernism. *Heart of Darkness* is the most obvious example, though E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* also comes to mind, and of course we should remember that Joyce's *Ulysses*, often seen as the central text of modernist fiction, was itself produced by a colonial subject of the British Empire and that the British colonial domination of Ireland is a crucial topic of *Ulysses*.

Beyond the obvious political issues dealt with in *Season of Migration*, Salih's novel also deals centrally with the topic of alienation, which is probably the most common experiential motif in modernist literature, in which characters such as T. S. Eliot's Prufrock so frequently lament their sense of estrangement from others and even from any authentic version of themselves. As Jameson has noted, it is in fact the ability to experience alienation – thanks to the vestigial holdover of a more stable and autonomous subjectivity from earlier periods – that provides a key distinction between the subjective texture of modernism and postmodernism, when those older forms of subjectivity have been swept away entirely. For Jameson, “alienation is, first of all, not merely a modernist concept but also a modernist *experience* (something I cannot argue further here, except to say that “psychic fragmentation” is a better term for what ails us today)” (Jameson, 1991a, p. 90).

Moreover, the modernist characters who struggle most fiercely with alienation as an experience tend to be intellectuals (or at least would-be intellectuals), whose attempts to live the life of the mind make it all the harder for them to adjust to conditions in a rapidly changing material world. Such alienated intellectuals, as Jameson has noted in his discussion of Sidney Kirkwood of George Gissing's *The Nether World* (1889), arose in Gissing's later work to provide a distanced (but sympathetic) perspective from which to witness the problems of the working class. Such figures, however, thus undergo, according to Jameson, a special sort of alienation that he labels “*déclassement*”: Not really members of the working class, their sympathy with that class leaves them estranged from their own bourgeois origins and therefore classless, drifting through the confusions of the modern world as members of no well-established social group (Jameson, 1981, p. 195). In this sense, of course, Kirkwood reverses the trajectory of Hardy's Jude Fawley, whose intellectual aspirations estrange him from his working-class origins, but who can never be fully welcomed as a member of the educated bourgeois class no matter how great his intellectual talents might be.

If the alienation of such proto-modernist intellectuals as Kirkwood and Fawley is thus largely a matter of class (and one might also place in this class-based predicament the more modernist Leonard Bast of Forster's *Howards End*), we should remember that Joyce's Stephen Dedalus provides us with a key example of a modernist intellectual whose alienation is closely tied to the doubly colonized condition of his native Ireland. Intensely aware that, as an Irishman, he is the “servant of two masters,” Dedalus attempts (unsuccessfully) to escape the bitter realization of his subaltern status as a colonized subject of both the British Empire and the Catholic Church by fleeing, at the end of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, to the intellectual Mecca of Paris. But, by the beginning of *Ulysses*, he has already returned after only a short time abroad, the mortal illness of his mother having called him home. Still rejecting both capitalism-dominated Britishness and Catholic-dominated Irishness, Stephen is, by the end of *Ulysses*, left adrift and homeless, both symbolically and literally.

It is certainly the case that *Ulysses* occupies a special position as a modernist text that is both intensely postcolonial in its sensibilities and strongly European in its cultural background.⁹ And, while Joyce's masterpiece has frequently been adduced as the epitome of modernist formal technique, it is also the case that *Ulysses* exemplifies another of Jameson's key distinctions between modernism and postmodernism – the fact that, in modernist texts, vestiges of older cultural and social forms are still able to assert themselves in opposition to the modernizing tendencies of capitalism. For Jameson, “the keen sense of the New in the modern period was only possible because of the mixed, uneven, transitional nature of that period, in which the old coexisted with what was then coming into being” (1991a, p. 311). Further, “one way of telling the story of the transition from the modern to the postmodern lies then in showing how at length modernization triumphs and wipes the old completely out: nature is abolished along with the traditional countryside and traditional agriculture. ... Now everything is new; but by the same token, the very category of the new then loses its meaning and becomes itself something of a modernist survival” (1991a, p. 311).

Joyce's extremely modern work nevertheless contains clear vestiges of older Irish culture and social customs (just as Joyce's famously high-tech literary style contains echoes of Irish oral narrative traditions¹⁰), no doubt partly because of Joyce's dual background in colonial Dublin and metropolitan Paris. Importantly, though, Joyce himself is absolutely unsentimental about the loss of Irish tradition as a result of the onslaught of British-driven modernity, despite his strongly critical attitude toward the British themselves. In the same way, Salih – with his own dual background in Sudan and London – refuses to idealize the traditional Islamic culture of Sudan, especially through the story of Hosna, which indicates the sometimes horrifying treatment of women in this culture.¹¹ Still, Salih presents an even more pointed critique of the negative impact of colonialism in his native country than does Joyce. *Season of Migration* is also more overt than *Ulysses* in its inclusion of a variety of cultural energies. Thus, while all of *Ulysses* is set in Dublin (and on a single day in 1904), the main action of Salih's novel occurs partly in the cosmopolitan center of interwar London and partly in Sudan – the latter events roughly covering the more than half a century of British colonial rule in the region and thus reflecting a considerable amount of modernization. Most of the Sudanese action is set in the village of Wad Hamid, which remains relatively traditional but also contains constant reminders of encroaching modernity – such as the mechanical water pumps that irrigate the local farmland and the trains that regularly come back and forth from the capital of Khartoum, where the narrator lives and works during the present-day action of the novel, whence he relates the novel's earlier action through a series of flashback narratives that are interspersed with his accounts of the more contemporary action.

As Hassan notes, Salih's Wad Hamid is reminiscent of the strong sense of place that can be found in the work of a number of other modern authors, resembling the Yoknapatawpha County of William Faulkner, the Macondo of Gabriel García Márquez, and the Cairo of Naguib Mahfouz (2003, p. 15). In particular, for Hassan, Wad Hamid takes on a special vividness because of its recurrent use as a setting in almost all of Salih's fiction. But of course the same can also be said of Joyce's Dublin, and in many ways the recurrent use of Wad Hamid by Salih structurally resembles Joyce's use of Dublin quite strongly, especially in the way both fictional

⁹ For an extended discussion of *Ulysses* in this sense, see Booker (2000).

¹⁰ On orality in Joyce, see, for example, A. W. Friedman (2007).

¹¹ According to Hassan, for example, the narrator's “indecisiveness and failure to take action” in saving Hosna from her ultimate fate “can be seen as Salih's indictment of the Arab intelligentsia's failure to struggle for the implementation of a vital part of the *Nahda*'s social reform project,” that is, the liberation of women (Hassan, 2003, p. 115).

settings are first explored through a series of short stories, then further elaborated in novels, with many characters appearing in multiple narratives. Dublin, of course, is more modern and more urban than is Wad Hamid, but it is still a colonial setting that is informed by the convergence of competing cultures, one colonizing and one colonized.

Indeed, if both Joyce and Salih engage in extensive dialogues with their own earlier works in their successive ones, one of the things they have in common with each other and with other modernist texts is the way in which they engage in dialogue with any number of other texts as well. Joyce certainly engages in such dialogues in a more overt and spectacular way, but such dialogues are also crucial to *Season of Migration*. Indeed, the already complex rhetorical structure of *Season of Migration* is also significantly complicated by the text's dialogue with any number of literary predecessors. While *Heart of Darkness* is the most prominent of these, at least from a Western perspective, there are in fact a number of other important predecessors. Johnson-Davies, for example, has noted that Salih also read extensively from other British writers, though perhaps not learning as much from them as some might think:

If Tayeb Salih has taken anything from his wide reading of such writers as E. M. Forster, Ford Madox Ford, and Joseph Conrad, it is an awareness of the importance of how to tell a story, of such technical problems in the art of writing fiction as the point of view. As for assistance with his material, of new ideas, he is in no need; one is ever conscious that he is in full control of it, that he speaks with complete authority. (2014, n.p.)

Though he is unmentioned by name in the text, Ford plays a key role in *Season of Migration* because the narrator first becomes truly fascinated by Mustafa when he hears the latter (after a bit too much imbibing) suddenly begin reciting a poem in English at a village gathering in Wad Hamid. Several lines of the poem are included in the text, though the narrator identifies the poem only as one he later found in an anthology of poems about World War I (p. 18). The poem, as it turns out, is Ford's 1915 "Antwerp," which deals with the carnage of World War I, a phenomenon that (in a very Fanonian vein) figures elsewhere in *Season of Migration* as an image of European brutality and as a sign of the European disease of violence that colonialism brought to Africa and elsewhere in the colonial world.¹²

Joyce is well known for the frequency with which he refers to texts by any number of canonical European authors.¹³ Shakespeare is probably the most important of these, though many readers have not appreciated the extent to which Joyce's extensive dialogue with Shakespeare is a subversive attempt to undermine Shakespeare's status as an icon of the British Empire. Booker thus notes that

Shakespeare functioned in the nineteenth century as the central icon of a British cultural heritage that itself served as one of the central justifications for British rule over the "primitive" cultures encountered in places like Africa and India. Shakespeare is thus understandably a crucial figure in Joyce's dialogue in *Ulysses* with British culture as an arm of British imperialism. (Booker, 2000, p. 93)

¹² Though *Season* stipulates that Mustafa recites the poem in English, it is conveyed in Arabic in the original novel. The English version of the poem that appears in the English translation of the novel seems to have been translated back from the Arabic and does not match the text of Ford's original exactly, though it is close enough to identify the poem without question.

¹³ See Booker (1996) for a detailed discussion of Joyce's dialogue with such authors as Homer, Dante, Milton, Shakespeare, Dostoevsky, and Goethe.

Among other things, Joyce sometimes treats Shakespeare's plays as emblems of British colonial violence. In "Scylla and Charybdis," for example, Stephen clearly suggests that the mass killings in Act 5 of *Hamlet* are informed by the same ideology of violence that also underlay the bloodbath in South Africa during the Boer War (which occurred at about the same time as the British conquest of Sudan): "Khaki Hamlets don't hesitate to shoot. The bloodboltered shambles in act five is a forecast of the concentration camp sung by Mr Swinburne" (Joyce, 1996, l. 9.133–35).

In *Season of Migration to the North*, Mustafa repeatedly compares himself to Shakespeare's Othello in his status as an Oriental who becomes tragically involved with a white European woman. Several critics have commented on the role of *Othello* in *Season of Migration*, including Barbara Harlow, who goes so far as to characterize Salih's novel as "a rereading of Shakespeare's Othello, a restatement of the tragedy, a reshaping of the tragic figure of the Moor" (1979, p. 163). Soon after Mustafa begins his seduction of the English woman Isabella Seymour, for example, she expresses confusion about his ethnic identity, since the Orientalist stereotypes he trots out to impress her seem both Arab and African. "I'm like Othello," he tells her, "Arab-African" (p. 38). Thus, Mustafa employs Shakespeare's character as one of the numerous European preconceptions about Arabs, Africans, and Muslims that he uses to his advantage in seducing English women – suggesting, among other things, that *Othello* deserves to take its place among the myriad of Orientalist misrepresentations that have contributed to the evolution of these preconceptions over the centuries.

Interestingly, only a few pages earlier, the narrator relates Mustafa's account to him of his trial for the killing of Jean Morris, during which Mustafa's lawyer had attempted to paint him as "a noble person whose mind was able to absorb Western civilization but it broke his heart" (p. 33). In short, he paints Mustafa as an Othello-like victim of a clash between cultures, at which Mustafa, not wishing to take advantage of this defense, had thought to himself that he should rise and declare, "I am no Othello. I am a lie" then ask them to hang him (p. 33). Later, the narrator repeats this same account, though (in keeping with the modernist ambiguity of the text) Mustafa's thoughts are now intertwined with what was actually said in court and, apparently, with the narrator's own embellishments, including many more details about Mustafa's status as a victim of colonial history. It is impossible to say at this point, amid the extremely complex voicing of the text, just which words emanate from where. The narrator now imagines Mustafa's voice comparing the latter's invasion of England with Kitchener's invasion of Sudan (p. 94). The voice goes on, in a bitter denunciation of colonialism:

Their ships at first sailed down the Nile carrying guns not bread, and the railways were first set up to transport troops; the schools were started so as to teach us to say "Yes" in their language. They imported to us the germ of the greatest European violence, as seen on the Somme and at Verdun, the like of which the world has never previously known, the germ of a deadly disease that struck them more than a thousand years ago. (p. 95)

Mustafa's imagined voice then declares that he reversed this dynamic through his own "invasion" of England, concluding with the repeated declaration that, "I am no Othello. Othello was a lie" (p. 95). The shift from "I am a lie" to "Othello was a lie" is not insignificant here, though, suggesting once again that Shakespeare's representation of the Moorish general, however seemingly sympathetic, was also an inaccurate Orientalist depiction of the Other. In addition, the repetition of Mustafa's denial of being an Othello figure amid a trenchant critique

of British colonialism in Sudan potentially implicates Shakespeare (and British culture in general) in this critique.

Joyce's dialogue with Shakespeare (and with the entire Western literary tradition) is certainly richer and more extensive than is Salih's, though Joyce's engagement with Arab culture and literature (consisting of little more than an occasional gesture toward *One Thousand and One Nights* and an Orientalist dream image or two) is rather skimpy. Salih does not engage very extensively with Arab literature in any direct sense, either, other than slight nods such as a mention of the fact that Mustafa once gave a heavily embroidered lecture on the Abbasid classical Arab poet Abu Nuwas, assuring his British audience that Abu Nuwas was a far greater poet than Omar Khayyam (pp. 142–143).

However, despite the paucity of direct allusions, *Season of Migration* engages in a subtle dialogue with other texts of Arabic literature, especially those that also involve encounters with the West. For example, Hassan deploys the theoretical work of Mikhail Bakhtin to argue that Salih parodies such Arab texts about voyages to Europe as Tawfiq al-Hakim's *Usfur min al-Sharq* (A Bird from the East), Yahya Haqqi's *Qindil Umm Hashim* (The Lamp of Umm Hashim), and Suhayl Idris's *Al hay al-latini* (The Latin Quarter) (2003, p. 83). In addition, Anouar Majid notes that "a dominant motif of canonical postcolonial works by Africans of Muslim descent is the young educated protagonist's wrenching deracination from his or her indigenous culture, followed by catastrophic, even suicidal, journeys to the Northern metropolis" (2000, p. 78). Majid then goes on to cite Salih, along with the Senegalese writers Cheikh Hamidou Kane and Ken Bugul as key practitioners of this motif.

Conclusion

Salih and Joyce are very different writers, but the very fact that such different writers nevertheless have so many things in common suggests the extent to which *Season of Migration to the North* can fruitfully be read within the context of global modernist literature. The categories of postcolonial and modernist need not be mutually exclusive. Indeed, Joyce's spectacular modernist writing can be seen partly as a postcolonial attempt to demonstrate that a mere Irishman can construct literary texts that are at least as sophisticated as those of Shakespeare – thus undermining stereotypes about Irish backwardness. But it is also the case that Salih's writing demonstrates that modernizing tendencies were already strong in Arab literature in the 1960s and that the gap behind Arab and Western culture has long been much more narrow than some would have us believe.

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Language and Cultural Identity in Postcolonial African Literature: The Case of Translating Buchi Emecheta into Spanish

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Le langage n'est jamais innocent
– Roland Barthes

Abstract

This article aims to make a contribution to the ongoing project of establishing the normative foundations for a critical theory of ethical translation. By defining our purposes in this manner, it is understood that we enter difficult terrain, for the interpretations of the word “ethical” can be unstable and even arbitrary. In view of this complication, and in the interests of aiming attention at specific objectives, we can say that what drives this effort is a politically-inflected manner of looking at the issue of translation based on progressive, emancipatory values and post-colonial theory. As such, our interest in culture, diversity, otherness, identity and other social factors that can define the connotations of the adjective “ethical” has guided this research; it contemplates an engagement with notions such as the type of impact the Western translator’s socio-cultural baggage has on their translation of a text that is the product of a non-Western sensibility. This explains why we start this paper with Roland Barthes’s statement, *Language is never innocent*. The specific aim is to offer evidence that the social, religious, historical and linguistic cultural references present in Buchi Emecheta’s postcolonial writings are not “innocent” constituents of her narrative, and that they are used as badges of her cultural identity. As a corollary, we assess whether or not her deliberate acceptance has been sustained in the translation of her English-African novel into Spanish.

Keywords: translation, Buchi Emecheta, otherness, hybrid language, culturemes

Introduction: Decolonisation and the Language of *Otherness*

During the XX century and due to migration, decolonization and the dissolution of the European empires, a postcolonial literature with a *hybrid* language appeared, verbalising a distinctive *otherness* and transforming contemporary identities as a consequence. According to academics of postcolonial translation such as P. Bandia, T. Niranjana, M. Manfredi, L. Venuti, S. Bassnett and D. Robinson, this otherness must be respected and preserved by the translators.

Niranjana called for a policy of “resistance and interventionism” (1992, p. 173), and stated that otherness could be preserved with translations rich in calques and loanwords. M. Manfredi (2010, p. 47), with her examples of translating Indian English texts into Italian, declared that it is *through* translation that linguistic and cultural differences can be not only safeguarded but also transmitted to the European world.

For many postcolonial bilingual and bicultural African writers translation provides a method of exhibiting their culture, hybrid language and fragmented identity across frontiers. Some have stated that postcolonial literatures are themselves translations, and even Bandia considered “the concept of translation as a metaphor for postcolonial writings” (2003, p. 140). Other writers like Ngugi wa Thiong’o decided to be more radical. In the 70’s, from his position in the University of California, he sought to abolish English Philology Departments at African Universities in order to defend native culture, and he decided not to write in English ever since, but to use translation into Gikuyu (Kukuyu) and Kiswahili as an important act of anti-colonial resistance. He insisted on the need “to decolonize the mind”, to use vernacular languages in order to more accurately reflect African culture, enhance national self-esteem and promote cultural identity.

In 1986, while teaching at Yale, he wrote the novel *Matigari* in Gikuyu. The main character, Matigari, became a popular hero that demanded the return of his lands, which were in possession of white settlers. This fictional character influenced Kenyans in such a way that then-president Daniel arap Moi ordered all copies of the novel impounded throughout the country (Suárez Lafuente, 2017). Since 1982, Ngugi wa Thiong’o has faced strong criticism, has been arrested and imprisoned and has been forced into exile in Europe and the United States. As Bandia says: “His writings in Kenyan languages are considered to be part and parcel of the anti-imperialist struggles of Kenyan and African peoples” (2006, p. 372).

In this new multicultural and hybrid order of the current globalized world, one in which the dichotomy between north/south, me/the other, colonizer/colonized is questioned, many scholars have argued in favour of what Bhabha called a “*third space*” or “*space in between*” (Manfredi, 2010:54), where cultures meet and overlap in mutual contamination.

For a better understanding of this hybrid language and third space, we analysed, for the present work, the novel *The Joys of Motherhood*, written in 1979 by Buchi Emecheta, a Nigerian immigrant in Great Britain. She wrote it in English, a colonial language, but with a significant number of cultural references in Igbo, her mother tongue, a tonal language written in Latin script which is spoken by approximately 20 million people from the Igbo ethnic group. Subsequently, we studied the translation into Spanish, *Las*

delicias de la maternidad (2004), in which the translator, Maya García, had to work with three languages: English, Igbo and Spanish. Fortunately, I had the chance to interview her at the University of Alcalá de Henares, and it was of great help for the present work.

In the analysis we found that all those cultural references written in Igbo were not explained in the source text. While the British have been in contact with Africans throughout colonial and postcolonial periods and are probably familiar with certain concepts, we still wondered if Buchi Emecheta wanted them to deal analytically with all those foreign words and expressions in the text. The translator, however, and perhaps due to the Spaniards' poor knowledge of the Igbo culture, explained some of them within the text and by adding 16 footnotes. The use of footnotes always means *amplification*, and although in the Spanish literary translation they are reduced to a minimum, in translating postcolonial texts they could be very useful in ensuring comprehension.

Translating Cultural References

Through the ages, people throughout the world have been developing their own distinct cultural characteristics, creating important differences between languages and social environments. These variations find expression in all their actions; eventually developing an increasing gap between individuals from different cultures. We refer to religious practice, social customs, household utensils, food, proper names, and so on, and they are defined as “references”, “realia” or “culturemes”.

Some scholars consider them “the verbal expression of a specific phenomenon in a language” (Marcelo, 2007, pp. 74–76), although it is not easy to decide when a reference is specific of one particular language. In one previous work (Pascua, 2015), following the intercultural tendency and the skopos theory (Witte, 2000, 2017), we defended that the best way to understand a cultural reference is to compare it with another one from a different culture. Finally, we adopted the definition by R. Mayoral (1994, pp. 73–78) who considers a cultural reference an element of discourse, the linguistic expression that reflects the way we see reality, a way of thinking and acting always influenced or conditioned by the culture we are immersed in.

In order to choose which theory or what strategies to use in our analysis of the cultural references manifest in this postcolonial hybrid text, we followed the principle of “loyalty” proposed by the functionalist Christiane Nord (1997): every translator should commit to both parties involved in the translation process: the author and the target reader. Venuti's method (1995) was also very useful: the translator should look at this process through the prism of culture which refracts the source text. He distinguished between *foreignization*, as the strategy of preserving information from the source text, breaking the conventions of the target language to ensure that the meaning is not lost, and *domestication* that brings the text closer to the culture of the target language. He strongly advocates the *foreignization* strategy, because *domesticating* erases the cultural values of the source text. However, and although we agree that cultural references should be preserved through foreignization, in the cases where we want to ensure the comprehension of the text and the readers' correct understanding of the cultural identity reflected in the text, “domestication” bridges the gap. So, our theoretical premise is that in this type of text we cannot use merely one translational strategy, we should look for a

balance. According to K. Gyasi, if translating from African into European languages is no easy task, the translation of this literature from one European language into another presents even more problems (Gyasi, 1999, p. 82).

Analysis

After the meticulous work of reading and studying the source text and the translation, we found more than 200 references used by Buchi Emecheta as signals of her cultural identity, and the Spanish translator perceived this intention and preserved them. We classified them into 10 categories, adapting the classification we used in G. Marcelo's doctoral dissertation (2007, p. 225).

1. Proper names: anthroponyms and toponyms
2. Housing. Transport
3. Clothing. Food
4. Expressions
5. Flora & fauna
6. Professions. Education
7. Health, medicine
8. Money. Institutions
9. Religion & tradition
10. Social realia

Only the most relevant examples will be shown:

Proper names (79):

All names were preserved as loanwords, even the most difficult to spell or write.

Anthroponyms (43): Nnu Ego, the main character, Nwokocha Agdabi, Nnaife, Ona, Obi Omuenna, Nwakusor, Dilibe, Obi Idayi, Folorunsho, Itsekiri, and so on.

–Source Text (–ST): Mama Oshia, customary manner for a woman with a male child.

Target Text (TT): Mamá Oshia, saludo que se utiliza para una mujer que tiene un hijo varón.

–ST: Oshiaju, meaning “the bush has refused him”

TT: Oshiaju, que significa “rechazado por la maleza” (maleza=cementerio)

Toponyms (32): Ibuza; Ogboli; Asaba; Emekuku Owerri; Akinwunmi Street; Fernando Po/Fernando Poo (exception); Amelika/América, and so forth.

Special dates (4):–ST: *Eke* night.../ TT: noche *Eke*.¹

¹ 1.El primero de los cuatro días de la semana ibo. 2. Día de mercado, *Eke*, que constituye el centro de la vida social para los pueblos de la región ibo. En los días *Eke*, como los días festivos en Occidente, la gente sale arreglada y elegante, al encuentro de los miembros de la comunidad y de otras personas de fuera; durante el día corren las noticias y se cotillea, mientras que durante la noche suele celebrarse un baile. (1. The first of the four days of the Ibo week. 2. Market day, *Eke*, which is at the center of social life for the peoples of the Ibo region. On *Eke* days, as in the holidays in the West, people come dressed up and elegant, meeting members of their community as well as outsiders. During the day, news and gossip prevail, while a dance usually takes place during the night.)

Housing (2):

–ST: homestead / TT: recinto²

–ST: *odo* / TT: *odo*³

Transport (2):

Calques.

–ST: “*kia-kia*” bus, meaning literally “quick quick bus”

TT: *kia-kia* que quería decir, literalmente, bus “rápido-rápido”.

Clothing (7):

Calques.

–ST: buba blouse/ TT: blusa buba

–ST: *lappa* / TT: *lappa* (Not explained. Fabric that can be used as a skirt or a dress).

–ST: *npe* cloth / TT: paño *npe*.⁴

–ST: George material / TT: tela *George*, (Not explained. Special fabric for weddings).

Food (15):

Most calques.

–ST: okasi soup / TT: sopa de okasi

–ST: *ogogoro* / TT: *ogogoro* (a drink)

–ST: *garri* / TT: *garri*⁵

Money (4):

–ST: *esusu* / TT: *esusu*, (savings among friends).

–ST: bags of *cowries* / TT: sacos de *couries* (not explained: small seashells, used as coins; shell money)

Education (4):

–ST: Yaba Methodist School / TT: Escuela Metodista de Yaba

–ST: St Gregory’s College / TT: St Gregory’s College

–ST: Junior Cambridge / TT: certificado 4º curso, el Junior Cambridge

Expressions (9):

² *Compound*: Del inglés de África Occidental y Sudáfrica, traducida en este texto unas veces como “recinto” o “concesión” (en referencia a pueblo) y otras como “casa”, (en alusión a una casa moderna de la ciudad), se refiere al espacio físico habitado por una comunidad. En el primer caso se trataría de la familia tradicional compuesta por el cabeza de familia y sus esposas, donde el padre tiene su propia cabaña y cada una de las esposas tiene una propia donde vive con los hijos que ha tenido; sin embargo, en la ciudad, se trata de un edificio en el que cada familia solía alquilar una sola habitación en la época colonial, algo que sigue sucediendo entre las familias pobres en la actualidad. (From the English of West Africa and South Africa, translated in this text sometimes as “enclosure” or “concession” (in reference to people) and others as “house”, (in reference to a modern house in the city), it refers to the physical space inhabited by a community. In the first case it would be the traditional family composed of the head of the family and his wives, where the father has his own cabin and each of the wives, in turn, has her own, where she lives with the children she has borne; however, in the city, it is a building in which each family used to rent a single room in colonial times, something that continues to happen among poor families today.)

³ *Odo*: Maza para majar cosas en el mortero. (Echeru, 1998: 133). (Mace to grind things in the mortar).

⁴ *Npe*: Paño tejido a mano para un recién nacido (Buchi Emecheta, en conversación con la traductora). (Hand-woven cloth for a newborn [Buchi Emecheta, in conversation with the translator]).

⁵ *Garri*: Del ibo, “harina de mandioca”. (Cassava flour según Echeru, 1998, p. 53).

- ST: *Dan duru ba!* / TT: ¡*Dan duru ba!* (curse, insult)
 –ST: He, who roars like a lion” / TT: “El que ruge como un león” (The chief)
 –ST: “Cootu, cootu, cootu” / TT: cucú, cucú, cucú! (Rocking a baby)

Religion-tradition (10):

- ST: *Chi* / TT: *chi* (personal God)
 –ST: *juju* dance / TT: baile *juju*
 –ST: *dibia* / TT: *dibia*⁶

- ST: *Mammy Waater* / TT: *Mammy Waater*⁷

Social realia (75):

These are the references that better reflect cultural identity in Emecheta's work. We have gathered the most important in 5 topics:

Traditions:

a. Chief's death:

–ST: The disclosure of his death would have to comply with certain cultural laws, there must be gun shots, and two or three goats must be slaughtered before the announcement. Anyone who started grieving before the official proclamation would be made to pay fines equivalent to three goats.

TT: El anuncio de su muerte tendría que cumplir con una serie de leyes culturales: debía haber disparos y debían sacrificarse dos o tres cabras antes del anuncio. Quien empezaba a llorar antes de la proclamación oficial tendría que pagar una multa equivalente a tres cabras.

b. The slaves:

–ST: A good slave was supposed to jump into the grave willingly, happy to accompany her mistress.

TT: Se suponía que una buena esclava debía saltar a la sepultura por su propia voluntad, contenta por acompañar a su señora.

c. Nnu Ego's wedding:

–ST: ...he sent his daughter away with seven hefty men and seven young girls carrying her possessions. There were seven goats, baskets and baskets of yam, yards and yards of white man's clothes, twenty four home-spun lappas, rows and rows of Hausa trinkets and coral beads [...]

⁶ Curandero, con un contenido religioso añadido, puesto que esta figura tiene poderes con respecto a la salud espiritual del paciente. (Healer, with an added religious content, since this figure has powers with respect to the spiritual health of the patient.)

⁷ Diosa de las aguas, como se le denomina en el inglés de África Occidental y del inglés *pidgin* hablado en toda la costa del Golfo de Guinea, incluyendo Guinea Ecuatorial. En el período colonial se la representa como una diosa mestiza con una abundante melena ondulada, que podría interpretarse como un sincretismo entre la imagen de la mujer blanca colonial y la diosa acuática tradicional presente en varias religiones de la región, como la ibo (donde esta diosa recibe el nombre de Uhamiri) o la yoruba (cuyo nombre es Yemanya). (Goddess of the waters, as she is called in the English of West Africa and in the pidgin English spoken all across the coast of the Gulf of Guinea, including Equatorial Guinea. In the colonial period she is represented as a mestizo goddess with an abundant wavy mane, which could be interpreted as a syncretic image of the colonial white woman and the traditional aquatic goddess present in various religions of the region, such as the Ibo [where the Goddess receives the name of Uhamiri] or the Yoruba [among whom her name is Yemanya]).

TT: ... envió a su hija con siete hombres robustos y siete jovencitas que le llevaban sus pertenencias. Había siete cabras, cestas y cestas de ñame, metros y metros de tela del hombre blanco, veinticuatro *lappas* tejidas en el pueblo, innumerables fruslerías y cuentas de coral dispuestas en hileras.

d. Sense on community:

–ST: People say you have even stopped coming to the meetings. Well, that is very serious.

TT: Dicen que has dejado de ir a las reuniones. Desde luego eso es muy grave.

–ST: An individual life belongs to the community and not just to him or her.

TT: La vida de un individuo pertenece a la comunidad y no a sí mismo.

Colonialism:

–ST: Naafy [...], We de go back to England! [...] England de fight to Germans.

TT: Naafy! Nosotros volver a Inglaterra! [...] Inglaterra luchar contra alemanes.

–ST:...they had a saying, “Na government work, ino dey finish”: it is government work

TT: ...tenían un dicho: “*Na government work, ino dey finish*”: “El trabajo del gobierno nunca puede terminar”.

–ST: ...I can’t speak that stuff they call `canary` English [...]

–“Pidgin English, old boy, pidgin English”

TT: Yo no sé hablar esa cosa que llaman inglés, el inglés de los canarios.

–Se llama *pidgin*, querido muchacho, es el inglés *pidgin*.⁸

–ST: The British own us, just like god does

TT: Los británicos son nuestros dueños, igual que Dios.

–ST: Are we not all slaves to the white men, in a way?

TT: ¿No somos todos esclavos de los blancos, de alguna manera?

Women’s role:

–ST: A woman without a child for her husband was a failed woman.

TT: Una mujer sin un hijo que ofrecer a su marido era una mujer fracasada.

–ST: My sons, you will all grow to be kings among men. My daughters, you will all grow to rock your children’s children.

TT: Hijos míos, todos vosotros creceréis para ser reyes entre los hombres. Hijas mías, todas vosotras creceréis para acunar a los hijos de vuestros hijos.

–ST: One thing was sure: he gained the respect and even the fear of his wife Nnu Ego. He could even now afford to beat her up.

TT: Una cosa era segura: se ganó el respeto e incluso el miedo de su mujer Nnu Ego. Ahora podía incluso permitirse pegarla.

–ST: Don’t you know that according to the customs of our people you, Adaku, the daughter of whoever you are, are committing an unforgivable sin [...] I know you have children, but they are girls.

TT: ¿No sabes que según las costumbres de nuestro pueblo tú, Adaku, la hija de quien seas, estás cometiendo un pecado imperdonable? [...] Sé que tienes hijos, pero son niñas.

–ST: She belonged to both men, her father and her husband, and lastly to her sons.

⁸ Alusión al inglés *pidgin*, denominado despectivamente *parrot English* (inglés de loros) o *canary English* por los británicos en las áreas colonizadas donde escuchaban esta *lingua franca* entre la población autóctona. (Allusion to the pidgin English, disparagingly called parrot English (English for parrots) or canary English by the British in the colonized areas where they heard this lingua franca among the native population.

TT: Perteneceía a los dos hombres, a su padre y a su marido, y en último lugar a sus hijos varones.

The eldest son:

–ST: His brother has died and left behind several wives and God knows how many children [...]

Oh, dear, are you bound to accept them all? asked Mama Abby.

TT: Su hermano ha muerto y ha dejado varias esposas y sabe Dios cuántos hijos.

Eso sí que es una mala noticia. ¿Estás obligada a aceptarlas a todas?, preguntó Mama Abby.

–(Father to son) –ST: Now, young man, when are you going to take on your family responsibilities?

TT: A ver jovencito, ¿cuándo vas a asumir tu responsabilidad?

–ST: What responsibilities, Father?

TT: ¿Qué responsabilidad, padre?

–ST: Adim, Nnamdio! You two come here! These are your responsibilities, to say nothing of myself and your mother!

TT: Adim, Nnamdio! ¡Venid los dos ahora mismo! ¡Aquí está tu responsabilidad, por no hablar de mí y de tu madre!

–ST: I don't understand, Father. You mean I should feed them and you too? [...] I can't take over, Father. I am going to the States. I have won a scholarship ...

TT: No lo entiendo, padre. ¿Quieres decir que debo darles de comer a ellos y a vosotros? [...] No puedo hacerme cargo, padre. Me voy a EEUU. He conseguido una beca.

–ST: I do not wish to see you ever again, since you have openly poured sand into my eyes.

TT: No quiero volver a verte en mi vida, puesto que me has tirado arena en los ojos, con ese descaro.

Demystification. The hope of a new African woman

–ST: God, when will you create a woman who will be fulfilled in herself, a full human being, not anybody's appendage?

TT: Dios mío ¿cuándo vas a crear a una mujer que se realice por sí misma, un ser humano completo, no el apéndice de otro?

–ST: When will I be free? [...] even in her confusion, she knew the answer. Never, not even in death.

TT: ¿Cuándo seré libre? Sabía la respuesta. Nunca, ni siquiera después de muerta.

Finally, she came back to her family's village. She died quietly and alone:

–ST: When her children heard of her sudden death they all, even Oshia, came home. They were all sorry she had died before they were in position to give their mother a good life. She had the noisiest and most costly second burial Ibuza had ever seen, and a shrine was made in her name, so that her grandchildren could appeal to her should they be barren.

TT: Cuando sus hijos se enteraron de su repentina muerte fueron todos al pueblo, incluido Oshia. Todos sentían que hubieran muerto antes de encontrarse ellos en situación de proporcionarle una buena vida a su madre. Tuvo uno de los funerales más sonados y fastuosos que Ibuza viera jamás y se hizo un altar en su nombre para que su descendencia fuera a rezarle si eran estériles.

–ST: Nnu Ego had it all, yet still did not answer prayers for children.

TT: Nnu Ego lo tuvo todo, pero nunca respondió a las plegarias de quienes le pedían hijos.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that all references found in this postcolonial African novel are signals that reflect not only the author's identity but also contribute to the constitution of a hybrid language, to the so-called "third space". Also, it is evident that the translator has followed the ethical commitment (Bandia, 2003, p. 132) to preserve cultural references when translating a European-African text into another European language.

Migration movements, independence, cultural encounters and mis-encounters among diverse peoples have created that *third space*, one where cultural and linguistic frontiers are vague, unclear, and where the local and the global have mixed and generated the so-called *glocal* (A. Rodríguez, 2016). This is a space where the "use" of a colonial language can help colonized people to be closer to international readers and make their own voice heard, creating a *hybrid literature* with which they can showcase their identity, make their mindset intelligible and articulate a different way to conceive the world.

No doubt that forging and occupying this third space was Buchi Emecheta's strategic plan in most of her writings. Due to her critical thinking as an African woman, her works are an important reference for the condition of African women in and outside the African continent. Through her work, written in a language that is *not innocent*—even the main character's name, pronounced *new ego*, means "priceless"—she reclaims her African identity and proposes a new African ideology based on *womanism* (a profound questioning of maternity, marriage, the strict rules of tradition, polygamy). In writing in colonial English while at the same time Africanising the language, Buchi Emecheta questions and challenges the historical authority of that European language, performing not only a linguistic act but also a political one, as language is also power. That is why we truly believe that:

"Language as culture is the collective memory bank of a people's experience in history" (Ngugi wa Thiong'o)

"Le langage n'est jamais innocent" (Roland Barthes).

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8½ and the Pitfalls of the Remake

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Why deceive us? Or is it really a deception? In the realm of doubling visions and mutating images, which is precisely what the culture that favors the remake should be, the question, Why wouldn't a filmmaker admit to remaking a classic? could be only another way of phrasing the questions, Why remake classics at all?.
– M. Brashinsky

Abstract

This article seeks to provide an archetypal instance of the problematic phenomenon of film remaking. In analyzing Fellini's 8½ and Marshall's remake of it, *Nine*, the article defines film remaking as a variable concept pulled in every direction by the remaking director's acumen and their views on the film's role in the world of local cinematic industries, critics and audiences. It also seeks to address a fundamental critical issue in the discussion surrounding the remake: the cultural differences between the source film's audience and the remake's target audience. This article takes an interest chiefly in the manner in which cultural and historical differences that separate the source film (8½) from the remake (*Nine*) determine the director's expectations regarding the film's target audience. And, moreover, how those expectations are instrumental in the film's fundamental characteristics.

Keywords: Federico Fellini, Rob Marshall, 8½, *Nine*, remakes, Italian cinema, Hollywood

Introduction

Hollywood remakes of classic films can turn out to be superficial spectacles that strip the classic of its original depth and style. Such films are fiascos because they seem to follow a much too simple reasoning: if a film was a hit, let us go ahead and do it again! There is also the idea that, under novel circumstances (new social environments and a new public with a new mindset), the exact same original work can be copied and it will not be considered a remake, but an original in its own right. Jorge Luis Borges's Pierre Menard, writing an exact copy of *Don Quixote* in the XX century, accomplishes an original work precisely because he is a modern individual writing for a modern audience: every word in *his* work traverses a different cosmos from that of Cervantes, who wrote *his* Quixote in the seventeenth century. Moreover, in light of our modern consumer culture, where the “new” is invested with a particular glow of freshness and with the power to rescue an original work from the undercroft of irrelevance (through technological advances and “corrected” viewpoints, for example), remakes are often seen as improvements. Yet, while some remakes can be understood as a savvy enhancement of a previous work (one can think of Hitchcock's remake of his own *The Man Who Knew Too Much*), remakes can, and often do, turn out to be shallow copies of more profound works.

The Pitfalls of Imitation

A prime example of a flawed imitation is the copy of Federico Fellini's film *8½* (1963). This is a self-referential film whose title, in a certain way, points to itself as its main subject. “By 1963 Federico Fellini had made, by his own count, seven and a half films. Hence *8½* is like an opus number: this is film number eight and a half in the Fellini catalog” (Sesonske, 2010, n.p.). Fellini's film underwent a disconcerting remake in Hollywood with Rob Marshall's *Nine* (2009). Marshall's unabashed recognition of the act of copying Fellini, reflected in his remake's title, forces the audience to view *Nine* through the rearview mirror, so to speak, looking back at the original, viewing the remake through the arbitrating presence of its source text. When doing so we see that, while both films recount the complications in the life of Guido Anselmi, a troubled and struggling Italian director, the similarities end there: even a cursory comparison of *8½* with *Nine* can establish a sharp difference between the cinema of bliss (*8½*) and the cinema of pleasure (*Nine*), respectively; these differences can be best noted in A – the overall atmosphere of the film and B – key shots, scenes and sequences such as those involving the gathering of all of the women in Guido's life as well as those in the finale.

The Cinema of Bliss

The cinema of bliss and the cinema of pleasure are two very different approaches to reading a particular film. On one hand, a film can be classified as cinema of bliss when it provokes the audience into thinking and analyzing; by feeling dissatisfied, the audience is forced to be an active participant in the composition of the film's meaning. This type of film disallows comfortable, passive viewing. The cinema of bliss can also be considered “meta-cinema” or “counter-cinema” in that it disrupts the conventions of filmmaking and makes the filmmaking process visible to the audience. Fellini's *8½* is the prime example of the cinema of bliss, as are many other Italian films of this period.

The Cinema of Pleasure

On the opposite end of the spectrum, a film can be classified as cinema of pleasure when its aims are to please the audience. By making the overall happiness and satisfaction of the viewer its goal, the cinema of pleasure turns the viewer into a consumer rather than an active participant in the interpretation of the film. Marshall's *Nine* is a prime example of the cinema of pleasure, as are most Hollywood films. Perhaps due to the intellectually undemanding nature of its productions, and in comparison to the challenging nature of the cinema of bliss, the cinema of pleasure is dominant and more mainstream. Furthermore, the cinema of pleasure will focus on the principal male character as a dashing hero, incorporating his inevitable, flattering close up shots, while the cinema of bliss will portray the man as flawed and troubled in some way, eschewing those close ups. In its original form, *8½* is a leading example of a film that represents the cinema of bliss, its remake *Nine*, diagonally opposed to it, is just another "cinema of pleasure" Hollywood production.

8½

Fellini's *8½* has a unique atmosphere that is able to emphasize the film's essence as auto analysis of Fellini's own life, as exploration of the Italian male psyche and of the cinema itself, thus making it a prime example of the cinema of bliss. This is evidenced by the fact that the entire film is essentially the main character Guido's stream of consciousness. Furthermore, the film uses what Robert T. Eberwein (1984) has characterized as the *dream screen* strategy, a technique that makes the audience question where (or when) they are in any given scene. This is a technique that Fellini very elegantly employed in a subsequent film, *Juliet of the Spirits* (1965). Eberwein explains the concept of dream screen as it is employed in this film:

Early in the film, after demonstrating her abilities to call up fantasies at will, Juliet (Giulietta Masina) appears before us sitting in a chair near the water and wearing an enormous white hat. As the camera moves closer to her, she falls asleep; her head moves down in such a way that the white hat overwhelms the entire screen. Fellini then cuts to her dream, a frightening narrative in which she sees bizarre figures and decrepit horses emerge from the sea. She seems threatened by the figures who seem to be ill, but calls in vain for aid to her doctor who refuses to help her. As the dream concludes, she sees a particularly menacing figure with a club, but then is awakened by the sound of a jet plane. The last object that Juliet sees before going to sleep is the white hat, the object that precedes *our* vision of the dream she is having. This seems very much to be the case where a surrogate object has functioned as a characters' dream screen, especially since the object takes over the cinematic dream screen that we are watching. (1984, p. 214)

In *8½*, due to this *dream screen* style, the audience must take a second and situate themselves in the film by asking: Am I in the film's reality or in Guido's mind, fantasy, or flashback? Fellini cleverly tips off the audience by indicating the transition from reality into fantasy; he does so by including shots throughout the film of Guido touching his glasses or nose right before he enters into one of his fantasies or flashbacks. All of this works to better portray the profound complexity of the main character's (and Fellini's) psychological makeup.

In this regard, Eli Rozik sees that

The director Guido (probably representing Fellini himself) is characterized by a series of iconic depictions of mental events such as dreams, a memory, a fantasy, to such an extent that this film should be perceived in terms of “stream of consciousness,” meaning that the entire film is the conventional representation of what happens in the character/director's mind, including reflections of reality. (2011, p. 189)

This need to locate oneself in the film creates a complexity for the viewer, in which the viewer can actually feel as though he or she is in Guido's mind. As a result, the density offered by the film forces its viewers to be active in the events of the film, as opposed to the audience simply watching the film at face value in order to feel content or satisfied. This film's unique atmosphere also allows it to function as an auto analysis of cinema in general by allowing the audience to see the editing effects, in contrast to Hollywood films in which the audience would never notice the editing because it is invisible. Additionally, Fellini puts the audience on the set of the movie that Guido is making by allowing set pieces, lighting structures and auditions to be parts of various scenes throughout the film. These particular characteristics of the film allow it to be considered “meta-cinema” or cinema about cinema, thus making it, in yet another way, an example of the cinema of bliss.

Nine

In contrast to its predecessor, *Nine* has an atmosphere that makes it a glamorous spectacle rather than a complex subject for thought, so it may be categorized as an example of the cinema of pleasure. Very similar to its precursor, this film follows the downward spiral of Guido. However, unlike the elaborate imaginative involvement required of the audience in *8½*, this film allows the audience outwardly to *see* Guido's struggle, but not inwardly to *feel* his struggle; viewers become mere spectators rather than participants. As an illustration, we notice that the surreal aspects of the film, such as Guido's flashbacks, thoughts or fantasies, are not sprinkled randomly throughout the film so that the audience can sense the same feeling of complexity as the main character. Instead, they are predictably shown whenever Guido is physically on location at his sound stage and not throughout the comings and goings of his everyday life. It is as if the surreal moments are staged, which is not the way humans daydream, think or have fantasies; this makes Guido's thoughts and flashbacks irrelevant to the audience, thus automatically disconnecting them from his intricate psychological gymnastics. Furthermore, Guido's flashbacks are interrupted by musical and dance numbers about the flashback or thought in question; such enhancements make the entire scene or sequence an unblushing spectacle. It seems difficult for the audience to feel puzzled, dissatisfied and ultimately connected to the struggle of Guido when it is being dazzled and distracted by garish musical numbers that do nothing to enhance our perception of the character's interior workings. Taking all of these aspects into account, it is apparent that *Nine* is the quintessential Hollywood film of the cinema of pleasure. From its predictably-situated flashbacks and its glamorous musical numbers, it is clear that this director's agenda is to impress and satisfy the audience, as only the cinema of pleasure can do.

All the women

One particular sequence in both films that is intended to be a complex auto analysis in *8½* but is morphed into a Hollywood spectacle in *Nine* is the one where all the women that Guido has

ever encountered come together in one of his fantasies. In Fellini's original film, this sequence is an auto analysis of Fellini and of the Italian male psyche, uncontaminated by external frivolities. The scene becomes an analysis of how the director (and by extension the Italian male mind) categorizes and sexualizes women. In this sequence, the audience sees all the women that Guido has ever encountered, from his wife to his mistress to a random showgirl, together in a house playing out very stereotypical roles. The women fawn over Guido as he enters the house, even bathing him like a child. Eventually, the showgirl drums up the support of the other women to rebel against the womanizer, reproving him for sending the "expired" women upstairs. This sequence is crucial to the theme of the film as it underscores the Italian male psyche with respect to women. The scene gains momentum for a brief moment as the women join to turn the tables on Guido, but then quickly become enchanted by him again: Guido's ability to womanize successfully is reaffirmed. Additionally, this scene addresses the models into which women are habitually typecast and how they guide Guido and the "Italian male" in sexualizing them. Owing to this scene's surreal, fantastic features, the audience can gain a sense of the psychological complexity and is able to draw conclusions on its meaning.

This sequence is not present at all in *Nine*, although its opening scene does include all the women in Guido's life singing, dancing and performing while Guido simply watches them. Fellini's complex scene is reduced to a cheesy opening number, with the male character (the male psyche) completely disconnected from the environment: the scene does not reflect his subjective microcosm. Here, Guido is a mere spectator. He, like the audience, is simply enjoying the gratuitous spectacle. Furthermore, the women have little to no connection with one another, a circumstance that removes their ability to stand together to address their roles in Guido's life. This powerful sequence of the cinema of bliss has been morphed into a Hollywood spectacle of the cinema of pleasure.

The finale

Another scene that shows the transition from cinema of bliss to cinema of pleasure is the finale. The finale of *8½* is arguably one of the most famous scenes in the history of Italian cinema. It depicts all of the characters dressed in white and directed by Guido himself to dance together, making one giant circle. The surroundings fade to black and all that is left is the circus band and eventually young Guido by himself. The aesthetic significance of this finale lies in the fact that it is representing "meta-cinema" in its purest form, as we see Guido direct the cast. So we've been involved in a film narrative regarding the making of a film. But intricacy intensifies as Guido joins the dancing circle, becoming part of "another" film, Fellini's, and now the engaged viewers must re-situate their gaze as spectators of a film under Fellini's direction. What film has the viewer actually watched? At what point does one narrative fade into the other? "This blurring of boundaries has the effect of heightening our awareness of both the rational content of dream and fantasy and the fantastic element in what we call reality. It is sensitizing." (Pechter, 1987, p. 269). The film closes with a fade to black and young Guido left alone playing his instrument. By leaving the audience with only one character at the very end, Fellini is creating a sense of emptiness and dissatisfaction, a characteristic essential for the cinema of bliss. Moreover, the circle or circus ring represents the amalgamation of the real (Fellini's film and consciousness) with the imaginary (Guido's film and consciousness); it also represents Guido's, and ultimately Fellini's, ability to resolve his conflicts and have his life back in sync. The audience watches the story of Fellini come full circle with the story of Guido while still feeling a bit empty at the very end, making this finale the perfect example of cinema of bliss.

The finale in *Nine* cannot be any more dissimilar to the finale of *8½*. Similar to Fellini's film, all of the characters in the film are together and are dressed in white. However, they just stand on various levels of Guido's film set as he looks on while an observable clapperboard reads *Nine*. Needless to say, there is no dancing in unison in a circular fashion, and inexplicably, little Guido runs in and sits on Guido's lap. This is the way the movie ends. Compared to *8½* the film can be said to complete the circle of shallow expectations. There is no hollowness, no desolation to give subjective complexity to the film. Although there are aspects of "meta-cinema", given that we see Guido direct a movie, the audience merely watches him do it. As the characters just stand around the set like mannequins, the film takes on the characteristics of artificial spectacle, adding to those same characteristics generated in previous scenes. This is why the audience has trouble connecting to the events of the scene: the audience is never provoked to think complexly. Additionally the fact that there is no circle negates a key component in the *8½* ending, which is to merge Fellini's story with Guido's and to coalesce the real with the surreal events. There is no such arrangement in this finale, making *Nine* another example of the glamorous Hollywood spectacle that is the cinema of pleasure.

Conclusion

Although the general plot of Fellini's *8½* and Marshall's *Nine* are similar, there are clear differences in the 21st century remake that reduce it to a superficial spectacle, distancing it from Fellini's complex self-analysis and from the examination of the Italian male psyche present in the original. The self-referential character of *8½* is also largely absent in *Nine*. These specific differences reflect the disparities between the cinema of bliss, represented by *8½*, and the cinema of pleasure, represented by *Nine*. The overall atmosphere of both films, the sequence with all the women in Guido's life come together, and the finale allow us to assume that, in the overall outlook of film production, Italian cinema and Hollywood aim to affect the audience in very different ways: one makes viewers active participants in the creation of meaning, while the other makes viewers consumers. In *8½* one delves deep into the mind of a troubled director; in *Nine* one learns that Sophia Loren, somehow cast as "Mamma" in *Nine*, should have remembered her status and declined the offer to contribute to this attempted demolition of a compelling and momentous work of art.

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Editor's Essay: Good-bye Homo Sapiens

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The currency of the public discussion converging on issues such as fake news, sham testimonials, manipulation of images and political swindles, addressed by most of the authors in the present issue, signals the start of a vigorous preoccupation with the state of our culture. This concern has compelled me to attempt to isolate what circumstances might be historically specific to the current cultural malaise. Social critics, in their desire to find evidence of the fraud, duplicity and general immorality that is at the heart of our ailments, never tire of pointing to the political establishment as the foremost cause and offender. While not defending politicians under any circumstances, I'll argue that the muddle and disarray that characterise current politics are incidental to a much more pernicious threat. What is commonly overlooked, especially by media analysts and observers, is the distinctive contribution of technology to the degradation of culture. Yes, technology.

I'd like to start by telling you a true story:

During the early 1970s, running water was installed in the houses of Ibieca, a small village in northeast Spain. With pipes running directly to their homes, Ibiecans no longer had to fetch water from the village fountain. Families gradually purchased washing machines, and women stopped gathering to scrub laundry by hand at the village washbasin.

Arduous tasks were rendered technologically superfluous, but village life unexpectedly changed. The public fountain and washbasin, once scenes of vigorous social interaction, became nearly deserted. Men began losing their sense of familiarity with the children and the donkeys that had once helped them to haul water. Women stopped congregating at the washbasin to intermix their scrubbing with politically empowering gossip about men and village life. In hindsight, the installation of running water helped break down the Ibiecans' strong bonds – with one another, with their animals, and with the land – that had knit them together as a community. (Sclove, 1995, p. 3)

The automobile, to give another example of what may result from technological innovation, served to increase air pollution, contributed to health problems, made many nations dependent on expensive foreign oil, ruined neighbourhood life in many communities and, ironically, added to the time it takes to get to work. I don't propose that automobiles and running water are intrinsically evil; we all know that there are many advantages to them, but not all of their upshots are wholesome.

In light of recent technological advances, which are much more consequential than running water, I'd like you to consider the monumental cultural, political and social changes that are forthcoming. The specific, relatively recent technology I'll discuss here is the screen. Television, computer, laptop, cinema and mobile telephone screens have lately afforded us a source of information that, because of the specific characteristics of the image, has a deictic relationship with "reality". Visual data allow us to *witness* reality, so what we see with our

eyes has always arbitrated our assessments of the “truth”. Evidently, there is an ethical concern here, and it is that those who monopolise the screen’s contents can manipulate the image almost effortlessly. But this is also incidental to what is at the heart of the matter: It is the *manner* in which we interact, gather information and construct knowledge that has changed radically, so much so that it may be contributing to a regress in our evolution. Where the word, especially in its most sublime form, the written word, had brought us to the pinnacle of our intellectual capabilities, unveiling for us the splendid cosmos of abstract thought and making us true *Homo sapiens*, the newly-preponderant synthetic image, whether moving or static, delivers the obvious, elementary, raw exterior of objects and movement and is starting to pull us back to a time when speculative thought was an irrelevant complication in a primitive world of basic survival skills.

By this statement I do not propose a return to a pre-penicillin world, nor do I suggest people destroy every screen they can lay their hands on. But there should be an acknowledgement that those screens, in a much more significant manner than running water, are standing between the citizens and the real world and may be diminishing their capacity for complex, abstract thought. We should also come to terms with the fact that, in the pre-communication-technology world, we fashioned our environments (cultural, political, social...) using very different modes of interaction. Back then the spoken word, articulated in person, inevitably determined the properties and peculiarities of such environments. We designed those environments and, in turn, those environments allowed us to systematise the organisation of modern societies. The new technologies are unavoidably changing our surroundings, altering social discourse and changing us in a much more profound way than running water did in Ibieca. It is not likely that Ibiecans ever intended to change their way of life in the way running water changed it, and it is also unlikely that modern *Homo sapiens* are overly concerned with future calamities brought about by technology, or even troubled by the warnings issued by noted scholars like Giovanni Sartori.

At the end of the last century, Italian political scientist Giovanni Sartori pondered the future of mankind, now that information gathered from screens was poised to replace the type of knowledge derived from the written page (2002, pp. 11–13). While he was more concerned with television than with computer screens, he wrote at a time of great technological upheaval, lamenting the fact that the written word, a critical factor in the development of what we call *Homo sapiens*, or “wise man,” might one day become obsolete.

Sartori’s concern is one that many of us who teach might certainly share. I, for one, have had such concerns for a long time, a concern that grows as my students’ capacity to express themselves relentlessly declines. If I may be granted this indulgence, I’d like to offer a bit of anecdotal evidence: in one of the first occasions that this decline made itself evident to me, a student, when trying to convey her trepidation regarding the number of pages I had assigned for reading, said: “when I saw the amount of pages you assigned, I went uuuggh!” This uuuggh was accompanied by a bizarre yet strangely endearing grimace. Regarding that same assignment, another student sent a classmate a message containing the image of a terror-stricken face with the caption OMG! The first few times that I was treated to such histrionics I did not deem the experience worth analysing, but after several more incidents I began to think that there was more to this than meets the eye. I concluded that the students, in fact, were giving me *visual* information, so rather than expressing their dismay, apprehension, joy or anxiety through a vocabulary of apposite words, they were *portraying* their feelings, acting them out. On another occasion, my question regarding the reading of Cervantes’s masterpiece *Don Quixote* was met with a strange response: “I believe that the critical moment in the novel

is when John Lithgow defeats the Knight of the Mirrors”. Oddly enough, I don’t remember Cervantes including a present-day American actor in *Don Quixote* (1605; 1615). Evidently, the undergrad had skipped the reading and watched the TNT Classics version (2000) on screen, featuring Lithgow as the heroic knight of La Mancha, with Bob Hoskins as Sancho. In analysing his comment, I speculated that in this student’s experience of Cervantes’s story he *witnessed* Don Quixote become mad by rummaging through his library, opening the pages of books at random, and mumbling incoherent phrases, and that what he missed by *watching* the knight of La Mancha go mad was the beauty, wit and trenchant humour of Cervantes’s description of the event, which I give here in Tobias Smollett’s 1705 translation:

In short, his understanding being quite perverted, he was seized by the strangest whim that ever entered the brain of a madman. This was no other, in a full persuasion, that it was highly expedient and necessary, not only for his own honour, but also for the good of the public, that he should profess knight-errantry, and ride through the world in arms, to seek adventures, and conform in all points to the practice of those itinerant heroes, whose exploits he had read; redressing all manner of grievances, and courting all occasions of exposing himself to such dangers, as in the event would entitle him to everlasting renown. This poor lunatic looked upon himself already as good as seated, by his own single valour, on the throne of Trebisonde; and intoxicated with these agreeable vapours of his unaccountable folly, resolved to put his design in practice forthwith (p. 30).

Perhaps with this example I may be overstating the disparity in the type of *knowledge* that the word brings relative to the image, but I don’t think so. The screen has provided the student with a concrete phenomenon, an instance of a specific situation that unfolds before his eyes. This explicit, unambiguous experience takes place in the absence of the arbitrating conceptual cosmos that is manifest in Cervantes’s masterful description. Students who watched the film *Don Quixote* may explain their experience using a concrete vocabulary that describes actions and situations; what is lost is a grasp of both the work’s elaborate complexity and the notional tracks that array and systematise the reader’s thoughtful experience.

To elaborate on the differences between reading and seeing, I’d add that visual stimuli make an impression on the viewer that, in large measure, depends on what is sensed. Consequently, the viewer will cohere those stimuli, stabilising them in order to articulate that impression into idiosyncratic, intelligible patterns that hinge on the film’s configuration. In spite of the intellectual concepts that the filmmaker may be attempting to convey, film’s distinction and modern pre-eminence hinges upon its uncanny power to convey the recognisable, external world of physical energies. This is a familiar, seemingly spontaneous world of unmediated reality where the human being feels comfortable and at home and, moreover, one that engages two of our primeval senses in order to produce meaning: sight and hearing. On the other hand, the book’s readers look at a paper object with rectangular white sheets and black makings printed in them. There is no denying that the contents of the book proceed through an ordered space that is the product of the intellect. Therein readers receive the impression of a conceptualised, abstract cosmos with stabilised components and properties; the written word is a font of conceptual knowledge that places truth and reality in a meaningful *context*. In a book, human direction of events is conspicuous and incontestable.

Furthermore, I'd reiterate that, in film and other visual products, our attempts to retrieve meaning are largely focused on physical phenomena that we can see and hear, phenomena we associate with "nature". This is important, because for millennia humans have coped with "nature" as a reality that is independent of human direction, it is *there* regardless of us, and as such, what is seen and heard has a more intimate, diagnostic connection with "truth". The audio-visual, for the general public, is considered intuitively as a reliable mirror that reflects a reality, even in works of fiction: when challenging the overwhelming power of the image, then, a written text can be bowled over, reduced to the level of opinion. Incidentally, we can observe the attack on the world of the word very clearly today, with claims of "fake news", "fake declarations", and so on, that question the intrinsic validity of the word.

Does the new-fangled supremacy of the image, brought to us by technology, mean that *Homo sapiens* is evolving into a different creature, the one Sartori in the title of his book calls "Homo videns"? At what point do we begin to consider, very seriously, the consequences of the transition from a society of individuals formed by the pondered word to a society of individuals formed by visual inputs and virtual reality? The question is valid inasmuch as the *umwelt*, the world as experienced by that particular organism called *Homo sapiens*, may be changing. Here I would call on the Knight of La Mancha again to explain my argument: the old knight on screen looks and sounds like a flesh and blood individual, a circumstance that contributes silently, inconspicuously to the invalidation of Don Quixote as a symbol. This is because the heroic Knight of La Mancha was never meant to be *seen*: he is an allegory, the linguistic projection of a psyche, a concept produced by an alchemy of words meant to generate universes that share very little with the world of things. But, regrettably, the universal availability of the screen, allowing us to peer into "reality" directly through images and sounds, may one day obviate the need for that peculiar bond that we've had with the physical world since the advent of the word: the symbol.

It has been noted on several occasions that we, *Homo sapiens*, are symbolic creatures. In the 10th edition of his *Systema Naturae* (1758), Carl Linnaeus describes the human species as *Homo sapiens*, describing as well four of its geographical subspecies. In his *Essay on Man*, neo-Kantian philosopher Ernst Cassirer aimed to recalibrate Linnaeus' definitions, moving beyond Aristotelian characterisations of man as "rational animal" to conclude that "... instead of defining man as an *animal rationale*, we should define him as an *animal symbolicum*" (1944, p. 26). Human beings, according to Cassirer, do not live in a purely physical universe that they perceive and describe using rational abilities; they rather live in a symbolic universe. Myth, religion and conjecture make up the symbolic texture of the human universe, and words are their agent and bearer. So this symbolic distinctiveness that defines the human being is manifested through abstract concepts that only language can provide; words, in short, are the building blocks of thought, and thought is a more profound, penetrating and insightful activity than visual perception. Evidently, language is a purely human creation, and while researchers do claim that animals have language, being that they communicate with each other, what animals communicate are sets of signals that alert others to danger, to the availability of food, and so forth, hardly the abstract concepts and ideas obtainable in that particular human discourse enabled by the word.

But, why should we be concerned? Well, to begin with, it is becoming clear that seated in front of a screen *Homo sapiens* is on the road to becoming that new creature, Sartori's "Homo videns", an organism that develops an awareness of its surroundings fundamentally through the senses of sight and hearing, just like so many other animals with which it shares the planet. One might argue that what one sees on a television or a computer screen comes

with language, with words that explain the images, but in a screen's hierarchy of value, the image reigns supreme and language functions as a mere auxiliary to it, like the ant riding on the back of an elephant. So, what I submit to you is that the concepts and ideas articulated in Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* or Sir Peter Strawson's *Entity and Identity*, for instance, couldn't possibly be expressed through images, no matter how much contextual information were to be provided. Undoubtedly, intellectual concepts require a level of abstraction that prevents their authentic disclosure through audio-visual display.

This leads us back to our friend *Homo sapiens* and its invention of the word. Beyond its initial function of expressing hunger, fear, commands or needs, the word promptly developed, very likely, as a scheme to inform others of things *seen*, of events experienced through the sense of sight. This would have made the word a proxy for the act of observing directly, of regarding, and as such, something that would not have been considered direct evidence of *reality* by our early ancestors. Moreover, an oral description of a horse would have been a less creditable depiction of reality than the image of a horse painted on the walls of the caves at Altamira or Lascaux. Those depictions can be *seen*. So, did we invent language because we did not always have the resources to create images readily available? Probably not: at a certain point we must have realised that grunts, hand signals, facial expressions and concocted images on the sand needed supplementing in order to cope with our environment more efficiently. But, with all its power to guide our actions and filter our perception of the environment, our ancestors likely recognised that language is still a human contrivance and therefore not part of reality, not a part of what is "out there". Words, in short, were not as "real" as the mountain they needed to climb, the river they needed to cross, or the deer they were chasing, all things that they could *see*.

This then begs the question: Does our primeval acumen still influence our present-day hierarchy of value like some embryonic vestige of our troglodyte days? If we still think of the image on a screen or a photograph as conventional proof of reality, then the word, artificial and evanescent, can only mount a flimsy and ephemeral challenge to the staggering, primordial power of the image. If such is the case, the word and the particular type of knowledge it bears will eventually be superseded by technological marvels lurking in our future, electronic gadgets that will again enthrone the image as paramount and conclusive instrument for communicating truth. The progress towards this destination, starting with cave paintings, drawings, then photographs, film, television and computers has been unremitting and is evident: Early newspapers, for example, when technology allowed them to print photographs, acknowledged the image as the happy culmination of their efforts to communicate truth. The January 10, 1918 issue of the *San Antonio Light* magazine, for instance, illustrates the superiority that editors assigned to the image over the word. Therein one reads:

One Picture is Worth a Thousand Words.

The *San Antonio Light's* Pictorial Magazine of the War exemplifies the truth of the above statement – judging from the warm reception it has received at the hands of the *Sunday Light* readers. (1918, p. 6)

Conceivably, this publication's photographs of World War I battlefields had a much greater affective impact upon the magazine's readers than the war correspondents' reports describing fields littered with the dead and the dying, but the point being missed here is that the ideas, concepts, assessments and inferences found in a text like that of Joll and Martel's *Origins of the First World War* (2007) would do much more to enlighten a reader regarding the war than

a thousand pictures or even films. The power of the image, then, rests upon the visceral reaction it produces, upon the noncognitive emotional manner in which it is assimilated. The word, on the other hand, can reach one's understanding in a much more profound way and is the backbone of social organisation: Its decline, then, is a tragedy whose proportions (social, economic, political, cultural) we have yet properly to measure or understand.

This tragedy is in front of us on our screens every day. Politicians, in the strongest, most affluent nations, have begun to dispute the evidential and demonstrative substance of the word, labelling as “fake” the argumentation, logic and lines of reasoning that dare to question the legitimacy of their authority. Words have become expendable in the age of the visual, of what can be seen happening without the need for an in-depth explanation. All our heroes have become visual “action heroes”: They somehow fly unaided through the skies, vaporise enemies with lethal rays emanating from their naked hands, generate explosions that eliminate any problem quickly and definitively without the need for dialogue, build enormous border walls that keep the criminals from entering the country and wear eye-catching wardrobe and eccentric, inexplicable hairdos. Evidently, words would be an obstacle to such exploits, as they could be used actually to explain that all of these visual stimuli are a fabrication, produced to have a visceral effect on viewers who are being asked to suspend their rational selves and believe the image. The post-word era we are entering is the post-knowledge era and, as perils accumulate, a post-knowledge popular base is growing whose political and cultural demands are being felt ubiquitously.

A starting point for measuring this tragedy would be assessing the way in which the preponderance of the image changes, in a fundamental manner, the way in which we communicate with each other. As Sartori states, when communication changes contexts, from the word to the image, the transformation is staggering. The word is a symbol whose value lies in what it signifies, in what it “makes us understand” (2002, p. 39). We are all, from intellectual to brick mason, immersed in our cultural cosmos because of the word's symbolic power. Proof that Homo sapiens are symbolic beings is that we can only gain access to our cultural cosmos if we can decipher symbols, only if we have the ability, the indispensable cultural and intellectual background to be able to understand language. You put most of us in front of an ancient Chinese text, and all we see is a number of converging lines forming complex shapes, and nothing else. We cannot enter that world, as it has no meaning and no discernible value. But given the relevant cultural background (e.g. being skilled in ancient Chinese), one could enter a rich cosmos of ideas, concepts, mindsets and beliefs when looking at such texts. That cosmos, which informed a whole culture for centuries, can only be reached with the knowledge of its words: we *are* symbolic animals.

So the change from word to image changes our very nature; it is a metamorphosis. In this regard, it is important to note that the screen is not only harmless entertainment; what is truly alarming to researchers like Sartori and John E. Grote is that the screen has been functioning as *paideia*, or form of education for the young. As Grote states, “It has also been found that the adult world has far less influence or impact on these children than the world created for them by television, by music and movies ... ” (2000, p. 194). In the opinion of several researchers, the screen is causing that metamorphosis of which I speak; it is an anthropogenetic medium that “is generating a new anthropos, a new type of human being” (Sartori, 2002, p. 40). This new human being will not read as an adult, and the exposure to all types of violence on screen will have desensitized them to others' pain and endorsed violence as an acceptable way to resolve disagreements.

So what happens in the future, if the image keeps obviating the word? The future is here. After providing a perverse “education” to the young, the screen, the image keeps acting upon them as adults, providing audio-visual information (not ideas) regarding what is happening in the world. A very large percentage of that information has to do with Manchester United, Real Madrid, the NY Yankees, the Kardashians, King Juan Carlos’s 429th girlfriend or the grocer who lost his hand in a bizarre accident and had it reattached. News that has to do with politics is handled at the most superficial levels, which is the likely cause of the imbecility that pervades in government today.

How do we make that connection? One might rebut by reminding me that in democratic societies “the people” have elected those who conduct policy and hold the reins of government. Tragically, that may just be the reason for the evident lack of intelligence, aptitude and ethical judgment observed at every level of government today. This is because, unfortunately, governments are the result of “the people’s” opinion. To give a suitable explanation for this one only needs to point to the genesis of public opinion. First, we must remember that opinion is subjective and does not need to be buttressed by evidence. Modern democratic governments obey not an informed, well-read public that has a profound grasp of the issues, expresses its concerns and votes in consequence; governments rather try to adapt their programmes to public opinion. The question then becomes: How is public opinion formed?

The answer to this question is not simple. Is the public being approached in the street, on the phone, through email or through “snail-mail”? Who formulates the questions, and to what purpose? It becomes apparent that the pollster has much agency regarding the answer that the interviewee gives to the question. In most cases the respondent does not expect to be asked and gives unpremeditated, guided answers to the questions. So those answers, as Sartori (2002, p. 78) fittingly emphasises, are superficial, volatile and/or made up at the moment in order to come across to the pollster as well informed. Moreover, the media can easily guide the citizens’ opinions from afar through the information highway by sending across a bevy of accepted or “correct” images, notions and expectations. Russell Newman (as cited in Sartori, 2002, p. 78) concludes that “of every ten questions on national policy that are asked every year, the average citizen will have a strong opinion on one of them, perhaps two, and virtually no opinion on the rest. This doesn’t keep the respondent from giving made-up opinions once the interviewer starts asking questions”.

I trust that the elucidations above help define the reason that I maintain that governments based on public opinion are becoming undemocratic; in this day and age, the technology used by the media has made it very easy to influence and escort popular opinions towards a desired objective, and governments react in view of those objectives. Regarding network newscasts, which are truly important purveyors of images and of categorized “reality”, Peter Hart (2005) states that

... the network newscasts were largely populated by guests and experts drawn from the elite and powerful classes, while voices who might challenge their views were given severely limited access to the airwaves. Consequently, their perspectives remained largely unknown to the tens of millions of Americans who rely on evening newscasts for their information. This situation presents a dangerous problem for a democratic society: When important issues are under discussion, can a democracy properly function when critical ideas are excluded from popular debate? (p. 53)

The situation described by Hart is also evident in the networks' Internet services, which are increasingly accessed by the public. So is it possible that television, the Internet, the universal screen that was touted as the tool for the most absolute democracy, be facilitating the creation of a sheepish follower, of an automatic, computerised citizen, of a post Homo sapiens with an undemocratic mindset, even in "open" western societies where formal censorship is absent? In their book *Manufacturing Consent*, Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky (1998) seem to think so:

In countries where the levers of power are in the hands of a state bureaucracy, the monopolistic control over the media, often supplemented by official censorship, makes it clear that the media serve the ends of the dominant elite. It is much more difficult to see a propaganda system at work where the media are private and formal censorship is absent. This is especially true where the media actively compete, periodically attack and expose corporate and governmental malfeasance, and aggressively portray themselves as spokesman for free speech and the general community interest. What is not evident (and remains undiscussed in the media) is the limited nature of such critiques [...] Money and power are able to filter out the news fit to print, marginalise dissent, and allow government and dominant private interests to get their messages across to the public. (pp. 1–2)

So as we say goodbye to Homo sapiens and welcome the appearance of a new species, of that new being brought about by the circumvented word and the triumph of the screen, one has to wonder what the future looks like. Will the screen keep functioning as a nursery for properly processed, predisposed thinkers? Will a resultant retrograde mindset, ill suited to addressing the ever-growing and difficult problems of the world, be dominant? Will the bewildering political landscape generate resolutions that mirror those of our unenlightened ancestors? What will happen to our dreams of social justice, such as the right to health, employment and social security that have been at the core of modern social democratic thought? Will the nostalgia for untroubled medieval utopias annul, once and for all, the critical insights that guided our thoughts and that books aptly delivered?

Has the future arrived?

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**Classic Rock in the Year of Revolt:
Using the Illusion of Life to Examine the Hits of 1968**

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Unabridged version

Abstract

This is not the first generation facing a fearful future. Exactly fifty years ago, 1968 – nestled between the Summer of Love ('67) and Woodstock ('69) - was known as the year of revolt. From Vietnam protests and Civil Rights marches, to the assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, American culture, like that of countries around the world, was awash in struggle yet alive in activist ideology. In particular, Classic Rock of the era served as a reflection of the times, a call to action, and eventually offered enduring insight into the qualities of effective protest music. Using Sellnow's Illusion of Life methodology, which examines music as rhetoric, this essay analyses the top ten hits of that year (per <http://ultimateclassicrock.com>), including such timeless masterpieces as Joplin's "Piece of my Heart," Cream's "White Room," Hendrix's "All Along the Watchtower," and the Rolling Stones' "Sympathy for the Devil." The humanistic methodology begins by identifying first the patterns found in the songs' virtual time (music) and virtual experience (lyrics). Analysis then delves into the use of strategies such as congruity and incongruity to get across meaning. Interpretations are offered on the impact such works had on their original generation, and concludes with applications for today.

Keywords: Sellnow, illusion of life, music, classic rock, 1968

Introduction

I want to thank IAFOR for inviting me to deliver this keynote address today. It's a distinct pleasure to have the opportunity to speak on this brilliant theme: "Fearful Futures."

In describing the theme, the call for papers said we are at a critical moment in international history. Multiculturalism is being threatened by a "destructive and potentially genocidal ethno-nationalism, the ferocity of which is fueled by economic disparity, religious intolerance and retrograde ideologies regarding gender, race and sexuality." Fearful indeed.

While I want to have an international empathy in my talk, given my background, my focus is obviously on the United States landscape. Let's take a quick look at the American vista. A U.S. president who is not trusted by many; who belongs to a political party seemingly more interested in victory than in the needs of its people. Racial tensions. Black athletes being ostracized for expressing their views about oppression. Frequent headlines about shootings. Urban turmoil often brought about by clashes between law enforcement and citizens of color.

I am talking, of course, about 1968.

You see, this is not the first time we've been faced with a fearful future. The parallels between today's tensions, and those of exactly 50 years ago, are astounding. And we survived then; otherwise we'd be living a complete dystopian nightmare now. Spanish philosopher George Santayana wrote "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." We seem to have forgotten lessons we learned back then about civil rights, and about just civility in general. But it is not too late for us to remember them now.

We must remember how good people, youth in particular, banded together for what is right. We moved forward – together – to explore space and our own planet, and made advances in computing and technology, to degrees only imagined before in science fiction. And on the humanitarian front, for the most part, our better natures have prevailed.

And, I will argue, music has been the constant backdrop accompanying our success.

Over the next thirty-five minutes or so, I hope to accomplish the following:

- Provide a summary of key happenings in 1968, and explain how the youth movements – and the rock music they listened to – were an essential element
- Offer a methodology – Sellnow's Illusion of Life – for examining the rhetorical properties of music
- Using the method, analyze the top ten classic rock hits of 1968, identifying the elements that made the songs both timeless and inspirational
- And finally, conclude with some commentary and applications for today's fearful future

1968: The Year of Revolt

When one pictures the United States of the 1960's, thoughts often turn to the hippie movement; images of young men and women with long hair, living in communes, wearing psychedelic clothing and love beads, flashing "peace" signs, and all with a penchant for sex, drugs, and rock-and-roll. But 1968 stands out as unique year in that era. Known as the Year of Revolt, it stood in stark contrast to the more peaceful years that surrounded it.

1967, in contrast, was known as the Summer of Love. The definitive song that year was Scott McKenzie's lilting tune, "San Francisco." Written by John Phillips of the Mamas and the Papas, the lyrics asked those going to San Francisco to "be sure to wear some flowers in your hair." It was the year the Beatles' released the feel-good album *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, and the year drug-guru Timothy Leary spoke to 30,000 hippies at an event called the "Human Be-In," and encouraged everyone to "Turn on, tune in, drop out."

Two years later, in March 1969, Beatles member John Lennon and new wife Yoko Ono were married. The couple held two week-long Bed-ins - a version of the hippie sit-ins adapted to a honeymoon motif - where Lennon penned the definitive song of *that* year, "(All we are saying is) Give Peace a Chance."

More important, from August 15–17, 1969, the Woodstock concert - touted as "three days of peace and music" - was held on a 600-acre farm about 100 miles north of New York City (Miles, 2004, p. 315). About 50,000 people were expected. Over 400,000 thousand showed up. If you've seen the photos or film, you know that it rained most of the time, and about a half-million muddy hippies jostled for dry spaces and woefully limited toilet facilities. But what should have been a disaster is fondly remembered as a defining moment, not only in music history, but for an era of love, sexual expression, unity, and peace.

But '67's Summer of Love and '69's Woodstock were but idyllic bookends to the violence-stained 1968. Author Greil Marcus (2009) recalls '68 "as a year of horror and bad faith, fervor and despair" (p. 331). CNN commentator David Axelrod writes, "If I hadn't lived through 1968, I might dismiss a film recounting the explosive events of that year as some sort of fictional dystopia, a dark political thriller sprung from Hollywood's fertile imagination" (np).

In 2018, it has become a sadly humorous exercise to check the morning's news and see what new fiasco or crisis or incendiary tweet occurred during the night. The feeling was similar in 1968. Gould claimed, "the nation seemed to lurch from one shock to another" (p. 60), and White described it "as if the future waited on the first of each month to deliver events completely unforeseen the month before" (1969, p. 107).

Let's look briefly at some of those key events.

In 1968, the Vietnam war took its toll on the country, and on incumbent President Lyndon Johnson. On January 30, the North Vietnamese attacked South Vietnamese and U.S. forces during the presumed cease-fire of the Vietnamese New Year. Known as the Tet Offensive, the attack proved that the conflict would be prolonged, and prompted famed CBS news anchor Walter Cronkite to make an editorial comment calling for negotiated withdrawal from the war. Johnson reportedly said that, if he's lost Cronkite, he's lost middle America (Nelson, 2014). In March, more than five hundred South Vietnamese (half teenagers or younger) were killed by American soldiers in a handful of small villages. Referred to collectively as the My Lai Massacre, it was originally covered up by the U.S. Government, and eventually led to the court martial of 24-year-old Lt. William Calley, Jr. Many felt Calley was a scapegoat and, while dismissed from the military, he served only 3.5 years under house arrest (Jones, 2017).

These events led to increased student protests and continuous bad press for Johnson, who ultimately chose not to run for re-election. Republications ran Richard Nixon as their candidate, claiming he was the only one who could lead us out of Vietnam (McGinniss, 1969;

Nelson, 2014). Despite being known to the public as “Tricky Dick,” the onus of war is why we elected a man who would eventually resign the presidency in shame following the illegal break-in at Watergate.

1968 was also marred by two horrific assassinations. On April 4, the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. – arguably the nation’s most respected and effective civil rights advocate – was shot and killed outside of the Loraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee. Two months later, after delivering a speech on how he would work to heal divisions between blacks and whites, Democratic presidential nominee Robert F. Kennedy (brother to the assassinated president John F. Kennedy) himself was shot. He died the morning of June 6 (Gould, 1993).

Nelson (2014) argued that, climaxing in 1968, race was the central issue dividing Americans. Following the death of Martin Luther King, Jr. Riots were reported in Washington, D.C., Wilmington (Delaware), Detroit, Kansas City, New York City, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Trenton (New Jersey), and Louisville (Kentucky). Gould (1993) reports that in Chicago, Mayor Richard Daley ordered police to “shoot to kill” rioters. Months later, Chicago was again the site of civil unrest. The Democratic national convention, which suffered its own identity crisis, was disrupted when thousands of anti-war demonstrators took to the streets.

A more poignant protest occurred at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico. Long before Colin Kaepernick and other NFL football players created controversy by kneeling during the singing of the national anthem, John Carlos and Tommie Smith – American athletes competing in the 200-yard dash - were both lauded and criticized for their politicizing an athletic event. After taking gold and bronze in the event, the two men climbed the award stand. They had removed their shoes to signify poverty, and wore beads around their necks to represent countless black men who had murdered for the color of their skin. When the national anthem started to play, they bowed their heads and raised gloved fists in a silent show of power and unity (Marcus, 2009). They were immortalized in an iconic photo by John Dominos that captures the intensity of the moment; a moment which caused them to be sent home from the competition and barred from the Olympics for life.

What’s most amazing about these stories from 1968 is that this wasn’t just happening in the United States. There is no time to elaborate, but I invite you to visit works such as Gildea, Mark and Warring’s (2013) interviews with dozens of activists worldwide, who reference similar movements in Central America, Africa, Cuba, Vietnam, and China. Similarly, Kusin (1973) examines the Czechoslovak movement of 1968; Langland (2013) shares stories of student protests in military Brazil; and Markarian (2017) reports the same phenomenon in Uruguay. Fink, Gassert, and Junker (1998) continue with additional tales from East and West Germany, Italy, Spain, Israel, and Poland. Finally, Frazier and Cohen (2009) add gender politics to the mix, adding more stories from Vietnam, Mexico, Cuba, and Africa; concluding that “Nineteen sixty-eight was a pivotal year on a global scale. In cities throughout the globe, young people took over streets. They blockaded buildings, verbally and symbolically attacked state political apparatuses and projects, and challenged conventional imperialist world orderings” (p. 1).

In the words of Goodman, Brandon and Fisher, “The world smoldered in the 1960s and was on fire by 1968 with each hot spot covered by the nightly news” (2017, p. 76). And, they continue, because the corporate structure of the music industry made possible the worldwide distribution of record albums, it allowed musicians to become the poets and prophets of the

revolt. Industrialized music releases meant the rhetoric of the social movement was restated “every time people turned on the car radio” (p. 78).

And what they heard was rock and roll. In a 1960s interview, Paul Kantner, songwriter and guitarist for the popular band Jefferson Airplane, stated “Rock’n’roll is the new form of communication for our generation” (Miles, 2004, p. 44). And record producer Joe Boyd, reflecting back on the era, explained the impact, noting a popular saying in his business: “When the mode of music changes, the walls of the city shake” (Miles, 2004, p. 174).

Sellnow’s Illusion of Life Methodology

Of course, the extent to which city walls shake is not an accurate technique for measuring the *rhetorical* power of music’s symbolic message. We need a tool for assessing music.

Enter the *Illusion of Life* methodology, developed by Deanna Sellnow currently of the University of Central Florida in the USA. Adapting philosopher Susanne Langer’s work on aesthetic symbolism, Sellnow’s model examines both the discursive and nondiscursive elements of music. While I will reference several works that Deanna and her husband Tim have published over the years, the source I’ll most use and recommend is her textbook *The Rhetorical Power of Popular Culture: Considering Mediated Texts*, now in its 3rd edition from Sage.

Sellnow believes that music is a rhetorical artifact, offering persuasive arguments that either reinforce or challenge taken-for-granted beliefs and behaviors. The performance by the artist offers a *symbolic* perspective on lived experience – an *illusion* of life, so to speak.

This is particularly useful when examining messages of revolt. Sellnow (1999) argues that “submerged” groups - those not in power- need to find a way to legitimize their message and their voice. They do so by employing “modes of communication other than the conventional discursive language system, which tends to perpetuate the hegemonic worldview held by the dominant culture” (p. 67). In other words, music.

The humanistic critic examines both the nondiscursive music – which Sellnow refers to as **Virtual Time** – and the discursive lyrics – or **Virtual Experience** – and how they work together to function rhetorically.

Let’s look first at Virtual Time. It is “virtual” because it is a step removed from and suspends the linear, one-dimensional time that punctuates our days. We don’t measure music in seconds, minutes, and hours; we measure it in the emotions that are created by the artist, within the genre, using rhythm, harmony, melody, phrasing, and instrumentation. Sellnow and Sellnow (2001) explain that these nondiscursive features go beyond fixed symbols like math or language. “In short,” they conclude, “music sounds the way feelings feel” (p. 397).

In assessing Virtual Time, the rhetor differentiates between two forms of timing: **Intensity Patterns** and **Release Patterns**. Briefly, the former creates feelings of tension while the latter creates feelings of relief. One riles you up, the other calms you down.

More specifically, Intensity Patterns tend to include driving tempos, fast or allegro rate, unpredictable changes, short-tones, staccato pacing, and tend to be amplified. In contrast,

Release Patterns have a relaxed tempo, a slower or largo rate, consistent meter, long tones, smooth pacing, and tend to be acoustic.

The fixed, discursive elements are found in a song's lyrics, or Virtual Experience; again, a symbolic portrayal of life experiences. Sellnow differentiates between two types of storylines: **Comic Lyrics** and **Tragic Lyrics**.

Now, this goes beyond Comic meaning just “Ha-Ha, funny” and Tragic meaning “Boo-hoo, sad.” In a Comic Lyric, the storyline is about a protagonist determined to beat the odds; failure is not an option. In the Tragic Lyric, the protagonist is trying to cope with fate; there is generally a sense of hopelessness.

Not always, but usually the Comic Lyric setting is characterized by **Dramatic Illusion**; it is forward-looking, generally into an unknown future. In contrast, Tragic Lyrics lean toward **Poetic Illusion**; they are backward-looking reflections on the past. Finally – not always, but usually – Comic Lyrics lean towards Intensity Patterns, while Tragic Lyrics often mesh best with patterns of Release.

Ultimately, the goal of analysis is to examine the music/lyric relationship and what it means to the audience. A primary question to ask – and the one that is most relevant to this talk today – is whether there is congruity or incongruity between the words and the sounds.

Congruent interaction occurs then the music and lyrics reinforce each other; together they make a clear and unified argument. For example, a school “fight song” played by the marching band before a sporting event tends to be both Intensity Patterns (tubas and brass, cymbals and drums) coupled with Comic Lyrics about impending victory over the opposing team.

Sellnow argues that such congruity creates an effective and persuasive message. In particular, it is compelling for the “in-group,” as it supports their mission. A congruent combination, however, may not appeal to outsiders. That makes sense. If Team A plays their fight song, Team B probably doesn't sing along. This is particularly true if the outside group also happens to be the dominant group; they don't like to be challenged by a consistent but contrary message.

An **Incongruent Interaction** occurs when, at some point or throughout the song, the lyrics and music contradict one another. Obviously, this leads to a greater possibility of listeners misinterpreting or altering the message. *However*, there are some unique benefits as well. Because the outside group is not alienated, as they are with a congruent interaction, this could increase broad-base listener appeal and persuasion, particularly over time. Sellnow states that “sometimes incongruity can successfully persuade listeners to accept a controversial message as legitimate” (2017, p. 178). This is a critical piece of the forthcoming analysis, as we turn to the Top Ten Classic Rock hits from 1968.

Analysis of Top Ten Classic Rock Hits from 1968

Let me start by telling you about my sample set. With such analyses, some scholars might hand-pick those songs they believe are most relevant to their argument. For example, in Goodman, Brandon and Fisher's study of 1968 music, they opted to focus on the Beatles' “Revolution” and Peter, Paul & Mary's performance of Dylan's “Blowin' in the Wind,” as

the lyrics of those songs supported their case. I wanted to start with an externally validated list.

To achieve that, many scholars use the Billboard magazine charts (available at www.billboard.com). I chose to avoid this list, as it represents a homogenized mixture of musical styles as preferred by a mainstream audience. For example, according to Billboard, the top ten hits of 1968 included Herb Albert's easy-listening "This Guy's in Love with You," and tunes from two movie scores: Hugo Montenegro's instrumental version of "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly," from the movie of the same name, and Simon and Garfunkel's folksy "Mrs. Robinson" from the Academy Award nominee "The Graduate." All wonderful songs, but not characteristic of the audience or activities in question. I needed to analyze the rock music of the youth counterculture.

That led to the website Ultimate Classic Rock (www.ultimateclassicrock.com). Part of the Loudwire Network, this music history and news site is owned by Townsquare Media – a radio, entertainment, and digital media and marketing company involved with music distribution and events in small and mid-sized markets across the United States. In their professional opinion, these are the top ten classic rock hits of 1968.

Top Ten Classic Rock Hits of 1968 (www.ultimateclassicrock.com)		
#	Song Title	Performing Artist
10.	<i>Born To Be Wild</i>	Steppenwolf
9.	<i>Waterloo Sunset</i>	The Kinks
8.	<i>Piece of My Heart</i>	Big Brother and the Holding Company (Janis Joplin)
7.	<i>White Room</i>	Cream
6.	<i>Jumpin' Jack Flash</i>	The Rolling Stones
5.	<i>Hey Jude</i>	The Beatles
4.	<i>The Weight</i>	The Band
3.	<i>While My Guitar Gently Weeps</i>	The Beatles
2.	<i>All Along the Watchtower</i>	Jimi Hendrix
1.	<i>Sympathy for the Devil</i>	The Rolling Stones

Table 1: Top Ten Classic Rock Hits of 1968 (www.ultimateclassicrock.com)

One caveat before I begin. I'm going to *discard* one of the songs because it simply doesn't fit. The reasons, I believe, actually bolster my case.

What amazed me when I encountered this list is that, with one exception, these songs are still a regular part of the American music landscape. Fifty years later, they still get radio air time. They regularly show up in movie and television soundtracks. My students and my children know these songs. Most important, when I talk to my contemporaries and members of that generation, these songs elicit positive memories and emotional response. The most common response when I mention a song title? Head nods to an imagined beat, followed by "Oh, yeah."

These songs are timeless, and I believe they achieve that status because, despite their similarities, each has a unique element of that makes them stand out. All of them are stereotypical rock and roll songs; they all are in 4/4 time, with the backbeat on the 2 and 4.

All of them rely on amplified bass and lead guitars, keyboards, and full percussion. Yet, each of them has its own form of Incongruity; a twist, turn, or outright contradiction which, as we've learned from Sellnow, adds to their broad-base appeal and increased acceptance over time. It almost becomes an act of perpetual motion; the longer the song remains popular, the more the incongruent hook adds new listeners and converts them to the message.

Longevity due to incongruity. We'll call that Ingredient One. But, in addition to being timeless, these top hits also share a common moral to their stories, or Ingredient Two. Despite many of them being situated in lyrically Tragic, sometimes dystopian settings, there is always an uplifting and Comic resolution. What my doctoral advisor would call "fetching good out of evil." These songs were the soundtrack that lifted us out of 1968's fearful future and put us back on the path to peace and civility.

Waterloo Sunset. With one exception. I'm going to remove the song "Waterloo Sunset" by the Kinks from the list. Why? It is completely Congruent. It lacks Ingredient One. It is an upbeat pop-rock song with Intensity patterns and matching Comic lyrics. That makes it perfect for the peace-loving flower-child of the sixties but, because it does not deviate in any notable fashion; it lacks the contradiction that would afford it timeless or countercultural status.

The song's writer and Kinks' frontman Ray Davies himself describes it as a romantic, lyrical song, written to honor his older sister's generation. Set in London, the lyrics describe life overlooking the Waterloo bridge:

*As long as I gaze on Waterloo Sunset, I am in paradise.
Every day I look at the world from my window.
Chilly chilly is the evening time, Waterloo sunset's fine.*

Davies actually acknowledges the simplicity yet congruity in his statement, "The lyrics could be better. But they dovetail with the music perfectly" (www.songfacts.com).

A reason this bolsters my argument is that, of the ten songs on the list, this is the only one I've never heard of. I still hear many Kinks' songs on the radio: "Lola," "You Really Got Me," "All Day and All of the Night," and 1982's "Come Dancing." Yes, that's anecdotal evidence, but the song never charted in the U.S. Over the past two months, I have polled many people who were in their teens and 20's in 1968 and have not found anyone (except for a former record promoter) who remembers "Waterloo Sunset." I'm guessing the song is better known here in Brighton? A band from England singing about a bridge that is roughly 90 kilometers north from where I'm standing? But lacking incongruity, and lacking comedy drawn from tragedy, it is not an anthem of the revolution.

For the remaining nine songs I'll use Ingredient One – Incongruity – as the organizational structure. I found that Incongruity manifest itself in three different ways, with three songs under each category. As I discuss each song under its respective heading, I'll also identify Ingredient Two, or the extent to which the song concludes with Comic resolutions.

Musical Manipulations

I label the first three songs **Musical Manipulations**; the Incongruity is created because – while the lyrics are straightforward – something happens in the orchestration, either with instruments or vocalizations, that captures our attention.

Hey Jude. The most subtle is “Hey Jude” by the Beatles. Originally titled “Hey Jules,” Paul McCartney wrote it as a song of encouragement for John Lennon’s son Julian, who was distraught over his parents’ divorce, and his father’s marriage to Yoko Ono.

The incongruity lies in in the build-up of the music; it ends up sounding like a different song than it started.

It begins only with McCartney’s voice, accompanied by soft piano, for the entire first verse.	<i>Hey Jude, don’t make it bad Take a sad song and make it better Remember to let her into your heart Then you can start to make it better</i>
In verse two, George Harrison comes in on guitar; with Ringo Starr on tambourine.	<i>Hey Jude, don’t be afraid You were made to go out and get her</i>
Harmony vocals are added in the middle of the verse.	<i>The minute you let her under your skin Then you begin to make it</i>
Contrary to almost all rock songs, drums don’t enter until almost a full minute in.	<i>better</i>

Some people recall “Hey Jude” as an acoustic ballad, but, by the end, it’s a full-Intensity rock and roll single with falsetto screaming and a 36-piece orchestra. Perhaps the gradual incongruity is what added to the song’s cross-over appeal. In addition to making this list, “Hey Jude” was also Billboard magazine’s number-one hit for 1968.

More so than any other song in this collection, the Comic conclusion of Ingredient Two is blatantly overt. The message is that things can be sad and cause us to be afraid or feel pain. But we have the power within ourselves to make things better, better, better, better, better.

Piece of My Heart. Though the next song was released by the band Big Brother and the Holding Company, history recalls the lead singer – Janis Joplin – as the artist behind “Piece of My Heart.” The song was originally written for and released as an R&B ballad for Erma Franklin (sister of the legendary Aretha Franklin). Joplin’s version is the one that stands as strong today as it did five decades ago.

Rather than a gradual buildup, the musical incongruity is the abrupt switching back and forth – both with instruments and vocals – between soft release tones and intense driving rock. At two points during the song, Joplin replaces her massive bawdy and gravelly voice with an almost whispered appeal. This draws special attention to the build in her voice as she returns to the Intensity level that led many to call her the Queen of Rock:

(Soft) *You’re out on the streets looking good*
 (Soft) *And baby deep down in your heart I guess you know that it ain’t right*
 (Building) *Never, never, never, never, never, never hear me when I cry at night*
 (Yelling) *Babe, I cry all the time!*
 (Loud) *And each time I tell myself that I, well I can’t stand the pain*
But when you hold me in your arms, I’ll sing it once again
I’ll say come on, come on, come on, come on and take it!

Take another little piece of my heart now, baby

A powerful voice, yes. But the song's real power is the moral in Ingredient Two. The lyrics reek with relational abuse, for example "*Didn't I give you nearly everything that a woman possibly can?*," "*I think I've had enough*," and "*I can't stand the pain*." But, instead of falling into Tragic despair, this protagonist finds the strength to persevere. She growls, "*But I'm gonna show you, baby, that a woman can be tough*" and the constant chorus "*Take it! Take another little piece of my heart now, baby*," is not a song of defeat. It is an act of resistance, telling the abuser to do his worst, and that she will still stand strong.

Sympathy for the Devil. The final example of musical manipulation is Ultimate Classic Rock's number one choice for 1968 – "Sympathy for the Devil" by the Rolling Stones. In this lyrical summary of historical atrocities, we see not a fluid build or an alternating switch, but two distinct styles happening simultaneously.

<p>The incongruity occurs immediately, as the song begins with intensity instrumentation – conga drums, maracas, and a samba beat.</p> <p>Seemingly oblivious to beat, Mick Jagger and a melodic piano seem to launch into a ballad.</p> <p>This contradiction forces you to listen to Jagger's voice. It makes the lyrics about the death of Jesus particularly striking.</p> <p>As the lyrics turn to Russia, Jagger's voice and the piano start to pick up.</p> <p>By the time we reach World War II, everything is congruent. Jagger is now using his stadium voice, and all instruments are now at full intensity.</p>	<p><i>(Orchestration)</i></p> <p><i>Please allow me to introduce myself, I'm a man of wealth and taste. I've been around for a long, long year – Stole many a man's soul and faith</i></p> <p><i>And I was 'round when Jesus Christ had His moment of doubt and pain Made damn sure that Pilate washed his hands and sealed his fate</i></p> <p><i>Pleased to meet you. Hope you guess my name. But what's puzzling you is the nature of my game.</i></p> <p><i>I stuck around St. Petersburg when I saw it was time for a change Killed the czar and his ministers, Anastasia screamed in vain</i></p> <p><i>I rode a tank. Held a general's rank. When the blitzkrieg raged and the bodies stank</i></p> <p><i>Pleased to meet you. Hope you guess my name.</i></p>
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By that time, the audience is hooked and, hopefully, more amenable to the moral of the song. In the next section I'll be looking at songs whose incongruity lie in puzzles within the lyrics. Some might put "Sympathy for the Devil" in that category, but that would be due only to a knee-jerk misunderstanding of a straightforward message. There are those who mistakenly thought, given the song's title and the fact that Jagger sings the song in first-person as if he

were the devil, that the Stones were somehow advocating on behalf of Satan. Jagger himself said the song is not about the devil, per se, but about the dark side of man (songfacts.com).

Of all the songs, the most overt reference to the events of 1968 occurs here. In one line he asks, “*Who killed the Kennedy’s?*” and concludes it was “*you and me.*” Therein lies the moral of the story; that *we* are ultimately responsible for the evil *and the good* in the world.

Near the end of the song, the protagonist identifies himself as Lucifer and admits he’s “*in need of some restraint.*” The devil then says: “*So if you meet me have some courtesy. Have some sympathy, and some taste. Use all your well-learned politesse, or I’ll lay your soul to waste.*”

Following the litany of tragic historical examples, there is the comic resolution. When confronted with evil, it is our responsibility to overcome it by being on our best behavior. The power is in our hands.

Lyrical Labyrinths

In these next three songs, the Incongruity ingredient comes due to some type of paradox or shift in the lyrics themselves. These range from subtle inconsistencies in word choices to outright contradictions.

Born to be Wild. The first song, “Born to be Wild” by Steppenwolf, is the most subtle. This song is considered by many to be the quintessential 1960’s song of rebellion. It secured its place in pop culture history as the theme song to the 1969 motorcycle cult-classic “Easy Rider.” In the title sequence, Peter Fonda and Dennis Hopper roll onto the screen with one of the most identifiable drum beats and lyrics in music history:

*Get your motor runnin’ – Head out on the highway
Looking for adventure – And whatever comes our way*

The musical pattern is all Intensity; it is perhaps the hardest rocking song of the collection. The incongruity occurs because the lyrics vacillate between the peace-loving language of the hippie movement, and images of urban industry and warfare. The hard-driving and dark highway motif of the introduction is multiplied through lyrics such as “*I like smoke and lightening / heavy metal thunder*” and “*fire all of your guns at once and explode into space.*” That sounds like a “Mad Max” movie.

However, the song’s writer, Mars Bonfire, originally wrote it as a ballad. That may help explain Ingredient Two, Comic emerging from Tragic, in the smatterings of incongruent upbeat language such as “*Take the world in a love embrace.*” In fact, the entire chorus – which is generally heard as an engine-revving war cry – could actually be the call to a pure and unadulterated life. Listen to it from that perspective, especially on the title line when the Intensity instrumentation actually stops, and there is only the voice calling you to freedom:

*Like a true nature’s child, we were born, born to be wild
We can climb so high, I never wanna die
Born to be wild
Born to be wild*

The Weight. The folksiest song of the bunch is “The Weight,” performed by a band called The Band. Ultimateclassicrock.com describes it as “rustic Americana shrouded in hippie blowback.” It’s a narrative tale of an unnamed protagonist who meets a number of people as he travels down the road. He appears to be traveling on behalf of one Miss Fanny, and his goal is to remove her burden and the burdens of others, and shoulder the weight himself. People remember the song because of its brief but catchy harmonizing chorus:

*Take a load off Fanny, take a load for free
Take a load off Fanny, and you put the load right on me*

Both Ingredients, incongruity and moral, are shrouded in the mystery and meaning of the lyrics. To this day, critics debate whether the song is a Christian Biblical analogy. After all, the song begins with the protagonist entering Nazareth, and is unable to find a place to lay his head. Band members say they’re referring to Nazareth, Pennsylvania, north of Philadelphia – and that the characters are based on real people they know. But other references are made to Moses, Luke, judgment day, and this conversation with his friend Carmen:

*I picked up my bags, I went looking for a place to hide
When I saw old Carmen and the Devil, walking side by side
I said, “Hey, Carmen, c’mon, let’s go downtown”
She said, “I gotta go, but my friend can stick around”*

Like the earlier Rolling Stones’ hit, we see the Devil as a central character; one who is willing to “stick around.” Is this another religious allegory about our behavior and choices? Co-writer Robbie Robinson said the song is about “the impossibility of sainthood,” but that’s it. So the incongruous intrigue about allegory versus actual events keeps us listening for generations, while we continuously absorb the Comic moral about removing the burden from others.

Jumpin’ Jack Flash. The Rolling Stones make the list again with their hit “Jumpin’ Jack Flash.” Here the contradiction in the lyrics are the most overt.

The Ingredient One twist and the salvific Ingredient Two is the stark lyrical contrast between the Tragic Poetic Illusion past of the protagonist and the Comic Dramatic Illusion positive outlook he has toward life. Singer Mick Jagger explains that this song is “about having a hard time and getting out” (www.songfacts.com). Clearly, as this person’s upbringing was a nightmare: “born in a cross-fire hurricane,” “raised by a toothless, bearded hag,” “schooled with a strap right across my back,” “drowned,” “washed up,” “left for dead,” and “crowned with a spike right through my head.” Most people, by this point, would be pretty discouraged. Not Jumpin’ Jack Flash, who bounces back and tells us “it’s a gas”:

*But it’s all right now, in fact, it’s a gas But it’s all right, I’m Jumpin’ Jack Flash
It’s a gas, gas, gas*

Instrumental Enthymemes

In these final three songs, the Ingredient One incongruity comes not from the lyrics, but in the instrumentation alone. In a traditional persuasive argument, generally a deductive case is made using syllogistic reasoning. However, we can sometimes be more persuasive using enthymematic reasoning; by leaving a major or minor premise unstated, it allows the receiver to fill in the gap and take more ownership of the conclusion. The Sellnows, in their 1993

analysis of John Corigliano's "Symphony No. 1," argue that instrumentation alone can act as an enthymeme; in that case as emotional evocation drawing attention to the AIDS crisis. In other words, just the music void of lyrical content can be an integral and stand-alone piece of the argument.

As with the lyrical labyrinth choices, the incongruity ranges from elusive to overt.

White Room. Most subtle is “White Room” by Cream. In both sound and story, the song is the most metaphorical and surreal; almost bordering on Tragic Release and Poetic Illusion throughout.

The instrumental incongruity is understated, but significant in music history. What stands out, in the background, is guitarist Eric Clapton using a wah-wah pedal (a technique he’d picked up from Jimi Hendrix), to make it sound as if the guitar is actually talking. His playing in this song is ranked as one of the top Wah songs of all time. You can hear the juxtaposition between the almost ominous lyrics and pacing, and the compelling alternative conversation from Clapton’s guitar:

*You said no strings could secure you at the station
Platform ticket, restless diesels, goodbye windows
I walked into such a sad time at the station
As I walked out, felt my own need just beginning*

Ironically, as mysterious as the title sounds, the White Room was just that – the white room that songwriter Pete Brown lived in when he penned the song. He admits that he wrote this at a watershed time in his career; dealing with feelings of hopelessness and pressure as he gave up drugs and alcohol (www.songfacts.com). Once again, the potential tragic setting “*in this place where the sun never shines*” is illuminated by Eric Clapton’s wah-wah pedal. His playing is also Ingredient Two, as every time a lyric seems destined for despair, the instrumental enthymeme ascends. In fact, the final full minute of the five-minute song is simply Clapton’s playing lifting us upward.

While My Guitar Gently Weeps. The Beatles make the list again with “While My Guitar Gently Weeps.” Even though it’s the Beatles, the Ingredients and argument are the same as “White Room.” In other words, the lyrics are a somber reflection on the state of affairs, but an instrumental enthymeme provides the attention-getting contradiction and elevates us to a positive place. And, even though it’s the Beatles, once again it is guitarist and non-Beatle Eric Clapton who takes us there.

In truth, 1968 was a fractious year for the Beatles. The two songs on this list are both from their White Album, produced during a time when the band members were not getting along; basically serving as backing musicians for each other on various songs. It’s said that George Harrison brought Eric Clapton to the recording session, not knowing how the others would react. It turned out to be a positive distraction, and Clapton’s guitar playing made this song the centerpiece of the album.

The setting here is less abstract than “White Room,” though still rather vague. We don’t know who the protagonist is addressing, but he notes throughout the song that that individual has been “*controlled*,” “*sold*,” “*diverted*,” “*perverted*,” and “*inverted*.”

Not all is lost, however. The world keeps on turning.	<i>I look at the world and I notice it's turning While my guitar gently weeps</i>
And we are able to learn from our mistakes.	<i>With every mistake we must surely be learning</i>
While the weeping of the guitar speaks to us in an encouraging and ascending voice.	<i>Still my guitar gently weeps</i> (Guitar solo)

All Along the Watchtower. These last two songs, where the message of resilience is found in the nondiscursive music separate from the discursive lyrics, were merely warm-ups to this most famous example of enthymematic instrumentation – Jimi Hendrix’s “All Along the Watchtower.”

Originally written by and performed as a slow, synchronous, and congruent ballad by Bob Dylan, Hendrix took this song and, with his unparalleled guitar skills, transformed it into one of the most influential hits of the sixties and beyond.

As with the previous examples, we once again have somewhat opaque lyrics. This seems to be the most dystopian of all settings. It’s never clear where this watchtower is located, but a growling wildcat and the howling wind paint an ominous picture. A joker and a thief discuss the vagaries and frustrations of life. On the plus side, they conclude that such is not their fate. As they agree to not talk of such false things, Hendrix’s guitar takes over the conversation and again, through ascendant build, speaks a message of power and survival.

One of my colleagues, David Palmer, also studies music, and he published a fascinating article looking at virtuosity (incredibly skilled action) as a rhetorical act. Looking at nineteenth century violinist Nicola Paganini, Palmer argued that such skill transfigures cultural ideas about expression. He says the truly gifted performer embodies the ideals of their era and evokes a unique sense of <i>communitas</i> (2009). I believe this is also true of guitarist Jimi Hendrix.	<i>So let us stop talkin' falsely now The hour's getting late, hey</i> (Guitar solo)
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Conclusion

This is one of the few times in a speech I can honestly, literally say, “*And on that note*, we can turn to the summary and conclusions.”

In summary, historical factors made 1968 a unique Year of Revolt in contrast to more hippie-centric peace and love messages of the decade. And we’ve seen that music was an effective tool for conveying the message of revolt. Sellnow’s Illusion of Life method provides a framework to examine the dynamic interaction between discursive and nondiscursive elements; an interaction, she claims, which allows the artist to “extend a complex and, perhaps, controversial message while remaining accessible to multiple audiences” (1999, p. 68).

From there, we've identified two Ingredients in the top ten Classic Rock hits of 1968 that, when mixed together, give these songs their longevity and persuasive power. Ingredient One is some form of Incongruity. Whether that comes from Musical Manipulations, Lyrical Labyrinths, or Instrumental Enthymemes, these ten songs each have some type of juxtaposition, contradiction, or hook that grabs our attention and keeps us listening.

Those measures are enhanced by Ingredient Two; the integration of an upbeat, Comic and Dramatic Illusion moral in the face of dark, Tragic, and Poetic Illusion challenges. We faced a fearful future in 1968 and, with these songs to give us strength, we pulled through.

That leads us today. Can we replicate the success of '68's Classic Rock? My answer would be No. And later, Yes.

No, in that the music industry today looks nothing like it did 50 years ago. We've gone from a few record labels producing all the music on limited media like LPs or radio airplay, to a complex blurring of genres, distribution modalities, and audience types. I polled a number of my past and current students, and asked if they thought 2018 had any songs that, 50 years from now, scholars would look back and say, "that was the soundtrack of their dissent." The silence was staggering.

My colleague and music scholar David Palmer did send me a nice email, where he summed it up so much better than could I:

In your and my language, the music arena is now postmodern: few central production-distribution systems, a staggering array of disparate music and music commentary outlets, less genre cohesion and fewer broad audiences, a huge number and array of self-promoting artists, extreme market ephemerality, and so on. For those reasons, and others, there is less of a cohesive generation for which there can be a shared anthem or soundtrack. (personal communication, June 19, 2018)

Goodman, Brandon and Fisher (2017) drew a similar conclusion: "Members of a cause might share a song, but it is difficult to imagine a scenario where music unites the world" (p. 83).

The Revolution Continues

Now, just because there is no unifying music does not mean there is no dissent. The revolution continues. 2018 in the United States saw such things as:

- The second annual Women's March on Washington,
- The explosion of the #Me Too movement condemning sexual harassment and assault,
- Continued activity of the Black Lives Matter movement and its offshoots such as Blue Lives Matter and All Lives Matter,
- Nationwide rallies, such as March For Our Lives, protesting gun violence, and most recently,
- Across the board dissent over the Trump administration's now-rescinded immigration policy which separated parents from their children...to name but a few

Just last month my girlfriend and her daughter attended a Pride rally in Denver, Colorado; corresponding with similar events worldwide including New York, Chicago, and San Francisco. Activism and advocacy is alive and well in the United States and around the world. Taking the words of Dylan Thomas out of context, but not out of intent, we will not go gently into that good night.

In my home state of Colorado, proactive youth have formed an anti-gun violence organization called Never Again. whose mission statement includes “dismantling injustices regarding gun violence and working towards making our schools and communities of color a safer place” (www.neveragainco.com) They’ve been successful in making adjustments to gun laws in Colorado.

So, we have the activism. What we’re missing is the cohesive musical soundtrack. But remember, I said part of my answer to whether or not we can replicate the success of 1968 was Yes. We simply do it with new modalities; all of which are still under the purview of these dual-conference domains: media, communication, film, arts, and humanities.

The lessons from 1968 were the use of attention-getting incongruities and “fetching good out of evil” storylines. We can still do that with social media. And film. And photography. And journalism. And curricula. And lesson plans. And keynote addresses. We must be careful to not let the transitory nature of sound bites, clickbait headlines, disposable memes, and 140 or 280 character Tweets diminish our ability to grab an audience’s attention and tell them a meaningful story with an eventually positive ending.

Classic Rock served its purpose for its time. It is now up to each of us to take the lessons we learned and apply them to the modalities of our era and expertise. The power, as always, is in our hands.

Thank you for providing me this opportunity to speak to you, and I wish for all of you a hope-filled future.

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