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Postmigration in a Global World: Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*

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Abstract

Extensive migration to Europe from North Africa, the Middle East and the Far East is a daily reality. Various reasons may drive migrants to escape: wars, religious or ethnic persecution, famine, poverty and environmental disasters. Migrants, asylum seekers and refugees have become transnational actors of change and transformation in the "First World", continuously re-defining their own existence and the equilibrium of their host countries. Mohsin Hamid's novel Exit West *imagines a world where global mobility and different forms of place-making seem to be the norm. By narrating the life of his characters – a couple fleeing from an unnamed city, which is undergoing a political apocalypse, first to Mikonos, then to Britain and later to California – the author is able to depict the global map of planetary changes and transformations. My contribution will analyse Hamid's novel in the light of concepts elaborated in postcolonial theory and migration studies.*

Keywords: *Mohsin Hamid,* Exit West*, postmigration, precarity, multiplicity of belonging, transnation.*

Exit West, published in 2017, is a novel that sounds prophetic today in the wake of the 2021 Afghan crisis, which saw the Taliban regime take control of the country after the withdrawal of the US troops, causing the pro-American government to collapse and thousands of Afghans to flee abroad. The Americans had invaded Afghanistan in 2001 in response to the 9/11 attacks, in order to wage war on terror, that is, on Osama bin Laden and the Islamic extremist group al-Qaeda, who were considered responsible for the attacks and had taken sanctuary there (Haski 2021; Marchand 2021).

In *Exit West* the two protagonists, Nadia and Saeed, are a young couple fleeing from a Muslim country that is never openly mentioned and is devastated by a civil war. Feeble government forces are unsuccessfully trying to neutralise the terroristic and military activity of bands of religious fundamentalists, called "the militants", who are occupying increasingly larger areas of the country and will end up controlling all the most important cities. The militants, who are also supported by foreign powers, spread a reign of terror, brutally killing anyone contrasting their views, in terms of religious doctrines, prescribed social behaviour, and gender relations. More generally, they are violently enforcing a theocratic cultural and political regime.

Right from the incipit, the novel describes the condition of refugees as a common feature of a global world: "In a city swollen by refugees but still mostly at peace, or at least not openly at war, a young man met a young woman in a classroom" (Hamid 2017: 3). Saeed and Nadia are surrounded by people escaping from wars or calamities, but soon the couple will enter this category themselves when they decide to emigrate to Western countries. The first part of the novel focuses on the birth and evolution of Saeed and Nadia's love, in a context that becomes increasingly threatening:

> Back then people continued to enjoy the luxury of wearing more or less what they wanted to wear, clothing and hair wise, within certain bounds of course, and so these choices meant something.
>
> It might seem odd that in cities teetering at the edge of the abyss young people still go to class –in this case an evening class on corporate identity and product branding –

> bur that is the way of things, with cities as with life, for one moment we are pottering about our errands as usual and the next we are dying.
>
> (Hamid 2017: 3-4)

Saeed and Nadia are depicted as an educated middle-class couple, with no propensity for religious radicalism: Saeed doesn't have a full beard but just "a studiously maintained stubble" (Hamid 2017: 3) and thinks that praying is "personal" (Hamid 2017: 5). Nadia never prays, listens to Western music, rides a motorcycle and lives in a flat on her own pretending she is a widow. Nevertheless, she always wears a full black robe in public (over jeans and a sweater) as a sort of armour, a protection of her anti-conformism. They are both technologically savvy and in full contact with the global world through the social media and the web. The painful decision to leave their homeland is a forceful attempt not to succumb to insane and violent extremism and to have a chance to thrive.

Most of the novel deals with their wandering as refugees outside their country in a fluid world where they interplay with masses of other refugees desperately trying to enter the rich Western countries. It is a global space of "flows", in Appadurai's terms (1996), characterized by movement and mobility, affecting people in different and contradictory ways and creating unequal relations of power, as Hinkson effectively describes:

> In recent years displacement, mobility, and placemaking have asserted themselves in human experience, consciousness, and imagination with newly compelling force. From the 65 million people estimated in 2015 to have been forcibly displaced (UNHCR 2016) to rust-belt neighbourhoods struggling with the withdrawal of industrial production, from agriculturalists dealing with unpredictable weather patterns and global markets to small islands communities confronting rising sea levels, from intergenerational contests between indigenous people, states, and corporations over resource extraction to the hypermobility of labor migrants and cosmopolitan elites, from Brexit vote to the ascendency more generally of governments promising to close borders and push back against globalization– across these diverse situations the outcomes of unequal, contradictory pressures on erstwhile ways of living in places are everywhere apparent.
>
> (Hinkson 2017: 50)

Hamid's interest is not the cosmopolitan elite of the globalized world, whose lifestyles and identities are not constructed within or devoted to a particular culture (Waldron 2010: 163), but the poor, the subaltern, the refugee. Interestingly, the writer does not focus on the so-called "journeys of hope", like the crossing of the Mediterranean Sea by North-Africans on board precarious dinghies or the Balkan routes followed by refugees from the Middle East or Far East. He imagines mysterious "doors" leading into tunnels and passages, through which refugees get to their chosen destination after paying the right people who know where these doors are located. His emphasis is not on the travellers' suffering but, symbolically, on the transformative effects of these passages, which are compared to crossing a dark and opaque black hole that "did not reveal what was on the other side, and also did not reflect what was on this side, and so felt equally like a beginning and an end […] the passage was both like dying and like being born" (Hamid 2017: 103-4).

Nadia and Saeed move first to a refugee camp in Mykonos, then to a squatted building in London and finally to Marin, a village near San Francisco. The world explored in the book is one of diasporas, transnational culture flows, and mass movements of population which

continuously problematize the relationship between space and culture, and destabilize the idea that culture and nation are isomorphic, namely, necessarily corresponding.

If Anderson defined the modern nation as an "imagined community" (1983), recent debates on the formation of nation-states and the relationship between nation and culture further underline the illusoriness of such a concept. Whereas once the nation was a category that enabled the socialization of subjects and the structuring of cultures, today it is "a near-absent structure" (Ashcroft 2010: 72). Meyer agrees with Anderson's idea of nation and adds that "the cultural imagination involved is substantially constructed in the wider world environment", therefore the nation-state "is embedded in and constructed by an exogenous […] culture" (Meyer 1999: 123). Indeed, the nation-state has become a controversial concept in an era that has challenged its primacy due to economic globalization (Steinmetz 1999: 4). A new concept has also emerged, that of transnation, which further complicates the present situation and challenges the possibility of a monolithic idea of nation, based on homogenous culture and customs. According to Ashcroft a transnation is:

> the movement of peoples within (and only sometimes across) the geographical boundaries of the nation-state yet who circulate around the boundaries of the state in ways that render the nation less and less instrumental in the framing of identity. […] Transnation is the fluid, migrating outside of the state that begins within the nation. It is the mark of interpellated subjects flowing through and around ideology itself.
>
> (Ashcroft 2017: 46-7)

This situation can be especially identified in countries such as India and China, where "the nation is already a migratory and even diasporic aggregation, both within and without state boundaries" (Ashcroft 2010: 73), and could be applied to many other areas of the world, for example the Pacific region, which will be mentioned later in relation to the concepts of multiple belonging and identities.

Exit West reflects the crisis of the concept of nation, which appears as a dissolving and collapsing entity:

> The news in those days was full of war and migrants and nativists, and it was full of fracturing too, of regions pulling away from nations, and cities pulling away from hinterlands, and it seemed that as everyone was coming together everyone else was also moving apart. Without borders nations appeared to be becoming somewhat illusory, and people were questioning what role they had to play. Many were arguing that smaller units made more sense, but others argued that smaller units could not defend themselves.
>
> (Hamid 2017: 158)

Together with mobility, also precarity seems to be a major feature of a global world of transnational migrations. Hinkson distinguishes between two words that are often used interchangeably but are not synonyms: precariousness and precarity. Precariousness is "a generalized common condition of human sociality" (Hinkson 2017: 51) and "a vital element of every exchange – the condition of being dependent on the grace or will of another" (Hinkson 2017: 51, quoted from Butler 2004). It "presupposes a meeting place of relationships with transformative potentialities" (Hinkson 2017: 51, quoted from Carter 2014). Hamid's focus on the protagonists' transformation could be interpreted as the

description of a state of precariousness. During their wanderings Saeed and Nadia indeed develop that mutual dependence that enables them to communicate, grow, and acquire a better understanding of themselves and each other. They undergo a considerable personal evolution. However, they also experience precarity, which is conversely a specific circumstance of contemporary mobility, "characterized by a set of 'dissolving assurances'" (Hinkson 2017: 51, quoted from Berlant 2011: 3). In the course of the novel, in fact, Saeed and Nadia must bear the anxieties and insecurities deriving from the sense of dispossession, placelessness and alienation, which has become a common dimension for the subaltern in this historical moment, in particular for refugees.

The novel therefore questions the spatial assumptions implicit in the most fundamental concepts of social sciences, such as: culture, society, community, and nation. Identities are increasingly coming to be de-territorialized and re-territorialized, or differently territorialized. As Gupta and Ferguson underline, "In this culture-play of diaspora, familiar lines between 'here' and 'there', centre and periphery, colony and metropole become blurred" (1992: 10). And, they continue: "deterritorialization has destabilized the fixity of 'ourselves' and 'others'" (20). Therefore, old-fashioned attempts to map the globe as a set of cultural regions or homelands are vain, as the Mykonos refugee camp shows:

> What looked like a refugee camp, with hundreds of tents and lean-tos and people of many colours and hues – many colours and hues but mostly falling within a band of brown that ranged from dark chocolate to milky tea – and these people were gathered around fires that burned inside upright oil drums and speaking in a cacophony that was the languages of the world, what one might hear if one were a communications satellite.
>
> (Hamid 2017: 106)

Later, another door leads them to London, and they find about a million refugees, the so-called "people of dark London" (Hamid 2017: 154), squatting in the empty spaces of the city: parks, disused lots, unoccupied mansions. The building in which they find accommodation is inhabited by Nigerians (the largest group), Somalis, people from Thailand and Myanmar (Hamid 2017: 123). In some areas of London, refugees are more numerous than the legal residents or native-born people. At night one could hear somebody singing melodies in Igbo and in the morning a call to prayer in the distance. Nadia becomes part of the Council of their house, mainly formed by Nigerian elders, and discovers that they are from different regions, speak different languages, have different religions, and "further that there was perhaps not such thing as a Nigerian" (Hamid 2017: 148). They communicate in various Englishes, namely, different variations of English. And Nadia's English is just another variation among them (Hamid 2017: 148-9).

Saeed and Nadia react to displacement in a different way. Saeed is critical of the occupation of a place that is not theirs and is more homesick. He joins a community from their country for weekly prayers. He would like to re-create his territory, but he is shocked when he realises that the preacher is fostering martyrdom and an extremist attitude similar to that of the militants at home (Hamid 2017: 156), so he distances himself from the community. Nadia is open to a more radical reconfiguration of herself in the new space, as her participation in the Council demonstrates. She is willing to experience different options of mobility. In Mykonos, she had suggested they should explore the island as tourists (Hamid 2017: 113) and in London she parallels the life in the occupied mansion to that in a college

dormitory "with complete strangers living in close proximity" (Hamid 2017: 131). Both, however, are going through a re-territorialization and new forms of place-making.

Saeed and Nadia develop a "multiplicity of belonging", which is the natural process when a high level of movement occurs. As Hermann, Kempf and van Meijl underline, "movement invests place-making and cultural identifications with a new dimension of multiplicity" (2014: 1). Multiplicity is not intended by them as negative or synonymous of fractured identities, but seen in its potentialities of flexibility and changeability (2014: 12). It basically means belonging in a transnational landscape of relationships and contacts. Hermann, Kempf and van Meijl endorse a theoretical trend in anthropology that considers static models of representations (stability, coherence of social systems, rootedness, immobility) unsuitable to today's reality and highlights the potentialities of flow, flux, mobility and migration. Their particular field of studies is the Pacific region, that has always been characterized by "a history of exploration, trade, interlinking and networking – including the transnational migrant flows of recent years" (2014: 3), due to sea-level rising and the flooding of atoll islands (Storlazzi, Gingerich et al. 2018; Kempf and Hermann 2014). Their view somehow reflects sociologist Hepeli Ha'uofa's definition of Oceania, intended not as "islands in a far sea", but as "a sea of islands" (Ha'uofa 1994: 153), that is, a constellation of relationships between islands. His focus is therefore on connectivity, movement and relation rather than smallness and fragmentation. In this context, multiple identities and multiplicity of belonging are the norm and even an added value. Interestingly, Nadia still keeps wearing her black robe as a protective shield of her freedom or a powerful symbol of one of her multiple identities, "because it sent a signal, and she still wished to send this signal" (Hamid 2017: 114).

If migrants and refugees have to re-design their existence continuously, they also re-define the equilibrium of their host-countries, becoming transnational actors of change and transformation in the "First World". The emergence of forms of populism and nationalism based on essentialist or nativist ideas is evident in the countries visited by Nadia and Saeed. Populism and nationalism rise from the frustration of a never fulfilled nation, so it is necessary to project this frustration onto alterity (Bromley 2017: 38). In Mykoonos, "Decent people vastly outnumbered dangerous ones, but it was probably best to be in the camp, near other people, after nightfall" (Hamid 2017: 107). In London, riots and violent outbreaks occur, fomented by a "nativist mob" (Hamid 2017: 134) who attack and beat migrants and refugees. During the so-called "battle of London", military and para-military forces are mobilized to clear migrant ghettoes like the one where Nadia and Saeed live. But there are also volunteers, distributing vaccines and food to refugees in need. The violent reaction of the British natives reminds Nadia and Saeed that their own country had received millions of war refugees in the past, but the conclusion is: "That was different. Our country was poor. We didn't feel we had as much to lose" (Hamid 2017: 164).

In general, the news on the web shows a transformative process occurring in the "First-World", whose nations are anthropomorphically defined as people with multiple personalities, split apart, and Britain as a geographical but not political entity:

> Reading the news at that time one was tempted to conclude that *the nation was like a person with multiple personalities, some insisting on union and some on disintegration*, and that this person with multiple personalities was furthermore a person whose skin appeared to be dissolving as they swam in a soup full of other people whose skins were likewise dissolving. Even Britain was not immune from this phenomenon, in fact some said that Britain had already split, like a man whose head

> had been chopped off and yet still stood, and others said Britain was an island, and islands endure, even if the people who come to them change, and so it had been for millennia, and so it would be for millennia more.
>
> (Hamid 2017: 158; my emphases)

Interestingly, the concept of "native" itself becomes multiple. The natives of Britain had so many different accents that it was impossible for Nadia to say which was the ancestral one (Hamid 2017: 182). And the British native foreman in the construction place where she works has a non-native wife who apparently arrived from a nearby country two decades ago but looks native to Nadia (Hamid 2017: 182). The Italian reader could suppose she is from Italy and cannot but remember the migration of millions of Italians to Northern Europe in the past.

When the couple arrive in the US, they discover that the natives are very few as they were largely exterminated long ago. However, they also realise that nativeness is a relative matter because many others consider themselves native to the country: basically all those whose families migrated to the US in previous generations and all African Americans (Hamid 2017: 198). Being a land of migration, the natives of US were mostly migrants.

The most powerful weapon in global mobility is actually technology. If, on one hand, technological advance helps nation-state governments to exercise control, defend borders and clear occupied territories, through drones, helicopters, surveillance balloons, and flying robots, on the other hand cellular phones and the world-wide web allow people in movement to build a network of contacts, information and help. And wherever migrants are, a thriving trade in electricity goes on.

Hamid's book seems to advocate the spreading of a postmigrant attitude in the present global world. Postmigration refers to a new set of emergent spaces of plurality and is a concept in which the prefix "post" is not just temporal but also epistemological (Bromley 2017: 36). As Bromley pinpoints, postmigration cannot be romanticised as "a new belonging" (2017: 37). It is about "de-essentializing so-called migrant coherences and homogeneities and breaking up ascribed identities" (2017: 36). It is "an exploration of the conflicts and contradictions, the belonging and unbelonging, the split subjectivities which, in many cases are a feature of a postmigrant belonging" (2017: 36). A postmigrant attitude aims at promoting new representational and cultural practices for migrants, going beyond fixed representations. It is performative, that is, it manifests itself in new forms and challenges traditions and customs because it is a process of discontinuity, something always under construction. Postmigrant aesthetics is a challenge to ways in which we are accustomed to talking about questions of assimilation, integration, roots, origins, cultural belongings, and equality. It encourages the right to ambivalence, to be here and there, without having to choose (2017: 37). Bromley wonders how a migrant ceases to be a racialized "other". His answer is:

> We need to move away from representational strategies that focus exclusively upon ethnicity or migrancy or minority to explore narratives that are post/national/ist, post ethnic and postmigrant in order to produce stories of complex subjectivities, which unsettle, render unstable, ideas of otherness.
>
> (Bromley 2017: 38)

Like the concept of multiplicity of belonging, postmigration encourages a "bricolage of identifications" (Bromley 2017: 37) for migrants, one that sets in motion interculturalism

rather than multiculturalism. In fact, the latter tends to lead to essentialism and separation, while the former is conversely "more fluid and dynamic, more of a dialogue, as it suggests narratives in motion, mobile and changeable belongings, with identities which are always under construction, incomplete, being here and elsewhere." (Bromley 2017: 37). It is a process that involves multi-directional and reciprocal interaction and exchange between "mainstream" cultural activities and those practiced by minority cultures. In this sense, it is not a process of assimilation into the hosting culture but brings a change to it as well.

As mentioned before, the protagonists experience a state of precariousness that triggers their evolution. During their tragic predicament they also learn something about themselves and are able to negotiate questions of sexual orientation, family practices and religious belief. The story of Saeed and Nadia is marked by love and respect for each other. Their bond, however, becomes more and more spiritual throughout the story and they are like brother and sister. This leads them to different directions and to the emergence of their primary needs. Saeed wants to recover his origin, roots and religion and starts a relationship with the preacher's daughter, whose mother comes from the same country as Saeed. She becomes a medium for him to retrace stories and images of his own mother country. On the other hand, Nadia becomes aware of her sexual orientation when she falls in love with the woman that works with her as a head cook.

The story of Nadia and Saeed is interspersed with short sections, generally no longer than three pages, which illustrate various episodes of migration, placelessness and violence, happening simultaneously in various parts of the world (for example, Sydney, San Diego, Vienna, Amsterdam, and Marrakesh) next to the main narrative, as if to underscore the interconnectedness of these events in a global reality.

In Sydney, a dark-skinned migrant emerges from one of the mysterious doors right in the bedroom's closet of an Australian woman. He is like a baby struggling his way out through his mother's cervix. The contrast between the sleeping pale-skinned woman and the frightened dark man with curly hair embodies the encounter between the First World and the subaltern refugee. The man finally sneaks out of the open window, to face his destiny in the new country (Hamid 2017: 7-9). In La Jolla, near San Diego, police officers are patrolling the coast where migrants, Mexicans or Muslims, are expected to land (Hamid 2017: 48-50). In Tijuana, on the border between Mexico and the US, an orphanage gives hospitality to the children of Mexican people working in the US. They are waiting to be old enough to cross the border themselves and join their parents (Hamid 2017: 159-61). In Vienna militants from Saeed and Nadia's country are shooting unarmed people in the streets to provoke an exacerbated reaction in Austrian citizens against the migrants. The mob, in fact, attacks the migrants starting anti-migrant riots (Hamid 2017: 109-10). All these sections frame the story, reflecting the global effects of migration.

One of the sections, at the very end of the book, seems to convey the most important message of the story. It depicts a rich old woman in Palo Alto, California, who has lived in the same house her entire life. She knew the names of almost everyone in her streets, families who belonged to old California. But over the years they had changed more and more rapidly, because people sold and bought their houses the way they sold and bought stocks. Therefore, now:

> all sorts of strange people were around, people that looked more at home than she was, even the homeless ones who spoke no English, more at home maybe because they were younger, and when she went out it seemed to her that she too had migrated, that

> everyone migrates, even if we stay in the same houses our whole lives, because we can't help it.
> We are all migrants through time.
>
> (Hamid 2017: 209)

In this passage Hamid problematizes the concept of migrant, inserting it in the category of time as well as space, therefore indirectly applying a postmigrant approach which "introduce[s] new levels of diversity and antagonism, expose[s] the contingency and emptiness of nationalist signifiers, to go beyond the nation to formulate other, perhaps global, but not necessarily territorial, allegiances" (Bromley 2017: 38).

Exit West is a novel on contemporary migration in a global reality. With his continuous move between fable and realism, between psychological and political time, Hamid helps us change our perspective: it makes the readers migrants in space and time, like Nadia and Saeed.

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Glocal Fiction, Markets and Terrorism in *Netherland* by J. O'Neill, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by M. Hamid and *Kapitoil* by T. Wayne.

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Abstract
*The expression of radical interdependence is an aspect that attempts to come to terms with the concept of glocalization and is interesting when analyzing post-9/11 literature. The novels I propose to analyse (*Netherland, The Reluctant Fundamentalist, *and* Kapitoil*) consider the relationship between a capitalist dynamic based on financial speculation, the interests connected to oil and the links to global terrorism. At the same time, they highlight the local effects of these global economic processes. They advance a look at the terrorist attacks of 9/11 firmly set in the heart of the capitalist system; and as an unavoidable reference, appear the local processes where the immediate effects of terrorism are produced.*

Keywords: *Glocal Fiction, Terrorism,* Kapitoil, Netherland, The Reluctant Fundamentalist.

Contrary to the official discourse about 9/11 and the War on Terror, centered almost exclusively on the confrontation of civilizations – in the wake of S. Huntington's "clash of civilizations" (1996), political proposals and narratives have appeared that emphasize multiple causes connected to the presence of global terrorism and its consequences. In particular, I am interested in those that point to the global economy and finance as the nerve center of the conflict.

Novels such as *Kapitoil* by Teddy Wayne (2010), *Netherland* by Joseph O'Neill (2008) and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) by Mohsin Hamid, among others, depict the relationship between a capitalist dynamic based on financial activities and the links to global terrorism. This focus proposes another view of the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and their aftermath, firmly set in the heart of capitalist society, which has one of its principal expansive driving forces in global financial speculation. But at the same time, and as per references that are unavoidable, local processes appear where the immediate effects of terrorism are generated.

In previous articles (2015, 2016) I have proposed the expression *glocalization novels* as a theoretical construct that permits the incorporation of the narratives' differential characteristics about terrorism in a globalized society, one that is permanently exposed to risk and different forms of new uncertainties. The society that experiences the processes of globalization is also a society linked to local processes. But now, these local processes can have global repercussions because our acts not only have an effect on our immediate environment, but also have effects far beyond imagination.

In the framework of criticism and heated debates swirling around globalization, especially in view of the fear of a possible social and cultural homogenization that could destroy diverse communities and cultural groups, the term glocalization has clearly emerged as a critical instrument. Sociologist Roland Robertson (2006) proposed the *glocal* concept to cover processes in which the relationships between local and global come from an

intertwining of actions and determinations that should not be considered unilaterally or uni-dimensionally.

Glocalization compels us to introduce nuances into globalization, in opposition to those who are only concerned about the generalized extension of a cultural, economic or technological current that ends up covering, blurring or eliminating all previous aspects by means of a sort of acculturation that erases local features. The term globalization, as Liam Connell and Nicky Marsh (2011) state in their book *Literature and Globalization. A reader*, is understood and used to identify the socio-economic changes related to the neoliberal economic trend as well as the processes of social and cultural homogenization. In contrast, glocalization provides a way of talking about hybridization and interaction between the global and the local.

The social way of life that emerges from glocalization shows transnational features that incorporate local characteristics into global practices as Victor Roudometof (2005) states in his article "Transnationalism, Cosmopolitanism and Glocalization", "transnationalism is an expression of the reality of glocalization in people's lives. Furthermore, transnationalism involves different layers of activities, each of which entails different levels of structuration vis-à-vis the permanence of the transnational practices performed by actors" (134). Thus, the "glocal" addresses the social and cultural consequences of the process of globalization in which the global and local components are inextricably linked, but above all it has a component that moves closer to the financial phenomena that are contained within the realm of globalization beyond the scope of the nation-state. For this reason, one of the specific objectives of this work is to analyze the relationship between global terrorism and financial markets based on their literary representation. The notion of glocalization offers a specific approach that could be enhanced later with a broad notion of transnationalism.

In the last decades of the twentieth century, studies on terrorism occupied a rather marginal space, both in fields of academic research as well as in different forms of artistic or cultural expression, and above all in comparison with the exponential growth that has occurred in that field since 2001. Beyond changes in the general sphere of politics, 9/11 meant the implementation of measures that directly affect the entire citizenry, with very few spaces of life that have remained outside its effects. The presence of terrorism and its consequences in the areas of social and cultural life have taken on a very multiple dimension because of the attacks, affecting everyday aspects and more general topics related to science, technology and the most varied types of political actions.

As a direct consequence of the expansion of studies on terrorism, there has also been a great deal of activity in the specific area of literary studies on terrorism, further boosted by the significant literary production that has emerged since 9/11. Several authors have pointed out that this was an issue that had not aroused much interest in the pre-2001 period. For example, Robert Appelbaum and Alexis Paknadel (2008) in their article "Terrorism and the Novel, 1970-2001" note that literary criticism had received null treatment of terrorism in fiction before the September 11 attacks, except for the works of Margaret Scanlan (2001) and Alex Houen (2002). This scarce development of studies on terrorism in the cultural sphere, particularly in the United States, is analysed by Jeffory Clymer (2003) in *America's Culture of Terrorism. Violence, Capitalism and the Written Word*. In his work, Clymer approaches a cultural history of terrorism before September 11, in the United States from the idea that in this country there had been a kind of persistent amnesia on the different acts and forms of terrorism produced throughout its history. Even today this situation has not changed, since the absence of these acts in the collective memory continues to occur and, in any case, is

being overwhelmingly occupied by everything related to the nine eleven attacks: “This absence in our nation’s historical memory is now filled by 9/11. From now on in American history, there will always be a terrible moment that is pointed to the day that terrorism was brought to the United States” (212). In this sense, it is remarkable that, as Clymer points out, a great number of Americans had never heard anything about, for example, the Haymarket bomb that exploded in Chicago in 1886. As such, it cannot be considered for its enormous historical significance although it is closely related to the actual commemoration of May 1 as International Labor Day in much of the world. Nor are other events important to public life embodied in the collective memory, such as the bomb that killed the governor of Idaho in 1905, bombs placed in the Los Angeles Times building in 1910. Another event to highlight for its obvious concomitances with the Twin Towers is the blast perpetrated using a horse-drawn carriage with a remote-control mechanism in front of Morgan Bank on Wall Street in 1920, and which was one of the deadliest acts at that time. The attack, perpetrated not far from the World Trade Center, brought about important consequences, in particular, the restrictions on migratory policies approved by Congress in 1921, in the middle of the trial of the Sacco and Vanzetti case, which were endorsed by a significant current of anti-immigration public opinion, at that time especially centered on Italian and Russian immigration. After the 1920 bombing there was widespread opposition to the free movement of people, with significant immigration restrictions as well as the configuration of an external enemy consisting mainly of anarchism and its Italian or Slavic ties.

American literature did not much deal with the anarchist terrorism of the time. One could mention the novel by Henry James (1886), *The Princess Casamassima*, which tells the story of a young London bookbinder who joins a group of radical politicians and agrees to perpetrate a terrorist attack, only to discover to what extent he can do certain acts. Similar to this, there is also mention among the American works *The Bomb* by Frank Harris in 1909, which recreates the events of the “Haymarket affair” in Chicago in 1886. The novel is told from the point of view of a German journalist who arrives to the United States in search of the American dream, and lives and narrates the hardships of workers in the period of industrialization in the cities. The protests unleashed in May 1886 ended with the explosion of a bomb placed by an anarchist, who causes the death of several policemen and an immediate police response that creates a bloodbath. As Walter Laqueur (2017) sums up in the introduction of his book *A History of Terrorism*, during the last decades of the 19th century and until World War I, terrorism was associated with left-wing currents, mainly anarchists and some nationalist variants such as the Irish. Subsequently, in the period between the two world wars the main terrorist attacks appear linked to currents from the extreme right. In a third phase, between the decades of the 1950s and 1960s during the years of the Cold War, plots and espionage acquire an international character. As of the 1970s, after the consolidation of the postwar world, there are terrorist currents connected with various leftist movements in European countries, the Middle East and Latin America.

A somewhat different observation, that qualifies and revises the characterization of terrorist acts, is offered by Joseba Zulaika (2009) in his book *Terrorism: The Self-fulfilling Prophecy*. This book analyzes how references to “terrorist acts” in the press and in political discourse were very scarce prior to the 1970s. On the contrary, it was common to speak of kidnappings, murders, bombings, threats, etc., but not terrorism. However, in the last third of the twentieth century, terrorism began to be named as such and would become a predominant component of political and journalistic discourse to refer to the same murders, kidnappings and so on that had been committed before. What appears here is a first, globalized notion of

terrorism that might be better understood in glocalized terms. This reconceptualization reflects an important change in the main agents of the political world, and in the geostrategic situation that occurs in that period. The correlation of forces was modified from a bipolar world that was aligned, also on the international plane, around a supposed left or right optic, and was reflected in the appearance of new agents. Thus, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Oklahoma bombings or the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, these last events occurring in 1995, religious terrorism or fanaticism began to be spoken about. And what was previously presented as a result of internal tensions in the various countries, due to their different ways of considering the political future, was now beginning to be defined by a new figure that transcended internal problems and was globally shaped as a product of diverse conceptions of civilization. What is clear at this point is that there was a separation of the terrorist act from the "idealists" of the seventies, and discourse began to speak of irrational acts of violence produced by fanatics, ultras of various types or simply by the mentally ill.

In order to analyze the way in which the novel or fiction constructs the terrorist phenomenon, it is pertinent to ask what type of terrorism appears in recent novels, what type of representation is made of that terrorism and what narrative varieties as well as moral trajectories are presented. One of the first problems is the very definition of terrorism. Defining terrorism always has a moral component, because someone who is a terrorist for one person can be a freedom fighter for another. There is no universal standard that everyone can agree on. On the other hand, given that terrorism has occurred in so many different situations and enclaves, it is not easy to find common ground. As Appelbaum and Paknadel (2008) state, "apparently there are many terrorisms, differing among themselves as to their means, ends, motives, and circumstances as well as to the diverse kinds of targets -symbolic and real- against which they are aimed" (390). The authors argue that, despite the tremendous growth of novels on terrorism since 9/11, at first glance many of them do not differ substantially from those written in the seventies and eighties. According to these authors this is the case, for example, with *The Afghan* by Frederick Forsyth (2006), a spy/suspense novel set around the backdrop of Islamist terror and Al-Qaeda. However, they do say that some of the main works of the genre after 9/11, such as Ian McEwan's *Saturday*, Updike's *Terrorist* (2006) or Claire Messud's *Emperor's Children* (2006), attempt to show how life has changed in the UK and America after nine eleven, while at the same time changing the subject of the narration by focusing on the individual victims of society instead of the act of terror and terrorists. In my opinion, both the transnational perspective and particularly the glocal point of view are very good hermeneutic tools to understand this process.

Clymer shares this point of view as a critic of the hegemonic discourse found in the first reactions after the 9/11 attacks, which pointed to terrorism as a phenomenon with fundamentally religious, cultural and civilizational roots. In this sense, Clymer proposes the necessity of going deeper into other causes to try to locate some keys to analyzing the terrorist phenomenon in the economic area, more specifically in the development of the global economy and new global financial markets. By placing the narratives in this complex storyline, both descriptive and interpretative regarding the fact of terrorism, even occasionally with the possibility to create new areas of reality, a critical analysis of post 9/11 literature has, at least indirectly, quite a lot to say about contemporary terrorism. In more recent times, we can even see the situation in terms of radical uncertainty. The space in which the terrorist act can occur appears outside the frame of possible futures. For example, terrorists are appearing in spaces for festivities, celebrations, and at voluntary gatherings of people who are directly defeated in their "local" way of life by terrorist actors who are

"global" in their approach and "local" in terms of belonging. Nice, Paris, Berlin, Barcelona – there are dramatic instances of the radical transformation of both transnational and glocal terrorism. As can be read in an editorial from *The New York Times* (08/18/2017)

> But the hard truth is that there is no sure defense against young men filled with resentment and fired up with the lethal propaganda of militant Islam, especially as they turn to rudimentary weapons like the vehicles in Barcelona and Cambrils, or before that in Nice; the Christmas market in Berlin; Westminster Bridge in London; or Drottninggatan, a major pedestrian street in Stockholm.

Post-9/11 novels such as *Kapitoil*, *Netherland* or *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* share certain characteristics. In these novels, explanations and responses to terrorism are not found in the attack itself or in traumatic aspects of the event but rather in tangential aspects. In the three novels, the central character and narrator (all three novels are written in the first person) is a foreigner in New York, which lets them analyze the facts from different positions, ones not only related to the religious or civilizational discourse that monopolized the analysis and responses to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. In a certain way, these three characters represent the transnational features that differentiate a large part of contemporary societies. As Susana Araujo (2015: 87) said, referring in her case to *Netherland* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, and it can be extended to *Kapitoil*,

> The narrators of these novels are foreigners living in the United States. These novels are only partially set in New York: the narratives depart from New York, hoping to attain a wider picture of the world. The themes of traveling and migration play an important role in these texts, as narrators attempt to come to terms with current political events by embracing – though not always successfully – a glocal perspective.

The transnational component of these characters makes it easier for them to understand glocal events connected to their own professional jobs, and the effect of said activities in their countries of origin due to the global impact of local actions. But also, and this is one of the most important shared aspects, the protagonists and narrators in the three novels are, or will be, successful workers in financial services companies.

Kapitoil by Teddy Wayne shows the perverse effects hidden behind a global economy based on financial speculation in the hydrocarbons market, and how these global politics influence local markets and the lives of individuals throughout the world. The novel, narrated in the form of a personal diary, with a component of Bildungroman, tells us about three months in the life of Karim Issar, an IT guy from Qatar hired by Schrub Equities, one of the world's most important financial services companies, to work in New York in 1999 to contain what was known as the "Year 2000 problem" (Y2K). The novel's protagonist experiences a learning process in the short period stay in New York. In this pre-9/11 atmosphere, a brilliant Muslim IT guy arrives to work in the nerve center of the capitalist system: a financial services company located on the 88th floor of the World Trade Center in New York. Karim creates a new computer system capable of predicting fluctuations in the oil market, which will be called Kapitoil.

The protagonist of the novel goes from amazement at achievements in development of the capitalist economy and its way of life, to disappointment, criticism and later rejection of this type of social organization. This happens as he personally experiences the perversity of a system centered only on individual economic benefit, extremely disconnected from solidarity

or interest in the well-being of the inhabitants, and which generates huge levels of social inequalities both within and outside of the borders of the United States. Considering the novel's approach, the use of Equity as the name of the company is loaded with meaning, playing with the dual usage of the word *equity* as shares in the net benefits of *capital*, and *equity* as a characteristic of justice. *Kapitoil* shows us the end of a century characterized by enormous confidence and the spread of a globalized economy based on profits from the free market and the financial systems dependent on communication technologies. Incidentally, Karim can be seen as a typical transnational character, linking places of origin with new places of residence where cultural traits and life experiences inevitably co-exist, defined by social, economic and political intersections. This specific situation places him in a position to intervene in glocal events that are felt even more intensely precisely because of his transnational location.

The novel also tries to respond to 9/11. Oil is situated at the center of the plot, although almost without being mentioned. Terrorism is also permanently floating throughout the novel but allusions to this phenomenon are few, and all are in a supposedly neutral tone, like just one more news item from a newspaper. Terrorism appears mainly as a simple variable used for calculations in a computer program that creates profits by calculating the effect on the price of oil according to the degree of probability that an attack happens. Karim is a fervent supporter of the capitalist system, even at the cost of arguments that put him in opposition to the opinions of his family. For example, when faced with an attack by his uncle on the imperialist economic policy of the United States, Karim is capable of defending the emergence of an economic model that, according to him, produces a win-win effect, that is, a compromise that benefits all parties by producing positive results, which goes beyond the traditional model of center-periphery dependency. In his own words: "the correct word is not 'imperialism', but 'globalization,'. (...) Globalization creates more trade and jobs for everyone, in both the U.S. and Qatar" (Wayne). But disillusionment with the capitalist system and its representation in American society will be reflected towards the end of the novel. Karim must choose between a successful future in NY, but one achieved by selling his software for purposes for which he does not agree, or to leave everything and return home. His decision is to forsake everything and go back home (and in a similar way coincide with the other two novels). The local roots appear stronger than the global ones.

Netherland is the story of Hans van den Broek as told by himself, a Dutch man who, upon hearing the news of a friend's death, sets out to reconstruct the memory of his time living in New York. Hans moves from London to New York with his family, having been transferred there by the financial markets company he was working for in 2001. In the first moments of his new life in the Big Apple, the September 11 attacks happen. As a consequence of the fear and uncertainty following the terrorist attacks, his wife decides to go back to Europe with their son. Hans, meanwhile, remains in New York to fulfil his work commitments. Within a scenario of global events that combine to affect individual lives, he discovers an ordinary cricket team made up of immigrants from various countries. He manages to join the team thanks to a friendship he strikes up with the man who has organized and motivated the team's activities, Chuck Ramkissoon, an immigrant from Trinidad whose dream is to build a large cricket stadium in New York.

The American Dream of the twenty-first century is represented by Chuck. He is a successful entrepreneur who manages to earn enormous sums of money without us knowing exactly the level of "honesty" of his business dealings, and whose dream is to be able to make his cricket stadium, the place from which to contemplate his success, a reality. In this sense,

the character Jay Gatsby from the book by F. Scott Fitzgerald clearly comes to mind. Even Chuck's death, which we know from the outset of the novel and leads Hans to tell his story, is reminiscent of Gatsby (with Hans appearing as a copy of the Nick character from Fitzgerald's book). Hans undoubtedly is fascinated by Chuck but holds onto certain skepticism towards the promise of capitalism as a creator of wealth, which seems to motivate Chuck's actions. Hans's attitude appears to be based on his better knowledge of the system, due to his work as a financial advisor involved directly in the heart and intricacies of financial markets. Chuck's enthusiasm to turn a dream into reality, one that will offer happiness and the possibility for change to many people, comes up against the skepticism of Hans, a man who works analyzing oil futures right at the moment when Iraq's destiny is at risk in the post-9/11 world. Hans sees his work as a cog in a machine that can only be taken as a fait accompli, and where trying to change its direction is futile. It is especially significant the coldness with which his character mentions the types of financial operations that are carried out, such as betting the future of oil on whether or not there is a war, or on whether a government does or does not fall, as if these facts were independent of his activity or of his ability to influence them.

In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* there is also a central character who works in the financial world. The novel basically presents two opposing views of post-9/11 society. The story develops by means of a dialogue between two characters, a Pakistani and an American, in a café in Lahore. Changez, the Pakistani, relates the life story of someone who could have been a success in the United States, an emigrant who studies at Princeton and gets top grades, and who immediately begins to work in a financial consulting firm for international companies. Changez's story, much like that of Karim in *Kapitoil* and Chuck's life as seen through the eyes of Hans, is that of an emigrant who, from the very center of financial activity within the capitalist system, begins to see his dreams and empathy with the American system slowly disappear as he starts to question the way in which the "global" activity he carries out in financial investment directly affects people's lives as well as local spaces.

In *Netherland*, Hans is a financial analyst working for an investment bank, in *Kapitoil* Karim is an IT guy who works in a financial services company, while in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* Changez works as a management analyst specializing in the cold-blooded appraisal of companies targeted for takeover. In my opinion, the fact that these three 9/11 novels depend on narrators who are involved in trade valuations is no doubt meaningful. By engaging with the meaning of the crisis created by the terrorist attacks, the three novels highlight the need to examine recent globalization processes in light of economic and financial concerns. In *Netherland*, Hans, as an investment banker, perceives a loss of confidence felt in Wall Street in the aftermath of 9/11, but the narrator never reflects upon the mechanisms of global capitalism. In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, however, Changez's occupation plays a more straightforward role in the narrative and has a predominant part in the narrator's self-questioning (and in the resulting "change" of heart that justifies his emblematic name). On the other hand, *Kapitoil* shows us a decade, from the fall of the Berlin Wall to the 9/11 attacks, where everything seemed possible – peace, integration, brotherhood between nations – while hidden behind these values was a type of savage capitalism very distant from the moral values that the political sphere sought to project.

Literature, particularly in dealing narratively with every day and individual stories, can provide important clues to understanding, from the point of view of emotions and subjectivity, phenomena of great complexity such as global terrorism. Starting from an analysis of the works selected, one hypothesis is strengthened: these novels encourage us, push us to consider the events of September 11 and their consequences under a lens that leads

to deep reflection of the terrorist phenomenon, in particular urging us to review the meaning of many apparently insignificant individual events, but which are reformulated by the singular fact of the presence of terror. This transformation of meaning is helped, and sometimes almost imposed, by the media impact of the events produced in, and taking advantage of, a globalized society.

In analyzing how the various ways in which acts of terror affect different areas of our individual and social life, and articulating them narratively, literature seems to be a possible, even privileged, way of approaching this complex emerging social product that is massive and globalized terror. At the same time, it has been possible to verify how practically all the novels analyzed establish types of relationships with the terrorist act that lead to an understanding of the inevitable coexistence with this type of phenomena. This movement towards narration of the particular, which has also been used in the social sciences, particularly in sociology and anthropology, has its privileged place in literary studies.

The axis of global-local analysis offers important explanatory power that allows a systematic interpretive line to be constructed for a good part of post-9/11 literary production. This approach had previously been used in some fields of sociology and political theory, and some background is even found of its use in literary criticism. Still, the systematic exploitation of this interpretive line allows to bring together many levels from the selected novels, a global-local perspective is one of the lines it would be worthwhile continuing to exploit in later analysis of works that, in increasing number and with very diverse approaches, are nourishing the volume of post-9/11 novels, enabling us to advance in the analysis of new forms of global terrorism and its emergence as glocal terrorism. Global changes, which have transformed many basic features of societies, including national identities, find expression in these novels by reformulating links with the environment, by enhancing local elements that are nevertheless conditioned by globalizing situations. In opting for models that surpass linear and monocausal readings, I have tried to formulate an axis from the interrelationship between the global and the local to explain the way in which the local is transformed by the omnipresence of the global, while the more persistent features of the global find their roots in local practice.

The glocality approach does not forget global aspects and local considerations, but, above all, is attentive to the construction of both, to the intertwining of events that, overcoming false dichotomies, help to understand specific situations. Analysis of these novels based on this glocal perspective is productive because discriminating between them with respect to the global / local axis, each of them appears, so to speak, and to a greater or lesser extent, with a specific degree of globality, but each shows a particular form of presentation of the narrative aspects that represents the character of intertwining global and local as elements of greater significance in the narrative.

Certain things that may be absent or lacking in these novels are not always the result of forgetfulness or deficiencies reflecting a certain political or ideological bias on the part of the authors. Unlike Cara Cilano (2013) or Roger Luckhurst (2014), who have critically reviewed some of the post-9/11 novels in relation to what is absent, unexpressed, or certain situation that are neglected (the Iraq war or other very serious moments of politics, war and international terrorism), these other events are clearly present in the novels analyzed, but not always in the obvious way of placing them in the foreground of the narrative.

The same can be said of certain critics who argue that some of the 9/11 novels represent a return to, or take refuge in, the individual, it turns out they are talking directly about episodes and experiences that powerfully affect the collective, sometimes forgetting

that novels do the reverse, i.e., these episodes emerge non-explicitly from the narrative. Richard Gray (2011) on Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2007), one of the first and most widely reviewed post-9/11 novels, argues that in it "all life is personal, cataclysmic public events are measured purely and simply in terms of their impact on the emotional entanglements of their protagonists" (30) and, from there, he considers it a failed work to the extent that the novel does not represent the magnitude of the event. Michael Frank and P. K. Malreddy (2018) reaffirm Gray's consideration that some post-9/11 novels focus primarily on the domestic sphere in which characters attempt to cope with their trauma. In this context, it is worth mentioning that Gray has a more favourable attitude towards other authors such as those I have analyzed in this work, Joseph O'Neill or Mohsin Hamid, whom he considers capable of breaking with the space of the individual and the domestic in their novels to show a more deterritorialized and transcultural form less centred on the local. This idea of deterritorialization, as Frank (2017) states, will later give rise to the development of other critics who will analyze literary representations of 21st-century terrorism as a global phenomenon that, moreover, attempts to break with the dichotomy of "them and us", which would be the approach of authors such as Tim Gauthier (2015), Georgiana Banita (2012) or Daniel O'Gorman (2015).

In my opinion, beyond the fact that the shaping of the individual can be done from a more radical individualistic consideration or from one that takes into account the local context of the characters, it is important to bear in mind that even in the shaping of the individual, collective processes of a transnational nature are articulated with the domestic experience. For this reason, it is neither a global nor a domestic option that should be applied to the analysis of this type of novel. On the contrary, I suggest a reading that allows the emergence of the fabric of the interrelationship between the global and the local. Apparently, small and individual events have global effects and global events form a good part of individualities.

The novel presents us with a certain type of narrative intertwining that each reader has the responsibility to unravel. Undoubtedly, these other absent or missing aspects, at least as a contextual element, are the key to glocal intertwining and, in many cases, act as an interpretative key. The glocal perspective allows us to see how, for example, the presence of an economic/financial dimension in fiction, the world of financial speculation and oil markets, portrays a very important and complex issue that is often left out in the analysis of global terrorism, mainly framed around the idea of a war of cultures, war of civilizations or religious conflicts. By pointing out one of the main energy sources that supports the modern way of life and explicitly showing its links with the phenomenon of global terrorism, fiction is contributing to questioning and expanding the official political narrative that, frequently, is limited to noting exogenous cultural variables as the principal motive for global terrorism.

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From *The Budapest File* to *An English Apocalypse:* Identity, Locality, and Language in the Poetry of George Szirtes

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Abstract

At the turn of the millennium, the Hungarian-born English poet George Szirtes published a pair of poetry collections: The Budapest File *and* An English Apocalypse. *Concentrating on these two books, this paper outlines the major theme of identity as defined by locations and languages in Szirtes's poetry. Tropes connecting places and cultures permeate his entire work from* Portrait of My Father in an English Landscape *to* Notes on the Inner City. *Challenging nationalistic approaches and bridging the cultures of two countries on the Western versus Eastern peripheries of Europe, Szirtes addresses the fragile possibilities for a postmillennial European identity.*

Keywords: *contemporary poetry, Europe, Holocaust, locality, identity*

1 Introduction: home and identity

The concept of home seems fluid in many texts by George Szirtes. As he writes in "English Rain", a poem from his latest volume *Fresh Out of the Sky* (2021): "This rain, this unremitting stoical drench / that defined everything by fully soaking it / was now home." (54). In these lines, home is not represented in the form of a particular place but as a natural phenomenon with symbolic significance – recalling the stereotypical English weather – and an all-encompassing medium that permeates and thus contextualizes everything. Similarly, home is just as often depicted by Szirtes in terms of cultural phenomena like pieces of art or language as in terms of space.

Places, however, are of utmost importance in Szirtes's work. They appear in numerous titles of individual poems as well of entire volumes, from *Bridge Passages* (1991) to *Mapping the Delta* (2016). This is hardly surprising in case of an author whose oeuvre abundantly reflects on his early-childhood migration experience and its consequences as well as on his narrative identity defined and produced by its double, English and Hungarian contexts. This geographical and cultural duality is most systematically explored in his poetry collections *The Budapest File* (2000) and *An English Apocalypse* (2001), which were clearly designed as a pair of parallel volumes, both published around the turn of the millennium.

Apparently, Szirtes understands identity as being closely related to, but not exclusively defined by the place(s) where one was born and one lives, especially as these two do not always coincide. Being a poet and translator who does not only have abundant first-hand experience in migration and mediation between different cultures but also contemplates these issues profusely, he can be a highly interesting and inspiring source for post-millennial readers facing intense globalization in increasingly multicultural societies.

In the following, I will examine the connections between identity, locality, and language in Szirtes's poetry. Focusing on *The Budapest File* and *An English Apocalypse,* and also referring to other texts by him, I argue that identity is a central theme in his work, yet he deliberately and overtly exceeds the boundaries of the traditional concept of a monolithic

identity. His texts can be better understood as acts of identification – often with contradictory results – as explained by Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper in their seminal essay "Beyond Identity" (2000).

2 Family history: *The Photographer at Sixteen*

The history of his family is a major subject in Szirtes's oeuvre, therefore it is useful to inform the reader about the basic facts. The poet himself does so in the biography *The Photographer at Sixteen* (2019) written about his mother in reverse chronological order. His narrative is organized by a spatial logic, following the protagonist Magda's life from the house where she attempted her final suicide through the detailed descriptions of the Szirtes family's previous apartments in London and in Budapest back to the scene of her childhood in "Cluj or Kolozsvár, also known as Klausenburg" (146, 163, 165, 166, 168, 170, 171). Naming the protagonist's birthplace in all the three local languages – Romanian, Hungarian, and German – within the same phrase repeated several times with a quasi-ritual precision emphasizes that identity is far from being unambiguous, even in the very beginning.

The narrative about Magda's life offers a condensed, personal version of the 20th-century history of Hungary, and, in several respects, of the entire Eastern-European region. Born in 1924 as Magda Nussbächer in a Hungarian-speaking, secular Jewish family in Transylvania, she was afflicted by all the major regional traumas either directly, or through the fate of her closest relatives. Country borders were moved multiple times, assigning Cluj – together with other parts of Transylvania – from Hungary to Romania in 1920 (Treaty of Trianon), then back to Hungary in 1940 (Second Vienna Award), and again back to Romania in 1947 (Paris Peace Treaties). Apart from the threatened and insecure minority position, her professional ambitions as a young woman also explain why Magda decided to leave her hometown at around the age of eighteen in order to receive training in photography in Budapest. There she met László Szirtes in the shadow of the Holocaust. Magda's entire family in Cluj were killed; she barely survived the concentration camps of Ravensbrück and Penig; and László was taken for forced labour. The couple could marry only after the end of World War II and had two sons, the elder of whom, George Szirtes, was born in 1948. As a result of the revolution in 1956, however, the nuclear family – along with about 200 000 other Hungarian citizens (Niessen 123) – left Hungary, and they settled down in London. Tracing these series of traumas through the personal history of apartments and the communal history of cities and countries, Szirtes concludes that "[t]hese changes of status and identity left traces on her already intense emotions" (146), leading to serious health issues, succeeding suicide attempts, and finally her death.

In this constantly changing framework, locality and language are both decisive components of identity and possible sources of confusion, or even of persecution, occasionally, which can be illustrated by innumerable examples from *The Photographer at Sixteen*. Traumatised by the concentration camps, Magda Szirtes denied her Jewish heritage: "According to the fiction, she was not Jewish at all, or that was the story she told us later. […] There were reasons for the fiction. We, her children were that reason. And the reason lies partly in Ravensbrück itself" (126). Arriving in England, Szirtes's family did their best to assimilate: "We were Englishing ourselves as best we could. Not that my mother ever did, not properly. It wasn't that she resisted, although she did sometimes: she found it impossible" (63). Although the entire family came from Hungary, they "had never been to the Hungarian Embassy" yet "accepted invitations to the Romanian Embassy in London for film shows and

exhibitions" (50). In other words, labels attached to the individual by society on the basis of homeland, citizenship, ethnicity, religion, native language, or other obvious categories of identity, do not always coincide with the person's own self-understanding, challenging "the Western understanding of the 'self' as a homogeneous, bounded, unitary entity" (Brubaker and Cooper 17).

As it can be seen from the brief outline above, George Szirtes's narrative identity is primarily based on his Hungarian and his English cultural heritage. At first, both seem to be defined by place and language, but a closer examination quickly reveals how the boundaries of both are unstable or blurred. An excellent example of this ambiguity is the story of his first name. After the liberation of the concentration camp, a young American captain called George wooed Magda. Finally, she married not him but László Szirtes, yet, as the son of the newly-wed couple writes, "she must have been very fond of George because when I was born she gave me the Hungarian equivalent of his for my middle name" (134). Later, recalling a family anecdote about how his mother made a joke about George Szirtes being a clumsy child by saying: "*Gabi mozdult!* George moved!" whenever "something went tumbling back in Budapest" (181) indicates that the family used the boy's first name Gábor (Gabi is its nickname form), whereas in English they switched to the English version of his middle name György, George, which also happens to be the "original" form of the name in the family history. In other words, even George Szirtes's own name, which is the primary signifier of any individual, implies ambiguities and historical layers regarding his double, Hungarian and English (or rather anglophone) heritage.

Szirtes not only refers to numerous elements of identity in many of his texts but also performs their close examination. He does that most comprehensively in the pair volumes of poetry: *The Budapest File* and *An English Apocalypse* (2001).

3 Hungary: *The Budapest File*

While in the biography *The Photographer at Sixteen,* George Szirtes embraces the Jewish heritage of his family, his collection of poetry *The Budapest File* focuses on Hungary. More precisely, the poems explore "a subject whose epicentre is Hungary but whose domain is essentially eastern continental Europe, more particularly the history of that region, which is by extension the history of the circumstances that made my grandparents, parent, myself – and even my children – what we are" (11), as the author defines the theme in the "Preface". Connecting locality and identity, he emphasizes the formative power of history.

Accordingly, the three cycles in the book follow a chronological logic, reflecting on three major historical periods in Hungarian history associated primarily with three succeeding generations. The first cycle is "The Town Flattened: war correspondence". It reflects on the period before World War II, mainly the generation of George Szirtes's grandparents, as indicated by poems like "Grandfather in Green" or "After Attila", an English paraphrase of "Jön a vihar", a poem by the great pre-war Hungarian poet Attila József. The second cycle "The Courtyards: Iron Curtains" addresses the decades of the Cold War, which defines the lives of the parents, as it is represented in poems like "A Picture of My Parents with Their First Television". Finally, the central theme of the third cycle "The Flies" is Szirtes's own experiences as he returns to Hungary after the change of the regime in 1989. As he starts to work more and more intensely on translations from Hungarian to English in that time, many of the poems deal with literary themes, from "Burning Stubble at Szigliget", which takes

place at the iconic Writers' House at the lake Balaton, to poems written in the memory of Hungarian poets whom Szirtes has translated, like "In Memoriam Sándor Weöres" or "In Memoriam István Vas".

The volume articulates identity essentially through place. In "The Lukács Baths" (24), elderly women swim around in a pool, from "circa 1900" up to the present of the writing, about a hundred years later, circling in the fluid and translucent medium of history, water, the eternal metaphor of time since Heraclitus. Watching them, the lyrical I concludes that they are the embodiment of history themselves: "Inside every grandmother there sits / an attractive young girl […] as they swim / and push away the past like tired waves" (24). In Szirtes's vision, human bodies are not just defined by their place: often they *are* the place themselves. In "A Game of Statues" (138-139), the poet imagines "people after the war returning to their homes, entering their rooms and passing straight through the walls, turning into statues in the process" (14). The speaker first focuses on a single woman – reminiscent of the author's mother, recognisable from several other relevant texts by Szirtes – as "She mounts a ruined staircase / through heaps of rubble. She has come / back from the camps" (138) and joins many other inhabitants of Budapest, similarly returning to their past and turning into stone by the traumatic processes of history, like so many wives of the biblical Lot: "Across the city / thousands are marching past, and poking heads / and arms through niches, waiting there / for common symbols of eternity" (139).

Although identity is frequently communicated by Szirtes through elements deeply rooted in place, and often Hungarian places in particular, the result is far from being unambiguous. A good example of this deliberate multiplicity is "The Accordionist" (28). The poem is dedicated to André Kertész, a Hungarian Jewish photographer, who started his career in Budapest but gained international recognition in Paris and New York, becoming another representative of complex identities with a Hungarian origin. Szirtes's poem is the dynamic and creative ekphrasis of Kertész's black and white photo representing a miserable, worn-out street musician, with whom the lyrical self seems to identify: "The accordionist is a blind intellectual / carrying an enormous typewriter" (28). The projection of the musician's profession into that of the writer is continued with the figurative extension of the picture: the expanding and collapsing instrument recalls the memory of tall houses destroyed by the war; in particular, the typical houses in the city centre of Budapest, where Szirtes spent his childhood, and many of which had been heavily affected by World War II.

> My century is a sad one of collapses.
> The concertina of the chest; the tubular bells
> of the high houses; the flattened ellipses
> of our skulls that open like petals.
>
> We are the poppies sprinkled along the field. (28)

The destruction of bodies is inseparably connected with the destruction of houses in the metaphor. The image of the instrument proliferates, turning from the means of artistic articulation into the subject of it, and from human body into the shelter for them, all doomed to perish. In the final stanza, the series of urban motifs is replaced by a natural scene: a field full of flowers. Yet these flowers are remembrance poppies, a typically English symbol for the victims of wars since John McCrae's poem "In Flanders Fields" written in 1915 in memory of soldiers who died in World War I.

In Flanders Fields, the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the dead.

The poem "The Accordionist" pays homage to a photographer of Hungarian origin and international fame through a series of interlinked images borrowed from Budapest streets and English iconography, commemorating the victims of both World Wars, which determined the fate of millions, often fighting against each other all over Europe in the 20th century. The reconciliatory gesture of the flowers is gently counterpointed by the mild irony of the closing lines: "Beware the sentiments concealed / in this short rhyme. Be wise. Be good." (28) as well as by the contrast between the melodious, perfect rhymes and the tragic subject. It can be claimed that the poem thus pays respect to both the Hungarian and the English heritage while not erasing the latent tensions between the two, either.

4 The United Kingdom: *An English Apocalypse*

A year after *The Budapest File,* its pair volume *An English Apocalypse* came out. Both books were published by the same publishing house, Bloodaxe. Besides, they are also visibly connected through the similar design: the same size, the same shiny black paperback cover, the same portrait of the author on the back, a painting by the author's wife Clarissa Upchurch on the front, and further pictures by her, which separate the sections. Yet the first cover painting features a typical urban picture: a caryatide above the entrance of a characteristically Budapest terraced house, whereas the second one represents a part of a road in a landscape. In other words, both books highlight locality in the title and in the cover image as well, that is both on the verbal and the visual level, contrasting Hungary with England as a primarily urban versus rural experience for the author.

Visuality is of utmost importance for Szirtes, who graduated at the Leeds College of Art and Design and worked as a painter and a teacher of arts at the beginning of his career. He writes in the "Preface" to *An English Apocalypse* that "I entered the England of imagination through the visual arts" (11). Truly, his poetry abounds in references to visual arts, from "Triptych for Music" (68), which borrows its structure from medieval altars consisting of three panels, to the title of "Payne's Grey" (83), which refers to the tint invented by the English painter William Payne and represents the sea with "this polite, most English of grey tones". In the latter poem, as in many other texts by Szirtes, "Life imitates Art" (Wilde 26) – as Oscar Wilde phrased it in his anti-mimetic dictum – that is nature is perceived through the filter or artistic representation, and it is also described with the means provided by arts in the poem.

In harmony with both the country scene on the cover and the cultural perception of nature, pastoral is a major inspiration and a dominant genre in *An English Apocalypse.* There is not only a poem with the title "Pastoral" (34) but an entire section

called “Pastorals” (115-119), and numerous other poems with rural themes like “Sheepshearing at Ayot St Lawrence” (35), “Picnic” (43), or “A Walk Across Fields” (44). As John Sears, the author of the so far only monograph on Szirtes observes: “The compression, and the consequent symbolic force, of the versions of ‘pastoral’ in these poems, resides in part in their connection to the landscape of melancholic nostalgia that comprises Szirtes’ England” (165). In contrast to the city of Budapest in case of Hungary, in England, it is the countryside that proves to be formative for Szirtes. Yet both landscapes are shaped and mediated by human culture: in Hungary mostly by history and literature whereas in England more by contemporary politics – as in “The Pickets” reflecting on miners’ strikes – and various arts, from paintings through film to music.

The book consists of two major sections. “Early English: poems from earlier collections” offers a selection of previously published poems related to the theme of England, whereas “An English Apocalypse: new poems” presents the author’s fresh output. The latter section includes two cycles: the first is a series of independent poems, while the second gives the title of the entire book: “An English Apocalypse”. This final cycle is a carefully constructed example of formal poetry, held together by the “Prologue” as well as the strict form of the terza rima and divided into five thematic parts, each with five poems. While the places in *The Budapest File* tend to offer the opportunity for a submersion in historical time, many poems about places in *An English Apocalypse* seem to host the encounter of distant cultures: “The Australian botanist / meeting the lecturer from Belarus / in a garden of old roses”, like in “Victoriana” (118), outlining a multicultural society. Yet also the difficulties of assimilation are articulated in poems like “Acclimatisation”: “Sometimes we were slow to / pick up a hint, to smile at the appropriate juncture / of a given conversation, were too often liable / to solecisms of an almost terminal sort.” (22)

5 Conclusion: Europe

In the light of the samples from Szirtes’s oeuvre above, it is clear that identity is a central concern in his writing. He started to recognise its significance especially after he rediscovered Hungary from the late 1980s.

> Everything was crying out for definition or redefinition, but the triangular relationship between Hungary, myself and England felt all the more uncomfortable for it being defined at all. None of the three parties involved knew how it felt about the other two. (*An English Apocalypse* 14)

His attempts at such plausible definitions resulted in numerous books, most notably *The Budapest File*, which reflects on his Hungarian family history; *An English Apocalypse*, which focuses on his adopted country, the United Kingdom, and within that, mostly England; and, finally, *The Photographer at Sixteen*, which explores his family’s Jewish heritage through his Holocaust survivor mother’s biography.

Many of these texts testify to the immense importance of locality in respect of identity. Szirtes, however, often explicitly rejects territory-based, nationalistic definitions.

> My greatest difficulty with nationally or culturally rooted notions is that they inevitably exclude those who are migrants, floaters, drifters and shadows.
> […]
> Poetry is always local. It is just that in this case – and in the case of other writers, indeed, I would suggest an increasing number of writers, those used to moving about from place to place without a secure notion of belonging – the notion of the local is rooted in the incidental." (*The Budapest File* 15)

Being conscious of his personal lack of a monolithic, all-comprehensive identity, Szirtes represents and explores various complex identities, challenging the concept of homogeneous identities in general. Consequently, his texts can be read not so much as the expression of one identity or another but rather as conscious acts of identification with certain communities, as described by Brubaker and Cooper.

It is not surprising that, surpassing the nation-based notions of identity, Szirtes concluded to the importance of Europe, as had all the member states of the European Union in the second half of the 20th century. Even after Brexit, he voiced his sense of belonging to this community, which includes all the heritages his narratives rely on:

> Having worked as an English language writer and translator from Hungarian for about forty years I now think it is even possible to become part of English literature without ever being quite English. Could I become Hungarian and start again after 64 years? I really don't think so. That's two close communities dispensed with.
> But there is a third community of which I am historically, culturally, and psychologically part, and that is Europe. (Szirtes 2020)

In our age of globalization, rapid changes, and

multicultural societies, Szirtes' texts reflecting on the challenges and pleasures of heterogeneous identities can serve as inspiring textual sources of immediate relevance. In his latest collection of poetry, he warns his readers again about the power that lies in the acts of identification and the need for resistance, awareness, and precision:

> Say no to cliché, to
> chronicles that bear too heavy a
>
> symbolic load. Say no
> to the role assigned to you. Say no,
> to the assigners who include
>
> yourself.
>
> […]
>
> Start again. ("Fresh Out of the Sky" 63)

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Showing through the Known: Problematizing Gender Identity in "Snow White & The Seven Microaggressions"

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Abstract

The power of fairy tales to pass on values and traditions has been discussed by many scholars – frequently in terms of the imposition of behavioural norms on the readers. However, the popularity of the genre also allows contemporary authors to pass on new messages by re-writing the stories. Laura Lane and Ellen Haun's re-writing of Snow-White called "Snow White & The Seven Microaggressions," unsurprisingly, deals with microaggressions and gender expectations. This paper addresses how the authors use the well-known premises as a tool to enlighten their readers about the changing perception of gender, identity and sex-based stereotypes in contemporary society.

Keywords: *Snow-White, gender, gender norms, microaggressions, re-writings.*

Introduction

Fairy tales and stereotypical depictions of gender, especially of women as passive and weak characters, are a very popular and well-known topic. These stereotypes have been discussed in the works of scholars[1] for decades, and many contemporary writers have addressed or even subverted the stereotypes in their re-writings of fairy tales. Most of these re-writings are "preponderantly concerned with gender roles and the female point of view" (Kawan 2008: 341). However, some authors add another layer by also discussing other issues that plague contemporary society. The aim of this paper is to analyse one such re-writing, specifically a contemporary version of the popular fairy tale "Little Snow White" called "Snow White & the Seven Microaggressions" by Laura Lane and Ellen Haun. Making use of close reading and fairy tale criticism, it will be shown how gender stereotypes and the microaggressions that stem from them are depicted in the story. The paper will focus on how the authors use the familiar characters to bring the issue of microaggression closer to the attention of readers and to enlighten readers about the harmful effects these may have. Lane and Haun illustrate this using the figure of the Evil Queen who is the main source of microaggression and only slowly starts to learn how to avoid hurting others with the way she speaks. Although her progress is slow, she makes an important first step – she learns to recognize the problem.

The paper shall be divided into three sections. The first section will discuss the issue of choosing a "traditional" version to represent "Little Snow White" and two character stereotypes that are present in the traditional version of the story – the angel and the monster. The second section features a definition of microaggression along with information about why microaggressions are such a problematic issue. The last section is dedicated to the analysis of Lane and Haun's "Snow White & the Seven Microaggressions" in terms of how the authors depict gender and the related microaggressions in the story.

Traditional Version and the Issue of Female Stereotypes

Firstly, it is necessary to establish what is meant by the traditional version and what stereotypes can be found in such versions. As is the case for many folk fairy tales, establishing what a traditional version is, is somewhat challenging because of the intricacies of the literary history of this fairy tale[2]. In this paper, the story "Little Snow White" by the Brothers Grimm shall be referred to as the traditional version since it is likely the best-known literary version of the story: "best known nowadays in its Disney movie version and the Grimms' nineteenth-century printed text" (Bacchilega 1997: 29).

The traditional "Little Snow White" is defined by the dichotomy represented by the two main female characters. Princess Snow White could be described as a paragon of femininity. She is the "fairest of all" (Grimm and Grimm 2014: 171), even though she is still just a child. She is also very passive and helpless and has to rely on other, specifically male, characters in order to survive. Once she reaches the dwelling of the dwarves, she also takes on the role of the housekeeper, a traditionally feminine role: "[Her] life with them is an important part of her education in submissive femininity, for in serving them she learns essential lessons of service, of selflessness, of domesticity" (Gilbert and Gubar 2000: 40). Snow White's cohabitation with the dwarves can be seen as an episode in her life when she has the opportunity to "practice" the housekeeping duties she will be in charge of in the future in a miniature household. Beyond becoming their housekeeper, Snow White does not seem to have any intentions to become active and change the situation she has found herself in because of the Queen's jealousy.

In contrast to the stereotypical angel as represented by the passive Princess, "stands the female monster, the woman who is active, aggressive, and unfeminine" (Joosen 2011: 216), represented by the much more assertive character of the Queen. At first, "the mirror ... calls the queen the fairest" (Joosen 2011: 218), and as long as this keeps happening, the Queen seems to be satisfied. However, once her stepdaughter surpasses her in her beauty, the Queen immediately decides to get rid of the Princess. Although the Queen's motivation to hate her stepdaughter sounds questionable at best[3], there is no denying that the Queen is a woman who is willing to do anything to get what she wants, which makes her – as a female fairy-tale character – a textbook villain.

Defining Microaggressions

As defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary, microaggression is "a comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group" (Merriam-Webster). These groups can be defined by "sexual orientation (gay/lesbian/bisexual), disability, class (poverty), and religion (Islam and Judaism); are confined to the edge of a system (cultural, social, political, and economic); and may experience exclusion, inequality, and social injustice" (Sue 2010: 14). Microaggressions are typically unintentional, or they can be even meant as compliments, but the underlying messages of microaggressions can frequently be hurtful or insulting to the recipient or the whole group that is denoted.

On the surface, this might seem harmless. However, as Sue (2010) notes in his analysis of micro-aggressions, they affect not only the psychological health of the person, but they also "affect the quality of life and standard of living for marginalized groups in our

society. Microaggressions have the secondary but devastating effect of denying equal access and opportunity in education, employment, and health care" (16). As such, microaggressions are an inconspicuous yet problematic issue that the general public should be made aware of to reduce unintentional microaggressive behaviour.

Gender, Microaggressions, and "Snow White & the Seven Microaggressions"

Connecting microaggressions and fairy tales might sound like an unusual combination at first. However, choosing fairy tales as the space where issues of contemporary society are discussed actually makes perfect sense for several reasons. One of them is the popularity of the genre. Fairy tales "are found universally, wherever there is language" (Tolkien). Although there might be some regional differences, the general outlines of the fairy tales and the symbolism remain. They "offer … archetypal stories available for re-use and recycling by different ages and cultures" (Sanders 2006: 82). Therefore, fairy tales are the perfect option to serve as a premise where the authors can discuss the issues that plague contemporary society because it will make the contemporary version accessible to mass audiences.

Another reason why traditional fairy tales are very well-suited for this kind of re-writing is that, as was mentioned in the introductory part, they are frequently criticised for the way female characters are depicted, which allows for a combination of criticism of contemporary issues with a feminist twist to appear in these re-writings.

As is suggested by the title, this re-writing differs from the traditional fairy tale significantly. The story is told in a very parodic as well as feminist way. The two authors use the familiar premise of the fairy tale to address the issue of microaggressions and the effects these can have on people; however, at the same time, they ignore some aspects of the traditional story, such as well-known tropes that are associated with "Little Snow White" or the romantic plotline and happy ending.

As it was mentioned, behaviour or stereotypes play a quite important role in the story. A good example can be found in the relationship between Snow White and the dwarves – or in this case, roommates. In the best-known versions of the story, Snow White "[rescues] the dwarves in a traditionally feminine way, by cooking and cleaning and acting as their surrogate mother in order to stay with them" (England et al. 2011: 563). However, Lane and Haun's protagonist is not willing to put up with behaviour like that. Right at the very beginning, the reader is informed that princess Snow White moved away and is living with seven male housemates who "left their dishes in the sink and assumed Snow White would deal with the mess. But Snow White put a quick kibosh on that sitch by making a chore chart" (Lane and Haun 2020: 22). While in the traditional version, Snow White's being left to take care of the whole household is depicted as good or even praiseworthy, in the contemporary re-writing, it is seen as old-fashioned, and the housemates' expectation that she will take care of all the cleaning could be seen as a microaggression. As Nadal (2014) asserts that one of the examples of microaggressions is "when an individual assumes that a woman needs to uphold traditional gender roles" (71). Therefore, the behaviour of the roommates can be seen as a microaggression on two interconnected levels. Firstly, they assume that Snow White will take care of the whole household based solely on her biological sex. Secondly, the roommates fail entirely to acknowledge Snow White's gender identity because Lane and Haun's protagonist is depicted as a non-binary person, unlike her traditional counterpart. This

example shows how subtle microaggressions can be, which makes it more important to enlighten people about them.

The most significant source of microaggressions in Lane and Haun's re-writing is the evil Queen. At the same time, the role of the mirror in the story changes from a mindless magical item that provides the Queen with information about who the fairest is into a teacher of sorts. The mirror has a will of its own, and it seems to be aware that "[the] more people are aware of the term and concept, the less likely they will be defensive when confronted about their behaviors" (Nadal 2014, 75). Therefore, the mirror tries its best to teach the Queen how to avoid microaggressions. The story starts in media res when the Queen addresses the magical mirror and asks who is the fairest. However, the mirror immediately criticises the queen's question because "[beauty] is a subjective social construct, the use of the word 'fair' is problematic because it means both 'white' and 'beautiful,' and [the mirror] terribly [hates] casting judgment on appearances" (Lane and Haun 2020: 22) foreshadowing that it will serve more like a moral guide to the Queen rather than an object that would cause her to become violent like in the traditional story.

While the mirror may be against the idea of judging people based on their appearance, as it is very problematic and individual, the Queen is not. The readers learn from the Queen that Snow White has expressed her wish to be regarded as a non-binary person rather than a woman, and the Queen does try to honour that wish. "Snow White explained to me that they identify as nonbinary and prefer the pronouns 'they' and 'them.' They aren't a maiden, like I thought. So I say 'them' to make sure you include Snow White when I ask who is fairest in the kingdom. Because I'll murder hims, hers, xems, zes, hirs, theys, thems. Really anyone who is hotter than me" (Lane and Haun 2020: 23). However, like in the traditional story, the Queen's behaviour towards Snow White changes. The breaking point comes when the Queen learns that she is no longer the fairest in the kingdom. Up until this point, the Queen has been successful in being respectful towards Snow White's wishes to refer to her by *they* however, once she learns that Snow White has surpassed her in her beauty, she reacts:

> "Dammit!" the Evil Queen shouted as she took off her tiara and threw it across the room. "Now I have to kill her."
> "Hold up," said the Mirror. "You mean you have to kill them. You were doing so well."
>
> (Lane and Haun 2020: 23)

The moment the Queen starts to feel threatened by her stepchild, who has surpassed her in beauty, all her efforts to be respectful go out the window, and she ignores Snow White's identity and their wish to be addressed as a non-binary person. The Queen asserts that she is too upset to pay attention to details like that, but the mirror is adamant that she has to be respectful towards Snow White's wish to be addressed as a non-binary person. Thus, the Queen should adapt to the cultural standards as her behaviour and tendency to say things that are considered microaggressions is "a problem" (Lane and Haun 2020: 24). As the mirror points out, even the language has changed to accommodate to make it possible for non-binary people to be addressed by a gender-neutral pronoun rather than with a pronoun based on their biological sex, and there is no excuse for her to be disrespectful.

The Queen tries to prove the mirror wrong by calling in her henchmen to show how nice she really is, but it has the opposite effect, and she comes to realise that she commits microaggressions quite frequently. As she talks to the henchmen, she learns more about what microaggressions are, that they can be unintentional or even meant as a compliment but have

a negative effect on the recipient. As she gets more enlightened about the topic, the Queen comes to realise that she has experienced similar behaviour – a microaggression committed against her – as well. In her case, the microaggressions were based on her gender. "[Gender-based] microaggressions [towards women] occur frequently, and they devalue their contributions, objectify them as sex objects, dismiss their accomplishments, and limit their effectiveness in social, educational, employment, and professional settings" (Sue 2010: 12). The Queen experienced microaggressions in the workplace when she attended an event for evil leaders: "That time I was at the Convention for Evil Leaders and I was the only Evil Queen at the table. The Evil Kings wouldn't listen to me! I had this great idea about how to steal a cyclops and one of the kings pretended it was his idea. So annoying" (Lane and Haun 2020: 27). This is a typical example of an act of microaggression based on gender that happens in the workplace. As Sue (2010) notes: "During team meetings in which a female employee may contribute an idea, the male CEO may not respond to it or seemingly not hear the idea. However, when a male coworker makes the identical statement, he may be recognized and praised by the executive and fellow colleagues" (12). Where a man would be praised for his ideas, a woman is frequently ignored, and her work can be even stolen from her because of her gender, like in the case of the evil Queen. Once she realises how it feels when an act of microaggression is committed against somebody, she decides to listen to the mirror and become more respectful. She puts more effort into referring to Snow White by the gender-neutral pronoun *they* and be more polite towards her subjects. She does not, however, give up her decision that Snow White needs to be killed because they are more beautiful than the Queen. This section shows how important it is to enlighten people about this issue. The Queen employs microaggressions toward her people all the time because she does not think about the effect these might have on her subjects. Nonetheless, when she realises how hurtful and uncomfortable it is to be on the receiving end of a microaggression, she decides to be more careful about what she says to avoid hurting people.

As it was mentioned in the beginning, the mirror does not want to judge people based on their appearance, but the Queen insists that it does. It is not surprising as beauty tends to be the most significant source of power for female protagonists in fairy tales. The emphasis on women's beauty in the fairy-tale genre and the jealousy the Queen feels towards anyone who is more beautiful than her as described by Marcia Lieberman in her well-known paper "'Some Day My Prince Will Come': Female Acculturation through the Fairy Tale". The villains "are jealous of any woman more beautiful than they, which is not surprising in view of the power deriving from beauty in fairy tale" (Lieberman 1972: 392), while the female protagonist has a "special destiny" (Lieberman 1972: 385). It is interesting that the mirror does not address this, as this concept is very outdated, beauty can also be a source of microaggressions. Even though the mirror points out how problematic it is to judge the fairness of somebody because it is subjective, it does not point out that it is how the views of the society have changed when it comes to the ideals of female beauty and the notion that one has to be the fairest at all costs. Neither does the mirror address the microaggressions that are frequently used in connection to somebody's appearance and the ideal of feminine beauty. Microaggression masked as compliments often appear in relation to women's appearance or the way they dress, and it is interesting that the authors did not include examples of these gender-based microaggressions as this could be connected to the story of "Little Snow White" very easily and it might be easily relatable to the Queen. Taking this into consideration, it is somewhat surprising that the connection between beauty and

microaggressions is not explored further in the story, and it would suit well the mirror's aim to make the Queen more tolerant.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Haun and Lane make use of the familiarity of the fairy tale "Little Snow White" to address the problem of microaggressions. The story is seen through the eyes of the Evil Queen as she learns about the effects microaggressions have on the people who are on the receiving end. With the help of the magical mirror, she learns that microaggressions can be committed against people who belong to a marginalised group based on various criteria, including gender. The mirror helps her realise that ignoring Snow White's wish to be referred to by the non-binary *they* is a problem as it is based on the idea that people have to fall into one of the male/female categories, which, as the mirror suggests, is no longer valid. The Queen also realises how harmful gender-based microaggressions can be as she has experienced them herself when her idea was stolen by one of her male colleagues only because as a man, he could afford to steal it. As her own experience and the mirror's help her to understand microaggressions, the Queen decides to mind more about how she treats others, though ironically, she does not get over the idea that she has to kill her stepchild and the huntspeople. This might be partially attributed to the story being a parody of earlier versions of Snow White. However, it could also be attributed to the fact that the Queen has just started to realise how her behaviour might be harmful to others and therefore, she has not progressed to the point where she would be able to give up on her fixation on being the fairest yet. Just like they would in real life, changes come slowly, but they do come once one learns how to recognize the problem and is willing to do something about it.

Notes:

[1] Some oldest and best-known include Marcia Lieberman's article on depiction of female characters in the best-known fairy tales "'Some Day My Prince Will Come': Female Acculturation through the Fairy Tale", Sandra M. Gilbert's and Susan Gubars section on female characters in the story of Snow White in *The Madwoman in the Attic.*

[2] For details see, for example, Christine Shojaei Kawan's article "A Brief Literary History Of Snow White".

[3] The author of this text discusses her interpretation of the Queen's behaviour in the article "Mirror, Mirror: Framing the Modern Adaptations of Little Snow-White'".

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A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Animal Totems in Some Selected Yorùbá Proverbs

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Abstract
This study examines animal totems in selected Yorùbá proverbs and their instructive information because none of the existing studies on Yorùbá proverbs have addressed this. The analysis of this research is premised on the Ethnography of Communication. Data in this research were sourced from native speakers of Yorùbá and Yorùbá proverb texts. It is argued that Yorùbá maintains the notion that animals and human beings share certain characteristics, and the animal features can be a yardstick to measure human behaviour. Findings in this study show that proverbs relating to animals are used to educate, inform, admonish, ridicule, encourage, advise, warn, and satirize the polity.

Keywords: *Yorùbá, proverb, animal totem, culture, language*

1 Introduction

The proverb is one of the genres of Yorùbá oral literature.[1] It has been described as witty sayings laced with the knowledge of cultural values, history, worldview, and natural environmental terrains of the native speakers of a language. Proverbs are premised on absolute truth that can be verified within the ambit of culture. According to Finnegan (1970: 389), a proverb is a saying in the more or less fixed form marked by shortness, sense, and salt and distinguished by the popular acceptance of the truth tersely expressed in it. For Ohwovoriole (2008: 189), "proverbs are like a code whose message is available only to those who can decipher it." This view is corroborated in Whiting (1932: 302) cited in Ohwovoriole (2008: 189), where she describes the proverb as:

> an expression which, owing its birth to people, testifies its origin in form and phases. It expresses what is apparently a fundamental, truth that is, a truism – in homely language, often adorned, however, with alliteration and rhyme. It is usually short but need not be; it is usually true but needs to be. Some proverbs have both a literal and a figurative meaning, either of which makes perfect sense, but more often, they have but one of the two. A proverb must be venerable; it must bear the sign of antiquity. Since a clever literary man may counterfeit such signs, it should be attested in different places and times.

The excerpt shows that proverbs are based on absolute truth, and they can have both literal and figurative meanings. Proverbs are not language-specific; they are attested in all cultures and languages of the world. In Africa, all cultures have proverbs and witty sayings that are used for different purposes as occasions dictate. Fasiku (2006: 25) explains that

> proverbs encapsulate the worldview of a people and serve as a means of arousing, defining, manifesting, and establishing the expectations, aspirations, and consciousness of a people (…) proverbs serve as a linguistic confirmation of the totality of a people's worldview and the epistemic cognition of this world-view.

The inference drawn from Fasiku (2006) is that proverbs show the psychology of the people based on their worldview, ethics, moral values, and norms of society. Zakariyah (2013) notes, among other things, that proverbs are one of the products of language that are used among African communities to educate, teach morals, teach norms, teach social values, enhance social control and maintain orderliness in society. Ojo (2015: 251) explains that proverbs are reflections and expressions of wisdom, ethics, philosophy, and beliefs of a given society. Proverbs in Yorùbá culture are used to show society's views on every occasion and their reaction to issues generally. This presupposes that the Yorùbá have proverbs for every situation and occasion. In the ancient Yorùbá settings, the knowledge of proverbs is one of the prerequisites of attaining leadership positions because individuals who possess versed knowledge of proverbs are deemed to have a good understanding of the history, norms, and value system of the society. This fact is acknowledged by Fayemi (2009: 63) when he says:

> The Yorùbá accord great respect for intelligent and expert use of language, especially the use of proverbs, and as such, the àgbà (elders) is expected to exhibit/demonstrate this capacity. And the capacity for exhibiting this expert use of language is not solely based on old age as there are some youths who are witty in the genre of proverbial communication and intelligent use of language. These people are also seen as elders in their own right.

For Alabi (2009: 515), the ability to mix or intersperse speeches with appropriately chosen and well-connected proverbs and proverbial expressions is considered a sign of native intelligence, cultural learnedness, and erudition. Thus, the Yorùbá societies in the olden days always considered individuals with vast knowledge of proverbs in leadership positions so that the knowledge of the proverbs would be preserved and, as well, transmitted to the younger generation. This accords credence to the Yorùbá informal educational system that was practiced in the ancient period, where education is predicated on a sound understanding of society's cultural values, norms, and ethics. However, in modern society, proverbs are still prevalent among Yorùbá people, and people who know the appropriate use are still accorded some forms of respect. Nwachukwu –Agbada (2002: 6) rightly observes that proverbs are statements of rules of conduct or basic laws of existence arrived at through human experience. She explains further that proverbs amplify one's position in a discourse; confer authority in a viewpoint; educate; instruct and satirize for positive behaviour modification or depreciation; serve as a rhetorical tool in persuasion; raise the image of their users" image imbue what is said with poeticism.

In Yorùbá culture, some proverbs are couched with symbolic animal totems to put across messages to human beings. The animal-related proverbs are drawn largely from the characteristics of the animals that have educative information about human existence. The theme of the proverbs ranges from human character and shortcomings, the value of children, social

norms, good manners, admonition, advice, and caution. In this study, Yorùbá proverbs with animal totems will be analyzed because none of the existing works on Yorùbá have addressed the subject matter, and the lesson drawn from such proverbs will be discussed as they relate to modern-day society.

This paper is organized into seven sections. Section one is the introduction. Section two contains the literature review. Section three is the theoretical framework. Section four treats data collection, while section five discusses data presentation and analysis. Section six discusses the sociolinguistic implications of animal totems, while section seven is the conclusion.

2 Related works

Ohwovoriole (2008), in her work, explains animal imagery in Urhobo proverbs using the functionalist theory. She explains that proverbs with animal totems in Urhobo are used to educate, inform and satirize the polity. She claims further that local myths and legends surround the totems of animals such as Iguana, Boa-constrictor, cobra, crocodile, alligator, hyrax, monitor lizard, dog, tiger, tortoise, rabbit, and snails, and there are sacred edicts concerning the treatment of these animals. She states that people from the polities where these totems are revered are not permitted to harm, kill or eat such animals. She concludes by establishing that there are interesting interrelationships between traditional beliefs, proverbs, verbal folklores such as legends and myths in respect to the animals. Ojo (2015) analyses the functional aspects of proverbs in selected Yoruba written literature. She identifies and describes the communicative functions of these proverbs. The article reveals that Yoruba proverbs play important roles in interpersonal relationships as well as community development. Akanbi (2015) discusses Yorùbá proverbs through the lens of vulgar language. At the same time, stressing the fact that the Yorùbá frowns at the use of sexual euphemism, which is seen as taboo, and that the users of such words are seen as uncultured. Therefore, he concludes that such proverbs use sexually explicit words that are not regarded as obscene in the context of their usage. Abiodun (2018) focuses on proverbs that deal with the elders in Yorùbá society. He establishes that the positions of elders are vital in society because they are the custodian of culture. He explains that age, beards, accomplishments, marriage, chieftaincy titles, and childbearing are some of the qualities of elders in Yorùbá. He notes further that elders in Yorùbá, as depicted in proverbs, must possess wisdom, deep thought, patience, perseverance, experience, cheerfulness, and the ability to settle disputes. Faleye (2018) provides an overview of the importance of the dress code, its artistry, and law to underscore the relevance and importance of dress attached to the issue of identity, beautification, and dignity in ancient times through some Yoruba proverbial sayings. Olofinsao (2018) identifies the use of proverbs in the day-to-day administration of Yorùbá community affairs in a formal system of governance. The article discovers that the Yorùbá proverbs are employed as a form of a plain statement of fact or a warning to those in governance either to praise or to guide them. She concludes that Yorùbá proverbs are a repertoire of knowledge used to control the affairs of the communities for peaceful co-existence. Akanbi (2020) examines Yoruba proverbs seeming contradiction and brings to the fore the implications of such contradictions. The paradox of this contradiction affirms that the nature of man calls for different

proverbs that match the behaviour of people. The paper concludes that the seeming inconsistencies observed in Yoruba proverbs portray the nature of inconsistencies and contradiction in man. The paper stressed that proverbs are not contradictory on their own, but they portray unpredictable behaviour found in human nature.

3 Theoretical Framework

This study deploys the Ethnography of Communication (henceforth, EOC) for its discussion. Dell Hymes proposed the theory in 1962, and its major concern is the investigation of language use in its cultural settings. According to Hymes (1962: 22), speech cannot be considered separate from the sociological and cultural factors that help shape linguistic forms and create meaning. As stipulated in Hymes (1962), the theory places a high premium on the interface of language and culture and the different manners in which individuals or groups perceive and experience the world in their domain. It is noted that the primary concern of the theory is the analysis of communication within the wider context of the social and cultural practices and beliefs of the members of a particular culture or speech community. The theory emphasizes the inseparability of culture and language for the total understanding of the meaning of an utterance. Thus, within the framework of the theory, the total understanding of an utterance will be predicated on the following: Settings (of speech event), Participants (people involved in the interaction), Ends (outcome and goal of conversation), Act sequence (actual form and content of what is said), Key (tone and meaning), Instrument (choice of the channel), Norms (of interaction and behaviours), and Genre (type of interaction).

We submit in this study that proverbs are laced with social values, cultural beliefs, world view, and the interlocutors' background knowledge; thus, the understanding requires a firm grasp of EOC. This is so because language cannot be divorced from the social and cultural context of its use, and the participants in the speech community also serve as a formidable force because they create interpretation and meaning for the codes in their communication event.

4 Data Collection

The data for this research were collected from ten informants who are natives of Òṣogbo, Ìkirè, Ìbàdàn, Ọ̀yọ́, and Ògbómọ́ṣọ́. The ages of the informants range from 65- 80 years. The choice of the elderly people is borne of the fact that most of them are not exposed to Western education, and they use Yorùbá mainly for their purpose of communication. Interviews were conducted for our informants in the five towns mentioned above (Òṣogbo, Ìkirè, Ìbàdàn, Ọ̀yọ́, and Ogbòmọ́ṣọ́) and their responses were recorded in digital recorder for the purpose of transcription. Apart from the native speakers, Yorùbá texts on proverbs were also consulted to authenticate the interpretations and comments of the elderly people collected during our fieldwork.

5 Data Presentation and Analysis

5.1 The Animal Totems in the Selected Yorùbá Proverbs

The names of the animals mentioned below that are referred to in the selected Yorùbá proverbs have different characteristics that are related to human life.

Monkey	"Ọ̀bọ"	Lizard	"Aláǹgbá"	Grass-cutter	"Ọ̀yà"
Goat	" Ìdérègbè"	Frog	"Àkèré"	Leopard	"Akátá"
Vulture	" Igún"	Snake	"Ejò"	Cat	"Ológbò/ológìnní"
Pigeon	"Ẹyẹlé"	Elephant	"Erin"	Chameleon	"Ọ̀gà/alágemọ"
Chicken	"Adìyẹ"	Tiger	"Ẹkún"	Toad	"Ọ̀pọ̀lọ́"
Dog	"Ajá"	Lion	"Kìnìún"	Earthworm	"Ekòló"
Rat	"Òkété"	Dove	"Àdàbà"	Hawk	"Àṣá"
Bush fowl	"Àparò"	Falcon	"Àwòdì"	Rabbit	"Ehoro"

Many folklore and myths are associated with these animals, and each of them shares certain unique features that are instructive to human beings in their day-to-day activities.

5.2 Data Analysis

(i) Àkùkọ tí yóò kọ lágbà àṣá ò níí be ní òròmọ. "The cock that will crow will not fall prey to the hawk at tender age."

It is a known fact that a hawk is a significant challenge for a chick's survival at the early stage of its life. However, against all odds, some chicks still outwit the challenge. Note that "cock", "crow," and "hawk" are three symbolic elements in the proverb. The "hawk" symbolizes death or extinction, while the "cock" is synonymous with a young man or woman with full potential. The "crow" means a duty they will perform later in their life. For instance, cock crows wake people up in the morning, afternoon, and evening to tell time. The cock has a masculine connotation, but it symbolizes energy and zeal, which means that one who will become a warrior or prominent person will survive the oddity of untimely extinction to fulfil his destiny. In human parlance, the proverb is used to affirm the decree of providence on one's life that whoever is destined for greatness will not be nipped in the bud by adversaries or death. This proverb is rendered to encourage younger people to be focused, that no matter the tribulations confronting them at the moment, their destiny will prevail. The fact of this proverb is applicable to our day-to-day activities; our growth and development generally as challenges and obstacles may stand as a cog in the wheel of our successes or nip our aspirations in the bud, but destiny in Yorùbá mythology is a strong will that will prevail over the challenges to pave the way for our desired achievements.

(ii) Ìyànjú gbígbà ojoojúmọ́ ni ọ̀bọ fi í mọ igi í gùn. "Series of daily trials make the monkey attain perfect climbing skills."

It is common knowledge that monkeys show skill in climbing trees and playing with the branches and trunk, much to people's admiration. This feat is not attained overnight but through learning and constant practice. It is a known fact that monkeys are used to running on trees. Yorùbá believes that when running activities meet monkeys on the ground, they become weak. The monkey starts learning to climb from the cradle. The monkey always straps the cub on her chest after birth jumping from one tree to another in search of food and water for itself and the cub. Through this process, the cub gets its first orientation. Second, when the cub is a bit mature, the mother will start the initiation of using his hands-on trees to prepare the cub for the future. During this period, a series of mistakes will be made before the monkey attains the level of perfection that will allow it to fend for itself. The proverb is used to emphasize that, through consistency and persistence; perfection will be the end result. It is also used to inform the younger ones or starters that perfection is not attained in an instant; a series of mistakes must have been made, and the ability to resist odds will usher in the desired perfection. The feat attained by the monkey as a sign of success is through constant practice and the ability to learn from different mistakes. Yorùbá elders, having noted that the attributes of consistency, perseverance, and doggedness of the monkey are germane to human success, normally encourage younger people to borrow clues from this special attribute of the monkey in their business, education, and vocation. Note that three words are symbolic in the proverb. "Ọ̀bọ̀" "the monkey" here means a starter/ aspiring individual, "ojoojúmọ́" that literarily means daily symbolizes consistency and perseverance, while igi "tree" is synonymous with success.

(iii) Bù fún mi n bù fún ọ làkèré ń ké lódò. **"**Life is symbiotic croak the frogs in the river."

This proverb is derived possibly from the melodic sounds of the frog, which seem to be like a conversation between them. One will make the sound ọ-ọ-ọ while others will respond similarly. The noise made by the frogs is similar to give and take. This proverb is rendered to tell people that life is a symbiotic relationship. That is if you accord respect or assistance to people, the same will be given back to you. On the other hand, if you insist on not giving necessary help or assistance to people, the same act will be reciprocated to you. It must be noted that proverbs are context-sensitive. This same proverb may be rendered as a form of agreement between two people who are willing to assist each other to show that certain benefits are required from the other person to show appreciation once particular assistance is rendered.

(iv) Ẹ̀sọ̀ pẹ̀lẹ́ lejò ń gun àgbọn. "It is through patience that snake mounts the coconut tree."

The coconut trees are very smooth, and this makes it to be slippery. Thus, a snake that will climb the tree must be patient and extra-careful. In human parlance, the coconut tree symbolizes the soil terrain, the world we live in. It is a common belief among the Yorùbá that life is slippery and that one needs to be careful. In modern-day society, people are eager to make headway in life very early through any possible means available. The older people normally render the proverb to tell the younger ones that patience and perseverance are crucial to success. The elderly, having

observed that snakes need more patience and precision in climbing a tree, felt humans should imbibe the same in climbing their ladder of success. The inference drawn from the proverbs is that when one is not patient in climbing the ladder of any race in life, it is not unlikely that the person will fall without getting to his destination. This proverb is rendered to teach patience and discourage over-ambition.

(v) Erin kì í fọn kí ọmọ rẹ̀ fọn. "Elephants and her offspring can't be trumpeting simultaneously."

Elephants daily, walk-in teams with their calves; the parents walk in the front while the calves stay in the middle. It is only the parents that trumpet on the journey. This silence on the part of calves indicates submissiveness, humility, and courtesy. In a real-life situation, father and son cannot be operating simultaneously to avoid unnecessary rivalry and unhealthy competition. This proverb is rendered to discourage disorderliness in society. Since the adage is context-sensitive, it can also be used to discourage the dominance of particular kin over the rest of the people. It can also be used to emphasize that father and son cannot be in the limelight simultaneously. Yorùbá elders normally use this proverb to caution someone (probably an heir to the throne) who wants to be making a decision when the father is still alive and capable of desisting from such an act. This is not to say that father and son cannot be in the position of authority at the same time, but their domains must be different.

***(vi) Ajá* tí yóò sọnù kò ní í gbọ fèrè ọlọ́dẹ. "**The dog that will go astray will not listen to the whistle of the hunter."

Dogs accompany the hunters on a hunting spree, who probably might be their owners. They help the hunters in sighting and catching animals. Frequently, they are always ahead of the hunters in the bush. As a result, the hunters use the whistle to summon them that they are ready to go home or draw their attention to come close to the hunters' camp. However, the dog that will go astray or get lost in the bush would have dwelt in the bush such that it cannot hear the whistle of the hunters. It must be noted that three words are symbolic in this proverb. They are ajá "dog", fèrè "whistle" ọlọ́dẹ "hunter." The "dog" here means a person, whistle in the context connotes admonition and the hunter could be advisers or elders. This proverb is given to those who are not willing to listen to corrections from others. When the elderly suspect that a community member is engaging in an illicit affair that can ruin them, they usually call the attention of such a person, his relatives, or friends to admonish them to desist from such an act. After a series of warnings, if they insist, the proverb will be given to show that they are toeing the path of danger which will lead to destruction in the end.

***(vii) Àgùntan tó bá bá ajá rìn yóò jẹ ìgbẹ́.* "**Sheep that fraternizes with dogs will eat defecation."

The sheep are known for eating grasses, while local dogs eat feces/excreta in the bush or anywhere. The sheep in this proverb symbolizes mild character, while the dog means wayward character. The excreta here means negative influence, which others may get involved in through peer group pressure. This proverb admonishes the hearer against a lousy company or peer group

pressure and its antecedent influence. It simply shows that one needs to be extra careful as bad company corrupts good manners. This proverb is pertinent in our present society, where adults engage in illicit affairs because of peer group pressure. On this note, the majority have deviated from their upbringing. The proverb is used to caution a child brought up in a decent home not to join a lousy gang to avoid bad influence, which may likely jeopardize their lives.

(viii) Bí ajá bá forí kó imí á mọ ọ̀nà ilé olówó rẹ̀. "When dogs encounter misfortune, it turns back to the owner's domain."

Excreta are associated with local dogs because it is their best food. They go to the bush in search of it. Due to the impatience of the dog, the excreta may fall on its head or stain its body. Local dogs cannot wash their bodies. They have to take the stain to the master for necessary action. Having observed this character of the dog, the Yorùbá believes that whenever dogs encounter strange things in their journey, they will run back to the owner's abode. The same applies to humans; whenever they experience difficulties, they recourse to their home where their family members can assist them.

Moreover, people tend to remember the serenity and sweetness of their home when faced with challenges with nobody to assist them in a foreign land. Apart from this, whenever a person encounters tribulation, their first succour is the family or loved ones. This proverb is used to counsel people on the importance of their home.

(ix) Kàkà kí kìnìún ó ṣe akápò ẹ̀kùn oníkálukú yóò ṣe ọdẹ ti ẹ̀ lọ́tọ̀ọ̀tọ̀. "For a lion to collaborate with a tiger on the same hunting spree, each will do its hunting separately."

Lion and tiger are potent animals, feeding on flesh (carnivores). The two animals cannot be seen together in hunting games because they may have a tough fight. Apart from this, cheating may ensue because the lion has more strength than the tiger. Thus, they will be more productive to hunt separately to realize their goal. This proverb is given to encourage self-reliance to avoid unnecessary cheating. It also captures instances where there was a rivalry between two groups, and one of the parties is unwilling to succumb to the dictates of the other party. As a result, they decided to go on their separate ways to avoid quarrels or misunderstandings.

(x) Gbogbo ìlérí aláǹgbá ò ju ìdọ́bàlẹ̀ lọ. "All the bravados of the lizard does not transcend prostration."

The lizard is known for crawling on the ground and moving on the wall on its stomach. All struggles or braggart cannot exceed its laying posture because it cannot stand up like other animals to resist attacks. This proverb is used to ridicule a bravado or proud person who insists they have nothing to do with other people or who feels their help does not matter. This proverb is used to ridicule a proud person to show that they have nothing to show for their pride.

(xi) Ewurẹ́ kò ní òun ò ṣe ọmọ ìyá àgùntàn, àgùntàn ló ni Iya òun ò bí dúdú. "The goat does not separate itself from the sheep, it is the sheep that laments that her mother did not give birth to blacks."

It is known that goats and sheep are different breeds of mammals, and they share other characteristics in terms of their colours, outlook, and behaviour. These colours (black and white of the animals) are symbolic and synonymous with negative and positive impacts. The black of the goat could mean bad character, poverty, or lack of education. The white of the sheep symbolizes affluence, wealth, and achievements. Note that there are no white goats and black sheep. This proverb shows that interaction between two people from different classes is challenging and most likely impossible. However, it can also be used when the relationship of two parties becomes sour due to the activities of one of the parties that have pushed the other to the wall. It aptly captures the scenario where a party, group, or individual in a relationship has endured the illicit activities of the other party for an extended period and tried every means to sustain the relationship without any hope in sight. This proverb is given to vindicate the party who has reasonably endured the odious acts of the other to show that he wants friendship, but the other insists on enmity.

(xii) Ẹyẹ tó bá fi ara rẹ wé igún ẹ̀yìn ààrò ni yóò sùn. "Any bird that compares itself with the vulture will find itself in the pot of soup."

In Yorùbá tradition, the vulture is a sacred bird that must not be eaten or killed unless it dies naturally. It is an abomination for anybody to kill a vulture in Yoruba land. As a result of the cultural restriction placed on the killings of vultures, they can be found anywhere on the street devouring dead animals, but if any other birds did the same, they would end up in the pot of soup as a meal of the hunter. This proverb is used in instances where one compares their lifestyle, success, and growth with somebody else that has the money or has strong backing. In this situation, the proverb will be used to admonish, warn and caution such a person so that they will desist from such acts they won't find themselves in deep problems. This proverb captures the present situation in our society where social media is in vogue and celebrities have flooded it with various shows to show off their wealth and lifestyle. As a result, many youths want to copy their character and lifestyle. This proverb succinctly summarizes that making an unnecessary comparison is dangerous and deadly, and wanting to behave like somebody else may lead one into the dungeon. The saying means that imitation is risky.

***(xiii)* Àgò ló kó ẹyẹlẹ́ pọ̀ mọ́ adìyẹ.** "It is the roost that brought pigeon and chicken together."

Naturally, pigeons and chickens cannot stay together in a cage; the pigeon will get hurt. Yorùbá had observed the situation critically and concluded that the only thing that can make them stay together is a tight situation where the chicken cannot exhibit its character. This proverb is used when a bad situation brought two people who were not supposed to be in the same position together, primarily people of different classes. In this situation, if the younger person or person of low status is overstepping their boundary, the proverb will be rendered to rebuke and remind them that the situation compels their attitude.

(xiv) Àgò lo máa dé adìyẹ gbẹ̀yìn. "It is the cage that will house the chicken at the end."

The cage is the abode of the chicken. No matter how it roams about, it will come back to it. The cage as used in this proverb has different connotations based on the context of its use. It may symbolize death in a broad sense, the wrath of the law, or succumbing to pressure. This proverb is told to caution miscreants or criminals who thought they could escape the consequences of their crimes; it is a matter of time, and the law will catch up with them. In another sense, it can be rendered to a lady that proves hard to get at the beginning of a relationship by putting up all sorts of troubles to discourage the suitors from wooing her that she will eventually end up with the man she despised. In another context, this proverb may be used to warn men about the inevitable end, death. No matter how long we spend on earth, human beings will fall into the cage of death despite shying away from it.

(xv) Ajá kì í rorò kó ṣọ́ ojúlé mèjí. "A dog cannot be fierce to guard two houses at the same time."

Some dogs are well-trained to perform the function of a guard. These dogs are often ferocious and ready to attack enemies. However, no matter the training the dogs receive, they cannot watch over two different houses simultaneously. This piece of wisdom is used to prevent interference in other people's affairs. It is given to tell people to mind their business instead of poking their nose into matters that have no bearing on their life. In marriages, most mothers-in-law are thorns in the flesh of the bride. Some of them go to the extent of dictating to the bride what to do and how to do it in her husband's house. The Yorùbá elders noticed that situations like this could not be ruled out in real-life situations. Whenever they see such, the proverb will be told to the erring personality so that they can take caution and desist from the act of interfering in the affairs of other people. It must be noted that Yorùbá did intervene when things were about to go wrong. The proverb is used to warn against over-zealousness because wisdom in one domain is idiocy in another.

(xvi) Ajá ráunràun ní í pa ikún. "It is the marauding dogs that kill a squirrel."

Some dogs are so ferocious that their owners no longer use them for hunting, but they do impressive things at times. This proverb is given to educate people, not to under-rate anybody. It is often the case that the person we thought might not have anything to offer may be our saviour. In other words, the proverb emphasizes that people should be treated with care and be given the benefit of the doubt. The adage discourages underrating anyone for whatsoever reason(s).

(xvii) Bí ajá wọ agbádá iná, tí àmọ̀tẹ́kùn wọ ẹ̀wù ẹ̀jẹ̀, tó ológìnní sán àkísà mọ́ ìdí, ẹgbẹ́ apẹranjẹ ní wọ́n ṣe. "If the dog wears a dress of fire, the leopard a dress of blood and cat just a rag tied around its body, they are all animals of the same species which kill and eat animals."

One can see that the three animals mentioned (dog, leopard, and cat) are carnivores" and each of them has a different capacity for hunting, and their levels of hunting are pretty different. Leopard hunts game in the wild for its consumption. On the other hand, the dog hunts in the wild too for

its owner, while the cat only hunts at home. Despite the difference in their power rating, they belong to the same family. The proverb is used to rebuke people in higher positions who want to deprive their subordinates of what should accrue to them due to their outlook or appearance. In essence, the proverb is used to teach people that appearance and reality are two sides of the coin. Often, appearance can be the opposite of reality; on the other hand, it can be reality itself. Thus, no man should be deprived of his right based on their appearance. The proverb also discourages looking down on others because of position or privilege.

(xviii) Alágẹmọ tó ń ṣe jẹ́jẹ́, ikú ń pa á, ánbèlèté ọ̀pọ̀lọ́ tó ń jan ara rẹ̀ mọ́lẹ̀. "Despite the calmness of chameleon death devours it, let alone toad that is hitting itself on the ground."

The chameleon is known for calmness and gentility, while the toad has a hasty disposition in its ways of movement. The chameleon's name in the proverb symbolizes calmness, carefulness, humility, and patience, while the frog is synonymous with impatience and hastiness. Yorùbá observed that with all the good attributes of a chameleon, it does not escape death, let alone the toad searching for death unknowingly through its lifestyle. This proverb is used to teach moderation and humility. It is used to discourage show-off and vivid life that may warrant unnecessary suspicion and hostility. The proverb, just like a sermon, is used to tell people who display wealth with pride to think of people who are humble and moderate but are still unfortunate. The proverb is used to say to people to take life easy.

(xix) Bí ekòló bá jubà ilẹ̀, ilẹ̀ álanu fún un. "If the earthworm acknowledges the superiority of the earth, the earth will open for it."

The Yorùbá people believe that the earth is older than the earthworm. They also share the view that the earworm accords due respect to the soil before it can pierce through it. The application of this proverb to the real-life situation is that honour should be to whom honour is due so that, one can have their way. The proverb is often given among elders when a younger person is addressing a gathering of both old and young to show respect. The inference that could be drawn from this proverb is that respect and honour do not end with one's parents alone, but whoever has an age advantage over us must be respected and honoured.

(xx) **Òkété fi ìjà sẹ́yìn ó dé ọjà ó wá káwọ́ lérí.** "The dead bush rat is brought to the market hanging from a stick to which its front feet are tied."

The Yorùbá believe that the trap of the hunter catches the bush rats because it did not think wise to leave the seed on the web. This proverb is given to both younger and old to teach them how to make reasonable/intelligent decisions to prevent unnecessary regret. Yorùbá are smart people that cherish making decisive decisions that would not lead to regret in the future. Thus, if a person is hasty in deciding, the Yorùbá will use this proverb to sermonize the regret that may ensue if they do not retrace their steps. The adage taught us that it is good to arrest situations to prevent danger in the aftermath.

(xxi) Àdàbà ń pe ògèdè ó ṣe bí ẹyẹlẹ́ kò gbọ́ ẹyẹlé kúkú gbọ́ títiri ló ń tiri. "The dove recites an incantation and believes that the pigeon does not understand; the pigeon understands, but it is hesitating how to act."

The pigeon and dove are birds that share the same character; one lives in the bush while the other is domesticated at home. It is common knowledge that the dove will have access to food more than the pigeon but pretend as if it is suffering. Little did it know that the pigeon was aware but tried to ignore the pretence? This proverb is related to people doing something and believing that other people do not know but prefer to jettison it.

(xxii) Àpa àìgbé dé ilé ni kò jẹ́ kí á mọ̀ pé ológbò ń ṣe ọdẹ. "The fact that the cat does not bring its kill back home prevents us knowing that the cat is a hunter."

Cats hunt games, especially rats, but eat it on the spot without taking it home. This proverb is used to rebuke someone working without anything to show for it. In another context, an adage is told when one struggles to succeed, and his efforts have not yielded the necessary outcome. People will not recognize the actions of a man until he succeeds. A man whose struggle and efforts have not paid off is looked down upon as if he is not making any efforts or working hard, but the man who succeeds is recognized even though he may not be working hard as the unsuccessful man. This proverb emphasizes the ends result as a justification for one's struggles and hard work.

(xxiii) Akátá ń dífá, ìkamùdù ń dìbò, wọ́n ní kí ló ń rùn báwọ̀nyí, ara ta ló mọ́ nínú wọn. "The civet cats are consulting the Ifa oracle, the large black ants are voting among themselves, and one asks the other 'what is it that is smelling?' which of them has a clean body."

Civet cats and black ants have foul odour such that it would not be possible for one to accuse the other. This proverb criticizes people with shady antecedents/characters who blame others for a bad situation. This proverb is used to expose the antics of the politicians who claim they are not corrupt by referring to their predecessor's shortcomings in office, but their present administration is worse. The proverb aptly captures the current political situation in Nigeria where PDP is blaming APC and APC is pointing to the lapses of PDP for lousy leadership. Still, none of the two parties is clean of mismanagement.

(xxiv) Bí àṣá kò bá fẹ́ fín àwòdì níràn, ojú sánmọ̀ tó ẹyẹ ẹ́ fò láìgún ara wọn. "If the hawk does not want to tease the kite the sky is big enough for any bird to fly without bumping into each other."

Kite and hawks maintain different spaces in the sky without interference from each other, even though they feed on chicken. This proverb is used to emphasize living and letting others live in society. The Yorùbá notice that the sky is vast enough for different types of birds to dwell without affecting one another. The world has enough space for everyone to live and succeed in human terminology. Thus, no one should prevent or hinder the success of the other. Yorùbá admits that there are competitions in business, politics, trade, contracts, and so on. Still, each of

the competitors must be given an equal opportunity to explore, knowing full well that one of them must win the race.

(xxv) Ẹnu ehoro kò gba ìjánu. "The hare's mouth cannot accommodate the bridle."

The bridle is peculiar to the horse because it is used to direct its movement. It is a known fact that the bridle is larger than the rabbit. As a result, its mouth cannot withstand it. This proverb is told when one cannot meddle in particular issues. In the Yorùbá settings, essential matters are left to the elders or people who have sound knowledge to take care of them. Furthermore, in Yorùbá culture, certain errands are not given to a younger person. For instance, the news of sudden death, drowning in water, and land disputes are always given to the king, chiefs, and prominent people in the society to handle.

(xxvi) Adìẹ ńjẹ́ àgbàdo, ó ń mu omi, ó ní oun kò ní eyín, ìdérègbè tí ó ní eyín ńjẹ okúta? "The fowl eats corn and drinks water, yet it complains that it has no teeth; does the goat with teeth heat stone?"

One will notice that a chicken has no teeth. Still, it can devour pebbles, while a goat with all the teeth cannot do so. This proverb is told to someone who enjoyed certain privileges and still complains by comparing themselves to others who have more benefits but did not achieve the same thing. This proverb applies to whoever is using other people's lifestyles as a yardstick without acknowledging that they stand a better chance than them. It condemns the unnecessary comparison of one's opportunity with another who has a bigger chance with fewer achievements.

(xxvii) Àdàbà kò fi oúnjẹ sí ọ̀fun òrófó, olúkùlùkù ń wá oúnjẹ sí ẹnu ara rẹ̀ ni. "The dove does not put food into the mouth of the green bush pigeon; each bird finds its own food."

The proverb is told to command one's job and show its superiority, that no other job is better than one's occupation because the work is putting food on the owner's table just like other jobs do for their owners. This proverb is used to teach self-pride and reliance on one's position and source of income. It is used to inform or educate people to have the confidence and boldness to say whatever legitimate job they are engaged in as long as they do not beg others to feed them.

(xxviii) Ajá mọ ọmọ ti ẹ̀ fún lọ́mún ó mọ ti òdù ọ̀yà kì mọ́lẹ̀. "Dog knows how to breast-feed her offspring but knows how to grip that of the grass-cutters."

Dogs typically protect their offspring by monitoring their steps and keeping vigil to ward-off humans and other animals from attacking them. Still, whenever it goes hunting, it kills the offspring of the crass-cutters. The proverb is given to rebuke the authority when double standards are used for people entitled to the same treatment. The saying also emphasizes that sons and slaves are born through the same process. Thus, equal treatment should be given to both. That is, justice must be served accordingly without fear or favour. This proverb is used to reprimand people who protect their children and maltreat other people's children.

(xxix) Àdàbà ò náání à ń kùn gbẹ́ pápá ń jó ẹyẹ oko ń fò lọ. "The dove takes no notice of someone burning the bush; the fire burns and the bird flies off."

Dove is one of the birds in the savannah forest. It has the character of looking for where there is serenity. As a result, it flies to another place whenever the bush is set on fire, not minding whether its former abode has been destroyed. This proverb is told to caution stakeholders in a community to be wary of outsiders who do not care if the community is destroyed. In Yorùbá community, the elders typically take cognizance of happenstances in their environment. They usually caution their children not to mingle with people who can cause mayhem in their community and run to another place for safety.

(xxx) Àjátì àwọ̀n tí ń kọ́ àparò lọ́gbọ́n. "The damaged net teaches the bush fowl a lesson."

Net is one of the traps that are used in catching bush fowl. When the bush fowl is detected, it will struggle to escape from the net. If it runs from the net by luck, it would have gathered experience on how to surmount the net whenever it falls into the same trap. The proverb emphasizes that experience is the best teacher. Experience often teaches someone the steps to take and how to handle them when one falls into a crisis. In education, previous knowledge is very pertinent in facing new challenges, which is why; teachers are often advised to start from the known to the unknown when new topics are introduced. The proverb shows that experience (whether negative or positive) typically prepares one's mind for the future.

From the data presentation and explanations provided so far, one issue interested this present research. What is the rationale behind the use of animal totems in Yorùbá proverbs? This issue will be discussed in this section.

6 The Sociolinguistic Implication of Animal Totems in Yorùbá Proverbs

The Yorùbá philosophy underscores the fact that animals also exhibit specific characteristics peculiar to human beings. These characters are used in Yorùbá proverbs metaphorically to refer to a human being trailing the animals' part. This observation among the Yorùbá is in tandem with the behaviourist approach, which stipulates that human and animal behaviour is similar or identical. Yorùbá also believes that each of the animals in the bush has human manifestations. That is why they usually say ***Ìṣe ènìyàn ni ìse eranko,*** "human behaviour is similar to animal behaviour." Using animal totems in proverbs among the Yorùbá people have two implications:

(i) It is a means of coding information reserved for the wise.

(ii) It is also a conventional way to oust outsiders from the conversation.

The relationship between the Yorùbá and animals that led to the derivation of the proverbs is borne out of the agrarian society of the ancient Yorùbá where they relate freely with some of the animals. The keen observation of the animal characters by the old Yorùbá people forms the basis of all the sayings with animal totems. The relationship between ancient Yorùbá and the animals

is clearly shown in their panegyrics. The ancient Yorùbá believe that they are sons and daughters of some animals. The relationship of Yorùbá people with animals is evident in their various panegyrics when they are rendered. For instance, Ìjẹ̀ṣà people's panegyric clearly shows their affiliation with tiger (***ẹ́kún***). They are praised in their panegyric as ***ọmọ ọwá, ọmọ ẹ́kùn,*** "the children of ọwá and the children of the tiger." The Aláàfin Ọ̀yọ́, on the other hand, has a panegyric that relates to elephant (***erin***). Also, among the Yorùbá people, certain tribes are prohibited from eating certain animals because of their affinities with such animals. For instance, the olòjèé families are not allowed to eat parrot, Tedé people are forbidden from eating black cray-fish, while Sẹ̀pẹ̀tẹ̀rí people are prohibited from eating duck. It is a general belief among the Yorùbá people that members of the tribes mentioned above, where these animals are revered, are not to harm, kill, or eat them. These facts enumerated above testify to the cordial relationship that existed between the ancient Yorùbá and the animals in the forest.

7 Conclusion

In this study, we have examined animal totems in selected Yorùbá proverbs and their instructive information based on the ethnography of communication. It is argued that proverbs relating to animals are used to educate, inform, admonish, ridicule, encourage, advise, warn, and satirize the polity. It is also established that Yorùbá people use proverbs with animal totems metaphorically to mirror their philosophy and worldview.

Notes

1. The Yorùbá are a group of people who are supposedly believed to be the descendant of Oduduwa. Yorùbá people are found in six states, namely Lagos, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Ekiti, Ogun, some parts of Kwara, Kogi, and Edo State in Nigeria. The population of Yorùbá speakers is estimated at 50million (2006 census). The language (Yorùbá) is spoken mostly in the Western part of Nigeria. Apart from the states mentioned in Nigeria, Yoruba is also spoken outside the shores of the country in Benin Republic, Cuba, Brazil, Trinidad, and Tobago.

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Intercultural Communication Strategies Used in *Liam Dan Laila* Film

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Abstract

The phenomena of bilingualism and multilingualism are important elements of effective relations in more than one speech community. These skills are not only used to communicate but can also be used as a tool or a strategy to achieve a certain goal, such as business goals or a social relationship. This study observes how Laila in "Liam dan Laila Film" uses her multilingual ability integrated with intercultural communication strategies to launch and keep business relationships. Furthermore, this research uses a descriptive qualitative-interpretative method supported by intercultural communication strategies to analyze Laila's communication with her customers. This research found that Laila uses her language skills to reach some of her goals, namely to reach wider customers for her accessories business, and to make friends with other people from other countries, as well as to share her knowledge about culture. With these strategies, Laila can tie herself to three different speech communities from three foreign languages that she speaks, namely English, Mandarin, and Korean, so that she can reach her goals. Consequently, Laila uses her multilingual skill to overcome linguistic barriers in her communication with her customers. In conclusion, intercultural communication strategies can be applied in a process of interaction between speakers with different systems of language channels to gain the purpose of their communications.

Keywords: *intercultural communication strategies, linguistic barriers, language channels, multilingual ability*.

Introduction

In life, humans need to interact with each other. Language can be reworked since the conventions are agreed upon by all the members of the speech community. Besides, language can become a way for every human to conduct their social lives, and it can also become the main factor that builds human communities (Wright 2016). Regularly, in a multilingual society, there will begin to emerge many different kinds of communities within a variety and mixture of linguistic sources (Roman 2019). Therefore, within its scope, individuals may belong to several speech communities.

Intercultural communication terms refer to the interaction process between groups who share different systems of symbolic resources. Intercultural communication deals with the identification of communications of a shared system of symbolic verbal and nonverbal behavior that is meaningful to group members (Fong and Chuang 2004: 6). The process of cultural identification is how and why people identify with one another and form cultures. The interaction between the different lingua cultural representatives serves as intercultural mediation that takes the classical forms of translating and interpreting in mediating between different lingua cultures and their representatives. Cultural differences may affect the way people speak to each other. They have different unique styles or characteristics to avoid the barrier in communicating between the channels (Popescu et al. 2014).

Intercultural communication strategies can be applied as cross-cultural skills in global business professionals who typically exchange information with a group of people around the world. People need to understand each other through knowing other cultures when conducting

cross-cultural communication to prevent misinterpretation (Nguyen-Phuong-Mai 2020). People need to consider cultural conventions to gain effective intercultural communication strategies that prepare people to have inter-cultural communication across the target cultures when building and maintaining relationships (Zhu, Nel, and Bhat 2006). Ting-Toomey (2010) stated that there are three traditional approaches to explore intercultural communication that is interpretive, critical and social science. Certain theoretical value dimensions in the social science approach can be used in describing and predicting specific intercultural communication phenomena.

Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov (2010: 7–9) used the total concept of manifestations of culture and at a different level of depth for symbols, heroes, rituals and values. The deepest manifestations of culture are the most superficial, and values are represented by the symbol. Models for cultural behavior are represented as heroes. The way language is used in text and beyond text, in daily communication is represented by ritual. Values are feelings with positive and negative aspects that are acquired early in our lives. From figure 1 below, we can see the cultural dimension scales of China, Indonesia, and South Korea for this study.

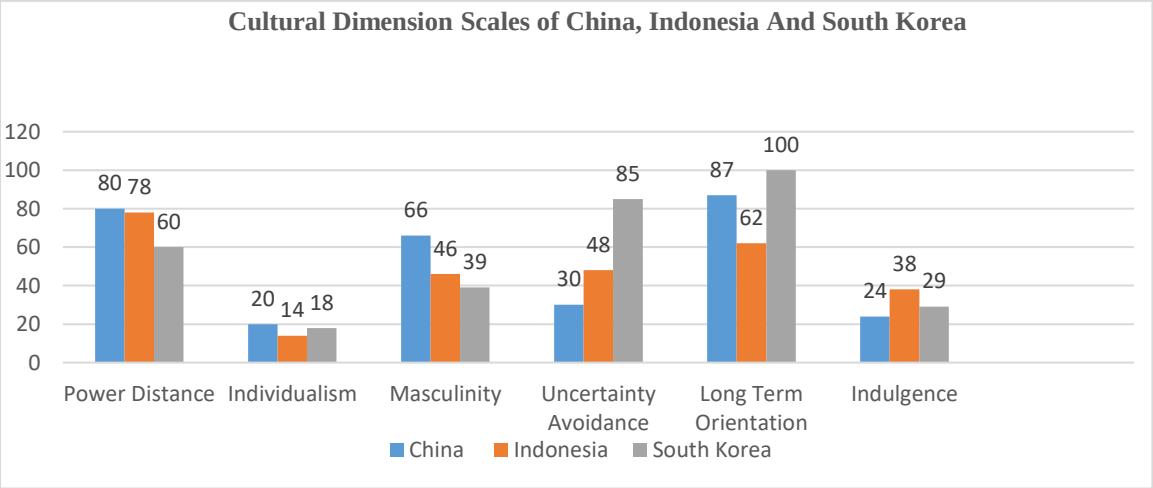

Figure 1. Cultural Dimension Scales of China, Indonesia And South Korea
Source: https://www.hofstede-insights.com/product/compare-countries/

A comparison of cultural dimension scales between China, Indonesia and South Korea (Figure 1 above) shows the sharp contrast between the three national cultures, especially in such aspects as uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation. The uncertainty avoidance dimension deals with facts that can never be known in the future. This ambiguity brings anxiety because of unknown situations (Hofstede et al. 2010: 195). For long-term orientation, the dimension defines how every member of society has to preserve some connections with the past while assigning something of the present and future (Hofstede et al., 2010: 259; Q. Zhang, 2018). One can imagine how hard it might be for people from the three countries to deal with each other. However, in the spirit of intercultural communication, people must adopt appropriate strategies for treating each other and as a result, overcome intercultural barriers (Meng 2018).

Intercultural communication strategies have long moved between a description of what people do, that is, how their speech, paralanguage, and nonverbal behavior change toward their interlocutors. Furthermore, Intercultural communication has always invoked the important role of tactics, or immediate behavioral responses to what has happened in the preceding conversational turns. The early and continuing emphasis on intercultural contexts meets this criterion, as it provides evidence of the link between language, in and outgroup attitudes, and the self-concept (Gallois et al. 2016: 193-194). Intercultural communication strategies suggest some approaches that build communication between accommodative attitude and authentic performance and perceptions. An approximation is a main strategy in some communications when a bilingual or multilingual person chooses whether to change to the language of a stranger who is asking directions or to maintain his or her language (Tracy, Sandel, and Ilie 2015). Besides, the speech community that is owned by an individual comes with the advantage that the community identifies and determines the various identities they have. Thus, to predict which group or community, an individual will consider that there are some aspects used to identify and classify to, such as religion, regional origin, profession or social class, and characteristics (Wardhaugh 2006).

The speech community appears together with a specific purpose. This is closely related to the context between ideologies and practices in each community. In a community, they usually gather based on "norms" which are consciously created therein (Singer 2018). Therefore, one can decide which community they wish to join. As for the community that has a bilingual member, they are united with structuralism that emphasizes abstract language models. As for multilinguals, they pay attention to the diversity of languages in their communities as well as in the world. Both are distinguished through linguistic practice or linguistic repertoire, which is the most interesting part of communication (Pauwels 2016).

In a multilingual community, there may be people who can speak multiple languages at the same time. This determines the community's intention in using code-switching and code-mixing and in their interactions (Wartinah and Wattimury 2018). These two things are examples of the phenomena of a person's linguistic habits. A person's linguistic habits are influential in reflecting a feature on one's identity. Usually, this is viewed from the relationship between the multilingual context in the media and its linguistic form and social context (Jacquemet 2019).

Having said that, film can be one of the best ways to reflect on situations portrayed in the literature that echoes real life to convey a message to a group of people gathered in a certain place and situation. Movie messages of mass communication can take any form depending on the mission of the film. The message in the film uses the symbolic mechanism that exists in the human mind in the form of message content, sound, speech, and conversation. The cultural representation of the film refers to the construction of all forms of media against all aspects of reality. The representation does not only involve how cultural identity is presented or rather constructed in a film, but is also constructed in the production process by a society that consumes the cultural values represented in the film (Dewi 2012).

In this study, we will use the film *Liam dan Laila* (2018). This film tells about Laila, who comes from Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, Indonesia, where she speaks Minang language or Indonesian, but she can also speak other languages: English, Korean, and Mandarin. Laila's multilingual ability becomes one of the strategies that she uses to develop her business. Based on that, this research will analyze the intercultural communication strategies that Laila uses to communicate with people around the world through her social media. This study proposes the following research question as follows: How does Laila use intercultural communication

strategies when interacting with foreign buyers and other foreign language speech communities in *Liam dan Laila*?

Method

The purpose of this research is to explore the integration of intercultural communication strategies used and multilingual speakers to gain the goal of communication in business. We chose "*Liam dan Laila* film" because the main character in this film called Laila that speaks three different foreign languages such as English, Mandarin, and Korean. This leads to a chance for her to join the other different speech community, not only Minang speech community, but she can also join the English speech community, Mandarin speech community, or Korean-speaking community. Laila's multilingual language ability showing with her intercultural communication strategies was analysed in this study. This research employed descriptive qualitative-interpretative methods generally applied in the study of literary work (George 2008). This research used the data collected that are in the form of text or image (Creswell and Creswell 2018). The instrument in this research is *Liam dan Laila* film.

Discussion

To answer the research question about intercultural communication strategies used by the main character, Laila, data from observation field notes and interview responses were collected. Excerpts from parts of the film were transcribed verbatim.

The classification is based on how the film described the character of Laila. The classification is being discussed through the aims of Laila that portrayed her ability in communicating with her customers and when communicating with her friends using intercultural communication strategies.

Communicating with Buyers

In this film, Laila is depicted as an online shop merchant. She uses social media to be able to advertise the accessories that she makes widely so that she can reach a wider range of buyers, who do not only come from around Indonesia, but also from outside Indonesia. In her efforts, Laila also learned to use various languages to be able to communicate with buyers from various countries. The variety of languages that Laila learned creates an ability in her to be able to join speech communities in every language she speaks. The languages that Laila learned that are shown in this film are Korean, Mandarin and English. Therefore, Laila's plan to join some of these communities was based on her aim to make her accessories business penetrate the international market.

The first thing that the writers will discuss is the ability of Laila in joining the Korean speech community. Laila's ability begins with Laila's understanding of the Korean language. Besides, in keeping up with her knowledge of the Korean language, Laila also tries to study the culture that is so inherent in Korean people. The culture that is meant of course has to do with the use of language that can be practiced by Laila, as she is non-Korean people. Laila doing this study is to gain understanding and fulfilment of her interlocutor's attention to her. Laila's efforts in learning the language materialized when there is a buyer who buys the accessories that she sells, which the buyer is coming from Korea. From here Laila is considered to have entered the Korean speech community, which is shown in the film at 13:08 – 13:18 minutes when Laila got a phone call from her customer from the Korean country.

Laila to her Korean customer: *Yeoboseyo ... Naneun, Laila ... Jinjja? ... Joahaeyo?* (Hello … Hey, it's me, Laila … Really? … Do you like it?)

(13:08 – 13:18)

From Laila's dialogue above that indicates the conversation between Laila and her customer from Korea, it can be seen that Laila is fluent in Korean. When viewed from the use of the language shown there, Laila uses the basic Korean language used by non-Korean people. However, the meaning of Laila's conversation with the Korean customer shows that the two are close. In practice, individuals will have conversations and talk to each other in different languages, that was based on the social and cultural diversity of each individual. This usually happens to an individual who maintains a pattern of language usage (Singer 2018). However, Laila adopted a different practice by trying to understand the manner of language for each language. She tries to understand each of her customers and tries to bond with them as they speak. The use of the word "*Naneun, Laila*" (It's me, Laila), shows Laila's closeness to her customers. Especially with the use of the word "*Jinjja?"* (Really?), where this word is usually used in close relatives, because the last word *"-yo"* is removed, which is a sign of formal language. Laila here, as an individual who borrowed Korean words to communicate with Korean people, is also trying to imitate the sound structure of a Korean. Laila's attempt to imitate or even modify the sound structure of the Korean speech community by adding the "*–yo"* behind the words spoken reflects this process of modifying the sound structure. Laila mentioned the ending *"-yo"* not only to refer to as a 'polite word' or 'formal' but also to show that her manner of speech and manner of speaking would not feel strange to her Korean buyers. This is a phenomenon that occurs in individuals who try to learn another language by borrowing the language as well (Kwon 2017). Indeed, this was done by Laila so that she could be considered a part of the Korean speech community. Likewise, with the fact that Laila got a phone call from her customer and she can answer the question of her Korean customer, as well as she can also ask her Korean customer whether the customer liked the item or not, so it provides details that Laila has been accepted into the Korean speech community.

The next effort was shown by Laila's character in continuing her strategy in spreading her online shop to other countries also looks successful with the presence of Chinese customers who are shopping at her online shop. Laila can think of Chinese customers who buy her merchandise as a way of success that she will achieve. As it is known that China is the most populous country in the world, therefore, Laila may think that the steps she has taken are big enough. Laila will begin to think that one day this buyer will use goods purchased from her shop in her country, and there will be many residents there who will be interested in the goods she designed. Therefore, Laila tried to increase her knowledge of the Chinese language and culture, resulting in her acceptance in the Mandarin speech community. The way Laila easily joins to Mandarin speech communities is being reflected in the film, this is shown at 13:18-13:33 minutes, which is shown when Laila is showing her accessories that she made to the Chinese buyer.

Laila to her Chinese customer: *Zhè shì quán hēi de, dàn hái yǒu gèng duō ... Hóngsè de yě hěn kě'ài. Nǐ xǐhuān nǎ yīgè? ... Hēisè dì nàgè.* (This one is all black, but there's more … The red one is also lovely. Which one would you like? ... The black one.)

(13:18 – 13:33)

The dialogue between Laila and the Chinese customer above, which happens through a video call, stated that Laila was also successful in using Mandarin. The use of the word that Laila uses in this conversation is broader because it involves the word for the varieties of colours. The variety of speech presented by Laila is a transcultural model of action, in which the utterance that is uttered, which is the linguistic value of the target language, is carried out through various codes (Jacquemet 2019). The code that Laila uses in the film is the code when she shows a black necklace and then shows a red one. Laila used it to offer the buyer a choice of two available items, the necklaces (black and red ones) that Laila has in her shop. As in the words "*dàn hái yǒu gèng duō"* (but there's more) and "*Nǐ xǐhuān nǎ yīgè?"* (Which one do you like?), which signifies an offer or choice sentence. As it can be seen in the dialogue above, Laila here is trying to communicate with her buyers, of course, she will try to offer the accessories that she sells to her customers. From this, it can be seen that Laila, who in her context is a speaker, can position herself in all circumstances in sorting out the use of the language she is going to speak. This reflects how language acts as something that can be constructed socially. From the way Laila offers the accessories that she sells in Chinese to her buyer, it has a powerful effect on the buyer. The way Laila speaks in Mandarin, which sounds very convincing to the Chinese buyer, makes Laila become a friendly and understanding seller. This indicates that through language, one can assume the identity of the speaker (Bucknam (Afang Sun, 孙阿芳) and Hood 2020). Therefore, from the Chinese language skills that Laila shows in this film, we can conclude that Laila has also been accepted in the Mandarin speech community.

Surely, someone's effort to reach the international market begins with mastering English, which is a universal language, and which is included as a strategy used by a seller. This strategy emerges with the existence of an individual's motivation and self-determination to achieve their dreams. The dream here is of course in the sense of leading to professional acculturation in the eyes of the communities they are targeting (Jiang and Zhang 2019). Likewise, the film shows Laila when she has a customer who speaks in English. This led to the portrayed action of Laila joining the English speech community in this film. The way Laila tries to join the English speech community, of course, cannot be separated from what is explained above, namely about cultural knowledge in the intended community. In the English speech community, a person's speech style, such as formal or non-formal, does not receive as much attention as in Korean culture. However, in the grammar of the English speech community, it is necessary to have a friendly nature and an understanding of the context in the speech, which is not only in English but in all speech communities. In the context of this study, Laila is a seller, therefore knowledge is needed in the language structure in the context of the seller and buyer discussions. After mastering the required language structure, Laila as a speaker will try to convey it in friendly language as a seller who wants buyers to feel at home and later becomes a regular buyer. This can be seen from Laila who got a phone call from her customer which she answered in English, this scene happened at 32:10 – 32:30 minutes.

> Laila to her customer who speaks in English: Hello, Laila Collection … Yes, right. … Hi, I've received your notification. … Yes, you've transferred, right? ... Yes. Okay… All right. Hope you shop again soon … Thank you so much. Bye.
>
> **(32:10 – 32:30)**

From the dialogue above, it is shown that Laila answered the phone from one of her customers by using English. From there, it can be inferred that Laila also has customers from countries

other than Korea and China, where the buyers are speaking in English. The use of English that is used by Laila certainly seems to be very fluent and smooth. As it has been explained before, Laila is a smart woman that can attract buyers because she can show her identity to this buyer who uses English. Language learning is closely related to humans, where the confusion of a person's identity can be identified or even constructed by the language they use (Bucknam (Afang Sun, 孙阿芳) and Hood 2020). The identity construction is related to the social process, which follows the social context between Laila and her buyer. So it was when the buyer directly called Laila to confirm the payment she made. This reflects the trust between buyers and sellers, which of course is based on Laila's English language skills. Trust between individuals is what raises the acceptance of one individual in a speech community. As consumers will trust the seller which in the initial interaction they feel comfortable and provide a fast and precise response, thus enabling them to interact again at a later date (Zhang and Curley 2018). That is what happened to Laila, her buyer's trust in Laila for the ability that Laila showed in using English had resulted in her being accepted in the English speech community.

To Expand Friendship and To Share Knowledge

In *Liam dan Laila*, Laila is a person who has a multilingual ability. The multilingual ability that Laila has can be explained in the sense where an individual wants to talk to other people using a certain language, and they will consider the choice of language that they will use as part of a multilingual setting (Ravindranath 2015). That is why Laila uses her multilingual ability when she wants to communicate with her buyers, which indeed some of whom are coming from outside Indonesia. Besides, besides she uses her language ability to help her to communicate with her buyer, as part of reaching wider consumers for her accessories business, she also uses this ability to expand her friendship and also to share her knowledge. When talking about language, sometimes the language barrier that some people have can be a barrier for that person to build relationships with people who come from different regions or communities. However, it is undeniable that sometimes language can also be a facilitator to develop relationships between one person and another, such as friendship development (Suwinyattichaiporn, Chen, and Generous 2016). Likewise, Laila's English skills, as one of the three foreign languages that she is fluent in, can help Laila to make friends with people from other countries besides Indonesia. Laila's friend who comes from another country is Liam.

> Liam: What are they doing?
> Laila: They are protecting me.
> Liam: Do they think I'm gonna grab you and throw you to that lion cage?
>
> **(04:11 - 04:22)**

The evidence above is one of the parts that consist in the film, which shows when Liam arrives in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, Indonesia and meets with Laila and her parents, Laila and Liam communicate by using English. Liam asked Laila what her parents are doing, by flanking her in the middle of them, and Laila said that they are trying to protect her, and with jokes, Liam responded that maybe Laila's parents thought he would throw Laila into the lion's cage because at that time they met at a zoo. As it can be seen, the conversation that happened between Laila and Liam is in English, in which they use the same language, but in fact they are coming from a different country. Based on that, it can be said that there is cross-cultural interaction between Laila and Liam because they have different backgrounds. When there is an interaction like that, it is stated that language becomes a tool that plays an important role (Tsang 2020). And besides,

in his article Tsang (2020) also stated that one of the most important languages in cross-cultural communication is spoken English. As many people already know, English is an international language, so it cannot be denied that English is the most important language to be used in cross-cultural interactions and adaptations. Therefore, because Laila can speak in English, and Liam also speaks in the same language, even though he comes from France, they can understand each other when communicating. Besides, with the same language, which they are good at, can make them close, even if they come from different countries or different communities. That is why language can be a tool to assist cross-cultural adaptation. Besides, Laila and Liam's cross-cultural friendship not only makes them close to each other because of the language that they use, but it can also make their language skills stronger (Gareis and Jalayer 2018), whether it is strengthening Laila's English skills, or strengthening Liam's ability in speak Indonesian.

Jamil: *Sudah pandai bahasa Indonesia rupanya.* (You speak Indonesian fluently.)
Liam: *Ya, saya belajar bahasa Indonesia sejak saya kenal Laila secara online. Namun belum bahasa Minangkabau…Saya punya dua agenda. Yang pertama, saya ingin menjadi Muslim di sini. Yang kedua, kami ingin segera menikah.* (Yes, I've been learning Indonesian, since I met Laila online. But not Minangkabau language, yet. I have two agendas. First, I'd like to convert to Islam here. Secondly, we'd like to marry soon.)
Jamil: *Menikah? Dengan Laila?* (Get married? With Laila?)
Liam: *Ya*. (Yes.)
Jamil: *Agama bukan untuk dipermainkan*. (You don't play with religion.)

(05:23 – 06:14)

The dialogue above happens between Jamil, Laila's uncle, and Liam, and the dialogue between them is in Indonesia. It can be seen from the dialogue that Liam's aim by coming to Bukittingi is not only to meet Laila, but he also intended to convert to Islam. In the dialogue, it was shown that Jamil argued a little with Liam because he knows that after Liam converted to Islam, he wants to marry Laila, which Jamil thinks, is tantamount to playing with religion. In this case, because Jamil speaks Indonesian, and so does Liam, so they also understand what they are arguing about. With Liam who is quite fluent in Indonesian, it is easy for Liam to understand Jamil when they speak, and likewise when Liam communicates with Laila by using English. As is well known, the language ability of each person is different, and therefore there must be some people who have language problems. Some say that language barriers can be the main thing that hinders friendly relations between cultures (Suwinyattichaiporn et al. 2016). And according to Kudo and Simkin, in Suwinyattichaiporn (2016), if two people want to have an inter-cultural friendship, but they speak two different languages, it can be a barrier to the inter-cultural friendship that they want. Liam and Laila are from different countries and languages. There are linguistic and cultural barriers between them. They need to bridge their communications to understand each other.

Liam: Yes, I know. *Saya mengenal Laila di Facebook tiga tahun lalu karena waktu itu saya sedang mencoba mengenal Islam, bukan sedang mencari jodoh*. I got to know Laila on Facebook three years ago because at that time I was trying to get to know Islam, not looking for a soulmate.
Jamil: *Banyak tindakan kriminal diawali dari media sosial.* (Many crimes start from social media.)

Liam: *Itu bukan saya, tuan Jamil. Sekarang, mohon bantu saya agar menjadi Muslim, dan kami menikah.* (It's not me, Mr Jamil. Now please help me to become Muslim, and we are getting married.)

(06:14 – 06:32)

In the dialogue between Jamil and Liam above, it mentions that Laila can get to know Liam because they meet or get acquainted through their social media accounts, that is, through *Facebook.* As it is known, many people from around the world try to make friends thru social media, like *Facebook*, and even though they only meet online, not face to face, they can become close to each other. And this happened to Laila and Liam. Thus, it can be said that Laila and Liam made friends online, then become close to each other, before finally, they decide to meet each other in Bukittinggi. Because they are making friends online, that is through social media or *Facebook,* if Laila or Liam want to share their knowledge, they can still do it. Sharing knowledge can not only be done offline, where everyone meets one-on-one, but it can also be done online, that is through social media. Some experts have recognized that social media is an important tool that will enable everyone to share their knowledge (Ahmed et al. 2019). Thus, it can be said that establishing an online friendship can also be a valuable thing because someone can share their knowledge with others and they will also get new knowledge that comes from people in a different social environment. And that is what Liam experienced. Laila can communicate in English, which is an advantage for her for being able to make friends online, allowing her to meet Liam. Because Laila is a Muslim, and Liam wants to learn about Islam, so Laila explains all the knowledge of Islam that she knows to Liam. So, it can be said, through social media and language ability can make a person establish a friendship and also spread knowledge that many people do not know.

Liam: Although…I can't help but wonder…why does Mr. Jamil always take care of everything? Are your parents not happy with all these?
Laila: No. it's not like that. See, the fact of marriage in Minang is uniting two big families. So, part of the family member, the uncle, usually take care of and also prepare the wedding of their niece. But of course, it's also with the blessing of the parents.
Liam: I see.

(39:13 - 40:00)

The dialogue above shows the conversation between Liam and Laila that happens in English, while they are talking about the marriage in Minang because Liam curious about why Laila's uncle, Jamil, looked so busy helping Liam and Laila to prepare everything for their wedding. As explained by Laila to Liam, indeed when it comes to marriage matters, the maternal uncle, or they will call him *Mamak*, is the busiest person preparing everything and also plays the most important role in determining the right partner for his niece (Iman and Mani 2017). And according to Reenen, in Iman and Mani (2017), she said that in the marriage of Minang, the opinion of the parents of the prospective bride is no longer considered. By using English Laila explained to Liam about marriage in Minang, and because the language has a social character, which in practice language can be a means of actualizing knowledge (Wiratno and Santosa 2014), therefore it can be said that language is a medium for culture (Selmier II, Newenham-Kahindi, and Oh 2015). Thus, although the culture described by Laila to Liam is traditional originally comes from Minang tribe, a tribe that comes from West Sumatra, Indonesia, and

even though Laila explains it in English, not in Indonesian or in Minang language, but it still will contain the same knowledge, which Laila wants to convey about one of the traditions that exist in Minang. As explained, language can be a means to actualize knowledge. In that so, it can be said that the English ability that Laila has not only helps her to make friends with other people from other countries, but her English ability can also help her to share the knowledge that she has with other people who still feel curious and also still do not understand something.

Thus, it can be said that, as a person who originally comes from Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, Indonesia, which makes her become part of Minang speech community, Laila not only speaks in Minang language or Indonesian, but she is also fluent in three other foreign languages, namely, English, Mandarin, and Korean. It can be said that the multilingual ability that is possessed by Laila is included in the speech repertoire that she has when communicating with others. Speech repertoire is a variety of code, manners of speaking, and pattern application, in which these three things have their functions based on the certain situation or events in which a speaker is involved (Jacquemet 2019). Besides, according to Jacquemet (2019) also, he said that speech repertoire is like a variety of language which a speaker will use when they have to adjust the use of their language to certain situation or activities. That is why Laila's multilingual ability can be called a form of speech repertoire that she has because every time she speaks in one language or another, she must use a different manner of language, as well as a different pattern of language. This happens when she has to adjust her accent for each language because each language has a different accent.

With her language skills, if seen from a linguistic perspective, especially in the field of sociolinguistics, it can be possible for Laila to enter or join the speech community of the three languages that she is mastered. In this case, it can be said that an individual can be part of several speech communities, not only one speech community. Therefore, every person can identify themselves with several speech communities, and this thing can be called intersecting communities, which it is influenced by linguistic variation, where this variation can make an individual be seen as a different person on several different occasion because they use different languages (Wardhaugh, 2006). Besides, it causes an individual to become part of several speech communities, and this variation or diversity can also cause the speech communities to intersect, which will gradually shift a social relationship (Silverstein 2015). So, from the possibility that Laila has, that is to join the three different language communities, that is indeed one of the reasons why she tries to master the three foreign languages. Because in the film, it can be said that her multilingual abilities are used as a tool to help her to develop her business that she runs online, as well as to expand her friendship, which in addition, she can use her language skills to share her knowledge of religion and culture with people who come from a different community from her. Without, her mastering the three foreign languages, Laila would not be able to develop her business or develop friendships with foreigners. That is why she must be able to master the three foreign languages, then adjust herself to the three language communities, then she can achieve the goals she wants. So, in this film, language is used by the main character, Laila, as a tool or a strategy to develop her business, so that she can reach wider consumer from outside Indonesia, and language is also used by Laila to make friends with other people from different country and community, as well as to share her knowledge about Islam and culture.

Conclusion

The findings provide useful insights into the intercultural communication strategies that could be used to ensure good service by Laila when dealing with her business customers from

different cultures. The importance of cultural awareness tied with the multilingual skills can have a great advantage in business communication. These business goals are planned by Laila in pursuing the target of her business through the strategy she employs by using intercultural communication strategies.

The awareness of using intercultural communication strategies could be taken as a recommendation when making communication with others from different countries. These strategies can then be used to turn a cultural barrier which may lead miscommunication becoming a strategic communication. This can reduce misunderstandings and positively influence the performance.

A few suggestions for future studies are provided based on the findings of the study. To know the importance of integrating culturally experienced individuals or people or to change intercultural communication behaviors can be conducted by dealing some different cultural situations for further investigations.

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BOOK REVIEW

The Rhetoric of Brexit Humour. Comedy, Populism and the EU Referendum

Simon Weaver: New York: Routledge, 2022, pp. 188

Simon Weaver´s book is an elaborate examination of multifarious ways in which humour and comedy played a role in the Brexit discourse. Focused predominantly on Brexit populism, this publication aims to elucidate how comedy became an effective tool in perpetuating populist narratives as well as in countering them.

The core argument promoted by the author is that both humour and populism share certain similarities, the most essential of them being that both enable slippages of meaning. Therefore, a significant portion of topics discussed in this book revolve around notions of ambiguity, ambivalence and incongruity, all of which are considered as rhetorical devices that enable the elusiveness of language, so vital for the domain of Brexit populism. Following this line of argument, the author asserts that Brexit humour is essential component of Brexit populism, not simply its accompanying element, and so the publication abounds with specific instances of comedic discourse to justify this claim.

Among the characteristics that define populism, the author identifies a lack of core values, hostility to representative politics, a notion of idealized heartland and a reaction to a sense of crisis. In his view, all these features can be easily traced in the Brexit discourse and so they are discussed in more detail in ensuing chapters. To perform his examination of Brexit populism, the author opted for rhetorical discourse analysis as the primary method. This methodological approach accrues practices of discourse analysis, rhetorical analysis, semiotics and linguistics that are subsequently applied to specific instances of Brexit-related comedy and humour. Adhering to Aristotle´s theory of the rhetorical triangle, the author stresses the audience´s role in the formation of a content. In other words, the message is "subjected to polysemy" which becomes fertile ground for the dissemination of populist rhetoric. Even though Brexit populism has been the subject of numerous academic publications since the announcement of the Referendum, this book skilfully offers an examination from a rather unexplored perspective that fuses populism with comedy, humour, and theories of rhetoric.

Structurally, the book consists of seven chapters, each developing the themes of populism and humour from various points of view. The first chapter identifies Brexit populism and Brexit discourse as a source of incongruities entirely dependent on rhetoric. As rhetorical tools, humour and comedy may function as a catalyst boosting populism further, yet the author also draws attention to their potential to achieve the opposite effect, in other words, to function as an undermining force. By addressing specific examples of comedic narrative, his intention is to identify the ways in which incongruity is constructed in Brexit populism. A part of the chapter is dedicated to the issue of ambivalence, one of populism´s most defining features. Under more scrutiny, however, is the notion of *othering*. The author recognizes othering as an endemic feature of populism that serves primarily exclusionary purposes. The chapter culminates with the enumeration of key themes that define Brexit discourse, which are sovereignty, economy, immigration, establishment, fear, and dishonesty.

The following chapter introduces the topic of irony. Drawing on Umberto Eco's and Roland Barthes's definitions of irony, the author emphasizes its capability to conceal the gap between a political and a populist discourse. Expanding the theme further, the focus is drawn towards cynicism and in particular, cynical irony. In the author's view, this notion may account for the recent surge of comedians-turned-politicians. He ascribes this trend to the fact that the dominance of cynical irony in the political sphere does not favour serious political statements. Furthermore, the comedians are particularly equipped with rhetorical skills that allow slippage of meaning that are essential for a populist politician. The chapter also opens the topic of globalization and neoliberalism in order to examine their role in Brexit's populist narratives of *the people vs. the elite*. The chapter ends with the analysis of the synthesis of racism and irony in the Brexit discourse, and it presents comedic responses to prevalent narrative of Brexit racism from both, *Leave* and *Remain* perspectives.

The third chapter explores the notion of a trickster, which in mythology is understood as a disruptor, as someone who brings changes to established social order. The author detects the presence of a trickster solely on the *Leave* side. Citing as an example Michael Gove's mockery of experts, or Nigel Farage's *Breaking Point* poster, the author subsequently dissects their modus operandi that aim to create new discursive taboos in order to supress the voice of their opponents. As the chapter later shows, counter-narratives to such populism significantly benefit from comedy and humour. Specifically, they become a vehicle that enables to "speak the truth to power." The rhetoric of Nigel Farage has become the source of yet another theme the author develops in this chapter, and that is racism. Nonetheless, his focus is on a racism expressed in a nuanced manner, or as he labels it, "liquid racism," which is a racism of "ambiguous cultural signs." Such conception also overlaps with irony's preconditions for elusiveness of meaning in a discourse.

While previous chapters were directed at the populist discourse, the fourth chapter observes its antithesis - anti-populism. Anti-populism is primarily the domain of the *Remain* discourse, yet, as the author points out, not exclusively. As the name itself indicates, the notion is primarily defined by what is stands against, however, its true nature is more intricate. Notably, while populism tends to abound with emotional responses, anti-populism is not devoid of emotion either. More importantly though, the author identifies hostility towards representative politics as a crucial feature shared by both of them. Such anti-populist hostility is manifested in questioning the intelligence and cognitive abilities of the *Leave* voters. This stance is interpreted as another form of othering, which leads to the conclusion that the anti-populists seem unable to evade the very thing they (rightfully) criticize. The chapter also addresses the use of a caricature as a means to oppose the proponents of Brexit populism, for instance by describing Boris Johnson as "scruffy" or by referring to Nigel Farage as "a toad, or a frog". The author however accentuates the limitations of such rhetorical devices. He maintains that the relationship between populism and anti-populism is defined by their co-dependency.

The next chapter tries to elucidate the relationship between Brexit, populism and social class. The idea that the Brexit vote is a revolt of working classes against the elite is rather simplistic, yet it entered the public consciousness, and it has become one of the dominating Brexit narratives. Therefore, the author addresses this widely held opinion by rightfully pointing out that statistical facts do not corroborate this narrative. Instead, he views Brexit as an example of "pan-class populism", i.e., the populism which transcends class boundaries. Yet despite

easily verifiable facts, social inequality still permeates the discussions about Brexit, and it is one of the building blocks of Brexit populism. What also deserves to be mentioned in this context is that the acceptance of this view is observable among the supporters of both sides, *Leave* and *Remain*. The author offers several examples of comedic responses to this view, justifying his claims that populists and anti-populists actively nourish this narrative for their own advantage.

Chapter six moves further into the domain of language in an effort to substantiate the author´s statement that Brexit discourse is severely affected by the language of humour. By developing his theory of shared characteristics between humour and populism further, the author maintains that the understanding of the rhetoric of comedy is necessary for the understanding of Brexit itself. The chapter explains humour´s metalinguistic function that is manifested in its ability to divert literal meaning. In other words, the meaning in humorous rhetoric evades being exactly defined, creating space for ambiguity that can be also found in a populist discourse. Subsequently, the chapter provides examples of the use of several rhetorical instruments detected in the Brexit discourse. For instance, allegory in author´s view includes meaning that can be conceived of in moral terms. Metonym may serve the purpose of othering. In Brexit discourse a part becomes the whole in a populist understanding of the people. Brexit has also become a source of numerous neologisms, such as ´Brexit hole´ (as a reference to rabbit hole), ´Remoaners´ or ´Bregret,´ to mention a few. Tautology is also represented in the (in)famous motto "Brexit means Brexit," which as the author explains, is rather vague, possibly even meaningless.

In the last chapter the author takes a look at the years that followed ´Brexit Day´ and the manners in which Brexit has become embedded in humoristic discourse. The author here also addresses strategies that for Remain-supporters provide a coping mechanism. The last chapter also gives more space to the examination of a political satire. In his extensive analysis of the movie *Brexit: The Uncivil War* released in 2019, Mr. Weaver recognizes the representation of political figures as satirical, and among the notions characteristic for populism he detects cynical irony, nostalgia for the past, and cultural decline. The analysis is centred around the role of Dominic Cummings in the Brexit campaign as portrayed in the film, but the chapter subsequently delves further in post-Brexit fascination with Mr. Cummings by pointing out plentiful instances of depictions of him that have been a vital source of mockery in political satire. At the very end, the chapter examines how the omnipresence of Brexit in the public discourse that had lasted for several years was suddenly erased by the outbreak of Covid-19.

The publication offers reflections about this major political issue from an angle that allows us to see the nuances often overshadowed in the public discourse. Mr. Weaver has presented a range of tools that can help us to navigate the often-intense discussions concerning not only Brexit, but in a broader sense also populism and nationalism. One objection that could be made is the fact that the instances of *Leave*-related comedy are much less represented, and in order to elucidate the humoristic responses politically leaning towards the *Leave* stance, the author relies only on a handful of comedians holding such views. It needs to be said, on the other hand, that it is generally believed that comedians and artists tend to be more left-leaning and Brexit has certainly proved to be a right-wing cause. The rather limited representation of pro-Brexit comedy might be therefore ascribed to this fact. Overall, Mr. Weaver´s approach that lies in serious and detached study of comedy has produced valuable results, particularly by

disclosing unexpected similarities between populism and humour. It may be concluded that amid countless analyses of Brexit, this publication stands out due to its unique perspective that contributes to better understanding of this recent political phenomenon.

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