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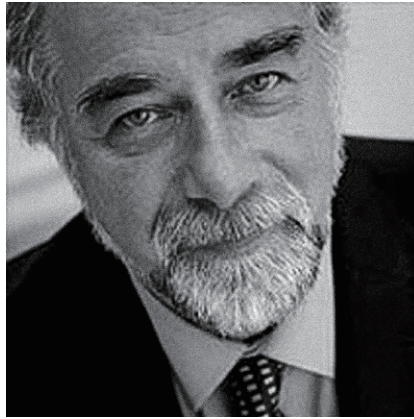
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Schubert: The Strange and the Supernatural

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Abstract

This study aims to comprehend better the culture surrounding Romantic aesthetics of fantasy and the uncanny during the nineteenth century (c.1800-1890) and evaluate how their expression in Schubert's music can be understood. Initially, it will examine philosophical writings (Chander 2015; Ffytche) artwork (Crane 2013; Dunekacke 2016) and literature (Geistfeld 2015; Smajic 2003) of the period, combining this examination with academic literature (Ellerman 2015; Trumball 1905) to explore why and how ideas around fantasy and the uncanny were spreading through European culture and taking on extra significance. After explaining why Schubert is the choice of subject for this study, it will apply these findings to hermeneutic musical perspectives of Schubert's music, providing insight into the relationship between aesthetic theory, cultural practice, and analytic theory. Firstly, the literary perspective, connected to the supernatural, poetic, and Romantic notions of imagination (Adorno 1928; Brittan 2017; Gooley 2018, Hengyue 2020; Young 2011) followed by, the psychoanalytic perspective, connected to psychological theories and ideas surround the 'Other', Hidden Strange and Unfamiliar (Lalonde 2017; Klein 2009; Kramer 1998; Smith 2010; Spitzer 2011). Repertoire explored with these perspectives will include Schubert's Octet, *Der Wanderer*, *Erlkönig*, *Gretchen am Spinnrade*, *Ganymed*, Symphony in C major and more. The findings will draw conclusions about how fantasy and the uncanny in Schubert's music can be best understood and analysed. Finally, these findings may benefit other areas of scholarship and be developed in future research.

Keywords: Music, Schubert, Fantasy

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Introduction

“The Fantasy is an elusive genre...many writers after 1900 simply abandoned the possibility that the genre could be defined at all.” (Coppola 1998 p.169)

Fantasy and related concepts have long been under investigated in musicology. Where they have been included, they've been treated with high caution, often subject to certain musical conditions and forms, usually the fantasia form or evaluated within contemporary film literature. (Butler 1974; Coppola 1998)

This has limited our cultural, aesthetic, and philosophical understanding of these concepts within music which can be understood as their phenomenological, subjective, emotional, psychological, sensory, and artistic value.

This study aims to investigate and evaluate the way in which Romantic aesthetics of fantasy and the uncanny (c.1800 onwards) can be understood, and how their expression in nineteenth century composer Franz Schubert's music can be analysed. Schubert was an extremely innovative composer of the period who: “chose his own path...as a songwriter- he was clearly right in his choice of German texts...who gave him the right sort of emotional stimulus.” (Gammond, 2018, p.31)

Many regarded Schubert's works as feminine in tone and his work was held against societal standards and artistic notions of gender and artistic notions, meaning he was largely overshadowed by those composers who embodied the heroic, masculine image that became so popular during the century. (Gammond 2018, p.164)

This however makes Schubert a wonderfully appropriate choice of subject for this study, for concepts of fantasy and the uncanny were often explored using what many perceived to be feminine musical qualities and throughout forms incorporating poetry and music.

Initially, this study will consider fantasy and uncanny in other art forms during the nineteenth century to enrich our social, philosophical, and cultural understanding of it before exploring it musically. Previously disparate areas of scholarship in relation to the fantastic, uncanny, and supernatural in music, produce two perspectives on evaluation which I have described as literary and psychoanalytic. We shall explore these in further detail through Schubert's compositions.

Culture, Society and the Arts; Fantasy and the Uncanny in the nineteenth century

The Romantic aesthetics of the nineteenth century were preceded by the eighteenth century's Age of Enlightenment, which had celebrated logic, intellectual ability, scientific understanding and a clarity, balance and simplicity of the arts. (Trumball 1905). According to Benjamin McRae, Romanticism began to question “the boundaries between life and death, matter and spirit, dreams and reality” and contest “the aggressive incursions of rationalism” that the Enlightenment had upheld. (McRae Arnoss 1996, p.264)

The concept of “aesthetic culture” was therefore truly recognised and appreciated during the long nineteenth century for the first time, by philosophers including Schelling, Kant,

Bourdieu and Adorno.¹ (Chander 2015; Ferris 2014) There was also a deeper interest in the *Unheimlich*, (the Uncanny) and fantasy. Schelling defined it as a “darkening power” (Lalonde 2017, p.103) and Freud as “something which is familiar and old-established in the mind, and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression”. (Lalonde 2017 pp.98- 100) The Uncanny symbolised an active engagement with such forces and otherworldly concepts.

It is important that we consider fantasy and uncanny in other art forms, before exploring it musically. Late eighteenth- century and nineteenth-century visual artists began to explore the ability of art to shock, confuse, induce awe and unease in the spectator, as Romantic ideals took hold. (Armstutz 2016) Madeline Crane’s states that such art works possessed a “strangeness...sublimity...a sense of the irrational” providing insights into “an invisible” hidden universe, including works by Joseph Turner and Henry Fuseli. (Crane 2013).



Figure 1- Henry Fuseli's Midnight (Crane 2013)

The work of British nineteenth century artist Walter Crane is another example of this. His depictions of extraordinary and imaginative within ordinary settings of modern life, embodied the Uncanny. (Dunekacke, 2016 p.2)

¹ Both Kant and Bourdieu explore the idea of self-knowledge and autonomy in relation to cultural practise in the nineteenth century, discussing individual contribution to the forging and challenging of cultural taste, as well as the deeper, mutual influence that each of the art forms had one on another. The significance of such theories is that Romantic audiences and artists were, for the first time, recognising the value and potential of such cultural autonomy and “position-taking” which resulted in a kind of cultural tension of artistic opinion. (Chander 2015; Ferris 2014)

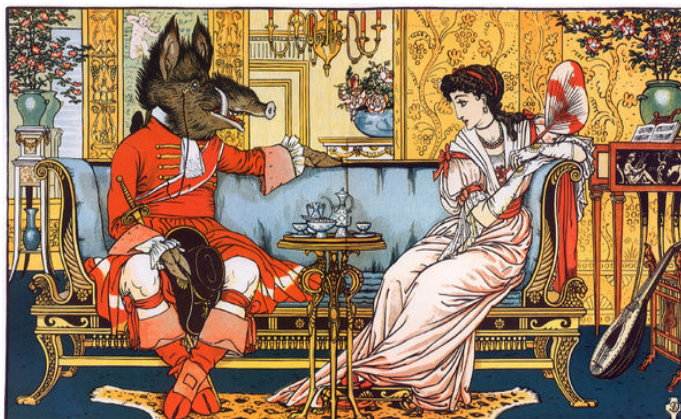


Figure 2- Walter Crane's The Beauty and The Beast (The Guardian 2015)

Literature too provided a platform to explore this, particularly through ghost stories and novels exploring dark, supernatural forces.² E.T.A. Hoffmann blended Enlightenment principles of logic and reason with more imaginative concepts, including his 1816 story *Der Sandmann* (Geistfeld 2015)³ while poets such as Henrick Heine's and Goethe explored themes of desire, love, bliss and torment, morality, the supernatural and darker forces in *Faust*, (1808) (The Poetry Foundation 2020)⁴

Contemporary author Smajic suggests that such works are "better adapted to the climate of...psychoanalytic, rather than historic readings"(Smajic 2003 p.1107) believing they transcend any political or social relevance. It would not be wise, to disregard the cultural, literary and social perspective altogether for as we have discovered, political and philosophical thinking of certain times had a great impact on culture and art. (Smajic 2003, p. 1108)

Musical perspectives; Fantasy and the Uncanny in the nineteenth century

Previously disparate areas of scholarship in relation to the fantastic, uncanny and supernatural in music, produce two perspective on evaluation, analysis and review which I have described as literary and psychoanalytic. Here we shall explore these in further detail.

The Literary Perspective

During the nineteenth century, many ideas which were explored in literature began to be explored through music. Previous research including by Cone, Coppolla, Dalhaus, Lindegren and Rosen has often been focused on the construction of stanza's, song cycles and narrative storytelling functions of music. What remains less clear are the devices composers employ to portray literary aesthetics of fantasy and the uncanny.

For example, as well as word painting there is great harmonic and textural instability within 'Der Wanderer'. In an example Hengyue uses, we hear a rising sequence, gradually growing

² Examples include Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Grey* (1890) Walter Scott's *The Tapestry Chamber* (1829) and August Apel's *The Marksman* (1811) (Smajic 2003)

³ *Der Sandmann* is based on losing one's grip on reality due to external and internal forces and deals with themes such as the dangers of technology as well as one's own mind. (Geistfeld 2015).

⁴ *Faust* tells of a man, selling his soul to the devil in exchange for power, knowledge and enjoyment. (The Poetry Foundation 2021)

more unstable as a minor key is introduced towards the end. A new phrase then begins with a sustained chordal piano accompaniment, in great contrast to the staccato triplets previously.

The image displays three systems of musical notation for 'Der Wanderer'. The first system features a 'Voice Lead' and 'Grand Piano' part. The piano part consists of staccato triplets. The second system, starting at measure 5, shows a change in the piano accompaniment to sustained chords. An orange circle highlights a leaping interval in the vocal line, and an orange box highlights a section of the piano accompaniment. The third system, starting at measure 9, shows a further change in the piano accompaniment. Another orange circle highlights a leaping interval in the vocal line, and an orange box highlights a section of the piano accompaniment.

Figure 3 - Leaping intervals in Der Wanderer followed by analysis of minor key, chordal accompaniment and textural, harmonic instability.

Adorno points out harmonic instability and shifts between areas of tonal grounding and modulation in Schubert’s C major Symphony, which may symbolize a contrast between light and dark which are the basis for Schubert’s musical landscape. (Adorno 1928)

The image displays three systems of musical notation for Schubert's C major Symphony. The first system shows the beginning of the piece with a piano accompaniment of staccato triplets. The second system, starting at measure 123, shows a change in the piano accompaniment to sustained chords. An orange circle highlights a leaping interval in the vocal line, and an orange box highlights a section of the piano accompaniment. The third system, starting at measure 123, shows a further change in the piano accompaniment. Another orange circle highlights a leaping interval in the vocal line, and an orange box highlights a section of the piano accompaniment.

Figure 4- Schubert’s C major Symphony, passages of harmonic uncertainty between the tonic

Adorno describes Schubert's body of work as a construction of an imaginative landscape, centred around death, darkness and the unknown, cultivated largely through his song cycles, with their aimless cycle of 5ths, harmonic rotation, and repeated themes. For example The A minor Quartet being dubbed "The Rosamunde Quartet" bears a resemblance to melodic counter and rhythm of the orchestral work.

Another element to consider is Nicholas' Young's study on what he terms "fantastic fragments" in nineteenth century German Lieder of literary/poetic origin. He identifies what he calls "brevity", a temporary fleeting experience of the fantastic phenomena, or a musical hesitancy which heightens its intensity (Young 2011) citing the introduction of 'Der Tod und Das Mädchen', with a lack of harmonic function, a slow, steady build and plenty of hesitancy to evoke death's looming and uncanny presence.

Another technique he discusses is the use of double voicing and repetition in 'Der Doppleganger', where the opening contains compressed intense doubling of the outer voices, (Young 2011, p.6) perhaps this is to heighten the undeniable presence of the Uncanny and the Doppleganger throughout the narrative.

Figure 5- Opening with harmonic stasis in 'Der Tod und Das Machen'

Figure 6- Outer voice doubling in Der Doppleganger.

Interestingly, musicologist Amanda Lalonde also discusses slow hesitant introductions as "the initiating stage of a passage from chaos to order". She views these as two separate entities when we may argue it is the interplay and interconnection between the two that creates the juxtaposition, unfamiliarity and uncertainty effects such as in the introduction the Allegro of Schubert's *Octet in F* (1824) where hesitant breaks are situated between chaotic chromatic short passages.

Moreover the idea of a "process of becoming" through music, which has been discussed by musicologists can be connected to ideas of tension, brevity, hesitancy here. (Lalonde 2017; Truscott 1961; Schmalfeldt, 2011). Especially since fantasy and the uncanny were often

connected to ideas of hiddenness and obscurity. For example prolonged ties are evocative of such literary ideas of the strange and supernatural in Schubert's *Octet in F* (1824) in bar 223-226.

The image shows a musical score for Schubert's *Octet in F*, measures 223-226. The score is in 4/4 time with a tempo marking of quarter note = 80. The instruments are Clarinet, Horn in F, Bassoon, Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Cello, and Contrabass. The dynamics are marked as *ff* (fortissimo), *p* (piano), and *pp* (pianissimo). The score features prolonged notes and ties, particularly in the woodwind and string parts, creating a sense of tension.

Figure 7- Prolonged notes, ties, and tension within Schubert's *Octet in F* .

Moreover, Kramer explores repetition in Schubert's Piano Trio in E flat, highlighting resemblances of second movement's themes within the third, which marks a diversion from the norms surrounding thematic development and convention at the time. (Kramer 1998) This disruption, along with the subtle, intrinsic repetition of motif is indeed uncanny in tone and evokes a strange kind of unfamiliarity and confusion. What is uncanny about this is that there is a double-bind – the unexpected and return of the repressed is emancipated in the sudden appearance within the third movement in the submediant key. This opens up ideas into musical manifestation of the unorthodox and uncanny being not just related to dissonance, but also structural aspects such as this. These transcendent moments could themselves be thought of uncanny.

The image shows a musical score for Schubert's Piano Trio in E flat, measures 223-226. The score is in 2/4 time with a key signature of three flats (E flat major). The instruments are Violin, Cello, and Grand Piano. The Cello part is highlighted with an orange box. The dynamics are marked as *p* (piano). The score features a double-bind structure, with the Cello part showing a subtle repetition of motifs.

Figure 8- Second Movement themes in the E flat trio, submediant key utilised.

Figure 9- A repetition and imitation of the second movement's theme in the third.

Furthermore, Hengyue remarks on how “segmented phrase structure and ambiguous key area...portray confusion” and imaginary landscapes in Schubert’s musical setting of *Der Wanderer* (Hengyue, 2020 p21). For instance, in bars 36- 40, the melody line flits between minor and major keys it rises and falls in big leaps and offers up strange and unsettling silences.

The sudden chordal interjections are reminiscent of frightened or shocked jolts which seem to evoke fear, uncertainty and a sense of disturbance also.

Figure 10- ‘Der Wanderer’ analysis with sudden silence, modulation to minor, sharp chords.

Francesca Brittan’s and Marshall Brown both write on the ability of nineteenth century orchestral idiom and instrumentation to create new, strange and Otherworldly sounds. (Brittan 2018; Bro2n 2009) In Schubert’s Scherzo of his 6th symphony there is indeed a deliberate light, textural and timbral use of winds which was associated with the mythical, supernatural and unknown.⁵

⁵ Brown also discusses the use of instrumentation, stating that “the brilliant use of the winds in constantly varying combinations and textures...occasionally piquant sonorities...the play of lights...is never optional” (Brown 2009, p. 96) implying that the choice and manipulation of certain instrument timbres can create a sense of the mythological and fantastical landscape, as Adorno believes Schubert sought to construct.

The image shows a musical score for the first four staves of Schubert's 'Scherzo' from his C major symphony. The staves are labeled Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, and Bassoon. The music is in 3/4 time. The Flute and Oboe parts start with a forte *sfz* dynamic, followed by a *fp* dynamic. The Clarinet part starts with a *sfz* dynamic. The Bassoon part starts with a *sfz* dynamic. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Figure 11- Schubert's winds in his 'Scherzo' from his C major symphony.

The psychoanalytic perspective

The Romantic period was the first to acknowledge the power of music to portray the “inmost expression of the mind” and achieve “psychological penetration” of composer and listener. (Drennan, Pakendorf, Viljoe 2019, p.159-163)

The field of psychoanalysis emerged during the nineteenth century. Theories around the fantastic, uncanny and strange were created by Sigmund Freud, who believed fantasy was not part of “material reality” but of a “psychical reality” and that the uncanny is that “which ... has become alien...through the process of repression”(Lalonde p.98) Schelling earlier had labelled the Uncanny as “everything which should remain in secrecy...and has emerged into perception”.(Lalonde p.101) While one category of Jung’s twelve personality archetypes “the shadow” was posited to facilitate fantasy, desire, repressed memories and the unknown. These were all seen as integral to the psyche. (BBC Radio 4 2004; Lobiano and Bartalis; Rand and Torok p.593, Warwick University 2015)

Musicologist Christopher Tarrant uses twentieth century psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan’s graph of mental fantasy regulation to analyse Schubert Sonatas. He suggests modal mixture and bass arpeggiation act like this mental cycle by “dispel(ling) problems posed by musical structures which rely predominantly on modulation through a third” (Tarrant 2015, p.201) Tarrant’s ideas are interesting but too focused on “finding an answer” and precise fleeting moments of fantasy within a work. This is therefore a rather strict and restrictive method of analysis which does not encompass broader cultural, the literary and philosophical ideas.

Music analyst Kenneth Smith also suggests that a constant circling through the cycle of fifths may represent unattainable desire in contrast with the harsh Lacanian Real. (Smith 2010) He states that use of Lendvai’s chordal substitution system, whereby “primary triads can be substituted by the tritone related or relative minor secondary triads” reinforce these musical effects. (Smith 2010 p.81) For instance, in Schubert’s ‘Gretchen am Spinnrade’ the music cycles through fifths sequentially at the moment where the narrator/singer delves into a fantasy mindset, the cycle ends and the harmony is grounded when he returns to reality. (Smith 2010 p.83-84).

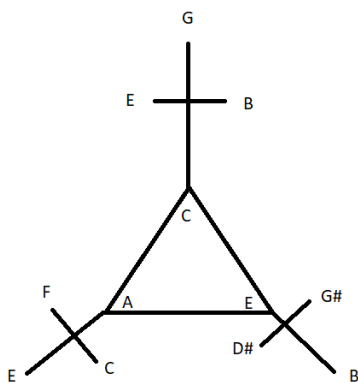


Figure 12- Lendvai’s Chordal Axial Substitution system.

Voice Lead

Grand Piano

pp

F C

Vc. Ld.

Pno.

2 **F D7 G Eb**

Vc. Ld.

Pno.

f

Vc. I **Ab F B F**

Pno.

B

Figure 13- Spinning through cycle of fifths as narrator descends into a fantasy mindset.

Another key idea in relation to these concepts musically is that of incompleteness or an unfinished, unbalanced or unclear musical phrase. Young suggests that unanswered fragments within nineteenth century vocal music allow for the audience to use their fantasies and imagination to create an ending within their minds. (Young 2011)

For example, in ‘Frühlingstraum’, a folk like melody in A major is followed by a cycle of rapidly shifting keys, settling on the relative A minor, (Young 2011 p.14) which embodies the very concept of unfulfilled desire. This also causes a juxtaposition between relative minor and major may indeed signify the difference between “the illusory world of beautiful bright dream (and) the real world of banal, wretched, naked reality (Heinrich in Kindermann 1986). Interdisciplinary musicologist Naomi Waltham-Smith’s theory of “the time it takes to listen” as the gap in which a listener hears the preconceived ending of a musical phrase or cadence and her discussion of the power of disrupting that, is also relevant to the evocation of the fantastic, strange and uncanny in music. (Waltham-Smith 2008)



Figure 14- Ending of ‘Frühlingstraum’ on relative minor chord.

Musicologist Spitzer suggests that the construction of musical personae can manipulate a “listener’s own hermeneutic activity” to finesse their “undeciphered fears”. (Spitzer 2011, p.201-202). He uses the example of Schubert’s ‘Erlkönig’, with the interplay between the tenderness of the ‘Erlkönig’ persona and the aggressive persona of the father in the story. (Spitzer 2011, p.199) to discuss this. For as musicologist Christopher Gibbs also highlights the use of timbre, register, metrics, and key to present the Erlkonig’s voice as “frightening in its sweetness, deadly in its beauty” acts as a confusing collaboration of the safety and danger. (Gibbs 1995, p.130). This literally embodies the idea of the uncanny, or a disturbing interplay between reality and the unknown.



Figure 15- High register used for the Erlkönig's melody line.

Scholar Michael Klein’s also discusses musical persona in relation to the four narrative archetypes he suggests are evident in nineteenth century music- romance, irony, comedy, and tragedy. He states that the personas within such as feminine, heroic or villainous can confirm

or deny cultural codes, and Kramer, Gibbs' and Spitzer's research suggests that such a denial or confirmation may contribute to the fantastic, strange and supernatural within music of the time. There is a social and political connection here to for as Kramer suggests, the negation of musical form and musical irony can be heard as a rejection of the norms of heterosexuality and masculinity within nineteenth century society. For example in the closure of *Uralinie* of 'Die Stadt' the male vocal line defies natural harmonic descent, (Kramer 1998 p.31) which we may view not only as a rejection of natural harmonic progression, but of gender register norms, of melodic contour and timbre and a fantasy or desire for the male narrator to explore his feminine and sensitive side.



Figure 16- Male vocal line ascending rather than descending towards closure.

Kramer delves further into the expression of desire and fantasy as he explores Schubert's *Ganymed* as a symbol of the "wish to be woman." He highlights the melisma, the repetition and differing key areas as symbols of impulsive desire. (Kramer 1998, p.22). The contrast of light sonorities and dark in the work as well as modulations to unrelated keys which are often in the submediant and flattened submediant makes us wonder if such sounds are representative of the jousiance sense of fantasy and an idealism of fantasy and desire as a higher transcendental dialectical position. Indeed this is a key and harmonic technique we came across in Scubert's E flat trio and also ties in with social, cultural and political ideas of the time rooted in rejecting quotidien life to escape into the world of myth, love, and innerlichkeit (inwardness).

The image displays two systems of musical notation. The first system includes a 'Voice Lead' staff and a 'Piano' section with two staves. The second system includes a 'Vc. Ld.' staff and a 'Pno.' section with two staves. Both systems are in a key signature of three flats (B-flat major/C minor) and a 4/4 time signature. The piano accompaniment in both systems features a prominent triplet of eighth notes in the right hand and block chords in the left hand. In the first system, an orange circle highlights a specific chord in the piano part, which is identified in the caption as a flattened submediant.

Figure 17- Harmonic Modulations in Ganymed, with disconnected accompaniment line.
Flattened submediant circled.

Finally, in analysing “The Trout” quintet, Kramer sees the narrator’s replication and imitation of the melodic motifs signifying the trout as his desire to become the trout, a female symbol within the narrative. He notes the link between sixteenth figures between different instruments as a sign of identification with the Trout’s narrative. (Kramer 1998.) Perhaps it is also the interplay of lightness and brightness of touch (feminine), with the darker, melancholic sonorities (masculine) and distinctive use of instrumentation to achieve this which are suggestive of this desire.

The image shows a musical score for Schubert's Trout Quintet, measures 1-4. The score is arranged in two systems. The first system includes staves for Violin, Viola, Cello, Contrabass, and Grand Piano. The second system includes staves for Violin (Vln.), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), Contrabasso (Cb.), and Piano (Pno.). The Grand Piano part features sixteenth notes and triplet markings. The Violin part has a triplet of sixteenth notes. The Viola part has a triplet of sixteenth notes. The Cello and Contrabass parts have long notes. The score is in 4/4 time and G major.

Figure 18- Trout Quintet Schubert with sixteenth notes in both piano and instrumental parts as well as octave doubling and distinct usage of instrumentation.

Conclusions

The following chart shows the results of this study's evaluation. Signifiers of fantasy and the uncanny in Schubert's music have been identified within both the literary and psychoanalytic perspectives and analysis of these findings has allowed us to establish areas of overlap.

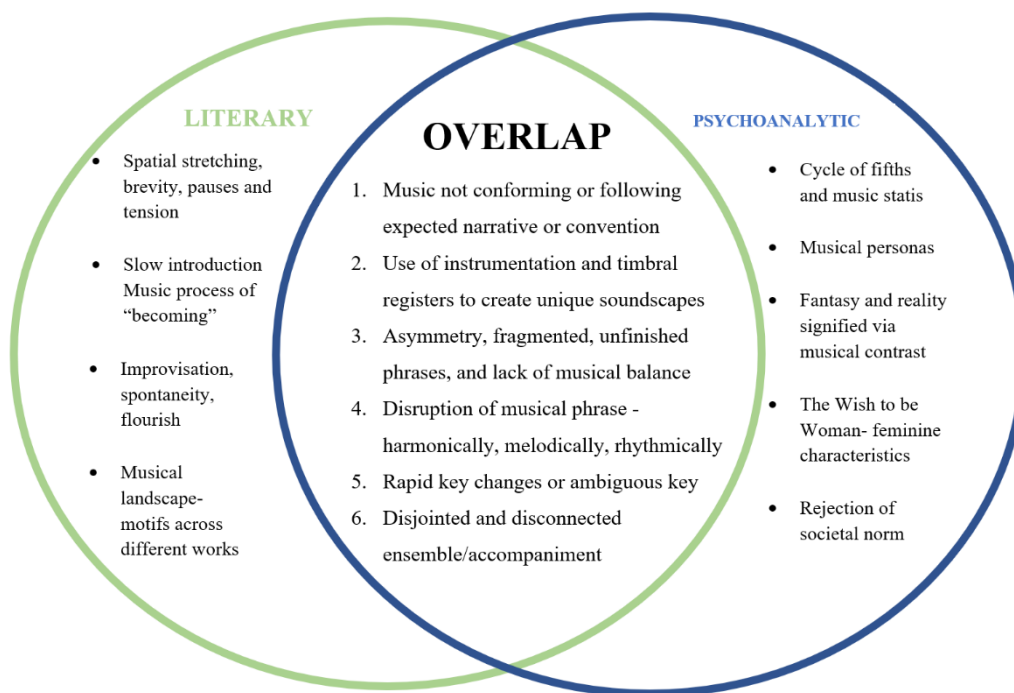


Figure 19 – Chart showing results of this study’s evaluation.

This overlap, previously unestablished and unrecognised in scholarship is consolidated by this research encompassing analytical, cultural, and holistic viewpoints. This study has added further to the cultural and historical context in which these signifiers can be understood within Schubert’s music, and well as more broadly musically and artistically.

Many musicologists have also identified the above signifiers including use of orchestral idiom, instrumentation, and exoticism as ways in which composers accompany fantastical scenes within films and visual narratives. (Elferen 2013; Kamp and Sweeny 2020; Plank 2020) One may remark that these similarities are a result of analysis from a twenty-first century viewpoint. However, the fact that our historical and contextual investigation into nineteenth century aesthetics around ideas of fantasy and the uncanny has revealed that such scholars, thinkers, and artists of the time were exploring fantasy and the uncanny in these ways means that findings become far more significant. Based on the knowledge this study has revealed, future scholarship then, should potentially examine how sound and modern music can act as active agents for portraying fantasy and the uncanny or how the concepts can be redefined as their own artistic aesthetics and experiences.

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The Psychology of the Other; Narrating Diaspora Identity and Psychic Trauma in Leila Halaby's Once in a Promised Land

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Abstract

The word diaspora invokes trauma. Being positioned in the in-between space and the struggle to assert identity, attempting to rearticulate one's existence, and negotiating a state of being subject to othering and social discrimination all boil into the trauma hovering around diaspora characters. In *Once in a Promised Land*, Leila Halaby responds to Arab Americans' identity crisis in post 9/11 attacks. The novel is inscribed in Arab Anglophone fiction that documents the current cultural anxieties and deconstructs politics of identity and cultural production to voice out a juxtaposed complex projection of dual existence. Being an Arab and a Muslim in America in the aftermath of 9/11 meant being viewed with suspicion; following the storyline of Jassim and Salwa who flee Jordan to “the promised land” where their life’s walls started collapsing, Halaby projects the hostility and pressure Arab-Muslims go through in America. To illustrate the psychological dimension of migrant identity, the paper explores power relations and the politics of subjugation. The novel’s significance for the study lies mainly in it being a powerful contrapuntally written novel; it brings traditional readings and writings to a crisis. The text delves into the underpinnings of the migrants' experience to grasp the architecture of discursive construction of otherness be it; bodily, religious, or racial othering and allows diaspora characters to vocalize their rich and complex existence. The paper unpacks the narratives’ social and political discursive dynamics to highlight the wholeness of the psychological struggle, it makes use of Fanon's theory to gauge the effect of sociopolitical on the human psyche and capture the psychic trauma through the characters of Salwa and Jassim.

Keywords: Diaspora, Othering, Sociopolitics, Cultural Anxieties, Migration, 9/11 Attacks, Psychopolitics, Psychic Trauma, Vocalize Existence

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Introduction

The word diaspora invokes trauma. Being positioned in the in-between space and the struggle to assert identity, attempting to rearticulate one's existence, and negotiating a state of being subject to othering and social discrimination all boil into the trauma hovering around diaspora characters. In *Once in a Promised Land*, Laila Halaby responds to Arab American identity crisis in post 9/11 attacks. The novel is inscribed in Arab Anglophone fiction that documents the current cultural anxieties and deconstructs politics of identity and cultural production to voice out a juxtaposed complex projection of dual existence. Halaby among other diaspora authors writes to challenge the metropolitan narrative and alters it to assert ostracized Arab subjects. Being an Arab and a Muslim in America in the aftermath of 9/11 meant being viewed with suspicion; following the storyline of Jassim and Salwa who flee Jordan to “the promised land” where their life’s walls started collapsing, Halaby projects the hostility and pressure Arab-Muslim struggle within America.

To illustrate the psychological dimension of migrant identity, the paper explores power relations and the politics of subjugation. The novel's significance for the study lies mainly in it being a powerful **contrapuntally** written novel. Said coined from music, advanced the "contrapuntal reading" to respond to and destabilize the narrative of power. Halaby’s narrative juxtaposes the dominant knowledge, her novel retrieves the silenced knowledge and complicates the simplistic linear narrative that underwrites the imperial power.

Halaby offers the life story of two characters, but throughout the narrative, she also gives us some historical accounts which inform our understanding of the narrative itself and diaspora characters' traumatized existence. The novel brings traditional readings and writings to a crisis by adding silenced narratives and accounting for more than one end of a text. It delves into the underpinnings of the migrants' experience to realize the architecture of discursive construction of otherness be it; bodily, religious, or racial othering and allows the Arab diaspora to vocalize their rich and complex existence. To understand the representation of diaspora characters and emphasize their mental and emotional experience, the paper makes use of postcolonial theories; namely Edward Said and Frantz Fanon.

The novel is considered a representing-fictional act of consciousness; it unpacks the narratives’ social and political discursive dynamics to highlight the wholeness of the struggle. Through her characters, Halaby delves into the Arab American psyche post 9/11 to destabilize a narrative of power and reverse orientalist views.

“Our role is to widen the field of discussion, not to set limits in accord with the prevailing authority”

Edward Said, *Orientalism*

Hypervisibility: racializing Arab-Americans post 9/11

Addressing the literary and cultural-ness of texts to locate the repercussions of the power struggle and its psychological impact on diaspora subjects’ psyche is crucial in understanding the wholeness of diaspora consciousness. Halaby is an Arab American writer; she is a diaspora character defined by the duality of her existence. Her novel *Once in a Promised Land* is contextualized by world politics post 9/11; the U.S so-called "War on Terror", and institutionalized racism. Her novel is woven in resonance with the psychological and political tensions. Following the story of Jassim and Salwa, Halaby tells the story of a couple who left

Jordon to settle in the U.S. from the early lines of the story, Halaby (2007) points out the correlation of her protagonists' personal experiences with the political one to stress the hypervisibility of Arab-American subjects after 9/11 attacks:

Our main characters are Salwa and Jassim. We really come to know them only after the World Trade Center buildings have been flattened by planes flown by Arabs, by Muslims. Salwa and Jassim are both Arabs. Both Muslims. But of course they have nothing to do with what happened to the World Trade Center. Nothing and everything. (p.VII-VIII)

Gregory Orfalea states that 9/11 is “the day on which Americans discovered the Arab world” (Shmidt, 2014, p.14). Before 9/11, Arab Americans were located at the site of marginality, they were made invisible. The politics of inclusion and exclusion place the Arab-American subject in a fluctuating state of being -a fluctuating state of oppression-. 9/11 forced them to the surface and exposed them to political violence; they had to endure the aftermath of the attacks for that time and for decades that follow. Salwa and Jassim were having a very normal life, in chapter two; Halaby presents an account of the wealthy lifestyle they carried out:

That afternoon, driving up recently repaved asphalt to his nestled-in-the-hills home, Jassim pulled up his glinty Mercedes next to one of many identical expectant mailboxes [...] the door of his car and the door of his house were across from each other [.....] today the quietness of the afternoon, the coolness of his house, Jassim removed a gleaming glass from a glossy maple cabinet and filled it with the purest water money could buy [.....] He pulled the trashcan [.....] into which he deposits a handful of direct mail and ads (except for Salwa’s over priced-underwear catalogue...). (P. 23-24).

Their lifestyle was pretty American, they were immersed in "the American dream" they have pursued in the U.S., and they thought of themselves as American citizens with no distinctions. Until that moment “the promised land” started racializing Muslims and sponsoring racism against Arab-American citizens, Salwa and Jassim weren't conscious of the difference tagged on them. Media channels and the government articulated a polarizing discourse; Bush's widely known expression "either you are with us or with the terrorists" forces the division. “You should put one [the American flag] on your car, on the back window. You never know what people are thinking, and having this will let them know where you stand” (p. 55) Salwa’s co-worker tells her.

The alterity discourse

In different instances of the novel, most American characters post 9/11 are depicted as fanatic subjects who viewed Arabs and Muslims as a monolithic rigid entity. Their orientalist perception brings into account the colonial infrastructure, the asymmetrical legacies of power, and the culture of subjugation. Edward Said’s influential book on postcolonial studies *Orientalism* deals with the question of representation, it dismantles the pre-constructed lens through which the Orient is framed. Said states that “it is, above all, a discourse that is by no means in direct, corresponding relationship with political power in the raw, but rather is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power, shaped to a degree by the exchange with power political (as with a colonial or imperial establishment), power intellectual (as with reigning sciences like comparative linguistics or anatomy, or any of the modern policy sciences), power cultural (as with orthodoxies and canons of taste, texts,

values), power moral (as with ideas about what “we” do and what “they” do or understand as “we” do” (1978, p.12). Orientalism then is a discourse that predisposes people to develop certain views about the Orient. Orientalism applies to Halaby’s text since it allows us to come to grips with the epistemological, political, and cultural orientalist tropes mobilized in her American characters’ imageries of Arabs in the contemporary era.

Then she went back into the corner where they had started and saw him walking towards her from the back with an odd expression on his face, almost fear. [...] she’s following me. Apparently I am a security threat. [...] "Why are you following my husband?" "I'm doing my job, ma'am." "Which is what exactly," asked Salwa with scissors in her voice." To protect the security of this establishment." (p.28-29)

The sales clerk Amber views Jassim with suspicion, she calls a security guard on him, and in response to Salwa’s inquiries on why did she do so, she claims; “he was standing here and staring too long”... “He just scared me” (p.30).

Penny argues:

Jassim is a good guy - he’s not like them, shouldn’t be judged like them. But those people over there, they oppress women and kill each other, they’re the ones who should be bombed. (P.281)

Penny's mindset maintains a binarist structure; the novel’s portrayal of many American characters namely Penny, Amber, and Jassim’s coworker who reported him reflects the dichotomy of us versus them, they mobilize generalizations and subscribe to a standardized view of the world. To challenge these linear narratives that underwrite the imperial power, Edward Said’s *Culture and Imperialism* advanced the contrapuntal reading or the contrapuntal method to emphasize the importance of accounting for more than one end of a text; it is crucial to read through the underpinnings and architecture of a text to allow counter-readings to emerge, ergo; silenced narratives and marginalized groups vocalize their existence and offer a more nuanced, rich and complex reading.

Diasporic novel: Seeing through the contrapuntal

Halaby subscribes to diaspora authors whose work is contrapuntally written; they account for the alterity discourse and point out new patterns. Her novel shifts the gaze and reverses orientalist discourse. What concern the novel are the aspects and reverberations of the socio-political impacts of epistemic violence that manifests itself in everyday practices of Arab-American subjects and subjectivities, both Jassim and Salwa grappled with identity. Being interrogated by the FBI based on the allegations of a coworker made Jassim furious and disappointed in the land of dreams:

Jassim had done nothing wrong and this was America and there should have to be proof of negligence on his part for his job to be affected. People, companies, the city, shouldn't be able to put accounts on the basis of his being an Arab. Yes, finally he saw what had been sitting at the back of his consciousness for some time in a not-so-whispered voice: *with or against*. But was he not *with*? (p.234)

America racialized a religion, Jassim and Salwa weren’t even depicted as Muslim practitioners, their lifestyle was American. But post 9/11 pulled out their race against them. Salwa was mistreated by customers in the bank, and Jassim was exposed to outspoken racism

on different occasions throughout the novel, their marital life was highly impacted by racial violence. The feelings of loss, alienation, and discrimination drove them away from each other, and their life together showed serious cracks and fissures, especially after Salwa's miscarriage. Being viewed with suspicion and hostility, Jasim and Salwa became estranged from each other.

Narrating post 9/11 consciousness

Their search for assertion made them seek comfort and acceptance from characters that fit into what America considers an American citizen. Salwa found comfort and acceptance in Jack's support and Jassim with Penny.

Let me tell you everything Randa and then, you tell me what I should do" Randa nodded. "After the miscarriage, remember, I felt depressed, sad, all the time. It just seemed to go on and on. There is this guy at work..." "American?" "Yes. And he was very nice to me, very cheerful, and I would forget about the baby, forget about the miscarriage, about Jassim, about all the problems in this country. About all the problems of my marriage. He would just talk about things, stories from his world, they were all simple, but it was fun. (p.285)

He [Jassim] had no interest in a relationship. He just wanted to be with Penny and her large breasts and her soothing easy smile and her **lack of connection to his life**. The further away he drove from Denny's, however, the more impossible the scenario seemed. At a spotlight, he pulled out the piece of paper on which she had written the phone number. "I can't do this," he said aloud in Arabic. "I could have then. Could have taken her away, somewhere private, and had American sex with her, fulfilled the need, but this takes too much thought. (p.158)

Jassim wanted to be with Penny for "...her lack of connection to his life", the burden of race Fanon refers to in his chapter "The Fact of Blackness"; when the black man starts seeing himself as "he" instead of "I", the use of the third person consciousness implies that the black man steps out of his own body and watch himself doing normal things that he felt abnormal while doing because of his blackness, the pressure of the gaze makes one uncomfortable with one's skin.

Fanon touches on DuBoisian term "double consciousness", they are both concerned with the mental conflict of dual identity and the repercussions of structural violence on subjects. Likewise; Halaby points out the struggle from a contemporary perspective, in the aftermath of 9/11, Arab American writing surged as a response to the politics of racialization. In *Once in a Promised Land*, both Salwa and Jassim were searching for a space of refuge, a space in which they don't identify with their demonized race. Fanon views this space however as an emphasis on imprisonment. Frantz Fanon who is a postcolonial writer, political philosopher, and psychiatrist engages in understanding the psychological traumas and the effect of sociopolitical on the human psyche, his works are concerned with the psyche, in his book *The Wretched of the Earth*, through empirical research he advanced a praxis through which Fanon asserts that understanding how the system of violence is established is key to understanding the impact of epistemic violence on subjects' consciousness, in that he is still concerned with the psyche and "psychopolitics", but also realizes that these psychological traumas can only be overcome through responding to the system of violence and engaging in change through creating a new kind of humanism.

Conclusion

The paper explores a discourse that challenges the linear narrative forcing a reduced ability to resist. It engages in the ongoing debate over the implications of relations of power on identity and migrants as it has been and is currently experienced by diaspora postcolonial subjects. By going over the diverse resonances of the asymmetrical legacies to point out a new mode of self-representation that encompasses insight into the psychological aspects of violence or violent political system in post 9/11 towards Arab-American subjects, and resistance to linear narratives presented through Laila Halaby's consciousness.

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Map-Making and the Adoption Atlas in 'Killing Karoline' by Sara-Jayne King

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Abstract

The recent proliferation of adoption narratives in mainstream media provides fertile narrative soil for sowing the seeds of adoption activism, awareness, and agency. Spanning the genres of autobiographical films to children's animation, such narratives frame the representation of adoption across ages and cultures. However, adoption studies show that members of the adoption triad (first parents, adoptees, and adoptive parents) often feel silenced and misrepresented despite these narratives, their trauma and search for belonging hidden behind what I term the "cult of gratitude". The memoir *Killing Karoline* (King, 2017) provides an insight into an adoptee's voicing of this trauma. This paper draws on two types of mapping, namely Hayakawa's (1991) concept of the semantic map, and Flatley (2008) and Jameson's (2000) work on cognitive-affective maps. Using these maps as framework, I investigate how the author navigates her adoption through map-making to create a unique adoption atlas. King sketches maps of trauma and unbelonging, while commenting saliently on core issues surrounding interracial adoption, such as racial literacy, forced displacement, and the primal wound. This sees King breaking free from the cult of gratitude, allowing the reader to see, through King's lived experience, a relief map of interracial adoption and the adoption triad. In the emerging oeuvre of South African adoption narratives, specifically, King's memoir opens the way for map-making in similar narratives in the creation of adoption atlases through the representation of lived experience.

Keywords: Interracial Adoption, Adoption Narrative, Semantic Map, Cognitive-Affective Map, Cult Of Gratitude

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Introduction

Interracial adoption is a fraught topic characterized by ignorance and misinformation. The public's perceptions of interracial adoption, as well as the stereotypes associated with the adoption triad (hereafter the triad) – adoptive/first parents, adoptee, and adoptive parents – make it hard for this triad to express the trauma inherent in such adoptions. The triad is often shunned by once supportive communities, and needs a space where they can find support, a sense of belonging, and representation reflective of lived experience. Though the pool of adoption narratives originating from the global north is vast, those from the global south, and specifically South Africa, were harder to come by. In South Africa, adoption memoirs have only fairly recently started to gain traction. This is important not only because of vast differences in adoption practices and policies across the globe, but also because, as Harf et al. (2015, para. 1) notes, "representations of child's cultural belonging and their positions concerning connections with their birth and its culture" are of critical importance. For birth- and adoptive parents, culturally and socially representative memoirs aid in creating a sense of belonging and kinship. *Killing Karoline* (2017) by Sara-Jayne King is one such a South African adoption narrative. It is a representation of the triad's lived experience, a memoir that exposes a side of adoption often silenced in fictional depiction of the process. In short, it creates an atlas the reader can use to navigate interracial adoption.

Society at large is not without adoption atlases. The atlases we receive come twofold: those conveyed to use in mainstream popular media, and those conveyed through documentaries, memoirs, and autobiographies of those involved in adoption. Jacobson (2013) notes that the framing and representation of adoption in fictionalized versions of adoptions may impact positively or adversely on how we regard adoption and the triad. Wegar (2000, p. 363) posits that such narratives threaten the dominant family ideology, and that the "adoptive family [is] socially constructed as deviant, stigmatized, and burdened". Kline et al. (2009) state that such narratives often depict adoptees as defective and ungrateful, first parents as neglectful or having substance abuse problems, and adoptive parents as affluent saviors who benefit most from adoption. Conversely, we are presented with adoption fairy tales: an orphaned child finds a home, an adoptive family finds a child who they can 'save', and the first parents are either ignored or vilified in such a way that the child's adoption is seen as a blessing. Though the stereotype of adoption as being lost and then found is observed in these films (Herman-Gallow, 2019), these atlases culminate in happy endings, with adoption-related challenges easily solved or deflected with humor (Jacobson, 2013).

Media representations of adoption based on lived experience – documentaries, memoirs, etc. – are becoming more prevalent, but are arguably less palatable fodder for mass consumption. Mainly, though, whether fictionalized or based on lived experience, adoption representation is mainly viewed through the lens of adoption practices in the global north. South African adoption narratives are not as much audio-visual as they are textual, and are a rather novel addition to the South African literary canon. *Killing Karoline* (2017) is interesting in this regard, as it describes adoption from both a European and South African perspective. As *Killing Karoline* is a memoir spanning both the UK and South Africa, this culture-dependent representation of adoption is particularly salient.

In this paper, I investigate the semantic and cognitive affective maps King employ in her memoir to represent the territory, the lived experience, of adoption, in order to examine how she creates an adoption atlas based on lived experience. Following a short synopsis of the memoir, I will provide a very brief outline of semantic and cognitive affective maps before

briefly explaining two specific landmarks evident in these maps, namely the triad and the cult of gratitude. Through a thematic analysis of the memoir, I will show that King's adoption atlas allows these landmarks to find a voice in a narrative landscape where they are often suppressed.

Killing Karoline

In Apartheid South Africa, Kris, a white woman, is engaged to Ken, her white fiancé, while she has an affair with a Black employee, Jackson, by whom she falls pregnant. At the time, interracial relationships were illegal. Pregnancies resulting from such illegitimate couplings resulted in orphaned children and incarcerated parents. Kris gives birth to a daughter, Karoline, who is classified as white according to the Population Registration Act of 1950, where individuals were classified as “native”, white, or “colored” (mixed race). However, during a later medical appointment, the child's changed appearance results in her being reclassified as colored. The reality of possible incarceration prompts Kris to have Karoline declared dead in South Africa. She travels to the UK and has Karoline adopted by Malcolm and Angela, who are already parents to adopted son Adam. The memoir follows the journey of Karoline, who is now called Sarah, as she navigates being a brown body in a white society, in a white family, how she becomes aware of her adoption and the circumstances that led to it, her growing rage towards her birth mother, and her ultimate return to South Africa.

Using Maps to Navigate Lived Experience

To take us on her journey, King provides us with access to her semantic and cognitive-affective maps to forge an atlas of the lived experience of interracial adoption. In brief, Hayakawa and Hayakawa explain the concept of the semantic map as follows: “Our verbal (intentional) world . . . stands in relation to the extensional world as a *map* does to the *territory* it is supposed to represent...” (1990, p. 20). They argue that we produce semantic maps through the words we use in verbal and written texts to depict the territory of our lived experience. However, Hayakawa and Hayakawa, as well as Korzybski (1995), note that “The map is not the territory ... The only usefulness of a map depends on similarity of structure between the empirical world and the map...” (p. 58). Therefore, semantic maps only represent the territory of thoughts. In an adoption narrative, semantic maps allow us to navigate the follow thought patterns of those affected by adoption through their descriptions thereof, so as to lay open the navigated territory of their lived experience.

Cognitive maps were proposed in 1960 by Kevin Lynch as our internalised maps of the cities we inhabit. However, Jameson (2006) extends the concept to include what Flatley (2008, p. 777) calls “a cognitive map of social space for a sense of agency in the world more generally”. As such, cognitive maps allow us to use spatial concepts to make sense of the world around us, to create an individual representation of the vast totality of societal structures, norms, and beliefs. Without cognitive maps, our views of ideologies, socio-political-, and normative structures are fragmented and, like the semantic map, only represent the topology, and not the territory, of lived experience. Affective maps, Flatley (2008, p. 77) argues, “indicate(s) the affective aspects of the maps that guide us, in conjunction with our cognitive maps, through our spatial environment”. We rely on these maps to negotiate our emotions and affect. The places we go are permeated with affect, emotions, and beliefs; affective maps become our individualistic maps representing the territory of our senses and emotions. Cognitive-affective maps (Shoda & Mischel, 1995) combine both these maps and aid in incorporating new information, experiences, and surroundings. The totality of these

maps is not completely self-invented, but is also a culmination of others' maps, those we inherit from our forebears, or those that have been socio-historically contextualized. Cognitive-affective maps therefore allow us to navigate places, the world, norms, institutionalized ideologies, etc.

Navigational Tools

To navigate these maps, I focus on two aspects. The first is the adoption triad, mentioned earlier. The second is a concept I call the cult of gratitude. This concept underpins many fictional adoption narratives, but also colours the lived experience of the adoption triad: they should be grateful, for they have been blessed by adoption. This toxic positivity negates the trauma of adoption; it requires the triad to be grateful for their trauma. Adoption is the ultimate solution: an orphaned child finds a home, first parents are relieved of a burden, and adoptive parents receive a child they have longed for. Members of the triad who are perceived to be ungrateful, traumatized, or displaced are admonished to be grateful. The trauma of adoption should be suppressed in favor of the fairytale ideal. This silences the triad and negates their trauma, forcing them to act in a way that conforms to the societally accepted trope typified by the cult of gratitude.

The Adoptee's Agony

The memoir states early on that, though perhaps not yet fully aware of being, King at a young age becomes aware that adoptees “are . . . born for the sole purpose of becoming part of their adoptive families” (King, 2017, p. 31). However, she is still young, and her “voice is still too quiet to be heard over the din of other people’s needs” (King, 2017, p. 35). Thus, she shows an awareness of the silencing of adoptees. These statements enable us to see double consciousness, a term coined by DuBois in 1903 to signify a feeling of racial duality in Black individuals, through a new lens. Not only is it based on racial duality in terms of being interracially adopted, but it is also relevant in terms of the adoptee’s identity *as an adoptee*, in the sense that adoptees are aware that, though they are part of a family, they do not truly ‘fit’. Inculcated in this particular sense of double consciousness is the unfortunate cult of gratitude, as well as King’s feeling of shame when this state of toxic positivity is one she does not experience.

I would have no words to express those feelings . . . the deep and profound sadness I feel will be compounded by a sense of shame. Shame, that . . . I am showing myself to be ‘ungrateful’ for the good fortune [of] by being so selflessly ‘taken in’ by my adoptive parents. (King, 2017, p. 43)

What this excerpt also shows is a subtle awareness that rejection forms the core of King’s being, her identity as an adoptee, and that it shapes her navigation of her image and beliefs regarding herself from a young age: rejected from one family, and adopted into another, King is not wholly part of either of these communities. It is also a subtle foregrounding on the judgement King will eventually fall on her biological mother, noted later.

This theme of adoptee double consciousness is further typified in King’s struggle regarding ‘real’ vs. ‘unreal’ families. King’s grandfather refers to her as his adopted granddaughter, an incident which makes her feel othered. There are various references to family resemblance, especially when King compares herself to her cousins, who are “don’t need explaining” (King, 2017, p. 34), because they physically resemble their grandparents: “Adam and I are

denied full, peak membership to our family because we don't have the 'family nose'" (King, 2017, p. 33).

Race is another contributing factor to King's double consciousness as an interracial adoptee. In her white community, King is racialized and othered. King's otherness is further emphasized by her perusal of an advertisement for financial aid in Africa, depicting an emaciated brown child holding an empty bowl. To King, her birth country is described as:

where people who are brown like me come from and it is dirty and poor ... I remind myself again to be grateful for having been rescued from a life in such a desperate place. (King, 2017, p. 63)

This is another allusion to the cult of gratitude, manifested not only in terms of being a rescued adoptee, but also being a person of colour rescued from dire circumstance. A further link to racialization is King's mention of how the only brown people she regularly sees are two television personalities. Both of these women have energetic and buoyant personalities. So akin to these personalities feels King that she wonders whether perhaps the one is her "real mom" (King, 2017, p. 64), even before she realizes the significance of her skin colour. However, King notes that "what happens inside the television isn't real" (King, 2017, p. 64). Racialized bodies may serve as role models, but is not the norm, furthering King's feelings of otherness.

It is therefore not surprising that fitting in is another recurring element in King's memoir. Individuals, clothing, furniture, are described in terms of how they fit into their environment, drawing attention to King's physical and affective separation from what she deems normative. One such an example is evident in her description of a dress made for her by her grandmother:

Making your own is better, because then whatever you make will fit perfectly. Fitting is important. Sometimes things fit . . . But sometimes even things that are new do not mould to us and they occupy an awkward space . . . When things don't fit, we panic. (King, 2017, p. 45)

The dress serves as metaphor of King's double consciousness – 'making your own', or having your own biological children, is better than adopting someone else's new creation, something that does not quite fit. King further strengthens this point through the use of other metaphors, such as the family home, "normal from the outside . . . but which inside is odd, topsy-turvy" (King, 2017, p. 52), much like the haphazard fashion in which the family itself had been constituted: "My family looks normal from the outside . . . but when you look closer you realise it doesn't quite match" (King, 2017, p. 52). Later, after her adopted parents' divorce, King refers to the jumbled items in her father's flat: "You can't just take something from one life and put it into another . . . There will always be something of the old life . . . that means it doesn't quite fit into the new" (King, 2017, p. 80). This becomes another metaphor for King's realization that an adoptee cannot merely be slotted into a new family without the agony of feeling othered.

The issue of race, as well as the many metaphors employed in the memoir, summarizes King's representation of her identity as an adoptee: that of not fitting in, but also that of continuous double consciousness regarding her adoptee status and as a racialized body in a white community. This affective displacement is perhaps best summarized in King's own

words: “I felt so desperately misunderstood and unable to speak about the feelings of sadness, insecurity, abandonment and otherness . . . It is a familiar feeling among adoptees. That we must be silent and, above all, constantly grateful” (King, 2017, p. 39). These words indicate that the semantic and cognitive-affective maps representing the interracial adoptee double consciousness, and an overwhelming sense of their silencing under the cult of gratitude. What King succeeds in doing in this memoir is to become a voice for the adoptee – the very act of highlighting the silence, breaks the silence. This may point to the creation of a new atlas with which to navigate the representational maps in South African adoption memoirs.

Adoptive parents: Victims or Villains?

As far as the depiction of the adopted- and biological parents go, a pattern of idealization, realization, and final resentment or disappointment emerges. Kings’ adoptive father, Malcolm, is, at first, her “captain [and] team-mate” (King, 2017, p. 59). Not much more is said regarding their relationship, until her parents’ divorce. This leads to Malcolm’s slow disappearance from King’s life. When she goes to university, she states, she has not had contact with him for nearly seven years, “I have almost, *almost* forgotten that I am his daughter” (King, 2017, p. 128). When Malcolm falls ill with leukemia, King attempts to visit him in hospital, only to be told by a nurse that “Mr. Kirk does not have a daughter” (King, 2017, p. 128). Nevertheless, King never expresses resentment. Their relationship is summarized in King’s words: “Although he hurt me by leaving me behind . . . he would still . . . be the first man who ever loved me” (King, 2017, p. 129).

Ultimately, King does not problematize her relationship with Malcolm as much as she does with her adopted mother, Angela. Angela is depicted as a devoted housewife and mother. As King grows older, she increasingly feels that she does not meet her mother’s expectations of what she wanted in a daughter: “I would be overwhelmed by the sense that my mother was eternally disappointed by me. I wasn’t the daughter she had really wanted” (King, 2017, p. 38). This is compounded by the fact that “Mum is always wistful and sad when she talks about her not being able to have children. Understandably so, but her sadness was greater than her desire to reassure us . . . that we were enough” (King, 2017, p. 37). These instances lead King to resent her mother. King implies that Angela was unaware of King’s struggles with coming to terms with her abandonment at birth: “According to my mother, I showed absolutely no sign of distress at being parted from Kris” (King, 2017, p. 42), and that Angela was mostly unaware of the constant “uncontrollable fear of abandonment, crippling self-doubt . . . and pitiably low self-worth” (King, 2017, p. 42). King paints a fresco of her adoptive mother as well-meaning and loving, though ill-equipped to deal with the rigors of life as an adopted parent, and largely ignorant of her adopted children’s affective needs and the underlying trauma that shapes their existence.

Apart from her views of her adoptive parents as individuals, King tells of how her initial view of an ideal adopted family unravels as she grows older. Her bifurcated double consciousness is mentioned earlier, but her adoptive parents’ role in this affective displacement should be scrutinized. In Chapter 4 of the memoir, King observes: “My adoptive parents were never really meant to have been my mother and father . . . They forget that the start . . . of every adoption story is pain” (King, 2017, pp. 30-31). The reasons behind this observation stem from King’s belief that her adoptive parents never addressed the issue of adoption itself, and far less so the issue of interracial adoption. Instead of personally addressing this aspect, King’s parents provide her with a book titled *Jane is Adopted*.

The pictures in ‘Jane is Adopted’ shows me how it works. A lady with red hair and a smiley face has a big tummy. Then on the next page she is holding a baby. Then she gives the baby to a lady in a green dress and a man with a moustache like Daddy’s. They are smiling too. At the end, there is a little girl sitting on the lap of the lady with the green dress; she is smiling too. Adoption just means lots of smiles and everyone is happy. (King, 2017, p. 43)

Though the book may initially soothe her and answer the questions she may have regarding the process of adoption, King is, from the outset, conditioned to subscribe to the cult of gratitude inherent in the idealized concept of the adoption fairytale, her trauma silenced. King also recognizes that adoption is seen as the purview of affluent whites, an uncomfortable truth exposed in extant adoption research, while also highlighting the white savior narrative perpetuated by interracial adoption (*cf.* Samuels & LaRossa, 2009; Zill, 2017; Steinberg & Hall, 2011; and others). Thus, King’s adoptive parents’ lack of open discussions pertaining to adoption leaves her unequipped to deal with larger issues she may have, such as feeling of abandonment, rejection, shame, and guilt. In this sense, one might say that the adoptive parents’ voices are heard and that, in the process, the adoptee is silenced.

Furthermore, King states in no uncertain terms that she and Adam were not first-choice children. King feels disposable, and Angela’s constant pining for her unborn biological children makes King feel inadequate, and that neither she nor Adam could “eradicate, or at least usurp, her own disappointment” at being unable to bear children (King, 2017, p. 37). Although King does feel loved, she also experiences a certainty that, had Malcolm and Angela conceived naturally, she and Adam would never have been adopted. King goes on to situate this in the larger context of adoption outside of her family, stating that she has never met adoptive parents whose choice to adopt was spurred on by the need to provide a child with a home rather than as a replacement for biological children who would never be born. This is not an uncommon view among adoptees as well as the general public, as discussed by Bramlett and Radell (2017), Palacios and Brodzinsky (2010), and others. What this indicates in terms of the adoptive parents in adoption atlases, is that their voices are imprinted on the adoptee. In this case, the adoptive parents’ trauma – their infertility – serves to silence the trauma of the adoptees themselves.

First Parents and the Negation of Trauma

As is the case with King’s perceptions of her adoptive parents, she at first has an idealized view of her biological parents. However, as she grows older and gains insight into their reality, mostly through letters written to her by Kris, her first/biological mother, and later through her interactions with Kris’ other children, this perception changes to one of resentment and anger.

King paints an idealized picture of her biological father, Jackson; however, little is written about him in the memoir. Based on the single photograph she has of him, King fantasizes about her biological father. She notes that all that is good in her must have come from Jackson, and that, despite his race being a disadvantage in the South African socio-political climate at the time of King’s birth, he would have been a revered and respected man: “In my mind my father is Othello” (King, 2017, p. 23). This is one of the only times King refers to Jackson, and she acknowledges that she only pretends to know him.

King's idealization of Kris and with own her birth story soon become colored with the reality communicated to her in Kris' letters. She realizes that giving her up for adoption was not an action taken in her best interest, but was her mother's choice to ostensibly protect herself from recrimination and incrimination. King interprets this as Kris absolving herself of impropriety and, ultimately, a choice she made to shirk the responsibility of dealing with her affair. King's belief is not without merit, as Kris states: "It is not true to say that you were simply the product of a romance story, nor that your adoption was simply down to the politics in South Africa when you were born" (King, 2017, p. 114). In the same breath, Kris proceeds to blame King for her need for information regarding her origins. While being seemingly accepting of and open to King's requests for information, she blames King for traumatizing her with these requests, negating King's trauma in the adoption process: "Your curiosity about your ancestry is understandable, but is the curiosity of a young idealistic woman worth the pain I am once again feeling?" (King, 2017, p. 114). She minimizes King's need for closure, and blames King's birth, and not her affair, for her divorce: "You have so many more years ahead of you and the first days of your life are not important on that scale ... Your conception and birth were partially responsible for my divorce not long after you were born" (King, 2017, p. 114). In this and other letters, King is told to cease asking questions, that "I want to keep that part of my life in the past . . . please let me go from your life" (King, 2017, p. 114). The rejection that informs King's identity as an adoptee is now verbalized, and solidifies her (relevant) belief that she was unwanted. King's resentment and anger coalesce into a message Kris:

I don't forgive you. I do not forgive you. I want pain and dark and nothing for you ...
 I want to crawl back up inside you, covered in barbs, ripping you open from your womanhood to your gullet and expose all of the things that fester under your skin [...] I want you abandoned and frightened . . . I want tears for my tears, scars for my scars . . . loss for my loss, because I do not forgive you... (King, 2017, p. 174)

King argues that there was indeed a way for her mother to keep her – to return to England along with her husband and child (King, 2017, p. 88). As King can rationally think of increasingly viable reasons why her adoption never needed to happen, she becomes convinced that she was unwanted, and was put up for adoption "because I was an inconvenience" (King, 2017, p. 88). Kris is painted as mothering without a of agency, a belief cemented with the arrival of the aforementioned letter. Ironically, it is in this instance that King feels closest to what can be called her true identity:

With the arrival of this letter, everything I've wanted – perhaps *needed* – to believe about my biological mother flies from my mind . . . I am overwhelmed with anger. Time stands still and the 'gone before' catches up with the 'yet to come'. It is where the two meet that I am most present, but also most afraid. (King, 2017, p. 117)

The idealized biological mother becomes instantly vilified and deceptive. Once more, Kris rejects her daughter, and King becomes "the thing she fears the most. The litter from her belly, the filthy issue, the prodigal daughter" (King, 2017, p. 118). Using the word "thing" in reference to herself speaks to the rejection and incongruity King experiences, and echoes the discussion on her identity as black, her embodied yet contested identity, above: "everything I know and think I know and have always understood about where I came from evaporates" (King, 2017, p. 115). She starts questioning what she had always believed – that for Kris this was a decision accompanied with doubt, grief, and internal conflict. Kris becomes the

embodiment of her lie – that Karoline has died. Kris had killed Karoline in order to escape possible legal and familial recriminations.

Conclusion

When we investigate the semantic and cognitive-affective maps King presents in her memoir, we come to realize that this is an atlas of lived experience. It is an atlas that provides maps of how King, her adoptive parents, and her first parents, navigated adoption, laying bare the trauma and long-term consequences of specifically interracial adoption. Rather than taking the essentialist approach of adoption as a fairy tale or vilifying those involved in adoption, King sketches the relief map of the motivations behind her relinquishment and adoption, and grapples with questions of identity, racialization, ignorance, good intentions, and unjust political ideologies. Though Kris is vilified, it is not done based on her choice of giving her child up for adoption, but rather for the selfish reasons leading to this decision and the duplicitous way in which she went about it. In a sense, this memoir is an atlas not only of adoption, but of adopting a life that is unconventional, that spans continents and political regimes, and different ways of family creation. In the South African context, King succeeds in exposing the dark underbelly of adoption in the Apartheid era while also commenting on how the country later adopts back those children it shunned, abused, and ostracized for decades. It is an atlas that does not shy away from showing the deepest crevices of despair, identity struggles, the cult of gratitude, and how good intentions really do pave the way to hell. Through this atlas, King creates a space where members of the adoption triad can recognize themselves and their lived reality, an atlas that transcends the fairy tale or horror story boundaries imposed by popular mass media and our consumption thereof.

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***Investigating the Learning and Cognitive Process With Phenomenography:
A Case Study of a Visual Experimental Research Course***

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Abstract

Experiential learning theory emphasizes on the importance of learning through experiences and reflection. Recently, the question of how to implement a teaching strategy has attracted great attention from educators. In this study, we designed a course on the theme of death. During this course, students were expected to learn reflectively and eventually create a video to interpret their conception of death for digital advocacy. To evaluate the course's effectiveness, we used phenomenography and iconology as a tool for rolling action research for different course stages. The results suggest that designs of experiential learning activities made the students' interpretation of death more positive, while creative practices encouraged students to focus on presenting their understandings with a higher level of certainty.

Keywords: Experiential Learning, Phenomenography, Cognitive Process, Iconology

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Introduction

The rapid evolution of industrial environment and the progress of information technology have not only come to change the social structure, but have also come to enhance consumers' awareness of social responsibility. In this context, designers need to shift their focus from designing an object to serving the general public (Xu, 2018). In Taiwan, the vocational education imparted to designers ignored the development of thinking, in-depth analyzing, and exploring abilities. The one-way teaching approach implied insufficient teacher-student interaction and scant attention towards the idiosyncratic learning needs (Zhang, 2019). Without practical experiences and skills, students will have a bumpy start in their careers (Hong, 2019). Changes in pedagogical forms and concepts are necessary to tackle the existing issues. Experiential learning has gained momentum in school education in recent years. Dewey (1938) believed education to be a process for students to construct knowledge, acquire skills, and improve their self-value through experiences (Wu, 2009). Some scholars proposed the introduction of experiential learning, an approach centered towards students and communities, and the enhanced efforts for developing individual capabilities and assuming social responsibilities. Reflection and critical thinking were deemed as important for students to acquire and internalize knowledge (Wang, 2006; Zhang, 2017).

In the past, advocacy was the most common means through which the disadvantaged groups made demands and achieved their goals. However, typical social issues could not be fixed by a single group. Government support and public engagement were needed to discuss issues from various perspectives (Li, 2018). In the digital age, we can use communication technology to increase efficiency. Specifically, Internet and digital technologies can be employed to produce and disseminate information, while traditional advocacy provides a means to organize, mobilize, coordinate, and integrate people (McNutt, 2008). However, with regard to shocking effect, ubiquitous death-related news and other created content on the media and internet have exaggerated the pain and terrifying experiences of death. They have come to fuel people's fear of death. The general public may suffer greater physical and mental harm as the fear is felt in addition to the many troubles caused by the sudden loss of their loved ones or others as well as disharmonious families before the death, thus, becoming more resistant and avoidant toward death-related issues (Gong et al., 2011). Cultures around the globe interpret death differently, thus, people tend to have different views on, approaches to, and emotions toward death (Li, 2005). With easy access to the Internet, communicating and embracing a variety of values should be an important feature of a modern society. Reviewing the current education system and the contents covered by it is necessary to highlight the respective feature.

In summary, experiential learning should be one of the focal points of curriculum design today. Students should be aware of the current social issues and be capable of using digital media to assume the social responsibilities of being socially influential. This study focused on the experimental video creation and research course of the National Yunlin University of Science and Technology as the research site. Upon the completion of the course, students should enhance their ability to deal with specific social issues by telling stories that are based on self-experiences via digital videos. The course was developed around the theme of "death." Through video design, content analysis, and re-creation for advocacy, students were required to improve their public understanding of death. The course was designed based on Kolb's experiential learning cycle, and the action research was the main tool for evaluating the teaching performance. However, action research is less effective in examining the teaching activities dynamically and also less relevant and effective in promoting reflective

learning (Zhang, 2021; Zhang et al., 2019). To showcase the outcomes and identify problems, other methods are needed to supplement action research (Bernstein, 2018; Dillette & Sipe, 2018). Therefore, in this study, I collected data by including an image questionnaire to be answered mainly by sketches. Through analyzing the images, it is possible to reveal the ideological consciousness reflected or implied by the changes of works from different cultural systems and various stages of a particular civilization (Li, 2008; Zhang, 2020). Therefore, this study aimed to do the following: (1) discuss how the experiential learning theory can be applied in the planning and teaching of a curriculum with equal emphasis on theory and practice and then examining the outcomes; and (2) understand the relationship between the course design and students' learning and cognitive development process by adopting the action research method supplemented by phenomenography, thus, discussing how the combined method can be used in evaluating the teaching practices.

Literature Review

Digital Advocacy

Instead of just carrying concerns over various social issues, advocacy is a kind of an individual or a group activity to support and express ideas and needs for the promotion of economic and social justice (Berry, 2003). The targets identified by an advocacy are often in line with the social expectations. They could be attained through enhanced educational activities and campaigns. Obviously, an advocacy would be more influential if it is more capable of triggering strong emotions and empathy, thus, making the targets more reachable. For an advocacy, the means and information necessary to promote the identified topics and targets are critical for ultimately influencing the policy, the audience, and the general public. A valid message could persuade the audience to think or act in a way that leads to changes (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, 2018). The advent of the digital era has fundamentally changed the operation of advocacy. Enabled by digital technologies, many messages can be instantly transmitted to the public. Disseminating information digitally for advocacy is known as digital advocacy. Digital advocacy covers many professional areas of digital design, such as online platform establishment and web page design, social media and planning and designing of media content, and interactive technologies and audio and video production. They are the design technologies that are integrated and applied to meet the social requirements (Bowen et al., 2017). Projects such as Connecting Voices, funded by Hivos in 2017, promoted digital advocacy through blogs and social media campaigns to improve democratic governance, protect civic space, demand government accountability, and uphold the local freedom of expression and social justice (Pollicy, 2018). Therefore, the course of this study will leverage the advantages of production and communication with new media to distill and communicate the theme of advocacy.

Death Education

Death education has gradually become a subject of school education in Taiwan, aimed to provide relevant resources to help people tackle the emotional crisis caused by death around them (Zhang, 2019). People are afraid of sudden harm and death experiences. The physical and psychological impact and sadness are difficult to alleviate. However, the media plays a dominant role in influencing people's attitude towards death with quick dissemination of information over the network. People are less likely to be able to judge the appropriateness of the information and its influence to themselves. They need to reflect their past experience and future goals based on the proper understandings of death, so as to learn to treasure what they

have at the moment and plan the next step rationally and thoughtfully under confusing and worrisome situations. Also, they need the ability to accept “normal grief.” Many scholars have called for the need to have death education based on these needs (Wu & Huang, 2001; Zhang, 2019). Death education offers the opportunities to know about the death attitudes of different cultures and ethnic groups. As a result, people can enhance their psychological capacity to deal with death. In addition, knowledge of the psychological changes that take place before death and the ability to analyze the changes are also useful. An optimized funeral for oneself or a family member could reduce the burden on the family and society. The counseling services help family members recover from the bereavement and resume normal life.

Finally, the education of the “world after life” encourages people to understand death from the perspectives of material transformation and spiritual significance, reducing the meaningless fear and worry caused by death and helping people realize that death is inevitable (Zhou & Huang, 2009). Therefore, by discussing the value of life and reducing the anxiety surrounding death, death education could help people take care of their mental and physical needs and maintain a good balance between them. Furthermore, people are expected to be aware of the emotional changes taking place while facing death, and thus, understand and recognize such changes. The ultimate goal is to have people cherish and respect life while developing their own philosophy of life (Qiu, 2006). Also, improving the psychological preparedness of family members and patients involves informing and guiding individuals to make choices during the transition of life (Li, 1999; Yang, 2017). While planning the course for this study, we expected students to integrate the theme of death in their lives. They should be able to communicate and discuss the topics related to death and the planning and arrangement for their final trip with respect, inclusiveness, and positive attitudes before the death of their loved ones or themselves. Moreover, through group discussion and creation, students should reflect on their own course of life, and thus, face life and living with a more productive and positive mindset.

Based on the analysis of the literature, we formulate the following five goals and concepts of death education. It was expected that the completion of each module of the course could bring some changes in students’ understanding of death-related topics.

1. Understanding that death is inevitable: death is bound to happen. People should learn to face it both physically and emotionally.
2. Capable of facing the death and parting of others: death cannot be experienced, it needs to be described and observed from the outside, usually the departure of relatives or pets. It is necessary to avoid the ignorance of the current mood. Particularly, we need to reduce fear, sadness, and regret, and guard against the loss of enthusiasm for life. After these events, we should care for our relatives and friends.
3. The importance of pre-death planning: since death is inevitable, both the parties concerned and their families should have a psychological preparation by understanding and guiding the choices they make during the transition of life to avoid any regrets.
4. Being able to discuss feelings about death: people are afraid of the sudden harm and death experience given the fragility of life and the lack of understanding of the essence of life. Media manipulation makes the fear of people even more terrible. The physical and psychological impact and sadness are difficult to alleviate. We expected the different teaching materials and created content to be able to abate the negative mindset.
5. Capable of talking about the constructs of death: due to the inability to experience death, people’s imagination of the post-death world mostly comes from religious experiences or

the experiences of a few people. Such uncertainty also creates mystery or worry and fear. Through the course, we expected the constructs to be mostly positive or people to divert their attentions to taking care of their emotions and pre-death planning.

Iconology

Images are inseparable from our life. They showcase the lifestyle of a culture. In a modern society, images, like words, can also be used to communicate and preserve information as well as present personal experiences and ideas (Li, 2008). Cognitive studies indicated people to be more interested in images, and visual thinking emphasized on the overall comprehensive ability of vision. It does not exclude the role of words and intuition in learning, and provides non-verbal learners another means of communication and expression. It is used to improve the communication and expression that otherwise required many words or are ambiguous (Wu, 2016; Huang, 2000).

Iconology was an important art research method in the first half of the 20th century. It originated from iconography and developed into a comprehensive and descriptive study of the theme of visual art until the 20th century. It emphasizes the rationality of images and focuses on the theme of artistic works and the deep meaning these works reflect, and thus, explores the ideological consciousness reflected in the framework of a cultural system and the changes of civilizations at various stages (Zhang, 2020; Zhou, 2006). Panofsky believed iconology to be an objective way to discover and elaborate the symbolic values hidden in visual forms, and divided the analysis of an artwork into three levels in accordance to the characteristics of graphics: (a) description, (b) analysis, and (c) interpretation of the inner meaning and content of the artwork (Zhu, 2012; Zhang, 2020). Since iconography has been established as a widely adopted research method for studying students' learning concepts, using sketches as an indirect procedure to collect data in social studies is justifiable (Feldon & Tofel-Grehl, 2018; Cox, 1981; Cox & Parkin, 1986; Harrison et al., 2007; Khan et al., 2019). For this study, image data can offer insights on students' cognitive process and different learning concepts (Selwyn et al., 2009; Hsieh & Tsai, 2018). By supplementing action research with an image questionnaire for teaching practices, this study could be able to gauge the impact of the course design with different methods.

Experiential Learning

In school life, the pattern and design of a curriculum restrict the learning effect and have a direct impact on the moral character generation, ideological transformation, and technical training of students, which are the basic requirements to realize the controllability of education (Kuang, 2007). Under the pressure of social change and responsibility, there is a need for education to also be reformed. In western countries, experiential education has been implemented for many years. In the teaching process, the combination of actual living environment and experience is used to experience and learn with real feelings, and this teaching mode has developed into an important part of the school education curriculum (Hsieh et al., 2007). Kolb called such experience-oriented educational learning theory "experiential" learning and defined experiential learning as "the process of constructing knowledge." This learning process involves a creative tension between the four modes of learning in response to the situational demands. The holistic idea fuses the concrete experience of being the best teacher with the concept of acquiring knowledge through critical thinking and reflection (Dillette, 2018). Fundamentally, it can be traced back to "learning by doing" proposed by Dewey (1938). He argued learning to be a process of constantly

reorganizing and changing our experiences. It is a process of transforming experiences into knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and achieving reflections, actions, and interactions between individuals and situations while making sense of the experiences (Wang, 2006; Huang and Su, 2017).

Based on the learning and cognitive development theories of various scholars, Kolb developed a staged cycle diagram of experiential learning. The four stages in the cycle are: after encountering a “concrete experience,” individuals would perform a “reflective observation” for analysis; then, “abstract conceptualization” is carried out, which refers to the processing of obtained information and developing it before the final stage of “active experimentation” (Wang, 2006; Li et al., 2011). Based on these four stages, this study designed a course of experimental video and research, which included multiple teaching methods and textbooks. With learners as the center of teaching and death as the theme, the purpose of death education can be achieved by exchanging and reflecting on the past experiences. By supplementing the assessment with sketches, we extended the means of expression beyond instant oral expressions and words by including images for recording and reflection.

Methods and design

Research Site and Participant

This study focused on the Digital Media Design Institute, National Yunlin University of Science and Technology as the research site and the students from the experimental video creation and research course as the participants. The number of students enrolled in the course is 17, comprising of three doctoral students and 14 master students. The students came from three different design departments and university majors, including visual communication design, product design, game design, and information management. All the doctoral students had working experience. In addition, all the participants signed the informed consent form.

Research Methods

This study was carried out via action research, and the results of the three tests were examined using phenomenography. Also, content analysis was adopted for data analysis. Action research provides a process with a series of actions to solve the problems step by step. Researchers can construct knowledge by addressing the practical problems in the process. However, the unique learning process requires the studying and observing of research area through real actions (Wang, 2020). Action research was adopted to improve teaching and achieve two learning objectives. The first is the resolving of internal issues identified through each round of reflection. To ensure the effectiveness of collaborative learning, it is critical to set rules and assign responsibilities that are deemed appropriate. A manager should be selected for each group to oversee the development of a team-specific operating system, which can be employed to resolve the internal issues effectively (Tseng, 2012). Second, students are required to generate new knowledge and discard the traditional learning framework. In the advocacy process, they should care for the society, humanity, and environment from different perspectives so as to enhance the ability to detect and reflect issues (Skerritt & Perry, 2002).

The image questionnaire does not have any requirements with respect to the students' drawing skills. They only need to produce sketches within the time limit by being faithful to their thoughts at the moment. The image analysis of this study is drawn from the three levels proposed by Panofsky by focusing on the inherent meaning or content, and integrating the concepts of iconography with the historical synchronic view, so as to focus on the influence of cultural or event changes and development in a specific stage (Zhou, 2006). Through action research, in addition to guiding students to reflect at each stage, researchers can analyze the image questionnaire and keywords. By matching the course content with the teaching log, we could identify the teaching issues or their implications in the context of the actual situation and events at the time.

Procedures

The course was divided into three stages: introduction and text analysis, conceptual prototypes, and design implementation and exhibition. Students were required to read and analyze the text objectively, communicate and discuss their reflections, and reconstruct their self-cognition and expression. Three reflection feedback points were established for the action research. At each point, students were required to participate in an image analysis test, which was carried out in about 10 minutes before the end of the class. The question of "drawing a picture to explain what death looks like to you" was identical for the three tests, with the aim being to guide students to think about their imagination about death. Students were required to draw the construct of death on the left side. They were also required to include 7-15 keywords in the space on the right to describe the image. After that, they would share the sketches with another teammate, who would assist the participant to add more keywords after the discussion. Each test took about 10-15 minutes.

The course design of this study is based on the four cycles of experiential learning, and focuses on the reflection of learners. The participants were required to review their experiences and derive rules and results from them via reflection. Subsequently, they were required to apply the results to relevant situations or even their lives (Li et al., 2011). The course so designed had different arrangements and objectives for different stages (Figure 1). The "introduction and text analysis" as the first stage is the starting point of the course. The focus in this stage is the acquisition of concrete experiences. Participants were expected to generate new ideas based on the theoretical knowledge of advocacy, curating, digital development, as well as case sharing. Also, they should re-organize their experiences and knowledge via the discussion and reflection of death in different cultures. These activities offer the foundation for understanding the death concepts in classrooms and curating the advocacy. The second stage "conceptual prototypes" has digital teaching materials and expert speeches. Students had the opportunities to conduct in-depth discussion on the topic of death and tried to propose curatorial plans. Finally, they worked in groups to conceptualize death and come up with detailed plans after reflection. Lastly, in "design implementation and exhibition," students were required to design and curate based on the three groups of themes decided as per the areas identified in prior stages. They were required to launch an advocacy exhibition based on the theme of death.

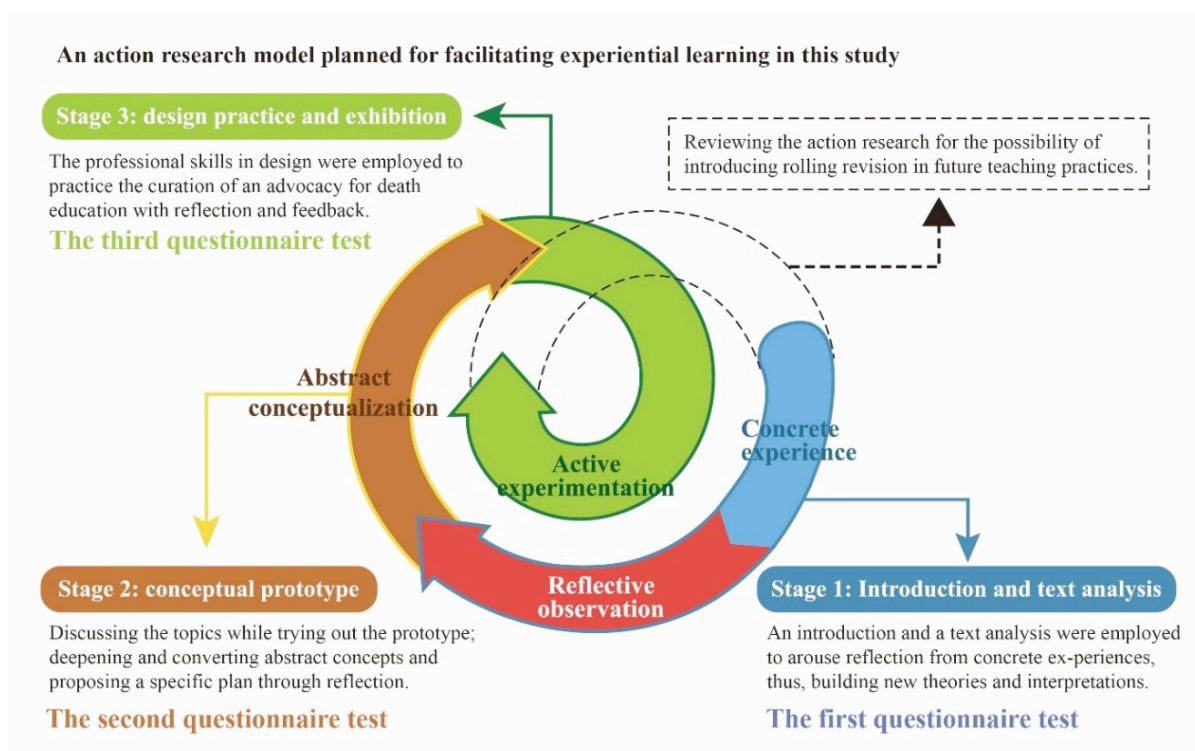


Figure 1 An action research model planned in this study for experiential learning.

Data analysis and results

The keywords from the three image tests were allocated semantically after open coding based on the above five categories of objectives related to death education: (A) understanding that death is inevitable; (B) capable of facing the death and parting of others; (C) recognizing the importance of pre-death planning; (D) being able to discuss one's feelings about death; and (E) capable of talking about the constructs of death. Subsequently, the data collected systematically were summarized and discussed (Table 1). We retrieved 537 keywords from 52 image questionnaires. Within each category, the keywords were further classified as positive or negative ones to characterize the emotions and feelings in the face of death, the death experiences related to themselves or others, and the imagination of the world after death. By denoting the negative constructs in the five categories as A1, B1, C1, D1, and E1, respectively, and similarly the positive constructs as A2, B2, C2, D2, and E2, we obtained ten types of constructs.

Positive and Negative keywords

The total number of positive keywords in Test 2 increased to 136 (Table 1). While the number of negative keywords also increased (Figure 2), the increase was minimal in the category of "feelings for facing others' death." This points to an effective death education in improving psychological preparedness as the reflection of texts and individual cases from an objective perspective during the second stage as well as group discussion, which may have changed the students' interpretation of death.

Table 1
Comparison of the negative constructs from the three tests

<i>General classification of the concepts Objects</i>	<i>Positive or Negative</i>	<i>Test 1</i>	<i>Test 2</i>	<i>Test 3</i>	<i>Sub-total</i>
<i>A. Understanding that death is inevitable</i>	A1	3	9		14
	A2	10	35	1	66
<i>B. Capable of facing the death and parting of others</i>	B1	2	1		3
	B2	8	21		37
<i>C. Recognizing the importance of pre-death planning</i>	C1	24	19	5	68
	C2	24	33	3	90
<i>D. Being able to discuss one’s feelings about death</i>	D1	24	20	3	77
	D2	34	33	4	121
<i>E. Capable of talking about the constructs of death</i>	E1	2	7		13
	E2	17	14	7	48
	Negative	55	56	4	175
	Positive	93	136	33	362
		148	192	97	537

As discussed in the details mentioned below against the course content, the students deepened and broadened their interpretation of death from Test 1 to Test 3.

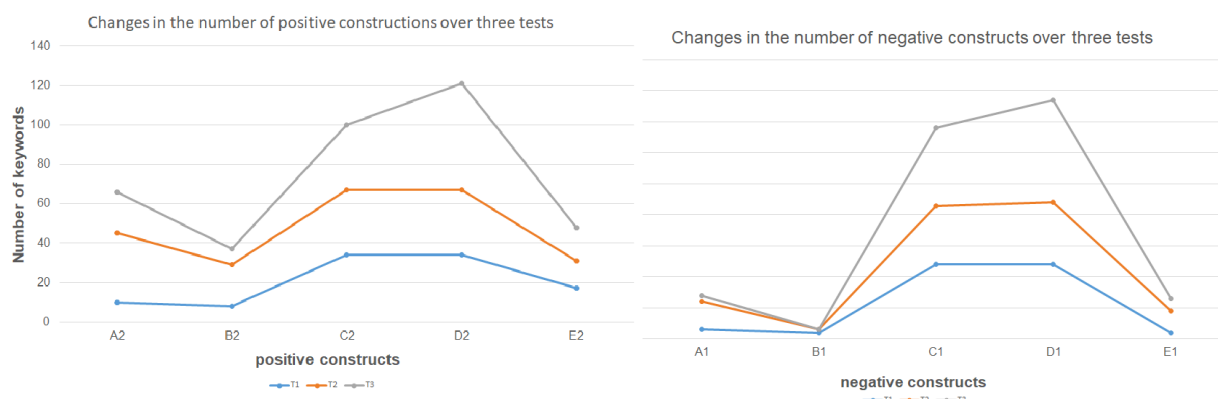


Figure 2 Comparison of the positive constructs from the three tests

Creation stage

Test 3 was conducted during the creation stage. At this point, students have undergone the process of visualizing their knowledge and experiences. Therefore, the death constructs increased to 87, among which 54 are positive ones, which is more significant (Figure 3), suggesting that the video creation process is also an image creation process for the advocacy related to death. However, given the small sample size, the statistical line chart cannot confirm the hypothesis about the relationship between each of the categories and the learning process.

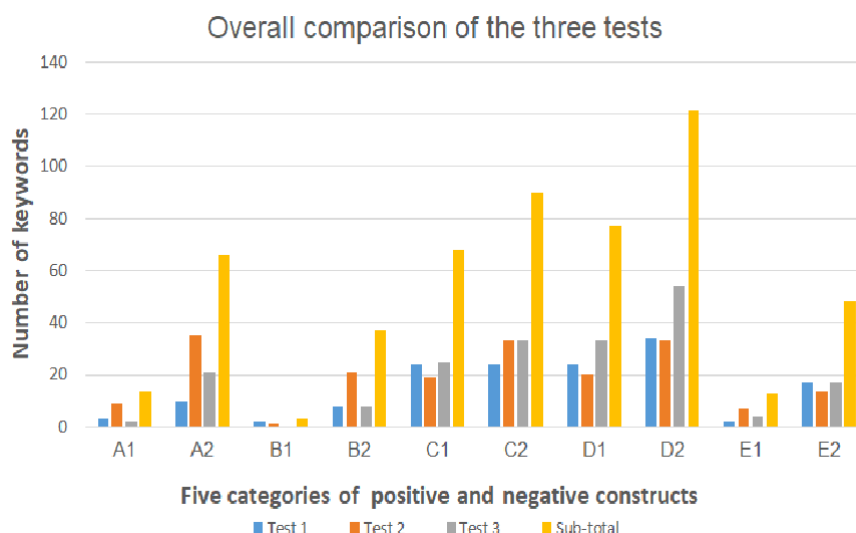


Figure 3 Overall comparison of the three tests

Two categories with a low number of keywords

For the two categories with a low number of keywords (Figure 4), the number of keywords for “C pre-death planning” increased notably, attributable to the discussion on pre-death during the conceptual prototype stage. However, during the creation stage, as the three themes are less relevant to the category, no keywords were allocated to it. Generally, pre-death planning for oneself or others is still a relatively unfamiliar or difficult concept to be expressed in practice. The number of positive constructs in “A death is inevitable” is many times higher than the negative ones.

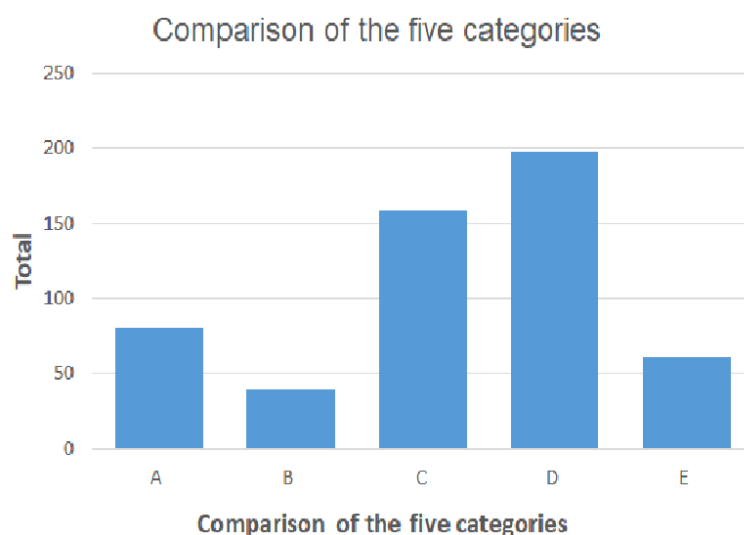


Figure 4 Comparison of the category axes

Summary

The result can be explained from two perspectives. First, the introduction and case analysis as well as the final exhibition of the work of students did not involve an in-depth discussion of the topic. Therefore, both the number of keywords as well as the depth of expression did not change with the delivering of the course. Second, the discussion in the course has always

been objective and rational, thus, there are more positive constructs than negative ones in general.

Conclusion

The exhibition place is in the exhibition space of National Yunlin University of Science and Technology. The theme planning, curatorial activities, and works of the three themed works were completed by the students in the groups. “Reminiscent Corner” combines both virtual and real settings. The area is arranged into a corner of a traditional living room. An interactive sensing technology is used to design a normal microphone that can be used to receive the last words from the departing people. The value of life is elaborated through the content from a database built by the students. “The Last Gift” is presented in VR360 for showing the existence state of a life in the middle between death and the beginning of the next life. Through immersive virtual reality, visitors can reconstruct a life retrospective process, providing viewers with an experience to review their own experience and cherish life. The “Endgame” guides visitors through a complete experience through digital audiovisual media, interactive technology, interactive experience, and reflective feedback. Finally, the visitors are encouraged to show the various choices they can make at the end of their lives.

In addition to these works, phenomenography research suggests that, along with the running of the course, positive changes in the students’ perception of death are significant. It also suggests that creation practice increased the number of death constructs notably. The results indicate that death education is effective in enhancing the psychological preparedness and course design based on experiential learning as it could integrate theories with practices effectively via the stimulation of continuous reflection and review of death concepts during learning. Due to the limited sample size and study time, even we combined phenomenography with action research. We could not discuss specifically and with certainty the association between students’ cognitive types and teaching material design as well as the specific design of reflection activities. Future studies could revise the course and activity design on a rolling basis. Also, this study has the potential to improve the application of phenomenography in teaching practice research.

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Teachers Mental Health: A Post-Graduate Course of Study Designed to Build Robust Teachers Mental Health Through Knowledge, Collegial Support, and Reflective Practice

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Abstract

There is a significant gap in post-graduate teacher education about strengthening teachers' mental health. This paper outlines the theorising, the understandings and the processes in creating an Education post-graduate, specialisation course of study on teachers' mental health. In particular, I draw attention to the relational nature of teaching and to the overlooked spiritual dimension of teaching with its links for a socially just future. Further, it proposes that the tandem of reflection about and reflective practice writing are beneficial tools for teachers. Reflecting, writing, and conjecturing possible strategies to understand the complexity of their role is an opportunity for teachers to develop different perspectives that encourage and foster professional relationships which can strengthen their mental health and teaching practice.

Keywords: Reflective Practice, Autoethnography, Future, Spirituality, Writing, Teacher Mental Health

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Introduction: Teachers' Mental Health

Prior to 2020 and the Covid-19 pandemic, both nationally and internationally, student mental health in schools was recognised as an escalating health, social, and educational issue that required a comprehensive response (Aldridge and McChesney, 2018; Weisbrot and Ryst, 2020). In parallel, though with less attention, has been the steady rise of teachers' mental ill-health (McLean et al., 2017). Before Australia's population entered the Covid-19 1 restrictions, the limited research on teachers' mental health identified some common underlying school-based factors that increased teachers' mental ill-health. (Hudders et al., 2018; McCallum et al., 2017).

The scholarly evidence indicates that there are significant gaps in a government and societal response to teachers' mental health which can be remediated by decreasing teacher workload, establishing whole-school collegial practices, raising the profile of teachers in the community, ensuring teachers are supported in professional development and addressing teachers' mental health in undergraduate degrees.

As teachers and educators in schools tackle the challenges of competing priorities of academic excellence, social-cultural equity and access to ever-changing digital technologies, teaching staff have taken on the mental health care and well-being responsibility as part of the duty of care for their students (Bouderou, 2019). The link between teacher well-being and student academic, social and psychological outcomes is noted (Fernandez-Betanaro et al., 2021). The link between teachers and educators as individual people, stress and working environments is also noted (Ramberg et al., 2020).

A Response From The Tertiary Sector

In the last decade, universities have offered graduate courses and undergraduate degree units that enable teachers and educators to identify and help manage student wellbeing, but there is little available for teachers and educators themselves. Independent sites that inform general public about the breadth of mental ill-health issues have considerable value, but do not contain the rigour nor breadth that teachers and educators require to build a comprehensive understanding of their specific circumstances. Nor do the sites prepare them for a future in which unusual circumstances, such as the COVID-19 pandemic challenges every-day, ordinary life. Examples from Australia include Beyond Blue and Lifeline. There is now a growing emergence of websites for teachers about teachers' mental health such as Reach Out ([Teacher mental health | Information and support | ReachOut Schools](#)). Their intention is to create an immediate solution for teachers who experience low-level mental ill-health rather than attempting to work towards whole-of-school, infrastructural, work-environment or policy changes. Their concern is for the personal rather than the political.

In the UK, the site *TeachCom*, offers a list of sites that can assist teachers but does not provide specific comprehensive information itself for teachers. ([50 Resources to Support the Mental Health of Teachers and School Staff](#)). Additionally, *Education Support*, [Improving mental health awareness at school \(educationsupport.org.uk\)](#), a UK charity for teachers is motivated to address the personal and the political by advocating changes to create a psychologically safe workplace. Though this service does not address the routines and societal expectations that create conditions for teachers' mental ill-health.

One disadvantage is that the online services that provide quality information for teachers, do so with limited financial support and without endorsement or affiliations from academic institutions or governments. This means that the organisation is unlikely to expand to tackle the critical, work-environment issues that create distress and burnout for teachers. Prior to 2020 and the Covid-19 pandemic teachers and educators have shouldered and continue to shoulder the burden of teaching large groups of students either face-to-face, via digital technologies or a hybrid; as well as having to manage their own domestic situation (Hadar et al., 2020). The cumulative effect of stressful circumstances reduces the sense of well-being, coping mechanisms and self-regulation (Zhou and Yao, 2020).

Currently, there appears to be no mental health for teachers and educators in Education post-graduate courses offered by an Australian university which is designed solely for teachers and educators with a focus on their wellbeing and that of their colleagues. Many universities offer courses in generic mental health and units about and for student well-being.

In some Australian states inclusive of Victoria and NSW, during 2020 students and teachers faced several episodes of lengthy lockdown. Indeed, numerous articles indicate that student mental health deteriorated during 2020 (Sicouri et al., 2021). Anecdotal evidence came in through ACU's partnership school systems and schools from teachers, school executives and principals who were experiencing more intense, more frequent and more sustained episodes of mental ill-health. By the latter part of 2020 there was sufficient accounts of the lived experience plus numerous studies to suggest there was a significant issue that, from a social justice perspective, had to be addressed. We understood that there were strategies that could have been and still can be done to support teachers through government and community initiatives – but that is not our remit.

However, as the largest provider of teacher education in both undergraduate and post-graduate courses we were positioned to respond – as an academic institution. We were positioned to provide an opportunity for teachers and education professionals to understand and manage how the increasing diversity of roles and responsibilities impacts their own and that of their colleagues' mental health, as well as the complexities of mental health issues that have emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic (Klapparth et al., 2020). Although the course, in the first unit of study, offers a focus on self-awareness and self-management, the course, because it is framed by social justice principles, when offered in relationship to the immediate and broader community, especially the education community, the acquired knowledge and understanding becomes a vehicle that offers the pursuit of knowledge to highlight human dignity whilst directed towards the common good. These three values reflect the ACU's mission.

Methodology: Reflective Practice

The four units have been designed to reflect the scholarly literature on teachers' circumstances, professional training and practice, and of the specific environmental factors that erode teachers' mental health. Further the units are designed with various activities that can be used for whole-school professional development. Additionally, this course includes two emerging trends in qualitative research. The first is an exploration of the connection between mental health and spirituality; and the second is highlight autoethnography as a qualitative methodology to explore aspects of the lived experience (Milner et al., 2019). They both sit within reflective practice – firstly as reflection and secondly as practice. The course recognises, uses and supports teachers and educators in their own teaching practice use a mix

of a social and cognitive constructivist approach to learning, and thus, the course has a constructivist frame. This approach acknowledges teachers and educators as adult learners will bring to their studies, their knowledge, skills, experiences and learning patterning.

It is designed to build on, and maximise teachers' and educators' known pedagogical understanding and practice as well as providing new knowledge and opportunities to develop and build collegial practises (Beteille et al., 2020).

Aims and Learning Outcomes

The aim of the Graduate Certificate's four units is to ensure that education professionals have engaged in an appropriately sequenced and structured program of learning and development to progressively build, identify, and respond pro-actively to specific challenges in their school life, to become confident decision makers for themselves, to assist colleagues, to guide school and systems policy, especially to bolster teacher/parent and school/community relationships. This latter aspect is significant. To galvanise community support to enhance the work conditions for teachers, the parent body are needed as political support and action to bolster the teachers' demands. Parents have a desire to have the best education possible for their child and when having acknowledged that teachers' mental health has a strong correlation with their child's academic and psychological achievement will be better positioned to argue in favour for changes to a teachers' work environment. But this will take time as teachers seek to remove negative community attitudes about teachers, they must also build support with productive parent partnerships.

The course offers an integration of the understanding and practice of knowledge, values and skills surrounding teachers' and educators' mental health that can be applied in a personal and work context; and which incorporates a values system based on serving the common good. Moreover, the sequence of units has a focus on the analysis of current, relevant data about teacher and educators' mental health and the education sector to promote independent thinking and inquiry to encourage further critical analysis of themselves in relation to their work environment.

The course aims to build on teachers' and educators' previous knowledge and pedagogy, so they are confident to integrate new content and skills into their understanding of the breadth of mental health self-care and well-being. This is achieved through proposing units that are interdisciplinary and make optimum use of available technologies to advance their classroom and education practice in the context of regard for human dignity and for social justice. The interdisciplinary nature of the course enables teachers of primary and/or secondary and/or tertiary sector, as well as participants from outside schools, to bring their knowledge, understandings and experiences to discussions and collaborative activities. By its very nature, the course promotes collegiality and community so that all can flourish and re-asserts the need for collaborative parent partnerships.

Online Delivery

To keep pace with changing market demand and recognising that a growing proportion of students are seeking more flexible on-line opportunities; and as a response to more effective digital accessibility, ACU offers the Graduate Certificate in Mental Health for Teachers and Educators as an asynchronous platform whilst maintaining a facilitator presence. This dual decision meets the demand to increase accessibility for teachers who may face barriers to on-

campus learning due to work or family commitments, disability, or geographic location, and secondly allows ongoing student/ tutor interactions through conference call platforms.

A Chance To Use Reflective Practice

The scholarly literature indicates the therapeutic benefits and utility, as well as the academic benefits of using an academically reflective approach to lived experience to link theory and practice. Further, teachers' reflective anecdotal evidence must be increased and used to dismantle the practices that render teachers vulnerable to mental ill-health. As reflective practice can become critical self-scrutiny, it opens the way for individual teachers to examine circumstances and contexts that can lead to new understandings about themselves, their subjectivity, and their sense of knowing the world.

Further, reflective practice within the frame of autoethnography allows students to conjecture their future teaching role in a post-Covid-19, dystopian or utopian world. Of significance is that they can imagine and articulate a world in which their work is directed towards the realisation of a socially just world – and it is this factor that is highlighted in the students' discussion posts and assessments. A socially-just world is neither a fantasy, nor an impossibility, and in many cases, is their justifying reason for becoming a teacher. The students' belief that a socially just world, idealised through imaginative reflection is possible and mirrors Anna Stetesenko's (2014) and, Gee and Bernard's (2020) suggestion that reflecting, imagining, and stating an imagined future is a condition for social justice.

To increase critical analytical skills required for good research and writing, the four units emphasise the use of the reflective practice writing model proposed by Rolfe, Freshwater and Jasper (2010). Not only does this model of "What?, So What?, Now What?" build capacity to articulate lived experience in response to scholarly material and researched studies, its practise develops subjective positioning in which arguments can be grounded, advocacy through negotiation and a recognition of power plays, the process becomes a scaffold for working with colleagues, school executives and parents to advance changes in the work environment to strengthen teachers' mental health (Harris, 2008).

Further, critical reflective practice writing is a useful tool for post-graduate students who consider their teaching role as a vocation and who have a strong spirituality as reflection calls for deep thinking about the reverberating consequences of actions. For people who regard themselves as spiritual without a religious affiliation, spirituality is best expressed as a connection to others. This perspective was used to emphasise, underpin and expand the relational aspect of professional collegiality that is a targeted feature of each of the course's four units. The reflective writing activities a space to engage with the spiritual dimension because narrating a good future is not just about the self, it is about relationships with others as articulated by Jonathan Lear in his text, *Radical Hope*. (Lear, 2008). Reflective practice is instrumental in conjecturing and brainstorming a frame to develop collaborative social and political activism between teachers and parents to improve teaching conditions.

For teachers, reflective practice that draws on self-understanding in relation to theory is a crucial professional activity because it can strengthen professional collegiality when used for collaborative questioning about what is teaching, the purpose of teaching; and how different research methods generate different data about teaching (Blakely, 2020; Keck, 2020).

Conclusion

As the teacher shortage continues to remain problematic for Australia and the U.K., and for the profession internationally, the ACU Graduate Certificate in Mental Health for Teachers and Educators is addressing one critical area of why teachers leave the profession. The content of the course is designed to provide knowledge, understanding and skills for practising teachers who are intent on using academically rigorous post-graduate study to extend their knowledge, and to acquire a qualification useful for the work-place. For ACU as a tertiary institution, the course is being adapted to become a suite of micro-credentials to provide schools with bite-size, academic material which can be delivered as professional development as well as developing whole-school workshops for education conferences.

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A Strategy for Resilience: Developing a Narrative of the Imagined Future

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Abstract

Using motifs from the 1484 Jan van Eyck, “The Arnolfini Portrait”, I draw parallels with the processes of narrating an imagined future and of art-making to develop a strategy that has the capacity to navigate through clinical depression and suicidality. Both art-making and creating a narrative of the imagined future call on the imagination to conceive a finished object before beginning its construction. Both processes open a way into the unknown future by claiming a stake-hold that signals a direction for the art-piece and the narrative to conjecture what could become real. I offer similarities between art-making and the articulating of a self-narrative through an exploration of my 2015, double portrait, “Be-yond Becoming”, which references van Eyck’s 1434, “The Arnolfini Portrait. Narratives are powerful vehicles. As we tell the story of who we want to become we set ourselves to live out and perform as though it is real, the story of the imagined future. The virtual is actualized and the imagined is realised. I outline how ruptures in a self-narrative can become the place in which another story of the self emerges. My own interest in articulating and living out a narrative of the imagined future through art practice developed when I exchanged a narrative of suicidal depression with a narrative of becoming an artist.

Keywords: Suicidality, Imagination, Art-Making , Narrative, Future, Becoming

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Introduction

In 2014 Spence and Gwinner (255) stated that there had been little research on or by artists themselves on the nature and implications of the lived experience of artists who live with a mental illness. To date there is still limited research on the first-person lived experience from an artist's perspective on how they manage and negotiate mood disorders, mental ill-health and/or suicidality.

This account by an artist on their lived experience of suicidality and how a narrative of the imagined future is written to fill some of the gap in the academic literature. This paper is autoethnographic research. The researcher is also the participant who critically and analytically interrogates themselves as the subject whereby their selves and their subjectivity becomes the case study for the research and their experience of suicidality becomes the phenomenon or topic of the research.

Methodology

Autoethnography is becoming a more common methodology in the social sciences for it can examine sensitive or taboo subjects with the intention of addressing its impact at a personal and social level within the larger socio-cultural world (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011). This positioning within autoethnography reflects the concern of narrative inquiry with the little or small personal story rather than the collective, generic story or the story of the big socio-cultural events. Autoethnography is positioned to challenge traditional understandings and can provide a counter account to meta socio-cultural narratives (Mesner, 2016).

Autoethnography specifically addresses ethical parameters and considerations of research about the lived experience and of sensitive issues. Although there are similarities with autobiography in that both seek to give an account of one person's life from the perspective of that person, because autoethnography is research focused, it is bound by ethical concerns. The statement of, 'Do no harm', to self and others, for now and in the future, is made overt. Relational ethics (Mendez, 2013, 282) demands that autoethnography be judicious in naming people and locations. Rather, to ensure de-identification and maintaining anonymity, the researcher emphasizes their analysis of the phenomenon in terms of how it influenced and impacted themselves.

Further Autoethnography has an experimental quality because it is a relatively new and self-consciously innovative method without fixed protocols, often involving creative assemblages of perspectives and methods from a range of disciplines (Denshire and Lee, 2013, 222). Autoethnography lends itself to an interest in imaginative self-narratives in which the researcher can 'adopt another skin' allowing researchers to access virtual worlds or experience circumstances outside their knowledge, using imaginative onto-epistemological narrative strategies (Jackson, 2009,240; Bochner and Ellis, 2003, 507).

Another reason autoethnography, as an account of a critically analysed lived experience, is a useful methodology is that it offers opportunities for an artist to rigorously examine the how and why of artmaking. As a research method it has scope for a multi-disciplinary approach which encourages non-traditional, more imaginative ways of incorporating and presenting research. One purpose of autoethnographic research is for the researcher to engage with its audience as end-users in more innovative ways rather than relying on a purely cognitive understanding of the data. The experimental and provocative nature of autoethnographic

research emboldened me to create series of art-work that communicates my research as a visual narrative to engage an audience to ask questions about the story and its attendant issues held within the art work. Neither autoethnographic nor arts-based research delivers stock answers. Rather, they expose oppressive practices and reveal the in-between spaces where social transformation can begin (Chilton and Leavy, 2014, 422).

Ontological position: Being in the world

As a person who makes future plans and crafts stories about my future-self, autoethnography with its acceptance of imaginative onto-epistemological narratives, my research into narratives of an imagined future is framed within an ontology of becoming which has a future-orientation. I have utilized Elisabeth Grosz's ontology of becoming (Grosz, 1999) to increase my understanding of the benefits of imagining and narrating a future. Grosz gathers together considerations of evolution, spirituality, psychology and sociology. She sets out a case based on Darwin's theory of evolution in which, through a desire to survive, we seek to adapt and adjust to new circumstances and that the markers for change are held within the reflexive re-turn of living into the next moment. We are – through biology – hard-wired to live into the future.

Likewise, the social political activist, Anna Stetsenko (2014) claims that if we want a different future for ourself and others, we are obligated to do more than to know about and to examine the here-and-now. Rather, to change the immediate future as well as the far-future, as researcher and social-political activists, we must identify the processes that constrain the realization of social justice by challenging, questioning and revealing the unknown multiple possibilities that are held within the future. Further the urban geographer, Ruggiero (2022, 305) considers that for change to occur there is a necessity not only to place the possible into the future, but to place it as a reality. Consequently, by imagining a different possible future and claiming it as a realized living entity, it corrodes a past we do not want to bring into the future. Rather than solely problematizing the present, we have a responsibility to imagine the future and chart a course that will lead to productive, positive, change for ourself and for others. (Stetsenko, 186).

Additionally, Jonathan Lear, author of *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation* (2008) states that by imagining a future that we want for ourselves, we create markers and stake-holds in the future to that we can anticipate, plan for and act for that imagined future to happen. Unless there is action towards that future, a hoped-for-future remains a only a wish without substance. To imagine a future for oneself means understanding that there is a complex relationship between one's subjectivity, experiences, social relationships and the material world, and that ones' ontology – ways of being in the world – and epistemology – ways of knowing the world – become transformed. The simultaneous narrating and performing of an imagined future is a powerful tool that can challenge and displace narratives of powerlessness and despair for a narrative of an imagined future offers up a different perspective of self and the world. Thus, it transforms subjectivities by encouraging different ways of being, doing and knowing (Stetsenko, 191).

Challenging common psychological presumptions

My narrative of powerlessness, hopelessness and despair was a narrative of suicidality. Severe clinical suicidal depression has been referred to as a state of being saturated with psychic, psychological and spiritual pain. The term, psychache to summarise the suicidal

state of being was first coined by the psychologist Edwin Schneidman and referred to by Thomas Joiner in his 2005 text, *Why people die by suicide*, defining psychache as a passive introspective experience encompassing guilt, shame, humiliation, dread, and loss. Although psychache and suicidality is an idiosyncratic experience, first person accounts have described it is like living in a cavernous void that has vacuumed up all sense of self.

While the social-cultural meta narratives of depression and suicidality scaffolded by psychiatry as a profession and discipline maintain that suicidal depression is a personal problem, there are first-person accounts emerging that challenge this approach. Most psychologists claim that the experience of suicidality shuts down the ability to imagine a future, to temporarily lose the capacity to make decisions, reduces capacity to engage in coherent language, inner speech, and causal interpretations, executive attention, and mental time travel (Kellog, Chirino and Gfeller, 2020; Wright, 2021). The psychologists, Roepke and Seligman (2016) claim that suicidality is faulty prospection based on incorrect thinking processes that may be the core underlying depression. Their theorizing suggests that it is poor thinking that drives depression resulting in poor generation of possible futures, poor evaluation of possible futures, and negative beliefs about the future. This is a subjective view only but remains consistent with a psycho-pharmacological understanding of anxiety, depression and suicidality. However, the consumer led movement is challenging these entrenched assumptions. The author, Mikkel Krause Frantzen (2019) explores the politicization of depression and suicidality and reveals how the socio-cultural meta-narrative of taking responsibility for one's own causes and cures of suicidal depression is an additional layer of guilt and shame that compounds feelings of hopelessness and worthlessness. Frantzen also addresses the social, political and cultural undertones of veiled, implied violations to self-worth experienced by marginalized groups, which, during an episode of depression and suicidality exacerbates feelings of futility and fear. This perceived violence to the self's subjectivity is mythic violence, aroused by emotion rather than cognition because there is no verifiable source that can be identified. Such perceived threats are usually felt by people who threaten to de-stabilise the status quo (Ruggiero, 2020, 306).

For people experiencing depression and suicidality the arousal of fear of retribution, incarceration and condemnation is overwhelming. They come to feel and to know that the short-term future of tomorrow and next month is as bleak and as awful as the present and thus it is difficult to desire a long-term future in which one's continued circumstances remain the same. Thomas Joiner (2005) posits that if people experiencing suicidality had the knowledge that the long-term future had the possibility of reduced psychache there would be increased possibilities that the person could endure and navigate through the short-term future. The most awful aspect is knowing that the short-term future may be anywhere between six to twenty-four months in duration is another suffocating level of knowledge.

Jonathan Lear suggests that this is possible because human beings do have the capacity to conceive of a good, positive and productive future that transcends and goes beyond what can be conceived of in the present circumstance. In other words, Lear's philosophizing about a future that cannot yet be articulated but felt as a possibility, speaks of Grosz's ontology of becoming; that is, the future in its evolutionary capacity, draws us out of the mire and into another way of being. Human beings hold within, a desired future that is "beyond current forms of oppression" (Grosz, 1999, 8).

That this is so underlies my conjecturing that I could bit by bit, build a possible future in which I was no longer the failed teacher but becoming an artist. In fact, it was the

understanding that becoming is never final and always open to change and adaption that secured my confidence that I would eventually navigate through to manage the experience of suicidality. My positioning as becoming-an-artist created a way of being that was always on the move (Squire, 2012).

Art-making and Constructing a narrative of an imagined future share similarities

As adroitly as I had imagined and configured death-by-suicide, I envisioned what becoming an artist would entail. There were three aspects. The first was as a studio and community artist-practitioner. The second was an exhibitor of completed art works and the third was as an academic-artist whereby I used my art-work to explain ideas and positioned to speak about the art-work on its own terms. By crafting a narrated vision of an imagined future, I came to understand it shared similarities with art-making itself. Both require an imaginative activity that anticipates the finished item before the process of bringing it into being has begun. In discussing the similarities I refer to my 2015 painting “Be-yond Becoming” which draws on motifs and symbols from Jan van Eyck’s 1434 painting, “The Arnolfini Portrait”, and Albrecht Dürer’s 1514 engraving, “*Melencolia I*”.

A narrative of the imagined future tells the story of one’s Self as it may be in the future. If the future Self is to be, it must also function in the present and thus the future and present selves are engaged in a reciprocal, reflexive relationship to ensure each are performatively building to achieve the imagined future increasing the ability to think and act as though the future self has already arrived. (Hunt, 2015, 232). Likewise, I suggest that art-making ruptures the present allowing the artist to simultaneously suspend, dissolve and intuit time as past, present and eternal. It is the same when we articulate to self and others what we imagine we are to become. Recognition that the self is both now and deferred disrupts an expectation that time occurs as a continuous chronology. This means that changes in thinking patterns happen, and it is this point that encourages me to consider that the imagining, narrating and future-oriented strategies may be useful to negotiate with, navigate through and manage suicidality.



Figure 1: *Beyond Becoming* (2015), 90cm x 60cm, gouache on MDF board.

A back story to contextualise

In the early years of my PhD, my supervisor asked me to create a painting that demonstrated my narrative of the imagined future as a visual narrative. It was a difficult task for although I was able to coherently articulate who I wanted to become, the dilemma was how to graphically create the narrative using paint and brush, my preferred medium of art expression. I drew on my knowledge of the visual arts, and in particular cited Jan van Eyck's 1434 painting, "*The Arnolfini Portrait*" in the National Gallery, London's collection to create my 2015 gouache on MDF board, "*Be-yond Becoming*", a double portrait of myself in the past, the present, and of what I imagine I will become. The first figure is a representation of me as the artist-academic and the second figure is my agentive demon-slayer self, depicted in the guise of Little Red Riding Hood whose narrative of courage offered me a self-story to revoke and slay the temptation to succumb to suicidality. The painting, as a visual narrative uses personal motifs to deliberately prophesy and signal open-ended, always becoming, and always more than can be imagined possibilities.

"The Arnolfini Portrait" (1434), Narrating Jan van Eyck's double portrait

As a young art student, I was told about its innovative perspective, setting and symbolism but it was the story of the couple that interested me. There is still dispute about whether this painting represents a marriage or betrothal ceremony and the symbolic meaning of the imagery. For me, this painting is a betrothal argued from the symbolism of the shoes at the front of the painting and those placed under the mirror. A very old Middle-astern custom was to exchange shoes to symbolize a promised, contractual agreement that was yet to be realized (Gaskill, 2013).

I am proposing that van Eyck was aware of this cultural symbolism of expected agreement to depict the future. From this perspective, the painting's subject is speculative. Two figures stand in a manner reminiscent of medieval images of the Annunciation. One figure moves towards the other in greeting, or in benediction while the recipient of the greeting remains cautious with arms in front of their body as in wondrous, awesome confusion. The Annunciation stance is the trigger for my interpretation because the Annunciation heralds the future breaking into ordinary present time. Mary is surprised that God has called her to attend to the here-and-now so the prophesied future can become a reality. In "*The Arnolfini Portrait*", the couple are about to become engaged or married; and this social moment signifies future possibilities.

The stance is a symbolic gesture just as the background, round mirror symbolizes the act of prophesying the future. It offers up a similarity with the mirror within the *Snow White* fairy tale and of Celtic scrying which uses a flat reflective surface such as still water, glass, silver or a mirror. The mirror's prophetic symbolism increases for in van Eyck's painting, the mirror shows two guests who are outside the frame of the painting approaching the Arnolfini couple. It is this device that continues to intrigue critics and viewers. The mirror shows two people, you and I, outside the frame of the painting, and outside the here-and-now of this couple for we have come to them from their future. We have become a realisation of their imagined future of a wedding celebration and signifies the realization of the promised betrothal.

As guests of the Arnolfini couple, you and I will always be located in the future and always about to arrive. By using the mirror motif van Eyck created a painting in which the future

viewer is interpolated as both guest at, and narrator of the betrothal ceremony, becoming part of its performative nature (Tamboukou, 2015,82). It is a clever device for we collude with van Eyck in realizing the Arnolfini couple's narrative of their imagined future. We have been cast "both temporally and spatially" as narrators and as characters in the story we tell when viewing the painting (Hunt, 2015, 239).

"Be-yond Becoming" (2015): Narrating a portrait of the future

In his seminal 1990 text, *"Time and Narrative"*, Paul Ricoer suggests that the past is continuously re-figured, and re-remembered through our own interpretation of the past just as our understanding of the past is always re-interpreted by what we know now. This is why the visual narrative, *"Beyond Becoming"* will always become both my future and my past no matter when it is viewed. Through imagining the past as it appears in the here-and-now, I can re-claim it, appropriate it, adjust it and embed a different meaning within it. Rather than deleting or forgetting the trauma that led to suicidality, a re-examination of the events from a different perspective creates further understandings of the circumstance surrounding the experience. *"Be-yond Becoming"* is set in an ambiguous environment being both interior and exterior which though anchored to the ground with a cartographic view of the land which seems to float in space suggested by the moon-like spheres surrounded by dots to suggest kinetic time of millennia, annual seasons and imminent moments.

The figures are in intimate relationship with each other being themselves viewed through a lens of past-present-future. On the left-hand side is a tree of splayed branches that, like rhizomatic growths, seek to capture the air and light to grow into the future. On the right-hand side wall to suggest personal and domestic interior's intimate space is a draped bed and fireplace. The two figures are themselves representative of and signify the ambiguity of the human condition of having been, being and becoming. They are both centrally placed. Although dressed differently both are of similar height and shape indicating they have equal value and equal voice as the characters in, and authors of, the self-narrative just as van Eyck interpolates the viewer as characters in and authors of the Arnolfini couple's narrative.



Figure 2: The ball of melancholia and the rug of instability

The circular shape of van Eyck's mirror is intrinsic to the design of the Arnolfini painting. Rather than replicate the mirror as temporally kinetic device, I have used a ball on the floor to speak of temporality. It sits on the map-rug surrounded by small flecks of white and silver which link the upper spheres. This ball's placement echoes the ball at the feet of Dürer's, "Melencolia 1" (1514), and is an acknowledgement that suicidal depression is part of my lived experience. Just as in Dürer's engraving where each object is laden with potential and is witnessed at the split moment before it moves, so too can suicidal depression be triggered and roll into play.

The ball is rendered in translucent form because depression has the potential to move from shadow to a concrete state. It is mobile and kinetic, sometimes becoming nearer to my sense of self and dominating my interior landscape and at other times, has rolled so far to the side that for a while it is forgotten, and then like a pinball game, something will catalyse it back into play. The ball of suicidal depression sits on a rug collaged from an old surveyors' map of Queensland's Casuarina region which is an area of Australia with a geological history of tectonic and seismic instability (Withnall and Cranfield 27). Further, the transparent ball of melancholia offers a connection to the prophesying, crystal ball used by mediums to foretell the future. Its association with fore-warning of death is exemplified in John Waterhouse's 1902, *The Crystal Ball* which portrays a red-robed woman holding a crystal ball above a skull and open book on her desk.

The rug is a signal to remind me that while I may believe I am standing on stable ground, the rug can be pulled from under my feet at any time, and when this happens, it will trigger the ball of melancholia to roll. The map and the ball are imagery to locate melancholia (suicidal depression) not only as a state of being, a state of play but a geographic state. In particular it is to reference Julia Kristeva's description of melancholia as a landscape for people to inhabit, visit, or transgress, or trespass into. For as Kristeva says, the depressed person becomes not only a 'dweller in truncated time ... but a dweller in the imaginary realm' (61).

Conclusion: Art-making and narrative

My priority is not just to meaning out of life's experiences or bring order from chaos. Rather, and this is why I favour collaged art-forms, I want to create something novel from elements of many ideas and objects and this is in living a life through the art spirit, making art and narrating that life of art-making. This attempt to grasp the unknown and give it form is similar to the desire to construct a Narrative of the Imagined Future because it allows entry into a space which is beyond our knowledge of what really will be and beyond our capacity to articulate.

"*Be-yond Becoming*" is a visual narrative of a future that is beyond knowing and imagining. This is because an ontology of becoming asserts that nothing is guaranteed, opening a space of unimagined possibilities and unimagined futures from which new experiences and new perspectives of the world can be formed. However, imagining the future does not necessarily lead to productive or positive ways of being. In the deepest part of suicidality I imagined a future that was terminal and depicted in "*Be-yond Becoming*", as the household hearth with a burning fire. Once the wood is burnt, the fire extinguishes itself. That future was one I could have chosen, but it would have denied me the opportunity to become an artist.

Conclusion: Beyond Becoming

As the consumer-led movement gains energy and first-person, researched accounts of suicidality are being valued by academia and the general public, the portrayal of my personal being and becoming as a visual narrative has worth. The crafting of the painting to reveal an imagined future that must exist in the here-and-now is reflected in new theorising that suggests that the threads of all possible futures can be found in emotional ruptures. There is sufficient theoretical evidence from theorizing of art-makers and art philosophers to challenge the psychological perspective that depression brutalizes the capacity to imagine and to conjecture the future. Additionally, suicidal depression or trauma may not suppress imagining and creativity, but may in fact for many people, offer an increased levels and scope of creativity (Reitano, 255).

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Resilience in Times of Need: Educational and Social Measures Adopted by the Regional Labour Court of Goiás During the Pandemic

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Abstract

Quarantine, lockdown, social distancing and facemask policies are measures that have been taken worldwide to reduce COVID-19 transmission. In Brazil, while the Executive administration has downplayed the threat of coronavirus infection, the response of Judiciary to COVID-19 crisis occurred immediately after the confirmation of the first cases. Different courts implemented a set of institutional arrangements to mitigate the impact of the pandemic within Brazilian society. By ensuring the constitutional right to health and social protection, one of the crucial decisions of the Brazilian Judiciary was also to interfere with the government's anti-scientific stance on vaccines. Apart from this essential role mostly played by higher courts, the Regional Labour Court of Goiás (TRT-18), located in Central Brazil, has also specifically invested in social solidarity actions towards local communities (i.e., expanding the scope of pre-procedural mediation for conflicts between employees and employers, allocating millions of pounds for COVID-19 care and distributing basic-needs grocery packages to unprivileged families). In addition, TRT-18 has developed educational initiatives, via remote learning, by offering training in health care and teleworking. My paper presents these actions to the international audience evincing the 'additional gains' achieved by this specialised court as part of its policies aimed at fostering institutional resilience in a context of health emergency. From this perspective, I examine the judicial activism these actions represent not as a practice by judges of disallowing policy choices by governmental officials, but as a substantial support measure to overcome social inequalities and attenuate structural problems intensified by the pandemic.

Keywords: Institutional Resilience, Judicial Activism, Brazilian Judiciary, Regional Labour Court of Goiás (TRT-18), Covid-19 Pandemic

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Introduction

In late December 2019, a highly contagious infectious disease emerged from Wuhan, China, resulting in the outbreak of a febrile respiratory syndrome caused by a new unidentified virus. Very rapidly,¹ that mysterious pneumonia characterized by fever, dry cough and fatigue would spread to all continents compelling the World Health Organisation (WHO) to declare it a global pandemic. As one of coronavirus-associated diseases, SARS-CoV-2 (the causative agent for COVID-19)² became a public health emergency of international concern especially due to its increased risk transmission and developing complications.³

As the COVID-19 disease continued to be disseminated at record speed, governmental authorities began to take a wide range of measures in response to the new pandemic context. Social-distancing strategies were the primary non-pharmaceutical sanitary policies adopted by several government worldwide to minimise human-to-human transmission; it would shortly become evident that political leadership would play a key role in handling the coronavirus crisis.

In Brazil, the largest country of Latin America and the fifth largest in the world, the federal government's denial of science and, consequently, of the seriousness of the pandemic led to a blatant failure to coordinate, promote and finance internationally sanctioned public health measures (Ferigato et al., 2020). Apart from Brazil's longstanding poor management of the public health care system⁴ and disparities between public and private health care infrastructure, the country's president opted out of actions recommended by experts with scientific credentials; instead, he promoted knowingly inefficient medications for COVID-19 treatment (hydroxychloroquine and ivermectin), spread fake news about the pandemic and, among others, continuously delayed/hindered a nationwide vaccination plan (Boschiero, 2021).⁵ As comparatively demonstrated in Figures 1 and 2, the ideologically-based stance of federal government in the direction of blocking needed actions contributed to transform the country very quickly into a major repository for SARS-CoV-2 and its variants.

¹ Less than two months later, on 11 March 2020.

² A viral infection caused by the new coronavirus strain Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)-Coronavirus-2 (Boschiero et al., 2021).

³ In early February 2020, a total of 28,276 confirmed cases with 565 deaths were documented by the World Health Organisation, involving at least 25 countries (WHO, 2019).

⁴ Sistema Único de Saúde (SUS). Brazil's public health system is the largest in the world and provides universal coverage without any cost to patients being accessible nationwide and providing community-based primary health care to more than 70% of the population (Ferigato et al., 2020).

⁵ President Jair Bolsonaro repeatedly criticised social-isolation measures and falsely claimed that social-distancing measures would not work (Ferrante et al., 2021; Neiva et al., 2020). For instance, he frequently had contact with the public without using a mask and encouraged his followers to do the same.

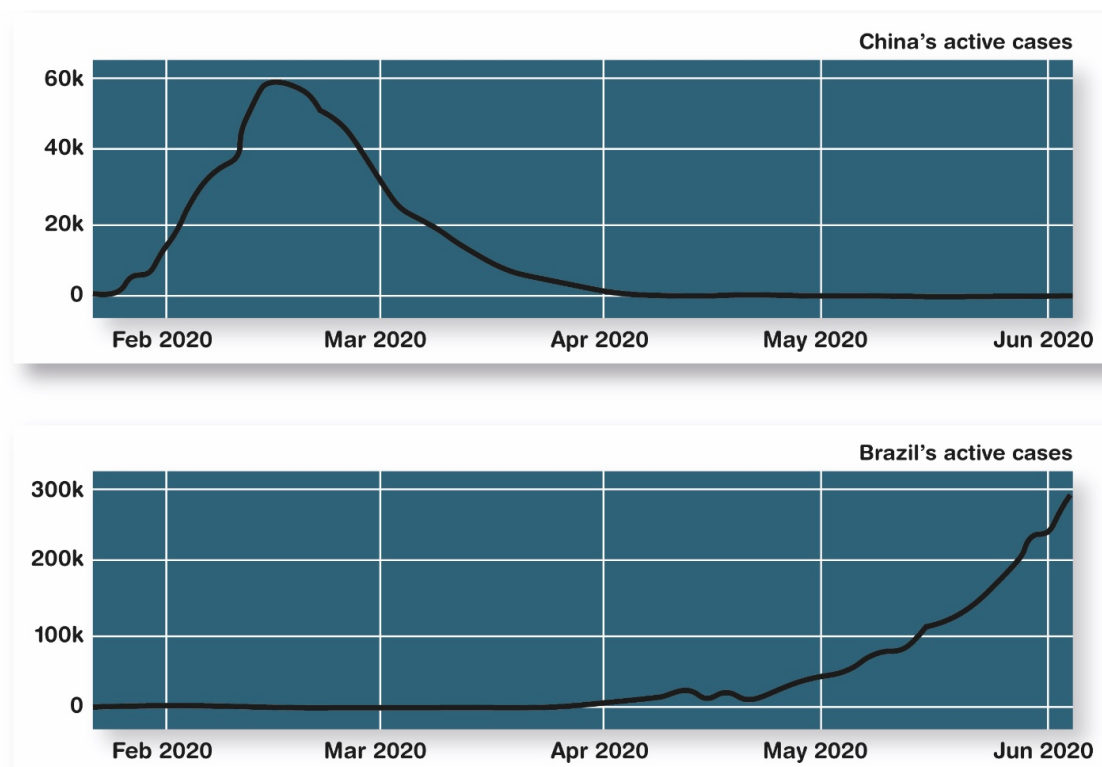


Figure 1: Comparison between China and Brazil in the fight against COVID-19.
Adapted from Neiva et al. (2020)

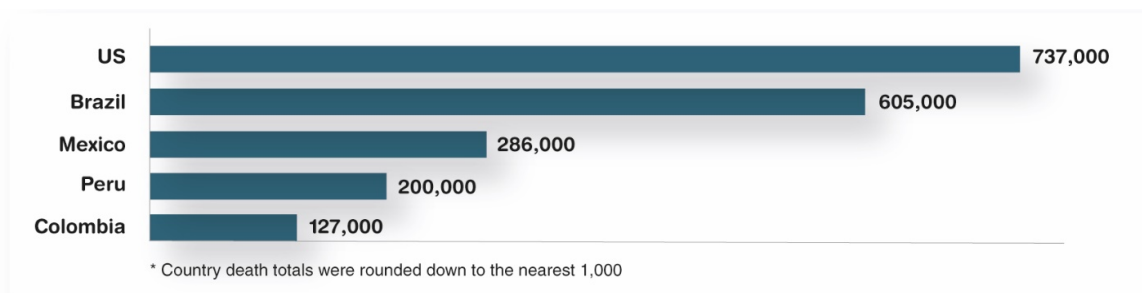


Figure 2: Some American countries' recorded deaths from January 2020 to October 2021.
Adapted from Johns Hopkins University and available at Gov.uk.

In that context of political instability due to the negative effects of governmental decisions, the Brazilian Judiciary started to intervene by adopting a series of measures that aimed not only the maintenance of judicial services but also the constitutional right to health and social protection. Judicial oversight in Brazil was firstly a matter of checking whether governmental decisions were based on medical and virologist evidence in the context of COVID-19 pandemic. But furthermore, even beyond its role to operationalise justice and safeguard the rights upon which democracy is predicated, the Brazilian justice system mobilised to minimise the impact of the pandemic on both internal and external audiences (Sátiro et al., 2021).

In light of this, my study contributes to a growing intellectual endeavour to understand how courts in Brazil have responded to the pandemic and how effective these responses have

been. The paper therefore concentrates on a regional experience providing evidence for my thesis that the Regional Labour Court of Goiás (TRT-18), besides having acted within the scope of its judicial competence, also offered substantial support measures for the State to overcome social inequalities and attenuate structural problems intensified by the pandemic.

On this basis, the paper starts off by briefly presenting an overview of the judicial system in Brazil to then particularise the crucial role of the Regional Labour Courts in maintaining effective social protection by regulating employment relations and establishing case prioritisation principles during the pandemic. From a stricter approach, I review four major dimensions (organisational, physical, technological and procedural) encompassed in the Brazilian courts' initiatives within the recent context of health emergency. In conjunction with this, I particularly expand on two additional dimensions (social and educational) the Regional Labour Court of Goiás excelled at during the pandemic. Finally, I argue whether the social and educational practices adopted by this specialised court in Brazil should be an evidence of judicial activism since these interventions, conducted to guarantee fundamental rights, ended up urging a judicial solution erstwhile subject to political resolution (Anderson, 1990).

The organisation and management of the Brazilian Judiciary

In accordance with the doctrine of separation of powers, the government is divided into three organs: the Executive, the Legislative and the Judiciary. The model of governance of the judicial system in Brazil is based on the Judiciary's responsibility to protect individual, collective and social rights. Guided by the principle of celerity and efficiency, it possesses administrative and financial autonomy directly determined by the 1988 Federal Constitution.

In terms of structure, the Brazilian Judiciary operates on federal and state levels.⁶ As a multifaceted system, it is organised into the Legal Justice System, comprising federal and state courts, and the Specialised Justice System, which consists of the Labour Justice System, the Electoral Justice System, and the Union Military Justice System. Article 92 of the Federal Constitution lists the components of the Brazilian Judiciary as follows:

- The Federal Supreme Court (STF);
- The National Council of Justice (CNJ);⁷
- Superior Courts, including the Superior Court of Justice (STJ); the Superior Labour Court (TST), the Superior Electoral Court and the Superior Military Court (STM);
- Regional Courts, including the Federal Regional Courts (TRFs) and Federal Judges; the Regional Labour Courts (TRTs) and Labour Judges; the Regional Electoral Courts (TREs) and Electoral Judges;
- The Courts and Judges of the States and of the Federal District and Territories.

Chart 1 systematises more clearly how it is organised. At the apex, the Federal Supreme Court (STF) is the guardian of the Brazilian Constitution.⁸ The Special Justice is represented

⁶ Municipalities do not have their own justice system.

⁷ Implemented on December 8, 2004, the Constitutional Amendment 45 created the CNJ as a control body of the Judiciary responsible for supervising the administrative and financial performance of the courts. Composed of representatives of the Judiciary, the public ministry, lawyers and civil society, it has the purpose of ensuring the autonomy of the Judiciary in line with the constitutional principles of public administration (Sátiro et al., 2021).

by superior courts and their respective regional courts with each of them being responsible for their respective specialised matters.

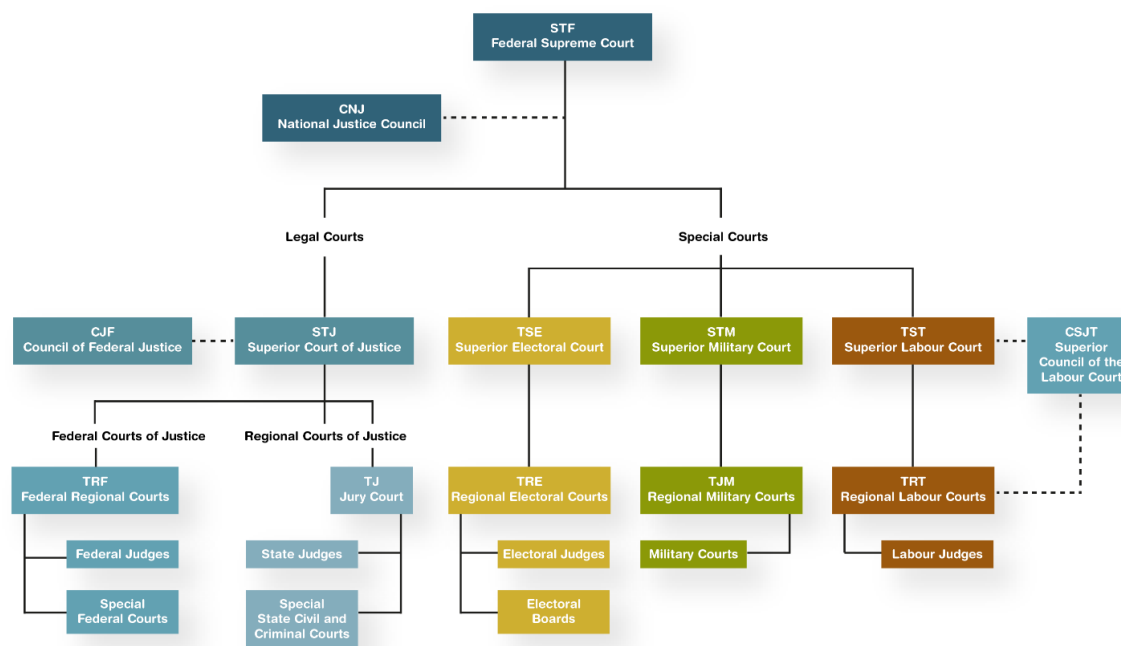


Chart 1: The Brazilian Justice System. Extracted from Fernandes and Ouverney, 2022.

Succinctly, besides the common justice system, there are specific judicial structures to deal with issues related to the electoral, labour and military fields. This division in specialisations aims to improve the law enforcement and the adjudication of cases addressed to each branch, contributing to speed up lawsuits and to reconcile them with a correspondent legal principle.

The Labour Courts in Brazil

As part of a system to initially regulate industrial relations, the Brazilian Labour Courts⁹ were created in 1939 in a moment when the body of labour legislation was being systematised by president Getúlio Vargas, who would shortly promulgate the Consolidation of Labour Law (CLT), in 1943.¹⁰ The CLT established a constituent labour court structure rooted in the so-called Conciliation and Trial Boards (labour forums), where workers' demands were formerly received, validated and processed. It was, however, almost 40 years later that these courts

⁸ It has exclusive jurisdiction to declare laws unconstitutional, order extradition requests from foreign States and rule over cases decided in sole instance courts where the decision may have violated the Constitution (STF, 2022).

⁹ One of the most long-lasting specialised justice in Brazil, the Labour Judiciary is composed of 24 courts divided into jurisdictions: (1) Rio de Janeiro; (2) São Paulo; (3) Minas Gerais; (4) Rio Grande do Sul; (5) Bahia; (6) Pernambuco; (7) Ceará; (8) Pará and Amapá; (9) Paraná; (10) Federal District and Tocantins; (11) Roraima and Amazonas; (12) Santa Catarina; (13) Paraíba; (14) Acre and Rondônia; (15) Campinas; (16) Maranhão; (17) Espírito Santo; (18) Goiás; (19) Alagoas; (20) Sergipe; (21) Rio Grande do Norte; (22) Piauí; (23) Mato Grosso; (24) Mato Grosso do Sul.

¹⁰ At that time, existing labour laws were extended and new labour regulations unified into a single document — the CLT. It organized the Brazilian system of labour relations around the idea of a formal job, under a legally valid employment relationship that endowed employers and employees with rights and duties, including social insurance, low-income housing, among other government initiatives (Coslovsky et al., 2017).

achieved national notoriety with the 1988 Federal Constitution, which significantly extended their power.

In the context of an international repertory of congeneric experiences, such as observed in the Italian and French judicial system, the labour courts are specialised in employment-related issues and recognised as being the most expeditious justice in Brazil.¹¹ In summary, they are comprised of:

- Lower Labour Courts, or courts in the first-degree, where a judicial process begin and a judge sitting alone decides the outcome of the case if conciliation is unsuccessful;
- Regional Labour Courts, or courts in the second-degree, where magistrates judge some new applications (e.g., injunctions and collective labour bargaining processes) or receive appeals against decisions of the courts in the first-degree; and
- The Superior Labour Court, or the court of final appeal, where ruling of the courts in the second-degree and referred to.

Especially across less-developed world, minimum wage rates, social security, occupational health and safety regulations are issues mandatory to be enacted by public administration. These regulations are usually *de jure* universal and inalienable, and they aim to suppress basic labour rights violations. Considering the essential nature of remuneration, when labour rights are infringed, workers must be adequately compensated; the appropriate way for them to do that is to take legal action through labour courts.¹²

The role of the Brazilian Courts during the COVID-19 pandemic

Owing to the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, the Brazilian Judiciary was abruptly faced with the need to adapt to the safety guidelines pronounced by the World Health Organisation, in special social distancing, lockdown and facemask protocols. Initially, judges, servants, lawyers and other members of the Brazilian Judiciary had to rethink how to operationalise justice in order to keep it minimally accessible to all citizens.

As a preliminary measure, the justice system adopted a set of procedures for prevention, control and surveillance of infection by COVID-19 in all courts for this main purpose of maintaining the availability and continuity of services. As in most countries (Propelier, 2020; Baldwin et al., 2020; Polischuk and Fay, 2020; Sourdin and Zeleznikow, 2020; Almeida and Pinto, 2020), these prior procedures included: identifying essential functions to be performed and defining the respective staff to continue essential court operations; eliminating, as much as possible, in-person practices, except for those strictly related to essential services; operationalising an emergency video-conferencing platform as well as other remote tools for holding hearings and trial sessions over the period of social isolation; broadening the scope of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms during the pandemic, and so forth.

¹¹ As an average, lawsuits take three years to be closed; the length depends on the complexity of the case and whether it is taken to the Superior Labour Court.

¹² According to Campos (2019), no less than 73.7% of decisions issued by labour courts involve credit claims, in most of which (46.5%) the litigation refers to respondents (generally, the companies) not complying spontaneously with the payment order. It is important to notice that monetary costs involved in taking disputes to the Brazilian Labour Courts are different for employees and employers (low or no cost for the former and higher cost for the latter). This difference is basically associated with the employees' protection principle, under which workers are considered to be a less privileged party (or in a relatively vulnerable position) in a formal employment relation; employers, on the other hand, hold the economic power of profitability.

Furthermore, an extensive list of norms was issued by the National Justice Council (CNJ) and all Superior Courts to determine and regulate case prioritisation. Fernandes and Ouverney (2022) have recently analysed, by type and categorisation, priority rulings of the Federal Supreme Court (STF) from the first Brazilian registered case,¹³ as systematised in Table 1.

STF collegiate decisions during the pandemic		
Type	Category concept	Number
Policies and health services	Directly related to actions, programs and, especially, public policies and health services	9
Regulation and territorial management	Includes administrative actions and measures, norms, decrees, or laws incident to the organization of services and federative relationships in the public administration spheres	9
Employment and income	Linked to actions, programs, or policies aimed at generating employment and guaranteeing income	9
Public Finance	Concerns administrative actions and measures, rules, decrees, or laws with a direct impact on investment accounts and financial expenses of the public administration spheres	3
Others	Decisions that do not fit into the previous categories because they have different natures or specificities	3

Table 1: STF decisions during the pandemic by type.
Adapted from Fernandes and Ouverney (2022).

Beyond that, as the federal government was not only slow to react but deliberately inattentive to the seriousness of the pandemic,¹⁴ the Federal Supreme Court decided that state governors could restrict economic activities and adopt other social-distancing measures to combat COVID-19, irrespective of president Jair Bolsonaro's inept handling of the coronavirus crisis (STF, 2020).¹⁵

Regarding the context in which effective labour protection urged to be enforced, the government, exercising its extraordinary legislative power during the first state of emergency, was compelled by both the Senate and the Federal Supreme Court to adopt some critical amendments by introducing special provisions with the aim of helping companies preserve jobs so that employees could be prevented from precarious living conditions. These provisions included (but were not limited to):

¹³ The first reported case in Brazil was on February 26, 2020, and the first reported death was on March 12, 2020.

¹⁴ There are numerous examples of declarations made by president Jair Bolsonaro in which he openly downplayed the pandemic, such as referring to it as 'little flu', publicly discrediting epidemiological findings, expressing disbelief over reported COVID-19 deaths, promoting untested pseudo-scientific treatments and, among others, dissenting from the stay-at-home orders proclaimed by the Minister for Health Henrique Mandetta, who would be rapidly replaced by another minister, and this one by another, until the president could find a leader, Eduardo Pazuello, from the military forces, as sceptical about the pandemic as he had been in order to justify limited government intervention.

¹⁵ The range of autonomy for local government was adjudged by STF with its ruling on Direct Unconstitutionality Suit No. 6341/2020, which reinforced the role of local public administrators in the adoption of legislative measures and administrative rules to fight COVID-19.

- the adoption of teleworking modalities, which in practical terms meant that the employer could unilaterally order teleworking for the employee;
- the reduction of working hours and wages; and
- the implementation of an Emergency Aid of 102 GBP (600 BRL) per month for five months to informal workers, individual micro entrepreneurs, self-employed and unemployed people;

These basic provisions resumed a minimum protection in core aspects of employment-related agreements, albeit with a limited scope. Considering the fact that courts play an important role to keep the government accountable, especially when drastic measures are issued, with most rules ensuring ‘emergency flexibility’ new aspects and types of workplace conflicts came out in Brazil; the rich existing case law had then to be subject to a careful assessment of all the individual circumstances of the cases as they arose, including *vis maior* — *force majeure* — clauses (Halmos, 2021).¹⁶ Labour Courts in every jurisdiction had to adopt methods for interpreting the pandemic-based provisions being especially attentive to the negative economic conditions that led many companies to be unwilling to perform their contractual obligations.¹⁷

The responses of the Regional Labour Court of Goiás to the COVID-19 pandemic: social and educational measures to ensure institutional resilience

In general, the unprecedented endeavour of the Brazilian Labour Courts to prevent and control COVID-19 was divided into four major dimensions: physical, organisational, technological and procedural.

(1) The *physical dimension* encompassed either the reorganisation of workspaces or the availability of personal protective equipment (PPE) to ensure adequate healthy, safe and working conditions for magistrates, servants, lawyers, other professionals and the parties.

(2) The *organisational dimension* constituted a series of administrative rules and institutional ordinances implemented to both prevent the internal spread of coronavirus infection and safeguard the functioning of justice; these normative acts included the limitation of face-to-face contact with the public and the adoption of teleworking regime.

¹⁶ *Force Majeure* is a common clause in a construction contract drafted to protect the parties from liabilities if these parties are prevented from performing their contractual obligations due to circumstances beyond control (Halmos, 2021). *Force Majeure* excuses then what would possibly be a ‘breach’ by suspending temporarily an obligation to perform the works (Miller, 2020). Among other authors, Judge Szilvia Halmos (2021) assessed the increased necessity of effective enforcement of labour law during the COVID-19 pandemic in Hungary; her findings evinced the endeavours of Hungarian Labour Courts to guarantee the safe maintenance of litigation in labour cases, which equalled the significant efforts the Brazilian’s Labour Courts made to ensure the enforcement of right to access to justice in the world of labour.

¹⁷ To particularly permit the application of *force majeure* in the context of coronavirus pandemic, the Brazilian Labour Courts would have to determine whether COVID-19 constituted a foreseeable contingency as alleged by several employers. The majority of Brazilian Labour Courts were inclined to understand that the institute of force majeure could not be applied during the pandemic, notwithstanding its prevision in the chief 2020 Emergency Procedure Government Decree 927 and even in 1943 Consolidation of Labour Law (Mota, 2021). Based on common law Doctrines of Impossibility and Impracticability, the general assessment was to disprove *force majeure* event because the pandemic did really not make performance impossible or impracticable to the point of excusing non-performance; as a matter of fact, businesses could conduct many of their normal activities, nevertheless in a very limited way.

(3) The *technological dimension* was firstly associated with pre-existing technological infrastructure in the Brazilian Labour Courts (i.e., the complete digitalized judicial proceedings known as PJe); secondly, the provision of a video-conferencing platform to enable fully functioning virtual hearings rooms and the adoption of remote access to all judicial proceedings were indispensable from the first reported case in the country.

(4) The *procedural dimension* involved, among others, the regulatory suspension of legal deadlines during the ‘state of emergency’ induced by the pandemic.

The Regional Labour Court of Goiás (TRT-18) had at first a particular interest in ensuring case initiation and the continuous availability of hearings and trial sessions. Considering that in 2013 the Electronic Judicial Proceedings (PJe) became the Brazilian Judicial System’s official procedural tool,¹⁸ TRT-18 was able to respond very quickly to social-distancing protocols induced by the COVID-19 pandemic, for which reason the Court could enable the provision of digital services to parties and the holding of hearings and trial sessions by electronic means. In that context, a very important measure was to expand the scope of pre-procedural mediation for conflicts between employees and employers.

In a technical sense, the Court’s President Judge convened the Information Technology personnel, especially user support technicians, to provide plaintiffs, defendants, witnesses and other participants with a framework for online hearings; they could join with their own devices through a web link sent by the Court. However, if a participant reported that he/she could not meet some videochat requirements, the Court would take appropriate measures, including the interruption and/or rescheduling of the procedural act.

Deciding on an equitable basis, Ordinance No. 678¹⁹ established that justified omissions could not trigger sanctions (e.g., the existence of respiratory symptoms even without a positive test amounted to sufficient justification of absence). Further, a webpage²⁰ was promptly designed for daily news; in a practical sense, TRT-18 Coronavirus Information Centre contributed to guarantee ‘trust’ and ‘transparency’ practices for communication with the parties.

Besides this essential role aligned with the four above-mentioned dimensions, the Regional Labour Court of Goiás (TRT-18) specifically invested in social solidarity actions towards local communities as a substantial support measure to attenuate some structural problems intensified by the pandemic. The Court allocated millions of pounds for COVID-19 care under the scope of public-interest litigation (commonly known in Brazil as ‘public-interest civil actions’); the very first allocation was on March 23, 2020, when judge Maria das Graças Oliveira, from Goiânia, the capital of the State of Goiás, determined the instant transfer of 100,000 BRL (approximately 18,000 GBP).²¹ A few days later, on March 26, at the behest of

¹⁸ In over a decade, non-electronic (‘paper-less’) processes have become an exception; electronic processes now constitute the bulk of all processes.

¹⁹ Ordinance No. 678 promulgated on March 18, 2020 [Portaria TRT18 GP/SCR N° 678/2020]. Available from https://bibliotecadigital.trt18.jus.br/bitstream/handle/bdtrt18/16863/Portaria_TRT18_678_2020.PDF?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

²⁰ Indicators such as ‘productivity’, ‘pandemic-related ordinances’ and ‘epidemiological framework’ were included. Other subjects were also easily obtainable on the webpage, including ‘mandated home office instructions’, ‘funds to combat COVID-19’, ‘returning-to-work guidelines’, among others. Available from <https://www.trt18.jus.br/portal/covid19>.

²¹ Available from <https://www.trt18.jus.br/portal/transferecia-fundo-coronavirus>.

the Labour Prosecution Office TRT-18 committed 600,000 BRL (approximately 100,000 GBP) to the Rio Verde City Hall (South-West of Goiás); the amount was utilised to prevent and combat the pandemic in the town.²²

Among other major decisions, on March 27, 2020, the Court allocated 2,000,000 BRL (approximately 350,000 GBP) for the Public Health Care System maintained by Goiás' State Government to purchase personal protective equipment, including masks, gloves, sanitizers, and other gear to be distributed to emergency medical service employees.²³ On July 2020, researchers from the Federal University of Goiás obtained up to 1,000,000 BRL (approximately 170,000 GBP) to develop COVID-19 rapid test kits; this substantial sum was transferred by TRT-18 on July 2020.²⁴ At that time, TRT-18 had already allocated 7,000,000 BRL (approximately 1,200,000 GBP) to reduce COVID-19-related social disparities while the normative provisions, resolutions and other administrative statements taken by the Court were around 2,8 million.²⁵

The Court also stood out as an assistance provider for communities in situations of greater social vulnerability by adopting direct income transfers — almost 500,000 BRL (approximately 90,000 GBP)²⁶ to distribute basic-needs grocery packages to unprivileged families through the Central Union of the Slums [Central Única das Favelas] and the Organisation of Women Volunteers from State of Goiás [Organização das Voluntárias de Goiás].²⁷ The staple food baskets included rice, beans, pasta, powdered milk, soybean oil, flour, manioc flour, cornflakes and corn meal.

In addition, TRT-18 developed educational initiatives, via remote learning, by offering training in health care and teleworking. Organised by the Court Judicial School (Ejud-18),²⁸ numerous webinars were held in 2020 and 2021 on a range of COVID-19 topics. Doctors and psychologists from the Court gave practical guidance about symptom management and discussed the mental health impact of the pandemic, sharing knowledge related to loneliness, anxiety, stress and burnout.²⁹ 'Occupational diseases' and 'Challenges for people with

²² Available from <https://www.trt18.jus.br/portal/justica-do-trabalho-em-goias-destina-r-600-mil-para-o-combate-a-covid-19-em-rio-verde-go>.

²³ Available from <https://www.trt18.jus.br/portal/justica-do-trabalho-libera-mais-r-2-milhoes-para-a-rede-publica-de-saude-em-goias>.

²⁴ Available from <https://www.trt18.jus.br/portal/ufg-teste-rapido-covid>.

²⁵ Available from <https://www.trt18.jus.br/portal/produtividade-trabalho-remoto-pandemia>.

²⁶ Available from <https://www.trt18.jus.br/portal/justica-do-trabalho-entrega-mais-de-4-200-cestas-basicas-a-entidades-filantropicas>.

²⁷ Central Única das Favelas (Cufa) is a Brazilian non-government organisation recognised nationally and internationally for its political, social, sporting and cultural support in slums communities; it has existed for more than 20 years. Organização das Voluntárias de Goiás (OVG) was Founded on October 30, 1947, OVG emerged from the initiative of a group of women and carried out by Ambrosina Coimbra Bueno, first lady of the State at that time; the group gathered to sewing trousseaus, bedding and school uniforms to be donated. Available from <https://cufago.com.br/site> and <https://www.ovg.org.br/site>.

²⁸ TRT-18 Judicial School, currently presided by Judge Lara Teixeira Rios, provides onsite and online training for judicial officials, including magistrates, judges and clerks of court. During the coronavirus pandemic, onsite courses were promptly interrupted as the webinars, broadcasted live, were openly accessible and free to view without registration.

²⁹ Available from <https://www.trt18.jus.br/intranet/live-vai-abordar-cuidados-com-a-saude-mental-em-tempos-de-pandemia>.

disabilities' during the pandemic were other crucial topics extensively addressed on workshops promoted by the Court in cooperation with medical and law experts.³⁰

Excelling in a time of challenges and changes, Ejud-18 invested in online-based training all over the COVID-19 crisis. Particularly in 2021, the Judicial School exceeded the goals of its professional qualification programs designed for the Court's personnel (4,147 servants and 735 judges joined in) and also increased the number of learners from the external audience (2,047 participants).³¹

All these 'additional measures' adopted by the Regional Labour Court of Goiás instituted two other dimensions in the Brazilian Judiciary's fight against COVID-19: a *social dimension* and an *educational dimension*. Both evinced that this specialised court invested in a variety of policies aimed at fostering institutional resilience in a context of health emergency.

Conclusions

Food and nutritional security was affected by the social and economic impacts of COVID-19. Considering social, economic, gender and ethnic-racial inequalities in Brazil, exceptional social protection measures for informal workers, individual micro-entrepreneurs, self-employed and unemployed Brazilians³² were indisputably unsatisfactory. Learning losses also exacerbated pre-existing education disparities by reducing the opportunities for society as a whole, especially for the most vulnerable populations.

Faced with the urgency of actions, programs, and policies (not only in health, but also in other areas such as education, employment and income), for whose implementation the federal government was responsible and in which the Brazilian president was omitted, the Regional Labour Court of Goiás was necessarily driven to move more proactively.

Considering that the effects of the pandemic for those already living in food insecurity increased severe malnutrition and that the education disruption similarly had substantial effects during the coronavirus crises, TRT-18 adopted, beyond the scope of its judicial competence, social strategies to attenuate structural problems intensified by the pandemic and developed educational solutions to support education continuity, including the investment in distance learning courses and the delivering of quality training for both the internal and external audience.

³⁰ Respectively available from <https://www.trt18.jus.br/intranet/ejud18-promove-segunda-live-com-o-tema-covid-19-como-doenca-ocupacional> and <https://www.trt18.jus.br/intranet/desafios-da-pessoa-com-deficiencia-na-pandemia-19-11>.

³¹ Available from <https://www.trt18.jus.br/portal/ejud-18-supera-numero-de-vagas-ocupadas-e-cumpre-metas-de-capacitacao-com-folga>.

³² Various issues were involved in this 'financial transfer to the poorest' adopted by the Federal Government, especially a set of difficulties in accessing it, including the requirement to register online to obtain the benefit (26% of Brazilians were still not connected to the Internet and 16% of illiterates or those with low education did not use it), along with the fact that 46 million Brazilians lived without a banking account and an active Individual Taxpayer Registration (CPF), which hindered access to applications or money withdrawals from banks. Another problem came out when the president vetoed the payment of aid to vulnerable groups, such as artisanal fishermen, family farmers, land reform settlers, taxi drivers, drivers, and application deliverers (Gurgel et al., 2020).

These measures can point to an evidence of *judicial activism*,³³ which is characterised as a set of proceedings that affect a large number of people who allege a violation of their rights and involve structural injunctive remedies — e.g., enforcement orders whereby courts instruct various government agencies to take coordinated actions to protect the entire affected population and not just the specific complainants in the case (Rodríguez-Garavito, 2011). It is embodied most clearly by judicial intervention in structural cases that address widespread fundamental social problems such as hunger, illiteracy and/or lower educational levels.

Despite the fact that it is not a monolithic concept but controversial, judicial activism is a dynamic process of judicial outlook in a changing society or in times of crises whilst considering the dynamic and pragmatic societal factors (Mehta and Maheshwari, 2020). Judges use their *judicial vista* to correct injustices; the core prospects include either law interpreted and applied according to ongoing changes in conditions and values of the time prevailing or social decision-making by courts as a useful adjunct to democracy.

It became clear that the Regional Labour Court of Goiás made a great number of interim orders to ensure the destination of available amounts to the fight against COVID-19 and to allocate funds to minimise pandemic-related social and educational disparities from the very first confirmed cases of infection. These measures set up two additional dimensions in the Brazilian Judiciary's fight against COVID-19, amounting to six major ones: physical, organisational, technological, procedural, social and educational.

It seems thus fair to say that the coronavirus pandemic brought the opportunity of envisioning creative ways for developing innovations and overcoming difficulties. As a positive result, I highlight the Regional Labour Court of Goiás' proactivity in coping with COVID-19, which evinced its assertive, zealous and efficient performance and culminated in the improvement of its institutional resilience all over the pandemic.

³³ The term was coined by historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr. in 1947, in an article titled 'The Supreme Court: 1947' featured in *The Fortune Magazine*.

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Fine Arts in a Digital Age

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The European Conference on Arts & Humanities 2022
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

This article will summarize the research shared at The 10th European Conference on Arts & Humanities, 2022 hosted at Birkbeck, University of London, UK, including a discussion of the Canadian landscape of fine arts in an online environment, an exploration of the use of web technologies to promote diversity and equality through notable examples, and a discussion of effective presentations of culture and the arts in ways that address social issues and promote audience engagement.

Keywords: Fine Arts, Digital Communications, New Media

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Introduction

This research project explores the interaction between fine arts and digital media through a partial examination of the current online landscape. The research presented at The 10th European Conference on Arts & Humanities, 2022 hosted at Birkbeck, University of London, UK consisted of a summary of different vantages on the online landscape, with ideation around the possibilities and potentials of associated technologies and online approaches, as well as critical consideration of the limitations. Weblinks and references to specific online examples representative of web-based dynamics and socially relevant content, were cited, and a selection of these are included here. At present, this research shows that digital technologies are effective in some circumstances and in specific instances to promote culture, performance, and the fine arts, while engaging with respect for diversity and equitable access. The implication is that online outreach can be leveraged, though precariously, to further diverse representation and to strengthen marginalized voices in the field of arts and culture.

I have included a bibliography of articles that may be of interest to scholars studying the emergence of new media from its beginnings to its present state.

Canadian Landscape of Arts Online

This section will offer a brief discussion of Canadian arts organizations online, and some of the approaches to new media and the fine arts that have been attempted in the online landscape of Canadian art.

The issue of how to define web publishing, where not every website is a magazine with serial rights and subscribe-able monthly issues, though a considerable amount of cultural content is shared over the web in a format that does not easily adhere to expectations attributed to on-site art exhibits, has recently been resolved with the Canadian Artists Representation (CARFAC) Minimum Recommended Fee Schedule (www.carfac.ca). The CARFAC Minimum Recommended Fee Schedule sets the Canadian standard for artist fees, and in 2022, includes minimum payment for internet-based per-piece presentations of artwork (CARFAC, 2022b), as well as professional fees tailored specifically to works presented during the COVID-19 pandemic (CARFAC, 2022a). As a technical consideration, there is still not a clear line that distinguishes a website, from a web zine, from a web exhibit, but the recent changes to the CARFAC Fee Schedule introduce a standard of payment for fine art practices that are shared in the digital realm.

Several Canadian art institutions have leveraged the increase in public interest in online offerings from the fine arts, and strong explorations of online and digital media have resulted in creative new ways to share art with the public. The Art Institute Canada (AIC) (www.aci-iac.ca) has published a digital library of Canadian artist profiles, with profiles of a diverse range of Canadian artists throughout Canadian history. This site is an excellent gateway to learning about Canadian art, for anyone interested in quality information about high profile Canadian artists. (AIC, 2013)

Some arts organizations have experimented with virtual space as a means to continue to engage audiences throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Since 2020, the Creating Virtual Spaces for Audience and Performers project at the Art Gallery of Guelph (AGG) (<https://artgalleryofguelph.ca>) has been using 360 degree digital technology to enable virtual visits to their exhibitions (Ford, 2022). At the beginning of 2020, a group exhibit of visual art

that I was invited to participate in was forced to hastily change its venue due to gathering restrictions. The *Igniting Hope* exhibit at the Port Moody Arts Centre Society (PoMoArts) (www.pomoarts.ca) shifted from an on-site installation to an online presentation. Artists received sharable promotional materials in the form of digital event cards sized to social media site posts, with images sized and formatted for webviewing on Facebook and Instagram, respectively. (PoMoArts, 2020) Lastly, this year's Juno awards were broadcast with online streaming through the Canada Broadcasting Company's net-television platform, CBC Gem, showing that streaming media can capture audiences far beyond the reach of the event attendance (Weaver, 2022). Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, online media has provided an avenue for cultural organizations and franchises to reach their audiences.

Web Diversity, Web Equality

So many aspects of our lives have become 'app-powered.' It is now possible to visit a restaurant where a QR code allows orders to be placed directly from a cell phones to the kitchen. This technology was used exclusively, as an alternative to table service at Ramen Isshin on Mont-Royal Ave. E., in Montréal, Quebec, Canada, who are found on Instagram @RAMENISSHINQC (Ramen Isshin staff, personal communication, May 7, 2022). Even more innovative, Robbie the robot waiter at The Mantra restaurant on Fort Street in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada (<https://mantrarestaurant.ca/>) serves customers their meals in a steady, smooth glide that ensures minimal chance of collision with human staff ('She Never,' 2021). If that is not enough, products ordered online are shipped to the doorstep, concert tickets can be photographed to a smartphone, and any number of transactions – purchase or business – can be made without leaving the wifi hotspot. If digital technologies are making the world a better place, as some anticipate(d) (Spar, 1999), this should entail opportunities for diverse and marginalized communities.

Equality in online communities has been a topic of conversation as far back as 1999, when it was noted that equality in the realm of online media was hampered by, "companies that control the rights to intellectual property, with implications for [...] social scientists eager to access formerly public data bases" (Lessig, 1999 as cited in DiMaggio et al., 2001). In a 2004 journal article, D. Perrons explains that, for social network business organizational structures, "while social networks exist, the competitive rationale remains paramount, countering some of the idealist visions of social solidarity in the social network approach" (p. 55), and in her studies, "some of the female respondents and the 'techies' (who were more involved in the programming end) felt excluded by what they referred to as either the 'blokism' or 'new media mofia,' respectively, in the social life of wine bars that are linked to the sector" (p. 52). In a 2007 journal article, W. L. Bennet and T. Lagos discuss the unequal stratification of social media messaging.

Social media companies enlist their audience to promote their platforms' credibility (Lefebvre, 2007). Most recently, some companies are becoming conscious of the value of diverse representation. An Indigenous woman from Treaty 1 Territory in Canada states, "I want to share my experiences of practicing my culture" (Rabbit, 2022) and she has discovered that the online real estate social media offers will allow her to do just this – according to an article on how social media creates new media opportunities for Indigenous Canadians. However, without evidence of actively applied strategies by social media companies to strengthen marginalized voices, it is not certain whether these examples of influencer success can be defined as representative, or as the exception. While it is possible to

find examples of successful social media influencers that represent diversity, alternate approaches to nurture true equality in online communities are still needed.

In an effort to generate a self-articulated online community, the First Peoples' Cultural Council (FPCC) has developed the First Peoples' Map of BC (<https://fpcc.ca>), an example of the way that custom web technologies are being developed to serve the Indigenous communities. The web-based interactive map includes information in Indigenous languages, with recordings of native speakers demonstrating accurate pronunciation of tribal and place names in Indigenous languages. Indigenous artists are virtually located on the map, and a healthy online community has emerged in the artist feed, where recent uploads of creative work appear in reverse chronological order. The content of the feed displays a welcome diversity of voices from within the Indigenous community, showing that online resources can promote cultural resilience for Indigenous peoples of Canada. (FPCC, 2022)

Overall, through the deliberate creation of pathways enabling online media to function in the interest of marginalized communities within the arts in Canada, these recent examples demonstrate standards and expectations of respect for diversity and equitable access that are shared with offline and on-site cultural institutions

Conclusion

A utopian portrait of the potential of online media and web communications to mediate inequity would detract from the immediate importance of monitoring usage trajectories of digital media in representing diversity and fostering equality. With this in consideration, online technologies as mechanisms of communication are capable of relaying important messages, of maintaining personal and business connections, and when grounded in an awareness of real-world impact, hold the potential to deliver to artists and arts organizations effective outreach options dedicated to cultural sharing, knowledge production, and cultivation of the arts in Canada.

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The Role of Omani Women's Associations in Preserving Women's Creative Industries

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Abstract

The government of the Sultanate of Oman has been keen to preserve the entity of Omani women and their families through stability and cohesion in the light of the changes in life, whether it was material stability or moral stability. Since the establishment of the first branch of the Omani Women's Association in 1972 AD to its wide spread to cover all regions of the Sultanate; these associations effectively contributed to the inclusion of Omani women socially, economically and culturally. In addition, the direct care of women by the government during the lifetime of the blessed Renaissance also contributed to empowering women in the three aspects and overcoming the basic challenges that were facing women during the early years of the blessed Renaissance. One of the most important goals of women's associations is the interest in small projects and the creative industries of Omani women, as the creative industries have an important and influential role in the economic development and raising the national and family income, as it opens new marketing horizons for the individual and helps them develop creative thoughts. The Sultanate of Oman is one of the countries that is rich in traditional industries which can be creative industries but due to the rapid technological progress, these traditional crafts have become neglected. Therefore, it has become necessary to seek new non-traditional solutions in order to preserve traditional crafts and industries that help craft women raise the level of skill, innovation and art, in order to preserve the crafts.

Keywords: Omani Women's Associations, Creative Industries, Omani Women

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Introduction

The women in the Sultanate of Oman are legally entitled for getting similar pay like the male employees. Along with that, the females are also entitled for similar treatment like the males. However, in actuality, the females often face various challenges in workplaces and they are often victims of gender discriminations and favouritism. The law enforcing agencies also do not provide enough importance to resolving gender discriminations in workplaces. For this reason, the financial status and the social status of majority of the women in the Sultanate of Oman are not well. However, the empowerment of the women is very much important for the economic and social development of the country. On the other hand, the economy of the sultanate of Oman is highly dependent on the mining industry and the sales of oil and gas.

Besides the mining industry, the agricultural industry has a large contribution to the economic growth of the country. However, other industries are often neglected in such a situation. Specially, the creative industries are often overlooked as they have very low contribution in the economic growth of the country. However, the government of Oman has realized that it is important for the country to enhance the growth of the creative industries like the art and craft industry, music industry, architecture, sculpture, pottery and so on. Considering all these facts, the government of Oman has become highly focused on the empowerment of the women and therefore, the government has taken initiatives for encouraging the women of the country to be engaged with various creative industries. The main objective of the study is to discuss about the creative industries and the association of women in the Sultanate of Oman.

Aim

The main aim of the research is to identify the creative industries in Oman and to investigate the role played by the women of the country in the development of these creative industries.

Objectives of the Research

- To identify the creative industries in the sultanate of Oman
- To analyze how women of Oman are associated with these creative industries
- To analyze the role played by the Oman women's association in associating the rural women to the creative industries of the country
- To analyze the role played by the women in the development and growth of the creative industries in the sultanate of Oman

Research Questions

1. What are the creative industries with which the women of Oman are associated with?
2. What is the role played by the women in the development and growth of the creative industries in the sultanate of Oman?

Literature Review

In this section of the article, various research articles, journals, books and information available in various websites have been reviewed in order to collect required information regarding the creative industries of the Sultanate of Oman and the role played by the women in the country in the development and the growth of the country. By reviewing the research literatures, information has also been gathered regarding the role of Oman Women's

Association regarding the empowerment of women in the country and the engaging the women with the creative industries. The information has been discussed and critically reviewed under various sections in order to answer the research questions.

Omani Women's Association In Oman

The government of Oman is highly focused on empowering the women of the country. The Omani women's association is an agency that is responsible for empowering the women of the sultanate of Oman. The Omani Women's Association is a social and cultural organization aimed at advancing Omani women in all social and cultural fronts. The Rural Women's Development Centre's are also under the supervision of The Omani Women's Associations. The Omani Women's association provides a variety of services to the women of the country (Weber, 2017). For example, the association can provide training services for getting placements in various companies associated with the creative industries. The association mainly helps the women of the country to become self dependent (Parmin and Savitri, 2020). Any women residing in the sultanate of Oman can request and avail the services of the association. There are various types of creative industries and the association mainly tries to engage the women of the country with the creative industries in order to make them financially self dependent.

When a large number of women become financially self dependent, the economic growth of the country can be enhanced. Therefore, the association will help the country to enhance the growth of the economy and to improve the quality of lives of the women in the society. In these days, the association has become highly focused on helping the rural women in the sultanate of Oman in their career development. The women in various disadvantaged areas and remote villages get enough support from the association for starting small businesses or getting replacements in small and medium sized firms (Adams, 2022). Along with that, there are a large number of women in the sultanate of Oman who fail to get employment due to the lack of professional skills and competencies. For this reason, the association also has tried to provide training to many women so that they can get employment in various companies and can become financially self dependent. Along with that, the association also provides various other types of services to the women like legal services to the women who are victim of rape, domestic violence and other issues. Along with that, the association also provides health care services, mental health services and education services to the children of the women who are victim of various types of social injustices, domestic violence or other issues.

The mental health services and other types of support services are also provided to the women who are either physically or mentally disabled. The old women who are the victim of financial abuse and neglect also get community support services from the Oman Women's Association. In these days, the association has become highly focused on engaging the women of the Sultanate of the Oman with various types of creative industries in the country so that the skills and competencies of the women are enhanced and they also get enough chances of becoming financially self dependent (Cerde-Suarez, 2021). Besides this objective, the association also wants to engage a large number of women with the creative industries in order to enhance the growth of these creative industries. Considering all these facts, it can be said that the Oman Women's Association is performing a nice work for the empowerment of the women of the Sultanate of Oman and the growth of the creative industries in Oman.

Creative Industries In Oman

There are various types of creative industries associated with women in the Sultanate of Oman. The most common creative industries in Oman are music industry, dance, art, craft, film, various types of performing arts, visual arts, architecture, painting and so on. Women in the Sultanate of Oman can be associated with any types of creative industries. Previously, these types of creative industries were not provided enough importance in the country and therefore, many talented people have not received the value of their talents in the country. However, in these days, the Government of Oman has become highly focused on the development of these creative industries in order to enrich the culture and the cultural heritage of Oman. For this reason, the government of Oman is also encouraging people for engaging with these industries (Dana et al. 2022). The government of Oman also provides enough support to the people, especially the women, who are associated with these creative industries. For example, the government of the Sultanate of Oman has introduced a new project called creative industries plan for boosting competitiveness. The main objective of the project is to encourage people to get engaged with these creative industries so that the economic growth of the country can be enhanced.

On the other hand, the government has taken initiatives for the development of the creative industries in order to reduce the unemployment rate in the Sultanate of Oman. The economic growth of the Oman is highly dependent on agriculture and the mining industry and therefore, the creative industries have often been neglected (Almamari, 2020). However, the Omani government has realized that the development of these industries is also important for enhancing the economic growth of the country. The development of these creative industries can also help improve the quality of lives of people who are associated with these industries (Al-Abri, 2021). Therefore, the government of the country has provided enough importance to the development of these creative industries. It has been revealed in studies that the development of all these creative industries will help increase the competitiveness of the economy of Oman in the world economy. The government of Oman has also taken initiatives for mapping out the present conditions and the ups and downs faced by the art-related creative industries so that the government can take necessary steps for the development of these art-related creative industries. It has also been revealed in studies that the development of creative industries in Oman is also interrelated with the development of tourism business in the country.

A large number of tourists also visit the country just because of the attraction of its music, handcraft, sculpture, architecture and traditional creative industries. According to the ministry of culture of Oman, the traditional handcraft industries like the earthen pot making industry, leather, textiles and other industries are considered the revered treasures of the country that need to be preserved and popularized in order to preserve the heritage and culture of the country. Because of this culture, a large number of tourists visit the country (Chatty and Rabo, 2020). Considering these facts, it can be said that the development of these creative industries not only enhances the economic growth of the country but the development of these creative industries can also help improve the quality of lives and the financial status of a large number of people in the country. Therefore, the government of Oman and various other NGOs has become highly concerned about the development of the creative industries of the country by engaging a large number of people with these creative industries. Along with that the governmental and non-governmental organizations are also trying to provide enough support to the businesses that belong to the creative industries so that the creative industries get enough opportunities of growth.

Creative Handicraft Industries Associated With Rural Omani Women

Though there are various types of creative industries in Oman like music, dance, film industry and others but the rural women are mainly associated with creative industries like art, craft, earthen pot making, painting and other industries. It has also been revealed in studies that there are many rural entrepreneurs who are the owners of small firms related to the creative industries like art, craft and others and there are many other rural women who work under them. However, it has also been revealed in the studies that the rural women associated with the creative industries and even the rural women entrepreneurs face various challenges related to the growth and advancement of their business (Ghouse et al. 2019). For example, the rural women often do not get enough chances of exposure and therefore, they often cannot get the success that they deserve. As a result of it, many of the rural women also stop their work and many cases the small rural firms associated with the creative industries also collapse because of the lack of exposure, the lack of infrastructure and the lack of funds and resources.

In many cases, the small rural firms associated with the creative industries also collapse due to the lack of funds and the lack of support from the government of Oman. For this reason, the government of Oman has decided to provide enough support to the rural women of the country who lives in mountain areas and remote village but still aspire to go beyond the traditional family role and want to become successful in life (Topimin et al. 2018). The Oman Women Association is responsible for providing the rural women the required support for their career development. The association provides various types of services to the rural women like financial support, training services and workshops, consultation services for running small businesses effectively or raw materials and capital for running the business effectively. The handicraft base creative industries are achieving noticeable growth in the villages of the Sultanate of Oman.

Mainly the industries like pottery, sewing, crafting and painting and other industries are growing gradually in the rural areas of the sultanate of Oman. The pottery industry is mainly associated with various types of works like making earthen pots, flower vase, utensils and idols and many other things. A large number of women are also associated with sewing and making design on clothes and some small textile businesses (Ismail, 2019). The popularity of crafting and glass painting is high enough among the rural women of the sultanate of Oman. Developing nice designs and paintings on flower vase, developing paper made flowers, toys and other things, wooden works on toys and embroidery works are the common crafting works with which the women of Oman are associated with. There are many women entrepreneurs who also are the owner and directors of small businesses that are related to these creative industries like art and craft. Apart from Oman women's Association, there are many other non-governmental organizations who are making efforts for supporting the creative industries and the firms associated with these creative industries and the women who are engaged with these creative industries in the sultanate of Oman.

The Role Offered By Women's Associations To Preserve These Creative Industries

A large number of women from both the rural and urban areas are associated closely with the creative industries of the country. However, in this study, we are mainly focusing on the role of the rural women who are associated with the creative industries in the sultanate of Oman. The rural women also play a major role in the development and growth of the creative industries of the country. There are thousands of women in the rural areas of Oman like Lima

Village, Kumzar Village, Wakan village and others and these women are directly associated with various small and medium sized firms that belong to the creative industries of the country. It has been revealed in studies that almost 22% of the total population of Oman lives in the villages or the rural areas of the sultanate of Oman. Almost 12.5% of the population living in the rural areas of Oman is women and almost 6% of the women are associated with various types of creative industries (Almamari, 2020). The women in the urban areas are associated with various types of creative industries like music industry, film industry, TV, painting, sculpture, art and craft, textile and others.

However, the women living in the rural areas are mainly associated with small and medium sized creative industries like pottery, art and craft and sewing and various other types of creative industries. The women associated with art and craft industry are highly skilled and they mainly perform works like developing earthen pots, utensils, making designs and paintings on earthen or metal pots, developing paper made toys, flowers and accessories, bags and many other products and so on. By being associated with these creative industries, the women actually play a major role in the development and growth of these industries and thus they also contribute to the economic growth of the country. On the other hand, when these women are associated with the creative industries and earn money and become financially independent, the quality of lives of the women and the family members can also be improved (Hammami et al. 2021). Thus, when thousands of rural and urban women are associated with the creative industries and they perform their works effectively and earn enough money, the overall quality of lives of the people of the country will also improve and the economic growth of the country. Considering this fact, it can be said that the women of the Sultanate of Oman who are associated directly or indirectly with various creative industries actually play a major role in the economic and social development of the country.

On the other hand, the creative industries like the pottery, art, craft, sewing and textile designing are the signifiers of the cultural heritage of the Sultanate of Oman and thousands of tourists visit the country because of the attractions of the cultural heritage and buy those products. Along with that, it is also important to preserve the cultural heritage, the rural creative industries of the country. From this perspective also, it can be said that the women who are associated with the creative industries and play a major role in the development and growth of the creative industries, also have a major contribution to preserving the cultural heritage of the country through their works (Ghouse et al. 2019). On the other hand, the empowerment of the women is also important for the overall development of the nation. From the above discussions, it can be said that the development of the women is important for the social and economic development. Along with that, empowerment of women of the rural areas is also important for the cultural development country. The empowerment of women in the rural and the urban areas are also important for achieving the sustainable development goals. For this reason, the empowerment of the women in various areas of the country is important for the overall development of the country.

However, it has also been revealed in the studies that though Oman Women's Association and many other NGOs are trying to engage a large number of women with the creative industries and these organizations provide training services and financial support to the women for performing their works effectively being a part of the creative industries, it cannot be denied that the women still face various issues because of gender discrimination in the society and in the workplaces. The women in the Sultanate of Oman do not often get enough opportunities of growth and their skills and competencies are often overlooked and not valued just because they are women. For example, the women employees in many small

firms are not provided managerial positions and other higher positions even though they have the required skills and this issues are faced by women just because of gender discrimination (Hansrod, 2019). The same issues are often experienced by the women who are associated with the creative industries. The women entrepreneurs who are associated with the creative industries often do not get enough opportunities of exposures and therefore, the growth of the creative industries and the empowerment of the women are often affected badly. Though the women artists have the required skills for performing works related to art and craft, many firms in the sultanate of Oman hesitate to hire women workers because of a prejudice that women are less competent than the men workers. These types of issues are major barriers to the development of the creative industries and the empowerment of women in the country. Considering these facts, it can be said that initiatives need to be taken in order to avoid these types of issues in the workplaces.

Outcome and Some Recommendations

Various research literatures have been reviewed in the study in order to analyze the role of the women and the Oman women's Association in the development and growth of the creative industries of the country. The findings have also been discussed under various section of the study. The main outcomes of the research have been discussed in this section. By reviewing the research literatures about the creative industries of the Sultanate of Oman, it can be identified that the main creative industries in the country are music, film industry, art and craft, drawings, paintings, sculpture, street art, pottery, sewing, textile and others (Dana et al. 2022). The economy of the country is highly dependent on the oil and gas industry and the agriculture and therefore, the creative industries are often neglected.

However, the government of Oman has decided to preserve the creative industries. Though there are various creative industries, in the rural areas, the industries like pottery, art and craft and sewing are very much famous. A large number of women are associated with these creative industries in order to become financially self dependent. The Oman women's Association and various other NGOs are also taking initiatives for engaging a large number of women with the creative industries so that the women become financially self dependent and can develop their own career. These organizations provide enough support to the women for getting placements in the firms that belong to the creative industries (Ismail, 2019). As a result of it, thousands of women are being engaged with the creative industries like the art, craft, pottery, music, paintings, drawing and others. These women are becoming financially self dependent and therefore, their quality of lives and the quality of lives of the family members of the women associated with these industries are also improved.

Along with that, as a large number of women are being connected with these creative industries, the creative industries in both the rural and the urban areas, are achieving rapid growth which is also beneficial for the economic and social development of the country. However, it has also been revealed in the study that though a large number of women in the Sultanate of Oman are being associated with the creative industries and they are achieving their career goals, the women also face various challenges in their works just because of gender discrimination (Hammami et al. 2020). Considering this fact, it can be said that it is the responsibility of the government of Oman and the Oman Women's Association to investigate the issues related to gender discrimination and favoritism that the women of the country face in various organizations. In case, these issues are resolved, it might become easier to empower majority of the women in the country and to enhance the growth of various types of creative industries in both the urban areas and the rural areas of the country.

Though there are laws in the country for preventing such discriminating behavior in the workplaces, the law enforcing authorities of the country do not provide enough importance to investigating the issues and therefore, the laws are not applied properly for resolving the issues like gender discrimination. Considering these facts, it can be said that it is also the responsibility of the law enforcing authorities of the country to investigate these types of issues and to take necessary actions in order to resolve such issues so that both men and women get equal opportunities of growth and advancement in the workplaces.

Conclusion

The study discusses about the creative industries in the Sultanate of Oman and the role played by the women in the country for the development of these creative industries. Along with that, the study also discusses about the role played by Oman women Association in engaging the rural women with the creative industries of the country. From the above discussions, it can be concluded that the main creative industries with which the rural women of the country are associated are art, craft, and paintings, sewing and drawing. The Oman Women's Association provides financial support and training services to a large number of women so that they can engage with these creative industries. As a result of it, a large number of women in these days have become associated with these creative industries and they also play a major role in the development and growth of the creative industries. However, in many cases, the women do not get enough chances of growth and advancements in their workplaces because of the gender discrimination issues in the workplaces of Oman. For his reason, it has been recommended that the law enforcing authorities of the country need to take necessary steps for resolving these types of issues.

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A Study of Visual Symbolic Perception in Shamanic Rituals

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Abstract

Shamanism is a primal shape that transcends ordinary consciousness as a cross-cultural phenomenon. From the universal analysis of Shamanism. During the process of religious rituals, shamans use visual elements, such as costumes and masks, to form a spatially based graphic narrative relationship that generates an experience of sacred perception. However, the study of shamanic rituals has focused on anthropology and neurotheology. Previous research has neglected the importance of religious symbols as a bridge between personal and religious perception. This study, therefore, explores the spatial construction of visual symbols in shamanic rituals as well as the connections and interactions between visual symbols and behavioral perception. In the research process, a sample group was used to experience a model of religious rituals constructed from religious symbols. Thereafter, a questionnaire was administered for the qualitative analysis of the emotional variables of the sample group. The results show that visual symbols significantly generate the perceptual experience in religious rituals. Through abstract and empathic symbols to produce a perceptual experience of arrogance. This research on religious symbols can help understand the inheritance and protection of shamanism. Furthermore, it may provide theoretical support for the visual perception of symbols and transmission of emotions.

Keywords: Shamanism, Religious Rituals, Visual Symbols, Perceptual Experience

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Introduction

In recent years, shamanic research innovations have been revitalized as multiple studies have attempted to reconstruct the shamanism of the past through historical, ethnographic, and archaeological evidence (Dubois, 2011). Research suggests that shamanism, as a primitive form that transcends ordinary consciousness, has elements of cultural representation that are cross-cultural in nature (Winkelman, 2011). Analyzed from a cross-cultural perspective, through an empirical comparison of shamanic territories in the Americas, Africa, and Central Asia, it has been found that the core concept inherent to shamanism is a state of interactive ecstasy in the social and spiritual world (Eliade & Doniger, 2020). This is concretely expressed in the religious rituals formed through social gatherings. In the same vein is Winkelman's transcendentalist reflection on religious ritual based on a neuro-phenomenological perspective. He affirms the cross-cultural attributes of shamanism and interprets the shamanic ecstatic state (spiritual flight) in terms of a transformation of consciousness (Winkelman, 2012), attributing the shamanic perceptual experience to a product of brain function and neural structure (Winkelman, 2011). A common feature is the active use of the body to enter an altered state of consciousness (ASC)—an unusual physical state in which sensations, perceptions, cognitions, and emotions are altered.

Being the centralized experience of shamanic ideology and the subject of perceived objects, the ritual activities surrounding a religion have been the focus of scholarly research. Religious rituals are the centralized manifestation of religious ideology and therefore, the main way individuals perceive the sacred. Furthermore, they represent the irrationality of religious ideas and are the basis for guiding individuals into the ASC. The traditional elements in shamanism are classified on the basis of brain function and the neural structure (Winkelman, 2011). Through the dramatic presentation of traditional elements of shamanism, such as wearing costumes and masks, the real space is transformed into an imaginary space by reconstruction. Through ASC, a narrative relationship based on imaginary space is formed, which transcends rationality and therefore, produces the transmission of shamanic ideology. This is actualized based on the semantic transmission of religious visual signs and samples—the perception of visual signs.

This research reveals that visual symbols act as ideological mirroring of the personal God. An integral part of the construction of ritual space, they serve as a bridge between religious consciousness and religious rituals. In the latter, ritual symbols—the smallest ritual unit—retain the specific attributes of the ritual act (Deflem, 1991). They evoke a strong emotional response and are particularly visual (Renteln, 2004). Geertz points out that religion is a system of symbols (Hori, 1975), resulting from concepts on the general order of existence and the granting of these concepts with an aura of factuality. These concepts make emotions and motivations seem uniquely realistic, thereby creating powerful, pervasive, and enduring emotions and motivations in people's hearts (p. 90). Visual symbols establish pictorial conventions in regions where religion is predominant, allowing a symbolic identity between different individuals to flourish (Bohrer & Mitchell, 1997). The visual experience formed through the religious rituals constructed by the identification with cultural symbols leads to an emotional perception of the reference of visual symbols by the public. Turner proposes a theory of threshold limits to explain how visual symbols are perceived by individuals during religious rituals. He suggests that during such rituals, groups are mobilized because of dominant symbols; people worship and perform other symbolic activities in their vicinity (Turner, 1973). This demonstrates the correlation between religious rituals and visual symbols.

This study is based on semiotic research. It adopts the ritual theory proposed by Victor Turner et al. Furthermore, it uses questionnaires and fieldwork by authors to identify the characteristics of visual symbols in shamanic rituals to assess how visual symbols produce perceptual experiences. This research may open up a new way of thinking about shamanism. Simultaneously, it should enable transmission and preservation of dying shamanism.

Pictorial Turn of Language In Shamanism

In natural societies, any linguistic description is a manifestation of textuality. Linguistics, semiotics, and rhetoric are all concrete applications of textuality, and even the unconscious is structured like a language (Bohrer & Mitchell, 1997). The transformative relationship between language and the visible can be called the turn of the image. With the development of art history, French pioneers, such as Roland Barthes, have proposed the doctrine of structuralism, which focuses on the structural theory of meaning in culture. This led to the gradual acceptance of the theory of the turn of the image. They found that visual art was a system of symbols influenced by “conventions” (Bohrer & Mitchell, 1997). Sculpture, painting, and photography—these are all imbued with “textuality” and “discourse.” In depicting images, language is bound by linguistic conventions. Therefore, different linguistic conventions of text give birth to different systems of symbolic graphics.

Shamanism is influenced by the geographical environment, and its visual symbol system is dominated by symbols. From the perspective of the distribution area, shamanism is mainly popular in relatively primitive areas. For example, the Haze, Oroqen, Evenki, among others in northern China still inherit shamanic practices in the way of clan tribes. To this day, traditional religious practices have been maintained. Due to the harsh natural conditions, the visual symbolism of shamanism is predominantly primitive. It is expressed as a hieroglyphic symbol and a relationship between the visible and the describable, such as the shamanic script symbols. Unlike other language families, Shamanic cultures did not give birth to writing but mostly reproduced the image symbols. By constructing a contractual relationship between image and symbol, a surrogate reference to the symbol is produced. At the same time, an idiomatic form is generated between the subject of viewing—the viewer—and the object's visual symbol. When the individual understands the symbolic form of the image, visual perception is created around the image in what Panofsky describes as a “symbolic form” (Újvári, 2021). It is based on this process of visual symbolism of shamanism taking the turn from language to image, producing a religious symbolic perception in a regional context. This births a system of visual symbols unique to shamanism.

Characteristics of Shamanistic Religious Symbols

Shamanism is one of the earliest and most far-reaching religious traditions, the remnants of which still form the basis of the major religious beliefs in the modern world. The shaman shows their people the unseen forces behind the mere appearances of nature, which are experienced through intuition, trance states, or ecstatic mystical visions (Stutley, 2020). The religious system of symbols resulting from the pictorial turn based on the language of shamanism has religious symbolic elements expressed in an order and structure. The overall construction of the symbolic domain in the ritualistic process of religion is accomplished in a specific natural space under the guidance of shamans who use the visual elements, such as religious costumes, drums, and masks. These different types of symbols are accepted by the tribal clans through the contractual relationship constructed by language and images. A communal perception is formed, generating the transmission of symbolic semantics.

From the perspective of shamanism's universality, it can be found that the religious symbols are influenced by the core concept of "animism," and that its symbols are inherently practical and highly recognizable (Winkelman, 2002). For example, in the rock art of northern China and Siberia, the shaman's image is an important subject. The discovery of a large number of petroglyphs showed multiple aspects of the ancient man's social life and ideology. Contrarily, the symbolic structure of images in shamanic culture is relatively monotonous, because of the unique geographical context in which it was developed. Consequently, shamanism's graphic symbols can reflect more accurately the different emotions of individuals. Symbols that appear in religious rituals can also be found. Although it has a single shape, it is a linguistic image that is infinitely scalable and speaks for itself. It is the meta-image of visual images (Brown & Mitchell, 1986). For example, in the shamanic costumes worn by the Manchu people in northern China, the symbols are mainly "heavenly diagrams" and ornaments. The "heavenly diagram" is the main part of the symbolic composition of shamanic patterns. The shaman tree is the symbol of the "heavenly diagram," which was formed from the belief of the clan in the shaman tree. The tree totem, as an important meta-image in shamanism, is widely used in different parts of religious symbolism. These include the shape of the solon pole in religious rituals and the curling of iron sheets into plant motifs on frames of animal hats worn by shamans, which are a direct reflection of the shamanic concept of the heavenly diagram (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1: Sauron rod and shaman hat

From a semiotic perspective, based on the theoretical foundations of Saussure's semiotics, we discovered that the religious symbols of shamanism were mostly symbolic. An example is the religious costumes worn by shamans during religious ceremonies (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2 Shaman's costume

This research found that the designs of religious costumes are mostly embroidered with animal hair, sewn with sinew and cut and pasted, and carved on wood, bone, and metal. The designs are either simple or complex in material, content, and craftsmanship, but not decorative for aesthetic purposes. However, they are a symbol of the shamanic god system and their religious concepts, and are a pictorial representation of shamanic religious culture. Additionally, the religious symbols of shamanism are based on the realization of their own functional properties, manifested in abstract and empathic symbols (Worringer, 1921). Abstract symbols can be seen as a rational reflection of symbols, while empathic symbols are an irrational transformation of sensuality.

Based on fieldwork, we classified shamanic religious symbols by their functional properties. The empathic symbols are primarily used in religious rituals and the abstract symbols in everyday life. In the course of religious rituals, shamans perform religious activities by wearing costumes, masks, and alternative objects made from paper cutouts. This is achieved through the imitation of primitive symbols and reflected in the religious objects' design in the human body shape as well as through primitive sewing. There is an emotional transference of the individual to the alternative objects. In this way, the shamanic concept of religion is transformed by empathic symbols. Analyzed from a visual point of view, these empathic symbols, which appear in religious rituals, achieve a transformation in their properties and substitute completely the emotions of the original symbols. For example, shamanic costumes are generally in red, yellow, and blue, representing earth, man, and sky, respectively. Another example is the shaman wearing a mask during religious ceremonies. All are visualized through the visualization of religious symbols. The individual is made to feel the presence of a personal deity, creating a mirror image of the deity's ideology that is a way of achieving an emotional experience of substitution. Additionally, the many symbols of life recorded in shamanism are collectively known as abstract symbols, an example of which is the emergence of shamanic petroglyphs. Numerous studies have shown that the rock art paintings of shamans are mostly records of religious rituals. The symbols are single-shaped and an abstract representation of a primitive two-dimensional image. The abstract symbols are primarily used in written records. In the Tungus language group, where shamanism is

practiced, the symbols are often pictographs—they are dots and lines, using the most basic stylistic symbols to record the daily life of the shaman, both anthropomorphically and figuratively.

In religious rituals, visual symbols by their characteristic properties enable the individual to create a pictorial narrative relationship with religious symbols through the combined use of abstract symbols and empathic symbols. It enables the individual to be fully immersed in the symbolic system constructed by the shaman through the religious symbolic domain in the trance-like religious experience. This results in a different emotionally and psychologically stimulating experience.

Symbolic Visual Perceptual Experience

Bataille suggests two ways of perceiving the sacred. The first is to aspire to something higher, such as art or religious practice, to exceed the boundaries of a part of humanity that is beyond one's reach and to experience another dimension, thus producing divinity. The other is erotic, sexual, and violent. During sexual intercourse, the body reverts to its original bestiality and through the self-denial of bestiality gives rise to the divine erotic. From this a rapid experience of divine perception can occur (Bataille, 1970). Two forms of excretion contribute to the human experience of perception. Using Hegel's phenomenology of mind as a theoretical basis, it can be said that human consciousness is a spiraling process of dialectical negation (Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, 1988). Early humans generated the perceptual experience of divine bestiality through the negation of their animalistic nature. In terms of the emergence and development of consciousness, an image's first perception arises when the individual consciousness is received through an external medium. In this process, consciousness generates self-denial, and thus, absolute consciousness emerges. The human being, in order to distinguish itself from other animals, thus, negates the animalistic nature of existence. This process is accompanied by the taboo of images that arises from visual symbols. It is in this process of negation that the perceptual experience of arrogating divinity arises. Divinity, in this case, is divine bestiality and a manifestation of objectification and self-denial that arises with human evolution. It can be summed up as the negation of the natural world that gives rise to divinity.

Based on Hegel and Bataille's point of view on conscious perception. To learn more about the way visual symbols produce perceptual experiences, we visited areas where shamanism is still preserved and practiced. Furthermore, we conducted participant observation of shamanic religious rituals. After collecting relevant data, it was found that there were three ways to acquire perception during shamanic rituals.

The first kind of religious perception is generated through the stimulation of an individual's senses. It was found that shamanic religious rituals are dramatic and can stimulate strong emotional experiences in the individual. During the religious ceremony, the shaman excitedly beats drums, sings, and dances while recounting the battle with the spirits. In the end, the shaman is exhausted and in a state of ecstasy as he communicates with the spirits and seeks their cooperation (Winkelman, 2012). Therefore, when an individual is in a dramatic religious ritual, the shaman offers a unique perceptual experience to the masses by resonating with the individual's five senses.

The second is a combination of geopolitical attributes and spatial fields. For example, Shamanism located in the north of China has a remote geographical location and harsh

natural conditions. The social ideology has retained its primitive character. This provides the means to disseminate geographical symbols. Through the establishment of pictorial conventions and construction of cognitive images, the visual perception is made available among the clan that has a perception of the same symbols (Snyder & Panofsky, 1995). From this, a system based on the perception of empirical images is formed. The metaphor of conscious experience is completed with the integration of religious rituals (Bohrer & Mitchell, 1997). This ultimately leads to a perceptual experience.

The last of these relies on the perception of the sacred in religious rituals and the usurpation that follows the breaking of taboos. In a comparative study of shamanism in the Lascaux culture, it was found that the murals in the Lascaux caves were full of visual elements representative of taboos, blood, beasts, and violence (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3 A bison with an open stomach

The Lascaux people were shocked by such representations and developed a visual perception of emotions (Bataille, 1970). The source of this perception is usurpation of the unnatural, which produces a perceptual experience of the divine. The divinity generated by breaking taboos is not personal divinity, but divine bestiality derived from the negation of humanity itself. In the course of shamanic religious rituals, the shaman acts as a medium of communication with the personal divinity. By using empathic symbols, such as masks and distinctive costumes with different rhythmic drums, the transformation of humanity and divinity is thus accomplished. The individual is made to perceive the arrogance of the divine, leading to a perceptual experience.

These three ways of perceiving religious rituals are closely related to the visual symbols used in religious rituals and were hence, used as the basis for our study and as an important dimension of this questionnaire research. Additionally, unstructured interviews with shamanic bearers were conducted, based on which six factors that influence the perception of visual symbols in shamanic rituals were identified. These included “religious cultural identity,” identity with one's own culture, and the characteristics of visual symbols in religious rituals “empathic symbols,” “symbolic symbols,” “change in religious consciousness,” and “bodily behavior,” under the influence of religious rituals. These factors

are why individuals perceive visual symbols. To verify the validity of the data obtained, a sample of shamanic religious rituals was used to simulate and experience the perception. In total, 27 test items were selected and designed in the following three different questionnaires (Fig. 4, Fig. 5, Fig. 6). Additionally, the data were coded and analyzed using the Likert data collection method for the group experiencing shamanic religious rituals.

Perception of space of the ritual's subject.

Dimensionality	Measurement indicators
Cultural identity	(1) A sacred place (2) A place where the power of faith is felt (3) A place of consistency with imagination (4) A place where troubles are temporarily forgotten (5) A place to feel a sense of belonging
Self-identification	(6) A place to purify the soul (7) A place to fulfill a long-held wish (8) A pilgrimage done in one's own way (9) Feeling transformed

Fig. 4 Perception of space of the ritual's subject

Visual perception of symbols in space

Dimensionality	Measurement indicators
Abstract symbols	1. Shamanic textual graphics 2. Religious rock art 3. Religious architecture 4. Religious motifs and decorations
Empathy Symbols	5. Religious objects (statues) 6. Shaman's masks 7. Shaman's paper cutouts 8. Religious costumes (animal costumes) 9. Religious implements (shaman's sacred drums and bells)

Fig. 5 Visual perception of symbols in space

Visual symbols of the perception of space

Dimensionality	Measurement indicators
Change of consciousness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Produces a trance experience 2. Produces the emotion that all things are spiritual 3. Time (the concept of time becomes blurred) 4. Space (the concept of space becomes blurred) 5. Interpersonal (relationships between people, freer and more equal) 6. Social attributes (age, gender, occupation, social status also become irrelevant)
Physical Behavior	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Can dance to music 8. Can develop worship of religious objects 9. Produces usurped religious behaviors

Fig.6 Visual symbols of the perception of space

For each dimension, 300 questionnaires were distributed. These were returned and screened to obtain a valid sample of 216, 248, and 252. Meanwhile, reliability tests and factor analysis on the data were conducted using the SPSS data analysis platform. The results of data analysis showed that the first questionnaire on the perception of space of the ritual's subject had a coefficient of Cronbach's Alpha of 0.851, which was greater than the test indicator of 0.7, indicating that the data were true and reliable. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test value was 0.727, greater than 0.6. The second questionnaire was on the visual perception of symbols in space. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test value was 0.754, greater than 0.6. The third questionnaire was on the visual symbols of the perception of space. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test value was 0.761, greater than 0.6. The results of the above three sets indicated that the factors in the questionnaire were correlated with the main variables. Therefore, the results of the qualitative analysis have been validated from the perspective of the data.

Conclusion

This study of shamanic visual symbols not only provides a fresh way of thinking about research on perceptual experience of religious rituals, but also validates the way visual symbols are perceived in shamanic religious rituals. Using the theoretical basis of ritual passage, a questionnaire was administered to a sample of people experiencing shamanic religious rituals in three dimensions, six directions, and 27 test items. Data analysis results showed that the experience of religious perception was the result of the subject's spatial perception, spatial concept, and spatial interaction. Visual symbols significantly influence individuals to produce perceptions and are an important medium connecting religious consciousness and religious rituals. In the course of religious rituals, the shaman produces pictorial narrative relationships based on abstract and empathic symbols through the spatial construction of visual symbols. Through the religious symbols, an individual's religious consciousness is guided and access to the threshold space is controlled. The individual is made to produce a dual arrogance of body and spirit, a trance, and a change of perception. A perceptual experience of divinity is thus created for visual symbols.

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Precious Murals in the Religious Building of Pothimala, District Ferozpur, Punjab, India

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Official Conference Proceedings**Abstract**

This paper discusses the precious murals in the religious building of Pothimala. Pothimala Building is situated in the village Guru Har Sahai in Ferozpur District of Punjab India. The study and interpretation endorse the philosophy of shared religious traditions followed and respected by the people of Punjab. The foundation of this building was laid by Guru Jivan Mal (7th direct descendent of Guru Ram Das, the 4th Sikh Guru) in 1745. The Pothimala building derives its name from the fact that Guru Nanak Dev's personal Pothi (handwritten scripture) and Mala (rosary) is housed in this religious building. The murals in Pothimala fall in the category of Fresco since the paintings have been executed upon freshly laid wet lime plaster. Water is used as the vehicle for the dry-powder pigment to merge with the plaster, and with the setting of the plaster, the painting becomes an integral part of the wall. The frescoes can be divided into the three categories of Hindu, Sikh and Folk Tales. The Hindu frescoes are further divided into the themes of Ramayana, Bhagwat Gita and Mahabharat. The Sikh frescoes are mainly on the themes of Gurus. The folk themes of frescoes are "Heer-Ranjha" and "Soni-Mahiwal". The study and analysis of frescoes dovetails well with the existing history available in three formats (written, oral transmission from generation to generation and visual flux) and prevalent cultures in the state of the Punjab.

Keywords: Pothimala, Frescoes, Folk Tales, Punjab, Culture

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1.0 Introduction

This paper explores the beautiful and precious frescoes which adorn the interior walls of a hall in the Pothimala building. These frescoes are a representation of the shared religious traditions of Punjab. Pothimala Building is situated in the village of Guru Har Sahai in Ferozpur District of Punjab; India^{1,2,3}. The foundation of the village Guru Har Sahai and this building was laid by Guru Jivan Mal Sodhi (7th direct descendent of the 4th Sikh Guru, Guru Ram Das;1534-1581) in 1745. Guru Jivan Mal Sodhi was the 6th direct descendant of Guru Prithi Chand (1558-1618); the elder brother of the 5th Sikh Guru, Guru Arjan Dev (1563-1606). The village of Guru Har Sahai is named after the elder son of Guru Jivan Mal Sodhi. The Sodhis of Guru Har Sahai have the ownership and administrative control of Guru Har Sahai and the Pothimala building.



Figure-1.1: Location of Village Guru Har Sahai, District Ferozpur⁴, Punjab, India



Figure-1.2: Pothimala Building at Guru Har Sahai, District Ferozpur^{4,5,6,7}, Punjab, India

It derives its name from the fact that the personal belongings ‘Pothe’ (handwritten scripture) and Mala (rosary) of Guru Nanak Dev, the first celebrated Sikh Guru, are housed in this religious place / building^{1,4,5,6,7}. The other original personal belongings of Guru Nanak Dev as claimed by the Sodhi family of Guru Har Sahai and as per the official website^{6,7} of the Pothimala are ‘Padam’, ‘Saligram’ and the ‘Topi’ (Cap)^{1,5,6,7}. The Padam is a priceless jewel in which the image of Guru Nanak Dev is visible & his right foot’s thumb print is also visible. Saligram is a fossilized shell used in South Asia as an iconic symbol representing the Hindu God Vishnu and universally followed by Hindus of Vaishnavite and Smarta sects⁸.

A sub sect in Sikhism venerates Guru Prithi Chand as their religious leader or Guru. This group Viz-a-Viz mainstream Sikh theology is different because it follows a line of Guruship that is independent of the mainstream Sikh belief and practice. This building has been the official residence of the eldest son of the descendants of Guru Prithi Chand. The eldest son is the Gaddi Nashin (Seat of spiritual leader) and holds the title of Guru and inherits the entire property of Pothimala as per the family tradition^{9,10,11}.

2.0 Intermingling Of Religious Cultures

The blessed land of the Punjab has had followers from the three major religious identities of Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam. The building of Pothimala is an example of multi-religious

identities coming together for worship. The description of frescoes adorning the walls of a serene Pothimala building establishes this fact.

3.0 Guru Prithi Chand And Guru Har Sahai

Prithi Chand was the eldest son of the 4th Sikh Guru Ram Das. It is a historically known fact that Prithi Chand refused to accept his younger brother Arjan Dev as the lawful Guru and the successor of his father Guru Ram Das's (1534-1581) Gaddi (seat). He however could not pose a viable threat to Guru Arjan's authority at Amritsar. He moved to the village of Hehar near Lahore. There he constructed a temple, a pool and officially established his Gaddi¹⁶. The 1630's saw the forced evacuation of the Sikhs from the Durbar Sahib, the central seat of Sikh authority at Amritsar by Guru Prithi Chand's son Miharvan. The 6th Guru, Guru Hargobind (1595-1644) was the Guru of the mainstream Sikhs during the period. The crises within the family started with the death of Miharvan (d.1696). His death saw the struggle for succession between his three sons and it was then that in 1698 that they were evacuated from the Darbar sahib. In the last quarter of the eighteenth-century Guru Har Sahai's son Ajit Singh (d.1813), worked out a close relation with the main stream Sikhs. This provided him with an opportunity to expand the family influence with the larger Sikh community.

Pothi Mala, the three-hundred-year-old building, besides being the residence of the descendants of Guru Ram Das, the building is a haven to the rather unexplored holy relics of Guru Nanak Dev, the first Sikh Guru. The original Pothi was stolen during the lifetime of Guru Jaswant Singh Sodhi (the 14th descendant of Guru Ram Das). Nevertheless, along with the remaining holy relics and the crumbling heritage building, stood tall the followers' undaunted faith in the mystical powers of the Guru Gaddi (Seat of Spiritual Leader), at the Pothimala where followers travelled long distances for the privilege of seeing the revered relics.

4.0 Relics Of Guru Nanak Dev

Pothimala building has priceless and precious personal belongings of the first Sikh Guru, Guru Nanak Dev. The Relics of Guru Nanak Dev the 1st Sikh Guru that have descended in the family of Sodhis of Guru Har Sahai are as follows:

1. The Original Pothi (scripture) of Guru Nanak.
2. The original Mala (Rosary) of Guru Nanak.
3. The Original Topi (Cap) of Guru Nanak.
4. The Padam (Priceless Jewel) in which the image of Guru Nanak Dev and his right foot thumb print is visible.
5. The Saligram which has sixteen circles around it and originally belonged to Guru Nanak.
6. A Small Pothi that also descended in this family.
7. A gold coin of Bhagwan (God) Krishna.

Some of these relics are shown in the following Figures^{1,4,5,6,7}.







	
<p>The original Pothi (Handwritten Scripture) & Mala (Rosary), Padam and Saligram.</p>	<p>A page from the original Pothi (scripture).</p>
 <p>The Topi (Cap)</p>	 <p>The Padam, The Saligram & one Rudraksh bead & Bead of Gold from the original Mala of Guru Nanak Dev.</p>
	
<p>Padam, the priceless jewel in which the image of Guru Nanak is visible & his right foot thumb print is also visible.</p>	<p>Saligram which has 16 circles around it and originally belonged to Guru Nanak Dev.</p>

Figure-4.1: Priceless and precious personal belongings of the first Sikh Guru, Guru Nanak Dev^{6,7}.

The Topi (Cap) is made of very fine silk and due to age is torn in some places. Few generations ago it was sewn inside an outer casing so as to protect the original Topi. This Topi is kept along with the other relics in the Pothimala Building at Guru Har Sahai. It is a custom that the Gaddi Nashin of Pothimala wears this Topi on New Sambat day every year when the Relics of Guru Nanak Dev are displayed for darshans by the devotees at Pothimala during the annual Mela (Carnival). Padam-The priceless jewel in which the image of Guru Nanak and his right foot thumb print is visible.

Pothi-What makes this Pothi so unique is that the hymns of Baba Nanak which have been recorded were the only ones which were available and were duly recorded. The Pothi has two sections. One deals with the hymns of Guru Nanak and the other with the hymns of Guru Amardas and Guru Ramdas.

5.0 Murals In Pothimala

5.1 Mural

Mural: Mural is any piece of graphic artwork that is painted or applied directly to a wall, ceiling or other permanent substrate. Mural techniques include fresco, mosaic, graffiti and marouflage.

Fresco: Fresco (plural frescos or frescoes) is a technique of mural painting executed upon freshly laid wet lime plaster. Water is used as the vehicle for the dry-powder pigment to merge with the plaster, and with the setting of the plaster, the painting becomes an integral part of the wall¹⁶. The type of art on the walls and ceiling of Pothimala building falls in the category of Frescoes.

A large collection of ancient paintings and also one of the oldest paintings of India can be seen at Pothimala. There are over eighty frescoes in the Pothimala building and they are based on the themes of Ramayana, Shri Krishna, Bhagwat Gita, Guru Nanak and Folk tales.

5.2 Frescoes On The Theme Of Ramayana

The legendary Valmiki wrote the Ramayana. It has 24,000 couplets, 48,000 lines. The text focuses on the supreme deity Shri Vishnu in his avatar of Rama. It has the honor of being called the first poem of Sanskrit literature.

One of the most popular versions which are available today are by Maharishi Valmiki and Sant Tulsidas which is called 'Ramcharitramanas'. The Ramayana is divided into seven kandas (sections). The fresco under study falls under the category of the second kanda, i.e. The 'Ayodhya Kand'.

5.2.1 Shri Rama, Sita And Lakshmana During Vanwas (Exile)



Figure-5.2.1: Fresco at Pothimala showing Shri Rama, Sita and Lakshmana during vanwas.

This fresco depicts Shri Rama with his younger brother and his wife in the forest during their exile or 'Vanwas'. Sita is shown wearing a Ghagra-Choli. Popular iconography shows her wearing a clothing which is referred to as a saree. She is also shown to be wearing jewelry

(nose ring, earrings). On her right is her husband Rama who has been painted in blue complexion owing to him being an incarnation of Vishnu and on her left is Lakshman. Their clothing and headgear are of leaves. They also have bows and arrows on their person since they were Kshatriyas.

5.2.2 Sita Haran

The fresco (Figure-5.2) falls in the third Kand, which is more popularly known as the 'Aranya Kand' or the book of the forest. While they were in the forest Rama, Sita and Lakshman set up their hut on the banks of the river Godawari.



Figure-5.2.2: Fresco at Pothimala depicting Sita Haran (Abduction)

Ravan wanted revenge for the humiliation of his sister Shrupnakha. The top part of the painting visually depicts the part where the demon Maricha assumed the form of a golden deer. Upon seeing the deer Sita became entranced by the deer and pleaded with Rama to capture the deer. He left for the hunt leaving her under the care of his brother. He cast his arrow which pierced through his heart. This led to the illusory guide fading away and Maricha appeared in front of Rama in his hideous form. Maricha in his last breath cried out for Sita in an imitation of Ram's voice "Sita! Lakshman! Help Me! Upon hearing the cry for help Sita became anxious and pleaded with Lakshman for assistance. He agreed to Sita's wishes and left to look for Rama. Before leaving he drew a boundary line which is referred to as the Lakshman Rekha.

The top part depicts Rama and Lakshman out for a hunt. Rama has been painted in the color Blue and he and Lakshman are dressed in the garb of tribal men wearing a headgear of leaves and the middle part of their body is also covered with leaves. The lower part of the painting shows Ravana dressed as an ascetic asking for alms from Sita. The Lakshman Rekha was symbolic of Lakshman. That is precisely why he asked her to step out from behind the demarcated line. It was only then that he assumed the form of the fearful Ravana and it was then that he abducted her.

Sita is wearing a Ghagra-Choli and her body is adorned with jewellery. Only Ravana's depiction is similar to the one which we find in the narrative. He is described as an ascetic who comes to abduct Sita and here also, he is depicted as an ascetic only.

5.3 Frescoes On The Theme of Bhagwan Shri Krishna

5.3.1 Marriage Ceremony of Shri Krishna

This painting covers a large part of the wall when a devotee or visitor enters the upper floor of the building and is located at the end of the room which houses the holy relics.



Figure-5.3.1: Marriage ceremony of Lord Krishna

The wedding guests are the Holy trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh (Lord Shiva). Their role in the Hindu pantheon is a very important one and their roles are of creator, sustainer and destroyer respectively. Along with them in attendance is Lord Ganesh.

Lord Shiva in this painting has been depicted with his third eye on his forehead. He is depicted in his ascetic avatar. There is only a cloth which covers the lower part of his body. Seated next to him is the creator, Lord Brahma. He however has four heads and the four Vedas have emerged from it. Popular iconography shows him seated on a lotus and he is an old man. Lord Vishnu and Lord Krishna have been painted together. Lord Vishnu is holding his shankh or conch and they both have been painted blue in colour.

The remaining wedding guests in attendance closely resemble rulers and kings and their head gears are indicative of the same. They are all shown wearing Mukuts (crowns). The women folk are primarily seated towards the right of Krishna and they all are dressed in Ghagra Cholis. Their body is adorned with jewellery which ranges from big nose rings to head gear. The women are also shown to be wearing what is called a passa.

5.3.2 Lord Krishna, His Wife Rukmini And Her Brother Rukmi

The second painting is that of Lord Krishna, his wife Rukmini and her brother Rukmi. This is a narration from the Bhagwat Purana. Also known as the Shrimad Bhagwat or simply Bhagwat, it is one of the most loved Puranas. The dates of this Purana are tentative but the scholars have dated it to about 900 CE. Some even believe that it originated in the 10th century. The Bhagwat has over 18,000 verses in Sanskrit and is divided into twelve books.



Figure-5.3.2: Fresco at Pothimala showing Lord Krishna, his wife and his brother in law Rukmi

The Bhagwat narration overall is basically the narration by Suta Goswami who was a renowned sage. He was requested by Shaunak Rishi, who is also referred to as the leader of a thousand sages, to speak on spiritual topics and especially the pastimes of Lord Krishna. Maharishi Ved Vyasa was the compiler of the Bhagwat.

Bhagwat was also the answer to all the questions of King Parikshit who had been cursed to die within seven days. He was the son of Abhimanyu and Uttara and while he was in his mother's womb he had been saved by Lord Krishna. The crowning jewel of the Bhagwat is the tenth book. It deals with the life of Lord Krishna, the supreme lord.

This painting has been painted right above the painting depicting the wedding of Lord Krishna. This said fresco can be divided into three sub parts. The top part is a visual narration of Rukmini praying to Goddess Parvati that Lord Krishna should come and marry her; the middle part shows him whisking away Rukmini on his chariot. The last portion of this fresco is indicative of Lord Krishna's fight with Rukmi.

Being analysed now is the first part of the painting. Rukmini's wedding had been fixed with Shishupal who was the prince of Chedi. This alliance had been fixed by her elder brother Rukmi. She on her part had also set her heart on marrying Lord Krishna. She, to pass on her heart's desire, sent across a letter to Krishna through Brahman. Rukmini also mentions how she wants him to take her away with him and this she suggested should be implemented when she is coming from the temple after offering her prayers to goddess Parvati.

The women folk are dressed in Ghagra Choli and jewellery adorns their bodies. Rukmini is shown offering worship to the goddess. The next part of the fresco is indicative of Lord Krishna whisking her away. The army in the background is led by Balrama who was the elder brother of Lord Krishna. The army which was led by him fought the army consisting of the princes who had assembled for her swayamvar. The bottom most part is indicative of Krishna fighting Rukmi who on his part was hateful towards Krishna. The painting shows the two engaged in a battle in which Rukmi was spared his life as Rukmini pleaded with her husband that her brother's life should be spared. Krishna however disfigured Rukmi.

5.4 Fresco On The Theme Of Guru Nanak Dev

5.4.1 Guru Nanak Dev, the founder of Sikhism and his Sabha

This fresco is a representation of Guru Nanak Dev (the founder of Sikhism) and his Sabha. Guru Nanak has played an integral role in the growth and development of the Sikh faith. He was born in 1469 to Mehta Kalu and his wife Tripta. His elder sister was Bebe Nanaki.



Figure-5.4.1: Guru Nanak Dev's Sabha

The fresco above is a visual depiction of him and his followers. Seated in between in the yellow-coloured robe is Baba Nanak. His white beard is a classic indication towards his later years as a preacher at Kartarpur. Looking back at the life and times of Baba Nanak one learns that he was married to Mata Sulakhni and they had two sons Sri Chand and Lakshmi Das.

Nanak had taken up occupation in Sultanpur and he was working for the nawab when he had an encounter with the divine during his morning ablutions. This fresco also indicates a man holding a musical instrument which is the Rubab and he is his trusted companion Bhai Mardana. He was the Guru's friend from his hometown of Talwandi and he had joined Nanak at Sultanpur. Nanak was encouraged by his friend Mardana to sing in public and that became a highlight of his sabhas. At Sultanpur the popularity of the saint grew multi fold and the attendees in the sabhas were both Hindus and Muslims.

Bhai Mardana devoted his entire life to the cause of the Guru's teachings and their propagation. The man sitting behind Baba Nanak is Bhai Bala. A Hindu Jat, he accompanied Baba Nanak and Bhai Mardana on their travels. The Bhai Bala janam sakhi mentions how he died at Khadur Sahib sometime in his late seventies in the year 1544.

The fresco also shows a man who is sitting across from the Guru and is only wearing a loin cloth which covers the lower part of his body. That is the artist's imagination of the Guru in conversation with his elder son Baba Sri Chand (1494-1643). He was deeply spiritual but his inclination was deeply rooted in the traditions of the yogis.

The fresco shows Guru Nanak with a halo around his head and that is to signify his position as a spiritual leader. He is dressed in a tallow choga. The fresco also shows his headgear which was always a cap which was partially covered with a turban. The fresco also depicts his footwear which was what is called a Khadaun or wooden sandals. Bhai Bala is wearing green and Bhai Mardana is wearing white. Baba Sri Chand is aptly depicted as a yogi who is detached from this world.

5.5 Fresco On The Theme Of Folk Tales

5.5.1 Soni and Mahiwal



Figure-5.5.1: Soni and Mahiwal

This fresco is in line with the Sufi idea of worship²¹. Soni (in Punjabi means pretty) was the daughter of a pot maker Tulla. A rich man by the name of Izzat Baig from Uzbekistan; once came to Tulla's house to buy some pottery. He was struck with the pot maker's daughter Soni's beauty and he decided to come repeatedly. The passing of days saw him spending all his fortunes.

It was then that Soni's father decided to hire him as a water buffalo's herder and it was then that he was rechristened as Mahiwal (a man who herds water buffaloes). Soni and Mahiwal were in love but her marriage had already been fixed with a potter who lived nearby. The day of her wedding finally came and she moved into the house of her husband. Mahiwal was distraught and he took up residence opposite Soni's house.

One day while Soni was looking across the river a thought crossed her mind. She thought that with the help of an earthen pot she could stay afloat on the river and cross it to meet her beloved Mahiwal. She in time implemented her scheme to meet Mahiwal. He on seeing her coming used to swim half way through the river and they both used to swim back to the bank.

The meeting of the lovers was discovered by Soni's sister-in-law. On a fateful day she replaced the baked earthen pot with an unbaked one. The next night while Soni was floating on the river her pot began to melt and she called out to Mahiwal for help. Mahiwal had a broken limp but he came to reach out to Soni. His body however could not tolerate the torrent of the water and the lovers together got drowned in the Chenab River.

The painting under study is a visual reflection of this eternal love story. In this Soni is shown floating on the river with the help of a pot while Mahiwal sits waiting. What is striking about this painting is that Soni is not clothed. Her body is adorned with jewellery and the lower part of her body is covered with a cloth.

5.5.2 Heer and Ranjha



Figure-5.5.2: Heer and Ranjha

The presence of the cows, bulls and a couple indicates towards this being the fresco depicting Heer and Ranjha. The man is shown playing a flute. Composed sometime in the fifteenth century by Warris Shah this is the story of Dhido Ranjha and Heer Sayal. Ranjha was the son of a landlord and Heer was the daughter of the head of the Sayal tribe.

They both instantly fell in love and he was hired by Heer as a cowherd for her father's cows. They met on the banks of the Chenab when he took the cows for grazing and their meetings were always in a furtive manner. Their liaisons however are shattered by her uncle Keido. Her family think of Ranjha as a cowherd and they refuse to accept him as a suitor for their daughter. She is forced to marry Siedo Khera but she, being faithful to Ranjha, refuses to accept this alliance.

Her marriage leaves Ranjha distressed and he retreats to a monastery which belongs to the Nath yogi tradition. Once when he was in the guise of a yogi holding a begging bowl, dress and ornaments, he travelled to Rangpur which was Heer's married home. There they (Heer and Ranjha) are helped by her sister-in-law Sehti. They elope to the court of King Adali. The king also supports them and refuses to return her to Seido Khera. The lovers meet their fateful end when they were tricked into believing that they will be married and on this pretext the family kills Heer to protect their honour. Grieve stricken Ranjha also passes away. The fresco at Pothimala depicts cows which indicate Ranjha being a cowherd and his flute indicates towards the music he played for his beloved Heer. In this fresco, his body is adorned with jewels. The depiction of trees indicates their time together along the banks of the Chenab when he took the cows for grazing.

Heer's face is distorted as the frescos have not been preserved too well. From what is left one can see her dressed in a ghagra-choli and some jewellery. She is shown to be holding the feet of an old man and this is a depiction of her requesting her uncle Keido to not reveal their alliance.

5.5.3 Sassi and Punnu



Figure-5.5.3: Fresco showing Sassi and Punnu.

This is one of the epic romances of the pre-partition Punjab and this was written by Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai (1689-1752). Of all the seven romances, this story still finds a resonance in the hearts and minds of the people of the land²².

Punnu was the son of a king. A legend also states that she was the daughter of a washerman who had laid out a test for Punnu. He had to wash the clothes which had been given to him. He being the son of a king had never carried out such chores and ended up tearing them. To prove his victory he had put gold coins in the pockets of the garments so that the villagers kept this piece of information to themselves. His brothers do not approve of Sassi as for them she is the daughter of a washerman and is not fit to be the wife of their brother.

Owing to their enmity for Sassi the brothers decided to follow Punnu to Sassi's town and upon reaching the town they realized that their wedding celebrations were in full swing. The brothers pretended to join in the celebrations and entice Punnu to consume different types of liquors. The brothers got him drunk and they took him with them to their hometown of Kicham. Grief stricken, she ran towards the city of Kicham barefoot. She crossed the desert barefoot and this proved to be a hazardous journey for her and this proved to be her end. Punnu on learning of what had befallen his lover was grief stricken himself.

This story finds a representation in a crude form. The camels in the painting are an explanation for it being Sassi and Punnu. They are an indication towards the desert. The viewer can take the woman in the front to be Sassi, as she has been portrayed in a body language which depicts discomfort and she seems to be in a rush and she also seems to be stopped by the lady behind her.

6.0 Conclusions

1. The mural paintings in the Pothimala religious building have been made using a technique that qualifies them to be called frescoes.
2. The technique of visual flux has been used for preserving historical facts.
3. Some of the precious murals in the religious building of Pothimala located in the village Guru Har Sahai, District Ferozpur, Punjab, India have been studied and the related historical facts contained in each of the frescoes have been interpreted.
4. The interpretation of frescoes establishes the fact that the technique of visual flux is a very powerful way of preserving history.
5. The close examination of the frescoes indicates that these are based on the Pahari School of Art (Paintings which originated in the hill states of India).
6. The frescoes discussed in this paper belong to the themes of Ramayana, Shree Krishna, Mahabharata, Guru Nanak Dev, and the folk stories related to Sohni-Mahiwal, Heer-Ranjha and Sassi-Punnu.
7. The interpretation compares well with the written material available elsewhere and the orally available account of the events.
8. The biggest advantage of preserving the facts of history through murals is that it provides space for individual interpretations while written texts are always rigid.

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How Power Inequality Operates in the Gig Economy: Taking Chinese Food Delivery Platform Meituan as an Example

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Abstract

Sharing economy has become a buzzword in the world in recent years. Though it brings lots of convenience to individual daily life and boosts economic growth, it seems to perpetuate and even develop the unfairness between employers and workers, leading to the further deterioration of labour rights. Given this background, this paper will take Meituan as an example to analyse how power inequality operates in the gig economy. Firstly, the presentation forms and possible reasons and consequences of inequalities existing between different stakeholders will be analysed in detail, involving that between riders and the platform, riders and restaurants, riders and customers, restaurants and the company, as well as unfairness between different consumers. Secondly, an analysis of the operating mechanism of inequalities in Meituan will be made from a holistic perspective, followed by a reflection of all the possible results of the unfairness in Meituan. Finally, a conclusion will be made, which argues that the power inequalities between various parties come to fruition through the regulation and algorithm introduced by Meituan, leading to the situation where a few capitalists win at the expense of the interests of the other three stakeholders and even the whole society in an attempt to provide a reflection on the current state and contribute to the development of the future of sharing economy towards a more equal and ideal direction.

Keywords: Sharing Economy, Gig Economy, Power Inequality, Labour Rights, Food Delivery Platform

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Introduction

Sharing economy, a socio-economic system of resource distribution involving 'sharing' with others, has attracted wide attention among the public these years. The integration of it into individual daily life has changed many aspects of society, one of which is the food industry. The development of the sharing economy seems to boost the increase in the number of food delivery platforms matching restaurant food with customers, fostering the emergence of a new profession, riders. According to the data from Statista (n.d.), the revenue of food delivery services is predicted to reach 343.80 billion dollars in 2022, with the majority of that coming from China. However, behind this huge number might be another distressing picture, demonstrated by various social events in China showing discontent and resistance of gig workers to the food delivery platforms. Given this background, it is necessary to analyse the root of this dissatisfaction with couriers by examining the inequalities in the structure of food delivery. Therefore, this essay will use Meituan, the largest food delivery company in China, as an example to investigate the unfairness existing in Chinese food delivery platforms. It argues that the power inequalities between various parties come to fruition through the regulation and algorithm introduced by Meituan, leading to the situation where a few capitalists win at the expense of the interests of the other three stakeholders and even the whole society in an attempt to make a little contribution to the understanding of this worrying trend in China.

Inequalities Between Riders and Meituan

In the operation of Meituan, there are various inequalities between different stakeholders, the most notable of which may be the unfairness between Meituan and its riders. This inequity is reflected in three aspects: the unjustified classification of riders as self-employed, unilateral account management rights of Meituan, and the great control of the platform algorithm of riders throughout the work. As De Stefano identified in platform economy (2016, p9), some gig workers are incorrectly classified as independent contractors rather than employees though they seem to be in an employee-like state, leading to their loss of protection in employment. Like other digital platforms, Meituan also adopts this strategy claiming its riders as freelancers due to the so-called flexibility they give to couriers, evading lots of responsibilities they should have had for their couriers and transferring the risk brought by unpredictable market conditions to riders. As a result, riders appear to lose all the rights that employees own, such as paid leave, maternity leave, holiday pay, pension, and so on. In addition to this, couriers are also exposed to the unstable external environment as they may have to bear the influence of the uncontrollable factors outside, such as extreme weather or economic recession on sales without basic employee rights, leading to their precarity lives. However, the claim of Meituan classifying its riders as individual entrepreneurs is unreasonable as they are under great control and limitation of Meituan. For instance, riders need to purchase a set of equipment such as uniforms and motorbikes before starting work. Furthermore, riders are required to wear these gears when appearing in front of consumers, as seen in the 'Smile action' introduced by Meituan in 2017, which checks whether riders wear uniforms and badges randomly (China's People Magazine, 2020). No matter in what situation, bad weather or driving on the road, riders randomly selected by 'Smile Action' must stop to take a selfie and upload it to the system. The workers who failed to pass this inspection will be fined as a penalty, placing riders under great pressure as they need to balance their safety and possible financial loss. This control of wages of Meituan shows the unequal affiliation between riders and the platform, which seems more like an employment relationship, demonstrating the hypocrisy of the platform claiming riders as freelancers.

The second type of unfairness between riders and Meituan is embedded in the algorithm, achieved through the great unilateral control algorithm has over its couriers. Firstly, the algorithm stipulates the time spent on delivering and could compress this time without the consent of riders. According to an interview of a Meituan takeaway team leader conducted by China's People Magazine (2020), the change of the predicted time is just displayed on the Meituan application function as a notification rather than a negotiation. It appears that riders have no choice but to struggle to meet the demand as they lack the bargaining power and channels to resist the turn. In the last few years, the expected delivery time of Meituan has reduced again and again. In a report by Trustdata about the development of the food delivery industry in China (2019, p27), the average delivery time dropped from 38 minutes to 29 minutes between 2016 and 2019, indirectly proving this expected time shrinkage. Furthermore, the projected delivery time offered by Meituan seems unreasonable as it predicts time according to straight-line distance while ignoring the complexities of reality (Sun, 2019, p10), worsening the situation of Meituan riders. Under this circumstance, riders have to find a way to meet this unreasonable expectation, or they will probably face a decrease in their income for delayed delivery. In addition to the estimated time, unreasonable route plans are also provided for riders which usually involves the violation of traffic rules to reduce time spent on the road. According to interviews conducted by China's People Magazine (2020), these unjustifiable routes include riding along reverse routes, crossing overpasses prohibiting motorcycles, and even 'passing through' walls. Accompanied with this unreasonable predicted time and routes simultaneously is the strict penalty system for overtime, which may create a nightmare for riders as punctuality is usually directly related to the final wages of riders. Specifically, delayed deliveries are likely to lead to negative reviews from consumers and then cause wage deduction of corresponding couriers according to the rules of Meituan. Thus, the combination of these policies may push riders into a dilemma where safety and income could not go hand in hand. As a result of this unreasonable plan and the harsh overtime penalty system, riders tend to choose to ensure punctuality at the expense of speeding and violations of traffic rules, resulting in many related traffic accidents. According to Reuters (2017), there were more than 3000 accidents involving takeaway businesses in Nanjing, a city in China, in the first half of 2017, 90% of which riders should take responsibility. These statistics demonstrate the negative effects of the unfairness imposed by algorithms on the safety of riders and public traffic. However, workers relying on the meagre salary paid by Meituan for the maintenance of basic subsistence seem to have no resistance to this kind of travel risk as they could not bear the consequence of wage deduction caused by the delay in deliveries. Compared with this tragic picture is the situation of Meituan, whose market value is constantly rising. One reason for these increasing revenues may be the expanding market resulting from the appealingly so-called fast speed and deduced cost of production caused by the decreased calculated delivery time and distance regulated by its algorithm.

Thirdly, the platform also has the right to determine the income of workers through a set of complicated performance appraisal systems. In contrast, workers seem to have little power for bargaining even if being classified as freelancers. Specifically, a series of symbolic ranks determined by the number of orders delivered per person per month is introduced to workers. Different ranks correspond to different titles, including Normal, Bronze, Silver, Gold, Diamond, and King (Sun, 2019, p6). Riders of these various rankings are paid different delivery fees per order (ibid). In addition, these rankings are cleared automatically in the next month (ibid), meaning workers need to deliver a similar number of orders as last month to maintain their title and income. In this setting, gig workers are involved in an endless circulation of exploitation. In order to gain a foothold in this system, they may not only have

to increase speed but also increase the delivery quantity. Regarding this unreasonable system, riders seem to have no resistance to it but to accept it. One reason might be the isolation of each rider due to their work requiring little communication with companions, resulting in the lack of contact between workers to unite to rebel against the exploitative system. Another possible reason might lie in the oversupply of workers caused by the low entry thresholds in this industry and continuously expanding recruitment of Meituan, decreasing the ability of wage negotiation of riders. Understandably, given this background, workers have to slave away all day trying to get a 'good' title in the ranking system to make ends meet in the fierce competition created by Meituan. Through this gamified evaluation program formulated by algorithm, Meituan rationalizes its exploitation of its gig workers, making the inequality more invisible.

Inequalities Between Riders and Restaurants

Apart from unfairness between Meituan and its riders, power imbalances also exist between restaurants and couriers. These inequalities embody two aspects: the transfer of responsibilities and the unilateral exercise of rights. Firstly, some responsibilities that should have been attributed to food providers are placed on riders. The reason for this phenomenon could trace back to the limitation of the algorithm that only calculates the time on the road while ignoring the uncertainty in the preparation of food (China's People Magazine, 2020). However, restaurants usually consume a host of time in the process of food delivery due to the reasons include the lack of attendants to manage takeaway when the restaurants are full of dine-in customers, the lack of time concept of restaurant owners, and the consideration of the fresh taste of food of some food suppliers, etc. (ibid). Unfairly, the delay of deliveries caused by the overuse of time of restaurants for these reasons will only lead to the wage reduction of riders in the design of the Meituan platform. In this unreasonable setting, riders seem to pay for the mistakes of restaurants even if they have no responsibilities. In response to these platform rules, riders usually have to do a lot of emotional labour, such as sending gifts to restaurant waiters to shorten the waiting time for meals (ibid). Conceivably, this unfair mechanism will likely increase the financial and mental burdens of riders. When the burden caused by this imbalance exceeds the tolerance threshold of riders, this inequality may pose a potential threat to social stability. This hazard could be proved by various press coverages about the revenge of couriers to society in recent years. For instance, the incident of the Meituan courier stabbing a shopkeeper fifteen times with a knife in a quarrel about meal picking in Beijing demonstrates the long-existing conflict between riders and restaurants over this inequality (AI Finance& Economics, 2017). This kind of tragedy also happens in other cities, such as the case of a Meituan rider wounding three assistants in a rice noodle shop in Shandong (AI Finance& Economics, 2017), the accident of a Meituan rider killing a salesman in Wuhan due to an argument about taking meals (Sina Technology, 2019). The frequent occurrence of these tragedies may have its root in the unreasonable system embedded full of inequalities, leading to conflict between different stakeholders and even social unrest.

Another type of inequality between riders and restaurants stems from the unilateral exercise of rights. In the setting of Meituan, restaurants have more power than the couriers, which manifests in three aspects. Firstly, restaurant owners could change their riders without negotiation with them. When facing these cases, gig workers seem to have no choice but to accept the result as they have no right to appeal or explain according to the setting of Meituan (China's People Magazine, 2020). Conceivably, this might bring a sense of instability to workers. Secondly, restaurants own the cancellation right when encountering an emergency,

while Meituan couriers could not cancel their orders in any situation. This uneven distribution of rights may push workers into a worse situation in which they have to bear various negative influences caused by uncertainty during the process of delivery without the right for justification, being in a state of loss of voice. Thirdly, the evaluation right for a takeaway order is designed as one-way, meaning that only meal providers could rate and complain about riders, while couriers have no right to comment on restaurants (Zhen et al., 2020). Under these rules, sometimes riders may become scapegoats of meal providers while lacking the right to voice for themselves in the misattribution of responsibilities. As reported by China's People Magazine (2020), the complaints of restaurants such as forgetting to put vinegar in the dishes, delayed delivery caused by long preparation of meals made by consumers usually appear in the review area of Meituan riders, leading to a drop in their score and wages. In most cases, this inequity could only be ingested and digested by Meituan riders.

Inequalities Between Riders and Customers

In addition to inequalities between riders and restaurants, injustice may also exist between Meituan riders and customers, manifesting in three ways: unfair blame distribution, unequal access to information, and asymmetric execution permissions on the platform. Firstly, according to the accountability system in Meituan, consumers hardly need to pay for their mistakes as they are acquiesced to be infallible in the power system in the Meituan algorithm. All errors in delivery due to customer issues such as wrong delivery address filled in by orderers, unreachable calls of eaters usually only lead to punishments to riders according to the judgment of the platform system, resulting in the unreasonable financial loss of gig workers (China's People Magazine, 2020). According to an interviewed Meituan rider in Gansu (China's People Magazine, 2020), sometimes the orders of consumers will even cross provinces due to their carelessness, but it is still riders to pay the price of the mistake made by consumers. This misattribution of blame might be a strategy of the company to please consumers, increasing their goodwill towards Meituan and then facilitating more transactions indirectly. However, riders may be fined unreasonably due to this inequality, nursing their grievance against customers and increasing the conflict between couriers and eaters.

Secondly, an information gap appears also to exist between these two parties. Specifically, consumers could see the personal information such as name, phone number, on-time rate, time left for takeaway delivery, location, and driving direction of riders, giving them the power to monitor the complete delivery process. In contrast, due to the customer privacy protection policy, riders tend to have little information about the persons watching them (Chen, 2020, p5). It could be seen in the design of the platform, the privacy of consumers, the party that seems to be placed at the top of the power system by Meituan tends to be well-protected while that of riders seems to be ignored, leading to the loss of basic rights as citizens as they become transparent from the moment the order is received.

Thirdly, more operating permissions on the platform are given to the consumers than riders. Some permissions are similar to those granted to restaurants, such as the unilateral cancellation right of orders and the one-way evaluation right. The difference between this injustice existing between riders and shopkeepers and the unfairness between riders and consumers is that the power is more skewed between the latter two. As the saying circulates among riders (Zhen et al., 2020), 'The one who wins the customers wins the world.' Compared with restaurants, the reviews of consumers tend to influence the income of gig workers more directly (Sun, 2019, p5). Under this circumstance, riders may need to

proactively please customers to improve their ratings closely related to final wages. According to a questionnaire survey conducted by Zhen et al. (2020), around half of riders will please consumers to improve their ratings. This finding is consistent with the analysis of Dzieza and Rogers about the gig economy that plenty of emotional labour seems to need to be done by gig workers in the working process due to the close relationship between their ratings and income on crowdsourcing platforms (2016, p12). In some cases, requirements may not only be limited to emotional labour, such as showing kindness and saying a blessing to food purchasers but also involve physical labour besides takeaway delivery. For instance, the practice of requiring takeaway couriers to paint a Peppa Pig on invoices popular among consumers of Meituan in the past two years demonstrates this phenomenon well (China's People Magazine, 2020). Furthermore, consumers may also ask riders to purchase commodities such as bottled mineral water and razors along the way (ibid). Provided that takeaway riders refuse these requests, they are likely to be given negative comments that usually result in wage deduction (ibid). Understandably, riders usually could neither bear the cost of this wage deduction nor complain about the unreasonable practice of consumers to the company due to the limitation of their operation permission. Hence, through a combination of the one-way evaluation right set by Meituan and their practice of bundling ratings given by customers and wages of riders together, workers may become bearers of all these additional labour without a channel to vent their dissatisfaction. Conceivably, these inequalities may increase the financial and emotional burden on riders and their accumulated grievances against society, posing a potential threat to social instability. One instance to demonstrate this conflict is the news of Meituan riders maliciously urinating in the food of a takeaway orderer, implying his dissatisfaction with the unfair treatment (Daily economic news, 2021). This case indicates the increasing tension between riders and customers rooting in the inequality caused by the system of Meituan. From a social perspective, the resulting ripple effect may also lead to the breakdown of trust between community members, which may harm the long-term stable development of the society.

In addition to the power imbalance in cancellation rights and comment rights, consumers are also granted exclusive rights such as the right to 'order reminder,' 'contact the shop,' and 'complaint to the platform' compared with riders (Chen, 2020, p5). These settings all show the preference of the platform for consumers. Customers could take immediate action to defend their rights if the delivery was not progressing or if the movement of riders did not meet the expectations of customers, in contrast to riders who could barely find ways to exercise their right to self-defence, demonstrating the inequality between them embedded in the power structure built by the platform algorithm once again.

Inequalities Involving Other Stakeholders

In addition to inequalities between riders and the other three stakeholders, there seem to be two other types of inequalities in the food delivery process: excessive commission on the platform and differential treatment of customers. The first kind of inequality exists between Meituan and restaurants. Specifically, Meituan charges a large sum of commission (from 16% to 23%) to restaurants, relying on its joint monopoly with another takeaway platform in China (Interface News, 2021). Though this policy appears to bring a heavy financial burden on food providers, it seems food providers have no choice but to accept as the restaurants rebelling against this rule will probably be restricted from operating on Meituan, resulting in both financial and reputation loss of restaurants caused by the lack of takeaway function (ibid). Apart from the injustice between food suppliers and Meituan caused by a one-sided agreement, unfairness also appears among consumers. Specifically, according to an

interviewed rider (China's People Magazine, 2020), customers ordering food at a higher price will usually be delivered firstly when the delivery time seems to be similar to each order considering the potential risk of wage deduction. Understandably, this order of delivery may be a strategy of riders to respond to the strict Meituan punishment mechanism to reduce potential financial loss as the consumer of more expensive food seem to be more impatient to wait and more likely to do bad reviews while waiting (ibid). As reported by Ipsos (2017, in China's People Magazine, 2020), consumers in the more economically developed regions of China are more likely to be impatient, with customers in Beijing being the most impatient, suggesting the possible reasons for this delivery order. Conceivably, this will probably result in the phenomenon that the haves are favoured while the have-nots tend to be marginalized in the food delivery process, increasing social inequality.

Conclusion and Reflection

Combining all of these inequalities existing in Meituan, which involves unfairness between riders and Meituan, riders and restaurants, riders and customers, Meituan and restaurants, and between different customers, it seems that inequalities exist almost throughout the whole delivery process. Through the various regulations introduced by Meituan and rules embedded in their algorithm, the company appears to build a strict power structure in which every party is placed inside and closely related to the others. In this system, riders appear to be at the bottom since they are subjected to triple inequalities from the platform, restaurants and consumers and are usually on the disadvantaged side. It appears that riders may have the least rights and have to provide surplus labour value to all these three parties (economically for the company, emotionally for the restaurants and consumers), resulting in their unfortunate situation full of exploitation. As a possible consequence, the inexpedient treatment of riders might lead to their discontent and even extreme behaviours sometimes, evidenced by the frequent clashes of riders with restaurant staff and consumers and some related criminal cases. It's worth noting that there is an absence of Meituan in the bearers of these repercussions. This phenomenon may be because the company transfers its conflicts with riders to restaurants and consumers via ostensible decentralization in algorithm design, although all of these inequalities between different stakeholders are created by Meituan. In addition to conflict transfer, the company also creates an illusion that customers are at the top of the power structure in the power structure as they seem to be the ones with the most rights compared to restaurants and riders. However, this illusion ignores the fact that the 'invisible' agent (Meituan) is the one who built the system and wields the most power, including the ability to change the game rules during the delivery process. One possible reason for this illusion may be that the control of the Meituan is achieved through the algorithm, making the company invisible in the operation of all the inequalities existing on the platform, escaping the social backlash brought about by the inequality of rights designed by the platform. Considering this, the actual party at the top may be the company.

Under the complicated power structure built by Meituan full of inequalities, possible consequences discussed below might happen to different stakeholders. For gig workers in Meituan, the iniquitous system may result in the loss of their employment protection, the increasing financial and mental pressure, precarity in their lives, and a sense of isolation. In terms of Meituan, it may mean lower production cost, less responsibility to workers, less market risk, and considerable profit gained from exploitation embedded in their system. As to restaurants, the unfair system will probably lead to increasing operating difficulties due to their lack of bargaining power caused by the monopoly and policies of Meituan and the intensifying conflicts between riders and them. As to consumers, they may become

scapegoats of the inexpedient system created by Meituan in some cases, suffering the backlash caused by the revenge of riders. In addition, customers may also be involved in inequality due to the preference of riders for a small group of customers caused by the reward and punishment policy of Meituan. From the perspective of the whole society, the power imbalance existing in Meituan will probably lead to social instability due to the declining trust in the community as well as the increasing misunderstanding and conflicts between different social groups. Taking all these possible consequences together, the company seems to be the biggest winner in this game, coming at the cost of all three other stakeholders, even society.

Thus far, the essay has examined how the power imbalance operates in Meituan and the possible repercussions of these inequalities. It argues that the power inequality operates in Meituan through the complicated power structure full of inequalities built by its algorithm as well as related policies, leading to a result that the capitalists in Meituan win at the expense of the interests of the other three parties, even the whole community. Admittedly there are many limitations. For example, the scope of this essay did not allow for providing feasible solutions to these systemic inequalities, which is very worthy research and would be a natural extension of this essay. Perhaps a top-to-bottom change boosted by the government and the joint efforts of the whole society could assist in alleviating the inequalities existing in Meituan. Maybe this could be a direction of future research to discuss in response to the current situation, contributing to the development of society towards a more equal and ideal community.

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