

Forum for World Literature Studies

世界文学研究论坛

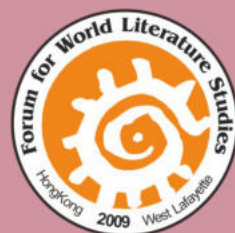
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Language and Culture in the Baltic States from Perspective of the Belt and Road Initiative: An Introduction

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Abstract China's historical recognition of the Baltic States' independence has paved the way for stable and positive relations, further strengthened by the Belt and Road Initiative. Due to the unique geographical position of the three countries and their own national conditions, the political cooperation and trade cooperation between the three countries and China are faced with some internal and external constraints. Under such circumstances, China is bound to encounter many language problems in the carrying out of the Belt and Road Initiative. If these problems are not properly understood and properly solved, they will to some extent bring some negative impacts to the construction of the Belt and Road. Therefore, we should fully recognize the role and status of language in the construction of the Belt and Road, when planning and formulating relevant language strategies. In this context, *Forum for World Literature Studies* organizes a special issue, "Studies of Languages and Culture in the Baltic States from the Belt and Road Initiative," to delve into the aspects of languages and culture in the Baltic states and their influences on language policy and economic development and cultural exchange.

Keywords the Baltic States; the Belt and Road Initiative; cultural exchange; language policy

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¹ This research is one part of The Special Program of Zhejiang University "Studies on the Languages and Cultures in the Baltic Countries" supported by the Fundamental Research Funds for the Central Universities.

China was one of the first countries to recognize the independence of the three Baltic States. Over the years, despite all the ups and downs in the development of relations between China and the three countries, they have always maintained a stable and positive trend. With the further deepening of China's opening up to the outside world and the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative, a new trend has begun to emerge in China's relations with the three countries.¹ This is reflected in the establishment of cooperation mechanisms between China and the three countries. First, the three countries have joined the Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European Countries (commonly known as the "17+1" mechanism) initiated by China and the Central and Eastern European countries, and have carried out a series of cooperation within the relevant mechanism. Secondly, the three countries signed a memorandum of understanding on cooperation on the Silk Road Economic Belt with China, officially becoming countries along the Silk Road Economic Belt. Third, China signed a series of agreements with each of the three countries. These agreements started from the different demands of the three countries and carried out bilateral cooperation according to their respective needs. These documents have become the legal basis for cooperation between China and the three countries in the new era, from multilateral to bilateral, from regional cooperation to bilateral cooperation, fully reflecting the consensus between China and the three countries, which plays a positive role in the further development of political, economic and cultural cooperation between China and the three countries. For the three countries, China has become one of the most important trading partners outside the EU.

Although the relations between China and the three countries have made great progress, there are still some shortcomings. Due to the unique geographical position of the three countries and their own national conditions, the political cooperation and trade cooperation between the three countries and China are faced with some internal and external constraints. Under such circumstances, we believe that the development of people-to-people and cultural exchanges between China and the three countries is an important aspect to break the bottleneck in the development of China-three countries relations. Bilateral or multilateral cultural exchanges will not only further increase mutual understanding, eliminate stereotypes and achieve effective communication, which will lead to consensus on a range of related issues. Deepen cooperation and promote further development of relations between China and the three countries.

First of all, we must adhere to the principle of "harmony in diversity." Harmony in diversity is an important part of Chinese traditional culture, which

1 See http://www.ndrc.gov.cn/gzdt/201510/t20151022_755473.html (accessed: 09 /09/2023).

emphasizes seeking common ground while reserving minor differences. For China and the three countries, different geographical conditions, different national growth experiences and their unique survival circumstances lead to different values and methodologies. In this case, there may be different views on the same issue, and disagreements and contradictions may arise. Therefore, in cultural exchanges, China and the three countries should reach mutual understanding and mutual trust on the basis of in-depth understanding of each other's concepts and internal cultural psychology of the nation.

In terms of cultural exchanges, cultural differences are obvious, which happens to arouse the interest of people in other countries. Though these existing differences or customs often bring surprise or rejection, the purpose of cultural exchanges is to make others see the meaning behind the superficial differences. The cultural exchange we emphasize is not only to show the exotic customs through the differences of surface culture, but also to suggest the rationality of the existence of behavior and institutional culture, and finally to achieve the compatibility of conceptual culture. The essence of "harmony in diversity" is to achieve mutual harmony and common prosperity through the common experience of mankind. By adhering to the principle of harmony, China and the three countries can understand and accept each other's culture more pragmatically and calmly, and perceive the rational core of each other's culture, thus making it easier to reach consensus in bilateral and multilateral exchanges.

Secondly, cultural exchanges are an important way to promote global cooperation which follows the principle of reciprocity and mutual benefit.¹ Cultural exchanges not only promote mutual understanding between people, but also bring about the corresponding results, achieving reasonable and effective profit distribution, so as to create a solid material foundation for cultural exchanges. Adhering to the principle of reciprocity and mutual benefit can avoid using culture as a soft power to pursue cultural hegemony and cultural centralism, so that countries of different sizes can achieve peaceful coexistence and common development.

Finally, we should adhere to the principle of diversified cooperation. The concept of culture is rich and diverse. It is necessary to make cultural exchange more interesting and attractive in ways that are popular with the public. In this case, it is necessary to take conceptual culture as the core, integrating it into material culture and behavioral culture through the variety of cooperation.

¹ See Thomas L. Ijgen, editor, *Hard Power, Soft Power, and the Future of Transatlantic Relations*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006.

In accordance with these three principles, in the practice of cultural exchange and cooperation between China and the Baltic countries, the first step is to strengthen top-level design to push the institutional construction and effective policy formulation. Second, it is necessary to build a platform and carrier for cultural exchanges with innovation, enhancing the intrinsic quality and external attractiveness of cultural linkages, and promoting the sustainable development of cultural industry. Third, give full play to their respective educational advantages, cultivating elite talents who understand each other's culture and national conditions through combining language education with professional education so as to promote the understanding and friendship between the people and the country.

China is bound to encounter many language problems in the carrying out of the Belt and Road Initiative. If these problems are not properly understood and properly solved, they will to some extent bring some negative impacts to the construction of the Belt and Road. Therefore, we should fully recognize the role and status of language in the construction of the Belt and Road, when planning and formulating relevant language strategies according to the characteristics of language and language education and then train, develop and make good use of relevant language strategists and language talents from a long-term and overall perspective. In this context, *Forum for World Literature Studies* organizes a special issue, "Studies on Languages and Cultures in the Baltic States from the Belt and Road Initiative," to delve into the aspects of language and culture in the Baltic states and their influences on language policy and economic development and cultural exchange.

The first article of the special issue titled "Estonian Language Policy: A Perspective of the Belt and Road Initiative," offers a comprehensive examination of Estonia's intricate language policy within the context of the Belt and Road Initiative. Central to this exploration is Estonia's unwavering commitment to preserving its national language and cultural identity while simultaneously addressing the challenges posed by linguistic diversity, particularly with regard to the Russian-speaking minority within its borders. The article carefully traces the historical evolution of Estonia's language policies, analyzing their profound impact on critical facets of the nation's identity, integration efforts, educational system, and cultural heritage preservation and highlighting the striking relevance of Estonia's language policy within the broader context of the Belt and Road Initiative. It underscores the pivotal role of language as a vehicle for global connectivity and international cooperation, emphasizing the significant lessons that Estonia's language policies can offer to nations participating in the Belt and Road Initiative, especially those grappling with intricate issues related to linguistic diversity.

“The Voice of Latgale,” a periodical published from 1946 to 1985, holds a significant place in the history of Latvian exile literature and culture. This publication serves as a unique window into the world of Latvian émigrés during a tumultuous period in history, when Latvia faced the challenges of World War II and subsequent Soviet occupation, leading to the displacement of many Latvians who sought refuge in various countries. Amidst this backdrop of uncertainty and change, religion emerged as a vital cultural and social anchor for Latvian émigré communities. It became a repository of faith and cultural traditions, allowing Latvians abroad to maintain their sense of identity and continuity in the face of adversity.

Oksana Kovzele & Ilze Kacane in their article delves into the pages of “The Voice of Latgale” and explores its coverage of Christian holidays within the Latvian exile community. It sheds light on how these holidays were celebrated and how they served as a means of preserving and passing down religious and cultural traditions. These holidays were not merely religious observances; they represented a unique blend of faith, cultural heritage, and resilience. This exploration of Christian holidays in “The Voice of Latgale” offers a glimpse into the enduring spirit and cultural resilience of the Latvian diaspora during a critical chapter in their history. It also provides a deeper understanding of the significance of religion and culture for Latvian émigrés and their efforts to maintain their identity and solidarity during a period of profound displacement.

In an era marked by shifting generations and evolving societal perspectives, there has been a growing fascination with the Soviet era, particularly in the realm of collective and individual memory. Literature, as one of the primary repositories of human experience, has played a pivotal role in shedding light on this tumultuous period. However, contemporary literature serves a dual purpose—it not only facilitates individual sense-making and identity formation but also encapsulates the very codes and symbols that defined an epoch. Karine Laganovska explores into the analysis of two novels: “Am kürzeren Ende der Sonnenallee” by the German author Thomas Brussig and “Čeka, bumba & rokenrols” by the Latvian writer Pauls Bankovskis.

Through the lens of semiotics and phenomenological-hermeneutic methodology, Karine Laganovska aims to uncover the distinct approaches taken by these authors as they reflect on their memories of the Soviet period, seen from the perspective of childhood and youth. The analysis on the authors’ experiences and their interpretation of the “text of experience,” demonstrates how literature encodes cultural memory and provides invaluable insights into the human condition,

deepening our understanding of how literature serves as a conduit for both individual and collective memory, transcending time and space to offer profound insights into the human experience.

The trilogy “Out for a Million” by Vladimir Krymov, a writer born in Daugavpils, Latvia, offers a compelling exploration of marriage and family relations within the context of the Old Believers during the late 19th and early 20th centuries in the Russian Empire. Krymov’s work meticulously dissects the generational differences within the Old Believer community, with a distinct focus on the older generation, the middle generation, and the younger generation. Each generation grapples with unique challenges and evolving worldviews, influenced by the changing societal landscape, especially in metropolitan areas like Moscow and St. Petersburg. One of the central themes explored is the significance of marriage and family in preserving Old Believer identity and cultural values. The older generation upholds traditional family structures, characterized by hierarchy, strict roles, and a commitment to religious upbringing. For them, the family serves as a bastion of cultural preservation and identity. In this analysis, Žans Badins & Evita Badina offer a thought-provoking exploration of how marriage and family relations intersect with cultural and religious identity, making it a compelling and enlightening read for those interested in the dynamics of Old Believer communities and the broader social changes of the era.

Marite Opincane in her article explores the nostalgia for sailing ships and the sea in Joseph Conrad’s autobiographical fiction with the various research methods including biographical, historico-cultural, literary-historical, interpretational, and semiotic approaches. Conrad, a sailor in the British Navy, witnessed the detrimental effects of civilization and industrial development on the sea and ships. He had a deep connection to sailing ships and viewed them as beautiful and alive, in contrast to the impersonal and destructive nature of steamers. Conrad’s autobiographical fiction draws from his personal experiences and knowledge of the sea.

A notable feature of both Evdokimov and Ivanov is their birth in the Baltics, with Evdokimov being born in Ukraine but raised in Riga and Ivanov hailing from Tallinn. Both authors acquired citizenship through the naturalization process in their respective countries, Latvia and Estonia, marking a significant aspect of their biographies. It is crucial to acknowledge the diverse political, cultural, and linguistic landscapes that distinguish Estonia and Latvia. Through this exploration, Elina Vasiljeva discusses the specific features of contemporary Russian literature in the Baltic states, particularly in Latvia and Estonia. focusing on the works of two authors, her article provides a comprehensive understanding of the intricate

dynamics of Russian-language literature in the Baltic region, revealing how it both reflects and shapes the cultural tapestry of Latvia and Estonia.

The Baltic States are renowned for their Baltic languages, which form a part of the wider Balto-Slavic language group. Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian, "the primary languages spoken in these countries, are some of the most ancient Indo-European languages still in use today" (Holst 269). Doing researches on the languages and cultures of the Baltic states is important for a better understanding and appreciation of the rich history and heritage of these countries. It helps to preserve and promote their unique cultural traditions, languages, and literature. Additionally, studying the language and culture of the Baltic states can foster greater intercultural understanding and dialogue between different nations and regions. It also provides insights into the social, political, and economic dynamics of these countries, contributing to the fruitful collaboration and smooth progress of the Belt and Road Initiative.

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Estonian Language Policy: A Perspective of the Belt and Road Initiative

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Abstract The article delves into the intricate language policy of Estonia, a nation with a complex history of foreign dominations and occupations. It explores Estonia's commitment to preserving its national language and identity while addressing the linguistic diversity within its borders, particularly the Russian-speaking minority. The article traces the historical evolution of Estonian language policies, examining their impact on national identity, integration, education, and cultural heritage. Furthermore, it highlights the relevance of Estonia's language policy as a model for managing linguistic diversity and cultural preservation within the framework of the "One Belt and One Road" Initiative (OBOR), emphasizing the importance of language in global connectivity and cooperation.

Keywords Estonian language policy; linguistic diversity; national identity, the Belt and Road Initiative; language ecology; language resources

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Introduction

Estonia, a small Baltic nation nestled in Northern Europe, has a rich history and a diverse cultural fabric shaped by various ethnic and linguistic influences. The country's current ethnic and linguistic situation is a reflection of its historical development, geopolitical influences, and policies implemented over the years.

¹ This research is one part of the The Special Program of Zhejiang University "Studies on the Languages and Cultures in the Baltic Countries" supported by the Fundamental Research Funds for the Central Universities.

Estonia has been dominated by foreign powers through much of its history. In 1940 it was incorporated into the U.S.S.R. as one of its constituent republics. Estonia remained a Soviet republic until 1991, when, along with the other Baltic states, it declared its independence. The Soviet Union recognized independence for Estonia and the other Baltic states on September 6, 1991, and United Nations membership followed shortly thereafter. Estonia set about transforming its government into a parliamentary democracy and reorienting its economy toward market capitalism. It sought integration with greater Europe and in 2004 joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU).¹

Estonia acknowledges the importance of maintaining a multicultural society while promoting the national language and identity. Efforts are underway to ensure that both Estonian and Russian-speaking communities coexist harmoniously. Cultural festivals, language courses, and community initiatives have been established to foster understanding and interaction between different ethnic groups. The aim is to create an environment where people can embrace their ethnic heritage while contributing to the shared national narrative. One of the key challenges in Estonia's ethnic and linguistic landscape is the integration of the Russian-speaking minority. Many older generations of Russians might not be fluent in Estonian, and this language barrier can create socio-economic disparities and hinder effective communication. Estonian governments have implemented policies to encourage language learning and integration, such as offering citizenship to long-term residents who demonstrate proficiency in Estonian. However, these efforts have been met with varying degrees of success and controversies.

The country's commitment to maintaining its national language and identity, while acknowledging its diverse ethnic makeup, is a delicate balancing act. By recognizing the importance of cultural diversity, implementing inclusive policies, and encouraging language integration, Estonia strives to create a harmonious society where people from various backgrounds can coexist, contribute, and thrive together. This essay explores the dynamics of ethnicity and language in Estonia, highlighting its unique characteristics, challenges, and efforts to promote cultural diversity and social cohesion.

Historical Context: Foreign Domination and Estonian National Awakening

Throughout its history, Estonia experienced periods of foreign domination by various powers, including the Danish, Swedish, German, and Russian empires. These occupations had a significant impact on the linguistic and cultural landscape

1 See "Estonia," Wikipedia <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Estonia>>.

of the country. During these periods, attempts were made to impose the languages of the ruling powers, often at the expense of the Estonian language and culture.¹

The 19th century witnessed the rise of the Estonian national awakening, a movement aimed at preserving and promoting the Estonian language, culture, and identity. This period marked a turning point in the recognition of the Estonian language as a vehicle for expressing national sentiment and fostering a sense of unity among the Estonian population. Prominent figures, such as Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald and Jakob Hurt, played crucial roles in the development and preservation of the Estonian language and folk culture.

The Soviet occupation of Estonia during World War II brought significant challenges to the Estonian language and culture. Russian became the dominant language of administration and education, and there were attempts to assimilate the Estonian population into the Soviet framework. This period marked a struggle to preserve the Estonian language in the face of linguistic pressure and political dominance.

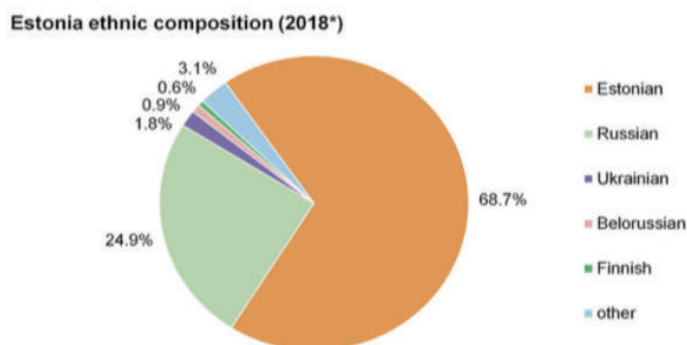
Estonia regained its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. Language played a pivotal role during this period, serving as a symbol of sovereignty and national pride. The re-establishment of the Estonian language as the official language underscored the country's commitment to preserving its cultural heritage and asserting its identity on the international stage.

Estonia's language policies of post-independence have aimed to strike a balance between promoting the Estonian language and ensuring the integration of linguistic minorities, particularly the Russian-speaking population. The Estonian government has implemented measures to encourage language proficiency among residents, with citizenship requirements often including language competency. Efforts have been made to provide language education and support to non-Estonian speakers to facilitate their integration into society.

Estonia's membership in the European Union has further emphasized the importance of multilingualism. While Estonian remains the official language, English has gained prominence as a language of international communication and business. The country's education system has adapted to these changes by offering a range of language learning opportunities, enabling students to be proficient in multiple languages. Estonia has a complex ethnic and linguistic situation. According to the 2020 statistics, around 68% of the population are ethnic Estonians, while around 24% are ethnic Russians. The remaining 8% consists of Ukrainians,

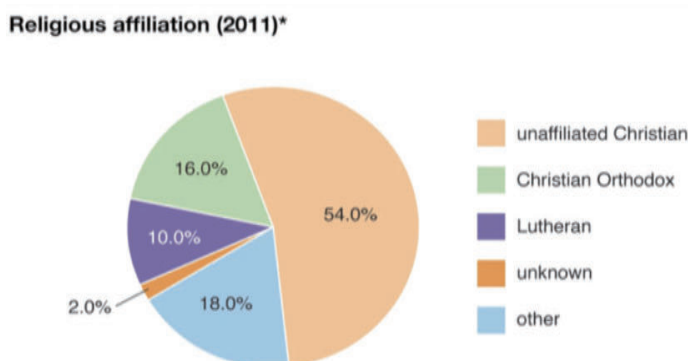
1 See Mart Rannut, *Language Planning in Estonia: Past and Present*, Tallinn: Tallinn Pedagogical University, 2004.

Belarusians, Finns, and other nationalities.



Estonia: Ethnic Composition¹

Estonian, the official language of the country, is a member of the Finno-Ugric branch of the Uralic language family. More than two-thirds of the populace speak Estonian as a first language; about an additional one-fourth speak Russian as their first language (mostly in the northeast), though few Estonians over age 60 or under age 20 speak the language. There is no state religion in Estonia, and many of the people are either nonreligious or atheist. The Christian majority includes a large slice of unaffiliated Christians, along with significant Evangelical Lutheran and Eastern Orthodox communities, as well as lesser numbers of Baptists, Methodists, and Roman Catholics.



Estonia: Religious Affiliation

Compared with other European countries, Estonia has a large percentage of foreign-born residents and their children. Only about two-thirds of the population

1 <https://www.britannica.com/place/Estonia#/media/1/193535/209822>

are ethnic Estonians. Russians are the most significant minority, comprising about one-fourth of the citizenry. Ethnic tensions between Estonians and Russians have been present since Estonia regained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. The main cause of tension is the legacy of Soviet occupation, where many ethnic Russians were brought to Estonia and given privileges over the Estonian population. This has led to feelings of resentment and discrimination among some Estonians towards the Russian minority.

These tensions have had an impact on Estonian politics and society. The Estonian government has implemented policies aimed at promoting the use of the Estonian language and the integration of ethnic minorities into Estonian society. However, there have been criticisms that some of these policies have been discriminatory towards ethnic Russians. The issue of citizenship is also a contentious one. Many ethnic Russians who were born in Estonia before independence are considered stateless and do not have the right to vote in national elections. This has led to accusations of discrimination and has been a source of tension between the two communities. While efforts have been made to promote integration and reduce discrimination, more work needs to be done to address these issues and promote social cohesion.

The Development of Language Policy in Estonia

Language policy plays a crucial role in shaping the cultural, social, and political landscape of a nation. Estonia has a rich history of language policy developments that have been influenced by various historical events and changing political regimes.

The period from 1918 to 1940 marked the first phase of Estonia as an independent nation after centuries of foreign rule. Language policy during this time aimed to establish Estonian as the official language and promote its use in all aspects of public life. This policy was driven by a desire to assert national identity and cultural independence. Educational reforms were introduced to ensure Estonian-language instruction in schools, and government documents and institutions operated primarily in Estonian. The key elements of Estonia's language policy during this period can be summarized as follows:

Promotion of Estonian as the Official Language: One of the foremost objectives of Estonia's language policy during this era was to establish Estonian as the official language of the newly independent state. Estonian had long been suppressed during the rule of foreign powers, such as the Russian Empire and the Baltic German nobility. To assert its national identity, Estonia sought to ensure that Estonian was

the language used in government institutions, administration, and the legal system.

Educational Reforms: Language policy in this period included significant educational reforms aimed at promoting the use of Estonian. Estonian-language instruction was introduced in schools to ensure that the younger generation could communicate effectively in their mother tongue. These reforms were vital for preserving the Estonian language and culture.

Cultural Promotion: The Estonian government actively supported cultural endeavors that promoted the Estonian language. The establishment of Estonian theaters, libraries, and cultural institutions contributed to the revival of Estonian culture. The government provided funding and resources to promote Estonian literature, music, and the arts.

Language Legislation: Estonia enacted language legislation to formalize its language policy. These laws reinforced the use of Estonian in official documents, public institutions, and the judiciary. Language planning and language protection measures were introduced to ensure the vitality of Estonian in the face of potential threats.

Protection of Minority Languages: Estonia was home to several linguistic minorities, including Baltic Germans and Russians. The Estonian government pursued a balanced approach by protecting the linguistic rights of these minority communities while prioritizing Estonian as the national language. This approach aimed to maintain harmony and inclusivity within the newly independent nation.

The language policy in Estonia during the period of 1940-1944 was greatly influenced by the tumultuous events of World War II and the occupation of Estonia by foreign powers. The Estonian language faced challenges during both the Soviet and German occupations, with varying degrees of suppression and promotion depending on the occupying power.

In 1940, the Soviet Union occupied Estonia as a result of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, a non-aggression treaty between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. During this period, the Soviet authorities implemented a policy of Russification, which aimed to promote the Russian language and culture in the occupied territories. Estonian was still officially recognized, but there was a push to increase the use of Russian in various aspects of public life, including education and administration.

In 1941, Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union and occupied Estonia. During this period, the German authorities reversed the policies of Russification and instead promoted the use of Estonian. Estonian was reinstated as the official language, and efforts were made to restore Estonian cultural and educational

institutions. However, this period was short-lived, as the Soviet Union reoccupied Estonia in 1944.

After the Soviet Union reoccupied Estonia in 1944, the policies of Russification were once again enforced. Russian became the dominant language in many spheres of public life, and Estonian cultural and educational institutions were once again subjected to heavy censorship and control by Soviet authorities. The Estonian language was still spoken by the Estonian population, but it was increasingly marginalized in official settings. It was only after Estonia regained its independence in 1991 that Estonian could fully reassert itself as the official language and a symbol of national identity in the country.

The language policy of the Republic of Estonia since 1991 has focused on the preservation and promotion of the Estonian language as a crucial element of national identity and cohesion while also respecting the language rights of ethnic minorities. These policies have played a significant role in shaping Estonia's modern identity and facilitating the integration of its diverse population. Here are key aspects of Estonia's language policy post-1991:

Estonian as the Official Language: The Estonian language was reaffirmed as the official language of the country in the Constitution of Estonia (adopted in 1992). This means that Estonian is the language of government, administration, and the legal system.

Estonian Language Education: The Estonian government has invested significantly in the Estonian language education system. Estonian is the primary language of instruction in schools, and students are required to learn Estonian to be well-integrated into society. Education in the Estonian language is essential for obtaining higher education and participating in various professions.

Language Integration Policy: Estonia has implemented policies to promote the integration of its Russian-speaking minority into Estonian society. This includes offering language courses and opportunities for non-Estonian speakers to learn the language. The goal is to ensure that all residents of Estonia can communicate effectively in Estonian.

Language Requirements for Citizenship: Estonia has language requirements for obtaining citizenship. Applicants for citizenship must demonstrate proficiency in the Estonian language, which includes passing language exams.

Protection of Estonian Language: Estonia has enacted laws to protect the Estonian language from linguistic interference. For example, there are regulations governing the use of the Estonian language in advertising and public signage.

Bilingual Education and Language Rights: Estonia recognizes the rights of

its ethnic minorities to use their native languages in education and cultural life. Bilingual education programs are available for these minority groups, including the Russian-speaking population.

Digital Services in Estonian: The Estonian government has made efforts to ensure that digital services and e-governance platforms are accessible in Estonian, making it convenient for citizens to interact with the government in their native language.

Cultural Promotion: Estonia actively promotes its cultural heritage, including its language, through various cultural programs, festivals, and initiatives to preserve and celebrate the Estonian language and traditions.

The historical development of language policy in Estonia reflects the country's struggle for cultural and national identity in the face of foreign occupations and geopolitical changes. From the early years of independence to the Soviet era and finally to the present day, language has been at the heart of Estonia's identity. The preservation and promotion of the Estonian language, along with a commitment to minority language rights, have been central to Estonia's post-independence language policy. This journey serves as a testament to the resilience of language in shaping a nation's history and future.

The Impact of Estonian Language Policy and Its Enlightenment to the “One Belt and One Road” Initiative

Language is a fundamental aspect of a nation's identity and plays a significant role in shaping its cultural, social, and political landscape. Estonia's unique language policy that has not only preserved its linguistic heritage but also provided valuable insights into the broader context of language diversity and cultural preservation. The language policy of Estonia can be seen as a model of linguistic preservation which is rooted in its historical struggles for national identity and independence. Despite periods of foreign rule and influence, Estonians have fiercely protected their language, a Finno-Ugric language, quite distinct from the Indo-European languages spoken by their neighbors. The Estonian language policy has evolved over time but has consistently aimed at preserving and promoting the Estonian language.

Estonia places a strong emphasis on language education, with Estonian being the primary medium of instruction in schools. This policy ensures that future generations are fluent in their native tongue, strengthening their cultural identity. Meanwhile, Estonia supports cultural initiatives and institutions that promote the Estonian language, such as theaters, literature, and media outlets. This not only preserves the language but also enriches the cultural fabric of the nation. As a

multi-ethnic and multilingualism country, Estonia has also implemented policies to integrate linguistic minorities while maintaining the dominance of the Estonian language. This balances the need for social cohesion with linguistic preservation. With the advancement of technology Estonia has leveraged digital means to promote the Estonian language, making it an integral part of its e-governance system. This has set an example for other nations looking to adapt to the digital age while preserving their linguistic heritage.

Estonia's language policy has had several significant impacts on the country, its society, and its people. These impacts have shaped Estonia's identity, education system, and governance. Some key effects of Estonian language policy can be seen as follows:

Preservation of National Identity: Estonia's language policy has played a crucial role in preserving the country's national identity. The Estonian language is not only the official language but also a symbol of independence and cultural heritage. The policy has helped maintain a strong sense of Estonian identity and pride among the population.

Integration of Society: Estonia's language policy, including language education and integration efforts, has helped bridge linguistic divides within the country. It has facilitated the integration of Russian-speaking minorities into Estonian society, fostering a more cohesive and inclusive society.

Economic Competitiveness: Proficiency in the Estonian language is essential for participating in the country's workforce and economy. Language policy has ensured that all residents, regardless of their ethnic background, have access to education and employment opportunities in the Estonian language. This has contributed to Estonia's economic competitiveness and innovation.

Educational Excellence: Estonia's focus on Estonian-language education has led to a strong education system. Students are educated primarily in Estonian, and this has contributed to high literacy rates and academic achievements. The Estonian education system has received recognition internationally for its quality.

Political Stability: Language policy has played a role in maintaining political stability in Estonia. A shared language contributes to effective governance and communication between the government and the people.

Preservation of Language Diversity: While promoting the Estonian language, the country's language policy also respects the rights of ethnic minorities to maintain and develop their native languages and cultures. This approach contributes to linguistic diversity and cultural richness within Estonia.

Cultural Heritage: Estonia's language policy has contributed to the preservation

and promotion of its cultural heritage, including literature, music, and folklore, all of which are deeply rooted in the Estonian language.

Digital Innovation: Estonia's commitment to making digital services accessible in Estonian has fostered a culture of innovation and e-governance. The country is known for its advanced digital infrastructure and services, making it a leader in the field.

European Integration: Proficiency in the Estonian language is often a requirement for citizenship and participation in European Union institutions, which Estonia joined in 2004. Language policy has helped facilitate Estonia's integration into European structures.

Estonia's language policy has not only preserved its linguistic heritage but has also contributed to national unity and international engagement. It has played a pivotal role in shaping the modern Estonian state and society. As one of the countries participating in the "One Belt and One Road" Initiative (OBOR), Estonia presents a model of finding a balance between cultural preservation and global connectivity, which provides valuable insights for nations to navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by OBOR while celebrating their unique linguistic and cultural identities.

The "One Belt and One Road" Initiative, also known as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), is China's grand plan to promote global economic connectivity and cooperation.¹ It involves infrastructure development projects spanning Asia, Europe, and Africa. While the primary focus of OBOR is economic, it also carries significant cultural and linguistic implications. Many OBOR countries have rich linguistic diversity. Estonia's approach to language integration can offer insights into managing linguistic diversity while promoting a national language. Statistics have shown that the language issue should be taken into consideration in the practice and research of OBOR. The research on language, as a fundamentally important starting point, is a key issue as well as a bridge in the software development of the Belt and Road Initiative, and thus should not be ignored.

As Bernard Spolsky observes, "Language policy is about choice. It may be the choice of a specific sound, or expression, or of a specific variety of language. It may be the choice regularly made by an individual, or a socially defined group of individuals, or a body with authority over a defined group of individuals" (217). In looking at the language policy of a state or other unit, it is appropriate to start off with an effort to capture the complex language situation. This involves analyzing the existence and nature of the named and unnamed varieties used in it, and their

1 See http://www.Ndrc.Gov.cn/gzdt/201510/t20151022_755473.html(accessed: 09 /08/2023).

demographic, territorial and functional distribution in the unit. An ecological approach requires going beyond the linguistic to the relevant social, political, ethnic, religious, economic and cultural make up of the unit and the way that each of these factors interacts constructively with the linguistic.

Language policy must take into account the significance of language to individuals, nations, societies and nations. The language policy of OBOR focuses on the cultivation of language service talents and the strategic reserve of key languages, with the purpose of improving national language ability, enhancing national language strength, maintaining national language security, and meeting the urgent need for language in the construction of the “Belt and Road.” In the multicultural context of OBOR, only by monitoring and studying the language situation of these countries and Chinese border areas can we understand the language usage habits of these countries and regions and the communicative value and core function of a certain language, and also have a deep understanding of their culture and thinking habits. Thus, it provides a strong basis for our country to deal with common language, non-common language, determine a few key languages and personnel training model, and lays a good foundation for our country to formulate a scientific and effective language policy.

The Belt and Road Initiative is intertwined with globalization the system of which is complex. In formulating language policy, the impact of the globalization process has to be taken into account. Adams and Carfagna once described globalization as “connecting the dots, finding patterns and relationships between seemingly unrelated ideas or events” to consider the world as a whole instead of broken into separate independent nations and individuals (1). Globalization drives people to contact each other, and in this cross-regional communication system, a communication medium is needed. For now, the general solution is to make English the universal language. However, in the dialogue with countries along the “Belt and Road,” English as a communication tool can only be used as an alternative language. In some domains, English is undoubtedly the world’s lingua franca, but in global exchanges and trade, it is difficult to ignore the multilingual and multicultural reality of the world, and ignore the native languages and values of neighbors, allies and trading partners.

The formulation of language policy is not only influenced by the external environment, but also closely related to the understanding of the function and value of the language itself. With the continuous improvement of the strategic position of language, people have a deeper understanding of the nature and function of language, the relationship between language and society, politics, economy, religion

and culture. According to Sue Wright, “Language builds human societies, solidarity and cooperation but it also plays a crucial role in the distribution of power and resources within a society and among societies” (7). Whether language is regarded as a symbol of identity, a resource, or an expression of rights, in other words, language policy is formulated for the efficiency of communication, for the purpose of strengthening the identity of national and national culture, or for the rational allocation of resources to produce various benefits, and so on. Policy making is always directed towards one or a combination of several important aspects.

The language ecology along the “Belt and Road” is complex, with more than 50 official languages and a small number of minority languages. To give full play to the resource advantages of languages, it is necessary to make a comprehensive judgment on their communicative value, economic value, cultural inheritance and other values, and rationally develop and optimize the allocation of language resources based on market demand and scope of influence to maximize their benefits. At the same time, it is necessary to balance the relationship between the official language, minority languages, common languages and non-common languages so as to avoid the uniformity of language selection and language resource allocation, and provide people with the opportunity and right to learn multiple languages, so that they have the possibility of independent choice and the diversity of development in construction of the “Belt and Road.”

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Christian Holidays in Latvian Exile Periodical *The Voice of Latgale* (1946–1985)

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Abstract The paper is aimed at analyzing newspaper articles on Christian religious holidays in a Latvian periodical *Latgolas Bolss* [The Voice of Latgale] (for a specific period known as *Latgola* [Latgale]) published in 1946–1985 in exile (Germany, France and the USA) in Latgalian—the historic variant of the Latvian language spoken in the south-eastern part of Latvia. The timeframe within which the newspaper was published (during WWII in Latvia, later in exile) is characterized by the effects of the loss of Latvia’s independence (1940), the country’s occupation and reoccupation—dramatic events in the history of the country that forced many Latvians to flee their homeland and find refuge in the West. By employing the cultural-historical, biographical and content analysis methods, the newspaper articles by Latvian Latgalian authors on two major religious holidays (Christmas and Easter) were selected to study internal representations while manifesting one’s identity through the medium of the native language from the perspective of a displaced person (cultural memory) under the impact of the external factors and surrounding reality.

The conducted research allowed concluding that the written texts about religious holidays in the Latvian exile periodical were presented as a component of the Latvian national and cultural identity. The depictions were imbued with nostalgia for the lost homeland and awareness of the risks of losing one’s identity and culture. The binary oppositions in the conceptual categories of space (“homeland—foreign country”), time (“then—now”), and value system (“one’s own—alien”) allowed Latvian Latgalian intellectuals to highlight the crucial role of the Christian (Catholic) faith in both adapting to changes and challenges in a new country and maintaining a sense of belonging to Latvia, i.e. during a process of redefining oneself and of reconstructing and negotiating identity in exile. Alongside the Christian segment, the pre-Christian heritage based on the Latvian pagan belief

system (winter solstice and spring equinox traditions and rituals) was presented as a major part of celebrating Christmas and Easter. The celebration experiences in the homeland juxtaposed with the observed and experienced celebration forms in a foreign country were perceived within a binary opposition “one’s own—alien”, where “one’s own” was characterized by the sacral, natural, and tranquil, but the “alien”—by the profane, artificial, and tumultuous.

Keywords religious holidays and traditions; Latvia; exile; memory; identity¹

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Introduction

Festivities as “residues of the past” (Popelková 173) incorporate not only the nation’s mythological thinking and elements of ancient cults and rituals (Mpofo 28), but also social and family life norms, standards of behavior, ideals and values (Korolova et. al. 544; Kovzele “Svētku kultūras transformācijas pierobežā...” 9). Compared to other holiday groups, religious holidays reveal “some of the most important values of a community as well as the place of these values in households and families” (Goldscheider 39). Members of the society intuitively follow the traditions and values and find spiritual inspiration in the “continuity in contents” of these festivities (Tak 12), which they try to preserve and inculcate into the coming generations.

In academic research, there is an opinion that religiosity “plays a key role in defining the boundaries of cultural differences” (Lipnicka and Peciakowski 1). Festivities, including religious holidays, reflect human nature and are vital “for managing, producing and reproducing national memories and identities”; they create

1 This research was supported by Daugavpils University (Latvia) research development grant No 14-95/2023/15 “Memory Representations: Literary and Cultural-Historical Aspect” and is also one part of The Special Program of Zhejiang University “Studies on the Languages and Cultures in the Baltic Countries” supported by the Fundamental Research Funds for the Central Universities.

favorable conditions for reflection on who we are as a nation (Mpofu). In various crisis situations of society's existence (natural disasters, epidemics, deportations, wars, etc.), it is the festivities that contribute to self-identification processes and ensure the unity of a group of individuals or society as a whole. In cases of the loss of national sovereignty and political repressions, as well as of living as a refugee in exile, two festivity functions become especially important—that of consolidating and that of accumulating; both involve preservation of and handing down cultural knowledge, norms and values of the nation (Kovzele “Svētku kultūras transformācijas pierobežā...” 11-12). In situations hazardous to spiritual and physical existence, festivities help to preserve and strengthen individual and national self-confidence and sense of belonging. Religious holidays and their traditions, in addition to previously mentioned functions, perform also the functions of providing emotional satisfaction and support in upholding faith in circumstances of physical and mental terror and exhaustion, especially in cases when the religious/ denominational belonging of the colonizers is different from that of the nation they have colonized or when trying to preserve one's identity in exile.

Exile has been defined as “the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home”, therefore “its essential sadness can never be surmounted” (Said 137). It has also been commonly perceived “as the presence of a broken past presence” (Schuback 179). In scientific literature, exile has been mostly viewed as an ontological condition, as a “meta-category describing an existential attitude” against a specific historical period and/ or periods (Enquist Källgren 54).

The concept “exile” within the article denotes the period of time from the final stage of WWII (the autumn of 1944–1945), when, trying to escape from the potential repressions of the Soviet power and mortal danger, about 10% of a total population left the country and found a refuge in other, mostly western, countries, to May 4, 1990, when Latvia regained its national independence and people, who had left the country, had the opportunity to return to their homeland (Celle 5; Daukste-Silasproģe 5; Plakans). After Latvia's occupation (1940) and by the end of WWII (1945), about 125 thousand of the Latvians were forced to leave their homeland and settle down in other countries—Germany, Sweden, Great Britain, Canada, USA, Australia, and elsewhere in the world (Zalkalns 50). In the situation characterized by the exiled Latvians as “the exile cross” (Anspoks 1), i.e., day-to-day anxiety about survival in new and unfamiliar conditions when starting their lives from scratch, they tried to remain united as a nation, respectfully treating the values of their own culture. The conscious commitment to preserve and strengthen Latvian cultural

heritage in exile was manifested in the field of writing, book publishing, theatre, painting, fine arts and, among other forms of representation of national cultural achievements, in the celebration of holidays (Kovzele “Peculiarities of Actualizing the Subject of Festivities...” 398).

A vital signifier of intangible cultural heritage and a means for transmitting the experience of the past in exile was festivity culture: national, family, and, among others, religious holidays (Ķestere, Kaļķe). Preserving and handing down cultural values and traditions to the younger generations was accepted as a calling since the loss of their own cultural environment meant for them also “existential loss” (Nollendorfs 219). On the occupied territory of Latvia marking national and religious holidays openly, due to the policy implemented by the Soviet power, was no longer possible; such holidays were considered “usual working days” (Latkovskis “Zīmāsvātki” 1). By living on mission, a symbolic spiritual link with the lost homeland was maintained.

This paper is aimed at analyzing the representation of religious holidays (Christmas and Easter) and their traditions in the Latvian exile newspaper *Latgolas Bolss* [The Voice of Latgale] (also *Latgola* [from Latgale]) published in 1946–1985 in Germany, France and the USA. The study is based on sources written in Latgalian—a Baltic language variety closely related to Latvian and spoken mostly in the Latgale region¹. The present study continues the research on the perceptions and depictions of festivities as analyzed by the authors of the paper in the research article “Representation of Christmas in Childhood Memory Narratives: Reflecting and Revisiting the Past” (Kacane and Kovzele). To supplement the previously conducted study on transformations of celebrating religious holidays in childhood memory narratives by Latvian Latgalian writer Skaidrīte Varslavāne (published in Latvia), a wider perspective has been offered, as reflected in periodicals by Latvian Latgalian intellectuals in exile and as presented in texts on both Christmas and Easter.

Methodology

The research was conducted by employing cultural-historical and biographical methods, as well as qualitative content analysis, which is a rather flexible and widely used research method (Cavanagh) that allows one to analyze content and interpret meaning from the different (verbal and visual) textual data. This study

1 The Latgalian written standard was formed during the nineteenth century. To many Latvian-speakers this language variety is unintelligible because it has sufficiently distinctive features (Lazdiņa and Marten 68-69). Latgalian is protected by Latvian legislation: “The State shall ensure the maintenance, protection and development of the Latgalian written language as a historic variant of the Latvian language” (Official Language Law).

analyzes texts from the printed and later digitalized sources—articles published in the exile periodical *Latgola* [from Latgalian: Latgale] (publishing years: 1946–1954), a successor of the newspaper *Latgolas Bolss* [from Latgalian: The Voice of Latgale] (initially published in Latvia in 1943–1944), and later known as *Latgolas Bolss* again (publishing years: 1955–1985).

In the result of an in-depth exploration of the content of 971 issues—308 issues of the newspaper *Latgola* and 663 issues of the newspaper *Latgolas Bolss* accessible to the public in the Latvian National Digital Library collection “Periodicals” (see Table 1)—, 21 publications dedicated to religious holidays (Christmas and Easter) were selected for citation as more vivid and complete evidence in the context of the analyzed research theme. The searches were made by exploring the content of the articles available in the newspaper, rather than entering specific keywords and thematically relevant article titles.

Table 1. The number of the issues available in the Latvian National Digital Library collection “Periodicals”

<i>Latgola</i>	
Year of publication	Number of issues per year
1946	6
1947	-
1948	37
1949	45
1950	48
1951	30
1952	46
1953	48
1954	48
	308
<i>Latgolas Bolss</i>	
1955	24
1956	24
1957	24
1958	24
1959	24
1960	24
1961	25
1962	24
1963	24
1964	24
1965	24
1966	24
1967	24
1968	24

1969	24
1970	24
1971	24
1972	24
1973	24
1974	24
1975	24
1976	24
1977	24
1978	24
1979	14
1980	15
1981	15
1982	13
1983	16
1984	12
1985	1
	663
In total:	971

Source: Latvian National Digital Library

Table 1 presents the scope of the text corpus of the study. Moreover, as the research has revealed it also testifies to the fact that not all issues of the newspaper *Latgolas Bolss* have been preserved and not all are available in the Latvian National Digital Library. In total, there were 1084 newspaper issues: 55 issues of *Latgolas Bolss* were published in Latvia in 1943–1944 (remain beyond the scope of this paper); 1029 issues were published in exile, which includes 366 issues of the newspaper *Latgola* in 1946–1954, and 663 of *Latgolas Bolss* in 1955–1985 (both within the scope of this paper). In 1955, the first issue of the newspaper *Latgolas Bolss* was published as No 422 and it was referred to as the twelfth year of publishing. This proves that *Latgola* was a successor of the newspaper *Latgolas Bolss*; from that time onwards the newspaper was published with its original title *Latgolas Bolss*.

The ten authors of the selected texts (see Table 2)—clergymen, publicists, writers, poets and public figures—were born at the end of the nineteenth century or at the beginning of the twentieth century in the south-eastern region of Latgale (then a part of the Russian Empire) or had some relation to it. The first years of activity for many of them coincided with a crucial period in Latvia's history when the Latvians managed to unite and change the course of the development of the nation under the impact of such historical events as the First Latgale Congress (1917), the proclamation of the Latvian State (1918), Latvian War of Independence (1918–1920), and Latgale joining with Latvia (1921).

Table 2. Profile of the authors whose articles were selected for the analysis

No	Name, Surname, years of life	The number of articles selected for the analysis/ religious holiday discussed	Brief biography
1	Aloizis Anspoks (1903–1985)	1 (Christmas)	Born in Preiļi civil parish, Anspoki (the current Preiļi district); priest, publicist, and social figure, who in 1944 emigrated to Germany where worked in the field of intellectual work, wrote life stories of the saints, composed hymns and sacred songs; Anspoks died in Germany.
2	Vladislavs Bojārs (1905–1984)	1 (Christmas)	Born in Bērzgale civil parish (the current Rēzekne district); writer, education and press employee whose first publications appeared in 1928, went into exile in 1944, lived in a refugees' camp in Germany, where worked as a teacher, later studied in München; in 1950 went to live in Canada, where studied in St. Jerome's College Ontario province; Bojārs died and is buried in Canada.
3	Jezups Grišāns (1891–1988)	3 (Christmas – 2; Easter – 1)	Born in Kaunata civil parish, Orehovka (the current Rēzekne district); priest and publicist, in 1944 went into exile in Germany, from 1945 lived in Italy, from 1948—in Argentina, from 1953—in the USA; living in exile published memoirs, wrote prose works, worked in local congregations, initiated organizing the American Latgalian Centre; Grišāns died and is buried in Stockbridge, USA.
4	Anna Konāns, born Ušacka; (1894–1984)	3 (Christmas)	Born in Balvi civil parish, Lielolksna (the current Balvi district); publicist and social figure, after WWII emigrated to Germany, but after 1950 settled in Connecticut, USA, where she published an article about Latvia, its culture and people; Konāns is buried in the USA.
5	Leonards Latkovskis (1905–1991)	6 (Christmas – 4; Easter – 2)	Born in Varakļāni civil parish (the current Varakļāni district); linguist, folklorist, publicist, ethnographer and writer, who had published his writings in the native country since 1927; in 1944 went into exile to Bavaria, Germany, where he founded and was head of the gymnasium for the Latvians, worked as a translator, in 1950 went to the USA, where he worked as a professor of linguistics, and was a researcher, participant of congresses and conferences, from 1947 till 1955 worked as an editor of <i>Latgolas Bolss</i> ; Latkovskis died and is buried in Louisville, USA.
6	Jōņs Leidumņiks; real name – Jōņs Mozga (1909–1982)	2 (Christmas)	Born in Varakļāni civil parish (the current Varakļāni district); the poet, first works by him were published in the periodicals of Latgale at the end of the 1930s, in 1944 went into exile to Germany, lived in Neuötting am Inn, where he was actively engaged in public activities of the Latvian Catholic congregation; in 1948 went to England and in 1951—to Canada, where he worked as a secretary typist, compiled and edited periodical editions, worked in St. Joseph's hospital in Ontario where he later died.

7	Konstantins Nautris; (real name—Konstantins Krusts) (1912–1985)	1 (Christmas)	Born in Riga; educator, writer and publicist, whose poems, stories, and sketches were published in periodicals from 1930. At the end of WWII, he went to Germany and lived in Neuötting am Inn, later in other camps in Germany; in 1950 emigrated to the USA and settled not far from Denver where he founded the society of local Latvians and actively participated in the public life of the Latvians in exile and published fables, from 1971 till 1985 worked as an editor-in-chief of the newspaper <i>Latgolas Bolss</i> ; Nautris (Krusts) is buried in Denver, USA.
8	Alberts Spogis (also—Spogis) (1924–2020)	1 (Christmas)	Born in Vārkava civil parish, Bratiški village (the current Preiļi district); poet, philosopher and publicist whose first publications were issued in 1948; after wounding he was put into a prisoners-of-war camp, later studied at the universities of Hamburg, Bonn, Madrid and Münster; worked as a teacher, was the author of publications in different periodicals, and the author of 4 poetry selections; in 1998 was awarded the Three Star Order, category IV; Spogis died in Münster, Germany.
9	Jezups Voskāns (N/A)	1 (Easter)	The identification of this cultural activist from the Latgale region is currently problematic; a short press article (“Breivūs latvīšu bolss” 3-4) dedicated to him states that he was a poet who served twice in the Korean War and settled in the USA, Voskāns’ poems were mainly published in the early 1960s in the newspaper <i>Latgolas Bolss</i> and the magazine <i>Dzeive</i> .
10	Ontons Zvīdris (1911–1992)	2 (Easter)	Born in Makašāni (the current Rēzekne district); painter, sculptor and writer; in 1942 he was sent to Germany where he worked as a farm hand near Flensburg, after WWII he stayed in Flensburg, studied at Düsseldorf Art Academy, in 1946 moved to England, in 1949—to Canada where he graduated from art college and organized several exhibitions and Latgalian cultural events, Zvīdris materially supported the Latgale Research Institute and was actively involved in its activities, he was an editor and collaborator in the newspaper <i>Latgolas Bolss</i> (from 1978) and the magazine <i>Dzeive</i> ; Zvīdris died in Toronto, Canada.

Source: Latgales dati; Latvian Literature Digital Resource; Paukšte et. al.

Results and Discussion

The findings of the research have been presented in five sections. The first section presents a brief history of the newspaper *Latgolas Bolss*, the second section traces reflections of religious holidays (Easter and Christmas) by the exiled Latvians as a significant segment of the Latvian national and cultural identity, the third section focuses on the religious aspect of holidays rituals, whereas the fourth section—on pre-Christian rituals as described in the exile newspaper. The fourth section “Religious Holidays as a Mirror of Society: One’s Own vs. Other Values”

demonstrates the exiled Latvians' observations of new forms of celebrations in a foreign country and dwells upon the conflict between internal and external goals and needs.

The Newspaper *Latgolas Bolss*: Brief Overview

The work of the newspaper *Latgolas Bolss* is divided into two periods: the first related to its founding and publication in Latvia (1943–1944) and the second—to its publication in exile (1946–1985).

The history of the newspaper reaches back to the end of the 1930s when a Latvian publishing house known as “Joņa Cybuļska izdevnīceiba” initiated by the poet, educator and publisher Jānis Cibuļskis (1911–1997) and the writer and publisher Vladislavs Locis (1912–1984) was founded (Latgales dati; Paukste et al.). Its work was interrupted by the change of powers and WWII events until 1943, when Locis obtained the licence of an independent publisher and the publishing house, known as “VI. Loča izdevnīceiba”, continued its activity in Daugavpils—a city in south-eastern Latvia. The first issue of the newspaper under the title *Latgolas Bolss* was published on 3 November, 1943 in Daugavpils, and from summer 1944—in the capital Riga under the conditions of the German occupation (1943–1944) (Datubāze...). The newspaper managed to publish 55 issues and “reflected the life of the local community, followed socio-political events in the world, published articles by the representatives of the Church, holiday addresses, as well as original texts on cultural history, law, journalism [...]” (Murinska 376-377).

After the Soviet reoccupation and Locis's forced emigration to Western Europe in 1944, Vladislavs Locis's publishing house resumed its work in exile and the first issue of the weekly newspaper under a new title *Latgola*—a continuation of *Latgolas Bolss*—was published on 5 September 1946 (the first editor-in-chief—Norberts Trepša) in displaced persons (DP) camp in Neuötting am Inn (1946–1949), later—in Munich (1949–1954) (Germany). After nine years of being known as the newspaper *Latgola*, from 15 January 1955 to 26 January 1985, it was published with its original title—*Latgolas Bolss* (the first editor-in-chief—Leonards Latkovskis (1948–1955) by “Latgaļu izdevnīceiba”—the successor of Locis publishing house. The editorial board of the newspaper was located in different cities and countries—Louisville, USA (1955), Strasbourg, France (1955–1956), Hollywood (1957), San Francisco (1957–1970) and Denver (1971–1985), USA. The newspaper was aimed at preserving Latgalian culture in exile and bringing together the Latvian community scattered around the world by fostering their Christian belief (Murinska). After the restoration of independent Latvia, the edition was renewed in Daugavpils on 15

May 1993, however, it was suspended after 6 issues due to financial issues (Latgales dati; Murinska).

Religious Holidays as Part of National Identity and Lost Homeland

For the current research thematically relevant publications can be found in the newspaper immediately after the end of WWII when it was published in a displaced persons camp in Neuötting am Inn. It can be explained by the attempts to overcome the loss of family, home and homeland, as well as to search for the possibilities for reviving and preserving a feeling of connectedness and a sense of belonging in circumstances of fear of losing one's national, ethnic and religious identity due to the interruption of intergenerational communication of values. The analyzed texts reveal that the older generation's staying behind, being deported or passing away was perceived as a tragic loss not only for a specific family, but also for the nation as it was believed that Latvianness was taken "to the grave with them" (Grišāns "Atmines nu pogótnes" 2).

On the one hand, the articles under the study were predominantly devoted to presenting religious festivities and traditions, as well as their attributes and rituals, within the frame of memory of the time in independent Latvia (the category of the past). The experience the Latvian Latgalian authors had gained in free Latvia was described in the context of the "golden past" and nostalgia. Such a view on festive traditions complied with the triad of the time typical of early romanticism—the past (Golden Age) was replaced by the present (Iron Age), and then followed by the future equivalent to the past (Golden Age). The Latvians in exile attributed this perception of time to Latvia's historical, political and social reality when the flourishing newly-found country lost its independence and masses were deported to Siberia, whereas thousands were forced to flee.

On the other hand, the articles were aimed at preserving cultural heritage and educating the younger generation (the category of the future). Recognizing the fact that the younger generation growing up in exile, where foreign influences "like a whirlwind" swept over

(Latkovskis "Tradīciju nūzeime" 1), was constantly brought under the process of assimilation, representatives of the intelligentsia (Jezups Grišāns, Anna Konāns, Leonards Latkovskis, Jezups Voskāns, Ontons Zvīdris etc.) considered their duty to popularize the traditions of these festivities: "[...] attention now is focused on one thing: maintaining [Latvian] language and [festive] traditions" (Konans "Uz jaunō goda slīkšņa" 2) (the category of the present). Thus, via these written texts, the Latvians working in the field of culture were striving to unite the exiled Latvians

and promote the preservation of their national and cultural identity in the unfamiliar cultural environment:

Traditions in their totality contain and preserve nationality [...]. Those not ashamed of their traditions living among foreigners do not run the risk of merging with the mass and being lost to their own nation. (Latkovskis “Tradīciju nūzeime” 1)

These publications were aimed at not only preserving the Latvian Latgalian identity and Latgalian as the values of the Latvian culture, but also at uniting the people abroad for the hoped-for homecoming:

[The Latvians] live only with the thought about their homeland, about the future—freedom, perfection—, because the present is void like a mother’s heart who has lost her only child. (Rancāns 5)

The authors of the articles underlined a deep conviction that faith was a spiritual basis which would help to ensure the Latvian nation’s “physical and spiritual existence” (Latkovskis “Vacōs latvīšu tradīcijas” 2) and “national unity” (Latkovskis “Tradīciju nūzeime” 1), and that the only way for the Latvians to exist as a nation was, as it was emphasized repeatedly, to “remain a Christian nation” (Latkovskis “Vacōs latvīšu tradīcijas” 2).

Following the Liturgical calendar was the means to preserve a link with the ancestors and ensure continuity, as well as to build a stable life in the future. For centuries, the identity of Latvia in the European cultural space, as stated in *The Constitution of the Republic of Latvia*, has been shaped by “universal human and Christian values” (1922). The significance of Christian traditions and values, including celebrating religious holidays, was widely reviewed and acknowledged as the approved basis: “Church festivities and teachings have affected the lives of our ancestors in all of their completeness” (Latkovskis “Tradīciju nūzeime” 1).

The written testimonies under the analysis reveal the fact that within the limits of their possibilities, the Latvians in exile tried to cherish all their ancestors’ traditions and customs to preserve Latvian cultural heritage in as unaffected form as possible. It was natural for them to include their reflections within the binary opposition “then—now” or “the past—the present”. In comparing the experience of celebrating festivities in their native country, refugee camps, and other foreign countries, the authors of the newspaper articles consistently used the adverb “before”

(in the homeland)— at a time when “morals of fathers were alive” (Konans “Pagōjušī Zīmas svētki” 3)—and juxtaposed it to the adverb “after”—the time in exile when “[...] everything, except the naked life, is lost” (Leidumnīks “Zīmas svātku sveceites” 2). For the Latvians in exile, the first conception was related to freedom, stability, joy and happiness, while the second—to the longings for the lost homeland and emotional pain. For this reason, the mode of presentation of religious holidays was not only emotional, but also motivational:

[Christmas in Latgale]

In Latgale, Christmas was [celebrated] modestly, but sincerely and with love. (Konans “Zīmassvātki dzimtinē” 2)

There was much of poetry typical of simple people, untouched by a life mechanism and practicalness as yet. (Latkovskis “Svātki” 3)

This was a festivity about excellence. (Ibid. 2)

[Easter in Latgale]

[...] a Catholic man longed for Easter and spring. At least, some time ago it was so in the homeland. (Zvīdris “Leldīnas un pavasari gaidūt” 1)

[...] you wouldn't find any other place where Easter was waited for with such great solemnity and celebrated with such a pure joy as it was once done in our native country Latvia and was regularly practiced in our dear region Latgale. (Vōskāns 2)

[...] nowhere else have I experienced such joy and enthusiasm on Easter as in Latgale. (Grišāns “Leldīnu svātki Latgolā” 1)

The descriptions were permeated with the authors' autobiographic memories, nostalgia for the lost past, and a tendency to idealize the formerly observed and experienced during celebrating religious festivities, which reveals both individual and collective history.

Christian (Catholic) Traditions of Celebrating Christmas and Easter in Latgale

The conducted study revealed that a part of publications on Christian holidays can be viewed as informative texts (focusing on specific traditions and rituals) permeated with both unpleasant/ deactivated and activated¹—being upset, sad, depressed, tense etc.—, and pleasant/ activated—being alert, excited, hopeful etc.— emotions. The tendency to describe in detail Catholic holidays and their celebration

1 More on differentiating emotions by activations and deactivations, see Acheampong et. al.

traditions can be demonstrated by reflections on Christmas that constitute the majority of texts on religious holidays. Christmas is often described in the context of tragic events in the history of the home country, the importance of praying for offenders and forgiving them their sins and wrongdoing is emphasized:

We, those living in a foreign country, are obliged to pray for our oppressed and exhausted homeland and celebrate holidays with the spirit of those Christmas in our hearts which we had in our free homeland, and we have to pass this spirit over to our children and grandchildren. (Latkovskis “Zīmassvātki” 1)

Focusing on specific Christmas traditions followed in free Latvia, in his publication “Svātki” [Holidays] (1956), Latkovskis mentions the main attributes and symbols of this holiday—the white tablecloth and hay under it (an analogy with the manger of Bethlehem, where new-born Jesus Christ once slept), observance of strict fasting, prayer, going to church:

A strict fast was kept on *Kūču* day: adults did not eat at all, only children were given a little food suitable for the day of fasting. And when the first stars were visible in the sky, the family sat down at the table on which food was laid [...]. Everyone stood up, led by the father, recited the prayers [...]. After singing some holiday songs, the family went to bed, got up early in the morning and rode a horse-drawn carriage to church. (Latkovskis “Svātki” 2, 3)

In the article, Latkovskis also provides a detailed analysis of such Christmas activities typical in Latvia and his native region Latgale as sharing *kaladas* or wafers—a thin blessed unleavened wheat bread, which symbolizes Jesus Christ, and is also a symbol of love and reconciliation (*Zemīte*),¹ and preparing *kūčas*—a special festive dish.² Although the newspaper article aimed at emphasizing the importance of traditions in order to ensure the preservation and continuity of religious holidays, its didactic function is also clearly observed:

[*kaladas*] symbolize the Christian spirit and can be traced back to the traditions

1 According to the old Latgale tradition, with the beginning of Advent that starts four weeks before Christmas, the parish priest visited each family of the parish, gave his blessing to the family and the house, asked religious questions to the children checking their knowledge and distributed *kaladas* (M.).

2 For a detailed description, see Grīns and Grīna.

of early Christians—to stick together, help and defend one another. [*Kūčas*] are whole wheat grains cooked or, to be more accurate, stewed in a small saucepan. When grains are already soft, honey is added, if there is no honey, you can do with treacle. Wheat and honey symbolize the Savior's arrival. Wheat is the most valuable grain given by the earth, clean, without husk. Honey, too, is clean and valuable and sweet—production of industrious bees. It symbolizes a new era, connection with the arrival of Christ. (Ibid. 2-3)

In the paper “Zīmassvātku tradīcijas” [Christmas Traditions] (1964), Latkovskis also focuses on the linguistic aspect of religious traditions, thus proving his erudition and foreign language skills. The author describes the origin and meaning of the refrain *kaladu*, pointing out to the fact that Christmas was closely related to the processes and changes in nature:

Kindred forms can be found in the Ancient Indian or, to be more precise, Sanskrit language: *kala* means ‘time, death, unavoidable fate, season’, *kalata* ‘just the right time to do something’, *akla* ‘at the wrong time’ (*alfa privatium*), *kaladharmā* ‘law of the time, unavoidable death’. The form of our refrain *kaladu* is kindred to the Sanskrit form *kalata* which expresses: now is just the right time (the turning point of the sun towards spring and lengthening of a day). (Latkovskis “Zīmassvātku tradīcijas” 2)

The newspaper articles published in Latgalian during the period under analysis also provide information on traditions of celebrating Easter in Latgale, however, the number of publications on Easter is smaller in comparison to the number of newspaper articles on Christmas. For example, in an expanded article “Leldīnu laiks” [Easter Time] (1962), Voskāns lists the most essential, to his mind, festivity activities—consecration of willow-branches in church, taking part in the Holy Mass and the festive procession:

On Palm Sunday, willow branches were taken to church to consecrate them, and those who slept late were also not forgotten and received a kind of ‘blessing’ [...]. The Holy Mass began. The whole church hummed like a beehive, the organ was played and exaltation songs were sung. After the Holy Mass, followed a procession, all the congregation went round the church. (Voskāns 2)

Unlike Latkovskis, Voskāns is more focused on church ceremonies and the fixation

of its details, rather than celebrations of religious holidays at home.

Pre-Christian (Latvian Pagan) Traditions of Celebrating Christmas and Easter in Latgale

In the early twentieth century in Latvia, there was a tendency to return to pre-Christian, “national” religion (so-called Neopaganism or *Dievturība* movement, which as a reconstructed form of paganism developed in Latvia in the 1920s and still exists nowadays (Stasulane “A Reconstructed Indigenous Religious Tradition in Latvia” 1)).¹ This process was provoked by the necessity “to substantiate the right of the Latvians to create their nation” (Ibid. 4) after the proclamation of independence of the Republic of Latvia (1918) and it was based on a specific mission “to unite the Latvians, putting forward indigenous religious values as the unifying element” in such a way making “Christianity more Latvian” (Ibid. 3). Similarly, ethnic, national and religious identities overlapped for the exiled Latvians after WWII, thus contributing to maintaining and succession of ethnic, national and religious values: “It would be in vain to look for a purely national element in Latvian traditions that is not somehow related to the spirit of Christianity” (Latkovskis “Tradīciju nūzeime” 1).

In the newspaper, next to the publications about the liturgical year, the nature of religious holidays and the nuances of proper celebration, several publications appear, in which pre-Christian/ Pagan traditions and customs of Christmas and Easter are dwelt upon, thus confirming the syncretism of pagan and religious holiday culture characteristic of Latvian culture. The descriptions of the ancient celebrations of Christmas available in the periodical mainly include descriptions of ritual activities and/ or plays. In the article “Svātki”, Latkovskis mentions the ancient Christmas activity *čigānos iešana* [going “gypsies”]—a folklore tradition of wearing masks in the time period starting from Christmas Day until the Star Day (6 January) (Rancāne 81):

[on Christmas] [people] went “čygonūs” [went mumming—visited other people wearing special clothes, masks] or welcomed “čygonus” [mummers] at their own homes. (Latkovskis “Svātki” 3)

In his article “Zīmassvātku rūtaļas (Nu atmiņu lūka)” [Christmas Games (From Memory Circle)] (1958), Bojars focused on games “Vylks i koza” [A Wolf and a Goat] and “Īkoru daleišona” [Distribution of Rings] practiced in Bērzgale civil par-

1 For detailed information on the movement, its history and transformations, see Stasulane “The Dievturi Movement in the Reports of the Latvian Political Police...”; Stasulane and Ozoliņš.

ish, Latgale region; thereby he emphasized their ancient, mythological origin and playfulness:

[...] a wolf was trying to get into the yard after a she-goat, but the players covered it up with their hands. When a wolf managed to get into the yard and catch the she-goat, the she-goat replaced the wolf, but the wolf played the role of the inquirer, and the game went on again [...]. (Bojars 2)

In former times, the name *ikor* was given to a ring, which, perhaps, was borrowed from the word *ikōroit, īgyut, īmontoit* [to desire, to get, to acquire]. [...] One of the players was a distributor of *ikors*, the other—a guesser trying to guess into whose hands the *ikor* was put. The distribution of *ikors* was done with the guesser looking [in whose hands the *ikor* was put], and either seeing or not seeing it, as it had been agreed on. [...] the distribution of *ikors* usually began with singing [...]. (Ibid.)

In the analyzed works, the ancient customs of celebrating the spring equinox were described more often and more widely than those of the winter solstice. Zvīdris informed about Latvian Easter celebration traditions in his article “Leldīnas un pavasari gaidūt” [Waiting for Easter and Spring] (1982), where the diversity of egg painting methods in former times has been described:

[...] painting eggs, which was done by boiling eggs in onion skins or in birch-tree leaves which were obtained from birch besoms, since trees didn’t have leaves so early in spring. There was no dearth of artificial colors and egg varnish as well. (Zvīdris, “Leldīnas un pavasari gaidūt” 1)

An expanded description of another important tradition—erecting spring equinox swings—can be found in Zvīdris’ article under the title “Leldīnes” [Easter] (1966). In the publication, the author has enthusiastically fixed the tiniest details of the construction so essential for Latvian national culture:

First, logs were barked smooth, then holes were chiseled and bored to a definite measure, two round and deep holes were dug, after that, beams were raised perpendicularly and the butt ends of the logs were dug deep in the ground. For these mighty poles to be stable, they were propped up by supports, since they could get loose at swinging. Then two swing poles were prepared and hung on the swing posts. For all connections to be strong and safe, they were bound

with metal and fastened with screws. (Zvīdris “Leldīnes” 1) [a long description of erecting the swing follows].

It is noteworthy that this publication was supplemented by “Redakcijas pīzeime” [Editorial Board Remark] (the author—Leonards Latkovskis—one of the editors of *Latgolas Bolss* at that time), which described the tradition of *ūlu kačōšonas* [rolling of eggs]:

[...] a piece of a shingle was chosen [one-piece wood], resembling a small trough, with a hollow. [...] both ends of the shingle were open [...]. To roll eggs, the shingle was placed on some supports, about 45 [degrees] slantwise. One egg was placed on the lower end and the other egg was let rolling freely down from the raised end. The rolling egg hit the egg on the lower shingle end. The stronger egg cracked the weaker egg, and the cracked egg was lost [...]. (L. L. 2)

This activity, as evidenced by the latest survey, is no longer widely spread in the Latgale region (Kovzele “Svētku kultūras transformācijas pierobežā...” 81-82).

Religious Holidays as a Mirror of Society: One’s Own vs. Other Values

Since Christmas has often been perceived as the only time of the year for maintaining active on-site relationships between distant family relatives (Cheal), it is celebrated on a grand scale. Gift exchange has long been a traditional part of Christmas, however, gift culture has been deeply ingrained in Western societies as a social, cultural and economic experience on a much greater scale than in other parts of the world (Belk).

The conducted study revealed that the exiled Latvians struggled with accepting different holiday celebration traditions, especially with local people’s “obsession” with the cult of gifts, as well as with the uproar and noise in the streets, which, in the authors’ opinion, erased the initial sacral meaning of Christmas as a time of silence and charity. The extreme focus on purchasing gifts and other attributes of religious holidays was perceived as a distraction from their faith. While holding onto their memories and building their new lives abroad they still prioritized the spiritual and natural over the material and artificial.

While describing her experience in the USA, Konāns mentioned that weeks until Christmas was the busiest time of the season as “[...] shops are full of people who are buying gifts, starting from expensive furniture and ending with toys”

(Konans “Pagōjuši Zīmas svētki” 3). Even financial instability didn’t stop many from borrowing great sums of money to follow the rules dictated by the consumer society. Leidumnīks provides a similar description of the pre-holiday situation observed in the USA: “[...] here everyone runs, hurries, carries home bundle after bundle, still thinking whether they have not forgotten about anybody” (Leidumnīks “Zīmassvātku breinums” 3). According to the Latvian authors’ observations in foreign countries, the concept of “holy” was frequently mixed up with the concept of “profane”, Christmas was turned into a “matter of shops”. Therefore, the massive usage of religious attributes for commercial purposes caused considerable dissatisfaction among them:

Luxurious shops become cathedrals of a modern man, where [working] in the sweat of one’s brow you can get everything you desire. [...] From the silence of the small stable in churches and Bethlehem, angels have joined the crowd of markets. (Spōgis 1)

If inhabitants of free Latvia “spoke about [Christmas] and waited for it from the Advent already” (Konans “Zīmassvātki dzimtinē”, 2), then while encountering new cultures in exile the internal (spirituality) aspect was overshadowed by the external (colorfulness and splendor). The traditional perception of Advent as the beginning of the Christian liturgical year, which was associated with fasting, peace, silence and reflection was contextualized within nostalgia:

We see a great difference if we compare the old Christmas with the present one here, in the USA. Now, you, poor man, don’t feel and are not enthusiastic about the approaching Christmas, since everything is as monotonous as on any other Sunday: without Advent, without the peaceful four-week fast, which we had in our homeland Latgale, and which was the time of silent reflection and solemn preparation for celebrating our Savior’s birth. [...] Now everybody [does everything] only for oneself. The old traditions fade into oblivion. (Grišāns “Zīmassvātki” 2)

The joy of celebrating religious holidays, as reflected in the newspaper, was genuine only in the homeland as “the source of this joy and happiness was true faith and love for the God and those of one’s nearest” (Grišāns “Leldīnu svātki Latgolā” 1). Great attention was paid to comparing the moments they had spent in their homeland in serenity and tranquility before religious holidays as they allowed to

feel the presence of God in their homes. Religious holidays, celebrated once in their native country, were attributed to “holy time” (Bojars 2), when “happiness,” “joy,” “peace” (Anspoks 1; Grišāns “Atmines nu pogótnes” 2; Grišāns “Leldīnu svātki Latgolā” 1; Grišāns “Zīmassvātki” 2; Vōskāns 2), and “spirit of concord” (Nautris 3) reigned in families. They were compared to the idyll full of bliss, when “[...] a special God’s blessing and peace prevailed in the Christian community and homes” (Grišāns “Atmines nu pogótnes” 2). In exile, joy was perceived as feigned as it was stimulated not from within, but from without, which contradicted the religious peoples’ belief that inner peace comes from inside, not from outside. Regret was expressed that exile made celebrating according to former traditions impossible (Grišāns, “Zīmassvātki” 2).

The authors of the newspaper articles saw Latvian cultural values as endangered and feared that with time they would be taken by strange but at the same time in some way attractive and exotic foreign traditions or, as they were referred to, “half-savage dances” on television (Grišāns, “Atmines nu pogótnes” 2). Other cultures and customs were initially perceived as a threat to one’s own culture and the continuity of ancestors’ traditions due to different value systems. The balance was searched for and with time, having settled in their new home countries, it was acknowledged that it was impossible and unnecessary to alien oneself from both either old or new traditions. Having recognized that, in parallel to different means of adaptation, various attempts were made to safeguard Latvian values and assert their own ethnic, national and religious identity: the Latvian community in exile revolved around Latvian Cultural Centers, Latvian fraternities, Latvian heritage and language schools, and Latvian congregations. The wish to preserve one’s identity and the need to adapt to the new Western lifestyle contributed to the phenomenon of hybrid or double/ multiple identity (also known as inclusive identity) when the categories within the binary opposition “one’s own – other” no longer had clearly observed boundaries.

Conclusion

As revealed by the analysis of the text corpus, reflections on Christian holidays (Christmas and Easter) in the exile newspaper *Latgolas Bolss* were primarily aimed at preserving the Latvian identity and the Latgalian language as values of the Latvian culture. For the exiled cultural activists, it was important to unite the Latvians abroad through the perceived ties between faith and national belonging as they saw a link between religion and national identity and recognized them as entwined phenomena. In contemporary Latvia with no official or preferred religion,

only 11% of Latvia's inhabitants believe that "religion and national belonging go hand in hand" (Kishi and Starr), however, Latvian Catholics who fled the country in the 1940s believed that national solidarity could be built not only through folklore (ethnic identity), but also through faith (religious identity). According to Tadeušs Puisāns, an exiled historian from Latgale, to be Christian meant being Latvian (see: Misāne), this view was adopted by many Latvian Catholics for whom highlighting Christian holidays and festive culture in general, including pre-Christian heritage, became one of the means of preserving national identity and unity.

In reconstructing Christian holiday traditions from afar at a time when homecoming was impossible due to the Soviet totalitarian regime, the Latvian Latgalian authors presented informative and emotional texts that have become a part of collective memory. The depictions of religious holidays were imbued with nostalgia for the lost homeland and concern about losing one's identity and culture. The binary oppositions in the conceptual categories of space ("homeland—foreign country"), time ("then—now"), and value system ("one's own—alien") allowed the exiled Latvian intellectuals from Latgale to highlight the crucial role of the Christian (Catholic) faith in both adapting to changes and challenges in a new country and reconstructing and negotiating identity in exile.

The conducted research also testifies to refugees' struggle in a new cultural environment while trying to keep their hope for returning to the lost paradise. Knowledge of celebrating religious holidays in homeland juxtaposed with the observed and experienced celebration forms in a foreign country were perceived within a binary opposition "one's own—alien", where "one's own" was characterized by the sacral, natural, and tranquil, but the "alien"—by the profane, artificial, and tumultuous. Differences in value systems manifested themselves within the tensions between the past, present and future or between the real and the desired.

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Phenomenon of Memory: Different Representations, Comparing the Works by Thomas Brussig and Pauls Bankovskis

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Abstract Today, as generations change, the interest in the Soviet Era, particularly in the collective and individual memory increases. Literature is one of information about this period. Moreover, literature is no longer just the source of individual meaning-making or the identity and consciousness formation. A literary text nowadays is epochal signs' repository of the codes. In this context, two novel have been analysed in the paper the novel “Am kürzeren Ende der Sonnenallee” (*The Short End of the Sonnenallee*, published in 1999) by the German writer Thomas Brussig and the novel “Čeka, bumba & rokenrols” (*Reds, Rats and Rock'n'Roll*, published in 2002) by the Latvian writer Pauls Bankovskis. The present research proposes the solution for the interpretation of the text, emphasizing the role of the literary text in encoding of cultural memory. For this purpose, two works from the same period were chosen. The focus of the research is on the authors' experience and the the interpretation of the “text experience” meaning. Using the applicability of semiotics and phenomenological-hermeneutic methodology, the different approaches of both writers have been revealed, reflecting the Soviet period from the perspective the childhood - youth memories. The research methodology is based on the insights of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), Yuri Lotman (1922-1993), Umberto Eco (1932-2016), Aleida (1947) and Jan (1938) Assmann, Svetlana Boym (1959-2015).

Keywords cultural memory; individual memory; semiotics; phenomena¹

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Introduction

The paper focuses on two novels, highlighting the function of the repository of literary memory. Nowadays, literature is no longer just a source of individual meaning-making or identity and consciousness formation. In connection with the period of the Soviet regime, the interest in collective and individual memory as a paradigm of literature and culture increases. where the codes of the epochal signs accumulated in literature from individual memory can influence collective memory. Modern literature has changed so significantly it is not enough to apply the classical methods of interpretation. The present research proposes a solution for the interpretation of the text, emphasizing the role of a literary text in encoding the cultural memory. For this purpose, two works from the same period were chosen: the novel “Am kürzeren Ende der Sonnenallee” (*The Short End of the Sonnenallee*, published in 1999) by the German writer Thomas Brussig and the novel “Čeka, bumba & rokenrols” (*Reds, Rats and Rock'n'Roll*, published in 2002) by the Latvian writer Pauls Bankovskis. The focus of the research is on the authors' experience (events in their lives) and the interpretation of the “text of experience's” meaning. Using the applicability of semiotics and phenomenological-hermeneutic methodology, the different approaches of both writers have been revealed, reflecting the Soviet period from the perspective of childhood-youth memories. The research methodology is based on the insights of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), Yuri Lotman (1922-1993), Umberto Eco (1932-2016), Aleida (1947) and Jan (1938) Assmann, Svetlana Boym (1959-2015).

Description of the Method

The functional value of fiction has been transformed in the process of cultural and social changes. A literary text, as a medium of the particular culture, carries out one of its several communicative functions: informing the addressee; maintaining collective cultural memory; integrating into a certain cultural context as coding

or selection of signs; initiating the addressee's self-knowledge as direct individual knowledge of world phenomena and code creation (Lotman, 2019).

The interaction of cultures is influenced by the factors such as individual experience and the interpretation of phenomena resulting from it. The communication between a work of fiction and a reader allows for unexpected discoveries, creative participation of a reader, as well as the reproduction of familiar but forgotten notions in memory. The interpretation of a text focuses on the conditionality of a human being in the social system and the historicity of experience - the moments before understanding (e.g. traditions, prejudices, perceptions, etc.). According to H. G. Gadamer, philosophical hermeneutics focuses on the study of objective conditions that precede prior knowledge and understanding. Interpretation is an understanding-based process; it depends on language, consequently, on the system of signs and meanings (Gardemer 253). Thus, the assumption may not be confirmed in the course of the reception of a text, but it may also fully or partially coincide with the author's intention, as it depends to a large extent on the reader's knowledge. Prior conceptions and assumptions are important in the reception of any text, and they also contain culturally specific signs.

By creating and interpreting signs, people produce meanings. Thus, signs become signs when they are given meanings. Gottlob Frege (1848-1925) recognized that a sign has not only an object meaning but also a conceptual meaning. A sign is associated with an object and contains information about it. The nature of the information, its, is determined by the system, in which the object is embedded (Frege, 1892). Such a system can be shaped by the context of the particular culture. The set of culturally specific signs forms the text of these signs. Thus, in the process of interpretation, the meanings of signs may be known, but at the same time the combinations of signs may remain unclear. Meanings are created by people according to the codes of which they are normally unaware.

Culture acquires, stores and transmits information through the signs—the signs are used in the communication process. According to Umberto Eco, culture can be studied as communication. Semiotics is thus defined as the communication encompassing cultural processes, where certain objects are designated by certain recognizable signs. Signs are based on the transfer of meaning, and they are divided into the following groups iconic signs (signs based on similarity); indices (signs based on connection); and signs based on cultural traditions (symbols - as a designation of a new object). U. Eco suggests that codes as a conventionalized system are a prerequisite for communication processes and mutual understanding. Readers use their own experience and prior knowledge to perceive and recognize

the cultural sign encoded in a work of fiction. U. Eco claims that the sign created on the basis of transference does not represent the properties of the object, but the conditions of its perception. Encoding, or the principle of sign recognition, is the basis for the selection of text interpretation conditions. U. Eco considers this coding to be a natural and independent process, unrelated to cultural conventions. It is up to a semiotician to determine what in the formation and coding of signs corresponds to the individual's nature and what to collective thinking (Eco, 1972).

The perception of space and time, both in the consciousness of an individual and in the collective cultural consciousness, is embedded in the form of signs. The designations of reality perceptions are embedded in the structure of a particular society, in the tradition of its codes. Each individual, like the society he or she represents, understands the phenomena of the world on the basis of either first-hand, experiential knowledge or a borrowed, traditional opinion. Phenomena are thought to change with time, place and the context of sensory perception. In each act of sensory perception, a new meaning or an invariant of the meaning of the phenomenon under study is discovered. The phenomenon under study is thus fixed and viewed through the prism of consciousness, revealing its meanings. The particular cultural phenomenon is studied using the material that has been uncovered in the process of interpretation. Perception "completes" the phenomenon as a holistic image, however, perception is variable; therefore, the revealed meanings can also be different.

Based on Edmund Husserl's phenomenology, in the interpretation of a text, the meaning of a phenomenon is explained and the significance, which is given by consciousness regardless of experience, is understood. The interpretation focuses on the stream of consciousness, which has no objectivity and which elements are phenomena (phenomenon). According to Husserl's philosophy, a phenomenon is something that reveals itself, acts as an element of pure consciousness and includes a verbal sheath, mental experiences and an object positioned by knowledge (Husserl 429). In phenomenology, a phenomenon that is one's own invention is more consistent with reality than borrowing. In the phenomenologist's version, a constant text of culture is a memory database. Past experiences are the raw material for an individual to create something new. Phenomenologists are therefore interested in the activity of consciousness that stimulates the imagination - the modeling of the future based on the individual's experience. Consequently, the reconstruction of the past and tradition, where it is important to believe in what you remember, is not relevant.

Every text (as a system of signs) can contain codes created and accepted during the particular time, persistent, socially recognizable and also unknown. The joining

up of the text's author in a particular cultural coding tradition creates a mutually understandable communication between an author (as an addresser) and a reader (as an addressee). A writer can use different types of cultural signs within a certain tradition of cultural coding. These can be philosophical abstractions, allusions, oppositions, religious rituals, images from works of art, intertextual quotations, etc.

The interpretation of the experience structures reveals how the interaction of space and time of human existence, an individual and society is understood and perceived. Thus, the relation between old, traditional and new cultural texts, which is grounded in the collective consciousness of an individual and society, is a compelling topic in cultural semiotics and phenomenology. The identification and inclusion of codes in a classification is possible using both semiotics and phenomenology. As one of the basic functions of a text, the transmission of information becomes the part of cultural memory and reveals important starting points for cultural dialogue.

Every memory is an interpretation, and it does not mean that there is no naked truth. Memory is a prop, and by interpreting I learn what they meant to me. The notion of collective memory is not a metaphor, because it is not based on an analogy between personal and collective memory, but on the contact and interaction between the internal and the external, memory carriers and memory triggers (Assmann, "Kollektives ..."). According to Aleida and Jan Assmann's theory, it becomes possible to reflect on the mechanism of the process of collective identity formation by separating memory from the person's experience. If historical facts are fixed, attitudes towards them and perceptions of the past can be socially variable and influenced. J. Assmann made a distinction between the concept of cultural memory and the concept of communicative memory, contrasting them. He suggests that memory is dynamic and only during in communication. Thus, it is the individual memory that is linked to its carrier; it exists only as long as its carrier is alive.

"Both communicative and cultural memory are collective memories that differ in terms of content, form, media and temporal structure. According to Jan Assmann, the decisive criterion of distinction is the relevant time period" (Euler 25). Society/community creates identity-related content, and collective memory is always linked to power. Moreover, the possessor of this power influences both the content of collective memory and the identity of the community. Collective memory is united by the phenomenon of several decades of shared experience. If this experience is linked to the shared dramatic experiences, it becomes unifying for a particular community. This is why the study of collective memory also touches on political contexts, as many experiences are repressed or forgotten in certain cultures.

One of the repositories of collective memory is literature, providing the selective storage of memories' contents. Cultural memory is a phenomenon, in which memory and history are separated. "“Cultural memory” is therefore not a synonym of history and historical consciousness, but an independent form of reference to the past. It is characterized by perspective and conciseness. Rather than the sources and traces one finds, cultural texts define his/her horizons and give him/her an identity-fundamental concision through their function of modelling the world of semantics” (Assmann, “Das kulturelle ...” 17).

Literature is one way of reflecting individual memory, where narratives capture memories and reveal the experience of otherness. The system of text signs allows crossing the boundaries of time and space and makes possible the transition of collective memory into cultural memory. If collective memory dissolves or disappears over time as generations pass, cultural memory of a particular era is stored in texts as part of a common repository (museums, libraries, archives, traditions, rituals, etc.). In addition, cultural memory can be transformed by social or political events, as in the collapse of the Eastern Bloc and the liberation from the Soviet influence during the revolutionary period of 1989-1991.

The late 1980s and early 1990s experienced radical changes in the international situation. The positions of socialist power were distorted. The European democratization processes reached the countries, which were under the administration of the Soviet Union. The dictatorial regime had an impact on all areas of life for almost half a century.

Most importantly, totalitarianism influenced people's thinking and value systems. The period from 1990 to 2000 was followed by the “post-socialist period.” During this time the consequences of socialism were overcome. The fragmented social memory preserved in a certain part of society a nostalgic longing for a “life under socialism.” This has contributed to the fact that in the post-Soviet cultural space, the topic “Life during the Soviet dictatorship” was reflected in literature in different ways. Literature is characterized by self-expression and the search for identity in lost time and space. The writers attempt to deconstruct nostalgic myths about social reality during the Soviet era. In addition, a new term appeared in German culture—Ostalgie.

A lapse of time was needed to study how public perceptions of this period of the past are being shaped and transformed. For this comparative research, two works of fiction have been chosen, written more than 10 years after the collapse of the totalitarian regime in Latvia and the former East Germany. Thomas Brussig (Germany) and Pauls Bankovskis (Latvia) were born in the 60s-70s of the 20th

century. Biographical parallels explain the selection of works by these authors. They belong to the generation of writers of the same era, and their literary activity began in the 90s. Another important aspect connects the authors, namely, the starting point of their works is their own lives. Therefore, their works reflect their dreams, desires, feelings and also disappointments. In addition, the writers reflect the mechanism of dictatorship in a different way and reveal what it was like to live under such conditions and what effect totalitarianism has on personality formation.

The novel “The Short End of the *Sonnenallee*” by the German writer Thomas Brussig ironically reflects the former East Germany. The action of the novel centers around young people in the GDR. The protagonist of the story is a young man, Michael Kupish. He lives with his family in an apartment on the Street *Sonnenallee* near the West Berlin border. In everyday situations, the young man and his peers have been reflected in confrontation with the representatives of the system and their absurdities. In this context, the repression under the regime in the Eastern Bloc is a particular issue.

The novel “Reds, Rats and Rock’n’Roll” by the Latvian writer Pauls Bankovskis reflects Soviet Latvia in the style of black reality. There are many people from different walks of life in society: an old Cheka officer, a drunken poet, a swimming champion, an agent and countless other typecast characters. They represent themselves and project a broader context of the era at the same time. In the novel, several actions take place simultaneously, until unpredictable circumstances bring the characters of the text together and destroy them both physically and morally. Each of these characters has an associated storyline.

The authors represent a certain socio-cultural space. It is on this “Soviet” stage that events unfold. The actual time period is 11-12 years just before the outbreak of liberation activities in East Germany and Soviet Latvia. The authors describe the recent history: Th. Brussig - of former East Germany, P. Bankovskis - of Soviet Latvia. The time and space of the action are related to the real living space and time of the writers. Various approaches of the authors, which reflect the relationships among a human, society and ideology, have been presented in the context of post-Soviet nostalgia. In this context, the life experience of the post-Soviet individual is explored—the phenomenon of memory and the interpretation of the text meaning in the categories of space, time and human.

Phenomenon of Memory in the Novel “The Short End of the *Sonnenallee*” by Thomas Brussig

The action takes place somewhere in the late 1970s or early 1980s. The novel is set in the East Berlin in the real street of *Sonnenallee*. The events take place at the shorter

end of *Sonnenallee* next to the Berlin Wall. Right here is one of the seven border crossing points. In the text, the events are concentrated in this street; they take place in different buildings in this street (*flats, school, police station, etc.*). The artistic world in the text by Th. Brussig has been created through the dual spaces between the real world and the world of fantasy, contrasting reality and adventure. This difference is very difficult for the characters to bear, and they try to overcome it in different ways by humor, irony and exaggeration. Moreover, the Berlin Wall is of particular importance, through which the impact on the characters at different levels is revealed: the division of the state at the individual and family level is perceived as absurd.

The text contains the narrative perspective of the author, who is directly connected to the protagonist of the story. The character's system is structured around the protagonist, Michael Kupisch. The other characters are directly related to Michael (family members, relatives, friends, peers, employees of public entities, etc.). The uncle from West Berlin represents the attitudes and opinion of West German citizens towards "society on the other side of the wall." The characters represent different generations and age groups, as well as various social groups. Ideological constraints and politically dictated prohibitions influence people's everyday lives. The situations in the text reveal the absurdity of these restrictions and prohibitions. Moreover, young people's life perception differs from that of their parents' generation. They do not compromise with the ideas of adults and their views contradict to the ideological settings.

Conceptually, the reflection of space and time is based on the writer's life experience. Space is locally concentrated and tied to a specific place that actually exists. Time develops in a spiral vertical movement from the past to the future, where the past influences the present. The period represented is a period in a broader historical context. When creating the characters' system, the generation of parents and the generation of their children (young people) are contrasted. Young people are developing a different way of thinking, which asserts itself by protesting against the existing system and its rules.

Phenomenon of Memory in the Novel "Reds, Rats and Rock'n'Roll" by Pauls Bankovskis

If for Th. Brussig is the shorter end of *Sonnenallee* next to the Berlin Wall, then for P. Bankovskis Riga is as a set of different micro-spaces. The action takes place between the years 1978 - 1989, and the displayed time is specified in the text. The action takes place in Latvia, in different places in Riga. The life beyond the borders of Soviet Latvia has also been revealed. In the text by P. Bankovskis, scenes of real

life intersect with subjectivized memories of the past. They affect current events—life was tragic before, and it is still gray and hopeless. The information in the space *here* is based on false ideologically supportive facts. The information media manipulate the public by “distorting” the facts, for example by hiding the true extent of the Chernobyl disaster. The text reflects the life of confrontation *here* (Soviet space) and *there* (beyond the border of Soviet space), which is associated with longing for a better life. Moreover, movement outside this space is restricted, and in some episodes the Berlin Wall is mentioned as an opportunity to get out of the Soviet Bloc and into the West. The East Berlin motif with the Wall as a border between two opposite worlds, East and West, emphasizes the different lives. A phenomenon such as a workers' strike for better social guarantees is alien to Soviet people.

“Soviet tourists wandered like blinded pilgrims through the disproportionately wide streets of East Berlin, sometimes timidly squeezing through the wall on this side and hungrily absorbing every detail, smell and sound.” (Bankovskis 37)

The text does not reflect any of the main characters; there are many representatives of different social classes, typical of Soviet society, such as an old Cheka officer who commits suicide; a drunken poet who becomes a snitch; a group of degraded young people, and many others. The characters here live their lives, and at the same time they are involved in parallel actions, are dependent on them and at some point their paths cross. People's lives are presented as a tragicomic absurdity of existence: it is the moral degradation of society on the background of greyness and poverty. The story of Eva Kallas, a swimmer and potential champion, is tragic. Her accidental encounter with Joren, an Israeli spy, turns her into the victim of a misunderstanding. The ideological threats against the external enemy are reinforced in the society, for example against America as the “land of the enemy,” but in contrast, the young people Ilona and Josef dream of living in America, which is the land of dreams in their imagination. A peculiar character is a boy with a nylon shopping bag, who has been reflected as a casual passer-by in some scenes and an observer of the situations portrayed. This boy thus links the parallel scenes of the novel. In the epilogue, the author indicates that this boy is he himself. The child is a well-chosen image of a victim, because he is unable to assess intelligently what is going on and is therefore even more vulnerable to destructive attacks.

Conceptually, the reflection of space and time is based on the writer's life experience. P. Bankovskis uses extensively codes of realities to reconstruct it:

specific persons are mentioned (politicians—Reagan and Brezhnev, musicians—“Smokie,” the actor—Alain Delon), the typical Soviet-era TV broadcasts, interior (a straw blanket on the wall with badges and medals pinned to it (Bankovskis 266), clothing details (men in grey and brown suits, ladies in dresses and costumes tailored to “Burda” patterns (Bankovskis 277)). A striking code is society's lack of access to household goods: the restricted purchase and scarcity of goods, which led to self-repair or self-manufacture of things from spare parts.

Space is locally vast; it extends beyond the borders of the country and can be applied to life not only in Riga, but anywhere else in Latvia. Time moves in a linear circle: there is the past and the present, and the past constantly influences the present. The perspective of the future is not reflected; it remains unclear.

“Everything is falling apart. People have too short a memory. They only remember what they are told, not what really happened to them.” (Bankovskis 177)

Individuals in society have been portrayed as victims of the degrading system. Their lives are affected by random and absurd situations. Even if some individuals wanted to live differently, they would not know how to do so. The social environment depicted in the novel does not constitute an internal defence mechanism against the contingencies inspired by time and political power. It thus absorbs rather than rejects evil.

Conceptual Differences by Comparing the Categories of Texts

Childhood/youth memories as the individual cultural memory code in the context of collective memory reveal the reconstruction of the past with different approaches in each work of fiction. The representation of reality overlaps with the subjective representation of time, space and human - both writers create their own phenomenon on the background of historical tradition. In both texts, spatial and temporal references have been through the textual references to the historical facts and realities, which link a reader to the Soviet period. For the writers (and readers of their generation), this is a kind of identity consciousness. Moreover, the distance between the experience and the story enables the author to portray it as phenomenal (unique).

Ironizing this time and space, Th. Brussig accentuates the absurd. Tragic situations are presented in a comic context and offer the positive conclusion. The writer's concept of Ostalgia is a part of cultural memory. The reflection of his

experience in a historical perspective is an attempt to deal with this problematic history of Germany, overcome it and also find positive features of this period. He tries to defend his former GDR against accusations and criticisms during the Ostalgia.

P. Bankovskis is different, juxtaposing post-Soviet nostalgia to the scenes of the Soviet realism based on his experience, overlaid with sombre existential topics. These are human being's relations with the past, society, his/her surroundings and self-perception. He tries to emphasize his own experience in contrast to the public memory that "beautifies" the totalitarian regime. His textual phenomenon deconstructs the myth of the harmonious life in the Soviet period. This is emphasized in particular by the image of a Soviet child, who can be identified with the author himself and whose feelings have nothing in common with the traditional symbol of a "happy Soviet childhood." The Soviet country is portrayed as a psychic aggressor that morally undermines the characters in the novel, including the children. The adult world traumatizes them mentally.

Despite the absurdity of the Soviet regime, people lived their lives. It is therefore quite common that collective memory harbors nostalgia for the past. Both Th. Brussig and P. Bankovskis project the time, in which they lived and worked, based on their personal experience. If Th. Brussig's nostalgic meditation is positively ironic, P. Bankovskis ironizes and "paints black" the gloomy reality. Both authors use reflective nostalgia to reveal the specificity of the Soviet experience and to criticize the Soviet regime, but they have different perspectives on the role of an individual in it.

Conclusion

Transforming real time and space into the artistic one, a writer draws material from personal experience, creating his/her own system of signs. Collective cultural memory holds a set of historically accumulated codes that exist in society and data shaped by traditions. The phenomenon created by an individual thus contradicts society's habitual cultural coding system. Th. Brussig and P. Bankovskis belong to the same generation of writers in different cultural spaces, but they are united by the common topic, artistically representing Soviet space, time and a human. New perceptions and their designations, formed in the writer's experience, memory and fantasy, create different phenomena of the representation of Soviet life. The codes that are nostalgically motivated are preserved in collective memory.

Based on the essays by Svetlana Boym, collective memory is complex and unsystematic, which nevertheless allows us to describe the phenomenology of

human experience. Nostalgia, as a feature of this era, mediates between collective and individual memory. The return of contemporary humanities to the study of collective memory is the restoration of a certain conceptual framework (Boym 41–55). Nostalgia, as a reflection of the past memories, evokes a different understanding of time and space, usually a longing for the time and space that has been lost. A nostalgia-based reconstruction of the past serves to bring feelings of the past back to the present. Social nostalgia can trigger people's dissatisfaction with life in reality.

Reconstructing the Soviet period, Th. Brussig and P. Bankovskis supplement it with their own experience. Their critical thinking and longing are not opposed to each other. Negative and positive representations coexist in both works. The writers' principles of cultural sign selection or encoding can be revealed by the synergy of phenomenology and cultural semiotics, which allows to focus the reader's attention on the mechanism of cultural sign selection. A nostalgic fixation on the past can lead to a lack of openness to the future, but both writers make it possible to discover how the past relates to the present by unravelling the mysteries of history.

Revealing everyday life under the Soviet regime, situations of positive depiction make the view of the past seem nostalgic. However, the negative representation adopts such features of the Soviet regime as resistance and the strategy of survival. The artistic world of Th. Brussig and P. Bankovskis deconstructs the myth of the Soviet social reality and, contrary to nostalgia, recalls things and events that collective cultural memory has forgotten.

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Marriage and Family Relations in V. P. Krymov's Trilogy *Out for a Million*

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Abstract The literary legacy of writer Vladimir Krymov (1878-1968), born in Dinaburg (Daugavpils), comprises twenty-seven books, seven of which have been translated into English. In 1933, the trilogy “Behind the Millions” was published in Berlin, rightfully considered one of the author’s most important works. The novel represents a variant of the family chronicle, a genre particularly popular in Russian literature from the late 19th to the early 20th centuries. The history of the family often reflects the main issues of its time, stemming from the contradictions of bourgeois culture that permeated all levels of personal and socio-economic existence.

Within V. Krymov’s artistic realm, three generations of characters are clearly delineated: the older generation, the middle generation, and the younger generation. Considering the daily behaviour and customs of the Old Believers during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it is noteworthy that the problem of marriage and family life organization constituted one of the most significant challenges. Each generation of Old Believers possesses a set of values that aids survival in unfavourable circumstances, particularly during periods of persecution and repression by official authorities and the Orthodox Church. For the Old Believers, the family plays an ontologically significant role in terms of both cultural and confessional aspects, serving as a key to preserving identity and transmitting cultural values.

The older generation, guided by ancestral experience and revered norms presented in texts, largely adheres to the features of traditional family relationships, reminiscent of a medieval model. This model is characterized by a hierarchical internal structure, clear role divisions, a traditional approach to education, and a pursuit of economic self-sufficiency. The family’s role here lies in the stable and reliable organization and implementation of religious upbringing and education, as well as in the establishment and assimilation of prohibitions.

Despite the seclusion of the Old Belief, it has never existed in complete isolation

but rather in a perpetual “culturally different” environment. Representatives of the middle generation, while maintaining religiosity, develop a new value system. Their aim is wealth accumulation and the pursuit of financial success, viewed as an opportunity to achieve higher social standing and prestige. Categorical attitudes toward prohibitions no longer hold sway over this generation. While sinful behaviour pervades everyday life in the capital city of St. Petersburg, it remains unnoticed and unrecognized as a sin. Consequently, none of the younger generation members manage to create a happy family.

Keywords Old Believers; Dvinsk; Russian literature; family; marriage ¹

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Introduction

The trilogy *Out for a Million* can rightly be considered the central work in the rich creative legacy of Vladimir Pimenovich Krymov. The trilogy, originally conceived in the early 1920s and initially titled “God and Money,” had its first two volumes completed by 1926. According to the author, “As I wrote, I found myself becoming less and less satisfied with what I had written” (Krymov 5). Krymov then began rewriting and revising the previously written and published material. He explains, “Consequently, slightly over half of the content from the first and second volumes remained, rendering the title “God and Money” unsuitable as it no longer aligned with the revised content (Krymov 5).

By the time the trilogy was published in 1933, alongside the Berlin edition of “Petropolis,” it had become increasingly clear that a series of episodes from an individual’s life or a biography alone could not fully portray the socio-cultural and political changes in society. Starting from the second half of the 19th century, there

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was a growing inclination to consider social phenomena within a diachronic context, leading to the emergence of a distinct type of novel prose known as the family chronicle. In these novels, real historical time and individual psychological time are inseparable. Furthermore, the objective course of history dominates and absorbs the ideas and emotions of various characters.

In the trilogy *Out for a Million*, Krymov endeavours to depict not only the transformation of the protagonist, Arseniy Aristarkhov, but also to present a comprehensive portrayal of various aspects of everyday life in the first third of the 20th century. The theme of marriage and sexual relations holds particular significance. The writer imbues the trilogy's protagonist with episodes from his own biography. The inserted chapter, *The Childhood of Aristarkhov*, stands out as the most extensive section across all three parts. Throughout the trilogy, the main character constantly writes a book, comparing the experiences and knowledge acquired during his childhood and adolescence in the provincial Dinaburg/Dvinsk with the realities of life in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and during exile. One of the most renowned facts from Krymov's biography is associated with his father and mother's conversion from the Old Believers to Orthodoxy, and the subsequent death of his father, which was perceived by relatives as divine punishment for apostasy.

Methodology

The article analyzes the features of the Old Believers' understanding of the tasks and functions of the family as a tool for preserving, conserving, and perpetuating the religious and cultural Old Believer tradition, using V. Krymov's trilogy "Out for a Million" as an example. The Old Believers entered into marital relations at an early age. Various forms of marriage existed: marriages without church wedding prevailed among the Bespopovtsy, while among the Old Believer priests, church weddings took place. An intriguing form of marriage was considered the "withdrawal (escape)" marriage, which took place without parental consent. It is important to note that most marriages were contracted based on personal feelings or with consent.

The history of studying the emergence and development of Old Believer communities in Latvia has a long tradition. Among the notable recent works published are *The Old Believers in Imperial Russia: Oppression, Opportunism, and Religious Identity in Tsarist Moscow* by Peter De Simone and *Old Believers in a Changing World* by Crummey. In recent decades, there has also been increased interest in the study of Old Believer culture in Latvia, as evidenced by works such as "Old Believers in Latvia: Yesterday and Today" ("Staroobrjadchestvo v Latvijā: včera i segodnja"), *Old Believers in Latvia (Vecticība Latvijā)* by Podmazovs, *Old Believers of*

Jekabpils. People. Years. Events: 19th-21st Centuries (Vecticībnieki Jēkabpilī. Cilvēki. Gadi. Notikumi: XIX-XXI gadsimts) by Zimova, *Old Belief in the Baltics and Poland: A Concise Historical and Biographic Dictionary (Staroverie Baltii i Pol'shi: Kratkij istoricheskij i biograficheskij slovar)* by Baranovsky and Potashenko, and *The Old Believers of Latgale: Essays on the History of the Old Believer Societies of the Rezhitsa and Lucin Counties (2nd Half of the 17th - 1st Half of the 20th Centuries) (Staroverie Latgalii: ocherki po istorii starovercheskih obshhestv Rezhickogo i Ljucinskogo uezdov (2-ja polovina XVII - 1-ja polovina XX vv.)* by Nikonov.

Special attention should be given to the works that study the phenomenon of the Old Believer family and the attitudes of Old Believers toward the institution of marriage. Many modern Russian scientists have dedicated monographs and articles to this issue, such as “Family and Marriage Relations in the Traditional Society of the Kama Region in the 19th - Early 20th Centuries” by Agafonova, “Old Believer Family: Religious and Cultural Dominance” by Kupriyanova, and *Family in the Old Believer Culture: Experience of Historical Research* by Veselova.

Peculiarities of the genre of the family chronicle have been quite thoroughly studied by modern literary critics. Starting from the second half of the 19th century, the tendency to consider social phenomena in a diachronic context” became widespread, which was reflected in the emergence of a special type of novel prose, the family chronicle (Nikolsky 60). The history of the family was often traced on the basis of the main problems of its time, caused by the contradiction of bourgeois culture, penetrating all levels of personal and socio-economic existence. Historical time and individual psychological time are inseparable in such works; moreover, the objective course of history subjugates and absorbs the characters’ perceptions and feelings (Zakablukova 4). A characteristic feature is the presence of intra-family conflict and family relations. Of decisive importance for the entire architectonics of the genre is the nature of the relationship of the individual with other family members, the relationship between which, having a number of particular features, is built on the principle of movement from organic unity to rupture (Simonova 8).

Old Believers: Marriage in the Russian Empire

Today, a substantial body of work is dedicated to the study of the Old Believers. It is evident that the Old Believers have never been a unified and territorial community, as they were situated thousands of kilometers apart and had to adapt to regional regulations. According to several researchers, attitudes toward marriage and sexual life have played a significant role, leading to divisions and disagreements. As noted by Alexander Etkind in his monograph *Whip: Sects, Literature, and Revolution*,

“irreconcilable contradictions in matters of marriage (‘permitted sex’)” (Etkind 70) and family law often gave rise to various Old Believer and sectarian groups. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, this issue garnered substantial attention from legal experts. It is not surprising since the refusal of the church and state to legitimize the marriage of a significant portion of the population for religious reasons was a legal and juridical incident, placing them in a particularly powerless position compared to other religions.

Following the reform of the church court in 1874, this problem received special attention, as evident in publications such as I. Orshansky's “About Marriage among Schismatics” (1877), A. Borovikovsky's “On the Family Law of Schismatics,” V. Rosenblum's “Punishability of Bigamy among Schismatics,” N. Suvorov's “Civil Marriage,” N. Zaozersky's “What is a Split Marriage,” and others.

Even then, the fundamental distinction between the perspectives of priests and bespopovtsy (priestless Old Believers) was recognized. The priests “did not propose any other form of marriage apart from a church wedding, officiated by a priest who must adhere to the traditional ceremony outlined in old texts and rituals, [...]. On the other hand, the bespopovtsy demonstrated a remarkable dedication to the Russian church wedding” (Suvorov 77). Within the bespopovshchina movement, the two largest groups, the Fedoseyevites, who reject marriage, and the Pomortsy, who accept it, have spent over a hundred years attempting to convince each other of their respective righteousness but have not reached a consensus on these matters.

Old Believers: Family and Marriage in the Novel

In the first novel, *Sidor's Teachings*, the author pays special attention to depicting the life and cultural characteristics of the Old Believers. The religious worldview of the Old Believers, which influenced the entire traditional everyday culture, is intricately woven into the trilogy and intertwined with the concept of the past. The world of traditional patriarchal values and the relationships built upon these values is set in a provincial town where Aristarkhov spent his childhood, hinting at Dinaburg/Dvinsk. Arseniy Aristarkhov is the main character of the Krymov trilogy. In the first part, he is portrayed as a young man who graduated from a real school in a county town of the Russian Empire, after which he moved to Moscow. Towards the end of his student years, he begins to comprehend the “wisdom” of doing business. By the second volume, he has already become a thirty-five-year-old man who has realized his youthful dream and earned his first million. In the third volume, the protagonist appears as a fifty-year-old adult, increasingly pondering the meaning of human life and reflecting on his own life path.

Arseniy vividly recalls his childhood experiences, such as the “kirmash” and fairs that took place during Christmas time and Shrove Tuesday. He describes, “Across from our house, Gostiny Ryad was bustling with activity. In the covered gallery facing the street, girls lined up in a row, their backs turned towards the passersby. I observed them from the window of our hall, witnessing an endless array of handkerchiefs of various colours and designs. The handkerchiefs swayed as one replaced another. A yellow one would emerge, only to be replaced by blue or orange. Then orange would give way to blue, or there would be a brief empty space before the neighboring handkerchiefs shifted. The handkerchief that stepped out of the row would embark on a stroll with a gentleman along the gallery. The luckiest gentlemen would be invited for a sled ride, with those possessing a horse and sleigh being particularly sought after. The arc and shafts were adorned with ribbons, and the mane of the horse was also woven with ribbons. Bells jingled around the horse’s neck, and the sled itself was narrow, barely accommodating two people. The gentleman’s left leg protruded from the sleigh, revealing the fur-lined interior of his coat, highlighting its opulence. The cavalier elegantly glided the chosen handkerchief back and forth along Gostiny Ryad, from the ice rink to the fish market. The other girls half-turned, observing and keeping count of how many times they passed. If many times—be a wedding” (Krymov 78-79).

Additionally, Arseniy’s uncle Pavel, an old bachelor, delighted the family with his favourite story about how he nearly got married in Torzhok. To emphasize his eligibility as a groom, Uncle Pavel acquired a raccoon coat, arranged for a horse-drawn carriage, and paraded down the main street at a lively pace, “displaying the floor of the coat...so that everyone could see that it was made of raccoon fur—imagine what a remarkable groom he was!” (Krymov 96-97).

In the artistic world of V. Krymov, three generations of characters are clearly distinguished:

1) The older generation - in many respects, this represents the legendary generation of the first Old Believers who fled from Nikon’s reforms. Some of the characters also belong to this generation - the great-grandfather, grandfather, and several elderly household members who zealously preserve the rules of the first Old Believers.

2) The middle generation is the generation of fathers—in many respects, Uncle Arseniy Sidor becomes the spokesperson for the ideas of this generation. It is no coincidence that the first part of the trilogy is called “Sidor’s Teaching.” This generation is characterized not only by the preservation of the Old Orthodox faith and piety but also by the desire to become fully integrated into the surrounding

society. This society is not organized according to the model of the Old Believer community and has long considered the Old Believers to be heretics and schismatics.

3) The younger generation includes the main character, his cousins, metropolitan friends, and companions. Gradually, as the volumes progress, the main character transitions from the younger generation to the older one due to natural aging.

The representative of the older generation, Grandmother Arseniy (old woman Aristarkhova), is primarily interested in whether the family of the potential bride is Old Believer and whether they managed to preserve the faith. After that, she clarifies which Old Believer community the family belongs to, making sure they are not Belokrinniks. This is an extremely important clarification since the Belokrinichniks are the Old Believer priestly sect, which is unequivocally unacceptable for Aristarkhova. The old woman herself belonged to the Fedoseyevites—bespopovsky sect. During the events of the novel, there was a gradual transition of the Fedoseevsky communities to the Pomeranian sect.

Grandfather Arseny believes that Grishka should get married “in order to rid himself of a dissolute way of life—to stop laying cuckoo eggs at last” (Krymov), hinting at Grishka’s extramarital affairs and possibly illegitimate children. Grandfather Arseniy often spoke on this subject, laughing and making jokes, always the same, known to everyone for a long time. They all revolved around the same sexual question. Business and serious issues were always resolved by the old woman with Sidor; the old man could only verbally tease his wife, who considered such conversations sinful. She constantly pulled her husband away, frightening him with evil spirits but not forbidding him to speak on these topics.

The main exponent of the value system of the middle generation is Arseniy’s uncle, Sidor Danilych Aristarkhov. The importance of the bride’s affiliation with the Old Believers is emphasized by Uncle Arseny Sidor: “He must absolutely find someone from our circle... born and dying in the same way, so as not to introduce discord into the family” (155). However, wealth becomes the main concern for Sidor: “he only needs to find a suitable match... Those who do not seek goodness and do not run after goodness—money to money... capital to capital, and so on...” (155). Uncle Sidor, who arrived in Moscow, immediately introduces Arseniy to his cousin Grigory. Arseniy accompanies Gregory in all matters, among which the search for a bride becomes the most important. Even the preparation for the trip required considerable effort from its participants. After receiving blessings, parting words, instructions, and prayers, the cousins were ready to go. “Everything was

ready on Saturday, but it was a sin to go on the eve of a holiday; it is also impossible on a holiday; Monday is a hard day - we left on Tuesday” (Krymov 174).

In Moscow, as in all major cities of the Russian Empire at that time, it was necessary to find a person who was willing to start searching for potential brides. Danila Minaevich Shitikov, the mentor of the prayer room at the Preobrazhensky cemetery, served as such an assistant, confirming that: “There are well-born, merchant, and affluent families among our Old Believers in Moscow... They do exist. And they donate a lot to our prayer room, may God save them” (Krymov 175). By donating two hundred rubles to the prayer house, the mentor attracted a well-known matchmaker who visited all the houses and initiated the matchmaking process. The mothers of Moscow brides, who themselves regularly contributed large sums to the needs of the prayer room, asked Mentor Shitikov to find good grooms for their daughters, where “good” means “rich” (Krymov 196).

The central episode of this storyline is the visit of Arseny and Grigory to the Voskoboinikov family, who were millionaires. It is through this family that Krymov decides to illustrate the problems that many Old Believers faced in their daily lives. After the death of the head of the firm, the millionaire Voskoboynikov, all the property was bequeathed to his wife Vassa Prokofievna according to his will. “An unprecedented legal incident occurred with the will... Vassa Prokofievna turned out to be Voskoboinikov’s illegal wife, and the court did not approve the will. Distant relatives of her husband interfered, and the million-dollar fortune could have left the family. However, it was discovered that the Voskoboinikov family belonged to a schismatic sect that did not recognize marriage, and therefore, they were not legally married” (Krymov 199). In Krymov’s novel, this situation, generated by Russian legislation, is resolved in a non-trivial, one might even say fabulously folklore, manner. Eminent merchants and other influential individuals appeal to the sovereign, and “by the highest order, the property passed, according to the testator’s will, to Vassa Prokofievna” (Krymov 199). It is evident that real Old Believers, unlike the fictional characters, could not rely on such a resolution to their problems.

Vassa Prokofievna also belongs to the older generation of Old Believers, zealously observing the traditions and precepts of her ancestors. Addressing Arseny instead of Grigory, she emphasizes this once again: “It might be of interest to you to know that we strictly adhere to the Old Believers and belong to a sect that does not recognize marriage... And I, being unmarried to my late husband, lived in sin, and I won’t give my daughters blessings for marriage... They can do whatever they want against their mother’s will since times have changed, but I cannot give my blessings for marriage... If the temptation is strong in youth, it’s better to live in sin and then

repent with the Lord asking for forgiveness. However, we have no one to officiate marriages; every young woman must remain the bride of Christ... Our mentors are unable to marry, as the grace of the Holy Spirit does not rest upon them. As you may be aware, in accordance with the teachings of the Church Fathers, it is believed that in the last days, marriage cannot be consecrated (Krymov 234).

The most indicative factor is the departure from everyday behaviour patterns of the ancestors among the youth in Moscow, especially in St. Petersburg. In one of the early scenes of the novel, Arseny Okonin's Moscow friend utters the phrase: "We, the Old Believers, know a thing or two about girls. The first libertines in the world" (Krymov 15).

In Krymov's trilogy, besides depicting the traditional model of sexual behaviour in everyday culture, he also recreates at least three additional models.: 1) physical (almost animalistic) sexuality (Dionysian) characterized by passion and the subordination of all actions to the satisfaction of this passion; 2) aesthetic sexuality (Apollonian)—sex viewed as a game or entertainment, prevalent in the bohemian circles of Moscow and St. Petersburg. In this model, sex becomes an important aspect, symbolizing a luxurious lifestyle. Only those with significant wealth can fully embrace this model. 3) The third model is the philosophical (ontological) sexuality of Arseny Aristarkhov (or V. Krymov).

Grigory Aristarkhov personifies the first model: Grishka was excessively focused on women, to the point of it being detrimental to his work, often leading to troubles. The Aristarkhov family, compensating for the absence of vices such as drinking and smoking, was known for their lustfulness. Grishka was no exception within the family. He believed that life without a woman was impossible, and if he did not have a love affair for a day or two, he claimed to be unwell and unable to work. "The head doesn't function properly..." However, the type of woman did not matter to him. It could be a promiscuous woman, a high-society lady, a drunken woman of low social status, an artist, a neighbor's nanny, a city professional, an apple vendor, old or young – it made no difference to him, as long as she wasn't too delicate" (Krymov 155).

During the first part of the trilogy, Arseny becomes a witness, sometimes unwillingly, and occasionally an accomplice to such behaviour exhibited by his cousin. Such behavior by Grishka is condemned by the older generation, but at the same time Uncle Sidor speaks about Grishka's method of interacting with the opposite sex with almost envy: "Putting them in his arms and on the bed, straight away after saying hello, how are you... Why waste time with conversations," he says, "it all comes down to the same thing in the end" (Krymov 155).

However, in the world of the Old Believers, there exists a certain sexual taboo — associating with “inoverki” [belonging to other faiths] — Jewesses and Catholics. Even Grishka, who instructs Arseniy, is forced to abide by this taboo: “You must not get involved with Jewesses... It will bring trouble. Worse than Gypsies... The whole kagal will raise a fuss...” (Krymov 170). Grishka frequently talks about Jews, gypsies, and women in general as commodities. He discusses their allure, as if inquiring about the price of a horse, preferring healthy and voluptuous young ladies.

Gregory’s brother engages in sexual relations with a Catholic girl, but their Old Believer mother blames the pregnant girl rather than her son for what transpired. The only fault of her son is his involvement with a non-Christian: “He found someone to associate with, some confusion, a Polish woman—now he needs to talk to a priest... He can’t handle his own affairs” (Krymov 172). The mother’s dissatisfaction primarily stems from the fact that their sinful relationship (“Afanaska’s dirty tricks”) became public, leading to significant financial expenses, and if the case cannot be resolved, then it will be brought before the court. Such cases are likely to occur in regions with a densely populated multinational and multi-confessional population. Even today, the issue of the religious affiliation of these children is significant for many Old Believers. Marriage permission from religious mentors can only be granted if the child has been baptized into the Old Believers’ church.

Vladimir Nikonov, a researcher of the Latgalian Old Believers, emphasizes that in the western part of the Russian Empire, particularly in Latgale, which was located in the western part of the Vitebsk province, Old Believers could visit a Catholic church to legalize their marriages. However, Nikonov points out that they considered this wedding ceremony to only have legal significance, as they believed that the Catholic Church, being distant from the true faith, could not influence those who entered into marriage. It is worth noting that no compromises were made to accommodate mixed marriages with Catholics (Nikonov 31).

Sexual extramarital relationships, of course, also existed within the traditional household culture of the Old Believers. Direct indications of this can be found in Krymov’s trilogy. From the history of his family, Arseniy cites the fact that, probably, his great-grandfather was the father of Fevronya Feoktista’s daughter, who quietly lived in the Aristarhovs’ house but did not bear their last name. Grandfather turned the domestic wing into a hospital for treating prostitutes, “Even though they are promiscuous women, they still need treatment... Let them get treated, those wretches!” (Krymov 103).

In the first novel, there is an episode in which Arseniy recalls how, as a child,

the “sweeping girls” on the eve of some holiday called him to light a lamp in one of the chambers. The hero wonders why they themselves could not do it. Most likely, we are dealing with popular beliefs rather than church rules. It was believed that prostitutes did not have the right to light lamps so as not to desecrate them.

In the second volume, *We Lived Well in Petersburg*, Krymov describes the time from the start of the Balkan Wars in 1912 to the revolutionary events of 1917 and the emigration of Arseniy Aristarkhov. During this period of his life, Aristarkhov encounters a different order of sexuality. Love and sexual relationships are perceived as a continuation of business meetings, sumptuous lunches, and dinner parties. Gourmet food, expensive drinks, foreign objects, outlandish furniture, and bright decorations fill the space of the privileged. At the same time, it is significant that none of the representatives of the younger generation of Old Believers in Krymov's trilogy had a traditional wedding or followed any other model.

Conclusion

When constructing a model of the artistic world, V. Krymov frequently draws upon the facts of his own biography. Dinaburg, the writer's hometown, can be easily recognized as A. Aristarkhov's native city. The transition of the protagonist's parents from the Old Belief to Orthodoxy is also derived from the writer's actual biography. Considerable attention is dedicated to depicting the Old Believer's way of life. However, the protagonist finds himself in a dual position. On the one hand, he is bound to his extensive family through blood relations; on the other hand, he is no longer an Old Believer and thus cannot be fully embraced as one of their own. This duality in the protagonist's position is mirrored in his perspectives—he possesses a comprehensive understanding of the history, traditions, and superstitions of the Old Believer culture, yet he remains an outsider.

Aristarkhov's views (likely mirroring Krymov's own) further underscore the influence of the religious worldview of the Old Believer groups on the entire traditional everyday culture of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. However, conflicting viewpoints emerge regarding the value system and behavioural norms of the Old Believers. The more radical circles demonstrate conservatism and consistently strive to limit the sphere of rituals, safeguarding it against the infiltration of new elements and, consequently, altering the meaning of ritualistic actions. In contrast, the protagonist exhibits a more adaptable attitude toward the traditional culture and belief system. Gradually overcoming his own preconceptions, he gravitates towards the concept of individual Epicureanism. Under the pressure of the value system of the new capitalist era, the conventional understanding of

marriage and family, which has endured for two centuries, begins to crumble.

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Nostalgia for the Sailing Ships and the Sea Gone in Joseph Conrad's Autobiographical Fiction

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Abstract English modernist writer Joseph Conrad, born in a Polish nobleman family stayed a real Victorian gentleman in his life and world view. Being a sailor in the British Navy he saw the harmful influence of civilization and industry development on the sea, ships, and in human relationships. The writer knew the sea and the ships very well as he was a sailor for 20 years, which is why his autobiographical fiction is based on his real-life experience and knowledge. Steamers started substituting sailing ships at the end of the 19th century. They seemed ugly and impersonal to Conrad in comparison to sailing ships, which the writer and the sailors loved like their women, admired, and compared to the beautiful birds, and treated like alive beings. Steamers poisoned the sea and as Conrad considered, brought the sea life to an end. The spot of the ash on the surface of the old sea seemed tragic to the writer and he stayed nostalgic for the sailing ships and the sea gone in his life and writings. The synthesis of different methods has been applied during the research: biographical, historico-cultural, literary-historical, interpretational, and semiotic ones.

Keywords autobiographical fiction; nostalgia; sailing ships; steamers; the sea ¹

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Introduction

The English writer Joseph Conrad (1857–1924) got shaped as a writer under the influence of positivist–realist culture traditions and gradually became one of the most outstanding representatives of the artistic paradigm of modernism. Conrad started writing during the Victorian era (1837–1901). In the middle of the 19th century, England was the largest colonial power in the world. The rapid flourishing of positivism was based on the conviction that England can achieve everything. Considerable technical achievements facilitated and consolidated the significance of the positivism philosophy in Victorian England.

Conrad's writing is marked by the recognition of the multi-layered structure of reality and his conception of literary character as an unpredictable entity that can never be fully revealed. In Conrad's understanding, a partial vision is no less significant than omniscience; moreover, it may gain an even greater significance. Conrad's novels are related to the status of the fact, the existence of several truths, and subjective impressions. His protagonists reveal a complicated structure of individual subjectivity, which has been derived from their social and psychological experiences. Conrad's narrative moves in time, unsettling the certainty of narrative, as if unbalancing a reader from the stable position of interpretation. Conrad's prose, and also his autobiographical prose demonstrates epistemological absorption into national identity and individual subjectivity that became more and more topical in the second half of the Victorian era.

Conrad deeply perceives the world as an ontological system, he has a modernistic artistic consciousness. The germ of modernism in literature grows simultaneously from the established rules, traditions, and conditionality. Modernism is characterized by a *fresh* way of looking at human's position and function in the universe and diverse experiments in form and style. It is particularly concerned with the language and its use (Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* 516).

A substantial feature of modernism is neo-mythological consciousness that puts forward the key binary oppositions: *reality–supra-reality*, *time–eternity* in the system of world comprehension. Myth is reflexive and intellectual in modernist

conception, wherewith it is intricately linked with a writer's individually subjective world perception. Thereby, the author's worldview is offered as a result of the recreation of myth and the formation of mytheme. The features of early modernism in Conrad's sea prose become strikingly apparent. Christopher Butler points out that early modernism doubted the values of Western civilization and disputed the existence of God and universal moral principles. Early modernists experimented with form and style in the arts (Butler, *Early Modernism: Literature, Music, and Painting in Europe, 1900 – 1916* 67). The writer could create the whole epic with its own mythology within the format of a short novella or a short novel. Psychology in the depiction of protagonists' subconsciousness is immensely important, but the external events have a deep and symbolical subtext. Protagonists undergo the loss of illusions, the good no longer holds a victory over the evil, and a man cannot find harmony neither in himself nor around him.

Conrad's worldview and writing have been affected by a number of philosophers, who made a great impact on the culture of modernism generally. Among them, two major philosophers of the late 19th and early 20th century, Friedrich Nietzsche and Arthur Schopenhauer must be mentioned. Conrad wrote to the Belgian writer Andrea Reuters: The problem of life is just not so simple. I suspect you know that as well as I do. The great minds (I am thinking of Nietzsche) don't notice it. Their job is not to look so closely (Karl, Davies, *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*. 204).

Nostalgia in Conrad's Life and Fiction

Literature and memories provide a wide range of research on the complexity of nostalgia. Literature, memories, and practical research have all illustrated the role of nostalgia in sustaining meaning, identity, and social connectedness. Niklas Salmose and Eric Sandberg have stated that the relationship between nostalgia and literature is particularly close, as:

Literature deal persistently and repeatedly, with an evocation of past experience that can be considered under the rubric of nostalgia. Modern literature is especially poised for nostalgia, as it is shaped by a powerful tension between an attraction toward the past and an equally powerful drive towards the future. (Salmose, Sandberg, *Literature and Nostalgia: Vestiges of Paradise Get access Arrow* 192)

Nostalgia involves revisiting personally cherished memories that involve his

close people, places, and time. Lawrence Grossberg and Janice Radway state that nostalgia always looks backwards in search of authentic origins and stable meanings (Grossberg, Radway, *Cultural Studies* 12). Nicola Sayers has emphasized that nostalgia is aligned with memory; whether on a personal, historical, or metaphysical level (Sayers, *The Promise of Nostalgia* 16).

Conrad continuously returns to his past experience through narrative in his autobiographical fiction. His narrative mirrors his past experiences—the sailor's experiences into the writer's experiences. Memories are one of the most essential concerns of Conrad, mainly because of his biographical background. He was born in a Polish family, worked in British Navy, lived in England, and wrote in English. He experienced political exile and cultural displacement. Conrad tried to comprehend the past and was looking for intellectual inspiration in his autobiographical fiction. He wrote to James Pinker about the book *Mirror of the Sea* in 1904: Essays—impressions, descriptions, reminiscences, anecdotes, and typical traits - of the old sailing fleet which passes away for good with the last century. Easy narrative style (Karl and Davies, *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad* 114).

Conrad's Autobiographical Fiction

Latvian literary theorist Ausma Cimdina considers that the development of the autobiographical genre is a late phenomenon in world literature, and it is linked with the manifestation of the individual's freedom and self-awareness:

Memory is always a selective and discursive activity, which depends on the context of the past update, and therefore autobiographical works have to be evaluated as the art of memorizing, as a creative but not a reproductive activity. As it is reflected in the title, the regularities of the author of the semantic units (a human, I), bios (life) and graphie (notes, a text) are essential in the autobiographical texts. (Cimdiņa *Teksts un klātbūtne* 54)

Conrad's autobiographical book *Mirror of the Sea* was compiled of a series of sketches, which were first written to popular magazines and were based not only on the writer's personal memories but also on his knowledge of the sea. The title of the book has a different, more essential meaning as it is often typical for Conrad's works. The sea can be perceived as the mirror of the Universe and in the thirty-fourth chapter the author writes about the wonder of the deep:

[...] the most amazing wonder of its deep is its unfathomable cruelty. (Conrad,

Mirror of the Sea 134)

The Bible allusion on the Lord's deeds can be seen here: They saw the deed of the Lord, his wondrous works in the deep. (Holy Bible Ps. 107: 24)

Already at the beginning of the book, the reader gets the hint that the memories and the impressions of the writer contain also philosophical motives. It contains statements which express the most essential concepts of Conrad. A reader becomes aware from the very beginning that the author is a specialist who relies not only on his knowledge but also on his own personal experience. The author introduces the reader to the world of sailors and ships. However, in the book, more attention has been paid to the ships than to the sea. The ships, which leave the port and return to it, their anchors, sails, cargos, catastrophes, and captivity have been discussed in six out of fifteen essays, and the seventh one is an anthem, to the particular ship *Tremolino*. Both in England and in America the book was published in 1906. The reviewers and his contemporaries, particularly J. Galsworthy, H. James, R. Kipling and H. G. Wells praised it.

The second autobiographical work by Conrad *Personal Record* is a short collection of memories, which was written for a literary periodical. The book is a perfect sample of personal mythology. The structure of the narrative caused some embarrassment, as the literary methods, which the author used in the book were most common for Polish than for English literature. Despite the dominating conversational atmosphere, there are few fortuities in the book. The change of themes and opinions sometimes made playfully, serves for specific artistic and emotional purposes. The tone of narration is cheerful, with cool wit and sarcasm, which flashes from time to time. This tone forms the cover of self-irony, through which the reader perceives personal, confusing, and sometimes intensively emotional themes: Conrad's memories about his parents, leaving Poland with its huge patriotic inheritance, his writing in the foreign language, the dream to become a sailor, becoming a professional writer. But there is little direct intimacy in *Personal Record*, except a few sentences about his parents. The associative flow of memories lets Conrad move from a particular subject to a general problem. The events of the writer's life have been reflected in sudden flashes of reflections. The writer expresses his main ideas and opinions in the book: that the aim of creating cannot be ethical at all, and therefore all human values have been created by the human mind itself; that the secular world has been based on some very simple ideas and one of them is the idea of fidelity; that the main source of arts is imagination and not the invention. This is continuing of the ideas, which have been expressed

in the famous preface to the Conrad's novel *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"*. The distance, which the writer keeps between himself, and the reader has been increased by the fact that a lot of stories in the book come from the other source, that is from the memories of his uncle Tadeusz Bobrowsky. It encourages Conrad to create his own personal mythology – to mythologize the artifacts of his life without strikingly misrepresenting them.

Both autobiographical books supplement each other. *Personal Record* tells about the writer's national origin and about the beginning of his both professions—a sailor and a writer. *Mirror of the Sea* in its turn reflects his experience as a sailor. Both books also supplement each other as Conrad's narration to the readers. A lot of the details, which seem unimportant at first sight in both books are biographical.

Latvian literary theorist Vitolds Valeinis has stated that the comprehension of the work of art is based on the comprehension of art (Valeinis *Latvijas, literatūrtēorijas vesture* 78). Vladimir Nabokov has emphasized: “The three facets of the great writer—magic, story, lesson — are prone to blend in one impression of unified and unique radiance, since the magic of art may be present in the very bones of the story, in the very marrow of thought” (Nabokov *Lectures on Literature* 39).

These three aspects also characterize Conrad's autobiographical books.

The Sea in British and Conrad's Writings

The sea has been one of the most essential spatial categories of European culture in all time periods. Starting with the early stages of human consciousness, the most essential mythological and culture archetypes were formed attributing an important function to the elements of the sea and water in it.

In England, the sea has become a symbol of the power of the Empire since the times of the Invincible Armada in 1508. The sea is one of the central paradigms of English consciousness appearing even in the English national anthem: Britannia! rule the waves (Thomson, *The Poems* 9).

The importance of the sea and seafaring throughout the centuries has turned the sea into a national myth. It was most precisely reflected in the sea text.¹

Conrad received European education; he went to the sea for 20 years and perceived the sea both as a well-known element and a huge store of symbols, which had been compiled by culture over the centuries. The sea is one of the main topoi in Conrad's writing. The life philosophy of the writer is closely concerned with his sea-farers philosophy and his attitude to the sea.

1 Sea text includes the sea topic texts, for example, limericks, poetry, prose, autobiographical texts, etc.

The repercussions of this conception appear vaguely also in some of Conrad's *sea prose* works. The romantic and dreamer's idea of the sea voyage just for an adventure is soon dispelled in his autobiographical work *The Mirror of the Sea*, where Conrad identifies the prosaic and practical skills of sea-going that form the moral side of bread-winning.

Conrad's *sea prose* is inseparable from his political opinions. He was among those who considered that the land was hopelessly demoralized and the sea was the last unblemished, honourable, and sacred place in the world, and this conviction inspired his most splendid works and attributed a bright quality to his vision of the sea. Conrad was born in a Polish family and in the country, which in fact did not exist; he spent difficult exile years in Russia, after his parents' death he had problems with acquiring of citizenship; hence, one can draw a conclusion that the writer had not had the place on the land where he would have felt free and happy. He found this sense of freedom and happiness in the sea. Conrad created his own, completely original conception of the sea. O. Knowles and G. Moore consider that Conrad's sea world cannot be understood only as an inflected form of the sea life:

Rather it offers a wholly different form of knowledge, complete with its own signifying system and test of truth. That the world of the sea has its own unique concepts is revealed in the precision of nautical language that renders these stories convincing yet mysterious to ordinary readers. (Knowles and Moore, *Oxford Reader's Companion to Conrad* 368)

A distinctive feature of his writing is that the writer describes most of the scenes that reflect the sea in a very detailed way, using a lot of details, but some important invariant, an ontological essence can be noticed through these seemingly private scenes. The seas and the rivers are concerned with particular geographical places, and Conrad's outstanding achievement was his giving the name to every sea he depicted.

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Conrad creates a double-sphere model in the form of expression that was characteristic of the romanticists, yet this model is already different. The sea in his

works has the semantics of the infinite and mysterious divine space. The writer constantly mentions the heavens, thereby forming the vertical vector, which has always marked the idea of the divine in European culture. Conrad's *sea prose* is deeply symbolic. The sea as the sphere of nature is in absolute opposition to the modern civilization.

For Conrad civilization is a hostile power of the social environment that destroys the unity between a human and nature. The characters' obsession with water dominates the writer's *sea prose*; he forms the world, which is opposite to the real one – a mirror world of shimmering lucidity, unblighted by the horrors of the nineteenth-century industrial democratic life. His love for the former is sustained by the hatred of the latter, and it is poignantly sharpened by Conrad's foreboding about the dying age in the life of the sea. The writer saw the loss of universal harmony embodied in the sea, notified by the appearance of steamers.

John Peck emphasizes that Conrad is the first writer who consistently offered a negative impression of the sea:

Britain was proud of its sea heritage, but in J. Conrad's works, this tradition is already considerably stunted. A lot of sea actions are covert and illegal. The loss of enthusiasm, energy, objective and direction becomes an overall feeling. (Peck, *Maritime Fiction: Sailors and the Sea in British and American Novels, 1719 – 1917* 171)

Thereby, the sea is one of the most essential topoi in the artistic worldview of Conrad's autobiographical books. To a certain extent, it developed under the influence of the conception of the sea of previous cultures. The writer forms his own universal and monolithic neo-myth. The sea turns out to be an ontological sphere that is concerned with eternity and not the short-term period in all the accuracy and detailed elaboration of its depiction. The sea is concerned with the divine from the very dawn and it strives for harmony. However, when it comes to insoluble contradictions with the civilized man-made world, the sea demonstrates to a man its archaic, disruptive, and malevolent nature.

Conrad's Sail Ships versus Steamers

Ship has always been an important image since ancient times appearing already in myths. It became a symbol of discovering new lands (Argo, Odyssey's ships) or a symbol of power (ahayahs' flotilla that sailed to Troy). Noah's Ark in the Bible became a symbol of life and salvage. Every historico-cultural epoch created its own

image of the ship.

Ship is an essential topos in Conrad's autobiographical fiction, and its semantics and symbols are rather varied and multi-layered:

Landfall and departure mark the rhythmical swing of a seaman's life and of a ship's career. From land to land is the most concise definition of a ship's earthy fate. (Conrad, *Mirror of the Sea* 41)

Conrad preferred sailing ships made of wood; he associated them with the Golden Age of the sea life, while steamers were associated by the writer with the Iron Age and the end of the sea life:

For a ship with her sails furled on her squared yards, and reflected from truck to water-line in the smooth gleaming sheet of a land-locked harbour, seems, indeed, to a seaman's eye the most perfect picture of slumbering repose:

For a ship with her sails furled on her squared yards, and reflected from truck to water-line in the smooth gleaming sheet of a land-locked harbour, seems, indeed, to a seaman's eye the most perfect picture of slumbering repose. (Conrad, *Mirror of the Sea* 54)

All the ships that serve best in his works and are worthy of human love are compared to white-winged birds:

In reality, she was a true balancelle, with two short masts raking forward and two curved yards, each as long as her hull; a true child of Latin Lake, with a spread of two enormous sails resembling the pointed wings on the sea. (Conrad, *Mirror of the Sea* 14)

Sailing ships are aristocrats among other ships for the writer. However, Conrad's appeal for sailing ships goes far beyond their innate grace and beauty to the nostalgic evocation of the past with its unique positive virtue of the close bond uniting the seamen and the ship, the bond that is gone in the clatter of engines and the hiss of steam. The sailing ships and their men are like a united whole:

Here speaks the man of masts and sails, to whom the sea is not a navigable element, but an intimate companion. The length of passages, the growing sense of solitude, the close dependence upon the very forces that, friendly to-day,

without changing their nature, by the mere putting forth their might, become dangerous tomorrow, make for that sense of fellowship which modern seamen, good men as they are, cannot hope to know. (Conrad, *Mirror of the Sea* 54)

The emergence of steam engines, turbines, and diesel engines intruded in the world reigned by sailing ships in their own right and outlined the horror of the 19th century industrial life. The steamers for him are only cargo carriers that do not know triumph, victory, or fame, but only fight with the sea:

[...] cargo carriers that would know no triumph but of speed in carrying a burden, no glory other than of a long service, no victory but that of an endless, obscure contest with the sea. (Conrad, *Mirror of the Sea* 129)

Words like “romance, adventure, and glamour” do not match the steamers; these are the very attributes that seem to have been lost to the seafarers’ world with the advent of the steamship:

I never went into steam—not really. If I only live long enough I shall become a bizarre relic of a dead barbarism, a sort of monstrous antiquity, the only seaman of the dark ages who never gone into steam—not really. (Conrad, *Mirror of the Sea* 189)

Conrad was happy on board of the ship, but he was never really happy ashore. A respectable ship that sailed under the English flag in the 1880s was like a small monarchy with a ruling and undisputable power of the aristocratic class over the faithful mass of lower citizens. There was no democracy there. During his sailor’s career from 1874 till 1893 Conrad had sailed on 18 ships.

A ship is sailors’ home and the sea is their native country because they spend much more time on the sea than on the land. A cabin is like home because there is light in it when the darkness rules all around. A ship is a disciplined and orderly world, where the routine seldom changes and every man has his own appointed role. A ship is an understandable world of the orders given, received, and carried out.

An anchor is a very important attribute of the ship that has both a practical and a metaphorical meaning. Conrad calls an anchor *the symbol of hope*. The writer highly values history, former times, former seamen and ships, also historical objects. The anchors of sailing ships in some way were the most efficient tools because they were hand-made and kept historical experience in their functions. On board the ship

no other appliance that is so small performs such big work that is so essential for the life of the ship. An anchor is forged and fashioned for reliability.

In Conrad's autobiographical prose, a ship is like a living being, which follows her own discretion and does not obey a man's will. The relationship between men and ships begins in trust and ends in love:

A ship is not a slave. You must make her easy in a seaway, you must never forget that you owe her the fullest share of your thought, of your skill, of your self-love. If you remember that obligation, naturally and without effort, as if it were an instinctive feeling of your inner life, she will sail, stay, run for you as long as she is able, or, like a sea-bird going to rest upon the angry waves, she will lay out the heaviest gale that ever made you doubt living long enough to see another sunrise. (Conrad, *Mirror of the Sea* 78)

Love, which Conrad envisions between man and ship, is rather the love of a man for a woman. The basis for feminizing a ship transcends her grace and beauty and her capacity for loyalty. A ship on the land or in the port in Conrad's autobiographical works is always a miserable and hopeless prisoner. Even demoralized and unreliable seamen rely on the fidelity of the ship. In the case of failure it is not the ship's fault, but the men who serve on the ship are to blame.

Hence, there is no ambivalence, uncertainty, or equivocation in Conrad's, and possibly his described seamen's, attitude to the ships, which can be observed in their attitude to the land and the sea. A seaman fully trusts his ship. It is essential that, when creating the image of the ship, the writer constantly uses important symbolical meanings, which have acquired the value of archetype, e.g. crossroads, crucifixion, resurrection, and the distribution of Holy Communion. The writer often compares the sea life to the priesthood. The strict daily routine of the ship could represent a secular substitute for the monastery routine. Sea life is perceived as sacred because it is dedicated to a superhuman ideal that makes it such, and compromising this ideal may in some way lead to perdition.

Conrad's autobiographical prose represents an essential stage in building the comprehension of the image of a ship as a component of the universe. Ships in the writer's prose make up their own microcosm, but everything that is happening on them symbolically reflects the events of the world.

Conclusion

In his autobiographical books, Conrad writes about sea voyages where the spirit of

adventure disappears, giving the place to greed and self-interest. He writes about the sea-polluting steamers, which replace the noble and beautiful sailing ships. In Conrad's opinion, it signals the end of sea life. Nature is remarkably essential in Conrad's temporal model. Nature's (geological) time is the time of eternity. All turning points of civilization are insignificant as measured against it. Hence, Conrad created a neo-mythological model of a procedural denial of history in the face of approving of its finiteness.

It is indicative that Conrad demonstrates in many of his ego documents the strategies of his autobiographical fiction. In his *Personal Record* Conrad compares himself to Cervantes's protagonist Don Quixote. Such essential conceptions as fall and atonement, grace and sacrifice, and, above all, spiritual revival reveal the author's imaginative world perception and become the most essential metaphors in his writing.

The neo-myth created by Conrad in his autobiographical fiction has a tragic character; the Iron Age acquires the nature of eternity. The present time in Conrad's *works* is negatively marked. Civilisation has influenced the sea life and the writer anticipates an imminent end to it.

It is obvious that Conrad created his own time conception that was explicitly neo-mythological and modernistic and was based on the heritage of the past literature and culture. According to it, the most valuable and best things that have existed have sunk into the past, the present is influenced by civilization and its consequences – degradation, and decay, but the future does not exist at all. Modernist narrative activates the time of memory, memory work, and mechanism of memorizing; the images of the past flake on one another and are transformed in a peculiar way. It seems as if time throws a veil on objects blurring the clearest conceptions of art.

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Russian Literature of the Baltics: Discreteness of Mentality

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Abstract The present study considers the specific features of contemporary Russian literature in the Baltic states. The research material of the study reflected in the article consists of two texts: the novel “The Argonaut” by Andrei Ivanov (Estonia) and the book by Alexey Evdokimov “Riga. The Near West, or Truth and Myths about Russian Europe” (Рига. Ближний Запад, или Правда и мифы о русской Европе = Riga. Blizhnyy Zapad, ili Pravda i mify o russkoy Yevrope). Both works are texts in which the Baltic space (Estonia/Latvia) and the specificity of Russian mentality of the Baltic space are modelled. The texts are genre and narrative structures; however, one can consider different principles of modelling Russian mentality that becomes discrete. Discreteness is manifested in the borderline location of the Russian, and as a result—an attempt to include the Russian in various cultural paradigms. The main character of A. Ivanov’s novel is a lone hero. The narrator of A. Evdokimov’s book is a public person. Nevertheless, it is possible to consider the general manifestation of discreteness, based on the dual perception of the status of the Russian as “one’s own/someone else’s.”

Keywords Russian literature; Baltic states; Emigration; Languages¹

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involvement of students of Master and Doctoral study programmes.

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine the specificity of the Russian-language literature in the Baltics on the example of the literature of Latvia and Estonia. To achieve this aim, the works of two authors, Alexei Evdokimov and Andrei Ivanov, were selected as the object of analysis. The comparative approach is based on more locally applied methodologies: cultural criticism and structural-semiotic analysis. The issues of the literary process in the Baltic region have often been the object of analysis (Willner&Kaakinen). The issues of the development of the national literature in a specific historical and cultural context arouse the keen interest (this interest is especially noticeable within the framework of postcolonial studies). Within this framework, the processes taking place in modern Russian-language literature are relegated to the background, although they are no less original phenomenon. On the one hand, Russian literature in the Baltics can be presented as a logical part of the general phenomenon “Russian literature.” On the other hand, the literature developing in the diaspora has its own unique model characteristics. The parallel with the literature of the Russian diaspora, correlated with various waves of Russian emigration, is undoubtedly logical. But the main distinguishing feature of modern Russian literature in the Baltic countries lies precisely in the situation different from emigration. Both authors studied were born in the Baltics (A. Evdokimov - in the Ukraine, but as a child, his parents move to Riga, where the family has lived since 1950, A. Ivanov - in Tallinn). Thus, the concept of emigration as a movement to a space different from the homeland is inappropriate as concerns these authors. And the determining factor will be the language of the written texts and the orientation to a certain readership. Another biographical moment is also indicative - both authors obtained citizenship (respectively, of Latvia and Estonia) through the process of naturalization. In this article, one work of each author has been selected as the object of consideration, the principle of choice was based on the commonality of themes associated with the artistic space of each work - the actions are associated with the Baltic space and its capital topos - Riga and Tallinn: A. Evdokimov’s guide book “Riga. The Near West, or Truth and Myths about Russian Europe” (2015) and A. Ivanov’s novel “The Argonaut” (2016). The significant difference between the two works is also taken into account. The book by A. Evdokimov is a publicistic text, while “The Argonaut” by A. Ivanov is fiction. At the same time, both works allow us to speak about the commonality of the issues

of Russian literature in the Baltic region - the definition of the concept “Russian world” and one’s belonging to the space of the “Russian world” and the country of residence.

It should be noted that despite the unconditional commonality of the Baltic region countries, the political, cultural and linguistic situation in Estonia and Latvia is dramatically different. In particular, the Estonian literary environment is characterized by such a phenomenon as bilingualism. Irina Belobrovtsseva in her article “The Bilingual Writer: Two Estonian-Russian Cases and One Russian-Estonian Case 1” (Belobrovtsseva) has extensively studied this distinctive phenomenon. And no doubt, the presence of authors writing in two languages is a definite marker of the cultural space. This kind of bilingualism is not typical for the literary environment of Latvia. The representatives of the literary poetic association “Orbita” can be conditionally referred to as bilingual authors.

A. Evdokimov vs A. Ivanov

Alexey Evdokimov (1975) debuted in 2001 with the novel “Puzzle,” co-authored with A. Garros. This was followed by a number of joint novels, and after the death of A. Garros in 2017, A. Evdokimov begins an independent literary career, mainly working in the genre of a detective adventure novel. A. Evdokimov’s works are published in Russia’s publishing houses, therefore, they are mainly focused on the Russian book market. In 2015, the author turns to journalism and publishes the guide book “Riga. The Near West, or Truth and Myths about Russian Europe.” The book is published within the series “Cities of Dreams” and is in many ways an order of the Russia-based publishing house, which has determined the style of the narration. In numerous interviews A. Evdokimov does not hide the fact that his book is an appeal to Russians, with the aim of debunking their mythological idea of Riga and the principles of European life in it. At the same time, the book is certainly not devoid of the author’s subjective beginning: the author’s wish to describe Riga is combined with a pronounced desire to tell his story, and not only his vision of Riga, but also the idea of his “Russian world,” among which the author reckons himself.

The author of the guide book explicitly emphasizes his belonging to the world of literature, since literary citations, intersexuality form the basis of the book’s composition. The table of contents of the guide book evokes an allusion of the table of contents of Andrei Bitov’s novel “Pushkin House”: this is a multi-stage division into parts, chapters and sub-chapters in the title of which quotes, the names of utterances from literary and cinematic texts are intriguingly rephrased or interpreted: Чемодан—вокзал—Рига (Suitcase - Station—Riga), История с топографией

(History with topography), Восемьсот лет между (Eight hundred years between), Ты виноват уж тем, что хочется мне кушать (You are to blame for the fact that I want to eat), Веселится и лигует весь народ (All the people are having fun and celebrating Ligo), Вино из одуванчиков (Dandelion wine), Жить или не жить (To live or not to live?), По долинам и по взгорьям (Through valleys and hills), etc.. With all the specified documentary nature, the book claims the status of a literary text, in which the author's "Ego," the narrator's "Ego" are being structure-forming. A. Evdokimov explicitly and deliberately uses references to primary sources in his text, thereby emphasizing the documentary nature of the material. But the documentary nature of these sources is obviously a play: these are mainly links to Internet pages, and the nature of their appearance in the text is quite selective - there are no direct references and quotations in the book.

The book is structured according to the principle of defining the main myths. The principle set initially by the author is the coverage of historical moments. But quite deliberately in the first part of the book the emphasis is laid on the pre-war and war period, which is defined by two key concepts - "occupation" and "May 9."

The word 'occupation' is encountered 48 times in the text, and most of the usage occurs at the beginning of the book - this is a topic explicitly set by the author to attract the attention of a certain circle of readers. "By elementary logic, anyone who recognizes (as required by law!) the events of 1940 as occupation, thereby recognizes everyone who moved to Latvia from other republics of the USSR in the following half century as occupiers. And their descendants are the descendants of the occupiers. The overwhelming majority of the Latvian Russians belong to those who arrived or their descendants (I myself, for example, - a descendant in the third generation). The well-known Latvian historian Inesis Feldmanis, by the way a member of the historical commission under the President, said outright, "There are currently 700 thousand civic occupiers in the country" (and *ibid*: "The occupation is the red line of our history"). Of course, if I write in the blog or even in a newspaper, something like, I refuse to consider myself an occupier, the next day I will not be taken away in handcuffs by the Security Police (the local analogue of the FSB). But the atmosphere within the bicommunal Latvian society is quite clearly demonstrated by the collision with this law" (Evdokimov 27). In a small fragment, the word "occupation" is stylistically exaggerated in terms of its frequency. In this context, the word is used from the position of authorities. It is significant that in one of his interviews with the local portal A. Evdokimov changes his rhetoric and ironically says, "I am a descendant of the occupiers."

The accent on May 9 from the first pages is not accidental, either. In the narra-

tion, a spatial axis is built: the Freedom Monument - the Victory Monument (topographically, this axis is not pronounced and is obviously corrected by the will of the author of the book). Thus, having defined his task as breaking stereotypes and myths, the author works to strengthen stereotypical thinking. The society of Latvia is presented as bicomunal, and this bicommunality is proved precisely by the presence of two monuments. Latvians come to the Freedom Monument on March 16 to greet the legionnaires. Russians come on May 9 to the Victory Monument. One chapter creates the myth of spatial, temporal and ethnic binarity. The author's attitude (which coincides indeed with the position of a part of the Russian-speaking population) presents in the text the attitude of the Russian community in Latvia. And in this attitude of the author, everything related to Latvian is marked as "theirs," and everything related to the Russian position is marked as "ours." Moreover, constructing the text on the basis of his personal judgments, A. Evdokimov reproduces the Latvian component rather conditionally: a significant number of state events take place at the Freedom Monument, and the procession of SS veterans is a numerically insignificant event that is not supported by the government. It should be noted that the author periodically makes some kind of correction to the binary constructions, but this is an attempt to superficially, just in case, note the presence of a different point of view. The author's superficial attention to everything that is outside the concepts of "Russian," "Soviet" (i.e. biographically related to the author) is observed not only in the transmission of facts concerning the Latvian component. An example is the chapters dedicated to the events of the Holocaust: the narrative is laconic, brief, impersonal and unemotional, three sub-chapters related to this topic give the impression of understatement. The name of the sub-chapter "Capital of the Holocaust" seems controversial from the ethical point of view.

One of the components of the Russian model of Latvia, as expected, happens to be the Russian language, "The language of interethnic communication, as Russian was called in the Soviet Union, in present-day Riga (where, let me remind you, the Russian language has no official status) performs exactly this function - a means of interethnic communication. The cruel logic of the market makes even young Latvian waitresses, who did not learn any Russian at school, to babble in a mangled language of "occupiers": the client is always right, no matter where he comes from" (Evdokimov 121).

In an effort to remove a mythological dichotomy "West—the Russian" (in his understanding) in the scope of the history and culture of Riga, the author confirms a number of mythological formations. This can be justified by targeting a certain readership and taking into account the ideological interests of that certain audience.

In Latvia, the book was published without much attention.

Andrei Ivanov (1971) began publishing in 2007 outside of the Estonian and Russian space (the first works are published in Finland and the USA), in Estonia his works have been published since 2009. He is a winner of many literary awards, both Russian and Estonian. In 2020, he was awarded the Order of the White Star of class IV by the President of Estonia.

In the article dedicated to the work of A. Ivanov, Irina Belobrovtsseva highlights the concept used by the author himself and which has become significant for the characterization of his model character - the narrator - “Non-belonger”; not belonging to any particular place; a stranger, an outsider (isn’t it that inspired some critics to compare Ivanov with Camus?). However, the translators of Rushdie into Russian have found, perhaps, a more appropriate meaning for this word - restless, and this definition exhaustively characterizes the characters-narrators of A. Ivanov.” (Belobrovtsseva, 2014). It is this definition that contains the main characteristics of the narrator, and he, in turn, determines the very model of the narrative. This is a loner character who does not accept the world and people living in this world, even very close ones, this is a character who declares his degradation (drugs, asociality) to be a philosophical theory. But at the same time I. Belobrovtsseva emphasizes one very important point - A. Ivanov’s prose is not a typical emigre prose (this is a definition that appears in a number of articles and reviews dedicated to individual works of the writer), “but A. Ivanov’s character is complicated: an idyllic image of Russia-Atlantis does not work in his case, since the vanished homeland - the Soviet Union—does not reach the ideal, and the writer himself, similarly to the narrators of the “saga” and “Rakitin cycle” created by him, was born in Estonia.” (Belobrovtsseva, *Pisatelstvo*.. 268).

The setting of the novel “The Argonaut” is modern Estonia and its characters are average residents of Tallinn, Russian-speaking both in terms of their belonging to the Russian culture, and in terms of their inner text - thinking, and many—in terms of their professional belonging - teachers of the Russian language, authors writing in Russian. Actually, their belonging to the “Russian world” becomes that unifying characteristic, the core which the narrative is based on. But it is here that the author raises a key question, which, perhaps, also distinguishes it from a number of Russian-language authors abroad - for Andrei Ivanov, the “Russian world” is a myth, it is something far-fetched and non-existent, and in contrast to classical myths (for example, the myths about the Argonauts), this myth is doomed to disappear quickly.

Through the narrative of different characters, the author retransmits the idea of

theatricality, artificiality of the myth about the salvation of Russians in the Baltics. Actually, the Russian issue is being raised with the aim of ensuring one's political career or financial well-being, "now they are preparing a new project called "Native Speech" — the salvation of the Russian language, as you might guess. She offered me to teach classes in Russian literature. All this is vulgarly oriented towards some kind of pseudo-gymnasium curriculum with a taste of pre-revolutionary times. I hate vintage, especially in the post-Soviet frame, with an Orthodox note and other archaic stuff, in short, understanding which way the wind is blowing and what it is carrying, I hardly hold back vomiting. Under such a project, it will be possible to beg money even from Russian tycoons" (Ivanov 348).

In the minds of A. Ivanov's characters, there is a clear line between the Russian-speaking people of Estonia and the Russians from Russia. An episode in a cafe where Semenov is watching a neighboring table is indicative: those sitting at the table (in the narrative they are defined as "tourists from Russia") mistakenly take Semenov for an Estonian. The Russians acquire a clear pronominal marking "these," which includes the whole set of ideas about Russian nouveau riches who discuss their surrounding in Russian with the confidence that no one will understand them (in fact, this is a direct opposition to the opinion of a certain part of Russians that everyone should know Russian).

Estonia turns out to be a relatively ideal space for the narrator, and this relativity is determined by comparison. On one side of the comparative axis are Sweden, London, San Sebastian, Venice and other points of cultural and social civilization. On the other side is Russia, in which all possible prospects for cultural and social development are crossed out by a political vector. In this regard, it is Estonia that happens to be that golden mean, the place "in between." This spatial "in between" by A. Ivanov differs significantly from the ideological "in between" by A. Evdokimov. For A. Ivanov, it is rather connected with the definition of the country, the characters of the novel only express their attitude to this locality. For A. Evdokimov, this is a demonstrative position of the author-narrator, although in the very title of the book and the description of the space of Riga this intermediate position is also emphasized, but in the author's narrative the irony prevails in relation to this position, as he also ironically connects himself with duality. The irony is also characteristic of A. Ivanov's narrative. In particular, the definition of Estonia as a possible paradise ("The real Paradise is a leisurely measured life, where people instead of messianism care about each other" (Ivanov 370) is also quite ironic, but this is another example of how biblical mythology is assigned the status of an everyday myth.

At the very beginning of the novel, the main character of the narrative, Pavel Bogolepov, tells the story of his family coming to Estonia, “the same could have happened to us, because we were the most typical family of Soviet ghouls, the most useless bloodsuckers, lazybones, parasites (vene okkupandid raisk!), they could have immediately drown us, in a bucket, like kittens; but no, they took care of us, they gave us documents, they didn’t even shoot my father, when he, a moron, returned from Paris in 1946, against the will of his parents, and in 91 the Estonians had mercy on us, they didn’t flush us down the toilet with shit, they gave out blue passports, through the mother’s line whose ancestors have lived here since the time of Alexander III (according to the programme of Russification in the outskirts, a family of small traders with small allowance had been first sent to Finland, and then the “Pineapple” of the autocracy threw them into Courland, where they put down roots)” (Ivanov 46). The notorious word “occupier” is encountered in Bogolepov’s narrative, moreover, as a quote in Estonian. In this narrative, one can feel both the author’s irony and the bitter recognition that the Bogolepov family has come to foreign territory. It is characteristic that the Soviet period is not mentioned here as the time of golden childhood, despite the fact that the artistic world of “Argonaut” is characterized by an appeal to the world of childhood, the world of the past, as a saving light (if escape from reality in the real world turns out to be impossible, then for many characters an escape into the world of childhood turns out to be the only salvation). But one more thing is important: in the very finale of the novel, Bogolepov, after the funeral of his father, learns another truth about his father, and in this other truth it turns out that the father returns from Paris to Russia just at the request (stupid and strange) of his father, in order to save his sisters, the father ends up in a camp, where his inner world will be broken: at night in a barrack, experiencing the humiliation of trusties, he curses his family. And this revelation significantly changes the attitude of Bogolepov to his family. But at the same time, the main thing in the understanding by the author and his characters of the concept of history is preserved: historical truth is conditional, there are different points of view on history. But it is the person himself who bears responsibility for his own destiny.

Debunking the “Russian world” of Estonia, A. Ivanov also creates in the novel the image of a Russian-language writer, a typical representative of which is Semenov, and Bogolepov gives him a characterization, “Bogolepov long ago noticed that all the Russians who write in Estonia used to suffer from one and the same disease: they dressed badly, lived in flophouses, looked terrible, drank a lot and wrote terribly” (Ivanov 253). This characterization combines external and everyday ugliness with an inability to write: in fact, this definition does not contain the word “writer,”

but the italicized “writers” appear, which emphasizes the presence of physical action but indicates the absence of creativity as a creative process.

The modeling of the artistic space is undoubtedly significant. The space of Tallinn was initially declared as not primary. Moreover, the places visited by the characters abroad seem more real and tangible: hotels (like on Booking), concert halls, parks. The toponymy of Tallinn is being announced gradually, and these are not single-point places, but rather the designation of some included spaces: the sea, Kadriorg. Tallinn is perceived as a place freed from the Soviet darkness, but at the same time in the minds of the characters the idea arises that the destruction of the Soviet as disastrous is possible only in external manifestations (reorganization of buildings), the internal changes (a person’s world perception) are more complex. It is symbolic, but a polyclinic happens to be a place that could not remove the stamp of the Soviet past, the place, which in Bogolepov’s consciousness, is associated with the awareness of imminent death.

The world of Andrei Ivanov’s novel is not just based on the myth of the Argonauts, as stated in the title. The novel is filled with mythology of various kinds. The narrative structure, built as a polyphonic one, also includes several neo-mythological models: here is the literary myth about Aelita, which includes the image of the Martian from the novel by A. Tolstoy, and Nabokov’s “Lolita,” and the mass cultural myth (“Elvira - the Mistress of the Dark”), by means of which a seemingly random set of names is being explained, and a biblical myth, and it is the biblical myth that has been relegated to the status of an everyday one (for Bogolepov’s father, going to the summer house equates in meaning to the Exodus).

The narrative system, like the system of characters in “The Argonaut,” is quite complex. Each chapter is narrated on behalf of a different character. But the principle of defamiliarization operates for all of them, which combines both the point of view of the character himself (his inner text) and the author’s view of him (a view from the outside). Using the terminology of J. Genette, we are talking about the “act of a narrative utterance” (Genette). One and the same event is transmitted both from the point of view of the author and from the point of view of different characters. In the narrative, the pronoun of the first person “I” is the most frequent, but it constantly changes its affiliation, by means of which the author creates a unique narrative model in which objectivity and subjectivity happen to be ambivalent concepts.

Each of the characters of the novel is a kind of an Argonaut, a gold digger who had gone to Colchis, but lost his way or made a mistake in his life having acquired gold. The characters seem to be familiar and related to each other and represent a team of Argonauts. But just as the ancient lists of the Argonauts, which continue to

appear in different versions, have not been saved, the Argonauts of the novel exist separately from each other and their very existence is ghostly.

Conclusion

Taking into account the specificity of the two analyzed texts, we can nevertheless speak of the model differences of Russian literature in Latvia and Estonia. Russian literature in Latvia seems to be a closed phenomenon, more focused on finding a reader outside Latvia. The process of separating Russian literature is two-way. On the one hand, taking into account the publishing policy, the publication of books in Russian is unbeneficial and not supported on the part of the state. On the other hand, Russian literature positions itself as different, not belonging to the Latvian cultural space, not interested in this cultural space. In turn, an attempt to compete with the Russian literature of Russia is quite controversial and the desire to find one's own reader, as a rule, affects the artistry of individual works.

Russian literature of Estonia is literature that has found its place in the context of Estonian culture, and has not lost its connection with the literature of the metropole. The complex world built in the works by A. Ivanov is a marker of the high quality of his authorship skill, when the desire to please (economic one) a certain circle of readers is relegated to the background, whereas the author's creative self-expression becomes defining. In this sense, the characteristics of both considered authors in biographical Internet sources are demonstrative: A. Evdokimov is a Russian writer living in Latvia, A. Ivanov is Estonia's Russian writer.

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The “Home View” of Overseas Chinese Literature

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Abstract Overseas Chinese literature is the cultural creation of Chinese writers who have moved and lived abroad, and it is also a new category in world literature. An important focus of the works of these writers is the allelopathy of new and old home, which the author calls a new “home view” of Chinese literature. As these people have moved away from their home, the new “home view” of their overseas Chinese literature contains rich psychological changes and poetic ideals, inheriting the past and initiating the future, warming up the “old” and opening up the “new,” profound and lingering, friendly and reserved, literary but satirical, and harmonizing so as to transform. These elements constitute a charming cross-cultural character. This article explores its origins, observes its transitions, and follows the progression of the levels of “native home,” “cultural home” and “spiritual home” to interpret the boundless aesthetic world displayed by this group of writers.

Keywords overseas Chinese literature; home consciousness; aesthetic world

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The “home” in the geopolitical sense and the “home” in the literary sense form a dialectical and complementary relationship of heterogeneous entanglement between the real and the ideal levels. In terms of aesthetic imagery, literature and life present a spiritually purified world that is mutually reinforcing. The overall grasp of the picture of survival in overseas Chinese literature provides a new perspective of “home consciousness” for the academic community. The systematic exploration

of overseas Chinese literary texts in the context of home and the discussion of the literary meanings arising from it are undoubtedly of positive and constructive significance for the construction of “a community with a shared future for mankind (人類命運共同體)” (Dai and Han 56).

Exploring the Cultural Origin of “Home Consciousness”

Human beings have a long history of “home consciousness.” Among the Chinese and Western philosophical thoughts, the *I Ching* (《易經》), also translated as *The Book of Changes* can be considered the earliest one. With the relationship between heaven and man as its core, this Chinese classic reveals the ancient wisdom of existence that “good life is virtue” and “life is never ending,” in which “home consciousness” is embedded. For example, the two trigrams of *Qian* (乾) and *Kun* (坤), which say “Great is Qianyuan, the beginning of all materials (大哉乾元，萬物資始)”¹ (Huang and Zhang 177) and “To Kunyuan, all things are born (至哉坤元，萬物資生)” (Ibid), reveal the innate “home consciousness” of the natural ecology of heaven and earth as the basis of human existence. and “*Fu Gua* (復卦),” the twenty-fourth trigram in *I Ching*, reflects the Chinese philosophical thinking of “easy change,” with the interpretation that all things must return to the fundamental law, so that the idea of “humanistic home” is revealed and acquired. Thus, in ancient Chinese philosophy, “home consciousness” not only has the superficial concept of “homesickness” and “homecoming,” but also has the deeper purpose of resetting *yin* (陰) and *yang* (陽) and the implication of returning to the true existence. It has the philosophical connotation of bridging the primitive and civilized cultures.

The *Bible* places the innocent home of mankind in the Garden of Eden and refers to the Lord’s “Promised Land” in Jerusalem (Feng, et al 98-99). In fact, evil was inherent in the Garden of Eden, and the “Promised Land” is a place of constant killing and destruction to this day. The *Odyssey* is an epic of “homecoming,” but the home has been changed so often that it has become a place of vicious fighting. There was no greater tragedy of destroying humans, homes and countries than the Second World War, when the German, Japanese and Italian Axis countries committed untold crimes against the people of the world. Home is a beautiful place to live in, but it is also a memory written in blood and tears. Philosophers and wise men have been thinking about home without interruption. Martin Heidegger is one of the Western philosophers with a strong sense of “home.” In his case, “home consciousness” is an integral component of his existentialist

1 The citations from *I Ching* (《易經》) in this article are translated by the author.

philosophy. In 1927, in his book *Being and Time*, Heidegger discussed the notion of “being in this world” around the living mode of “human existence and the world,” with special emphasis on “dwelling,” “sojourn,” and “attachment,” which are closely related to “home.” He points out, “according to human experience and history, all that is essential and great emerge only from the fact that man has a home and has taken root in a tradition” (Heidegger 127). His causal ideas such as “being and the world” and “man and heaven” reveal the relationship between philosophy and aesthetics with its origin. His exposition of the roundelay among “Heaven, Earth, God, and Man” expands the ideal of home in a very broad sense. The poetic sense of home is thus raised to an aesthetic realm.

As a kind of “cross-border” localized writing, overseas Chinese literature is a kind of peaceful creation. There is no religious intimidation, nor is there a vicious hobby of conquering cities and land, but rather a literary expression of these Chinese writers’ adherence to international law and the laws and regulations of their host countries. It is a “poetic dwelling” that inherits the mother theme of the Chinese benevolence and beauty of “home.” In the sorrow at separation and happiness in union of overseas homes, Chinese writers cultivate the seeds of reaching the acme of perfection, and describe the justice and evil, the coldness and warmth in the disaster of home. Through the changes of history and the transformation of time and space, these writers write about the hardships of Chinese people who leave their home, go to the sea, and make a living abroad in different contexts, presenting their individuality and progressiveness in the aesthetic sense, and portraying their mental journey and cultural identity, as well as their international image of reshaping themselves and their new home. For example, by combing the non-universal “home” images such as “long journey,” “back figure,” “flying bird” and “drifting,” these writers let readers feel the unique poetic connotation and cultural significance of overseas Chinese literature. In popular terms, Chinese writers use their pens as plowshares to sow the seeds of benevolence for their survival in foreign countries, and to draw portraits of overseas Chinese individuals or groups who have taken root in other countries. At first, they seek common ground while reserving differences with the indigenous people of the host country, and practice cultural complementarity, and then they rely on each other and work together to build a home of solidarity and coexistence.

The Transformation of “Home Consciousness”

What “home consciousness” seeks is the “overall mind map” of overseas Chinese literature. While reflecting the “reality” (Ni 46), it also hopes to reach the “reality

supported by distinctive ideas,” trying to bring a broader meaning to literary texts. However, an inescapable reality is that researchers, like writers, are experiencing a complex quest that requires both literary perspective and ethical criticism. It is needless to say that early studies focused on “nostalgia” and “separation” in overseas Chinese literature, and lacked pertinent analysis and philosophical arguments on the generation, change and establishment of a new “home consciousness” in the context of globalization, and often neglected the in-depth narration of life and death, love and hate in the texts, especially the exploration of the theme of ethical choices in Chinese literature.

Therefore, the real demand for constructing “home consciousness” is to rebuild “a holistic understanding of the historical course of overseas Chinese literature,” and the historical reality of overseas Chinese and the textual expression of Chinese literature, as well as the related critical studies, are precisely in the context of a holistic understanding of “home.” It is in the holistic understanding of “home” that we can produce works and doctrines that are deeply touching. In this sense, it is clear that “home consciousness” and its theoretical exploration have become quite important, and at the same time have raised increasingly diverse and multidimensional academic demands. Readers and theorists should rely as much as possible on the context of the times and literary texts to grasp the transformation of overseas Chinese literature.

How can we observe both the subtleties and the motivations of this field of study, i.e., discover its implications and reasonable interests? There are three levels of “home consciousness” that should be particularly noted, which could be called. The author calls them “native home,” “cultural home” and “spiritual home” (Jiang Shaochuan 113). These three levels are intertwined and integrated, constituting three important nodes in the path of transmutation, so it is necessary to examine them in a holistic and dynamic structure. The advantages of this approach are twofold: first, it facilitates the re-grasping of the structure of overseas Chinese literature and its changes, and second, it helps to sort out its historical and cultural contexts, so as to uncover the ethical value of multiculturalism. This is an all-around care and hierarchical point tracking, grasping the phenomenon of “retrospection, independence and conflict” in overseas Chinese literature and deciphering the deep texture of “respect, reconciliation and pluralism” in a cultural environment where multi-ethnic people live together and various civilizations intermingle.

A deeper reading will make it clear that “native home” is at the physical level, with obvious regional markers, and the region is mostly a mixed consciousness of duality, with both the sentiment and various feelings of the hometown and the new

home, while the “cultural home” is at the ideological level. It is the new concept and new thought of overseas Chinese survival, the message of identity, and the many trials and tribulations of the new life and its current human-ego communication field; the “spiritual home,” on the other hand, is at the level of values, or beyond the limitations of “native home,” “foreign land,” “national border” and their relevant ideology. It is an ecological environment of human coexistence and a living field of common beauty through boundaries. The system of “home consciousness” thus constituted is like multiple mirrors, giving their works the subtle qualities of “transformation” and “sensation” and “change” and “access.” In popular terms, most of the writers’ works up to this realm are concerned with both inward-looking in-depth space and outward-looking open field, absorbing cultural factors and concentrating local imagery with the aesthetic form of interplay between reality and fiction, between emotion and reason, making “home consciousness” a place to purify the soul.

From the perspective of structural storytelling, most overseas Chinese literature has its own special contextual and individualized narrative style, with thematic ideas rising and falling, characters in staggered plots, hidden or revealed, urgent or slow, obscured or isolated, placed in a scenario of cultural mixing and gradual integration, with charm and bitterness, showing the personal feelings and literary expressions of Chinese people in the course of immigration. These Chinese writers combine the old and the new “home view” with the different and intertwined “sense of existence” into a single furnace, forging the patterns of survival and the pursuits of overseas Chinese value, and striving to create a cultural context of commonality and universality among human beings. It is constructive to understand this point in order to deeply grasp the characteristics of overseas Chinese literature.

From Native Home to Cultural Home

The early overseas Chinese literature was influenced by the traditional mother culture, showing the examination, reflection and attachment to the “root” culture, and at the same time, it was also influenced by the local culture, reflecting the ideology that the new home belongs to the mainstream culture of the region. Most of the Chinese writers belong to the former group, describing the unfamiliarity and discomfort brought about by the experience of spatial migration, and conveying the confusion of identity, culture, status and other distortions and dislocations during their travels to foreign countries by describing the psychological shocks caused by such factors as cultural conflicts and external changes, showing the

creative mentality of stumbling and turning around to look back, with a particularly strong sense of cognitive awareness of “home.”

In terms of literary expressions, the theme of “nostalgia” and “searching for roots” is highlighted, and the narrative content is mostly about the nostalgia for the “home,” and the narrative techniques tend to be plain and simple. The representative works include Yu Lihua’s novel *Seeing Palms Again, Seeing Palms Again*, Cha Jianying’s novel *Glacier Under the Jungle*, Nie Hualing’s novel *Mulberry Green and Peach Red*, Su Wei’s novel *The Back figure*, Sima Tapping’s prose “The Bright Moon Comes from the Water,” and the poems written by members of the “Sirius Poetry Club” of Mahua Literature. The early overseas Chinese literature is a series of poems written by members of the Sirius Poetry Society. The “home consciousness” of the early overseas Chinese literature was one way, showing the expatriates’ spiritual dilemma “after pursuing the dream,” and the writing “in other countries” was still difficult to be separated from the “dream of the home.” They are bound by the spiritual burden of national history, feeling the strong conflict of heterogeneous cultures, and trying to use pure literary “strokes” to cut through the “siege” of the region and to return to the home of their native land.

An exploration of the evolution of “home consciousness” necessarily involves the reconstruction of the “I” and its cultural identity. As overseas Chinese increasingly integrate into the politics, economy, culture, and life of their current places of residence, their subjective consciousness is constantly changing, and the form of literary expression also changes accordingly. As a result, overseas Chinese literature, while maintaining the original Chinese cultural tradition, has begun to take root in a cultural space different from that of the “native home,” showing a new “cultural home consciousness.” This shift in literary subjective consciousness reveals that the new generation of immigrants has jumped out of the shackles of identity and taken a rational look at the heterogeneous culture, and their “home consciousness” has also consciously formed a new stability and adaptability in the trend of cultural identity, trying to build a huge historical picture through a literary perspective that includes the history of the development of Chinese national civilization, the history of overseas Chinese settlement and immigration and the history of personal destiny. The representative works include Cao Guilin’s novel *A Native of Beijing in New York*, Zhou Li’s novel *Chinese Women in Manhattan*, Wang Zhou Sheng’s novel *The Accompanying Lady*, Zhang Ling’s novel *Crossing the Other Shore*, and Yan Geling’s novel *The Young Girl Little Fish*, and *The Infinite Mirror* by Chen Qian. In terms of literary creation, they show a concern for realism,

a tendency to innovate in artistic expression, an emphasis on symbolism, a tendency to adopt both a large number of overseas images and exotic stories that fit the characteristics of the times in writing. To put them into their writing, these works represent a portrait of multi-cultural integration.

Among the group of Chinese literary writers, most of them have been influenced by Western thought and culture. On the positive side, “other mountains and soils also nurture people,” and the fragrant words of flowers and birds enter their poems. On the negative side, there are also Chinese writers who are obsessed with Western centrism and even follow the trend to cater to Western vulgarity. On the whole, flaws do not hide their virtues. The majority of writers still draw positive energy from Western values.

The Construction of a Spiritual Home

In the age of information technology where differences are gradually being bridged, human beings are experiencing the “walking” state of migration, re-migration and even multiple migrations. The concept of “home” is gradually shifting from unity to diversity with the principle of geographical transformation and multi-ethnic coexistence, and brings together the most complex human experiences. Moreover, when the finiteness of the external local world is leveled one by one, the inner cultivation experience and the improvement of intellectual wisdom will also remedy the deficiencies, rectify flaws and form various bright spots of existence. The new “home consciousness” of overseas Chinese writers has shown remarkable achievements in this regard.

The new “spiritual home” is obviously not marked by national boundaries, but by the exploration of the harmonious development of human beings. The harmony and coexistence between human beings and nature, society, others, and different cultures are the basic criterion and value to pursue. Writers write about the good and evil of human nature, the darkness and brightness of a society, the vicissitudes of the world, the internal grief of civilization, and of course, the aspirations for tomorrow and the future. There are many such works, such as Yan Geling’s novels *The Lost Daughter of Happiness* and *Human World*, Zhang Ling’s novels *Gold Mountain Blues* and *Laoyan*, Chen He’s novels *Red, White and Black* and *City in the Black and White Film*, Shaojun’s series of online novels *Confessions of Life*, and Mahua writer Lai Zishu’s collection of micro-fiction *The Rest of Life*, and so on. The warm love between the lines and the spiritual realm expanded in them is so fascinating. With the inner descriptions and flow of consciousness of the writers’ characters, readers can find a place to rest their souls through entering a

warm space and time propped up by “home.”

Specifically, in the various texts of overseas Chinese literature, the “original” and “new ecology” of the “home” can be found in reality. On the one hand, it presents unreservedly the nostalgia for the “native home” and the compassionate moral sentiment, including the various forms of the traditional “home consciousness” such as serious human inquiry and firm self-redemption; on the other hand, it is a metaphor for the modern trend of continuous integration of living individuals under the influence of multiple cultures, and its constructive movement is precisely the great project of “cultural home” and “spiritual home” toward benign globalization; but whether it is the former or the latter, the similar psychological demands repeatedly expressed in their different literary expressions make “home consciousness” not only inherit the existing cultural meaning, but also absorb new realistic discourse, thus enriching itself with a spiritual meaning beyond the mundane. The individual self and all of us flourish in their world of works, which is a kind of “poetic dwelling” and “spiritual cultivation,” providing a directional coordinate for the construction of globalized “home,” or it can be called the aesthetic world without borders (Wu 42-43).

In general, overseas Chinese literature has developed a basic trend in the past century, which reveals the “dialectical relationship” between the “native home” and the “foreign land” (Jiang Shuzhuo 102-103). Therefore, introducing “home consciousness” into the discourse criticism of “literariness” can help refine a series of new concepts of overseas Chinese literature and build a new literary theory with cross-ethnicity, cross-region and cross-culture. Home, country, and world are all the same. Rooted in a dream of hometown, aspiring to a new residence in a different place and a new home of multi-cultural harmony, it should become a paving stone for “the construction of a community with a shared future for mankind” (Xi 1). If you may ask where home is? Home is far away.

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The Administering of the Bodies and Sexuality of Javanese Women Migrants in Early Twentieth Century New Caledonia

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Abstract Since their arrival on the island in 1896, the Javanese diaspora in New Caledonia has been regarded as the group that has been most accommodating to the French Pacific ruler. Politically, they have never coordinated any resistance campaign. Socially, they have been able to coexist peacefully with different ethnic groups, including the Europeans, the Kanaks (Melanesians), and the Wallis (Polynesians). From the economic standpoint, they are still praised for their hard work as laborers in the plantations and mines in the past. While Europeans and other ethnic groups appreciate their presence on this island, historically the Javanese diaspora was a vulnerable community whose physical bodies and sexuality were administratively regulated by the French colonial ruler. This study intends to investigate how the female Javanese *koeli kontrak* (contract laborers) were controlled in terms of

their bodies and sexuality in past French colonial projects in New Caledonia. The novel *La Bayou: de Djakarta à Nouméa* by Liliane Saintomer and the personal and familial historical accounts of a New Caledonian Javanese descendant, Catherine Adi, served as the sources for the study's data. Adi narrates the stories of her ancestors, on both her mother's and father's sides, who arrived on this island as contract laborers. This study used content analysis as a method to identify the connections between the writers' micro narratives and the social and political circumstances that existed in New Caledonia during the time of the colonial period at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Keywords New Caledonia; body; sexuality; administration; Javanese migrants

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Introduction

When colonialism held its sway globally, not only were lands being plundered through the exploitation of natural resources, but the bodies and sexuality of the inhabitants were also being administered in accordance with the colonial rulers' objectives (Ashcroft et al. 261; Rothberg 3). When the Dutch occupied Java, the bodies and sexuality of Javanese women were colonized in many ways. An essential part of Java's colonial history involves the exploitation of women's bodies. One example was the existence of *nyai*, or women compelled to cohabit with Dutch men without a legal marriage status. For the Dutch men sent to the Dutch East Indies away from their spouses, they became a source of comfort (Hera and Wijaya 49).

In practice, the bodies and sexuality of Javanese women even entered into the solidarity politics of the European colonizers, leading the Dutch to grant France the authority to administer the bodies and sexuality of Javanese women in their labor politics. Contract laborers were not subject to any laws in France at the time. Slav-

ery was still widespread, and many nations lacked uniform standards for working conditions, particularly for former slaves in colonial nations (Shohat 104–05). However, as part of the Dutch Ethical Policy initiated by Conrad Theodore van Deventer, Indies indigenous peoples began to receive pay for their work for the Dutch colonial government (Hera and Wijaya 50).

As laborers were sent in waves to the French colony of New Caledonia, Javanese women became one of the recruitment targets. In 1880, France borrowed the Dutch regulation of *Koeli Ordonantie* as a recruitment instrument (Maurer 69). The ordinance was enacted to regulate *koeli kontrak*, literally contract laborers, employed by Dutch companies in the Dutch East Indies on their plantations and mines (Udasromo and Setiadi 240). Along with men, women also worked as contract laborers. A total of 170 men and women from Java traveled to New Caledonia in 1896 as part of the first wave of labor migration to the island (Adi 10; Maurer 68).

There is a gap in the academic literature regarding the administering of the body and sexuality of Javanese women who served as contract laborers in New Caledonia. So far, sociological topics including their historic arrivals in New Caledonia, how they lived, and how they related to other ethnic groups on the island have received the greatest attention in studies regarding their presence in New Caledonia (Chappell 274; Connell, *New Caledonia or Kanaky?* 95; Connell, “The 2020 New Caledonia Referendum” 3). Numerous studies have discussed the political changes that occurred in New Caledonia relating to the referendums that gave citizens the option of choosing full independence or staying under French rule (Connell, *New Caledonia or Kanaky?* 311; Connell, “The 2020 New Caledonia Referendum” 1–2). Linguistic studies have been one of the concentrations in other fields. Among the most well-known of these is Australian researcher Pamela Allen’s “Diasporic representations of the home culture: case studies from Suriname and New Caledonia,” which compares the developments of the Javanese language in the two countries (Allen 1–2).

For his book *Les Javanais du Caillou*, Jean-Luc Maurer conducted the most thorough investigation on the Javanese diaspora in New Caledonia with regard to political, economic, social, and cultural elements (Maurer 67). Widyatka Ryananta authored research on the political and sociological dimensions of the Javanese in New Caledonia (Ryananta 2). There have also been linguistic studies conducted by Indonesians that examine the hybridization of the French and Javanese languages in the linguistic practices of New Caledonian Javanese (Subiyantoro 43; Subiyantoro et al. 85).

The trajectory of Javanese migrants to the island in the historical setting of

their arrival until their last migration in the 1950s is frequently the subject of works produced by Javanese diaspora descendants in New Caledonia (Adi 20; Muljono-Larue 5). Adi incorporates her grandparents' stories as references to reveal what life was like for the contract laborers. As a result, the text is a collection of biographies of her large family, the majority of whom worked as contract laborers. The work of Muljono-Larue, in contrast, concentrates on the overall hardships and day-to-day experiences of Javanese contract laborers in New Caledonia.

Problems of Javanese women in New Caledonia during the colonial period are at the center of a recent study by (Udasmoro et al. 74), focusing on their survival strategies in the foreign land. Given the numerous accounts found in the source materials and the fact that women of Javanese heritage tend to write more than their male counterparts, the particular study needs to be expanded. In order to fully investigate women's historical experiences in early twentieth century New Caledonia, it is crucial to elaborate on the perspective toward women.

Some women in that period had to leave Java due to poverty (Bastien 331). They were mostly farm laborers who had little money and saw the recruitment program to New Caledonia as a way out of a difficult life. From the time they departed until the time they lived in the new place, accounts of the struggles of the women, many as young as 15 to 20 years old, have been collected (Adi 60).

Generation after generation has passed down their memories, which have evolved into social narratives of the Javanese descendants in New Caledonia. Both fictional stories and historical texts written by predominantly women of Javanese heritage in New Caledonia depict experiences of how their bodies and sexuality were regulated by the colonial administration. As a novel, *La Bayou: De Djakarta à Nouméa* (Big Sister: From Jakarta to Nouméa) by Liliane Saintomer describes how the bodies and sexuality of Javanese women in New Caledonia were controlled. The novel tells the story of a poor, young Javanese rural woman who travels to New Caledonia in the early twentieth century to work as a contract *koeli*. She goes through many unpleasant incidents from the time she boards the ship, when she is sexually harassed, until she arrives in the new land, when she becomes the victim of an attempted rape by European men. The transmission of past memories to the author originates through her mother, a contract laborer in New Caledonia around the same time as the novel's setting. Meanwhile, Adi wrote historical accounts in her book *Orang Kontrak: Les Engagés Originaires de Java Venus Sous Contrat en Nouvelles-Calédonie 1896–1955* (Contracted People: Indigenous Javanese Involved in Contracts in New Caledonia 1896–1955). Adi's parents and grandparents, who worked as contract laborers, provided her with recollections.

To put into perspective the waves of diaspora to New Caledonia, particularly the diaspora of Javanese women, as well as the corresponding administration and regulation used by the French authorities as a mode of control over their sexuality and bodies, the paper employs Foucault's "docile bodies" in relation to his notion of the panopticon as its lens and framework. It emphasizes the struggle, overt repression, and subjugation of the Javanese women laborers by their French employers and, by extension, the French hierarchy.

The purpose of this research is then to investigate the administering of the bodies and sexuality of Javanese women contract laborers in New Caledonia at the beginning of the twentieth century. "Administer" in this context refers to the French colonial government's system and mechanisms in regulating Javanese migrant women to conform administratively with their rules. In order to paint a more complete image of how the Javanese migrant women had to carry out the process of not only observing the laws but also negotiating these norms as a means of survival, two separate literary genres, namely a work of fiction and a historical narrative text, have been textually combined. In this piece, the battle for the private and the public will also be examined. The paper uses historical and contextual evidence to focus on the French administrators that oversaw and regulated the bodies and sexuality of Javanese female contract laborers in early twentieth century New Caledonia.

The theoretical perspective for this research has been the concept of docile bodies. Docility occurs when a group of people are used to being watched continuously that their disciplines become internalized, and they no longer have the capacity to resist. The concept of docile bodies serves as an example of how social systems are continuously looking for reasons to observe things, particularly when it comes to the body and sexuality. This concept by Foucault (1983) is especially evident in his interpretation of the panopticon, which is literally a prison tower that is used to monitor inmates. Everything that the prisoners do in their cells is constantly being watched from the tower by guards and their searchlight. However, Foucault associated the panopticon with all manner of norms and rules that are employed to keep each citizen under the ruler's thumb. As a convention, the panopticon power is also used to explain how the body is governed and controlled for a particular truth. Administrative correctness becomes one of the grounds for how such control is carried out. There are several ways to exert control over a woman's body and sexuality, including through formal and societal rules. How the Indonesian Pornography Law mostly targets women is one blatant example. Additionally, there are rules that are cultural in character and followed in different parts of the world, such as cultural norms regarding virginity.

The administering of women's bodies and sexuality is widely practiced even in developed nations. Some rules pertaining to the body and sexuality are enforced through birth control, which is closely tied to women's bodies and sexuality. For instance, during Indonesia's New Order administration (1968–1998), women were coerced into reproductive politics by being made to use birth control through a national family planning program (Udasmoro 147–48). At the time, this requirement had to be followed by married women, particularly the spouses of government personnel. The promotion of their husbands' rank and position in government offices would be hampered, for example, as punishment for those who did not comply.

In order to create docile bodies or subjects, Foucault proposes a different type of mechanism, one that is not coercive but rather constitutive of a different mode of control. For instance, the body may be regulated through a repetitive exercise or a form of ritual that eventually trains the body to exhibit a desired trait or behavior. According to Foucault, the subject must be located or positioned in time and space in order to work on the body. Different times and spaces require different mechanisms to manipulate the body.

The training of the soldier serves as the starting point for Foucault's discussion of discipline. He proposes how the ideal soldier of the seventeenth century was immediately recognizable in both appearance and behavior through the process of disciplining through training or simulations of battle—methods to use, alter, and enhance the docile body. Throughout the classical era, power was concentrated on subjugating the body. In the eighteenth century, efforts to bring about such submission constituted a new level of control in which the economy of the body was important (Foucault 150).

In addition to the army as a site of discipline and control, Foucault considers monasteries as another example of a body that is situated in time and space to encourage docility through behavioral control. To comprehend how subjects can embody the norms and transform into docile bodies, one needs to look at the mechanisms constructed by the so-called "technicians of discipline"—the means that power utilizes to "affect the body" and make it compliant.

In order to maintain order and control, Foucault underlines the necessity of using an enclosed, guarded space, such as prison, school, factory, and barracks. The systemization of the body depends on this placement and anchoring of the subject in space and time. According to Foucault, the critic can chart the ways that the operations of the body are controlled. In a monastery, for example, there are several regulated activities throughout the day, such as praying, eating, studying, washing oneself, and sleeping, all of which must be accomplished on time. This persistent

sequence shapes the aspirant's body through internalization, rendering them a docile subject. The concept of the panopticon or "surveillance tower" may even be abandoned as a result of this internalization of the discipline.

This research examined two different types of texts, namely a literary text and a historical narrative text. These two sources were examined in order to provide a comprehensive image of Javanese women in New Caledonia, both historically and fictitiously. The novel was chosen since it contains many historical elements. Additionally, a lot of literary fictional narratives are employed in historical research. However, in terms of approach, most studies that combine the two types typically simply explain how literary works with historical information should be interpreted, while studies that link two materials of different types that have the same time setting have been rare.

The content analysis method was applied in this study. The first stage involved gathering information about various topics pertinent to the administering of the bodies and sexuality of Javanese women who had been transported to New Caledonia at the close of the nineteenth century through the beginning of the twentieth century. The data was collected from Liliane Saintomer's novel *La Bayou: De Djakarta à Nouméa* (2001) and Catherine Adi's historical writing *Orang Kontrak: Les Engagés Originaires de Java Venus Sous Contrat en Nouvelles-Calédonie 1896–1955* (2014), the latter of which includes raw data from Adi's interviews with members of her family who worked as contract laborers in colonial New Caledonia. The second stage involved choosing more specific data to show patterns in how the women's bodies and sexuality were administered. In the third stage, the data were integrated with the gender perspective on positionality, which is often found in instances where women's bodies and sexuality are being administered. At this stage, the docility of the bodies serves as a lens that allows us to view the practice of controlling the bodies and sexuality of female contract laborers in early twentieth century New Caledonia.

The Javanese Diaspora in New Caledonia

As it is not on the European continent but rather across the ocean, specifically in the Southwest Pacific Sea, the French territory of New Caledonia is frequently referred to as *Outre Mer* (literally across the ocean). The Kanaks were already living on the island when British explorer James Cook arrived there on September 4, 1774 (Adi 25). During that time, France was also conducting many international expeditions. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the French had arrived on the island and established themselves as a political force. In 1864, people who were deemed prob-

lematic in France were sent to New Caledonia, where they were given jobs as farmers on the island. With mining discoveries, such as nickel, the French in New Caledonia could not afford to do the work themselves. They then tried to take advantage of a system that had been developed by the Dutch, namely the *Koeli Ordonantie*, issued in 1880 (Maurer 69). Using this ordinance, the Dutch sent *koeli kontrak* (contract laborers) from Dutch colonies to work on Dutch plantations. The sending of laborers from Java to Suriname is one instance of how the decree was put into practice (Allen 3).

France opted to employ this system of contract *koeli* recruitment for its projects, including its nickel mines and plantations in New Caledonia, after observing the effectiveness of the *Ordonantie*'s implementation. As many as 170 Javanese left for New Caledonia by ship on February 15, 1896. Later, batches of additional contract laborers were sent to the island, adding to this growing population. There were roughly 87 boat voyages from Java to the island between 1896 and 1946—a period of fifty years. The contract laborers came from various regions in Java, especially Central Java, West Java, and East Java. These individuals consistently identified as Javanese. Semarang was chosen as the departure point in 1896. From 1913 through 1933, the laborers were sent out from Batavia. From 1915 through 1922, Semarang sent out more. The Port of Surabaya served as the departure point in 1919 (Adi 50). Around 5,000 Javanese were transported by several large ships from these departure points.

At the time, New Caledonia offered a variety of jobs. Seen as undemanding and pleasant in character, the Javanese were employed in a variety of sectors, primarily in nickel mines, plantations, and agricultural fields for the males. The women were mainly employed in the domestic sector, specifically as housekeepers.

From the Economy of the Body to the Efficient Machine

Even before the contract laborers from Java were transported to New Caledonia, the administering of women's bodies and sexuality had held sway under the Dutch colonial regime. The pay range on offer attracted many women from the lower classes who were desperate to join (Maurer 72–73). Even if it meant breaking the law, the labor recruiters wanted to attract as many workers as they could for strictly business reasons.

There were manipulations, primarily in the form of age falsification. Information about workers' age was adjusted to comply with labor standards. The minimum working age was 14 years old as of January 10, 1903, in accordance with New Caledonia's employment laws. However, in 1906, the labor syndicate changed the

recruitment age to be between the ages of 18 and 35 (Adi 54). However, the Dutch East Indies administration's policies, which were based on the laws that were in effect in 1909 and 1914, prohibited potential employees under the age of 16 from signing employment contracts. In her novel, Saintomer describes how her grandmother was enlisted at the age of 15. Additionally, married women who had absent husbands were also prohibited from joining. Therefore, widows and divorced women were not permitted to sign up. However, this rule was also broken in an effort to hire as many people as possible.

Adi describes in her writing the experience of one of her relatives who left because of financial troubles. The woman and her two children could get on board even though her husband objected to going. According to a rule on housing, a shelter would be allocated for a man and his family. Upon arrival, the woman and her two children was told to live together with a single man, whom she eventually married (Adi 55).

It is clear from the above account that a regime of power with economic interests controlled how women's bodies and sexuality were administered. Because of their poverty, women were used in difficult economic times. Later on, the woman's children would also work as laborers. According to some sources, they felt that they were being sold to the French by the Dutch. One source informed Adi about the issue, which is best described as the commercialization of humans.

"Vient, vient, vient, il y a du travail là." Aussitôt, il te rentre dans un dock, tu vois. Et là, même pas la famille peut te voir. Ah, c'est comme ça, c'est, c'est, c'est vendu quoi!

(from Catherine Adi's interview with a contract labor's daughter in March 1997, in (Adi 51))

"Come, come, come, there's work there." Immediately, he pulled you into a dock, you see. And your family couldn't even see you there. Ah, that's what it was like, yes, yes, like being sold!

The informant explains that even though she did require employment, she could sense the strong persuasion. The Javanese villagers' attention was swiftly captured by the promise of a work, so much so that as the persuasion was being made, the gathering villagers were hustled onto the ship without having a chance to say farewell to their families. The circumstance gave the informant the impression that she was being sold. Throughout the interview, she makes frequent references to

“being sold,” but admits that only when they had reached New Caledonia did she truly comprehend how much she felt like a commodity.

Men who worked in plantations and nickel mines were not the only ones who were subjected to the exploitation of the body. The treatment of women’s bodies in domestic settings took many different forms, all of which were legal. In one of the accounts gathered by Catherine Adi, female laborers were required to carry water for their employers’ needs each day.

«C’est pas tous les jours, mais de temps en temps, comme ça. Sam il doit se rappeler, on allait à la chasse. A la maison, je donnais la main à ma mère. Maman il portait, deux touques d’eau là ici, ah la la. Quand [...], on venait de Java, emmener les deux touques d’eau là, pour faire la cuisine tout ça, elle faisait la cuisine maman, ma mère quoi. Elle fait la cuisine pour le patron, pour tous les autres quoi, [...].» (from Catherine Adi’s interview with a contract labor’s daughter in March 1997, in (Adi 56))

“Not every day, but it was like that from time to time. Sam had to remember to go hunting. At home, I lent my mother a hand. Mother had to carry two pails of water to and fro, my goodness. We came all the way from Java to bring two pails of water there, to cook everything, she did all that, she did. She cooked for the employers, for everyone else, [...].”

Young girls were also administered and told to be babysitters. The law said that kids might be requested to complete such a work as early as age 6, as that was when small children could begin performing labor. The law was eventually modified to forbid kids from starting jobs before becoming 10 years old. In one of Catherine Adi’s historical narratives, Embah Ratmi’s experience is described as follows.

De son vivant, embah s’est souvenue de son travail comme bonne d’enfants dès l’âge de six ans. Embah Ratmi a gardé les enfants du gérant de la station d’élevage sur laquelle était affectée sa maman. Elle n’était ni payée, ni nourrie. Elle retrouvait sa mère pour le déjeuner. On trouve des similitudes entre son histoire et celle des enfants océaniens. L’âge minimal légal des travailleurs importés des Nouvelles Hébrides est fixé à 6 ans. La loi reste en vigueur durant les dix sept premières années de l’immigration océanienne. Par la suite, l’âge minimum légal est fixé à dix ans. (from Catherine Adi’s interview with a contract labor’s daughter in March 1997, in (Adi 60))

During her lifetime, *embah* [granny] remembered working as a nanny from the age of six. Embah Ratmi looked after the children of the manager of the breeding station to which her mother was assigned. She was neither paid nor fed. She would only see her mother for lunch. There are similarities between her story and that of the children of the Oceanians. The legal minimum age for workers imported from the New Hebrides was 6 years. The law remained in effect for the first seventeen years of the Oceanians' immigration. Subsequently, the minimum legal age was set at ten years.

The aforementioned instances are excellent illustrations of Foucault's idea of confinement as a means of discipline. The island and the settings in which the men, women, and kids worked turned into places that were just as constricting as the prison, school, factory, and barracks. WE map out, for instance, a housekeeper's typical daily work schedule, namely waking up, preparing breakfast, morning chores, shopping, preparing lunch, additional household chores like laundry and ironing, preparing dinner, nightly chores, bedtime activities, etc. The purpose of the regulated activities was to turn the housekeeper into an "efficient machine." As a result, in this illustration, the economy of the body relied on its transformation into an efficient machine that could carry out various duties effectively, much like an all-around person. The hierarchy uses the female subject as a tool. Furthermore, the authority over the body that is fixed in space and time acts as boundaries and power structures. To put it another way, the schedule that is imposed, repeated, and possibly internalized is a power structure. The panopticon is very well in action here.

Interference of Private Affairs

Women employees were treated differently than male employees. Many laws were made specifically to prohibit women from working in certain fields, including mining. The male employees were required to complete a set 12-hour shift each day. The women who worked in the domestic sector, however, put in more hours (Adi 60). They might put in 24-hour shifts to assist the family they were hired by. Living with their employers frequently prevented them from taking time off, as Saintomer in her novel describes below. Even though it is her day off, Nadiem, the novel's main character, is required to complete the household tasks that her employer requests.

"Nadiem, viens voir par là. Essuie-moi cela tout de suite. Tiens, vas laver aussi

ce vêtements.

-Mais Madame, c'est aujourd'hui dimanche et j'ai l'après midi de congé.

-Et bien, tu récupérera sur ta semaine.

(Saintomer 61)

“Nadiem, come and look over there. Wipe that off for me right away. Here, go wash these clothes as well.”

“But, Madam, today is a Sunday, so I have the afternoon off.”

“Well then you can make up for it on a weekday.”

Because Nadiem's physical body in the novel is under administrative control, she is obligated to follow her master's orders. This suggests that those who disobeyed their employers would face disciplinary measures. These could be physical punishments for the women, such as being slapped or assigned tougher labor.

Sa patronne descendait en hâte les marches qui les séparaient et la gifla à plusieurs reprises. Elle osait lui répondre ! Nadiem saisit un tison dans le feu resté allumé. Elle menaça sa patronne. Nadiem en avait assez de ses agissements, voulait bien être puni si elle méritait vraiment. Mais là, sa patronne dépassait les bornes ! (Saintomer 61).

Her employer hurried down the steps that separated them and slapped her repeatedly. She dared to answer her! Nadiem grabbed a weave from the fire that had remained lit. She threatened her employer. Nadiem was fed up with her actions, prepared to be punished if she really deserved it. But this time, her employer had crossed the line!

The administering of the women's body, however, also took place through the control of their private lives. Their employers had a lot of say in who they could meet or get married to. In Saintomer's piece, Nadiem makes the decision to wed a Javanese man without her employers' consent. She is punished after they learn the truth.

«Alors, comme ça tu t'est mariée avec un Javanais, un kakane?»

Silences. En prononçant ce mot, il avait pris un ton méprisant. Il savait que cela voulait dire grand frère. Les Javanais s'appellent respectueusement entre eux comme cela.

«Réponds»

Oui monsieur.

Oui Patron! Je te l'ai déjà dit.

Oui ... Patron.

Je ne t'ai pas faire venir ici pour aller avec un Javanais. Tu es là pour travailler non pas pour batifoler.

Mais Patron tu t'es bien marié toi? Alors pourquoi moi Javanais n'ai-je pas ce droit?

Il ne fait pas partie de mon personnel!»

Elle fut sur le point de répondre, mais une gifle empêche toute tentative. (Saintomer 66).

“So, you got married to a Javanese, a *kakane* [Javanese man]?”

Silence. In pronouncing this word, he had taken a contemptuous tone. He knew it meant big brother. The Javanese respectfully call each other that way.

“Answer.”

“Yes, Sir.”

““Yes, Boss!’ I’ve told you.”

“Yes, Boss.”

“I didn’t bring you here to wander off with a Javanese. You are here to work, not to frolic.”

“But, Boss, are you not married as well? Why can’t I, a Javanese, have the same right?”

“That’s none of my business!”

She was about to reply, but a slap prevented the intention.

When the employers believed they had full authority to control the private life of their contract laborers, they began to administer their bodies and sexuality. In the story, Nadiem’s employer emphasizes that he has the discretion to permit Nadiem to wed or not. As a result, he unilaterally dissolves Nadiem’s marriage. As a member of the ruling group, the employer has the power to control and administer Nadiem’s body and sexuality.

Sur ordre du patron, chacun rentra chez soi, un goût amer dans la bouche. Monsieur Loulou fit annuler le mariage de Nadiem et de Senen par le Hadji même qui l’avait prononcé. Ils divorcèrent donc sans en être avertis ! (Saintomer 67).

On the employer's orders, everyone went home, a bitter taste in their mouths. Monsieur Loulou had the marriage of Nadiem and Senen annulled by the very *Hadji* who had pronounced it. They were therefore divorced without being informed!

Nadiem's employer then explains the social framework that was in place at the time, where the authority to regulate the bodies and sexuality of the people belonged not only to the state but also to individuals from a certain group—in this case the French. They hold the authority to control the immigrants simply because they have paid them. This suggests the condition at the time where these individual authorities believed they had the power to control both the work and personal life of the contract laborers.

Conclusion

The administering of Javanese women laborers' bodies and sexuality in New Caledonia illustrates a gender divide in the experiences of women contract laborers during the colonial era. Even the men who worked in mines and plantations encountered challenges, and their outcomes were frequently not any better. However, contrary to working in the domestic sector, labor on plantations and mines had clearer rules. On the contrary, women were subject to the rules of the families where they worked because they had to spend more than 12 hours with their employers. It appears that historically women were restricted based on their very own bodies and sexuality, not only as properties of a society but also as the properties of their employers, whether the employers be male or female.

According to Foucault, internalizing rules via repeated behavior, rather than coercion, is what causes the body to become docile. However, the process was different for the Javanese female contract laborers in early twentieth century New Caledonia. First, not only were they restricted to the domestic setting where they performed their labors, but they were also subjected to forced physical punishment on top of their monotonous daily tasks. Second, the female contract laborers' private lives were invaded as a result of the discipline's broad application. They were not only restricted in who they could marry, but their unions might also be deemed invalid and susceptible to annulment by their employers. This illustrates the social condition at the time when power targeted docile bodies for the economy of those bodies—when the authority believed that they had the right to limit and exploit the contract laborers in both the employment and personal domains.

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On Cultural Transmutation and Aesthetic Turn in the Age of Consumerism

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Abstract The strong intervention of technology and the market in the field of culture shows a noticeable trend of generalization across culture and aesthetics in the present era, which is performed by the rise of popular culture and the transformation of daily life aestheticization. In the face of this profound wave of secularization and widespread democratization, the supremacy of high culture and the disciplinary vision of traditional studies are under strong attack, and the traditional methods of creation and aesthetic criticism of classical art no longer apply to the emerging mass culture or mass art. From the aesthetics of classical art to the aesthetics of pleasure that focus on bodily sensations and physiological desires, from the “human” voice of classical art to the popular experience of contemporary culture. From the literal imagery of classical art to the image reproduction of popular culture, from the conceptual illusion of classical art to the physical comedy of popular culture. Classic aesthetics has rapidly entered its contemporary transformation and reality reconstruction. Its cultural standpoint and theoretical horizon have made a comprehensive adjustment.

Keywords pan-aesthetics; pleasure experience; classical art; mass culture; classical aesthetics

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Introduction

Although people like Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno have written off mass culture as a worthless part of the cultural industry, it is an indisputable fact that the cultural industry has flourished in the developed countries for nearly a century. The cultural industry uses mass media to create physical fantasies, provide playful psychological experiences, overcome identity anxiety, and enrich the cultural life of the public in a broader sense; it might be fashionable and kitsch, but cultural consumers have embraced it. Therefore, the development of mass culture in the consumer society is inevitable.

Supported by the ever-rising technological rationality, human society has made great strides in material civilization, which has led to an unprecedented burst of self-confidence. The progress of technology and pervasiveness of market logic have caused the earlier humble human beings to proclaim “the death of God,” “the death of man” and “the death of the author” one after another, and to constantly discuss “the end of religion,” “the end of philosophy” and “the end of art,” turning over every spiritual icon on high to the ground. In the face of this profound secularization and widespread democratization, the supremacy of high culture and the disciplinary perspective of traditional studies have been strongly impacted, and the traditional methods of creation and aesthetic criticism of classical art no longer apply to the emerging mass culture or mass art. The strong intervention of technology and the market in the field of culture has led to a remarkable trend of generalization across culture and aesthetics in the present era.

Aesthetic Generalization: The Modern Variation of the Aesthetic Routinization

The aesthetic generalization firstly appears to be the enlargement of artistic scope. From the original poetry, painting, and music to the nine Muses who perform respective duties, from the traditional types of art to the new types of art, such as film, television, advertising, and performance art, culture has expanded its original, narrow and specific types of art, to all the spiritual and ideological realms of mankind, even the realm of pure desire; especially with the rise of popular culture, everyday life tends to be aestheticized, aesthetic modernity and aesthetic routinization—the former tension-filled pair of categories in classic aesthetics—

have shifted from opposition to harmony. What is more interesting is that the material utility and physiological pleasure that classic aesthetics has always denied and suppressed have become the representative and leader of beauty in the contemporary aesthetic context and aesthetic experience. In short, the extension and connotation of contemporary aesthetics have been significantly expanded and extended. Beauty has become pervasive and ceaseless in people's daily life. In the era of globalization, the economy has shown an evident trend of integration; the shallow material culture and industrial culture are showing the same tendency with the help of modern industrial high-tech and modern information high-tech. It is an undeniable reality.

As one of the cores of culture, the generalization of aesthetic culture is an irresistible trend. It is not only driven by the external environment, for example, but the "lifelike effect" under the intervention of high-tech makes the originally genius imagination become various alternatives of the desire abreaction and satisfaction of the real or virtual life. Moreover, there is also a sense of crisis that the aesthetic culture itself, especially the traditional aesthetic standpoint and experience, if it refuses adjustment and expansion, will withdraw from the criticism discourse field in the emerging art. Just as the 15th century Protestant Reformation that made daily mundane behaviors religious is an irresistible religion generalization, popular culture or aesthetic generalization is also a historical necessity that makes daily mundane behaviors aesthetically significant. In other words, similar to the Protestant Reformation, which is essentially a movement of secularization and routinization of the sacred religion, which makes people's life more rational and spirits free and liberated; this transformation of aesthetic generalization is in essence the routinization and popularization of elegant and specialized artistic aesthetics, it aims to get out of the narrow circle of classic aesthetic theories surrounds traditional elite art, and to better adapt to the new changes brought by the modern cultural life generalization, avoiding the invalidation of classic aesthetic discourse and the aphasia even absent of aesthetic criticism. This transformation of aesthetic generalization is a big wave in the tide of cultural generalization, and it is the aesthetic, theoretical answer to the increasingly culturalization of daily life. The new aesthetics which adjusted its vision has based on the aestheticization of daily life to provide a reasonable statement and explanation for the cultural changes in the new era and further refines the new aesthetic experience it contains, condensing it into the intrinsic driving force of human spiritual development, which is also the theoretical meeting point of humanities and arts and mass culture in the new era.

The current transformation of aesthetic generalization is comprehensive. From

the perspective of the research object, although the classic aesthetics which focus on high art are also concerned about the beauty of nature, the nature, on the whole, is emotionalized and aestheticized by people; the “virtue comparison theory” of traditional Chinese aesthetics and the “Project Theory” of the modern Western aesthetics are the proof of that. Hence classic aesthetics can also be referred as artistic aesthetics. Nonetheless, contemporary aesthetics focuses on a completely different point, and it emphasizes attention to daily life or cultural phenomenon in daily life, that is, popular culture, especially popular fashion. Therefore, fashion and clothing, interior decoration, advertising design, and even resort layouts that have never been shown in classic aesthetics have officially entered the research field of contemporary aesthetics. From the perspective of aesthetic form and aesthetic style, classic aesthetics regards tragedy in high art as high, comedy as low, and rejects burlesque. Its overall style is refined and elegant, tragic and solemn; it praises the beauty and sublime, even if it involves comedy art, it is most tragic comedy or contains tragic elements, the so-called “tearful laugh.” While contemporary aesthetics is dominated by informal and popular comedies, various sub-comedy arts and burlesques also have a broad cultural consumer market, and their overall style is plane, standard, relaxing and vivid. It accolades pleasure and economy: it firstly lays eyes on physiological pleasure experience instead of deep mental rejoicing and spiritual cleansing, the so-called “katharsis” effect; it no longer pursues the traditional artistic conception which is distant and intriguing, but focuses on the immediate cheerful response of the body and the saving of time and effort in consumption. Thus, current mass cultural products are mostly disposable, and their cultural consumption is often oriented to leisure and entertainment, mental stress relief, or desired release.

From the essence of aesthetics, classic aesthetics pays attention to aesthetic transcendence and the development of spiritual space. It regards tranquility, serenity, and peace of desireless and selflessness as the highest state, there to have the ancient saying of “quietness goes far.” Contemporary aesthetics, on the other hand, focuses on shallow psychological pleasure and self-satisfaction, and the so-called “individual” choices of emotionalization and the seemingly unconscious so-called “fits,” in short, it is based on the cheerful presentation of the body comedy. If the culturally nourishing environment of classic aesthetic concepts is the metaphysical questioning of existence which runs through from classical to modern time, with obvious religious compassion, then the culturally nourishing environment of contemporary aesthetic ideas represented by popular culture is the new religion of contemporary masses—pure consumerism philosophy supported by technologist

and materialism. From the cultivation of the beauty of classical art to the pleasing aesthetics that pays attention to physical feelings and desires, from the endorsement of “human” in classical art to the popular experience of contemporary culture, from the literal imagery of classical art to the image reproduction of contemporary culture, from the conceptual fantasy of classical art to the body comedy of popular culture, classical aesthetics quickly entered its contemporary transformation and reality reconstruction.

Based on the burgeoning modern high-tech, and controlled by strong capital that expands the market to earn greater profits, mass culture, permeated by a dramatic change in aesthetic interest, has completely reversed the metaphysical heaviness of human that have been inherited for thousands of years, and moved towards an attempt to individualize the experiential ease of the individual. The aesthetic generalization brought about by the rise of popular culture is both revolutionary at the level of preventing cultural fascism, which was praised by Walter Benjamin, and reactionary in the sense of spiritual degradation that Herbert Marcuse has reviled. Facing the generalization of aesthetics, most people have to experience unavoidable bewilderment and confusion: how much effect does classic aesthetic theory have in the transition from aesthetic culture to popular culture? And how to adjust it?

Reorientation of Pleasure: The Contemporary Change of Aesthetic Interest

Artists and aestheticians initially disdained and confronted the impact of technology from which modernism emerged in the late nineteenth century; the most fashionable fast-food art, decorative art, and consumer art of contemporary people are worthless to modernists. In the face of the impact of the market, the traditional attitudes of artists and aestheticians are antipathy and panic. Since the nineteenth century, when capitalism achieved the unification of the global market through colonial violence, the patronage system of traditional arts gradually disintegrated, artists were gradually professionalized, and their works had to rely on the power of merchants, compradors, and intermediaries to enter the market territory and obey its manipulation.

After more than a century of technological and market shocks, especially the high-tech and economic globalization since the 1970s, traditional art, high-tech and contemporary fashion have combined and derived, and many ideas of classical aesthetics have been radically shaken, arts and crafts, pop music, cartoon products, popular film and television dramas, various decorative fashion arts, body painting, performance arts, etc. are making a great clamor, the transmission and expression of

physical desires, the pursuit and implementation of utilitarian ideas are extremely heated. These are in sharp contrast to the clear-boundaries traditional arts and the graceful, sublime classical aesthetic concepts. Contemporary art has an obvious sub-variety and cross-variety character, and contemporary aesthetic concepts have also shifted from ultra-utilitarian and spiritual sublimation (purification) to meet people's everyday release of desire and chase of pleasure; shortness, flatness, and fashion have replaced infinite charm, distant mood, and unique personality. The main theme of aesthetics throughout the era, changed from the noble and solemn tragedy art to the humorous comic art; heavy metaphysics and exquisite, elegant aesthetic taste have become exclusive to a few elite thinkers and artists, the superficial physical enjoyment and body pleasure have become the cultural interest of most people.

Frankfurt School thinks that the pleasure generated by popular culture is nothing but a sugar-coated ideology, and our indulgence in sensory joy induces us to unconsciously succumb to ideological cognition violence. Benefiting from Bakhtin's "carnival" theory, the "pleasure" theory that appeared in the 1980s gave "pleasure" a completely different meaning: it regards pleasure as an important resource of the resistance to hierarchical order and authoritative control. But more importantly, it benefits from French thinker Roland Barthes' exposition of physical pleasure. According to Barthes, the body is a product of nature rather than of culture and it is detached from ideology, therefore it constitutes the last stronghold against cultural control; presumably that the body is separated from the subject constructed by ideology, then ideology is not all-pervasive, and the body provides us with a limited free space to resist ideology, physical pleasure then becomes the antithesis of ideology and has obvious positive significance. Based on this, Fiske, a well-known British culturalist scholar, concluded, "There have been many attempts to theorize the role of pleasure in culture; they vary immensely, but all share the desire to divide pleasure into two broad categories, one of which they applaud, and the other they deplore" (Fiske 16). From Fiske's point of view, this dichotomy is sometimes regarded as "aesthetic," that is, it is opposed to vulgar pleasures with elegant and noble pleasure; sometimes it is "political," that is, it is distinguished from revolutionary pleasure by rebellious pleasure; sometimes it is "discourse," that is, the sense of creative pleasure is different from the pleasure of accepting the stale definition; sometimes it is "psychological," that is, the mental pleasure and the physical pleasure; sometimes it is "rules," it is the pleasure of exerting power and the pleasure of evading power. Fiske noted, "I, too, wish to recognize that pleasures are multiple and can take contradictory forms, but I wish to concentrate on popular pleasures as

opposed to hegemonic ones, and thus to emphasize what is typically thought of as the more disreputable side of each antithesis” (Fiske 6). Based on a careful analysis of “pleasure,” Fiske divides pleasure into two types: one is evasive pleasure, which surrounds the body, it tends to cause offenses and vilifications in a social sense, and one is the pleasure brought by the production of various meanings, they are about social identity and social relations, and they operate in a social sense by resisting hegemonic powers in a semiotic sense. Fiske thinks that this classification is beneficial. He opposed the Frankfurt school’s general view of mass culture “From this point of view, mass culture is a standardized, formulaic, repetitive and superficial culture, one which celebrates trivial, sentimental, immediate and false pleasures at the expense of serious, intellectual, time-honored and authentic values” (Strinati 12).

Undoubtedly, the focus of classic aesthetics is on the spiritual level and spiritual world of human beings, and the pursuit of a transcendent promotion of human nature and a continuous improvement of the existing situation with a compassionate and solemn attitude; it researches the origin of beauty as beauty, and discusses the aesthetic category of grace and sublime, by “Animism” and “Virtue Comparing theory” to bring everything—nature, pure art, human society and daily life—into the human aesthetic vision, and classify them into human moral purification or spiritual ascension; it opposes non-harmony, non-equilibrium, and non-delicacy except tragedy and magnificence, and rejects the pursuit of physical happiness and utilitarianism beyond spiritual grief and solemnity for it believes that those will degenerate humanity and alienate the spirit, therefore, comedies that promote humor are always at the bottom in the discourse field of classic aesthetics, those emerging sub-comedy varieties—such as cross talks, sketches, comedies, New Year blockbuster, soap operas and etc.—are worthless, not to mention being researched as serious art.

The continuous improvement and rapid development of human production technology have continued to generalize the culture which exclusive to human beings, the achievements of human civilization have changed with each passing day. In the recent digital technology revolution, the high development of information technology and the full penetration of capitalism have promoted the complete generalization of human culture, and the main focus of human culture has also shifted from the ideological elite to the consumer mass, the material world is extremely rich yet unbalanced, the cultural influence is extremely broad yet superficial; industrial culture dominates the world with its oneness, many people are reduced to slaves of industrialization and marketization, and become spiritual vagrants with no thought, no opinion, and no personality driven by huge living pressure and fast fashion, im-

mersed in alternative and virtual satisfaction all day long and unable to extricate themselves. Frankfurt School's ideas are not all sensational, while it is impractical to resist and oppose them blindly as in a Don Quixote-style behavior, aesthetics reclusion, shown in romanticism and aestheticism in the nineteenth century, is more of an illusory, wishful thinking aesthetic Utopian. Only through careful and thorough analysis and dissection, and with critical guidance, will it be possible at the appropriate time to promote the transformation of the current "cultural industry," which has been alienated by capital, into "folk culture" that represents the masses, which in the true meaning is the culture of "mass." Therefore, the aesthetic redemption theory advocated by Adorno, Marcuse, and others has considerable value and reference significance. After all, the turning of aesthetic taste has become a reality, but the key question is: After the turning, the ideological elites have been completely marginalized, and they no longer have the right to control the direction of the development of aesthetic culture. So, who is at the helm of popular culture now?—It is the so-called "cultural economic man" and "economic cultural man" who obey the capital and the market. In the final analysis, it is the capital and the market. Therefore, there is a pair of main contradictions in people's minds about the contemporary mainstream culture: the confrontation between aestheticism and consumerism.

Mass Culture: Confrontation Between Aestheticism and Consumerism

The rise of popular culture has caused many new topics. Aestheticization of popular culture or aesthetic generalization is a revolution of daily aesthetics, and it is in nature a process of secularizing the sacred aesthetics and popularizing elegant art. Its main appearance is the culturalization and aestheticization of daily life; this is also the ideal that the ideological elites of all ages have been eager to achieve since the Enlightenment. Now, this ideal has been realized on the surface, but many serious problems are still rooted in the depths, especially the internal driving force of this change is derived from the control of market capital and technological civilization, rather than the top-down cultural awareness or aesthetics awareness of the masses which was expected by enlightenments of all ages. It is because of this deep-rooted disagreement that contemporary marginalized ideological elites spare no efforts to speak out despite changes in their status, attempting the impossible by insisting on criticizing the full-scale control of market capital and technological civilization on human society, exposing the "accommodation" and "kitsch" conspiracy in the production and marketing of popular culture, and resist the consumerist principles hidden in the development of popular culture; in the era of writing or making "for the chest and the lower body," when chanting desires and expressing utility as

frankly and nakedly as animals, the ideological elites still adhere to the standpoint of human sublimation and spiritual evolution by under aestheticism, oppose all form of human alienation and attempts to impress those who are accustomed to change the status quo and prevent the emergence of cultural consequences.

There is a fundamental difference between classic art and popular culture, that is, whether it is the emotional expression of the producer or the desired catharsis of the consumer that is the focus. The cultural concept of aestheticism is based on artists' self-subjectivity, so it emphasizes the free appearance of individual life experiences; while the cultural concept of popular culture is based on the consumers' interest choices, hence it emphasizes the most common life experience, such as sexual fantasy, etc., only in this way can it obtain the best market prospects. It is also in this sense that Horkheimer, Adorno, and others believe that mass culture is a way for the industrialized totalitarian society of capitalism to exert control over the mass's minds, and this control method eliminates doubts about the rationality of capitalist industrial society by satisfying material desires in a remarkable degree. Classic art, especially modernist art, which imaginatively surpassed the secular society, was appreciated by the thinkers of the Frankfurt School in resisting the objectification and one-sidedness of people in the consumer society.

Classical art is a discovery of meaning expressers when facing the world, while the meaning of popular culture is a kind of "endorsement" of expressers facing consumers. Therefore, the meaning of classic art arises from the relationship between the subject and the world and has a strong referentiality, while the meaning of popular culture arises from the relationship between the author and the consumer, tending to be an experiential or gaming experience. Aestheticism often engages in artistic activities with the concept of aesthetic salvation, so art is essential and immortal to them. Artistic activities are to reveal the original meaning of the world and even formulate a generally effective way of understanding and valuing principle for all people. This urge to create classics has filled elegant art with words about the meaning of the world, no matter whether the meaning is absurd or harmonious is of nothingness or primitive vitality, and no matter how this meaning makes the recipient feel obscure and unfamiliar, the words facing the earth always support the meaning production system of classic art. Mass culture does not care much about the national economy and people's livelihood; it refuses to assume the important task of speaking the earth. Its meaning does not come from reference but resonance, from the producer's endorsement for mass consumers. Mass culture does not need to explore the essence of cosmos and life, but only speculates on the trend of the cultural market, pondering the emotional desires of people in secular

society; mass culture should build a real stage or virtual space for consumers to vent their emotions or realize dreams. Therefore, whether it is philosophical essence truth or real-life truth, it does not make much sense to mass culture. For example, Camus' *Sisyphus Myth* uses the vain of the strong to inform people of his discovery of the world's meaning—absurdity, the Hollywood movie *Terminator* starring Schwarzenegger, weaves a false story for people to realize their desire for “the strength to punish evil and promote good.” The meaning of *Sisyphus Myth* is of Camus' deep reflection on the world, while the meaning of *Terminator* is of the “collusion” of the film production team and the audience.

As an institutional existence of popular culture, mass media such as television, cinema, radio, newspapers, karaoke, dance halls, etc. have prepared material premises for the development of popular culture, and its ultimate role is to make mass culture produced on the scale of the cultural industry and spread globally. As a result, the field of cultural sharing has been significantly expanded, and the barriers of traditional regional culture with boundaries of regions or ethnic groups have been dismantled on a large scale, providing the possibility of forming a modern world culture. Mass culture clearly positions itself as a commodity, is guided by market principles, and has been used by the masses for consumption, and therefore, mass culture instinctively tracks the masses' cultural consumption psychology and caters to the masses' consumer tastes. It has a certain degree of innovation and helpfulness: it replaces empty doctrines with shallow principles of commodity equality, participates in the daily life of the public with the relaxed principle after intense work, relieves the social tension with the principle of repressive consciousness release, and updates cultural products constantly with the principle of natural selection, so it is said that popular culture has its irreplaceable functions in modern society. However, compared with elegant art or elite culture, the market characteristics and commodity principles of popular culture determine its flatness and short-sightedness, and the pursuit of instant pleasure or instinct satisfaction becomes its mainstream. Restricted by the market logic, there is indeed a driving force in the pursuit of stylization, pasteurization, and mass production to obtain the maximum economic benefit in mass culture production; but when the consumer market becomes more sophisticated and the consumer psychology matures, there is also competitive creative driving force that is constrained by the law of natural elimination and focuses on maximizing consumer interest with innovation and uniqueness. This shows that the production of popular culture, in addition to being restricted by the market economy, is also potentially constrained by aesthetic laws and public interest at appropriate times.

Needless to say, the current mass culture production in mainland China is dominated by consumerism which is controlled by the market logic, the inner spirits of its products are almost lost, and only one appearance survived. Its commerciality from production to sales even includes the so-called after-sale services are no different from other unstable goods. It can be said that the commodity attribute of current popular culture occupies a dominant position, while the spiritual attribute is replaced by high-tech packaging and technological decoration. The level of mass culture in many regions is even more worrying, that short, plain, quick, and vulgar, pornographic products are pervasive, making the Chinese cultural industry, which relies much on the leading role of popular cultural products, clearly at a disadvantage. The development of the market, driven by competition, shows that popular culture itself can also produce an antidote and restrain consumerism from domination, because the creation of the cultural market requires the “appeal” under the support of “applause,” otherwise it will not last long. After the development of popular culture reached a certain extent, its internal changes just fit the aestheticists’ criticism of single-dimensional consumerism, the combination of internal and external forces promotes popular culture to increase spiritual capacity and reduce the possibility of human alienation. However, given the fact that the nature of market capital control has not been eliminated thoroughly, it is in vain to expect the market to purify itself, external impact and benign criticism still play a key role. So, from the standpoint of aestheticism, how should the aesthetic foundation of popular culture be established? What is the theoretical basis of the aestheticization of daily life?

Experience Aesthetics: The Cheerful Show of Body Comedy

In fact, with the development of cultural industry, the production economy has made the intellectual class increasingly subject to producers of capitalism and bureaucracy; the consumer economy has conflicted the intellectual class with popular culture; the left-wing intellectual class holds a democratic vision of opening up culture to all people, but this vision is contradictory to the comic exaggeration of which popular culture presented; the tendency of intellectual class advocating elitism and nobility is contradictory to the popularization of culture. In a deeper sense, artists and intellectuals feel the defects of modern society and the shock from the world that is moving towards chaos.

The modern variation of daily aesthetics has prompted the conscious adjustment of the cultural standpoint and theoretical horizon of classic aesthetics. Aesthetics has gradually broken through the narrow frame of “beauty for beauty’s”

sake in the past, and penetrated various living activities of human beings, to strengthen the power of aesthetic intervention in reality and elevate the spirit in the interpretation of contemporary human survival activities. There is no doubt that the relationship between aesthetics and human existence has become the internal basis of the aesthetic transformation in the new period; aesthetics changes the previous abstract speculation that starts from a certain fixed point to confirm the existence of beauty. Instead, it focuses on the living conditions of contemporary people in a unique way, asking the value of life and exploring the meaning of it. The transformation of the perspective of existentialism means that aesthetics participates in the construction of contemporary attitudes of existentialism in its possible way, and also uses its affectionate pursuit of ideals to erect the transcendental coordinates for human existence, to better shoulder the mission of “worrying” for humanity.

Classical aesthetics has gone through the three major stages of ontology, epistemology, and the theory of knowledge, starting from Gadamer to a new stage of the theory of the experience, which has laid a solid theoretical foundation for contemporary aesthetic transformation. Nietzsche once said: Beauty is the root of man. Therefore, aesthetics is based on the sharing of civilizations. The so-called “do not do what you don’t want to do to others” embodies experience ethics that think for others. However, the factors of the theory of experience do not represent the theory itself, neither the related components necessarily originate from it. Leaving aside distant classical tradition, the connotation and tendency of experience in the near modern age contrast each other enormously. For example, in the modernism art which Kafka represented, novelists turned man into a beetle, or a symbolic character K, making the audience experience a sharp heaviness and intelligence; while the famous Italian novelist Calvino makes people experience the flat lightness and sentimentality that uniquely belongs to the post-modernism. The rise of popular culture is supported by an unprecedented high-tech synthesis and modern communication technology, based on a new encoding-decoding cultural information theory, and formed on the theory of experience aesthetics as well as daily aesthetics, which are core ideas of the pan-aesthetics age. Popular culture’s new aesthetic point of view is the visual turn, and it takes high-quality, virtual image culture as its cultural form to eliminate “true” life with “true” technology; people use them to fight against the survival pressure, technological control and cultural hegemony in their real lives, and to achieve a new type of aesthetic liberation and meaning creation with a pan-cultural tendency. The popularity of leisure and fashion aesthetics has made the philosophy of happiness or jovial popular. It neither pursues a deep search for ideas nor seeks the development of spiritual space. Instead, it

points oneself to the individual's body, emphasizing the current pleasure experience and desire for release.

Mass culture is not as obsessed with concepts and ideas as classic art but is committed to creating a body fantasy, because its connotation needs to be a consumable thing, something that can imaginatively satisfy desires. While the human body is both an object of desire and a representative of emotional release; both a collection of social relations and a secular image of existence, therefore, in popular culture, cultural producers are committed to creating a variety of body fantasies. For instance, the storyline, world conditions, and aesthetic style in Hollywood movies may be quickly forgotten, but the movie stars' elegant demeanor enjoys the vivid eternity. Audrey Hepburn's charms, Marilyn Monroe's sex appeal, Ingrid Bergman's elegance, Vivien Li's beauty, etc. are all body fantasies that were intentionally created by Hollywood movies. They have now become metaphorical "signifiers" and symbols of people's dreams. The mass culture of post-modern society also particularly highlights the sexual characteristics of movie stars' body fantasies, for sexiness is the object of general human desire, and it is also the expression of physical characteristics. Contemporary mass culture often regards sexiness as the content of body fantasies, and sexy stars also fill the space of various media; as the focus of the lively physical comedy, sex has become the biggest commodity in the cultural market, and the dream of all consumers, for it is both the core of life's desire and the selling point of the cultural industry.

Of course, it is impossible for contemporary aesthetics, which has experienced the impact of postmodernism, to return to the classical era intact; experiential aesthetics, which are built on the philosophy of existentialism, can neither pander to the interests of the masses without principle nor cling to the existing traditions, it should show a new post-humanistic position, that is, calling for the return of the divinity while preserving aesthetic "earthly" results. The medieval divine monism is completely different from the current pursuit of divinity, the previous divine monism led to the enslavement and bondage of man—the supremacy of God and man's divine servitude, while the current pursuit of divinity is to elevate man's spirit after material enrichment, so that man is truly on the path of full development; humanism first rebelled against divinity and broke free from its bondage, focused on the earthly nature or secularity, but when the earthly nature went downhill remarkably, there was an urgent need to rebuild the humanistic spirit, call for its uplift, and promote it in post-humanistic context. The great decline of humanism caused by secularization and consumerism ended the honeymoon between popular culture and humanities and arts, and the tension between emotion and reason, content and form,

experience and thought loosened and even disappeared. Under such circumstances, the positive results of aesthetics utilization and popularization should be preserved, the sensation and recollection of spiritual pleasure should be restored in a variety of pleasurable experiences, and the “pursuit of divinity” that always asks about existential conditions by the modernism of which Kafka represented should be borrowed. Using spiritual divinity or transcendence to confront the falling material secularity and technological solidification, and feed this non-falling spirit into the popular mass culture again, while preserving its external beauty and diversity of interest, and striving to improve its ideology and artistic taste, so that mass culture enters the track of healthy development.

Popular culture witnesses the rapidly daily production of works, just like a new cloud expels clouds from the previous day. People blame mass culture for being a degenerate culture; it might be true, but popular culture has its repertoire. Besides, there is no less mediocrity in elegant culture than there is in popular culture in proportion. Moreover, university professors should not only see the bottom of the vulgar culture but neglect the top, which is the university campus culture. It is true that television programs popularize science culture and provide superficial explanations of literature, and in the case of scientific shows, there are indeed excellent scientists from various fields who participated in the production. The real problem is the consumption patterns of this culture. It is a culture that does not allow for introspection, not just because one show will repel the previous one and one cloud will replace another, but also because the show is watched at leisure in the way of consumption. People watch it while dining, and before going to bed. It is the same as listening to music as a background sound and going to a concert hall. As a result, popular culture offers fewer possibilities for reflection because of its lack of consumption patterns and structures. After all, the tragic syndrome of modern culture is a tragedy of reflection. Originally, knowledge is for thinking, discussion, and consideration, to be incorporated into the experience of life. Thinking is degenerating everywhere, and even in humanistic culture, the mill is idling; it is no longer possible to take material from scientific culture for thinking; communication has become very rare, even between philosophy and science. Because of the difficulty of acquiring specialized scientific knowledge, humanistic culture is no longer able to reflect on human knowledge in the world. And in a scientific culture, where knowledge accumulates in nameless databases and computers are used more and more frequently, there is also the possibility of depriving people of knowledge, raising fears of new ignorance in its accumulation. The mass culture that gives up its obsession with ideas and thoughts and focuses only on the creation of a physical

illusion will ultimately deprive human culture of its possibilities for introspection.

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The World of Al-Gharbi Emran in *Mushaf Ahmar*: A Critique of Tripartite Taboo

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Abstract Very few studies have been carried out to investigate *Mushaf Ahmar* (2010), a narrative that questions conventional and tripartite taboos surrounding religion, politics, and sex in a conservative Yemeni milieu. Its appearance elicits a conflicted response of extreme hatred and great admiration. Though it can be addressed and analyzed on numerous and diverse levels, none of which are far removed from controversy. It provokes controversial questions about the homeland, existential issues related to interreligious interactions, equality between social classes, and its own crises, leading to a cultural interpretation that helps the community promote awareness and freedom struggle. It is hypothesized that the novel violates the Forbidden Trinity and that religion, politics, and sex are thought to be essential components of what defines a man, and avoiding them would be equivalent to writing an angelic earthbound story. By employing an eclectic method, in which a literary text's form and content are inseparable, the novel is analyzed. One of the most significant findings is the disclosure of the loopholes over which institutional literature has kept mute and refrained from delving into them openly and daringly by violating taboos. Emran, unlike some other writers, does not use sexuality in its two forms: homosexuality and heterosexuality, to arouse suppressed sexual urges. Instead, he uses sex to critique social and political corruption as well as extremism. The novel addresses broad humanitarian issues that concern everyone around the globe and offers an alternative perspective to the more widespread perspective in society.

Keywords Forbidden Trinity; politics; religion; sex; taboo.

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Introduction

Whether it has to do with religion, politics, sexuality, conventions, or anything else, the term “taboo” refers to anything that is regarded as sacred, forbidden, or otherwise socially unacceptable. It is the speech, expression, or emotion that society, family, a political authority, or a religious institution forbids one from using or indulging in because it might violate people’s inalienable beliefs, symbols, and values. Messaoud et al., in *Taboo between the Novel Production and the Temptation to Receive the Story of Riyagh for Raga Alsanea as a model* state that taboo refers to a person or a group that fails to follow social norms pertaining to religion, sexuality, politics, or tribalism (304-305).

The topics of religion, politics, and sex (traditionally known as the Forbidden Trinity), despite being essential to life, are taboo in our culture on the grounds that addressing them facilitates the spread of nasty misinformation. Tackling taboos have terrible repercussions that cause a person to stray from morality and religion. As a result, for a very long time, writers shied away from taboo topics before approaching them to uncover and shatter them. They feel inspired to challenge social norms and create groundbreaking works that defy expectations. It is not possible to develop characters who do not hold any positions on issues of politics or religion and do not engage in sexual behavior. Yet, a literary work’s exploration of politics, religion, or sexuality is not an end. Instead, it serves as a means of employment and the purging of selfish desires and intentions. Every person’s life and the life of society are influenced by sex, politics, and religion. Since they are human in their morals and baseness, they cannot be separated. Even if someone is dressed in monks’ robes or is acting immorally, he is still a human being who is shaped by circumstances and motivated by desires.

A narrative has been touched by modernity due to a significant break with tradition in both form and content. Ahmed Murad, a novelist incorporated sex and religion into his works, such as “Season of Hunting Deer.” Regarding the religious taboo, Naguib Mahfouz’s name appears in his novel, “Children of Gebelawi,” as well as Haider Haider’s novel “A Feast for Seaweed.” There are two novels by Muhammad Shukri, “The Barefoot Bread and the Shaytar,” as well as novels and short stories by Ghada al-Samman that address the topics of sexual taboo. As for the political taboo, we find the novels of Abdul Rahman Munif such as “Cities of Salt,” show the brutality of political prisons and their gloomy hallways, which rob people

of all their humanity and reduce them to nothing more than a number.

Numerous literary works' most recent efforts seem to soar above the localized monotony and frustration to achieve a standard befitting of both local and global recognition. The Yemeni novel, which is not an exception, has experienced a sudden change. A well-known contemporary Yemeni novelist named Al-Gharbi Emran has deviated from traditional narratives in terms of content, style, and dialectical devices. His writings stand out for their broad audacity and depth in terms of culture, politics, and philosophy. He strives to make sense of the world around him and make it understandable to everyone. His purpose is to place the modern Yemeni novel within the context of both contemporary Arabic literature and international literature. His writing is well known for its audacious and caustic critique of reality and peculiar societal mores. *Mushaf Ahmar*, his first novel, challenges superstition, religious dictatorship, the annihilation of the other, sex, and political and social backwardness. Emran is aware of how to pique the reader's interest and evoke his feelings, and occasionally shifts his conceptions resulting in a distinctive reading experience (Editorial Board, 2008 245).

Mushaf Ahmar breaks taboos and causes controversy in several areas, including politics, sex, social concerns, and religion, evoking a range of responses to the point that it was banned from entering the country and its author has been fired. Aside from being a critique of the authority represented by the Sheikhs, who are a state within a state and religious leader, the novel also tackles the topic of sexuality, revealing homosexual and lesbian relationships. It may set out to be enlightening from the start, respecting religion to its purest limits. It argues with authority to bring it back to the right path when desires and a lonely voice become overwhelming, and it comprehends the soul and human nature within the framework of innocence, as well as the nature of creation (AbuTaleb 56). The narrative could be a powerful statement against religious oppression and the elimination of the other, and its themes seem to be an appeal to love, coexistence, tolerance, and acceptance of the unity of plurality, which has long been a Yemeni trait.

Abu-Taleb adds that the narrative is a mental and creative splash to uncover and dissect the reality of underdevelopment and the factors of monotony that late society has crammed into a terrifying black box to prevent the simple-minded from approaching them. From the outset, the book presents itself as enlightening, fully respecting religion and engaging the authorities in discourse to guide it back onto the proper course (56). From the perspective of the fundamental purity of creation, it understands the soul and human nature. It exposes society's hidden mechanisms, which stand for a discrepancy between internal claims and actual conduct. One

might wonder whether the taboo is broken here just for the sake of excitement, and later renown, or whether it is a necessary component of the tale.

Analysis

Through a series of letters between Samparia, Taba'a, and their son, Handala, the novel tells the story of a Yemeni rural family's plight, separated by the civil war (between the north and south of Yemen) and the struggle between the right and the left. Al-Atawi (Taba'a's father and Samparia's maternal uncle) is the only one who resists the Sheikh's avarice and injustice to the people. As a result, the Sheikh and his bodyguards cruelly humiliate him to set a bad example for those who would challenge the Sheikh's unquestionable authority. Taba'a takes revenge for his father's humiliation, but he is arrested. However, he manages to escape to the frontiers near the former south of Yemen, where he meets Mawlana, a spiritual and mystified personality. Taba'a accepts Malwalna's offer to work as an assistant for him (Emran 58). Mawlana is a religious singer who performs religious melodies and anthems at weddings and recites Quran verses at funerals. Both men live in village's mosques because there are no other places to stay due to the lack of accommodation. One night Taba'a was shocked to find Mawlana playing with the young's penis (Taba'a penis). Taba'a is perplexed by being at the mosque and getting such sexual arousal from an allegedly holy man. Mawlana, however, is seen castrated, much to Taba'a's surprise.

Taba'a is presented to the National Democratic Front (NDF), a Marxist movement supported by the state of South Yemen that wages attacks against the political regime in Sana'a in North Yemen. The Islamists were appropriated by the political regime in Sana'a. The scenario is not favorable for the Marxist insurgents. Some of them fled to Aden, while others were granted amnesty. Al-Atawi is in prison because of his communist beliefs. Handala, who receives a scholarship to study medicine in Iraq, does not return as a physician. Instead, he reappears as an extremist whose head is filled with Islamic fundamentalism. He disagrees with his mother and despises his communist father. At the conclusion of the story, his name is on a blacklist and Interpol is looking for him. Samparia, who is introduced to the Hammam rituals, ends up lesbian "I've never imagined that a female would stimulate me" (204). Samparia is also taken aback by Shakhmina's marriage proposal to marry her "She astonished me by asking me to marry her" (207).

Following a brief plot outline to obtain a sense of what is going on, it is critical, to begin with, the title of the narrative (*Mushaf Ahmar*) that has sparked outrage towards the novelist. The word "Quran" refers to the book that the prophet Muham-

med (PBUH) received as a revelation from God. These revelations are gathered and preserved in a book known by several names, the most significant of which is Mushaf (plural Masahf). Because the word is used interchangeably to denote the Quran, any use signifies a direct reference to the Quran. Many people start questioning why such a “sensitive” word with so much religious, cultural, and ideological connotation is employed. Emran was asked to justify his title in an interview with Al-Riwayah online magazine. He replies by stating that the word Mushaf, which many people assume to mean Quran, does not have that meaning. Per the novelist, the word is not an Arabic word. It is derived from an ancient Yemeni language such as the Sabaeen or Himyarite and means “book.” To some, this response appears ornate and remorseful.

In general, the indefinite form of the title “*Mushaf Ahmar*” indicates that there is a Mushaf other than the well-known Mushaf, when compared to the definition form, “Al” (The), (Al-Mushaf Al-Ahmar), this indefinite form marginally seems to lessen the title’s provocative nature. This Mushaf Ahmar—as the narrator calls it and as described in it—is different from the Mushaf that is known by Muslims. It includes passages from the holy books of various religions like the Holy Quran, the Torah, and the Bible, as well as teachings from other religions like Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, and Sabinism (Emran 139). Yemenis have embraced and learned from all the main world religions, and most of them are practiced today. Neither fanaticism nor extremism have been able to stop them. This highlights the significance of coexistence and dialogue in all matters pertaining to man, rather than having religion, sect, race, or belief listed as potential sources of conflict.

Religion and its establishments, such as the mosque, a holy sacred place in Islam and one of its basic doctrines, is shown here as a site that shares and contributes to people’s misery. It is utilized by the political regime to question, imprison, and torture political dissidents. This means the mosque is shifted from a place of worship to a place for rest, sleep, and homosexual practices. Many nights of playing with Taba’a’s penis transform the mosque into a place where desire can be fulfilled. In this way, Emran deconstructs the mosque’s portrayal and its historical importance in the Muslim community.

This deconstruction infuriates people because it violates a religious taboo. The theme of religion appears through the symbol of Mushaf Ahmar, that is, with the red cover, and not the Red Qur’an, according to the translation on the cover of the novel, because the writer does not mean what the publisher wanted from this non-innocent translation, or say, the literal translation, perhaps for marketing purposes of the novel. Moreover, there is nothing in the novel about the issues of terrorism. The

title bears this interpretation, but the reader of the novel knows that what is meant is a call to tolerance and that religion in its entirety is one and the belief in the heavenly books is one of the pillars of faith (Abu Taleb 57).

At every opportunity, Al-Atawi would read passages and verses from all three books, indicating that all three religions have a common aim and are of equal significance “Allah originates creations; He repeats it; then to Him shall you be brought back” ... “And this is what the Lord said: I will destroy the whole earth, but I will not annihilate it” (Emran, 2010 34). To Al-Atawi, combining all the beliefs and religions known to humans in one book is essential for living in peace, and such a book should be a solution to conflicts and wars that stem from different and scattered beliefs derived from a purely religious reference. This also implies that Yemenis have believed in all religions since ancient times, and the story makes no distinction between them. The narrator brings up Yemeni characteristics from ancient history: “He is the one who prepared the trial against everyone who opposed Judaism. The Najran groove and burning those who followed Jesus’ teachings, written in the celestial writings, brought about the one male’s curse” (11). By promoting the spirit of tolerance, particularly religious and ideological tolerance, *Mushaf Ahmar* aspires to end the curse. “Your ancestors begin looking in Sana’a’s treasuries (for heavenly books) to gather them into one Mushaf” (11). Perhaps what Al-Atawi’s Mushaf (book) contains is evidence of religious and cultural compatibility. This does not imply blasphemy or atheism, but rather that we are in a context with its own peculiarities, one that has witnessed co-existence in Yemen since ancient times. The Red Book (Mushaf Ahmar) in the novel, is nothing more than a symbol of the coexistence of religions and beliefs, as well as their tolerance, within one man’s heart.

Al-Atawi seen by society as irreligious for accepting co-existence with all religions “does not deny that he believes in Judaism, Christianity, and other unknown religions that we have not heard of, nor does he deny that he believes in socialism. But he also believes in Islam” (Emran 228). Seen as a secular man who violates the taboo of religion as he “confuses Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and believes that the three religions are but one religion and professes that he is a secularist in principle” (139). *Mushaf Ahmar*, from which the fictional text’s title and initial threshold are derived, is committed to the concept of openness, and possibly a form of tolerance and uniformity between the doctrines that shaped the nation’s conscience/history.

Perhaps the authorities’ decision to remove parts of Al-Atawi’s book, such as the Old Testament and the Gospels, highlights the ugliness of the attack on freedom of belief and the violation of privacy. By refusing to succumb and continuing to

struggle silently, Al-Atawi might be considered the other face of forgotten Yemen, bearing noble values and the face of the history of religious coexistence with the reality of destruction, devastation, and tyranny. He stands for Yemen, which has been the victim of murder, displacement, and dismemberment.

The paradox is that Handala, who represents the third generation, is meant to maintain these tolerant values and embrace modern technology and knowledge. Handala, a representative of the country's younger generation, goes to Iraq to study medicine to transform the nation's image, which has been marred by wars and crises. Though he gets a scholarship to study medicine in Iraq, he returns to Yemen after years of university studies and has embraced religious extremism and learned to abolish the other because it is religiously or doctrinally different. Samparia addresses her son, Handala, in a dialogue between them, which was mentioned in the last pages of the novel:

Samparia: Isn't the heaven under the feet of mothers?

Handala: Yes

How do you allow yourself to say so many nasty things? Samparia

Handala: It was God who created us all, not me, who said that.

Samparia: leave me alone! [...]At that moment, I recognized that our conversation had come to a dead end and that my life was in jeopardy, and that you believed ... that God was only with you. (236)

Through the character of Handala, the narrative unveils practices that use religion as a cloak and a pretext to achieve their goals and conveys a message that wars provide fertile ground for extremism and terrorism, as demonstrated by Handala's experience in Iraq during the Iraq war. Emran might send an indirect message that since no one can be certain of others' genuine beliefs, even if they appear to be on the same path as the group, intellectual and open dialogue on religion is not taboo. Due to the internal leakage of hazardous ideas and the outward exaltation of religion, these taboos are a significant contributor to the emergence of extremism and terrorism. The novelist used mosques to discuss their religious role, and how they were also used by powerful people to assist some of their worldly business through clerics or those who served in the same area.

Black and red are the cover's two primary colors, which go well with the book's title and subject matter. The blood drops on *Mushaf's* paper are a symbol of the bloodshed in the name of religion throughout history, even though religion in general, and notably Islam, which shares its linguistic foundation with peace, begs for

love and peace. The novelist's message is that if a religion promotes hatred, malice, and premeditated murder, it is no longer a religion. In terms of the indication of the red color's association with Mushaf, we may find a preliminary explanation in the narrative that this Mushaf's color is red, but the symbolism may prompt us to look for the closest indication attached to this characteristic, which is the red color's association with blood. Then there was the blood link to terrorism, which took many forms, including Handala's intellectual shift following his study trip to Iraq. Rather, the story has several varied images of terrorism. The novel is likely meant to convey the message that *Mushaf Ahmar*, which some individuals use to justify their acts of terrorism, has nothing to do with the Holy Quran, which is replete with mercy and justice.

It serves as a metaphor for thought that has been purified of all traces of extremism. It represents an intellectual movement that upholds tolerance, the diversity of viewpoints, and the freedom for others to accept any ideologies, sects, or beliefs they choose without fear of compulsion or arbitrary judgment. Therefore, it is an approach to thinking that opposes individuality, dictatorship, and authoritarianism, and inflates one's own ego at the expense of the group, regardless of the justification—political, social, or even religious.

However, it is impossible to dismiss the possibility that the Mushaf, which Al-Atawi chooses as his constant companion and method, is a different religion. This religion is a synthesis of all religions, as it ultimately leads to a single path. However, the novelist addresses the taboo of religion, without scratching anything from the three religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Even man-made beliefs are treated with extreme caution by Emran, and he sticks to the catchphrase he first coined for Al-Atwal: "I am a believer, not a Muslim" (228). This is because faith is more all-encompassing and superior to Islam, and beneficence is higher than faith. This saying is based on the noble verse in Surat Al-Hujurat, chapter 49: "The Arabs of the desert say, 'we believe.' Say, 'You have not believed yet; but rather say, 'we have accepted Islam,' for the true belief has not yet entered into your hearts'" (Ali, 2004, verse 15). Because religion is the religion of God and because man is fallible, literary works' task is to criticize delinquency and not offend religions. Since religion forbids deviations, abnormality between men and women is common and these activities can be committed in secret, particularly in oppressed countries.

Politics

Every aspect of life, including the arts and religion, has been significantly impacted by politics. Though people are still reluctant to discuss politics since it is still

viewed as taboo, writers are determined to break the taboo around politics. It is worth mentioning that political issues and political history are interwoven, so it might be difficult to separate them in the narrative arts. According to prevailing opinion, the writer should be a member of the society she/he is writing to. Therefore, setting the text in its historical and social milieu is a key methodological step in determining themes and meanings. There have been many unspeakable social calamities throughout history. Through their writing and shattering of taboos, novelists advance society's understanding and combat injustice, persecution, and corruption.

More than the taboo topics of sex and religion, politics is the focus of *Mushaf Ahmar*. The narrative is set in the politically volatile era of the 1970s when there was intense political turmoil and ideological strife between the two Yemeni regions: Politically, South Yemen is referred to as the People's Republic of South Yemen, and North Yemen is known as the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR). The story centers on the ensuing struggle, which escalated into a civil war between these two sections, with each attempting to enforce its ideology on the other under the guise of uniting Yemen. The entire atmosphere of ideology was governed by a major issue. It's simple to bring a country together, but what about a country divided by ideologies? The south of Yemen adhered to a Marxist worldview, while the north clung to Islamic and traditional societal traditions. This inconsistency creates a slew of impediments to unity.

The main political concern of the story is evident in the criticism of the tribal Sheikhs' assumed leadership positions and their unchallengeable dominance. Al-Atawi's book embodies the ancient spirit of resistance and revolt against injustice and exploitation. Both characters, males, and females, engage in a dialectical conversation that can be perceived as political protest and rejection of classical and despotic forms of power. The novel attacks the Sheikhs' ultimate authority, who believe they are the entire state or a state inside a state and who take decisions without trial. "You must leave the village. In a fit of rage, the Sheikh finished his speech" (Emran 37). They enjoy absolute power to the extent that when Taba'a tries to flee the Sheikh's prison, one of the inmates urges him to abandon the plan. "You must think reasonably. Do not think of escape. Patience is better. Don't think that angels once they receive you in your grave after death .. they will ask you who is your God, your prophet, and your Sheikh... " (27). The writer mocks the Sheikhs' unassailable authority, which is comparable to that of God: "This is how you obtain my satisfaction...God bless my subjects" (38). This means the Sheikh behaves like God on the earth and that people must seek his pleasure. However, by beating the sheikh and knocking him to the ground, the author breaks the Sheikh's taboo (26).

On the other hand, the narrative also vilifies those who rebel against tyranny, even though they represent the other side of oppression and exclusion.

Do you know why you are here?

You know?

Do you remember the year of famine?

Any year?

And what are you doing now against me? do you not consider it oppression?

Who has given you the right to stand trial me?..... (132)

The conversation described above is between the Sheikh (who was abducted by the National Front) and members of the National Front. The National Front members sacrifice their lives and money to put an end to the unjust sheikhdom because they regard it as a representation of the dictator who robs people of their rights by force. The Sheikh and that group are engaged in a conversation in which each member attempts to defend the validity of his own beliefs. The Sheikh believes he has the right to dispose of other people's lives and possessions as he sees fit. The National Front sees itself as a wise judge that interrogates the Sheikh and holds him accountable for all his unjust actions against his subjects. It is as if the novelist shouts at us, saying: Yemen will not rest if individuality reigns supreme and tribalism persists, exclusion, marginalization, murder, and displacement are the only ways for different ideologies to communicate with one another.

There is a religious authority, which is represented by some priests who are dressed in piety to fulfill their own and other authorities' goals. They employ their ability to use religion to bolster certain members of society, and the matter goes further to the extent that the priests involve convincing people of the significance of those in positions of authority both in this world and the hereafter. One of the Sheikh's soldiers is heard saying to a prisoner who wants to get out of jail: "Don't think when the angels receive you after your death, they will ask you who is your Lord, Prophet, and Sheikh? If you answer incorrectly, God's curse and wrath will befall you" (Emran 27). In this conversation that demonstrates how powerful the Sheikh is, the novelist mocks the Sheikh's absolute power, which is akin to that of God.

As stated in the preceding passages, there is a connection between politics and religion. Such a connection is also evidenced by the terrible end of the socialist, Shakhmina at the hands of women in the mosque. Shakhmina is the woman who fought beside the Taba'a comrades and never wavered in the fulfillment of her na-

tional duty until she, too, died as a martyr. Yet, the justification for murdering her is that “This is the punishment for prostitutes, and another one said: Society must rid itself of them” (194). This is not unusual in any country that rejects the other’s point of view and refuses to accept what he or she presents. The danger lies in connecting religion and politics because it binds man with the shackles of fear, which makes any coup or objection to it in the circle of unbelief and exclusion. As a result, individuals who see themselves as guardians of the people in the name of God choose this method since it is the most effective and efficient means of controlling people.

“O Ye who believe! obey Allah, and His Messenger and those who are in authority among you” In the noble verse, our sheikh is the one who is concerned with authority. To obey him is to obey God and His Messenger. You must know that the imprisonment of our sheikh is obedience and loyalty. (27)

Thus, anyone who disagrees with its point of view or method is silenced. Al-Atawi is a one-of-a-kind model of liberal thought and a person who is adamant about the values and opinions in which he believes. Regardless of how much injustice and persecution he faces, he is convinced of the future’s justice.

Tyranny will grow old tomorrow, and no one will be able to restore its youth... sharpens its fangs..... And the whip we used to scrub our skin will wear away, and the executioner will be unable to find anyone willing to listen to his explanations for his tyranny. (170)

Al-Atawi’s *Mushaf Ahmar*, is a symbol of an intellectual movement that promotes tolerance, diversity of viewpoints, and the right of others to adopt whatever ideas, sects, and beliefs they wish without fear of force or arbitrariness. It is a way of thinking that opposes individuality, despotism, authoritarianism, and the ego under any justification, whether political, social, or even religious. Oneness of thought is a symptom of barrenness, lack of fertility, the flowering of authoritarianism, the dominance of totalitarian mentalities, and man’s tyranny over his fellow man as much as it is a sign of consistency and development of life. Individuality is a long-standing problem that predates any single epoch or historical period, and eliminating its curse necessitates a historical background as well as a mantra that reorganizes things according to the logic of plurality and variety, hence *Mushaf Ahmar*’s presence was required.

The novel depicts political conflicts as well as Yemenis’ yearning for unity

between the country's northern and southern sections, Sana'a and Aden, the dream, which has come true. It highlights the relationship between Yemen's political, tribal, and revolutionary authorities, as well as the tribal sheikh's authority in Yemeni society at that time, and yet still today, over many aspects of Yemeni life, events, and trajectory. Even though the novel portrays urbanization and cultural progress, it closely monitors the sites of flaws and proposes alternatives that might be considered, even if they are utopian and not currently possible. The narrative of *Mushaf Ahmar*, describes a significant and sensitive period in Yemeni society's history, which was torn apart by civil conflicts from north to south as the ruling authorities continued to exterminate and exploit many segments of the downtrodden. Yemen would be transformed into a hotbed of violence, with many crimes taking place between the eastern and western camps, both of which are backed by the Arabs, who in turn support Sana'a. The narrator says, "Within days, Sana'a succeeded in winning the support of some Arab leaders and formed a front against anyone who supports the armed struggle to achieve Yemeni unification" (118).

The international support manages to recruit the opposition that has sided with personal interests over the nation's overall cause. Supporting the Salafist movement's battle against renegades, infidels, and communists is remarkable. This rendered mosque imams into trumpets, chanting Surat Al-Fil and some supplications recited after the Maghrib prayer during the occupation of Iraq or Kuwait. "Oh God, do freeze the blood in their veins, demolish them, and scatter them into pieces. Oh God, make them captives and their property booty for Muslims" (176). Not only was the leadership bought, but a series of assassinations and looting were practiced by releasing the hand of Salafi jihadism to confront communism. This results in the siege and bombardment of entire villages, but rather their burning.

"Mawlana," one of the National Front's undercover spies in the north is a symbol of a religious group that once dominated northern Yemen before succumbing to the Salafi movement, backed by the government in its fight against the communist invasion. He never succeeds in controlling the front's revolutionary thought, which crumbled early, because he's been castrated, thus, his impact may appear to be restricted. Under the authoritarian system, the term "castration" is frequently used to describe political impotence (Driss 82). "Political and sexual castration are ironically related to homosexuality and masturbation" (82).

This is also true with Samparia who turns to new forms of desire after failing to satisfy her own cravings in the traditional manner. While Mawlana finds solace in arousing Taba's desire, Samparia is likewise initiated into Hammam ceremonies and eventually ends up as a lesbian. One of the more captivating passages for the reader

is the scenario where Taba'a and Samparia's marriage contract is performed in an unusual way. They were alone without a guardian, witnesses, or judge when he proposed to her after they stripped off and descended to swim in the waterfall because, as Taba'a states, they do not need that paper "that kills love. "How then, do we get married? Like this!! I extended my palm to you.. I shook hands with you.. I addressed you: -would you accept me as husband..? If you wish, say: "I accepted you as a husband... and if..." (Emran 126). Through this scenario, the author questions moral and social norms, breaks the taboo of using sex in politics, and gently promotes marriage based on love.

Under the guise of purifying the country of communist elements, Salafist groups in Yemen committed terrorism by displacing the inhabitants and plundering property (222). Al-Atawi who is arrested and imprisoned since he is the only opponent, is taken to the mosque's court and given three days to repent. Arresting Al-Atawi on suspicion of possessing *Mushaf Ahmar* shows that anyone who does not belong to the power group will face arrest and a loss of dignity, whether he is a member of the revolutionary, nationalist, or Marxist left, or a believer in God, His angels, books, and messengers. Thus, it is not strange to find that the people's view of the ruling authority in the remote areas is shaped by a kind of blind sanctification shrouded in ambiguity, as Taba'a says:

We visited several villages...the inhabitants of these unusual regions follow inherited customs passed down from their Himyarite forefathers... Some pagan practices, such as ruler sanctification, persisted. Many of people believe that his authority comes from God...they live in primitive conditions. (135-136)

The ugly picture introduced by the novel about the Yemeni war is the reality of the struggle for power in various parts of the world. However, the reasons differ depending on the influence of history and geography, which demonstrates how leaders achieved unity at the expense of the people, who remained the first and last victims.

The rebel, the opponent, the downtrodden, and the furious lover all see Taba'a as a symbol of the Yemeni cause. From the perspective of his beloved Samparia, he was not portrayed as a normal human being.

He is the one who has reawakened in me human feelings. He instilled in me the concept of respect and equality.... I absorbed from him the principles of socialist freedom from engraving the initial letters of love on the purity of the

heart. (219)

Moreover, Taba'a was viewed as something great by "Mawlana," the guy who goes between villages and districts as an opponent and a new transmitter. "I was searching for myself, hoping to find you Today, I see you as a man working for a good cause, and I view you as someone amazing" (83). Taba'a wished for a united Yemen because he was an international revolutionary combatant who thought that change would come via the guns, not through politicians' words and with the military invasion. He was confident in the capabilities of the front, which we learned through a message sent to Samparia "Tomorrow,we will live in a country where justice and equality prevail, a country that extends from sea to sea... a country that is anti-secession" (195).

Strangely enough, Taba'a rebels against his slogans and allies with his old enemy that is still exercising injustice against the subjects, including his father "Al-Atawi" who is still imprisoned in a covert prison, and the Sheikh of Arfata fortress, who is still exercising his powers freely. This change is not unexpected because it was preceded by a period that gave the new grace time to take effect on his face. Taba'a is shown abusing his erstwhile allies and calling them mercenaries while blinding himself from what he is doing. This is how the novel shows contradictions, refractions, and transformations. This represents the betrayal and political hypocrisy that spread among the members of the revolutionary groups, which were defeated by the repeated betrayals of the leaders who ruled them and who used them to stop their progress as they approached victory. It has split up, lost credibility, and appeared to be motivated by its authoritarian aspirations like other weak groups. "Suddenly, Taba'a appeared on Channel One's screen... to announce that the coalition had entered into a political dialogue with the ruling party through an alliance with it... He curses in his words the former comrades...accusing them of treason" (231).

The story essentially shows how corrupt authorities are in North Yemen. It also shows how the people are unable to topple the rulers despite their wrongdoings because they are exploiting religion as a tool of power, as already alluded to. Moreover, Sana'a authorities depend on the tribal system that controls the fates of the populace. In the basements of the mansions of the most prominent citizens of the state, there are hidden jails across Sana'a. The revolutionary movements were merely catchy slogans used to achieve utilitarian purposes. They are only a replica of the oppressive systems they are criticizing. There are many events in the novel that reflect a bleak image that reinforces the negative view among many who belong to the National Front: images of homosexuality, e.g., Mawlana.

In brief, the ideal image of the “National Front” that has been constructed in the reader’s mind for years has been demolished through the character of Taba’a. It is manifested clearly when Taba’a met his son, Handala for the first time. When “Taba’a” arrived clandestinely to bid his son “Handala” goodbye before he left for Iraq to pursue his studies, Handala was surprised to see a frail old man instead of the one portrayed by Samparia as a strong, muscular young man and a daring and indomitable knight “Where is whom you have drawn, Mom?... remains of a human” (13). Furthermore, the novel highlights the fact that external forces are what really drive the Yemeni conflict and that the country’s ruling elite is more interested in safeguarding its own interests than the welfare of its people. “The major catastrophe is that the split leadership is subjected to a command from the influential exterior forces” (218).

Sexuality

Mushaf Ahmar breaks the taboo of sex and boldly highlights a rare sexual philosophy aspiring to generate rarefaction and explicit change in a variety of systems. Addressing social flaws that jeopardize society’s ideals is the first step toward fixing them. It makes mention of male-to-female gay relationships, and it does so in a way that suggests that it is normal. Rather, the novel dares to connect the characters’ militancy with sexual behavior. Through its characters and dialogues, as well as its postulates, the novel has demolished the sex taboo. It deliberately exposes the manifestation of homosexuality among the women in the bathrooms and the men in the mosque, which is an example of moral degradation in Arab society.

The story devotes space to the issue of homosexuality between Sheikh (Mawlana) and “Taba’a” “I left him...his fingers had withdrawn after he had brought me to the climax, and his fingers were polluted...that night I only slept before dawn” (64). Taba’a is perplexed by this elderly Sheikh who transforms into a frail and eccentric person at night. Sheikh’s action is the result of impotence, as Taba’a discovers the secret, saying: “I saw him without genitals” (83). This action draws attention to the amputation of “Mawlana’s” genitals, which were amputated for various reasons or as part of the ruling party’s torturing of him. It can be said that the novel’s criticism of Mawlana has broken and destabilized the religious institution and the clergy alone, rather than shattering the taboo of religion. Emran wants to convey through the clergy that nothing other than what is on the surface is considered holy, while there are many deviations, and this is a criticism of a person’s delinquency and violation of the law.

On the other hand, it might be argued that criticism of religious symbols con-

stitutes a breaking of a political taboo or an indirect attempt to undermine it. Taba's sexual complicity with Mawlana, on the other hand, foreshadows his political complicity in the final years of the struggle. Mawlana is credited with preparing the intellectual and organizational groundwork for the political uprisings that broke out in the country's northwestern areas.

I changed the way I dealt with him...He began by briefly introducing me to the names of the settlements in the area...He provided me with the names of persons who were known for standing up to authoritarianism and injustice. He taught me about the ideas of liberty and struggle. He explained the powers of evil, good, and progress, bringing me closer to the foundations of achieving justice and equality. I acquired the fundamentals of national ideas from him during my last stay with him... and he taught me how to confront life. (81-2)

Throughout the novel's chapters, Samparia's relationship with Shakhmina appears to be based on friendship. Yet, the ritual of bathing turns into lesbian sexual practice. "Shakhmina fingers had crept into sensitive areas... my body collapsed. I closed my eyes and collapsed onto kneeling as her fingers stretched above my thigh" (202). Such practice for a simple reader apparently seems to be attributed to the absence of Samparia's lover, son, and uncle causes her to lose her femininity, and she starts to seek out things she has lost. Significantly, the bond between Samparia and Shakhmina symbolizes the desire for the union of "Sana'a" and "Aden," as well as their decision to unite the North and the south of Yemen, the dream that came true in 1992.

The scene in the bathroom is one of the most prominent scenes that indicate the writer's ability to convey the unspoken, making it a human issue within a psychological framework and a physiological requirement. "All of the singing and dancing, I discovered, was merely a warm-up for a far more thrilling ceremony....." (200). The narrative here reveals the unspoken by reading the alternative underworld of a society whose two sides are battling for survival and unity or no unity. There are no men in this female underworld; instead, there are passionate partnerships that embrace the spirit of homosexuality in scenes illustrating the extent to which a society has fallen into the retreat of its men by waging deadly struggles for survival, power, and control.

The bathing room has been the private haven for women to break away from the routine of sexual intercourse while searching for something new and different. The narrator's opinion on the subject of sex and pleasure has changed. He's deve-

loped a new sexual philosophy that will lead him down the path to absolute pleasure. "My dreams... over the past years revolve around having a man take over me... To turn me into a waterfall of pleasure... But I didn't think of the woman Shakhmina pushed me to the edge of an unfamiliar sensation" (204).

The use of sex is not so much offensive as it reveals a particular response to the human spirit, which is caught between anguish and waiting, death and the desire to live. This means sex's main purpose is to make people forget their anguish. Moreover, many types of societal and governmental corruption are fought using sexuality as a weapon. When the National Democratic Front operations against Sana'a's political regime are successful, Taba'a's sexual encounters with his "wife" are extremely fruitful. These attacks by Marxist combatants, among whom Taba'a is a prominent character, are juxtaposed with Taba'a and Samparia's fruitful sexual encounters. However, we discover sexual failure when things start to crumble apart for these fighters following the signing of the agreement between the governments of North and South Yemen. Samparia describes a moment in which a failed sexual communication occurs:

I lay naked in my bed indifferently ..he continued sipping his drink cheerfully. The light of dawn approached. He tried again and again. I submitted myself to him without responding to his attempts. His lips did not stop. I left him to plan. ...He exploded crying and cursing himself with abusive words. I embraced him consoling him and reminding him of our past happy memories. (Emran 20-21)

Taba'a's aspiration of a united Yemen ruled by a Marxist political state is crushed, leaving him impotent. His world's demise was the primary cause of his impotence. Mawlana is also revealed to be a castrated person who has lost hope in life as a result of numerous personal and societal political and ideological setbacks. This parallel to and coupling of sex and politics is a distinguishing trait of the modern Arabic novel that characterized Emran's *Mushaf Ahmar*.

Sex is also viewed as both the social manifestation of freedom and the essence of the human experience that women go through. This appears clearly in *Mushaf Ahmar* which examines the essence of extremism in all its forms, positive and negative. The characters meticulously chosen by Emran to represent all the conflicting currents show exaggeration. Samparia practiced obscenity (lesbianism) and sexual perversion when she grew radicalized in her socialist current, and her view that it is one of the freedoms, despite her religious upbringing. The Sheikh's

mother, Fatmina, and her maid, Shakhmina, shared the same traits. Both were early members of the Salafist movement, and it's possible that these characteristics led to their marginalization, ignorance, flatness, and dependence. It is an upbringing that purposefully kept women out of a patriarchal culture ruled by religion and guardianship. Taba'a was also submissive and submitted to the abnormal sexual activities of (Mawlana), who was hiding beneath the Sufi court's tent, in his weird attempts to masturbate Taba'a. The writer portrays the exaggeration in the philosophy of possession through the dialogue between Taba'a and Mawlana:

Taba'a: Mawlana, I can't sleep if someone teases me.

Mawlana: Even if you get married. I was taken aback by his logic. I took a deep breath and gathered my thoughts.

Taba'a: even if I get married

Mawlana: What's wrong if I tease you? Do you think I'm harmful?

Taba'a: But foreplay consumes me.

Mawlana: [...] for a little while longer, and then I'll put you to sleep...you provide me with enormous pleasure...a sense of ownership [...]. I don't think in the same way that others do...and I don't want to hurt anyone. (68)

From the above discussion, it can be said that sex is only an alluring cover for its real objective, which is to combat political corruption, fanaticism, and extremism. Moreover, it seems that perhaps the expansion of the space of events is what made the aspects of life in the novel overlap. The political overlaps with the religious, and the intellectual modifies the social and becomes a form of religion and a form of politics.

Technique

The epistolary method used by the novelist recounts the injustice, cruelty, and feudal sheikhdom that were once and are still prevalent in many Yemeni districts. The letters are convenient here as they work as a link between the characters who are separated from each other; Handala in Iraq, Taba'a escaped the tyranny of the Sheikh, while Al-Atawi is in jail. The strategy of suspense starts with the title and lasts throughout the narrative space until the conclusion, swiftly moving between the past and present tenses while utilizing different narrative techniques.

The narrative makes use of intertextuality. There are several references to the Quran Bible, the Turah, and other traditions such as Buddhism and Confucianism. When addressing political events, direct reporting is also used. The dialogue te-

chnique is appealing since it is devoid of invention and was executed expertly. In addition to the objective competence and dexterity with which the narrative was constructed, the dialogue profited significantly. Besides employing external dialogues, the novel contains internal dialogues that delve into the depths of the various characters.

Emran has a great deal of faith in the meaning of the names he provides for his characters, as well as in their spatial and conceptual value. The grandfather's name, Al-Atawi, is Arabic for "to give and to offer." The name is taken from the word "atta," which means to give, and the character, in this case, alludes to this meaning as it follows its development through the story. He has never been a hindrance, a stopper, or detached from the act of giving. This is reflected in his role as a struggler in thought, politics, and aspirations, as well as in weaving the close relations between members of the one family that feeds into the larger family, which is the homeland. The name Taba'a, which in Arabic means "to follow," followed the father's lead in pursuing his vision for the unification of Yemen. He is also the one who walked with his father, convinced of the necessary part to be played. Samparia is more than just a woman; she is a symbol of the 26th of September Revolution against the Imamate regime. Handala, Samparia's son, passed away after losing his chance to be a doctor. Because Handala is a bitter plant, its name implies bitterness, and I believe there may be a connection between some of the implications. It is hurtful to see Handala reject his father when he says goodbye, because he does not adhere to his beliefs, and the mother, because she possesses the drive and ability to work for the good of the nation and its citizens through political or social action. The term "Handala" describes the gap that has developed between the son and his mother since his travels, and it predicts that one day the son will return to stand in front of these letters and read them, at which point he will be aware of the anguish the mother was going through. The names made the novel more in-depth. They are handled with high professionalism and generality. It becomes an indirect or strange novel because of their nodding, not stating, pointing, and lack of clarification, as well as the release of some of their occurrences into the world of imagination, which is distinct from reality. This demonstrates Emran's ability to connect the semantics of various objects, names, locations, etc.

The components of time and space are present in the narrative work. Through them, the events develop and travel through space, just as the writer who mastered the game of time that interferes with each other did, and this occurs through a letter, or a memo written by Samparia. Throughout all this time, questions about society's problems, changes, and relationships among its members have been raised. The

places vary according to the requirements of the narrative event and the narrative work process. Mosques have been used in the novel to discuss their religious significance as well as how powerful individuals take advantage of them to further some of their worldly interests. The story's setting, characters, and events provide an artistic portrayal of the political scene during the period that spans the years 1970 to 2006.

Conclusion

Mushaf Ahmar, a narrative that can be interpreted in a variety of ways, is a true turning point and significant transition in Al-Gharbi Emran's experience and creative vision, not just in terms of content but also in terms of form. It transcends certain conflicting social norms rather than breaks down the taboos of sex, religion, and power. Although it focuses on "The Forbidden Taboo», a destructive and frustrating league for Yemen's development, it succeeds in avoiding stimuli that influence morals and public decency. It avoids violent breaks and flagrant transgressions of religious beliefs and symbols. It also neither advocates sectarianism, ethnicity, or racism, nor does it violate the system of values or beliefs. Instead, it emphasizes the danger of extremism and condemns it in all its manifestations. The narrative doesn't violate religious beliefs. On the contrary, it addresses religious issues to correct mistakes committed in the name of religion. By criticizing religious symbols, it indirectly transgresses a political taboo, condemning how bizarrely politicians exploit religion to their advantage. The novel exposes the policy of ignorance, and the corruption of Sheikhs, politicians, and authorities. By addressing the topic of homosexuality, the novel breaks the sex taboo.

The novel subverted reality by removing the image of the man in favor of the interest in the woman and by elevating her to a major position in the narration, events, and heroics. The novel's distinguishing feature is the women's voice (Samparia) in its excellent furnishing, which distinguishes it as a unique, profound novel with a deep human depth, in addition to the dream of Yemen's union. It is concluded that to create a cultural reading that helps the community and to increase awareness of and aid in the search for liberation from domestic crises, political, religious, and sexual concerns must always be tackled. This indicates that the so-called "Forbidden Trinity" is nothing more than a fear-based ruse that has kept many people in the dark. It is nothing more than a vicious spiral that will create generations that are incapable of being creative or powerful.

The novel's theme is an appeal to love, coexistence, tolerance, and acceptance of the unity of diversity, which has long been a Yemeni trait. It reveals the hidden

and sheds light on people who falsely claim virtue. It illustrates the untruth of man, society, and reality, as well as the falsehood of individuals who profess convictions that crumble at the first shock, conflict, or change. It exhibits an exaggeration of fanaticism when Samparia became radicalized in her socialist movement. Despite having been raised in a spiritually committed household, she practiced lesbianism and homosexuality, feeling that they were among their liberties. The same is true with Fatmina, who belongs to the Salafist movement.

The novel as a whole is a literary work that recounts Yemeni unity and tracks its stages since its inception. It's all wrapped up in a wonderful symbolic and creative cover that, as far as the researcher is aware, no one has ever dealt with from this perspective. It is stated that the Yemeni crisis is no longer a domestic issue, but rather one in which external forces are at work.

In short, politics, religion, and sex are integral parts of a person and go side by side. They are intertwined in the novel to the extent; talking about politics naturally leads to talking about religion, and religion leads to sex. Emran's ability lies in highlighting the contradictions and the unsaid. He does not use sex to elicit repressed sexual urges as some Arab writers do. On the contrary, he fuses sex with politics and religion. Neither public modesty nor religion is transgressed by the novelist. Sex is employed to combat radicalism and the ruling regime.

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From Ritual to Moral Elevation: The Essence of Medieval English Morality Plays

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Abstract Medieval English morality plays present a complex and multifaceted moralizing model that intertwines Christian morality with the path to salvation. These plays suggest that inner transformation, achieved through gaining truth, is essential for redemption. This transformation is highlighted through participation in the sacrament of penance and prayer rituals. While the morality of these plays emphasizes the pursuit of transcendental truth, the focus on public rituals reveals a morality that values visibility and ritual. This paper explores the intricate moral model presented in medieval English morality plays, examining how inner transformation and public ritual are combined to create a unique moralizing model. In this process, contradictions in Christian salvation theory and debate between Catholicism and Lollardy on prayer rituals showcased in the plays are analyzed.

Keywords medieval; morality; penance; prayer; salvation

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Introduction

In his work *The English Morality Play — Origins, History and Influence of a Dramatic Tradition*, Robert Potter notes, “morality plays have frequently been mistaken for naive treatises on virtue. They are in fact the call to a specific religious act [...] It is the acknowledgement, confession, and forgiveness of sin, institutionalized in medieval Christianity as the sacrament of penance” (16). While Potter’s argument is correct, previous interpretations are not necessarily misunderstandings.

As Hardin Craig states, “in consequence of the fall of Adam man is destined to

die in sin unless he be saved by the intervention of divine grace and by repentance. It is the presentation of man in this situation in perfectly general terms that is the essence of the morality play” (67). In the five pre-Tudor medieval English morality plays¹, humans inevitably succumb to temptation by evil characters and demons. All five plays teach sinful people to resist the demon’s temptation, avoid the seven deadly sins, reject the body and world, follow virtues, believe in God’s miracles, repent and pray, and hope for eternal life through God’s grace. In the plays, seven abstract virtues are personified as characters, representing the qualities that people should possess to return to their original state of being like God. However, as Zhao Lin points out, these pure and simple moral qualities could only be achieved by early Christian saints. During the Middle Ages, a formalized confession mechanism and externalized good deeds replaced these difficult-to-achieve moral qualities.² Morality plays prominently depict this situation. These plays not only promote the Christian virtues, but also emphasize the necessity of penance and prayer to gain knowledge of human nature and God. Actually, the morality portrayed in these plays coincides with humanity’s path to salvation as a unity of good deeds, faith, and acceptance of religious rites. It involves both the exposition of virtues and the action of penance, as well as their relationship to transcendental knowledge, illustrating Christian salvation theory. In this process, religious rituals and sacraments are prominently featured.

The Moral Dimension of the Sacrament of Penance

The sacrament of penance is the retained part of each morality play. It plays a vital role, as it illustrates the interplay between grace, sacraments, and knowledge. Julie Paulson, in her analysis of the morality play *Wisdom*, observes that “*Wisdom* presents penance as a performance that is instrumental to the very formation of Christian subjects, for in the same moment that penance reforms the soul to God’s

1 The five pre-Tudor morality plays include: *The Pride of Life* (1300), *The Castle of Perseverance* (1400-25), *Wisdom* (1460-70), *Mankind* (1464), and *Everyman* (1510-19). The dates given for the first four plays are the dates of composition, while the date given for *Everyman* is its first printing date, as no manuscript exists. Some of these dates cannot be accurately determined due to a lack of specific records and firmly established facts. Scholars can only infer the dates based on relevant paleographical, linguistic, and internal textual evidence. See Richard Beadle, Alan J. Fletcher, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, 2nd ed, Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 2008: xix-xxi.

2 赵林:《中世纪基督教道德的蜕化》,《宗教学研究》,2000年第4期,第70-76页。[Zhao Lin, “The Degeneration of Christian Morality in the Middle Ages,” *Religious Studies*, 4 (2000): 70-76.]

image, the soul learns what a soul is” (“A Theatre” 275). In “Wisdom,” after confessing, the soul declares, “The lyght of grace I fele in me” (“Wisdom” 1073)¹. Penance also embodies the contradictions in Christian salvation theory. In response to the sin of greed, the church promotes the virtue of generosity and includes the specific strategies of restitution and donation as part of penance. While good deeds cannot save humanity, they serve as a guarantee of redemption. This encompasses personal virtues and good deeds as well as adherence to church rituals as parish members. However, the effectiveness of these aspects is a point of contention in Christian salvation theory. Morality plays emphasize the importance of rituals, with “The Summoning of Everyman” being a prime example. This section will focus on penance’s vital function in displaying Christian morality.

As Ryan suggests, the religious doctrine and effective dramatic structure in *Everyman* are consistent in their time sequence, with the former supporting the latter.² The path to salvation for Everyman is presented as a dramatic explanation of the contradictions in orthodox Catholic salvation theory, showing the moral requirements for Everyman. Like other morality plays, “The Summoning of Everyman” integrates the promotion of morality into the depiction of how humans can be saved. However, it sets itself apart by using the process of rendering account as a metaphor for the road to salvation, reflecting changes in the times. With the growth of commerce, the church increasingly emphasized that material wealth inevitably brings sin, and greed for accumulating wealth was foregrounded in literary works. The process of settling accounts is a recognition, defense and healing of greed. According to the rules of repentance, people’s accounts defending their

1 David N. Klausner, ed., *Two Moral Interludes: The Pride of Life and Wisdom*, Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications of Western Michigan University, 2009. All quotations from “Wisdom” in this article are from this slightly modernized and annotated version. Quotations from “Wisdom” in the following text will be marked with the play name and line number without further annotation.

2 Lawrence V. Ryan, “Doctrine and Dramatic Structure in Everyman,” *Speculum*, 32. 4 (1957): 730.

participation in economic activities¹ are integrated into penance sacraments, forming a repentance strategy. Therefore, the morality embodied in “The Summoning of Everyman” includes not only sacraments and grace but also Christian virtues such as generosity and charity, as well as business ethical standards such as justice and honesty. Even requirements for virtues and business ethics are incorporated into sacraments to ensure the acquisition of grace.

“The Summoning of Everyman” explores the sin of greed by revealing the true nature of goods. In the play, goods is personified as a tempter (an evil character), singing cunning and satirical tunes. Goods refuses Everyman’s request to accompany him on his journey, and tells Everyman,

I follow no man in such voyages,
 For, if I went with thee,
 Thou shouldest fare much the worse for me:
 For because on me thou didst set thy mind,
 Thy reckoning I have made blotted and blind,
 That thine account thou cannot make truly;
 And that hast thou for the love of me. (“The Summoning of Everyman” 224-225)²

1 The emergence of intentional theology in the twelfth century, the establishment of the sacraments of confession and penance, and the expansion of the commercial economy all contributed to the development of double-entry bookkeeping. The double-entry bookkeeping was a tool for merchants to defend their participation in economic activities, modeled after the Catholic system of confession and penance. While Aho and others have focused on the function of double-entry bookkeeping as a defense tool for merchants, the specific type of bookkeeping used is not important. In fact, whether the tool is single-entry bookkeeping, double-entry bookkeeping, or paragraph bookkeeping is not important. What matters is that bookkeeping and various records were determined by the dual identity of economic participants as Christians in the late Middle Ages, serving both as an inner confession and as a statement and defense to the outside world. Aho believes that “The advent of communal chronicling, manorial accounting, the family scrapbook, the personal diary, and so forth, were all elements in a vast accounting enterprise that arose near the end of the Middle Ages. Each in their own way is an exhibit in a larger European project of moral improvement, a project both stimulated by confession and reflected in it.” See James A. Aho, *Confession and Bookkeeping—The Religious, Moral and Rhetorical Roots of Modern Accounting*, New York: State University of New York Press, 2005: 29.

2 “The Summoning of Everyman,” Roger Sherman Loomis and Henry W. Wells, eds., *Representative Medieval and Tudor Plays Translated and Modernized*, New York: Sheed & Ward, 1942. Available at: <<https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015005109569>> (accessed January 18, 2020). All quotations from *Everyman* in this article are from this slightly modernized version. In this version, the play keeps the name “The Summoning of Everyman.” Quotations from it in the following text will be marked with the play name and page number without further annotation.

Goods goes on to say,

That is to thy damnation, without lying,
 For my love is contrary to the love everlasting;
 But if thou had me loved moderately during,
 As to the poor given part of me,
 Then shouldest thou not in this dolour have been,
 Nor in this great sorrow and care. (“The Summoning of Everyman” 225)

These passages illustrate that love for goods is incompatible with love for God and that greed causes harm to others while bringing pain to Everyman himself. Goods also reveals its own cunning nature by saying,

What, thinkest thou that I am thine?
 [...]

 Nay, Everyman, I say no:
 As for a while I was lent thee;
 A season thou hast had me in prosperity;
 My condition is man’s soul to kill;
 If I save one, a thousand I do spill. (“The Summoning of Everyman” 225)

This passage suggests that the sin of greed, brought about by Goods, is inevitable. Overcoming this obstacle is crucial for Everyman to settle accounts with God and reflects the Catholic doctrine of cleansing sin and the morality it advocates.

As Everyman faces the crisis of accounting for his deeds, he is abandoned by Fellowship, Kindred, and Goods. His love for these three things increases in degree, as does his disappointment. He painfully realizes that his love for external things is misplaced. In desperation, Everyman turns to Good Deeds, whom he has neglected in his daily life. Good Deeds is willing to help, but is powerless in the face of sin, as a person’s good deeds have no value when they are in a state of sin¹. Good Deeds advises Everyman to seek the help of Knowledge. Under the guidance of Knowledge, Everyman confesses and repents. He performs penance under the guidance of a priest, enduring whipping to obtain God’s grace. From then on, Good Deeds can walk and promises to help declare Everyman’s good deeds. This demonstrates that only after a person has regained God’s grace through

¹ Lawrence V. Ryan, “Doctrine and Dramatic Structure in Everyman,” *Speculum*, 32. 4 (1957): 727.

the sacraments of the Church can good deeds help a person be saved as a devout Christian,¹ for “in every good thought and deed of man, there is the work of God” (Zhou xxxvi). Good Deeds then advises Everyman to summon Discretion, Strength, Five Wits, and Beauty. With these qualities by his side, Everyman makes the decision to donate and return what he has taken. Although these qualities eventually leave him, symbolizing that one’s own abilities are not enough to obtain salvation, he still has Good Deeds by his side as he walks towards the grave and eternity with a clear account book.

“The Summoning of Everyman” aligns with Augustine’s theory of grace when addressing contradictions in doctrine. Its emphasis on good deeds “reflects the cultural and intellectual trends of the time,” as grace “extends to every good intention, thought, and deed in the daily life of ordinary believers” (Zhou xxxv). In the Middle Ages, the growth of the commercial economy continually tested church doctrine. Despite the sins associated with commerce, there was no significant conflict between engaging in economic activities and being a Christian. This was due to theologians’ efforts to renovate doctrine and reconcile commercial activities with good deeds, as well as the adaptation of commercial activities to changes in doctrine.

In the play “The Summoning of Everyman,” good deeds play a crucial role in writing a clear account book, as can be seen from the implied blending of the account book. The account book has a religious reference meaning and includes the metaphor of “moral interaction is commodity transaction,” recording Everyman’s moral interactions as if they were financial transaction. In its source space, income and expenditure items record the acquisition and relinquishment of goods respectively. In the target space of moral accounts, sin is recorded as income, while good deeds are recorded as expenditure. Sin represents the acquisition of goods at the expense of morality, while Good deed signifies the relinquishment of goods in exchange for morality. Good deeds offset sins, resulting in a balanced account which indicates that Everyman is a moral person. Based on this moral account, Everyman is allowed by God to avoid punishment and attain eternal happiness after death. This blending of the account book is characteristic of the allegorical morality plays, where the metaphorical expenditure of good deeds matches the literal economic accounting entries of restitution and donation.

The character Good Deeds wraps up the correspondence between metaphorical meaning and literal meaning. Good Deeds can stand up and walk once Everyman

1 Lawrence V. Ryan, “Doctrine and Dramatic Structure in Everyman,” *Speculum*, 32. 4 (1957): 728, 733.

regains grace through confession and penance. At this moment, Everyman asks, “Good Deeds, have we cleared our reckoning?” (“The Summoning of Everyman” 233) Good Deeds says, “Yea, indeed, I have [a clear account] here” (“The Summoning of Everyman” 233). This signifies that Everyman’s moral account is balanced. Since metaphorical meaning corresponds to literal meaning in the allegorical morality play, the play also depicts a balanced and clear literal economic account, with entries for donation and restitution representing charity and justice. When Everyman makes the decision to donate and return, Good Deeds reaffirms everything, and the clear account is praised by angels who sing a hymn:

Come, excellent elect spouse to Jesu,
 Here above thou shalt go,
 Because of thy singular virtue:
 Now thy soul is taken thy body from,
 Thy reckoning is crystal clear. (“The Summoning of Everyman” 243)

A balanced metaphorical moral account with good deeds offsetting sins indicates that Everyman has overall morality. A balanced physical account book with entries for donations and restitutions proves Everyman’s fairness and integrity in commercial activities, and can be a reference for absolution of sin. The entries of donation and restitution demonstrate the defensive nature of the account book. Therefore, the physical account book also plays a role in salvation, washing away Everyman’s sins together with the Christian sacrament of penance.

From this, it can be seen that the accounting of Everyman’s deeds is a major feature of the plot. It reflects the penitential doctrine of the late Middle Ages, and relies on the defensive nature of accounting and its reference during the repentance process. Moral accounting, which represents God’s judgment, is a metaphor that reinforces the Church’s salvation doctrine. Good deeds are contrasted with restitution and donation, showing a clear correspondence between metaphorical and literal accounting. This reflects the adoption of specific commercial ethical standards by religious moral principles, demonstrating the morality of the time. This morality has worldly tendencies but is essentially an expanded doctrine of grace, based on eternal transcendental reality and concluding with sacraments. Its transcendental goal encompasses secular recognition.

In general, each of the five morality plays reveals sin and promotes virtue, but with different emphases. The commonality is that all five plays combine virtue with faith in God and acceptance of religious sacraments. Just as Thomas Aquinas

discusses the supreme good of God, human virtues, and Christ and sacraments in the three parts of *Summa Theologica*, the morality of medieval English morality plays encompasses God's grace, human virtues and good deeds, and religious sacraments, with religious sacraments becoming the culmination of all moral requirements.

The Ethical Purpose of Prayer Rituals

The protagonists in the five morality plays are all fallen sinners. However, under the guidance of the priestly figure, they see the ugliness of their own souls and the invincibility of death, realize that death may come at any time, or wake up when death truly arrives, thus understanding their sinful nature and inherent shortcomings. Thereafter, they abandon their pride and complacency, do good deeds as God requires, remain vigilant at all times, and pray to God in a submissive manner. They are portrayed as "figures who are praying to God" (Liu 84). Prayer becomes a demonstration of one's moral state and a necessary condition for receiving God's grace in medieval morality plays.

In his research on prayer in Renaissance drama, Joseph Sterrett mentions morality plays such as *The Castle of Perseverance* and the popular theology they convey. He notes, "if we go back to the popularised theology expressed in late-medieval morality plays such as *The Castle of Perseverance*, we find that all Mankind need do is call out or appeal to the grace of God for mercy to be granted. It is, in fact, the performance that triggers the mercy of God — at least in medieval drama" (504). Sterrett agrees with Marcel Mauss's definition of prayer as an action or performance, where prayer includes not only an inner emotional dimension but also an external or imagined ritual. People not only pray spontaneously but are also taught to pray. Using Mauss's definition, Sterrett seeks to go beyond the theological context and view prayer as a distinct socio-cultural phenomenon. He expands the interpretive scope of Renaissance drama but oversimplifies the prayer of medieval English morality plays.

According to Robert Potter, the plot of morality plays can be summarized as "man exists, therefore falls, yet is saved" (7). Potter also describes the pattern of morality plays as "a sequence of innocence/corruption/redemption" (8). In the essay "Morality Plays" in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, Pamela M. King points out that the plays' action is "presented as the temptation, fall and restitution of the protagonist" (King 235). Man inevitably falls into temptation but is miraculously saved in the end. This structural pattern reveals the optimistic tone of morality plays, rather than the tragic color shown in Renaissance dramas such as Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and Shakespeare's *King Lear*. Therefore, while

as a prototype for later plays, the characteristics of medieval English morality play cannot be simply inferred from later plays. Its basic pattern deserves further study. The author holds that prayer is a clue to morality play's structural pattern and brings out sectarian disputes and moral connotations, showing its complexity.

John Cox mentions that in *Mankind* "a talented anonymous author in fifteenth-century East Anglia made prayer the focus of his generic story of Christian formation" (63). The prayer is a central theme in *Mankind* and drives its progress for (i) the main temptation by evil characters in this play is to persuade Mankind to abandon prayer and turn to pleasure, (ii) Mankind's abandonment of evening prayer signifies his fall, and (iii) he is forgiven through prayer for God's mercy. These elements show that prayer provides the complete structural elements of temptation-fall-redemption in the play. This essay argues that the structural function of prayer stems from the play's implication of the debate on prayer and its portrayal of prayers' effectiveness .

When Mankind is still innocent, he begins to perform evening prayers in the field, saying "Thys place I assyng as for kyrke [church]. / Here in my kerke I knell [kneel] on kneys [knees]" (*Mankind* 552-553)¹. However, the theological debate on prayer rituals implies the possibility of mankind's fall from innocence. When glossing line 552, Ashley and NeCastro quote Eccles's notes: "the Lollards believed, according to the trial of William and Richard Sparke for heresy in 1457, that 'a prayer made in a field or other unconsecrated place is just as efficacious as if it were made in a church'"(55). The Lollards were a heretical sect that emerged in England in the 14th century against the orthodox Catholic Church. The Lollards believed that going to church to pray was futile and that believers should pray on their own in their daily lives.

The effectiveness of prayer was pursued by both the orthodox Catholic Church and the Lollards. However, as Sterrett points out, "definitions of the interior vs public subject have been heated reference points throughout the history of Christian thought and the history of religious life itself" (497). In short, opinions differ on whether an inner spiritual life infused with emotion is superior to an external public performance. And some hold that public community's supervision of individual prayer curbs the capriciousness brought by individual freedom and ensures propriety and fairness. Although the Lollards who advocated individual prayer

1 Kathleen M. Ashley and Gerard NeCastro, eds., *Mankind*, Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications of Western Michigan University, 2010. All quotations from *Mankind* in this article are from this slightly modernized and annotated version. Quotations from *Mankind* in the following text will be marked with the play name and line number, without further annotation.

were suppressed by the Catholic Church from their emergence to their eventual extinction, theological debates have never been settled.

In terms of religious sacraments such as confession and penance, morality plays adopt some Lollard views while mainly representing orthodox Catholic views. The Lollards focus on repentance within the heart while ignoring forms such as confession and do not respect priests' authority. The five morality plays emphasize changes in inner states while also valuing external forms' role in promoting changes in inner states. In addition to this, despite that Knowledge in "The Summoning of Everyman" expresses skepticism towards clergy members, all five morality plays feature priest characters and portray them as intelligent. To be precise, it can be inferred that morality plays' overall attitude towards Lollard views is to learn from criticism but oppose their advocacy of arbitrary forms of rituals. Mankind's subsequent temptation by demons to fall can be seen as a result of his choice of prayer method. Prayer that does not emphasize ritualism and publicness is shown to be ineffective in the play.

When Mankind begins to pray, he recites in Latin, "Pater noster qui es in celis [Our Father who are in Heaven]" (*Mankind* 554). At this time, Titivillus whispers in Mankind's ear, "A schorte preyere thyrylth hewyn; of thi preyere blyn [A short prayer pierces the sky; stop your prayer]" (*Mankind* 558). Smart points out that this expression of Titivillus also appears in the poem "The Good Wife Wold a Pilgrimage" and the long poem "Piers Plowman," where such a short prayer is considered efficacious, and Titivillus's goal is to make Mankind abbreviate the prayer further — completely abandon prayer.¹

According to Robert Porter, the Lord's Prayer beginning with "Paternoster" "had been an instrument of repentance since the rise of the Celtic penitential system" (25); it was "an essential and magical prayer, familiar to all Christians, but to be spoken in good conscience only by those who had repented of their sins" (27). In *Mankind*, the efficacy of Lord's Prayer is not certain. On one hand, Mankind inherits Adam's original sin and must continually seek forgiveness through prayer. However, Titivillus's interference may prevent Mankind from effectively repenting. On the other hand, at this point in the play, Mankind has not committed any sins other than original sin. Mankind represents Adam in the Garden of Eden before he ate the forbidden fruit and was still innocent. He has not yet experienced the fall and not gained a deep understanding of his sinful nature and the concept of mercy. Therefore, his prayer may not meet the requirements for efficacy.

Furthermore, the content of Mankind's prayer is not revealed, and he does not

1 W. K. Smart, "Some Notes on 'Mankind'," *Modern Philology*, 14. 5 (1916): 107.

receive a response from God. As a result, the play does not confirm the efficacy of Mankind's prayer, leaving his fall as a possibility. After Titivillus tempts Mankind to abandon his evening prayers, the play shifts its focus to the sins committed by fallen Mankind. Abandoning evening prayers is a sign of falling, and Mankind's fall is no longer just a possibility but an inevitability that has already begun to manifest.

After committing the seven deadly sins, Mankind prays for forgiveness under the guidance of Mercy, who appears as a priest and encourages Mankind to pray by saying that "Dyspose yowrsylff mekly to aske mercy, and I wyll assent" (*Mankind* 816). Mercy explains the importance and effectiveness of prayer, and Mankind begins to pray for God's mercy through an "expedycius petycion [expedient petition]" (*Mankind* 860). Through his prayer, Mankind acknowledges his own misery, indulgence and weakness, and understands the significance of God's mercy. As a result of his repentance, Mankind receives God's mercy and is miraculously saved. This is not only the conclusion of *Mankind* but a common ending in all morality plays. The effectiveness of prayer in these plays is based on its public nature (praying in front of a priest) and the acknowledgment and confession of inner sinfulness during prayer.

Effective petitionary prayer, as Joseph Sterrett suggests, has become a dramatic device linked to redemption.¹ Robert Potter argues that morality plays are penitential dramas that evolved from the tradition of repentance.² One of the goals of morality plays is to encourage confession and repentance, with the promise of forgiveness and salvation, in keeping with theological concepts and repentance tradition. As a result, redemption is combined with petitionary prayer to form a prototype prayer model in morality plays. This prototype had a significant impact on English drama, as seen in Shakespeare's *King Lear*, where the petitionary prayer model evolved to produce a different outcome. At the play's conclusion, King Lear acknowledges his powerlessness in prayer, saying, "Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so/ That heaven's vault should crack" (*King Lear* Act 5 Scene 3 231-2)³. Sterrett considers prayer as a ritual and comments, "[the tongues and eyes] are ineffective because 'a chance which does redeem all sorrows' has passed and lingers only in the 'Look', wish and perhaps the unspoken prayer of [Cordelia's] dying father"

1 Joseph Sterrett, "Rereading Prayer as Social Act: Examples from Shakespeare," *Literature Compass*, 10/6 (2013): 499.

2 Robert Potter, *The English Morality Play—Origins, History and Influence of a Dramatic Tradition*, London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975: 25-29.

3 William Shakespeare, *King Lear: An Authoritative Text, Sources, Criticism, Adaptations, and Responses*, edited by Grace Ioppolo, New York: W. W. Norton Co., 2008: 231-32.

(499). The prayer model followed by five medieval English morality plays mirrors the primitive ritual rhythm of life triumphing over death and rebirth replacing decay. It expresses the emotional connection between external world and people's inner world — the connection between events and people's understanding of order and construction of meaning. Morality plays aim to reveal the human life process, showing that human predicaments are inevitable. They also depict human's efforts to strive for eternal happiness. They unfold as relentless tragedies but end joyously, promoting Christian moral values. In contrast, despite its protagonist's repeated repentance, the Renaissance drama *King Lear* ends tragically. A comparison of dramatic prayers reveals how dramatic models have evolved across time periods.

The Moral Implications of Performances of Contrition and Contemplation

In medieval English morality plays, sacrament of penance is the ultimate moral requirement, and prayer is essential for receiving forgiveness from God. These become the most important and evident criteria for moral judgment and salvation. The significance of penance and prayer lies in that religious rituals and sacraments shape an individual's inner senses, allows them to gain knowledge of their soul and God, and brings about changes to their inner state. This aligns with the morality plays' emphasis on using sensory images as a starting point and imagination as a means of understanding morality. Accordingly, the morality achieved through penance and prayer is characterized by its ritualistic and visible nature.

Firstly, the sacrament of penance is emphasized in morality plays, demonstrating that both God's grace and human repentance are essential for salvation and are attained through external rituals. Paulson notes that "inward self-understanding occurs through a visual, highly ritualized, and exteriorized demonstration" ("A Theatre" 275). This inward self-understanding is crucial for shaping morality and it depends on recognizing one's own shortcomings. Catholic theology stresses that "man is morally incapable" (Zhou xxxv), and to comprehend this, one must acknowledge their own deficiencies and sinfulness. Understanding one's deficient state and the significance of Christ's grace is attained through Christ's church and its sacraments. Thus, one must become a member of the church and partake in the sacraments.

The sacrament of penance is an external act intimately connected to an individual's inner subjective state. Confession in morality plays stresses the importance of contrition, as seen in "The Summoning of Everyman" and "Wisdom." In "Wisdom," Wisdom tells the soul: "Lo, how contrycyon avoydyth the devllys blake! / Dedly synne ys non you wythin!" ("Wisdom" 978-979). Wisdom also

explains the relationship between contrition and inner understanding:

By Undrystondyng have very contrycyon,
 With Mynde of your synne confessyon make,
 Wyth Wyll yeldyng du satysfaccyon. (“Wisdom” 972-974)

After being advised and guided by Wisdom, Anima [the soul] departs from the stage to receive the sacrament of confession, accompanied by Understanding, Heart, and Will. Anima says,

O Fadyr of mercy ande of comfort,
 Wyth wepyng ey and hert contryte
 [...]
 Wyth Mynde, Undyrstanding, and Wyll ryght,
 Wyche of my Soull the partyes be,
 To the domys of the Chyrche we shall us dyght,
 Wyth veray contrycyon thus compleynnyng we. (“Wisdom” 988-995)

Paulson argues that the use of “we” in the last two sentences expresses inner harmony between the soul and three powers, inseparable from external harmony in ritual action.¹ External rituals influence inner powers — particularly the contrition ritual affects inner understanding. External rituals place individuals in a state of inner devotion — precisely what Christianity demands and what morality plays advocate as a moral manifestation, reflecting medieval ethical thinking derived from imagination’s cognitive functions.

In “The Summoning of Everyman,” Everyman turns to Good Deeds in desperation when facing death and judgement. However, Good Deeds is weak and only stands after Everyman receives confession and contrition sacraments guided by Knowledge and a priest. From this, we can see an important point: an individual cannot truly understand their own sinfulness or know what true goodness is until they undergo religious sacraments. Only after the sacraments does one gain self-understanding through their own fragile image. They realize that they are the most abominable sinner, while also comprehending Christ’s mercy. This process triggers a change in inner state which is a prerequisite for regaining grace. Inner understanding relies on external visible images; inner change is achieved through

1 Julie C. Paulson, *Words Made Flesh: Sacramental Knowledge in the English Morality Play*, Durham: Duke University Doctoral Dissertation, 2001: 154.

external means — meaning that inner understanding is not directly conceptualized; this way of understanding emphasizes sensory experience's role in cognition and imagination.

Moreover, the specific redemption strategies of good deeds — restitution and donation — are recorded into account books and incorporated into confession sacraments to take effect. Therefore the morality which is embodied by good deeds depends on religious rituals and culminate with penitential sacraments. Good deed enters into the visualized, ritualistic external form as an external reference to initiate changes in inner state, helping the repentant achieve renewed self-understanding and approach God. The embodiment of Christian morality through good deeds and faith still needs to take effect through acceptance of church rites; therefore the morality advocated by morality plays is mainly manifested through ritualistic external forms. This morality's social concern remains low in degree while its primary concern is activating inner emotions through images and performances to facilitate the cognition from sensory experience to transcendence.

Secondly, prayer is a powerful ritual that can induce changes in one's inner state. In morality plays, the prayer model represents prayer theology. Eleonore Stump observes that there is a link between petitionary prayer and belief in an omniscient, omnipotent God. Despite being omniscient, omnipotent, and capable of miraculously saving humanity, God cannot respond to prayers if they are not offered. Prayer itself can bring about natural and spiritual changes in the one who prays.¹ Medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas stated, "we pray not in order to change the divine disposition but for the sake of acquiring by petitionary prayer what God has disposed to be achieved by prayer" (qtd. in Stump 86). Stump's theological analysis and Moss's definition of prayer complement each other, allowing prayer to be understood beyond salvation structure, highlighting individual changes brought about by prayer, while without separating its ritual characteristics from its theological content. As a repeated ritual, prayer consolidates social groups and brings about changes in the cognitive state of the one who prays, allowing them to understand God and gain knowledge. Thus, prayers in morality plays prompt God's mercy by inducing changes in people's inner states, providing structural elements for salvation and fulfilling the educational purpose of morality plays.

It should be noted that in morality plays is a one-time event, but its constant performance turns it into a repetitive event. This is consistent with the Christian reality that someone faces judgment every day. Therefore, last-minute repentance

¹ Eleonore Stump, "Petitionary Prayer," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 16. 2 (1979): 81, 84.

and prayer in morality plays become requirements for people, and regular repentance and prayer are encouraged in the plays.

The morality play “Wisdom” advocates for a contemplative life as a moral life. In the play, Lucifer ironically implies that prayer is a key element of contemplation. Wisdom teaches people to distance themselves from fallen worldly life and reject the misleading mixed lives of crime and prayer, while appealing for a contemplative life of prayer, learning, and asceticism. The speech-act process of prayer is an important representative of contemplative life. It is a way of contemplation and carrier of contemplative meaning. The cognitive enhancement brought about by prayer is an important aspect of how contemplation embodies morality. When the protagonist finally utters a prayer to God, he confesses his sins and lack of grace, mentions Christ’s suffering and mercy, and sincerely begs for God’s grace, which are results of contemplation.

Contemplation does not completely exclude external forms of assistance. The acquisition of truth through contemplation lies in imagination facilitating religious cognition during contemplation. In Christian contemplative literature, “the soul comes to knowledge of God through meditating upon the soul’s ability to remember, behold, and desire God” (Paulson, “A Theatre” 264). Augustine called this understanding “the rational vision.” However, in her study of “Wisdom,” Paulson argues that drama offers a unique representation of the contemplative tradition. This form inherits the tradition of acquiring religious knowledge through self-knowledge, but does not rely solely on inner sensibility as a means of knowing or withdraw humanity from the world. Instead, it allows fallen humanity to gain true knowledge through the performance and practice of rituals. Paulson emphasizes visual and material images by focusing on the performance and practice of rituals. In morality plays, the state of the soul is consistent with external appearance, with a filthy physical image reflecting spiritual fragility. The ritualistic, public, and image-utilizing nature of prayer serves as an example of change from the outside in, cohering with the understanding of contemplation through performance and interaction in drama.

Conclusion

Compared to doing good deeds, the requirement for reverence and prayer for God emphasizes people’s inner heart and spirit, rather than external behavior. They are practiced through physical actions. But this practice is an action that concerns inner psychological states and spirit, which is an external form that reflects inner states. Sacraments and rituals emphasize human deficiency and imperfection by

utilizing man's filthy image and Christ's holy image. They strengthen separation from material world and connection with the transcendental world, proclaiming God's saving miracles. They enhance people's cognition by reasonably mobilizing imagination. In fact, they complete contemplation by joining external forms and performances. Their training of cognition demonstrates the morality advocated by medieval English morality plays, as well as their benefit for achieving the didactic purpose of the plays. They reflect the cultivation of imagination, highlighting the unity of morality and cognition.

Rising from the sacrament of confession to its moral dimension and from the prayer ritual to its moral purpose, the morality plays present a moral view that lies between this world and the other shore. The sacrament of confession and prayer rituals require a relationship between people and the secular world due to their public nature, but they also demand a close connection with God, ultimately transcending the secular world. The handling of relationships between people is for the ultimate arrival at the eternal happiness of the other shore. However, the morality play's portrayal of sacraments and rituals emphasizes their ritualistic and visible nature. The publicness of sacraments and rituals is a guarantee of their effectiveness, allowing people to achieve inner change through these effective external rituals. This approach reflects the effect that the dramatic medium adds to Christian literature. Although the morality plays point to transcendental goals, they also reflect the importance of people as church congregants and the control of the church over Christians, revealing to some extent the complex reality of "secular identity" and sectarian disputes.

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The Traumatic Experiences of Abdou Said in Abdul Wali's Novella *They Die Strangers* from the Perspective of Trauma Theory

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Abstract The study is an attempt to expose the traumatic events experienced especially by the protagonist in the novella from the perspective of trauma theory, its implications and the transformation that the protagonist achieves. Trauma can be experienced in life due to many adverse situations that encounter the modern man. The objective of the research is to answer the following research questions: what are the traumatic events that Abdou Said has faced? What are the effects of trauma on Abdu Said? To answer these questions, an analysis of the traumatic experiences of the protagonist in the novella is made with reference to Trauma Theory. Traumatization approach has often shed light on the language and practice of different types of traumatic events, such as childhood suffering, bad impacts of immigration, and isolation not only on the protagonist of the novella but also all people in Yemeni society. It is concluded that Abdul Wali has shown the traumatic experiences of Abdou Said's childhood, immigration, isolation, that stemmed from past and present tough circumstances in two different places in Yemen and Ethiopia to be healed. The traumatic experiences that Abdou Said undergoes in the novella are experienced not just in Yemen but also throughout the Arab world.

Keywords childhood; immigration; isolation; trauma theory; Yemen

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Introduction

During the 20th century, many Yemeni people emerged as sufferers, exploited, op-

pressed and lived in poverty. These bad conditions impacted the Yemeni lives since they witnessed many tough experiences and bad condition that made their life unstable. Trauma as a theme has attracted the attention of Yemeni writers who made this topic the center of their works. The growing number of novels published during the last decade and a half indicates that fiction in Yemen is the dominant genre in responding to these decisive historical transformations (al-Rubaidi 123). In fact, Many Yemeni writers were interested in trauma because they have already experienced some traumatic experiences as Abdul Wali, Ali Al-Maqri, Wajdi Al-Ahdal, Zaid Dammaj and others. The novella explores the human life experiences, and is connected to Abdou Said's painful experiences that caused him many social and psychological problems. Abdul-Wali's career as a Yemeni novelist was short, as he died at the age of 35. However, he was the leading character in the Yemeni novel. Among his many novels, the novella, *They Die Strangers* is perhaps the best known, and it has been translated into several languages including English, French and German. It got a great reputation in Yemen as well as in the Arab.

In Albalawi's studies, *They Die Strangers* is a great representation of the tough period of Imam Regime. Abdul-Wali wrote this novella after having discovered the critical incidents of Yemenis during the Imam regime that recounts the story of Abdou Said who was dead in Ethiopia as a stranger. "The novella takes place in a critical period in Yemen's history during which the North Yemen Civil War (1962-1970) was fought. The trauma of war and its psychological and economic impacts on individuals constitute deeper dimensions to understand how one may end up virtually unknown in strange places despite the dreams and hopes of gaining any financial or spiritual success" (Albalawi 100). In Manqoush's words, *They Die Strangers* is one of the Yemeni problematic novels. The most important theme of the novel is to expose "the factual worst conditions of Yemenis that was hidden because of the political oppression in Yemen" (Manqoush 461). It also depicts the difficult conditions of Yemenis who leave their homeland, their children, and their families due to hunger, illiteracy, ignorance and injustice from the tyrannical government. They travelled abroad in search of a good life. In Chelalass article, *They Die Strangers* depicts the lives of men and women who live solitary life in their own societies or abroad as strangers. All immigrants are strangers in a strange country. In this novella, the author depicts the dreams, disappointments, distress, hopes, and lives of Yemenis affected by isolation. "It is about poor, marginalized and sometimes forgotten Yemenis living in difficult circumstances. Their experiences reflect the universality of the struggles of migrants and living in complete isolation" (Chelala 2002). In Mohammed's articles, the novella deals with the feeling of isolation and the search

for identity, while observing its dispersion between places and cultures. For example, Abdou Said feels isolated and *is* stuck in Ethiopia (Sidist Kilo), while feeling nostalgic for his village in Yemen for which he desires. He permits memory to fill that space with aspirations and fantasies, in an effort to restore it and reclaim the self that sought exile in Ethiopia in order to raise money and return to his country to construct a house in his village. “However, he (Abdou) falls into the trap of exile and is stuck there until he dies” (Al-Bakery 2019).

Trauma Approach

Due to the pervasiveness of trauma in the lives of individuals and societies, trauma was conceptualized as a theory and system during the 20th century. According to trauma theory, “trauma is an unsolvable problem of the unconscious that illuminates the inherent contradictions of experience and language” (Balaev 1). The concept of trauma is usually referred to a psychological state of the individual who becomes a victim of terrifying event such as, Family problems, accidents, war, poverty, isolation, or shock after a negative event can also change victim’s behavior. The victim’s behavior will begin to change. For example, Abdou Said starts doing something unusual and gets flashbacks of what happened to him. The problems and pains experienced by most Yemenis due to the repressive political system in Yemen led Yemeni people to emigration. This may be due to memories of the traumas Abdou Said experienced in Yemen as well as Ethiopia. This appears in the story when Abdou recalled the backward decades in Yemen.

Trauma theory helps survivors demonstrate the effects of trauma, anxiety and understanding the value of knowing these effects. People get traumatized when they encounter horrific and frightening events in their lives and are hurt by others and not necessarily something. The painful experiences will be viewed in trauma theory. This theory helps us to expose the symptoms and effects of these traumatic experiences. As immigrant, Abdou Said’s suffering lies in the core of trauma theory and pain studies. His painful experience is full of hardships in his country and abroad. His case moves from physical pain to psychological distress due to impacts of his childhood, immigration and social isolation. In many ways, “the sufferings that immigrants and refugees experience are more quotidian and chronic in nature and may include such experiences as isolation, alienation, discrimination, poverty, or violence” (Kurtz 288). Abdul Wali was able to reveal traumas and its physical and psychological effects not only on Abdou Said but also on all Yemenis in Yemen or abroad at that time. According to trauma theory, Abdul Wali’s novella has been able to achieve its goal to show not only the traumatic history of Abdou Said but also the

traumatic history of all Yemenis. The trauma is considered “as the enigma of a human agent’s repeated and unknowing acts as well as the enigma of the otherness of a human voice that cries out from the wound” (Caruth 3). Abdul Wali also narrates the stories of Yemenis’ tortures, sufferings, and pains in an attempt of healing these wounds that have been caused by poverty and injustice of political regime during the Imam rule. This work adopts Trauma theory as a theoretical approach to prove how the traumatic experience of the protagonist can affect his life.

Childhood Trauma

They Die Strangers is a novella that shows the physical and psychological harm of Abdou Said as the cause of the historical and cultural traumatic experiences in his homeland abroad. Thus, trauma theory is considered as crucial source to study and investigate the traumatic experiences of the protagonist, and show how he turns into undesirables on account of his experiences. Through the analysis of the protagonist’s traumatic experiences, Abdou Said recalled the severe traumatic experiences when he was chewing qat in his small store in Ethiopia. As a child, he was a shepherd. He also remembered the critical living conditions of Yemenis during Imam’s repressive regime. He did not know his mother, so he did not remember her either. His mother died as well as a large number of people died in the village due to a pandemic disease at that time. He recalled his traumatic and painful experiences since his childhood. When he was child, he used to drink the milk of the sheep secretly, to eat some fruits that grow on the trees of the village, such as the elderberries and dates in the valley. He used to eat bananas that he often stole it from garden next to the valley. The writer could expose the difficult conditions of Yemenis’ life due to poverty, hunger, outbreaks of diseases and injustice of the political regime in Yemen at that time. As Abdou Said says:

He used to drink only goat’s milk, which he milked secretly in the cool mountain breeze. Perhaps he ate some fruit that grew on village trees or dates that grew in the valley or bananas that he stole from a garden near the valley or bananas that he stole from a garden near the valley. (Abdulwali 25)

The recollections Abdou Said’s childhood indicates a painful and traumatic feeling when he was in Yemen. Poverty, scarcity, want and hunger are the most prominent features of Yemen during the Imamate era. Leaving people to die silently in a country that is closed off completely from the world. This means that these famines and disease that killing the lives of hundreds of thousands of Yemenis each time. “Reliving a traumatic experience, whether in the form of intrusive memories,

dreams, or actions, carry with it the emotional intensity of the original event. The survivor is continually buffeted by terror and rage” (Herman 52). In *Sodest Kilo*, Abdou wants to relieve himself by showing us his traumatic moments from his past and never neglects this part of life even after spending years away from his country. But Abdou decided to hide these feelings from his childhood because he never understood them.

Abdou had recollected the two painful and traumatic memories of his childhood. He had two tragic incidents in his childhood. He remembered them while chewing qat leaves in Ethiopia. Despite Abdou never recognizes his mother, he also missing his grandmother whose presence seemed to give him a sense of motherhood. The loss of the two women is the traumatic thing in Abdou’s childhood. But his grandmother’s death was more traumatized as Abdou described the incident vividly. According to trauma theory, “his own early childhood, poverty, hunger, neglect, domestic violence, and his mother’s untimely death had influenced the direction of his intellectual pursuits and allowed him to identify with the traumatized soldiers” (Herman 53). Indeed, the traumatic experience of sadness and plague, which Abdou Said’s trauma had a remarkable effect on him. He remembered the sound of her death as he depicts death as evil person. As Freud explains that, “Mourning is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one’s country, liberty, an ideal, and so on” (Freud 243).

The description below is an important because it reflects the grief, loss and trauma that were haunting the Yemeni people at that time. The word sound embodies death as an evil human that steals people’s souls. His mother and a large number of people in his village died because the people could not find a hospital or a doctor when the epidemic struck the village. As the narrator says:

His grandmother had died like his mother, after being sick for days. He still remembered the sound of her death rattling in her throat as she lay in a corner of her room, saying, Son, I’ll get over this quickly and be well again soon. But that wasn’t to be. She died without saying a word, her throat constricted. He was asleep by her side; when he awoke in the morning he felt her hands digging into ribs. He had said to her, unwittingly, Grandma, Grandma...you’re hurting me. (Abdulwali 25)

In the above lines, Abdou recalls the painful memories of his grandmother who had been ill for several days. Indeed, the traumatic experience of loss and epidem-

ic, which Abdu faced in Yemen, had a remarkable effect on him. He remembered the backward and oppressive decades of the Imam regime. He also recollected the painful conditions of his living in Yemen during Imamate era. The tyrannical and repressive regime of Imam tortured the Yemeni people different types of fear and terror, hunger, wretchedness and ignorance until Yemen became an example of backwardness, ignorance and poverty among the peoples of the world. "All death is, to a greater or lesser extent, traumatic for the living, and yet some deaths are more shocking and catastrophic than others and they require different kinds of memorialization" (Balaev 158). While Abdou does not know his mother's death, his grandmother's death appears to have left a clear mark on his life. It is no secret that the absence of motherhood affects the life of the child. According to trauma theory, "Survivors of chronic childhood trauma face the task of grieving not only for what was lost but also for what was never theirs to lose. The childhood that was stolen from them is irreplaceable.

Also, Abdou Said remembered the miserable events of not only his living conditions but also all Yemenis during the political regime of the Imam who ruled North Yemen at that time. It was a regressive and tyrannical regime that made people suffer from poverty, starvation, illiteracy and diseases. Abdou also recollected the traumatic memories of the people's famine during the period of Imam Regime. He remembered the kind of the bread that his grandma gave him and sometimes porridge, especially when it has milk mixed with ghee in the middle. These kinds of food symbolize poverty and famine of Yemeni people at that time. "He still remembered the bread his grandmother used to make, spiced with fenugreek seeds, how delicious the bread was with fenugreek pudding or sometimes with porridge with yoghurt and ghee in it. Those were the days" (Abdulwali 25).

In above lines, Abdou recollected his traumatic experiences that happened in Yemen since his childhood. He recalled things he actually encountered when he was child in Yemen. After the death of his grandmother, Abdou married a girl he didn't know. He also didn't know what marriage meant. Thus, his father sent him to the market to buy two goats, some food and clothes. And he comes back to the village to sit in the corner of the room that his grandmother and mother died. The most important reasons that push children to accept the offer of marriage is the ignorance, backwardness, old habits, poverty, and illiteracy that had applied by the Imam regime at that time. As the narrator says:

And he was fifteen.. and got married. All he knows is that he went to the market and bought two heads of sheep, some food and clothes, and returned to the

village to sit in a corner.. the same corner where his grandmother died, and perhaps his mother before. And sit next to him is a little girl.. is his wife. (27)

The protagonist recovered from his childhood trauma via migration, breaking traditions, and transforming his life into a new set of variables while developing an interest in exploring human motivations. He faced traumatic acts when he was child in Yemen during the decades of the backward imam's rule. "Although in many cases the children are unable to resolve their traumatic experiences, they are able to cope with them through their imaginations" (Lejkowski 66). Abdou suffered during that time, so he decided to leave Yemen to Ethiopia, escaping from the political oppression and poverty in his homeland. Abdou, on the other hand, chooses to keep his feelings about his childhood's painful experiences hidden since he hadn't known how to deal with it perfectly.

Immigration Trauma

They Die Strangers as the voice of Yemenis trauma bears the traumatic memories of immigration and the passionate grief that Yemenis have suffered from. Abdou Said was the mostly victim of many traumatic incidents in the novella. However, many reasons like the loss of his mother and grandmother, sufferings, ignorance, poverty, political injustice and diseases were led Abdou to leave his country. In Foster words, "Seeking safety, shelter, food, farmable lands, and human freedom, people have sought to escape hunger, incarceration, torture, and oppression of the spirit" (Foster 153). Abdou's life was tied to his grandmother's remembering of his painful past. On the other hand, he was emotionally and physically overwhelmed by the tyrannical and oppressive regime of Imam which was a reason of his distress and suffering.

They Die Strangers highlights the story of a Yemeni shop owner, Abdou Saeed, the main character in the novella, who immigrates to Ethiopia and lives in Sodest Kilo, a neighborhood of Addis Ababa. He spent 10 years fighting assimilation in to host culture and traditions in Ethiopia, and maintaining his connection to his country. He left behind a wife and a child, and devoting his life to the idea of returning as a rich man to his homeland. He lives in tatters in the back of his shop in Addis Ababa, decreasing his expenses to shockingly low levels in order to send all his profits home. His traumatic suffering of spending low for himself enables him to have a wonderful house, and he only put his house's picture on his shop's wall. According to trauma's perspective, "Survivors whose personality has been shaped in the traumatic environment often feel at this stage of recovery as though they are refugees entering a new country" (Herman 203). In fact, Abdou Said's traumatic experiences

in his homeland and abroad seemed to represent not only the author himself but also the traumas of Yemeni people as well as Yemeni immigrants in all over the world.

Abdou had remembered the traumatic incident that drove him to leave his country. When Abdou Saeed was working with his wife for a man in the village, he heard some women whispering about a rich emigrant, named Saleh. There were discussing about the happiness of Saleh and his family. They were saying Saleh will return this year and entering his new home. “Their words stabbed him in the heart, and he saw his little boy playing in the ground, half-naked—and he was torn.. and he felt the fenugreek seeds burn his lips” (Abdulwali 27). The ladies were talking bitterly about the owner of the house that came a few days later, and Abdou was in the village. Everyone came to see him, and the children were in the foreground. Abdou’s son is among those who went to celebrate this occasion. When the son returned, he showed his father some dates he got from the rich man. The narrator describes this moment, “He (his son) showed them to his father and said, ‘Look, Baba, he gave these to me.’ As he nibbled at them, he added, ‘Why don’t you emigrate and bring me something like this?’” (27). In Abbasi’s words, “immigrants coming from war-torn countries have often faced violence, rape, or the loss of family members” (Abbasi 2021). From this time, Abdu felt an increasing desire to leave his homeland in order to support his family and be able to give them what they needed. The narrator explains that Abdou felt the sharp pain in his heart after hearing his son’s words. Abdou immediately went to his father and telling him about his decision to leave:

What about our land, Abdou?

You can take care of it.

But I’m getting old.

My wife will help you.

I’ll work there and send you money to hire men to help. (Abdulwali 27)

In the above lines, Abdou Said remembered the traumatic moment when he heard his son words. He decided to meet his father to satisfy him about his decision to leave. As result of this, Abdou’s father feels shock and confusion at his son’s decision. So the author exposes the fear and desire of Abdo’s father. Thus, his father knows that due to his old age, he will not be able to take care of the family land. However, he does not want to stand in the way of his son. Abdou realizes that his presence will reduce his sense of self-esteem. According to immigration trauma, Foster says: “The immigrants’ loss of family, community, and physical environment are themes that reverberate through both clinical and creative literatures, alike” (154).

The traumatic experience of losing original identity is extremely painful for Abdou Said who is proud of his native homeland. Abdo's homeland becomes a visual representation that may be remembered and recalled. Abdou recalled events that he actually witnessed in Yemen when he chewed leaves of qat in his small shop. According to trauma theory, "memory involves past events—more correctly, interpretations and representations of those events—that profoundly impact how we live in the present. Like trauma, memory is inveterately connected with identity" (Kurtz 9). Thus, Abdulwali depicts the case of Abdou Said as, "these were things he remembered when he chewed leaves of *qat* and a far-off expression came into his eyes" (Abdulwali 25). For example, the protagonist in the above passage is shown as addicted to the habit of chewing qat. The narrator's portrayal of Abdou's eyes when chewing qat leaves as a drug addiction exposes recollections of tragedies that he had backward decades in Yemen. This is because the traumas of Yemeni migrants in Ethiopia, which are portrayed in *They Die Strangers*, emphasize the Yemeni people's suffering as a result of their immigration, traditions, and customs.

In order to build his self-worth, Abdou feels the need to migrate and stay away from his family. Throughout these years of immigration, Abdou had painful moments because he knew very little about his family. He only knew from the letters he received two or three times a year. Abdou was happy to receive the message despite the longtime of waiting. As the narrator says: "now, twelve years later, he knew very little about home, except for what was revealed in the letters he received two or three times a year. Still, he was happy despite the long periods of waiting" (Abdulwali 27). In these lines, the only things that brought happiness and pleasure to Abdou were the letters from his homeland. Whenever he opened a letter, he felt connected to his family as well as homeland, as if he never left. In order to show how Abdou has been emotionally connected to his beloved country, "in his heart, he lives not in Sodest Kilo, but in his faraway village in Yemen" (27). Abdou's sense of belonging to Yemen prompted him to recall pleasant or painful memories of his ancestral land.

Abdou Said had faced traumatic act in Sodest Kilo when his beloved Ta'atto paid him a visit. One of Abdou's girlfriends, Ta'atto, visits him one evening while he is at his shop to bring the bad news. This visit becomes an obstacle preventing him from integrating with Ethiopian society. It also leads him to feel that he is rootless and homeless. This can clearly be seen when Abdou Said refuses to recognize the illegitimate son. She tells him about the death of her friend Fatimah, and leaving a boy who is rumored to be Abdou's son. She informs Abdou that Fatimah has no relatives and that the son is alone in order to elicit pity from him. He's your son,

Abdou, she adds tenderly. You must help him in some way. Abdou is traumatized as he has “never before faced a problem like this” (Abdulwali 36).

Abdou becomes scare that the rumor will spread and reach his family, which will finally lead to the breakdown of his family. He doesn't know how to deal with this unexpected matter. He realizes that if he accepts this child, many women will come and “throw their children” at him (36). Later, he denies Ta'atto's accusations, saying, “I work very hard for my living, to earn a few coins. By God, how can you ask me to join a bastard to my name? Who knows if he's even mine? I can't do anything for you” (36). When Ta'atto blames Abdou for not having a heart, he says furiously:

I don't have a heart, huh? If only you knew how much I suffer, how I kill myself working. I own an honest business. I would like to live in my home again. I would like to die after I've done good things for my son and wife...God commands us, Ta'atto, to work as hard as we can, to work for our children, our legal children, but I have only one son. God created those others, and He will take care of them. (37)

In the above lines, despite Abdou is traumatized, he denies Ta'atto's accusations, and telling her that he came to this place to work hard to earn money for his family. She asks him to join a bastard to his name, but he told her that he couldn't do anything for her. As a result of this, Abdou is confused and traumatized after Ta'atto's leaving. He thinks intensely of what will happen for him in the next days. His confusion is shown clearly in the way he deals with his first customer after Ta'atto's departure. When the client requests cigarettes and matches, Abdou answers nothing. He shouts at him, “I'm all out,” despite the fact that the cigarettes are in the shop, the customer says, “what happened for you today?” (Abdulwali 39) The man is perplexed by Abdou's reply. Abdou is traumatic and distressed over Ta'atto's insult. According to trauma, “Immigrants and refugees face numerous stressors when they leave their homelands and acculturate into a new host environment” (Kurtz 289). By anyhow, the immigration is a complex psychosocial process associated with emigrant's trauma. The transformation of Abdou Said from an ordinary man into a beast without remorse is because of the effects of immigration on him.

Abdou becomes traumatized because he is not expected that Ta'atto's threat would reach a point to make his Yemeni friends challenge him. Abdou's trauma destroys his relations with everyone in the quarter and even Yemenis. “Language links human beings to one another, making it possible to explain one's experience

to another and thereby reducing isolation. Trauma devastates that link” (Kurtz 308). Abdul Latif uses strong words to fear and shock Abdou to accept the illegitimate child. As he tries to respond, Abdul Latif blames him with a threatening speech: “People know, and you’ve got to take your son and rear him. Isn’t it forbidden... to leave him orphaned, living a life of loss?” (Abdulwali 49) Abdou is shocked when heard the speech and the word son has started to move his mind to remember his legal son in Yemen. Abdou’s family is the only thing that directs his thinking.

However, Abdul Latif’s words run into his mind, Abdou realizes how serious the matter is. He has to stop the accusations. He tells him ironically that he is surprised that Abdel Latif believed the prostitute’s words. The author writes, “I thought you were thinker, but...” (50). Abdou’s main goal is to use humiliation as a weapon to destroy Abdul Latif, so the purpose of his visit becomes futile. And he also wants to get him out of the accusation. Abdou Said laughs at himself when he recalls his homeland and village. When he will return to his village, the villagers will sing, “What house is the beat in the village?” And they’ll say to themselves, “Abdou Said” (62). It is clear from the title that the immigrants are experiencing an identity crisis as they live and die as strangers. Yemenis seek to maintain Islamic ideals in a Christian environment, but some are unsuccessful. Abdu Said is one among those who has misguided the right way. He is an extreme example of a “‘fallen’ émigré who ruthlessly betrays the ideals of his native culture and religion without remorse” (Weir 11). Thus, immigration trauma affects Abdou Said when he is found in Ethiopia. Because it was impossible for him to return home, he only remembered his ancestral homeland. These memories can be happy or painful. Abdou alternated between recollections of his original homeland and reality of his current home. As a result, Abdou feels estranged from his host country, and his identity is shattered. By any way, the immigration is trauma.

Isolation Trauma

Abdou Said had traumatic experiences due to tough living conditions in his homeland, and the need to rebuild his identity as key factor to relieve the psychological pressure and distress that was in Yemen during that time. For this reason he decided to emigrate, hoping to find work and a new life abroad, only to be confronted with isolation in his small store in Ethiopia. In Shelagh’s words, *They Die Strangers* concentrates on “the anguish of long separations from family and homeland, the loneliness and moral hazards of living in an alien culture, and the tension between the migrant’s desire to assimilate in the host country and his yearning to return” (Weir 11). These critical difficulties painfully compound the distress experienced by many who

have already suffered persecution in their countries. From the early days of Abdou Said's in abroad, he is always an isolated from his environment because he did not accept the way of life that other people did. But in Balaev's words, the traumatized victims are "those denied their rightful place in society, and those that have chosen isolation from society in reaction to the oppressive controls" (Balaev 126). Even though Abdou Said tried to distance himself from the people around him. As the narrator describes the situation of Abdou Said: "He lives among them, but he is as far from them as the distance between his black dirty clothes and his smiling white face. No one remembers that there has been a change in the man's face, for he was ten years ago, still a young man, dripping with affection and a smile" (Abdulwali 17).

The above lines illustrate the contradictions in Abdou's life by dividing Sodest Kilo into two worlds. In Sodest Kilo, there are both rich and poor people who live there. He, on the other hand, is unconcerned about his life's divergence. Despite the fact that he physically interacts with people, he is spiritually isolated. His separation is reflected in his detachment from people whose presence is nothing more than dirty black clothes that reflects his soul's isolation. Thus, the writer depicted the suffering of individuals living in cultural isolation under authoritarian governments' oppressive and terrible economic problems. "By inflicting on him such a tragic end and denying him absolution, Abdul-Wali delivers an uncompromising verdict on the dangers and delusions, as he saw them, of Yemeni men living abroad alone" (Weir 11). Isolation is one of the most problems that Yemeni migrants faced after leaving their birthplace and country. He focuses on Yemeni men leaving their homes, families, and children, who pay a tremendous price for doing so.

Abdou is traumatized in Ethiopia due to a long-term separation from his family and his homeland. He doesn't have personal interpersonal communication, so he couldn't tell anyone about his pains and sorrow. He hasn't any relationship with other men, which lead to increase his distress and psychological trauma. "Traumatized people feel utterly abandoned, utterly alone, cast out of the human and divine systems of care and protection that sustain life. Thereafter, a sense of alienation, of disconnection, pervades every relationship" (Herman 62). Abdou was an introverted person in Sodest Kilo that led him to lose the enthusiasm for living luxuriously, but also lost his hope for homecoming. He becomes traumatized to everything around him, and assuring that the world is an evil and could not be changed. Abdou Said feels isolated among Ethiopian people and culture. This is evident in the following passage, which depicts Abdou Said's sense of isolation in Ethiopia. As the narrator says:

He stays home on Fridays, giving himself a couple of hours of leisure in which to work on his garden and to mend what the children from the quarter had ruined. Everyone called him ‘Camel Jockey,’ a term they used for all the Yemeni immigrants. This didn’t disturb him as it did others. (Abdulwali 18)

In the above lines, Abdou sleeps in his shop, which is very small. He spends his leisure time tending to the garden of his store. Through the entrance that leads to his wonderful garden, where he is isolated from everyone. According to isolation trauma, he is unable to accept Ethiopian children who regard him as a stranger. Those kids always refer to him as camel jockey. In reality, as shown in the story, this clause is used to refer to Yemeni migrants in Ethiopia. However, Abdou will be able to control and endure those Ethiopian misbehaving children by then. The above lines indicate a sense of isolation and exile in his host country. “Social isolation is the distancing of an individual psychology or physically, or both, from his or her network of desired or needed relationships with other persons” (Luskin & Nicholson 85). In spite of Abdou Said is in Ethiopia, he feels isolated from the people around him. He only thinks about his family as well as homeland. This demonstrates that “home” encompasses more than just government, people, culture, or customs; it also encompasses feelings and identity. Although Abdou Said was a prosperous trader in Ethiopia, the significance of home led him to fantasize about returning to Yemen.

Abdou is dissatisfied in Sodest Kilo because he is separated from his loved ones. This dissatisfaction appears to be the result of the war in his homeland, which has caused many people to seek work elsewhere. But the yard was more orderly and beautiful than the place he called his room. When you see the land from behind the wall that he made himself, you realize from the first glance that a great effort has been made to take care of his yard. “The yard was more organized and more beautiful than the area he called his room. A considerable amount of effort had gone into his yard” (Abdulwali 18). Abdou appears to find relief in his own backyard. His disorganized shop represents his lack of interest in establishing a sense of self. Abdou doesn’t put much effort into the shop because it permits him to interact with other people. Despite the fact that people love him, Abdou chooses to isolate himself because he feels he is different. He’s not supposed to be in this place, but the work is what brought him to Ethiopia and it is the only important thing to him.

After building his dream home, he doesn’t seem to care much about what people would say if they knew this news. Abdou hangs a picture of his house in the middle of his shop and is anxiously waiting for someone to ask him about the house

owner. The narrator describes situation of Abdou Said: “Abdou waited on his customers, tending to their orders, all the while following their eyes, which were fixed on the photo. Deep inside, he was anxious. What would they say if they knew this was his house, his own house?” (Abdulwali 18) It is clear that Abdou had isolated himself due to his strict dedication to secrecy regarding his personal life. “Social isolation ranges from the voluntary isolate who seeks disengagement from social intercourse for a variety of reasons, to those whose isolation is involuntary or imposed by others” (Diana and Nicholas 85). The author describes Abdou as a mysterious figure in the eyes of the residents of Sodest Kilo. He is like a tomb that people see, but they are unable to tell the story behind it. Now, it’s different as Abdou feels he has fulfilled his ultimate dream of having a home for his family. Accordingly, Abdou’s contradictory behavior stems his isolation from the people around him. Abdou is unable to integrate into the new society as well as culture. Hence, he is physically present among the inhabitants of Sodest Kilo, but he is not present emotionally and mentally. Abdou seems as a traumatic figure because he doesn’t have any relation to anybody in Sodest Kilo.

Abdou’s schizophrenic view of his existence in Ethiopia is reflected in his dependence on masculinity rather than integration. Abdou emerges as a man who doesn’t know how to fit in doing emotional bonds. His trauma creates his emotional isolation. One of the women describes Abdou as an animal that hasn’t any kinds of affection towards his mistresses. One of the critics states that, “emotional isolation is initiated by the absence of a close emotional attachment” (Weiss 33). After one intimate night, Abdou does not seem to show any kind of emotions and feelings towards his lover who wrathfully says, “You’re an animal with no heart and no taste. All you want is to screw like a dog” and later adds, “nothing concerns you, not even a woman in your arms. You quench your thirst. You live in a mirage, my friend, a mirage” (Abdulwali 34). Clearly, Abdou is isolated from his surroundings completely when he spends much of his time alone in his garden. Because of his trauma, he doesn’t care of his passionate love relationships with Ethiopian women that may represent a sense of emotional isolation to this place. He only had sexual intercourse out of marriage as a result of his isolation from his family as well as the world around him in Sodest Kilo.

Abdou is not only isolated from the Ethiopian society in Sodest Kilo but also from the Yemeni community in Ethiopia. Abdul Latif asks Saleh to go with him to meet Abdou for convincing him to take care for his child. Saleh appears hesitant, believing that Abdou will never accept the child. On the way, Saleh thinks over approach he would take to persuade him because Abdou is a baffled and tough man.

As Saleh describes Abdou to Abdul Latif, the narrator describes that, “How many times had Saleh Saif seen Abdou fold up the newspapers in his shop without even thinking to read them? He never gave donations or attended community meetings. He lived in complete isolation” (47). This is the real description of Saleh views about Abdou Said. Not only has Abdou isolated himself from everyone, even his fellow emigrants, but he has also refused to give any financial donations to the Yemeni revolutionary government. In Kurtz’s words, “if humanity is achieved through community, to be separated from that community is to experience the loss of one’s own sense of selfhood. That loss is the fundamental trauma” (Kurtz 312). Abdou’s trauma is the real loss that has isolated him from his Yemeni community.

In the above lines, Abdou has never said which side he believes in. His lack of sympathy for the war is demonstrated by his isolation from any political activity. Abdou’s decision to isolate himself from any political activity is not something new. According to that, isolated people are less likely to be political activists. He has just been thinking about his family. The war has led him to leave the most valuable things in his life. Even if the war is wreaking havoc on Yemen’s people, Abdou and his family desire to live together. The war is the, “traumatic events generally involve threats to life or bodily integrity, or a close personal encounter with violence and death” (Herman 43). Perhaps the war’s trauma has changed Abdou into someone different, someone who is missing pieces of his personality. Abdou is indifferent by the revolutionists’ calls for social change. He is not concerned about the political movements in his country. His trauma reflects his isolation from the world around him.

Conclusion

Like Muhammad Abdul-Wali, Abdou Said has suffered from various traumas such as, childhood, immigration as well as isolation, struggled bravely from poverty, ignorance, diseases, sufferings and injustice of Imam Regime, and finally died in stranger land. Muhammad Abdul-Wali dedicated his life to the cause of Yemenis’ liberation from the tyrannical regime of Imam. He has experienced trauma himself, which is extremely valuable for readers to analyze this novella. He not only depicts the suffering that most contemporary Yemenis have experienced, but also provides them a way to comprehend the trauma and walk away from it. Actually, many Yemenis are unaware that they have been traumatized. Just like Abdou Said, they are used to everything and accept it traumatically in their homeland and abroad. More Yemenis are forced to leave after realizing that they have been deeply traumatized. The traumatic analysis of the novella will surely enable more Yemenis recognize

and pay more attention to the suffering that has occurred in their lives.

Through his novella, Muhammad Abdul-Wali was successful to convey his message concerning the traumatic reality of the Yemeni expatriates not only in Ethiopia but all over the world. Like Abdul-Wali, Abdou Said lives far away from his country where he doesn't find a way to live a decent life. He lives in a strange country, an unstable life, and waiting to return one day to his homeland. His dream dies and buries in abroad and he dies as stranger from his homeland. The novella sheds light on traumatic experiences and sufferings not only of Abdou Said but also all Yemenis in and out of Yemen. Thus, the author has dreamed of a modern civil state and his dream did not come true until now.

According to the writer, the painful experiences Yemenis faced inside and outside the country are the result of the repressive and tyrannical regime of the Imam at that time. Yemenis leave their homeland due to the harsh conditions of life in it. As a result of their departure, families, lands, identities, ideals, religion, and mores have all been lost. The initial traumatic experiences of Abdou begin since his childhood, his immigration to Ethiopia, and isolation from everything he loves in his life. Abd al-Wali's novella reconstructs the public issues of Yemenis to create a new life in society. He uses the image of Abdou Said to depict trauma, sadness, and suffering, so that he creates awareness not just among Yemenis but also among Arabs.

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