

Mnoho tvárí
odolnosti a uzdravovania
v súčasných naratívoch

The Many Faces
of Resilience and Healing
in Contemporary Narratives

ANA MARÍA
FRAILE-MARCOS
(ed.)

BELÉN MARTÍN-LUCAS

Resilience and healing in the slums of Manila: Merlinda Bobis's *The Solemn Lantern Maker*

MARISOL MORALES-LADRÓN

Embodying the mother, disembodying the icon: Female resistance in Colm Tóibín's *The Testament of Mary*

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- Mnoho tvárí odolnosti a uzdravovania v súčasných naratívach / The Many Faces of Resilience and Healing in Contemporary Narratives

ANA MARÍA FRAILE-MARCOS (ed.), Universidad de Salamanca

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The many faces of resilience and healing in contemporary narratives

ANA MARÍA FRAILE-MARCOS

Resilience, the capacity to adapt to adversity and rebound, has become a ubiquitous and contested concept. Nowadays, resilience is studied by researchers from disciplines as diverse as physics, ecology, disaster research, psychology, neuroscience, genetics, sociology, business, cultural studies, or medical humanities, resulting in varied approaches and definitions. Besides, the notion of resilience gained new currency with the political discourses of global governance that often asked citizens and governments to endure and build resilience during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. This pervasiveness calls for a reassessment of the validity and accuracy of resilience as a working concept, as well as a deeper study on the nuanced implications it holds vis-à-vis related notions such as vulnerability, precarity or the ethics of care. Moreover, the alignment of the discourse of resilience and neoliberal ideology demands a critical approach. Literature has not remained detached from this discussion. On the contrary, “narrative is perhaps the major cultural and cognitive scheme through which notions of resilience are currently generated”, according to Michael Basseler (2019, 25). Yet the studies produced in the field of literary studies around this concept are still scarce when compared to others.

The present thematic issue builds on previous research (Fraile-Marcos 2020) and extends the work carried out by the project “Narrating Resilience, Achieving Happiness? Toward a Cultural Narratology” (PID2020-113190GB-C22) by probing the literary representation of resilience as a multifaceted paradigm through which to apprehend contemporary reality and subjectivity. The ten articles gathered here interrogate the global currency of notions of resilience conforming contemporary narratives and theoretical perspectives from as diverse and distant locations as the Philippines, Australia, Canada, Ireland, the United States, the United Kingdom, Spain, and Germany. The articles have been arranged in a way that highlights the dialogical nature of this issue: not only each author offers a productive conversation between distinct perspectives on resilience and related critical thinking – on trauma, vulnerability, precarity, care, environmentalism, race, indigenism, decolonialism, feminism, humanitarianism, post-anthropocentrism, resistance, and healing – but the articles also dialogue with one another in their identification of an aesthetics of resilience,

exposing potential new paths to (self)understanding, knowledge, hope, and positive agency opened by contemporary resilience narratives and the nascent field of critical resilience studies.

In the first article, Belén Martín-Lucas makes the case for a *glocalized* reading of Merlinda Bobis's *The Solemn Lantern Maker* (2008), a novel that offers narrative therapy at the interface between individual vulnerability and the war on terror. The article foregrounds the resilience built in the Manila slums, as well as the potential for healing through affective bonding at the intersections of race, ethnic, class and gender differences, and defends an ethics of reciprocal solidarity and compassion as the means for critical intervention in public discourse and a challenge to dominant narratives.

Marisol Morales-Ladrón's subsequent piece offers a compelling analysis of Colm Tóibín's *The Testament of Mary* (2012), a novella that revises the Passion of Christ from the perspective of a grieving yet empowered and gendered Mary. Challenging traditional binaries as regards body/mind and reason/emotion, Mary's account provides a resilient and self-therapeutic narrative anchored in her corporeal reality, which also vindicates her authority as narrator and subverts the received images of this character as a sacrificing mother. Resilience emerges as a mechanism of resistance against received religious, patriarchal assumptions, and as a means to vindicate the narratives that rest upon the experiencing self.

Miriam Borham-Puyal's article explores the contending notions of individual and relational resilience in two novels by author Emma Donoghue, *The Wonder* (2016) and *The Pull of the Stars* (2020). In these novels, the former emerges as a liberal conception that expects endurance and sacrifice, while the latter is seen as an empathic relation to the other that builds resistance to systemic oppression and abuse. Moreover, the novels seemingly counteract the negative understanding of vulnerability in the aforesaid liberal notion of resilience, by conceiving it as the foundation for an ethics of care or a theory of recognition expressed by sororities that challenge patriarchal narratives on women's bodies and roles.

Lucía López-Serrano approaches the psychosocial narratives of resilience from the medical humanities, focusing on the neoliberal emphasis on recovery as determining personal virtue and worth. Her insightful reading of Miriam Toews's *All My Puny Sorrows* (2014) exposes how this novel problematizes contemporary understandings of the good life and a good death, suggesting a relational mode of resilience based on the acknowledgement of vulnerability and the cultivation of interdependence, and proving how literature can serve as fertile ground for critical approaches to visions of resilience and contemporary narrativizations of illness and healing.

Next, Peter Arnds engages the dialogue between Kafka's *Metamorphosis* (1915) and a selection of recent Anthropocene fiction that politicizes the cockroach as *bestia sacra* in the context of trauma and resilience. Arnds posits that Clarice Lispector's *The Passion According to G.H.* (1964), Marc Estrin's novel *Insect Dreams: The Half-Life of Gregor Samsa* (2002), Scholastique Mukasonga's *Cockroaches* (2006), and Rawi Hage's *Cockroach* (2008) draw on the resilience of this species to construct a model

for human agency in the face of adversity, thereby destabilizing biopolitically charged species metaphors and diverting from Kafka's narrative of defeat.

In line with the analyses by Martín-Lucas and Arnds of literary narratives of resilience vis-à-vis humanitarianism and de/humanization, Sara Casco-Solís's approach to Sharon Bala's fictionalized account of a real-life event involving a cargo ship full of refugees in her novel *The Boat People* (2018) further discusses the alignment of resilience with neoliberal discourses on national security and the self-adaptive skills of migrants. Building on previous work on socioecological resilience, as well as Lauren Berlant's and Sara Ahmed's exploration of optimism and happiness, Casco-Solís deconstructs the neoliberal resilience discourse's investment in these latter notions, placing it in dialogue with other politically loaded concepts such as hospitality, hostility and national security.

Vicent Cucarella-Ramón then engages with an understanding of resilience as a relational concept, as the basis for an ethics of responsibility and care, especially among communities facing ubiquitous risk and ongoing crisis. In his reading of David Charriandy's novel *Brother* (2017), Cucarella-Ramón explores issues of belonging, identity, prejudice, and racial capitalism, and how the Black family at the core of the novel must develop strategies of resistance through care when facing tragedy. In the dialogue between articulations of resilience and ethics of care, the author proposes how the interplay of the two concepts acts as a healing mechanism and a more ethical mode of survival to resist racial capitalism.

Martina Horáková's article is concerned with contemporary Indigenous literatures' engagement with and critique of the notion of resilience, both as a positive trait for the survival of Indigenous peoples and their cultures, and as an instrument to perpetuate settler-colonial dominance. Exploring an Australian Indigenous novel, *The Yield* by Tara June Winch (2019), Horáková brings to the fore the entangled notions of resilience emerging from a multivocal narrative that juggles two languages, and hence the colonized-colonizer discourses and realities, while highlighting alternative ways of living involving respect, responsibility, gentleness, and kindness.

Silvia Martínez-Falquina's ensuing article continues the study of Indigenous resilience narratives by focusing on *Carry: A Memoir of Survival on Stolen Land* (2020) by Métis US writer Toni Jensen and emphasizing relationality (to others but also the land, to the past as well as to the present) as a form of activism which deconstructs settler colonial violence, the waste of lives and resources. In Martínez-Falquina's analysis of the first piece, "Women in Fracklands", the intertwining stories create an aesthetic relationality that becomes explicitly decolonial, involving the reader through the use of a second person narrative and enabling a recovery of agency that paves the path to healing.

Finally, Kendra Reynolds wraps up this issue collecting many of the threads woven in the previous articles. Her focus on the practice of "affective bibliotherapy", in which reading fiction serves the purpose of enabling readers to establish connections through a process of identification – or recognition – closes the circle that began with Martín-Lucas's reference to Bobis's novel as a form of narrative therapy. Reynolds identifies how this practice can be used in schools to enhance the learning

of resilience coping mechanisms, thus conceptualizing resilience as a replicable and transferrable trait. In her selection of texts – “Grace” by Darcie Little Badger and an extract from *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas – literature not only exposes models of overcoming universal obstacles, but also enables an exposure to external cultural, social, and political factors that shape these characters’ need to develop resilience mechanisms, as they face racial and gender discrimination.

In summary, these articles weave intricate connections between different notions of resilience and enrich this critical tapestry by expounding on its entanglement with other relevant concepts such as vulnerability, precarity, resistance, memory, or healing. Moreover, they make an important theoretical intervention in the field of resilience thinking by suggesting new terms and concepts that are geographically, historically, and culturally situated. All in all, these articles place value on literature’s power to speak to the reader from the place of the *other* and engage the audience in relevant discussions that address important issues of our time.

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Resilience and healing in the slums of Manila: Merlinda Bobis's *The Solemn Lantern Maker*

BELÉN MARTÍN-LUCAS

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The Solemn Lantern Maker by Filipina-Australian author Merlinda Bobis challenges and criticizes hegemonic racist and sexist capitalist tenets sustaining militarized globalization in the aftermath of the attacks in New York on September 11, 2001. Published in Australia in 2008 and in the USA in 2009, the action takes us to the megalopolis of Manila, moving back and forth from the misery of the slums to the luxurious hotels for foreign tourists or the consumerist Christmas frenzy in “the largest shopping center in Asia” (Bobis 2008, 89). The narrative addresses tough realities such as extreme poverty, the prostitution of children, police brutality and political corruption, and it puts these apparently Philippine matters in direct relation to globalization and its *war on terror*. With its recurrent refrain “*I know a story you don't know*”, the novel exposes epistemic violence and belongs with those stories that “inquire after the missing, the deported, the detained, the de-remembered, and the dead” (Dauphinee and Masters 2007, viii).

In the opening pages, a white American tourist named Cate Burns suffers collateral damage in the shooting of a Filipino political journalist. Cate is accidentally injured and removed from the scene by two boys, Elvis and Noland, who take her for refuge to Noland's hut in the slums. This genuine act of protection is immediately labelled by American and Philippine authorities as abduction and terrorism, and Colonel David Lane is put in charge of the rescue operation. Noland and his mother, Nena, dispossessed and traumatized after the killing of Noland's father by the police in their rural village, have been hiding in the slum in Manila to escape political violence and police brutality, becoming, after this act of kindness, even more persecuted. Cate Burns, on her part, is a Ph.D. student of literature at Cornell who has travelled to Manila as a tourist to recover from a failed marriage and now, as a consequence of her shock after the shooting of the journalist Germinio de Vera, also from a miscarriage. The relationship between these three wounded characters, sheltered in the most marginal and miserable hut in the slum, is presented throughout the novel as one of reciprocal nurturing in a context of extreme violence acutely intensified by the intersecting interests of local political corruption and the US-led *war on terror*. Against this hostile setting, Bobis offers through the small community gathered in the slum hut a motivating example of humane deep understanding across gaps of nationality,

race, class or age differences, gaps that are not denied or obliterated but negotiated via reciprocal solidarity.

MASCULINIST HEROISM: PROTECTION VIA AGGRESSION

The relationships within the micro-community of main characters – Nolan, Nena, Elvis, Cate and Colonel Lane – are set against the background of the intricate ongoing collaboration of corrupt Philippine and American authorities, with deep-seated roots springing from “40 years of American occupation” (Bobis 2008, 85). This collaboration was revitalized after September 11, 2001, under the camouflage of the *war on terror* rhetoric, as the novel registers:

the news moves on to the joint exercises of the Philippine and the United States military in their common fight against terrorism. At efficiently stage-managed press conferences, the countries’ respective presidents affirm current bilateral relations and “our long history of friendship”. But the camera is fickle. It cuts to a veteran activist asking whether this paves the way for the revival of the US military bases, which were shut in 1992.¹ (Bobis 2008, 53)

This “common fight against terrorism” of the American and Philippine governments participates in what Mona Baker has defined as “the metanarrative of the war on terror”, whose rhetoric of fear and retaliation has been violently sustained across the world “rapidly acquiring the status of a super-narrative that cuts across geographical and national boundaries and directly impacts the lives of every one of us, in every sector of society” (2006, 45). Sara Ahmed’s insightful work on the “affective politics of fear” in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* is especially illuminating on how cultural narratives do not merely register the fear of a given group, but in fact produce and amplify the affect of terror (2004, 74–80). The term *metanarrative* proposed by Baker invokes the kind of larger, systematic, ideological work that hegemonic narratives of the *war on terror* perform, in accordance with Ahmed’s description of the political manipulations of that affect. This is a crucial, instrumental function of the program of military cooperation between the Philippines and the US, called *Balikatan*, which is recurrently exposed in *The Solemn Lantern Maker* as an act of neo-colonial occupation through the journalists’ insistent questions to the military officers:

Balikatan means “shoulder-to-shoulder” – but are you sure it’s about our countries fighting the war on terror together? Isn’t it about Washington paving the way to reopen the US bases here? Are you getting nostalgic for the old days? [...] Will your so-called “permanent-temporary presence” in the Philippine territory be more permanent than temporary? How soon before we have stars and stripes flying in Manila’s airspace? (Bobis 2008, 79)

Later, in a different passage, the accusation is expressed even more explicitly: “There is protest against America meddling with Philippine affairs, besides this is a civilian matter, or are we seeing the usual neo-colonialism?” (113) Colonel Lane himself admits this colonial history in conversation with the American consul; while the consul complains: “We gave them democracy, an educational system, we still feed them foreign aid, and what do we get in return?”, the Colonel’s response recognizes the abuses: “Forty years, Bettina. We occupied them for forty years, and

before that, we fought them in a war, and much later, we backed the dictator who robbed them blind for twenty years” (175).

Cate’s disappearance provides a perfect opportunity to reinforce this alliance between American and Philippine forces of control and repression, as Bobis’s narrator exposes: “the machinery is rolling. The police are on the case, and so are the American embassy and the presidential palace” (150). The intimate connection between American neocolonialism and brutal violence against the most vulnerable sectors of the Filipino population – represented in the narrative by the children and women inhabiting the slum – is best exposed in the scene where Elvis, a prostituted 12-year-old boy who admires everything American, is being raped in the shower in a luxurious hotel suite, while on the background the television announces the agreement between Washington and Manila:

The Philippine president commiserates with the American ambassador, emphasizing the friendship between the two countries. She invokes their joint military exercises for an urgent cause: the war against terrorism. The anchorwoman asks, “Is this abduction a terrorist act?”

“Just suck up, that’s deal, okay? Bobby said.”

“You and your pimp want to rip me off? C’mon, don’t make me wait, boy. Turn around. I said turn around, you cheat!”

The shower is steamed up, as if there’s a fog. Behind the glass, two bodies struggle. A boy is screaming. “Fuck you, fuck you!” his body flattened on the glass, his hands held up, as the man grunts. “Yes, I’m fucking you, I’m fucking you. That’s the deal, that’s the fucken deal!”

On TV, again the face of Cate Burns. (Bobis 2008, 119)

The conflation here of the anonymous foreign rapist, the raped boy and the allegedly abducted American woman is both powerful and symbolic. It alludes literally to the abuse of minors in an economy of globalized sexual trafficking massively dominated by men, under the bland euphemism of sexual tourism.² Metonymically, it refers to the abuse of civilians funded by the US *war on terror* in the Philippines, since in the name of the protection and safety of American citizens – in the novel staged on screen in global media through images of the white woman, Cate Burns – Filipino civilians were forcefully displaced, tortured and killed under Gloria Macapagal Arroyo’s mandate (2001–2010), when “the Philippine government included left-wing political opposition, critical journalists, government critics, and local political opposition as targets of violence by the military and the police, [...] sponsored by the US government” (Regilme 2014, 148). Their common interest in the *war on terror* was to squash any revolutionary upsurge and silence opposing voices, such as Noland’s father (a poor peasant about to be evicted from the plot of land that has sustained his family for generations) or the journalist shot in the novel, Germinio de Vera. In this context, as one of the local police officers expresses in the novel, “safe will always be a pretend word” (Bobis 2008, 147). Salvador Regilme has denounced that “[i]n effect, the selection of legal political opposition and activists as targets of US-funded counterterror operations in the Philippines substantially contributed to the increase in human rights violations after 9/11” (2014, 149). This situation is explicitly discussed in the novel through a tele-

vised debate where the “competing regimes of truth” (Zine and Taylor 2014, 14) on the *war on terror* are voiced by a journalist, an academic, and a priest, representing the powers of the media, institutionalized education, and the church, respectively (Bobis 2008, 136–139).

Bobis’s novel thus helps contextualize the events taking place at the beginning of the 21st century within the much longer history of American wars in foreign territories that Salah Hassan has described as “never-ending occupations”:

a repeating pattern from the 1890s occupation of Puerto Rico and the Philippines to the mid-twentieth-century occupation of Germany and Japan to the early twenty-first-century occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq. In every one of these cases, the U.S. presence was ostensibly temporary, aimed at overthrowing an unjust dictatorship, yet quickly took the form of a permanent military presence. (2008, 2)

The *war on terror* is portrayed here not as a new era suddenly erupting after September 11, 2001, but as the intensification and global expansion of ongoing colonization, staunchly patriarchal and capitalist, that stems from centuries ago. As Jasbir Puar has pointed out, “[t]he event-ness of September 11 refuses the binary of watershed moment and turning point of radical change, versus intensification of more of the same, tethered between its status as a ‘history-making moment’ and a ‘history-vanishing moment’” (2007, xviii). Similarly, Elizabeth Dauphinee and Cristina Masters sustain that “the war on terror animates particular forms of political violence, while simultaneously obscuring the historical contexts in which these violences have emerged” (2007, vii). For them, 9/11 has become the “‘perfect alibi’ for the evacuation of politics from memory” (vii). On her part, Sara Ahmed has argued that the patriotic discourses of love for the nation that followed the 9/11 events stirred a narrative of retaliation that “*allowed home to be mobilised as a defence against terror*” (2004, 74), which constitutes a dominant trope in this metanarrative, as we could witness in the subsequent responses to terrorism in Europe and the US. In the novel, Colonel Lane addresses this issue when he ironically describes *home* as “that vulnerable place which justifies arsenals, the reason invoked when we go to war. We must protect *our* home; everyone against *our* home is evil; there is no other home outside ours” (Bobis 2008, 189). There is in this discourse a strong notion of masculinist heroism related to the protection of the home/family/nation that has been reinforced despite the incorporation of women to the police and military forces, which demand masculinized women, not feminized men, as this novel clearly reflects. As Jan Jindy Pettman has pointed out, in the war of terror metanarrative “‘[h]ard’ masculinity was privileged, based on force and power over/dominance relations” (2004, 58).

Bobis contests the hypermasculinization of the war hero through the ethical dilemmas of Colonel David Lane, whose “hard” masculinity is compromised by his consciousness regarding the abuses his country is committing. He is described as “a model soldier, decorated for bravery in Afghanistan, just like his grandfather in the Second World War, *though the old man didn’t crack up*” (2008, 158; emphasis added), which implies that David did break down. After demonstrating his “bravery” in Afghanistan, he is deployed to Iraq, where an incident with a mother in Fallujah

who requests his help first raises his doubts regarding the rhetoric of heroism and humanitarian intervention that supposedly had brought them there, and the reality of abuses and inhumane necropolitics he witnesses, and contributes to, in the war: “Once for him the base was 9/11. He was there the day after, so he went to Iraq. Then, in his heart, it felt right. But has he, in fact, done it wrong? When did the heart become a cog in a wheel that is now impossible to turn back?” (76). To avoid his causing trouble in Fallujah, Lane is then sent “to the tropics” (158), supposedly a milder environment, to perform psychological warfare, because according to his superiors he is not man enough for the “rough and tumble of the field, but he can extricate the truth nicely” (158). In the Philippines, however, David’s unease only increases: “He has grave doubts about this assignment. It’s a civilian matter, for God’s sake” (76). At first he shields his consciousness under patriotic duty: “An American life is at stake, so fly a combat helicopter to show we refuse to be terrorised. Part of operations, and he can’t be accused of being unpatriotic, un-American. Always protecting our own” (77). But this task becomes more and more difficult as he realizes the connivance of the *global war on terror* with Arroyo’s particular purge of dissidents:

What if we’re wrong? What if this “terrorist group” is nothing more than a gang of kid-nappers used to discredit the Muslim guerrilla armies that have fought for self-determination since the seventies? Where does the story begin? Have we asked about the years of dispossession of Mindanao’s Muslims? Do we *know* this country? Have we asked about the endemic corruption of this government, the violence of its military against civilians, and the *even greater violence of poverty*? (172; emphasis added)

Still, he resists the idea of resigning and envisions a possible return to civilian life as a failure, a loss of manhood: “*Come home*. Ah, all these wives and mothers waiting, beckoning, as if we’ve just gone to the corner store on an errand and can easily slip back into their arms, a boy again, enfolded” (161). The return home is, from his perspective, a return to boyhood, to innocence, and to being protected by a woman’s arms. But “[h]e can’t return, because he can’t leave what he has become” (189), and because “[t]hese days his wife despises him, he’s sure of it” (189).

In parallel, we may appreciate a similar criticism of masculinist heroism on the part of the author in the figure of Noland’s father, a poor peasant who takes justice into his own hands. When he is announced that he and his family will be evicted from the land they have cultivated for generations, he goes for the landlord, hacks him to death and hides in the hills. A group of uniformed men harass both little Noland – who, to protect his mother, points them in the direction where his father is hiding – and Nena, who is left with permanent damage to her legs after this violent attack. From this moment Noland will remain mute, and mother and son move to the slums of Manila to escape “the uniforms”, as Nena calls them.

Bobis voices through the character of Lydia de Vera, the widow of the journalist killed at the traffic intersection where Noland and Cate Burns meet, a very different view of this idea of “heroism”, focusing on those who are left behind, often to suffer the consequences of the men’s “heroic” acts:

Foolish men, not for a moment do they think of their wives who will be widows or their mothers who will be childless, but about country and integrity, the bigger picture. Al-

ways the home is too small. The heroic resides somewhere else. If not the streets, the halls of government, or a war.

Would they have loved them less if they were not heroes? No. They would have loved them longer. (161)

It is these other logics of love, survival and protection of the lives at home that predominates among the women and children in the novel, as will be analyzed in the following section.

COMMUNITIES OF CARE: HEALING AND RESILIENCE IN THE SLUMS

That the military officers in the novel are men should not distract us from the fact that the figures of political authority in the novel are women: not only the corrupt president signing the agreements with the American authorities (Gloria Macapagal Arroyo) – “the president herself has promised full support for Cate Burns”, her press secretary announces in the novel (139) – but also the American ambassador (Kristie Kenney) and consul (“Bettina” in Bobis’s fictional narrative, probably Bettina Malone, spokesperson of the Embassy at that time). This signals the active participation of women, both American and Filipina, in the war and in the international politics governing these decisions. In contrast, there is a significant emphasis in the narrative on the affects of care, resilience and healing embodied by the women and children sheltered in the little hut in the slum that puts at the center the alternative “shoulder-to-shoulder” forms of cooperation that they practice. This contrast reveals that care and affection, violence and brutality, are not *natural*, innate, gendered characteristics of women and men, but different ideological and ethical positions.

In this regard, it is relevant to clarify at this point that the concept of resilience I am invoking here emanates from the feminist critique of the neoliberal rhetoric of individual resilience that thinkers like Angela McRobbie (2020) or The Care Collective (2020) have undertaken in the context of the Covid pandemic. This concept, resilience, has acquired predominance in intellectual and political circles in the past two decades, becoming especially popular after the international success of Boris Cyrulnik’s bestselling texts, including, in the anglophone world, *Talking of Love on the Edge of a Precipice* (2007), *Resilience* (2009) and *The Whispering of Ghosts* (2010). Cyrulnik’s definition of resilience focuses on the strategies for the overcoming of trauma developed by children and draws on his personal experience as the surviving child of Holocaust victims, as well as on his professional dedication to trauma as neuropsychiatrist. This focus on resilience as an individual characteristic that can be developed with, in Cyrulnik’s vocabulary, the correct tutoring has been unashamedly coopted by neoliberal ideology so that

over the past few decades ideas of social welfare and community had been pushed aside for individualised notions of resilience, wellness and self-improvement, promoted through a ballooning ‘selfcare’ industry which relegates care to something we are supposed to buy for ourselves on a personal basis. [...]. In short, for a long time we had simply been failing to care for each other, especially the vulnerable, the poor and the weak. (The Care Collective 2020, 2)

From feminist flanks, the criticism toward the neoliberal rhetoric of resilience has been sharp to denounce that “[t]he ideal citizen under neoliberalism is autonomous, entrepreneurial, and endlessly resilient” (12). Contrary to this individualist approach, communal care has been vindicated from feminist perspectives as fundamental to the development of resilience, an aspect that Cyrulnik has also underlined in his studies, but which has been vastly ignored in what Hannah Hamad describes as “the logic of neoliberalism that continues to operate under the ideologically disingenuous banner of ‘resilience’” (2022, 318). This Darwinian logic makes the individual exclusively responsible for their own ills, to the point that the most vulnerable due to social discrimination are in fact “dissuaded from questioning context-related adversities like racism and other forms of social injustice. They are, instead, directed towards positive thinking and self-actualization” (Mahdiani and Ungar 2021, 147). Feminist analysis has exposed how resilience is a characteristic most demanded especially of women in times of conflict, disaster and austerity (Bracke 2016, 65–66; Hamad 2022, 319; Martin de Almagro and Bargués 2022, 974), and Sarah Bracke has identified it as “a key organizing principle for all homeland security strategies, programs, and activities” of the post-9/11 context (2016, 52). Paying attention to the development of resilience through strategies of communal care developed by women activists in post-war Liberia, Maria Martin de Almagro and Pol Bargués affirm the need to “mobilise an affirmative feminism to consider how *resilience thrives outside governance structures and the confines of neoliberal policymaking*” (Martin de Almagro and Bargués 2022, 968; emphasis added).

In this section I will argue that Merlinda Bobis illustrates in *The Solemn Lantern Maker* a similar feminist understanding of resilience, as emerging from reciprocal and communal care among vulnerable characters, as well as among strangers. This other form of resilience coincides with Bracke’s definition of subaltern resilience, characteristic of

the subject of the global South who has survived colonization, exploitation, and wars and has been subjected to austerity programs, most often conceptualized in the global North, and other forms of exploitation. We might call this a subject of subaltern resilience, or the resilience of the wretched of the earth, which is born out of the practice of getting up in the morning and making it through the day in conditions of often unbearable symbolic and material violence. (2016, 60)

Noland is a 10-year-old boy suffering post-traumatic stress disorder after having found the bleeding corpse of his murdered father; his name, as his father had explained to him, is a reminder of their destitution, their lack of ownership of the land they have farmed for generations: “*Noland. No land*” (Bobis 2008, 203). The first protective relationship we witness in the novel is Noland’s friendship with Elvis. The two boys help each other in a tough context of sexual and economic exploitation. Although at the beginning Bobby and Elvis use the alluring fantasy of a new family to gain Noland to their business – “Noland grew warm inside when he heard it. *Like family*. Like Christmas gift-wrapped in kind voices” (11) – the two boys soon become like brothers, and Elvis will act as a protector when Bobby shows his intention

to start pimping little Noland: “I’ll do double jobs, I promise, but not Noland” (110). Elvis is merely two years older than Noland, but already an expert survivor in the sex market. When his greedy “uncle” breaks his agreement and arranges a session for Noland with a pedophile (according to Bobby, just for pictures, but Noland comes home in shock after this session), Elvis breaks with Bobby, who then batters him cruelly. Elvis sacrifices himself to protect Noland, and he loses his life in the effort, as the corrupt local police have identified him as a suspect of the American’s ‘abduction’ and finally shoot him to death in a back alley (202). His friendship with Noland puts Elvis at even higher risks than his harsh life already had, but he does not hesitate to take those risks to help a more vulnerable person. On a similar ethical position, Noland puts himself and his mother at risk when he brings Cate Burns to their home and attends to her, prioritizing a stranger’s safety over their own. As Dolores Herrero has pointed out, “Noland’s affection and generosity eventually bring about the miracle of getting together people who, although belonging in different and apparently confronted worlds, can nonetheless transcend all their differences in order to care for one another” (2013, 109). Even Nena, who is well aware of the great danger Noland’s compassionate decision is bringing on them and bitterly complains about it (blaming it all on Elvis’s bad influence on her traumatized son), soon takes the responsibility of nursing Cate, sympathizing with the sad “Amerkana” in her loss. Compassion is the prevalent affect linking these women. In the preface to his *Being Singular Plural*, Jean-Luc Nancy provides a long list of the armed conflicts taking place in the summer of 1995, at the moment of writing his philosophical tract: “It is a litany, a prayer of pure sorrow and pure loss, the plea that falls from the lips of millions of refugees every day: whether they be deportees, people besieged, those who are mutilated, people who starve, who are raped, ostracized, excluded, exiled, expelled” (2000, xiii). Immediately after, he provides the following definition of compassion: “What I am talking about here is compassion, but not compassion as a pity that feels sorry for itself and feeds on itself. Com-*passion* is the contagion, the contact of being with one another in this turmoil. Compassion is not altruism, nor is it identification; it is the disturbance of violent relatedness” (2000, xiii). I think Nancy’s definition encapsulates what is happening in the novel between Nena and Cate. Drawn together accidentally by the violent killing of Germinio de Vera and the more global violence of the *war on terror*, these two women *are* with each other in the turmoil of their pain. Nena deeply understands Cate’s feelings of loss for the miscarriage and for having lost her husband (abandoned when he expects Cate to have an abortion): “Nena stares into [Cate’s] blue eyes welling with tears. Her own fill too; the tug of grief runs between them, and much more. Pasts so estranged and futures that will never touch again. But here, they are irrevocably bound” (Bobis 2008, 134). Reciprocally, Cate feels the pain of Nena, for the violent loss of her husband, for the traumatic experiences she and Noland have undergone, for the permanent damage in her legs from the “uniforms” battering: “Cate wants to say sorry forever. She wants to weep with this woman for a long, long time” (126). Paul Giffard-Foret has described Cate and Nena’s understanding across linguistic, cultural and class borders as “cosmopolitanism of the ‘wretched’” (2016, 603); I consider the intimate relationship developing

between the two women along the novel an example of transnational feminism, a political and ethical stand that is able to recognize and state the more than obvious differences between a white affluent American tourist and an impoverished and disabled Filipina, without formal education, and yet establish strong bonds of reciprocal care and protection. As The Care Collective have pointed out in relation to hegemonic neoliberal ideology, “[w]e have, for a very long time, been rendered less capable of caring for people even in our most intimate spheres, while being energetically encouraged to restrict our care for strangers and distant others” (2020, 4). In this hostile context, “to put care centre stage means recognising and embracing our *interdependencies*” (5), which constitutes, in my opinion, an outstanding theme in Bobis’s novel.

It is interesting in this regard to remark on the reversal of positions in the novel, which first situates the affluent American woman in need of help from the third world subalterns; however, when these subalterns are accused of having abducted the white American and targeted as “terrorists” – because, as Colonel David Lane says, “after 9/11 any American gets hurt or gets sneezed at in a foreign country and ‘terrorism’ rears its ugly head” (Bobis 2008, 76) – they come to be in need of the American woman’s protection. Cate Burns refuses to occupy the position that American and Philippine authorities and the media have allotted her, the victim of a terrorist cult, and in the interrogatory with Colonel Lane she insists, “I wasn’t abducted, I was rescued. That boy and his mother saved my life” (157), and “they’re not what you think – they helped me, they risked their lives, they saved me” (158). Her main preoccupation is to reciprocally help Noland and Nena: “They took care of me, his mother took care of me. I was sick, and I couldn’t remember – [...] They’re innocent, it’s all a mistake, please help them – they saved my life” (159). Her pleas are dismissed by the American guards as “hysterical” (181) and “delusional” (195), thus following the classic patriarchal “gaslighting” strategy, while she is being kept de facto sequestered in a luxurious hospital near the American embassy where “the suites match those at five-stars hotels” (195). Here she is drugged, even “contained”, without access to a phone or television; under the pretense of keeping her safe, she has now become a prisoner of her American “protectors”.³

The novel closes with Cate in a drugged dream in her hospital bed and Noland and Nena in a safe house, after Elvis has been shot by the police and thus the end of “the hostage crisis” has been declared. In a very brief epilogue, Bobis uses the style of the Christmas fairy tale to admonish readers that “[i]t’s time to help” (207). The narrator thus explicitly includes us as readers within this larger community, using the first-person plural pronoun to demand our implication with her request that we draw wings on the designated “all five points of light” (207) in this story – Noland, Nena, Cate, Elvis and Noland’s father. This closing confirms Dolores Herrero’s observation that

one of the issues that *The Solemn Lantern Maker* puts forward is that no excuse whatsoever can free individuals of their obligation to be *ethical*, that is, to engage in an open-ended dialogue with the world and the others, to open themselves to the experience of *alterity* that will let them cling to love and make the most of the redemptive resilience of their spiritual dimension. (Herrero 2013, 110)

CONCLUSION

As I hope my discussion of the novel has revealed, the *war on terror* surfaces in Bobis's *The Solemn Lantern Maker* as the armed branch of neoliberal capitalism, proving right Alda Facio's statement that "September 11th marked in the history of this planet the unequivocal militarization of the process of globalization of extreme capitalism" (2004, 380). The alliance of exploitative capitalist powers in the novel targets the most vulnerable bodies of street children and grieving women as the underside of what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have termed "the global Empire system" (2004, 4), one where the media and political apparatus of the metanarrative of the *war on terror* reiterated the spectacle of mourning for the grievable lives (Butler 2009) of citizens and affluent tourists, and not of those who most suffer the consequences of old and new Western colonialisms. The novel challenges the hegemonic narratives that sustain the kind of planetary violence engendered under the auspices of the global *war on terror* and "succeeds in illustrating how, in spite of this dark scenario, the small story of an insignificant Filipino child can impinge on the powerful world of international politics" (Herrero 2013, 109). Against the aggressive rhetoric of fear and death, Bobis voices, through the character of a Filipino journalist, the wish for "an antidote against unscrupulous self-interest. [...] A drug for decency" (2008, 168). To contribute to the instillation of such a decency drug, the narrative offers varied examples of resilience and healing that rely on reciprocal care, starting with Noland's risky intervention to protect an unknown foreigner, which triggers the network of solidarity built in the novel. *The Solemn Lantern Maker* thus unequivocally defends an ethics of reciprocal solidarity and compassion that may constitute a form of critical intervention in public discourse, a different form of activism, in concordance with Mona Baker's idea that "undermining existing patterns of domination cannot be achieved by concrete forms of activism alone – demonstrations, sit-ins, civil disobedience – but *must involve a direct challenge to the stories that sustain these patterns*" (2006, 6; emphasis added). Bobis's novel does exactly this, offering a compelling and convincing counternarrative to the hegemonic discourse of the *war on terror* from subaltern perspectives (Giffard-Foret 2016, 596). My analysis of Bobis's novel has paid special attention to the gendered inflections of the violence it describes, and to its effects on the material lives of vulnerable civilians, taking into account the increasing degrees of risk at the intersection of race, ethnic, class and gender differences. In *The Solemn Lantern Maker*, Bobis interpellates readers in numerous occasions on the too common fault of convenient ignorance or cruel plain indifference, which has been theorized as intended or active ignorance on the part of the privileged (Sullivan and Tuana 2007; Medina 2013). For example, she has Colonel Lane thinking "We are jostled by too many acts that we choose to forget" (196) or Cate Burns slapping one of her guards and shouting "Don't you even fucking care?" (181), in relation to Nena and Noland's safety at the hands of the corrupt Philippine police. Bobis thus contributes to the struggle for epistemic and social justice, demanding active listening on the part of her readers: "I know a story you don't know, *that you can know*" (117; emphasis added).

NOTES

- ¹ At the time the actions in the novel take place, the presidents of the US and the Philippines were George W. Bush and Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, respectively. Both presidents were accused of having used torture and other illegal practices such as extrajudicial executions in their *war on terror*. See Human Rights Watch 2011; Regilme 2014.
- ² Elvis brags in the novel he can identify all foreign accents, and we may infer it is from his “business” with foreign men: “I know Americans, Australians, Germans, Japanese, yeah man. I know many-many international, but America’s the best” (Bobis 2008, 19).
- ³ I find this comparison with five-stars hotels significant, taking into account that the luxurious suites in the novel have been the scene of sexual abuses of minors by foreign tourists. Like Noland, immobilized by drugs in the hotel, Cate is kept in a drugged dream in her hospital bed.

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Resilience and healing in the slums of Manila: Merlinda Bobis's *The Solemn Lantern Maker*

Healing. Resilience. Solidarity. War on terror. Corruption. Transnational feminism.

This article examines Merlinda Bobis's novel *The Solemn Lantern Maker* (2008) with recourse to affect theories on terror and vulnerability. The narrative addresses harsh realities like children's prostitution, extreme poverty, and brutal corruption, and puts these apparently Philippine "domestic" matters in direct relation to globalization and to the so-called war on terror. The analysis of the narrative pays attention to the strategies of resilience and healing developed by vulnerable civilians, taking into account the increasing degrees of risk at the intersection of race, ethnic, class, age and gender differences. It examines how such differences are negotiated in the text via reciprocal care among the main characters in a context of extreme violence.

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Embodying the mother, disembodying the icon: Female resistance in Colm Tóibín's *The Testament of Mary*

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I am sure
The body of an ageing woman
Is a memory
Eavand Boland "Anna Liffey" (1994, 45)

The classical Cartesian dualism body/mind has informed much of Western thought since the 17th century and it has also served to validate unbalanced dichotomies, especially those associated with gender roles, which placed women closer to the body or to emotions, and men closer to reason. In their refusal to endorse this reductionism, feminist scholars have been at pains to redefine biased ideological positions and have articulated discourses that delved into the blurring of boundaries of such artificial categories. Besides, recent discoveries in neuroscience have confirmed the linkage of body and mind, suggesting that emotions and feelings, even more than reason, shape our decision-making processes, our consciousness and, therefore, our daily lives. In Colm Tóibín's *The Testament of Mary* ([2012] 2013b), a subversive revision of one of the most emblematic symbols of Catholicism, the Passion of Christ, a grieving Mary recollects the last days of her son's life more than twenty years after his death. Questioning the validity of the Gospels as given truths and refusing to collaborate with the apostles to confirm their version, she vindicates her authority to testify as a witness and give voice to her own experience after years of resisting silence and exile. In so doing, she does not accept to endorse the received image of herself as an atemporal, iconic symbol of a sacrificing mother and defends the authority of her narrative, her Testament to the world.

The cult of the Virgin Mary, the Mariology, and its ideological implications for the cultural construction of female silence and motherly sacrifice, are the main targets of Tóibín's criticism. Engaged in the rendering of a more human version of a flesh and blood woman, he challenges centuries of appropriation and recreation. In her reverie, an agentive and gendered Mary gives shape to her consciousness by means of an unorthodox account that relies on the emotions felt by her body,

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historically absent in official records. Bearing these aspects in mind, this discussion intends to explore Mary's resistant narrative against misrepresentation, probing into the function of the body as text. Its fundamental role in the shaping of consciousness will ultimately contribute to dissolve traditional binaries as regards body/mind and reason/emotion. I will argue that the reliance on emotions and feelings as catalysts of memory places her healing account within a therapeutic framework that, in turn, provides a secure space from which she can redeem herself and grieve the loss of her son. To this end, I will rely on the theories of neuroscientist and clinical psychologist Antonio Damasio, who argues that emotions are located in the body, whereas feelings and thoughts emerge at a further stage in the cognitive process, as he has demonstrated in influential works such as *Descartes' Error* (1994), *The Feeling of What Happens* (1999) and *Looking for Spinoza* (2003). This reading will eventually attempt to place Tóibín's controversial *The Testament of Mary* as a text that writes women's bodies and female selves back in history, challenging the received accounts that have fueled Christian imagery and have sculpted western thought.

RECEPTION AND GENESIS OF *THE TESTAMENT*

Originally written for the stage, the monologue *The Testament* was produced for the Dublin Theatre Festival in 2011. Later staged in Brooklyn as a dramatic solo play, with the full title *The Testament of Mary*, it triggered unfavorable reactions and controversy (Shea 2012; Oppenheimer 2012). Despite positive reviews and three Tony Awards nominations, it was closed five months later due to poor ticket sales (Pinsker 2013). In the following years, it was produced by the most emblematic theater halls with enormous success, including Dublin, London, New York, Montreal or Toronto. Tóibín's ensuing adaptation of Mary's reverie in the form of the novella *The Testament of Mary* ([2012] 2013b) was equally received as a blasphemous account (Pinsker 2013) and as an engaging exercise in revising established interpretations of a sacred text (Boland 2012; Charles 2012; Gordon 2012). While some critics could see its value "as an example of rewriting, of hypertextual 'transposition' [...] an exercise in 'transvalorisation,' [...] in giving voice to a previously marginalised character" (Kusek 2014, 82), some conservative members of the Catholic community interpreted it as blasphemous and heretical, and demonstrated in the streets when it was staged in New York. (A similar case had happened years before when Martin Scorsese's *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988) and Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* (2004) premiered.) Despite such polarized reactions, it was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 2013.

Though the text clearly resonates with Irish Catholicism, readers who are familiar with Tóibín's work could also recognize one of his most prominent themes, the mother-son relationship which, in this case, went beyond the largely problematized bond. In an article published in *The Guardian* soon after the novella came out, the author described its sources and acknowledged having been deeply inspired by two Renaissance paintings that he admired while in a trip to Venice. On the one hand, Titian's *The Assumption of the Virgin* (1516–1518) pictured the Virgin Mary ascending to heaven in the company of the angels, whilst the apostles were kneeling down

in prayer and raising their hands to the sky in full awe. On the other, Tintoretto's *The Crucifixion* (1565) bestowed a terrifying view of the pain and suffering of Christ on Calvary, with his mother lying at his feet, amidst a violent landscape of fear, menace and death. The contrast between the two images struck Tóibín, who saw: "One pure, the way they wanted her to be, arising into heaven; and the other impure, chaotic, cruel, strange, unforgettable," and came to realize that such "transformation fulfilled a pictorial need, or a storyteller's need, as much as it did anything else" (2012, n.p.). Hence, the interpretative potential of the figure of Mary, triggered by the gap that existed between the limited space she occupies in the gospels and the paramount significance she had acquired for the Catholic faith, was the basis for the writing of *The Testament*.

Being both mother and virgin, as José Carregal-Romero has noted, "as the epitome of purity and ideal femininity, [she] has traditionally served both as a figure of worship and also as an oppressive cultural artifact in order to control women's sexuality" (2013, 92). Thus, grounded on this contradiction of a flesh and blood mother who gives birth to a holy baby, Tóibín's narrative dissolves the historical conundrum of such an in-between space, subverting a culturally constructed notion of motherhood that embodied "centuries of sentimentality – blue and white Madonnas with folded hands and upturned eyes, a stick with which to beat independent women" (Gordon 2012, n.p.). However, precisely the gulf that separates Tóibín's empowered mother from the faultless and atemporal Virgin Mary of the Gospels was at the core of much of the debate surrounding the novel, which can be summarized in the following statement: "I don't want a Mary this contemporary and human – just as I do not want a Jesus who hikes up his shorts" (Oppenheimer 2012, n.p.). Yet, as Michael Fontaine argues, placing the focus on Mary's more human nature is where Tóibín's success lies, as it redeems a "culturally overdetermined image of Mary as a symbol of divine purity" and furthermore exemplifies "human benevolence encouraged by religious teaching" (2017, n.p.).

MARY'S ACCOUNT AND VALIDATION OF THE TRUTH

The Testament starts twenty years after the death of her son when an ageing Mary, exiled in Ephesus and retained in her own home by two guardians – seemingly the apostles John and Luke – with "a brutality boiling in their blood" (Tóibín 2013b, 3), refuses to validate their version of Truth.¹ Even though she cannot read or write, she is aware of the power of narratives to shape cultural beliefs and refuses to be reduced to a historical icon constructed out of polyphonic versions of her life, except her own: "They want to make what happened alive for ever, they told me. What is being written down, they say, will change the world" (99). Defending her right to speak the truth and to be the only reliable narrator, she gives voice to her experience as mother, woman and witness of the events, digging into her memories and offering an alternative more maternal and human storyline in the form of a legacy to the world. Her testament is therefore a resistance narrative against silence and forgetting, whose healing potential eventually grants her a space to properly deal with resentment, pain and grief. As the narrative stylization of the character

foregrounds its fictional nature, Tóibín's text deftly manages the suspension of disbelief, having Mary often comment on the constructive quality of stories and their ability to manipulate reality. Presenting herself as the only administrator of the doses of truth that she will reveal to the world, the reader is led into the belief that, since her narration is based on her real involvement, her account is more valid and authentic. As Mary Gordon puts it: "She sees herself as a victim, trapped by men determined to make a story of what she knows is not a story but her life. The making of the Gospels is portrayed not as an act of sacred remembrance but as an invasion and a theft" (2012, n.p.). More so, this Mary not only uses the power of her voice to rebel against her historical muteness, but she also has a body, that is, a text that demands to be read. Such weight placed on the representation of a flesh and blood woman, a personified subversion of the atemporal, pure and sexless Catholic icon, undermines the debate on the division of body and mind, from which the present proposal takes its cue.

ANTONIO DAMASIO'S NEUROBIOLOGY OF EMOTIONS

The classical dichotomy of body/mind, or matter/spirit, which can be traced back to pre-Aristotelian philosophy and reached its peak in Cartesian thought, has been the source of endless debates throughout history. Dualism and monism have prevailed as two positions from which to explain the realms of body, matter, mind or brain, and of corporeal and spiritual reality. Dualists have traditionally maintained that reason was located in the mind, whereas emotions and feelings were sensed by the body, a separation that current research in neuroscience has proved wrong, evidencing their complementary nature. Additionally, western religions have fostered the separation between the corporeal, temporal and sinful body from the atemporal, sinless and spiritual soul. Even though in recent decades, scientific advances have demonstrated that their link is unquestionable, controversy remains as regards the role of each one in the shaping of consciousness. From this angle, the theories of the neurobiological basis of emotions and feelings proposed by the internationally recognized North American and Portuguese leader in neuroscience, Antonio Damasio, might enlighten a reading of *The Testament*, a narrative that locates emotions and memory in the body. His research, which has proved both revolutionary and divisive,² has helped to elucidate the biological basis of the emotions and has shown how these play a central role in individual social cognition and in decision-making processes. His work has also exerted a major influence in our current understanding of the neural system, closely connected to the cognitive processes involved in memory, language and consciousness, which he defines "as the critical biological function that allows us to know sorrow or know joy, to know suffering or know pleasure, to sense embarrassment or pride, to grieve for lost love or lost life" (1999, 4).

In one of his key texts, *The Feeling of What Happens. Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness* (1999), Damasio distinguishes different phases in the manifestations of emotions and feelings: a stimulus triggers a reaction in the body, which is registered at a neural level, forms a neurological pattern, a somatic marker, and starts a physiological process that gives way to an emotion. The brain,

which “is truly the body’s captive audience” (150), cognitively maps the expression of this emotion and represents it through feelings.³ So, for him, emotions precede feelings, are placed in the body and are experienced, whereas feelings are produced by the mind at a further step in the cognitive process.⁴ Hence, since conscience and subjectivity are the result of awareness, they necessarily rely on the body, connecting emotional processing and decision-making. In his own words: “I separate three stages of processing along a continuum: a state of emotion, which can be triggered and executed nonconsciously; a state of feeling, which can be represented nonconsciously; and a state of feeling made conscious, i.e., known to the organism having both emotion and feeling” (37).⁵ Arguing that his approach to emotions and feelings is “unorthodox” because “there is no central feeling state before the respective emotion occurs” and “that reflection on feeling is yet another step up,” he ends up suggesting that bodily symptoms are not the result of emotions but the other way round (186–187). In fact, he follows psychologist William James, who had postulated a century earlier in his *Principles of Psychology* (1890), that “bodily changes follow directly the perception of the exciting fact, and that our feeling of the same changes as they occur *IS* [sic] the emotion” (Vol. 2, 449). This means that, for instance, we do not cry because we are sad, but quite the reverse, we are sad because we cry. As Steven Johnson further explains, Damasio’s research had somehow evidenced and offered “an updated version of James who, famously argued in the late 1800 that emotions were simply a readout of the body’s physiological state” (2004, 47).⁶ In a clear nod to James, Tóibín has Mary affirm in the novel that: “There are tears if you need them enough. It is the body that makes tears” (2013b, 4).

MARY’S CORPOREAL ACCOUNT: THE BODY AS TEXT

That the body matters in Tóibín’s text seems certain from the moment Mary initiates her reverie asserting that: “Memory fills my body as much as blood and bones” (4). Damasio believes that there are three different phenomena: an emotion registered in the body, the feeling of an emotion, and knowing that we have the feeling of an emotion, and the three are present in Mary’s account. In fact, following his claim that “emotions use the body as their theatre” (1999, 8, 51) to probe into Mary’s narrative of resistance against a made-up version of her life might shed some light into how the somatic memory informs her discourse.⁷ Since the act of remembering involves a sensation attached to it, the role of emotions is central to the shaping of memory and, by extension, of consciousness. The self does not exist outside its mental processes, in truth, maps of how the body and the external world function.⁸ Accordingly, recalled with a span of twenty years and writing back in anger for the way her fabricated identity has satisfied religious beliefs, Mary navigates her body through her resentment for a son who had turned away from her, transforming this initial narrative of resistance into one of repair, allowing her to redeem her own seemingly (un)motherly choices and lack of unconditional love. The way her memories activate and evoke the states of her body is explained by how these responses had been registered at a neural level, creating mental images that are recalled later: “Feeling an emotion consists of having mental images

arising from neural patterns which represent the changes in the body and brain that make up an emotion” (280).

As underlined above, Mary is not merely an empowered agentive woman, but a flesh and blood character who reaffirms herself physically and ideologically through her body-text. She both occupies a place and bids to be read, enacting an act of writing back against her appropriation. The way she defends her space, violated by the two guardians who keep her captive, is paramount for her existence, and she does not doubt to threaten them with a knife when they try to use an empty chair, her husband's, whose absence yet inhabits a space: “It was to be left unused. It belongs to memory, it belongs to a man who will not return, whose body is dust but who once held sway in the world. He will not come back” (Tóibín 2013b, 19). Filling the gaps left by centuries of omission and misrepresentation involves her in a double act of subversion, through her body as text, and through her deviation from a given truth that has shaped Christian belief. Meaningfully, *The Testament* brims with references to blood, inner organs, veins, bones and other corporeal parts, often evoking images of violence and death.⁹ Given the number of allusions to blood, its significance as a trope for female blood and womanhood deserve to be commented upon. In fact, Mary is puzzled by the disciples' assumption of her virginity, when she considers herself a flesh and blood woman and mother, who has, in fact, shared her blood with her son in pregnancy.¹⁰ In her pretension to stand for a real being, Tóibín creates a new subjectivity for her and makes Mary compare her struggle to recall reliable memories to the existence of her hands, arms or other parts of her body, insisting that she only relies on what she can see and feel, even though in the realm of the narration, the fictive historical character as much as her body occupy the same ontological space. For this reason, Mary does not merely have a body but signifies through her body. Moreover, at the end of the narration, when she foresees her death, she also wishes her body would be taken care of: “in those days after he was born, when I held him and watched him, my thoughts included the thought that I would have someone to watch over me when I was dying to look after my body when I had died” (74).

The fact that Mary's corporeal account largely rests on what can be seen or experienced, in strict terms, on the matter, has further implications for the rejection of miraculous and spiritual explanations that have constituted the bases of Christian belief. In her narration, Mary not only surfaces as a woman and a mother in full human sight, but she also refuses to see her son in any other form than as a rebellious young man with leading skills, capable of moving crowds. She makes clear that those who claimed that he could walk on water, calm strong winds, transform water into wine or perform miracles were just crafting stories that circulated and to which she paid little attention: “For those who gathered and gossiped it was a high time, filled with rumours and fresh news, filled with stories both true and wildly exaggerated. I lived mostly in silence” (56). Dismissing his deeds, miracles and spiritual self means that there is no room for worship. Tellingly, she is a pagan woman who keeps a small statue of Artemis at home, the Greek goddess of animals and fertility – who ironically was never a mother – to whom she prays because she finds more truth in her

than in the God of the Christians. In fact, the novella ends with her final invocation of Artemis: "I speak to her in whispers, the great goddess Artemis, bountiful with her arms outstretched and her many breasts waiting to nurture those who come towards her. I tell her how much I long now to sleep in the dry earth, to go to dust peacefully" (103).

A turning point in the novel in this regard is the scene of the resurrection of Lazarus, which a skeptical Mary disparages on account of an ethics of care and the need of the diseased body to be respected and left alone. Once Jesus and his followers arrive at Lazarus's tomb four days after his death, the crowd brings news of how he was able to turn a blind man to see and produce food out of nothing. So, when he makes Lazarus's dead body come to life, Mary can only see him suspended in limbo, in an in-between space between life and death, unable to utter a word or to sustain his decaying body: "They felt, as I felt, as I still feel, that no one should tamper with the fullness that is death. Death needs time and silence. The death must be left alone with their new gift or their new freedom from affliction" (31). Accordingly, and in opposition to the rest of witnesses, Mary is disturbed by the apparent possibility of being raised from death and focuses on the unnatural physiological reaction of the body: "his howls in the hour before dawn harrowed up the soul of anyone who heard them" (63), rather than on its miraculous quality.

In addition, the harrowing scenes of the suffering of her son, against the admiration and wonder of his followers, are also worth commenting upon. During Jesus's trial as the King of the Jews, the horns of his crown make him bleed so much that there is a violent outcry: "I sensed a thirst for blood among the crowd" (69), which "had reached every single person there just as blood pumped from the heart makes its way inexorably to every part of the body" (70). However, at that intense emotional moment, Mary's narration diverts to her aching feet from walking in the heat, placing her body at the forefront of her account: "every body's blood was filled with venom, a venom which came in the guise of energy, activity, shouting, laughing, roaring instructions [...]. And it was strange too the fact that my shoes hurt me, that they were not made for this bustle and this heat, preyed on my mind sometimes as a distraction from what was really happening" (74). The significant shift of attention from the body of her son, the object of the gaze, to her own body, the subject who gazes, make her more physically present: "All the worry, all the shock, seemed to focus on a point in my chest" (74), establishing "a nexus between an object and an emotional body state" (Damasio 1994, 132). And yet again, the body is the focus of the narration in the description of Jesus's crucifixion and his violent disfigurement. While watching the horror of how he is being nailed to the cross, Mary recalls being unable to recognize him: "I tried to see his face as he screamed in pain, but it was so contorted in agony and covered in blood that I saw no one I recognized. It was the voice I recognized, the sounds he made that belonged only to him" (Tóibín 2013b, 76). Fully detached, her body displays no reaction, in contrast to the widespread Christian imagery that pictures a devastated Mary held by other women in unbearable pain. At the end of her narration, the final confession of a faulty, imperfect mother, explains her actions:

For years I have comforted myself with the thought of how long I remained there, how much I suffered then. But I must say it at once, I must let the words out, that despite the panic, despite the desperation, the shrieking, despite the fact that his heart and his flesh had come from my heart and my flesh, [...] despite all of this, the pain was his and not mine. And when the possibility of being dragged away and choked arose, my first instinct was to flee and it was also my last instinct. In those hours I was powerless [...]. As our guardian said, I would leave others to wash his body and hold him and bury him when his death came. I would leave him to die alone if I had to. And that is what I did. (84)

THE MOTHER-SON RELATIONSHIP

At this point, it needs to be stressed how cold, detached and abject mothers have populated Tóibín's novels, unresolved mother-son relationships being one of his most recurrent themes.¹¹ In *The Testament*, Mary's bitterness towards her son works at two levels. On the one hand, as a mother who must come to terms with her failed efforts to protect and control his wanderings, mixing with other young men whom she only sees as misfits, and especially, to accept his self-sufficiency and independence. Thus, her grief is problematized by her anomalous loss: for the vulnerable child that she had lost when he claimed to be the son of God and for the real man who died at the cross. Jesus's actual denial of his mother and his mortal origin is described in the Gospels, in his famous sentence at the wedding of Cana: "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" (John 2:4; Tóibín 2013b, 47). Claiming that his holy mission was to bring the reign of God upon earth, the Virgin Mary wordlessly accepts such sacred destiny, embodying the universal symbol of the sacrificial and sorrowful mother of us all.¹² Subverting centuries of idealized sainthood, the flesh and blood Mary of Tóibín's text refuses to admit his divine origin and voices her resentment for his son's absence of memory and for the historical silencing of women:

And then time created the man who sat beside me at the wedding feast of Cana, the man not heeding me, hearing no one, a man filled with power, a power that seemed to have no memory of years before, when he needed my breast for milk, my hand to help steady him as he learned to walk, or my voice to soothe him to sleep. (54)

Denied as a mother, since she has no mothering role to perform any more, she refuses to be one of his followers, worship him or believe in his miracles. In fact, she instead refers to them as "stories – narratives which might well have been inspired by true events, but which, like any work of memory, fail to pass the test of veracity and are shaped to suit various, often conflicted and contradictory demands" (Kusek 2014, 84).¹³

On the other hand, Mary's reverie also hinders at her own bitterness for having failed to remain at his side when he was dying, letting others wash and bury his body, affirming at the end of the text that she "fled before it was over" and that "when you say that he redeemed the world, I will say that it was not worth it. It was not worth it" (Tóibín 2013b, 102). Elderly, in exile and seeking redemption, she dwells on the justification of her apparently cold decision to protect her own life and run away. Such a problematic ending has led critics to see Mary as a traumatized subject. Carregal-Romero, for instance, identifies it in the grief, sorrow and regret of her "witnessing the brutal execution of her son whilst being unable to offer any help or

consolation” (2013, 93) and Rosemary Rizq pictures a “Mary tortured by her failure to save Jesus from his fate. She is guarded by two disciples of Jesus who are engaged in the onerous task of writing down a record of what happened to her son” (2019, 614). However, my sustained argument is that she is extraordinarily articulate, retains a full account of her memories – her own narrative – and is utterly connected to her body, an empowered weapon with which she refuses to endorse the story of the redemption of humankind through values of suffering, sacrifice and death. Against the unspeakable as a construct that permeates trauma narratives, she affirms: “I remember too much; [...]. As the world holds its breath, I keep memory in [...] the details of what I told him were with me all the years in the same way as my hands or my arms were with me” (Tóibín 2013b, 5). As Damasio has asserted, “consciousness feels like some kind of pattern built with the non-verbal signs of body states” (1999, 312). Not only does she have a language, but she also has a corporeal consciousness and recalls having a body that speaks volumes against so much silence and oblivion. That is how her initial narrative of resistance translates into a narrative of healing, a true testament to the world that writes back centuries of unquestioned beliefs. Indeed, some decades ago, the Irish writer Edna O’Brien had also aptly defended the bases of female corporeality, explaining that: “The body was as sacred as a tabernacle and everything a potential occasion of sin. It is funny now, but not that funny – the body contains the life story just as much as the brain. I console myself by thinking that if one part is destroyed another flourishes” (quoted in Roth 1984).

CONCLUSION

To conclude, it would be pertinent to evoke Simone de Beauvoir’s affirmation in *The Second Sex* that “to be present in the world implies strictly that there exists a body which is at once a material thing in the world and a point of view towards the world” (1953, 39). Through Mary’s corporeal narration fixed to a time and place, Tóibín subverts the atemporal iconographic symbology of the Virgin Mary that has rendered mothers invisible and silent throughout centuries. *The Testament of Mary* is the flesh and body account of a mother who has lost her son to save humanity and who finds such effort and sacrifice worthless. Through an empowered voice, her resistant narrative refuses to be appropriated in mind or body, letting her son’s disciples validate a story that texturizes in the Gospels. Rejecting to endorse the official version of both her story and her son’s, she offers an alternative pagan narration, claiming to have the authority to speak the truth, as she was the most important witness to the events. Tóibín’s version of the Passion of Christ, therefore, succeeds at transforming the iconic virginal, voiceless, sexless and static image of the Virgin Mary into an aging, gendered body in pain that reclaims her own space in the narration and, ultimately, in history. Her last words are eloquent: “And I am whispering the words, knowing that words matter, and smiling as I say them to the shadows of the gods of this place who linger in the air to watch me and hear me” (2013b, 104). As the author himself has explained: “I wanted to create a mortal woman, someone who has lived in the world. Her suffering would have to be real, her memory exact, her tone urgent [...]. She would have to have grandeur in her tone as well as deep fragility” (2013a, n.p.).

NOTES

- ¹ In the narration, she refuses to address her son by his name: “I cannot say the name, it will not come, something will break in me if I say the name. So we call him ‘him’, ‘my son’, ‘our son’, ‘the one who was here’, ‘your friend’, ‘the one you are interested in’. Maybe before I die I will say the name or manage on one of those nights to whisper it but I do not think so” (9).
- ² As his theory of the mind is non-cognitivist, in the sense that it explains mental states through the monitoring process of bodily and behavioural responses, his ideas have been contested by cognitive psychology, a model which argues that emotions also involve evaluation and representation in the mind.
- ³ For Damasio, feelings do not exist without a mind that processes them: “Someone may suggest that perhaps we should have another word for ‘feelings that are not conscious’, but there isn’t one” (37).
- ⁴ In Damasio’s words: “I have proposed that the term *feeling* should be reserved for the private, mental experience of an emotion, while the term *emotion* should be used to designate the collection of responses, many of which are publicly observable” (42).
- ⁵ Arguably, his theory is much more complex than what the limits of space allow me to discuss here. For instance, it is important to add that Damasio also believed that consciousness has two levels: core and extended. While the first one is shared with other animals, the second depends on memory and language (16).
- ⁶ These findings have been backed up by evolutionary evidence. Risking an oversimplification of a much more complex process, I will only underline that science has shown that the amygdala, responsible for the expression of emotions, is an older part of the brain, while consciousness and rationality, which require the functioning of higher brain areas, developed at a later stage in evolution of human beings.
- ⁷ Damasio’s somatic marker finds an equivalent in somatic memory, a term that has been applied to literature mainly in trauma studies to foreground the role of the body in tackling the inarticulate, demonstrating the existence of a somatic corporeal memory that precedes suppressed or blocked cognitive processes.
- ⁸ For Damasio, the brain works like a cartographer, forming representations and revealing how: “Consciousness is rooted in the representation of the body” (1994, 37).
- ⁹ Her descriptions are so physical that she even recalls smells: “And then he went, and, perhaps because there had been no one in this house for so long, he left behind a smell of pure unease” (60).
- ¹⁰ Watching her son bleed at the Temple, Mary reflects: “In those days if I had even dreamed that I would see him bloody, and the crowd around filled with zeal that he should be bloodied more, I would have cried out as I cried out that day and the cry would have come from a part of me that is the core of me. The rest of me is merely flesh and blood and bone” (74).
- ¹¹ Besides being an underlying theme in many of his novels, Tóibín has also addressed this issue in works, such as *New Ways to Kill Your Mother: Writers and Their Families* (2012) or his earlier collection *Mothers and Sons* (2006). See Fogarty (2008), Costello-Sullivan (2012), Morales-Ladrón (2013) or Walshe (2013) for further insights.
- ¹² For a thorough Kristevan analysis of the concept of the “Mater Dolorosa”, see Bruzelius, who argues that the powerful symbol of the Virgin Mary “pervades western consciousness, even in Protestant and secular manifestations. It is difficult to ignore her” (1999, 215).
- ¹³ Interestingly, also, at the wedding, when Jesus transforms water into wine, Mary mentions that the first container did have water, but that she was not sure about the others, questioning the authenticity of the miracle. Using it as a metaphor for truth, Tóibín is also suggesting that in the same way that the water was transformed into wine, the writers of the scriptures could have changed the story for their own benefit.

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Embodying the mother, disembodying the icon: Female resistance in Colm Tóibín's *The Testament of Mary*

The Passion of Christ. Mary. Religion. Corporeality. Mother. Icon. Colm Tóibín.

Informed by the theories of Antonio Damasio on the emotional mappings of the mind, the present article probes into the Irish writer Colm Tóibín's *The Testament of Mary* (2012), originally written for the stage as a solo play and later adapted into a novella, to disclose the resistance narrative of a grieving mother against the official accounts of the Passion of Christ. The ageing Mary of this text, who is granted voice and body, defies the symbolic representations of female suffering and sorrow that have nurtured cultural history and memory for centuries, and engages in a corporeal rendering of her version, which she intends to leave as her Testament to the world. The shaping of her consciousness is thus substantiated on her embodiment as woman and mother, against the iconic disembodied Virgin Mary that has formed the axis of the Catholic cult of Mariology, ultimately contributing to dissolve the classical dichotomies body/mind and matter/spirit, which will be analyzed in depth.

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Nurses, mothers, sisters: Relational resilience and healing vulnerability in Emma Donoghue's *The Wonder* and *The Pull of the Stars*

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The Irish-Canadian writer Emma Donoghue (born in Dublin in 1969) is known for her award-winning novels, among them the acclaimed *Room* (2010), together with historical fiction that explores late-Victorian times and lives. In *The Wonder* (2016), an English nurse is sent to the Irish Midlands in the 1850s – a land ravaged by famine and poverty – to watch over a fasting girl, Anna O'Donnell, whose parents claim she is living without any food. Trained by Florence Nightingale herself during the Crimean war, Lib is torn between her duty as a hired nurse and her growing concern for the child, leading to consequences that will alter the lives of both. Although still lacking scholarly attention, *The Pull of the Stars* (2020) shares important elements with the previous novel. Set in 1918, it evokes the havoc caused by the Great Flu and the Great War in Dublin, while it describes three days in a maternity quarantine ward where nurse Julia, Dr. Lynn, and a young volunteer named Bridie struggle to keep their patients alive, at the same time they find it increasingly hard to remain detached from them and from each other.

Dealing with common themes, such as pain and the limits of the body, nursing and healing, the experience(s) of motherhood and the oppressive patriarchal systems of control, whether religious or medical, these two novels attest to the importance of the notions of resilience and vulnerability in Donoghue's body of work, beyond the well-researched case of *Room* (Borham-Puyal 2020; Jaime de Pablos 2022; Morales Ladrón 2017). Specifically, building on previous work on psychosocial resilience, as well as on physical and social vulnerability, it will be contended that these works illustrate two opposing forms of resilience and vindicate vulnerability as a path to healing. On the one hand, Donoghue's novels expose an individual resilience based on notions such as endurance and duty, triggered by professional standards or a religious zeal, in which vulnerability is conceptualized as a negative trait, the equivalent of weakness or incapacity. In this conception of resilience, the trauma of war or sexual abuse is forcibly silenced, and individuals are required to survive and adapt. However, Donoghue's novels display the ways in which the human body and psyche rebel against this forced adaptability and show the signs of their corporeal vulnerability to cope with that trauma. On the other hand, as she had previously done in *Room*

(Borham-Puyal 2020, 86), the author explores the potential of vulnerability, understood as a *relational* quality, to facilitate greater resilience and to challenge the above-mentioned individualistic conceptualization of it. Finally, these two ways of understanding resilience and vulnerability will be proven ideologically charged and highly gendered, as they become associated with endemic systems of control exerted mainly by men or by women who have assimilated the patriarchy – priests, husbands, brothers, doctors and even mothers or nurses – or with subaltern or othered forms of relationality performed by women on the margins – professional women, suffragettes, *unnatural* mothers, or lesbians.

OPPRESSIVE RESILIENCE AND THE PATRIARCHAL NARRATIVES OF THE FEMALE BODY

The term *resilience* is well established within psychology, with varying approaches from a physiological to a psychosocial perspective, and multiple applications from individual interventions to social vindications (Denckla et al. 2020). Despite this multiplicity, there seems to exist a certain consensus on some dimensions of the concept: it involves some form of adversity or risk, it triggers resources to face these adverse situations and their effects, and it results in some form of positive adaptation (Berástegui and Pitillas 2021, 272; Denckla et al. 2020; Windle 2011). This idea of adaptation under or after duress, inherited from physics or environmental studies, has recurrently been appropriated by liberal discourses to emphasize individual responsibility for one's wellbeing, given that "with a focus on the individual, larger entities and social structures do not have to take responsibility" (Denckla et al. 2020, 12). Nevertheless, an individualistic reading of resilience has been challenged from the very field of psychology to those of ecology and social justice (Fraile-Marcos 2020, 3), and this critical questioning can be seen in literature as well.

The Wonder and *The Pull of the Stars* both offer pertinent examples of how resilience narratives that focus on individual responsibility in the face of risk or adversity are used with the intention to free "larger entities and social structures" from being held accountable. This is particularly evident in the latter novel, set amid the influenza pandemic of 1918. The reader encounters public messages from the government, which include advice in imperative capitalized form: PURGE, CONSERVE, KEEP, EAT (Donoghue 2020, 39), as if it were a recipe for good health. Contagion and illness then point at the individual failure to comply with these recommendations by the authorities. More explicitly, these posters remind citizens that "WAR-WEARINESS HAS OPENED THE DOOR TO CONTAGION. DEFEATISTS ARE THE ALLIES OF DISEASE" (10), "INFECTION CULLS ONLY THE WEAKEST OF THE HERD" (39), "WOULD THEY BE DEAD IF THEY STAYED IN BED?" (257), thus equating illness with lack of will, and health with strength, patriotism or enough resources not to work. These posters echo not only the class subtext in the narrative of liberal resilience, where self-care often requires the means to afford it, but also the motifs of many self-help books that revolve around the power of the will. In doing so, they diminish the influence of what has been termed *situational* vulnerability, that is, the socio-economic context in which resilience is meant to be exerted, and which

“renders some humans more at risk than others” (Mills 2015, 47–48). In Judith Butler’s conceptualization this corresponds to the notion of “precarity” (2009, 3), “a politically induced condition” in which “failing social and economic networks of support” can make certain populations more vulnerable (25) by having their common or universal vulnerability, their intrinsic embodied needs, denied or exploited.

Exemplifying the opposition to this liberal understanding of resilience which blames the population at risk, the protagonist, nurse Julia Power, reacts in anger to the insensitivity and implicit hypocrisy of these messages, and must refrain from tearing one down and maybe commit an act of treason, while mentally listing everything that could be to blame for those deaths, including the lack of hygiene and the war (Donoghue 2020, 257), elements which fall under the responsibility of the same government that requires resilience from its citizens. On the other hand, *The Wonder*, also framed within a time of crisis in Ireland, sees the country resort to forbearance to face hunger, disease, and death, fuelled by religious narratives surrounding fasting as regulating the “cravings of the body” (2016, 24) or a misplaced pride at such endurance, expressed in a lack of appetite or greed (162). In both novels, class plays a very important role when it comes to building resilience and even surviving – hunger kills the poor; the poor Catholic mothers at the ward have undergone more pregnancies than the rich Protestant ones – which again relates to the notion of a situational vulnerability read systemically as a lack of resilience if these individuals fail to comply with what is expected from them. As a political notion, situational vulnerability is relevant given the time frame of *The Wonder* and Donoghue’s Irish origin: the whole country is described as under required endurance caused by the “hungry season” (5, 7). In what will become an echo of the O’Donnell household, Ireland is described as an “improvident mother” (23), at first despised by the English Lib as maybe “impervious to improvement” (5), without considering the historical role played by her own nation in Irish impoverishment.

Significantly, beyond class, the main narratives of individual resilience revolve around gender. In both novels discourses on the need for (female) endurance in the face of hardship are embodied by the representatives of the Irish Catholic church and the unfeeling, or even incompetent, men of medicine. *The Wonder* portrays religion as a potential source of resilience and hope, as a “shield of consolation” (200), recalling findings that confirmed that “religious involvement, measured at the individual level is a resilience resource” (Denckla et al. 2020, 8). Nevertheless, this is only possible if true faith is not confused with “morbid nonsense” (Donoghue 2016, 268), which in this case means superstitions that place blame and pain on the female body, requiring it to be cleansed, chastised, and even finally erased. Convinced by her older brother to engage in an incestuous relationship, Anna has been burdened with her own shame, as well as her brother’s sin, for he died without confession. Lin Pettersson has convincingly argued that Anna’s fasting body is a way of communicating the trauma of incest, attempting to escape the imposition of silence, and implicitly of overcoming the burden that both Church and family, as its representative, have imposed on her (2017, 4). First father Thaddeus, who hears her confession and entreats her to silence (Donoghue 2016, 316–317), and then An-

na's mother, Mrs. O'Donnell, who accuses her of lying and forces her to conceal it (308), impose the narrative of shame and then atonement that lead to Anna's fasting. Mrs. O'Donnell, one of those Irish mothers who became the enforcer of the Church's code in the home (Pettersson 2017, 13–14), does indeed become an agent in maintaining the charade of a miracle and later giving up her daughter by stating that "she had made her choice" (Donoghue 2016, 308).

Within this system of constant vigilance, restraint and self-denial, Anna somehow regains control of the body and life that had been taken from her, first, by her incestuous brother, then by the priest and mother who suppressed her trauma and even allocated the sin within her. She does this by attempting to control her body narrative, telling a story that is forced into silence: her "wrecked body" an "articulate testament" (286) that "told another story" (137) from the official version of endurance fostered by faith and filial duty. In the end, facing incomprehension and silence, she abandons her will to live, in that way assimilating the religious discourse of guilt and atonement, acting as a "sin-eater" and offering herself for her brother's sins (Šlapkauskaitė 2020, 250). For this expiation of her attacker, her vulnerated body is forced to become increasingly and painfully vulnerable by fasting, almost to the point of disappearance.

Also, evincing the connection of vulnerability to ecstasy as anchored in the body, especially associated to fasting (250), it is significant that Anna's performance of her vulnerability takes place within the context of a deeply Catholic context, given that this church sanctions as saints those women who renounced themselves, who were consumed by physical sacrifice, or displayed miraculous endurance in the face of torture. In other words, it extolls women's endurance in vulnerability, yet performed individually, often in isolation, thus transforming the female ecstatic body into a sight of spectacle (Donoghue 2016, 91, 129) and, finally, into a disembodied saint. Donoghue's novel, in fact, builds on the life of two such Irish fasting girls, a true phenomenon in the 19th century, in which "religious faith and medical science" prove "destructive forces" (Pettersson 2017, 13). The latter is represented by Dr. McBrearty, who willingly forsakes his Hippocratic oath to exploit Anna's body, forcing it to endure the prolonged watch to fulfil his scientific and hubristic aspirations to fame (Donoghue 2016, 287), blind to her pain and approaching demise despite the nurse's warning. More harrowing is Anna's examination at the hands of a reputed doctor from Dublin, who exposes her whole body, unfeelingly examines it, diagnoses hysteria, and recommends forced feeding "above or below" (124–126). To this suggestion Lib reacts standing between him and Anna, hoping to protect the girl from another instance of patriarchal control over her already pained body to *force* its endurance, because he reads her fasting as a whim and not a manifestation of deeper trauma. The forceful introduction of food is also an infringement or new violation on the hospitable body, who should willingly open to receive food, becoming then vulnerable to medical violence and stressing the "structural (a)symmetries and ideological conflicts of Victorian society distilled into the novel's underpinning dichotomies of *mind/body*, *male/female*, and *religion/science*", which Šlapkauskaitė associates to the stories about *anorexia mirabilis* (2020, 244).

In *The Pull of the Stars* both institutional forces also share their control over the female body and expect its resilience based on its *natural* inclination towards giving birth, supported by the religious principle of not preventing pregnancies in any way. First, doctors perform all manner of unnecessarily dangerous procedures on women's bodies while in labor, with little concern about the pain or the risks, beyond not hurting the uterus for future pregnancies (Donoghue 2020, 193). These include the use of forceps (217) or "rough handling" (192); symphysiotomies, that is, the division of the ligaments holding the pubic bones together; and pubiotomies, which involves sawing through the public bone (193); all procedures which, as the book tells us, were performed until a couple of decades ago (294). A particular scene shows a male physician, McAuliffe, immediately suggesting surgery based on statistics, rather than approaching birth with more natural options, as Julia does by following Dr. Lynn's advice, with success and less traumatic results (193–194). Secondly, medicine builds a narrative of endurance around the future mothers, solidly founded on Irish Catholic culture: "*She doesn't love him unless she gives him twelve*" (24), a saying goes. The description of the exhausted, injured, torn bodies before, during or after birth is a graphic image of the expected resilience of the female body at the service of state and church (24–26), as well as of the narrative of *bad womanhood* associated with the desire to limit one's physical sacrifice in endless pregnancies (77). To this narrative and practice that pushes women's bodies to their limit, rendering them even more vulnerable, Dr. Lynn, a New Woman, strongly objects throughout the narrative (100), while Julia compares these mothers to the soldiers in the trenches: paying the "*blood tax* since time began" (180). Like them, they are asked to endure for their country and God. Lib also conjures this image when she compares Anna to a "stoic soldier" (2016, 84).

Moreover, it significantly recalls the nurses' own training and their role in war-torn contexts, or their motto to "soldier on" (17). In this sense, Lib and Julia have internalized the type of resilience required from nurses, which prevents bonding and potentially thwarts an effective sorority with their female patients: both constantly quote the rules of no attachment, no questioning, and self-sacrificial endurance in the face of duty, thus denying their own bodily needs such as food, rest, or sleep – the epitome of the liberal notion of resilience. Despite this initial alliance with institutionalized narratives of resilience, these female care professionals will seek more ethical ways to approach the female body, and by standing up to doctors and priests will also attempt to build a relational bond, a sorority, to oppose the patriarchal rule.

BUILDING A SISTERHOOD: RELATIONAL RESILIENCE AND THE HEALING OF VULNERABILITY

Contrary to the aforementioned individual understanding of resilience, in his early observations Norman Garmezy (1993) already attested that, in children exposed to risk factors, their family relations had an enormous impact on the development of "resilience mechanisms" in traumatic situations. This supports the need to adopt a *relational* view of resilience, one that "assumes the centrality of supportive relationships in positive adaptation to adversity [...] by encouraging their [the individ-

uals'] potential to overcome stressful challenges and by supporting their best efforts to make the most of their lives" (Walsh 2021, 256). Froma Walsh, in fact, develops the notion of *family resilience*, which she defines as "the capacity of the family [immediate or extended], as a functional system, to withstand and rebound from adversity", with the basic premise that "serious crises and persistent life challenges have an impact on the whole family, and in turn, key family processes mediate adaptation (or maladaptation) for individual members, their relationships, and the family unit" (256). Beyond its individual potential, Ana Berástegui and Carlos Pitillas also acknowledge that a relational understanding of resilience has a social component, as they claim that "resilient attachment relationships may facilitate resilience across development, and promote healthier, more resilient societies at different levels (extended families, schools, neighbourhoods, cultures)" (271–272). Donoghue's novels, in fact, offer positive and negative models of this form of resilience, also challenging normative understandings of "family".

A lack of healthy family resilience, indeed, illuminates the malfunctioning of Anna's family faced with the trauma of incest and loss, especially when considering her mother. Mrs. O'Donnell plays along her daughter's religious self-sacrifice not to face the revelation of her rape by Pat, upholding the church's narratives on and regulation over the sinful female body, and thus failing to provide the needed relational processes of support or to challenge societal rules that hurt her daughter. Lib, in fact, recognizes the O'Donnells as one of those families who not only thwart resilience, but "amplify suffering" (Berástegui and Pitillas 2021, 274), comparing the mother to a bird that turns against her chicks and concluding "they're no family" (Donoghue 2016, 311). The same could be said of the priest or religious *father* (316–317): while sympathetic and undecided on the miraculous nature of the fasting, he only offers consolation not salvation, he preaches silence and endurance not addressing Anna's trauma as a vulnerable body and psyche. In contrast, Lib's adoption of Anna and her establishment of an unconventional family literally and metaphorically saves the girl, while it also heals Lib's trauma after the loss of her own child. Their escape to Australia significantly marks the possibility of a new beginning, the birth of new identities, more resilient selves.

In *The Pull of the Stars* another eccentric family unit proves the more positive context for resilience building: Julia and her brother Tim, queer orphans caring for and supporting each other, display strong relational bonds that help them cope with the effects of war and the death of loved ones which cannot publicly be mourned (2020, 291). Her brother's trauma points at another secret – the death of his lover – which manifests itself also with physical symptoms in his muteness. Against this silence, Julia advances telling him all about Bridie and what had happened to them (291): this communication within the family could prove healing, as part of the relational processes of resilience.

In line with these ideas around families, another important concept to understand relational resilience is *attachment*, a notion directly related to that of vulnerability. According to Berástegui and Pitillas, attachment relationships can be seen not only as "mediating" factors "between adversity and its impact", or even a "source

of protection in the face of hardship”, but as a “resilient mechanism in itself” (2021, 271). Or, in other words, the “caregiver-child dyads, as bipersonal, dynamic systems of interaction and meaning-making, may themselves show resilience when exposed to adversity” (271). Attachment resilience becomes conceptualized as the “processes by which the attachment relationship [...] is capable, when subjected to a certain degree of adversity, of preserving levels of affective connection, and of maintaining its functions as a safe and secure base for exploration” (273).

While the above mentioned scholars speak specifically about early attachments and family bonds, which would apply to Anna and Julia, it can be contended that other relational experiences could be defined in a similar way – dynamic, meaning-making, created or tested under duress – and have comparable effects in terms of resilience when they serve the function of maintaining security or “restoring [it] after damage or rupture”, or even of entailing “a more solid sense of interpersonal connection, a reinforcement of the experience of safety and effective interactions”, all characteristics of attachment resilience (274).

In Donoghue’s novels the family unit is often replaced by some form of surrogate relation, as Lib replaces Mrs. O’Donnell as maternal figure (2016, 346) and nurse Julia becomes surrogate mother to another orphan, or when her relationship with Bridie evolves from professional to sentimental, both sources of attachment resilience springing in the midst of adversity and when trauma is caused precisely by the “deterioration of attachment relationships, their absence, or their character as negligent or abusive” (Berástegui and Pitillas 2021, 274). That is, when their family attachments “amplify suffering” rather than serving “as a buffer and a growth-promoting factor in the face of adversity” (274), a fact symbolized by the malnourished or violated bodies of Anna and Bridie, who have been failed by those who oversaw their protection.

Moreover, a characteristic of Donoghue’s novels is the depiction of a potential community of women who replace dysfunctional families or patriarchal structures of control. In *Slammerkin* (2000) it was the friendship among two prostitutes, in the *Sealed Letter* (2008) New Women but also the two protagonists’ bond suggested the possibility of this alternative communitas on the margins of society. While these sororities prove far from successful or free from hardships and pain, in *The Wonder* and *The Pull of the Stars* there are examples of these female attachments or surrogate sisterhoods that do enable resilience. In the latter, sisterhood is indeed embodied in Kathleen Lynn, a suffragette and doctor, who is also a “lady rebel” and Sinn Féiner, member of the nationalist political movement Sinn Féin (2020, 60). Based on the real-life Lynn, Donoghue’s character demonstrates her concern about her female patients and colleagues, and the general well-being of women in Ireland, standing up not only to medicine and church, but also to the governmental forces. By so doing, she becomes vulnerable, precarious, for she will be persecuted and finally arrested by the police, yet her good work and example build hope for the future. The same can be said of Lib and Julia, and the attachments they will form with their patients: they expose themselves and their stories, they listen to Anna’s and Bridie’s silenced narratives, and thus create a healing relation in which traumas can be overcome.

For instance, Lib can finally address her own loss and sense of inadequacy so as to take action and save Anna, while Julia can experience love in her own terms with Bridie. By becoming vulnerable to each other, they also come to be stronger. Lib and Julia also acknowledge the particular manner in which Anna's and Bridie's vulnerability is evinced by forms of sexual violence, which triggers in this case modes of resistance, which can happen when the fallacy of control is burst (Butler 2004, 28–29; Butler, Gambetti, and Sabsay 2016, 1).

In this sense, the novels play out Butler's notion of vulnerability as a defining characteristic of human beings, who are "socially constituted bodies" open to experience love and loss (2004, 20). Embodiment becomes the locus of reciprocal vulnerability, for it is "[t]hrough the body" that we are "exposed, opened onto the world and to others even as for others we are the ones to whom they are exposed and vulnerable" (Gilson 2011, 42). That is, relationality or vulnerability must be understood as having a "double edge", for humans are "constituted by and through relations with others but also dispossessed" by them (Mills 2015, 41, 43). It is then important to acknowledge the ethical promise of vulnerability as a relational concept. This idea of relatedness resonates with the notion of vulnerability as a means to build empathy towards the other, replacing liberal and individualistic ideas around resilience with an emphasis on "interdependence and responsibility", which can set the foundations of "sociality, justice or politics, manifested [...] in an ethics of care or based on a theory of recognition" (Petherbridge 2016, 589–591, 593). In Butler's words, the "recognition of shared precariousness introduces strong normative commitments of equality", while it also "seeks to address basic human needs [...], and other conditions for persisting and flourishing" (2009, 28–29). As illustrated by Donoghue's novels, vulnerability is perceived as a negative trait within the societal context in which the protagonists live, yet it has the potential to be transformed into an enabling condition, a "condition of openness", in particular "to being affected and affecting in both positive and negative ways, which can take diverse forms in different social situations", including bodily, psychological, emotional, or legal vulnerabilities, among others (Gilson 2011, 310).

Where this recognition is not developed, an ethical commitment to resistance is lacking. Interestingly, the enforcers of the abovementioned institutional observance over the female body are also women under such medical or religious authority, which points at a failed notion of sorority, embodied in the "Sisters" in both books. In *The Wonder*, a nun and a nurse, Sister Michael and Lib, are called in by a panel of men who represent secular power, religion and medicine to observe Anna, the eponymous wonder, for two weeks to certify whether her fasting is miraculous or a hoax. This dyad is reproduced in the later book, with nurse Julia working with Sister Luke to observe and care for the women in the quarantine maternity ward. Sister Luke, in addition, works at the institution for destitute children, for fallen women and their babies, a space that comes to represent exploitation, abuse, and dehumanization, a "motherhouse [...] without a mother in the place" (Donoghue 2020, 137), which signals at its patriarchal nature and lack of emotional nurture. At one point, Lib highlights this acquiescence to the patriarchy by pointing at the nun's assuming

a male saint's name "as if giving up womanhood herself" (2016, 17), also hinting at her own compliance as a nurse by evoking that "awful nurse in *Jane Eyre*, charged with keeping the lunatic hidden away in the attic" (11).

Like her religious colleague, Lib commences her watch reminding herself of the detachment required for the job, and the need not to become invested in the child's fate. She then reduces her charge to measurements, data, and forgets some of the principles of a caregiver: observe, listen, understand what the patient needs. In fact, according to Šlapkauskaitė, it is her lack of empathy which at first calls into question "the role of nursing in the ethics of vulnerability" (2020, 246). At first, Lib echoes the idea that the *heart*, and personal closeness, must be rejected to be a proper nurse (Donoghue 2016, 127); yet as the novel advances she will become painfully aware of Anna's physical and emotional vulnerability, consequently distancing herself from the nun's compliance and desperately trying to save the girl's life. Moreover, Lib admits her own vulnerability as a witness to the horrors of war, but more significantly as a false widow and a mother who lost her baby because of a problem with her breastmilk, thus becoming doubly stigmatized as a woman (312). As the reverse to Mrs. O'Donnell and her intentional starvation of her daughter, Lib cannot feed her own child but decides to save Anna by nourishing her body and self-esteem. She can then build an attachment with Anna, becoming resilient together: they can experience adaptative success because of their bonding.

Julia also challenges doctors' and nuns' authority to adopt a motherless destitute baby in honor of Bridie. Barnabas is the son of a fallen woman, Honor White, a victim of common and situational vulnerability; a condition she passes on to her son given his hare lip and illegitimacy (2020, 228, 231, 287). Julia decides to create this resilience attachment to help the baby survive and thrive, but it could also be argued that, implicitly, she does it to establish a caring family that might help heal their own traumas: her brother's war PTSD or the loss of their respective lovers. She brings a "frail baby home to [...] my frailer brother" (290), but trusts that common vulnerability to be a bond, so that the "nurturing" nature of her brother will rise to the occasion (291). It is that recognition of vulnerability, this openness to others, that has triggered the transformation in Julia. First, by listening to Bridie's story of physical, emotional, and legal vulnerability, then by establishing a relationship with her. Finally, by becoming exposed to harrowing personal loss with her death. Bridie, on her part, has scars on her body that speak of her previous abuse; her corpse tells a bodily tale of exploitation and malnourishment (283), while she considers her body "dirty" by its sexual violation (254). She has been reduced to *existing*, which recalls Butler's statement that "under certain conditions, continuing to exist, to move, and to breathe are forms of resistance" (2016, 26).

However, Bridie's true mode of resistance comes by relational resilience: by bonding with Julia, using her own body to give and receive affection from her (Donoghue 2020, 250), as well as to maternally care for the vulnerable women at the ward (90). She claims that her relationship with Julia "[m]ade [her] matter" (249), which could also be said of Anna's with Lib. In these two cases, as well as in those of the suffering mothers at the ward, Donoghue's discourse around the female body proves far

from simple. In *Room* she had already “complicate[d] received bodily constructions by turning binary opposites such as able/disabled, productive/unproductive, or assertive/submissive into porous and malleable categories” (Zarranz 2017, 50), challenging “a simplistic interpretation” of the victim of abuse’s “role as one of strict submission” and instead suggesting “a potential for unruliness and dissent” (50), which can be seen in Anna and Bridie, whose bodies are sites both of vulnerability and resilience, fighting against erasure (Donoghue 2016, 332; 2020, 278, 281).

By befriending these younger women, and recognizing the trauma read on Anna’s and Bridie’s bodies, Lib and Julia create a resilient attachment and become carers more attuned to the ethics of vulnerability. Their professional and personal experiences of recognition of vulnerability bring pain, yet also create deeper connections with those around them and finally trigger their own self-awareness to their emotional needs and desires. When they recognize their charges’ vulnerability and *care* for them both nurses can find healing to their own pain, whereas relational resilience motivates them to move on and be reborn as new foster mothers. This new maternal role, in turn, brings a new form of vulnerability and relational dependence, which opens them to pain or loss, but also to attachment and hope. Motherhood in particular serves well this dual reading of vulnerability – both embodied and situational, empowering and weakening (Borham-Puyal 2023) – and features predominantly in Donoghue’s two novels in all its forms: biological, adoptive, or by proxy, in the case of nursing. At one point, Julia reflects on this duality surrounding maternity: “*Woe unto them that are with child. Also joy. Woe and joy so grown together, it was hard to tell them apart*” (Donoghue 2020, 286). Lib channels in her care for wounded soldiers her trauma at losing her baby, while Julia has acted as mother to Tim after their biological parent died shortly after his birth. They are both accused of conflating their role as nurses with a latent maternal instinct; however, they defy conventional notions of biological motherhood – something Julia, for instance, cannot imagine herself going through (44, 81) – and in the end they both do become adoptive mothers who truly develop family resilience. Together with female friendship and the care of the nurses – in the novels a woman’s profession defined by *care* and observance, rather than theoretical and detached knowledge – motherhood in which vulnerability is acknowledged and shared becomes opposed to the endurance expected from the female body and preached by detached institutions of control, namely state, church, and western medicine.

CONCLUSION

Asked about her neo-Victorian body of work, Emma Donoghue claimed that she hoped to give voice to “the ones who had been left out – like the nobodies, women slaves, people in freak shows, servants –, the ones who are not powerful” (Lackey and Donoghue 2018, 121). In these two novels she has certainly provided visibility to the tales of those women who were subjected to forces of abuse and control, and who reclaimed their bodies by exerting, first, a form of individual resistance which gained agency to their no-bodies: in her metaphorical death and re-birth, Anna can reclaim her violated self, while Bridie is finally seen beyond her na-

ture as a refuse child lost in the cracks of the system. Secondly, these young women achieve the final overcoming of their trauma by forming an attachment with other dispossessed or vulnerable women who assume a role as care-givers: an abandoned wife and childless mother as well as a woman of science who stands in opposition to the Church and finally rejects the very tenets of non-involvement entailed in her profession, and a lesbian who is also not a biological mother, who in this case even literally struggles with a representative of religion – standing up to Sister Luke to save Barnabas – and the unfeeling rules of obstetrics, aided by a third liminal woman, Dr. Lynn, a radical New Woman. These women’s development of relational forms of resilience by caring for each other and thus becoming emotionally, physically, and socially vulnerable – for Lib loses her job and is burnt, Julia moves further away from an acceptable heteronormative female standard and grieves the loss of Bridie, Anna must sacrifice her old identity and become a fugitive, and Bridie dies – constructs a narrative around these modes of sorority and love as subversive forms of relationality performed by women on the margins, which challenges patriarchal forms of endurance that are endemically imposed on their bodies.

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Nurses, mothers, sisters: Relational resilience and healing vulnerability in Emma Donoghue's *The Wonder* and *The Pull of the Stars*

Ethics of care Imagination. Attachment. Endurance. Motherhood. Sorority. Liberal resilience. Emma Donoghue.

Discussing two novels by acclaimed author Emma Donoghue, *The Wonder* (2016) and *The Pull of the Stars* (2020), this article hopes to attest the ways in which these works illustrate two opposing forms of resilience and vindicate vulnerability as a path to healing. On the one hand, it will discuss how Donoghue's work exposes an individual resilience based on notions such as endurance and duty, triggered by professional standards or a religious zeal, in which vulnerability is equated with weakness or incapacity. In this conception of resilience, the trauma of war or sexual abuse is forcibly silenced, and individuals are required to survive and adapt. On the other hand, it will address how she explores the potential of vulnerability, understood as a *relational* quality, to facilitate greater resilience, even if it exposes humans to pain and loss.

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Subverting resilience in the psychiatric ward: Finding the good death in Miriam Toews's *All My Puny Sorrows*

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Resilience seems to have become an imperative for modern life. In a world of increased precarity and uncertainty, where the welfare state is disappearing in the face of increased privatization, and climate change heightens our vulnerability to natural disasters, the global message we receive from political discourse and the media seems to be to prepare, adapt, and endure. For instance, the potential for an increase of labor organizations and activism for the betterment of work conditions resulting from the 2008 financial crisis “crystallised the trend towards ‘precarious’ labour market conditions” (Berry and McDaniel 2022, 322), and we have witnessed the glorification of workaholic lifestyles that look at side jobs to supplement our income through a “relentlessly positive” (Griffith 2019, n.p.) outlook. South Korean philosopher Byung-Chul Han addresses the issue in the *Burnout Society* (2015), where he posits that we now live in a postindustrial achievement society where the individual seeks happiness in professional self-realization, expecting “the profits of enjoyment from work” (38). Thus, happiness functions as a device of self-regulation for the benefit of an increased productivity, “[h]owever, the absence of external domination does not abolish the structure of compulsion” and in the neoliberal achievement society, it is the “dispositive of happiness” which deploys the principles of “self-motivation and self-optimization” to subjugate the individual (2021, 9). If wellness and happiness are the only acceptable options towards which we must continuously strive, pain and unrest lose their political dimension and become medicalized. The response to precarity then is not association nor revolution, but embracing “change, no matter how terrifying; grasp it as an opportunity” (11): in a nutshell, resilience in its most neoliberal expression.

In her 2016 essay “Bouncing Back”, Sarah Bracke reaffirms this view and notes how the rise in popularity of the term “resilience” has been inextricably linked to the hegemony of neoliberalism. She notes how the term is now spanning “the macro level of ecological and economic systems to the micro level of selves” (52), having permeated popular culture to such depth that cultivating individual resilience has become a “personal virtue” (53) by which recovering from situations of precarity and trauma has become part of the “moral code” (62) of the individual.

Bracke argues that this version of resilience relies on individuality and turns away from vulnerability, championing self-reliance as a moral virtue. This “dis-identification with dependence, need, and other kinds of vulnerability” (59) has now entered “the realm of hegemonic truths about the self” (53), and thus also permeates the sphere of healthcare, informing our socio-cultural understandings of the processes of illness and recovery.

The effects of neoliberal politics on healthcare have translated into increased understanding of healthcare as a commodity rather than a human right. Although the World Health Organization acknowledges “the highest attainable standard of health as a fundamental right of every human being” (1946), the right to health has been challenged by an increased privatization of health care across the globe. Medical anthropologist Brian McKenna notes how neoliberal economic interests are involved in the support of a biomedical model of healthcare¹ that is oblivious to “the increasingly occupational and environmental causes of illness” (2012, 256). Instead, the onus of care lies with the individual. Political scientist Katherine Teghtsoonian notes how this is particularly true in the case of mental health coverage by analyzing documents intended to guide interventions in healthcare directed towards addressing depression. She remarks that “[i]n framing the problem [...], each document directs our attention to the individual with depression rather than to the broader socio-political environment [...] that might be understood as contributing to the high rates of depression” (2009, 31). An extension of this is an increased “recovery work” that the patient must undertake to comply with the moral duty of individual resilience (Bracke 2016, 62).

Canadian writer Miriam Toews tackles the issue of the resilience imperative, particularly framed within the field of mental health, in her novel *All My Puny Sorrows* (2014), inspired by the suicide of the author’s own sister. Narrated by Yolandi (Yoli), a chaotic aspiring writer and single mother of two, the novel’s focus is her elder sister Elfrieda’s (Elf) wish to die. Despite her seemingly perfect professional life as a world-class concert pianist, her husband’s love and her sister’s efforts, Elf has been forcibly confined to the psychiatric ward of a Winnipeg hospital after a suicide attempt, the last of many since her diagnosis of chronic depression as a young adult. Determined in her wish to end her life, Elf pleads with her sister Yoli to help her go to Switzerland so she can die peacefully through assisted suicide, a difficult decision that Yoli struggles with. However, Elf cannot wait for her sister to make up her mind, and on her birthday, as their father had done a decade before, she jumps in front of a train and ends her life, leaving Yoli and the rest of the family to deal with the painful aftermath of her violent passing. In this novel, Toews problematizes contemporary understandings of the good life, which proves insufficient for Elfrieda to develop any wish of continued existence, and doubly troubles current understandings of neoliberal resilience. She does this firstly by openly exploring and giving voice to an illness narrative that counters the restitution model of willed recovery, and secondly, by doing so without judgement through Yolandi’s final acceptance of her sister’s choice to die as a valid option. Thus, I argue that Toews highlights how care may be absent in psychiatric healthcare. In this article, I look at Toews’s novel from

the field of the health humanities and examine how popular understandings of resilience can infiltrate medical discourse.

“WHY WON’T YOU BEHAVE?” NEOLIBERAL RESILIENCE AND THE GOOD PATIENT

In his seminal work *The Wounded Storyteller* (1995), Arthur Frank established a categorization of illness narratives,² which he divided into three basic archetypes.³ He argues that the restitution narrative – that which follows a diagnosis, convalescence, and cure in a linear way – is most dominant in Western contexts since “contemporary culture treats health as the normal condition people ought to have restored. Thus, the ill person’s own desire for restitution is compounded by the expectation that other people want to hear restitution stories” (77). The popularity of the restitution narrative lies in its support of modernity’s conception of Western medicine as the ultimate example of scientific progress and its power to decrease human vulnerability. In his analysis of the restitution narrative, Frank critiques Talcott Parson’s theory of the “sick role” as a descriptor of “the social meaning of illness” through which the sociologist analyzed the “behavior the sick person expects from others and what they expect from him” (81). Although Frank establishes Parson’s “sick role” as outdated, he highlights its usefulness as a narrative framework for restitution stories, pinpointing its function as a “modernist narrative of social control” (82). The restrictions of Parson’s model, I argue, highlight current limitations in society’s understandings of the interplays of illness narratives that do not comply with the restitution model.

Parson contemplated illness as a temporary state from which the patient is willing and able to recuperate. He remarked the potential abuse of exemptions of normal responsibilities during convalescence and noted that, in order to avoid it, patients should relinquish their autonomy and authority over their illness to a medical professional (Williams 2005, 124). Thus, Parson’s “sick role” is highly hierarchical and considers the medical professional to be the one with authority to construct the illness narrative from the results of observation and physiological testing, while the patient’s subjective perception is marginalized. Moreover, Parson’s model demands discipline and compliance to the doctor’s rule from the patient, and deviations will consequently be regarded as unruly and antisocial: the patient’s attempt to prolong the convalescence and avoid their return to a productive role. In Parson’s conception of the compliant patient, discipline is framed within the context of post-diagnosis guidelines. However, contemporary wellness culture has taken health from within the hospital walls and “the prevailing approach to health promotion in Western neoliberal societies” expects individuals to “take responsibility for their own health and to manage it through healthy behaviour and avoidance of health risks” (Keshet and Popper-Giveon 2018, 3). It is possible now for the patient to be undisciplined then *before* illness is diagnosed, or even at the present moment, by failing to cultivate their resilience (wellness) in the face of possible illness.

In keeping with these ideas, I posit that in *All My Puny Sorrows* Elfrieda is the ultimate undisciplined patient. Not only does she exhibit lack of compliance and con-

tinued refusal to follow orders from the medical staff during her stay in the psychiatric ward, but in her continued suicide attempts, Elfrieda contravenes all the tenets of neoliberal resilience. Instead of doing the recovery work she is tasked with to overcome her depressive state, all her efforts are directed to “opting out” of life and its challenges. We see how the psychiatric system charges Elf with the responsibility of her own recovery work in the attitude of the ward nurses and the psychiatrist entrusted with her care. For instance, during a depressive episode, Elfrieda refuses or is unable to communicate verbally with her doctors, which Yolandi understands as her sister’s attempt to “assert one small vestige of individual power over her life” (Toews 2014, 175) while under institutional care. However, the doctor qualifies Elfrieda’s attitude as a “silly game” and answers that “if she wants to get better she’ll have to make an attempt to communicate normally” (174), determining that he will not visit with her until she consents to verbal communication. In this way, the doctor is establishing that Elfrieda’s refusal to take responsibility for her own health is what is keeping her from accessing the psychiatric help she would need to improve. The eventual failure of the system to help Elfrieda, the doctor’s attitude seems to imply, is Elfrieda’s own failure.

If cultivating individual resilience is now a “personal virtue” (Bracke 2016, 53) and recovery from trauma has become part of the “moral code” (62) of the individual, Elfrieda’s behavior is deviant and immoral. The treatment she receives from most of the medical staff at the psychiatric ward reinforces this idea. Elf’s depression and suicidal ideation is linked to selfishness and lack of virtue, but also to a diminished intelligence and ability to reason. “We are very much amazed at what little intelligence there is to be found in Ms. Von R” (Toews 2014, 38) is what Elf overhears one psychiatric doctor tell another. “Equating intelligence with the desire to live? Yoli asks her sister. [Elfrieda answers:] Yeah, she said, or decency” (38). The consequences of her deviancy are not only her confinement to the ward, where she is under permanent surveillance, but also an infantilizing rhetoric under which she is treated as a recalcitrant child. When a nurse condescendingly asks Elf whether she will promise to go to dinner that night and Elf fails to provide the expected answer, they embark on an exchange reminiscent of a sarcastic schoolteacher reprimanding an unruly pupil:

I see, said the nurse. Is that a challenge?

What? No, said Elf. Not at all. I was just...

She was just joking around, I said.

Okay, that’s great, said the nurse. We like jokes. Jokes are a good indication that you’re feeling better, right? [...] If you’re well enough to make a joke then I think you’re well enough to join the others for dinner, right? Said the nurse. Isn’t that how it works? (86)

In psychiatric cases, Toews seems to imply, the patients are held to a moral standard that is absent in the general treatment of physical ailments. Yolandi highlights this difference when she compares her sister’s experience with that of her mother, treated for a cardiac event in the same hospital: “hers was a cardio case not a head case so there were no lectures from the staff, no righteous psych nurse demanding of her: why won’t you behave?” (308). Indeed, a 2014 review published in the *Lan-*

cet found that mental health-care and other health-care professionals stigmatize people using their services, and the same level of stigmatization was not found in patients with physical illnesses (Henderson et al.). Ultimately, the consequence for psychiatric patients whose behaviors or discourse subvert hegemonic master narratives of resilience and overcoming seems to be a categorization that denies them a voice of their own. By labeling them as infantile and unintelligent, their complaints about a life that they do not find worth living are merely classified as a symptom of illness and not a valid complaint.

Toews's narration of Elfrieda's suicide after a long experience with depression stands at the margins of contemporary mainstream illness narratives because it subverts the notion that human life must strive for resilience in the face of suffering and illness. Following Frank's classification of illness narratives, Elf's struggle with depression aligns with what he names the chaos narrative: "its plot imagines life never getting better", which the author qualifies as profoundly uncomfortable for the listener/reader since "[t]elling chaos stories represents the triumph of all that modernity seeks to surpass. In these stories the modernist bulwark of remedy, progress, and professionalism cracks to reveal vulnerability, futility, and impotence" (1995, 97). For Frank, people whose experience of illness do not align with the socially accepted restitution narrative, "regularly accuse medicine of seeking to maintain its pretense of control – its restitution narrative – at the expense of denying the suffering of what it cannot treat" (100). Elfrieda's experience in the psychiatric ward certainly aligns with a medical denial of her suffering – expressions of her pain are seen as silly behavior within the bounds of the psychiatric ward – and her proposed solution, ending a life in which suffering overwhelms any other experience, is deemed completely outside the bounds of reason. Although Toews's representation of the hospital staff can be quite harsh, Nic, Elf's husband, also appears as a benevolent defender of the biomedical solution for Elf's treatment: in Yoli's words, "[h]e is pragmatic, scientific, and believes in prescriptions, in doctors' orders and in their omnipotence" (2014, 95). Because of this position, Elf is unable to express to her husband her desire for assisted suicide: biomedical understandings of her illness experience refuse to understand a voluntary death as an acceptable outcome. Toews poses a provocative dilemma to the reader, which Yolandi will struggle to answer in the following pages: is Elfrieda's choice to die a rational decision to end the extreme suffering that has followed her through life? Or is it, as the medical establishment represented in the book seems to imply, a symptom of her illness that she is morally compelled to endure to fulfill a resilience imperative?

TROUBLING RESILIENCE: THE GOOD DEATH AND THE GOOD LIFE

All My Puny Sorrows prompts an exploration of what constitutes the elusive good life that Yolandi seeks, and further, the good death that Elfrieda pleads for. The understanding of what constitutes a good death, like the concept of the good life, has changed in different cultures and societies throughout history. In contemporary Western societies, movements rooted in hospice philosophy,⁴ consider death to be

entirely too dominated by medicine and argue for understanding death and mourning as normal parts of life. For the modern hospice movement, the good death is not a fixed moment in time (i.e. when the patient dies), but a complex situation in which the “actors in the social process” (McNamara, Waddell, and Colvin 1982, 1502) and the patient’s acceptance of death is an important factor. Similarly, they note that healthcare professionals must compromise to establish the autonomy and subjectivity of the patient at the center of what constitutes *their* good death (1502).

A. L. Saclier first related the concept of the good death to euthanasia in 1976, noting how the understanding of this process as a hastening of the end stages of terminal illness ignored any other type of distress as the subjects’ reasons for not wanting to live. He noted the conflicted reaction of medical workers in the face of non-terminal patients who wished for euthanasia, since the prevailing idea of Western medicine contends “that preserving life is more important than easing suffering” (4). In disagreement with this position, Saclier developed a vision of the good death as one that is willingly accepted once suffering outweighs the benefits of living, noting the necessity to acknowledge the emotional and psychological dimensions of pain in the decision to end one’s life voluntarily. However, legislation regarding euthanasia in most Western countries still mostly only considers extreme physical pain and terminal and degenerative illnesses as justified motivations to end one’s life, reinforcing the biomedical mandate to preserve life as long as the physical body can endure.

In *All My Puny Sorrows*, Toews, like Saclier, counters biomedical discourse by accepting Elfrieda’s emotional suffering as a valid reason for wanting to end her life in her own terms. Although her family and doctors see her suicide attempts as symptoms to be treated and cured, Toews’s depiction of Elfrieda’s wish to die is allowed enough nuance through the story to make the reader understand the character’s firm determination is not born out of a suicidal episode. The difference is particularly clear during Elfrieda’s last hospital stay when she is almost incommunicative. During a visit from Yolandi she interrupts her catatonia to plead once more, “serious” and with eyes that “were bullets” (2014, 212), for Yoli to accompany her to Switzerland: “Yoli, she said. I feel like I’m begging for my life” (213). In her attempt to have her emotional pain legitimized by her sister, she likens her experience of major depression to a terminal illness, equating her emotional pain to an untreatable physical ailment, more widely recognized as a valid reason to end one’s life: “Well, Elf, no. I won’t take you to Switzerland. Please, Yoli, I’m asking you to do this one last thing for me. In fact, I’m begging you. Does it work that way? Don’t you have to have a terminal illness? I do. You don’t. I do.” (90) In this comparison, Elfrieda is introducing a radical idea: she challenges the body/mind Cartesian dualism very much alive in Western medicine today and implies that her severe depression may be as untreatable and life-threatening as any visceral damage. However, Elf’s absolute belief that she has no reason to stay alive is “disqualified by the very forces of psychiatrization” (Morrison 2005, 18) that have established she is unable to know her own mind. This denial of Elfrieda’s voice ultimately also denies her good death and, after her wishes are dismissed, she decides to throw herself in front of a train – the same way her father killed himself – as the only option to fulfil her desire to end her life.

For Elfrieda and Yolandi – and arguably for the author, who wrote *All My Puny Sorrows* in response to her own sister's suicide (O'Keeffe 2015) – a good death certainly involves the acceptance and involvement of the deceased's social circle. Elfrieda, although determined to die, is nevertheless afraid of doing it alone (Toews 2014, 149, 213), and Yolandi's utopian imaginings of her sister death pre-suicide (237, 258) and post-suicide (319–321) figure her surrounded by her family, her decision accepted, and her death, peaceful. This figuration of death as a social event counters neoliberal myths of autonomy, a theme that saturates the novel. From the title onwards, Toews sends a powerful message of the unavoidability of interdependence in human existence. The novel's title, *All My Puny Sorrows*, is taken from Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem "To a Friend", which references the loving relationship between two siblings. In its verses, the speaker compares the sister who listens to the "hidden maladies" of the heart to a nurse who cares for a sick patient, thus foregrounding a relationship of interdependence and care that moves away from the model of autonomous self-care that is privileged by neoliberal models of success (The Care Collective 2020, 2). This evidence of interdependence is also highlighted by Yolandi's ponderings of the origins of her sister's trauma: she acknowledges their father's violent suicide as a probable seed for Elfrieda's suffering, but thinking about her cousin Leni's own suicide, Yoli wonders whether there is some disposition in the family, rooted in the traumatic cause of their Mennonite forefather's immigration to Canada:⁵

When my mother went to university to become a therapist she learned that suffering, even though it may have happened a long time ago, is something that is passed from one generation to the next to the next, like flexibility or grace or dyslexia. My grandfather had big green eyes, and dimly lit scenes of slaughter, blood on snow, played out behind them all the time, even when he smiled. (Toews 2014, 18)

This is certainly supported by Marianne Hirsch's writings of postmemory, which she defines as a relationship with places and stories of trauma never seen or experienced, but felt as vivid as if remembered, mediated by "the stories, images and behaviors" (2008, 106) of relatives and community members that shape the cultural inheritance of younger generations. If this inheritance is unavoidable and the root of the Von Riesen family's suicides, Toews seems to say, interdependence is also the source of solace and salvation: in the chapters that outline the aftermath of Elfrieda's suicide Yolandi, her mother Lottie and her daughter Nora move into a dilapidated house bought with her life insurance and engage in a process of mourning that is deeply rooted in the acknowledgment of vulnerability and the cultivation of interdependence.

For Yolandi, grieving for her sister becomes a transformative process in which her understandings of the good life, initially challenged by Elfrieda's wish to die, are irrevocably changed. In *Cruel Optimism*, Lauren Berlant ponders the consequences of failing fantasies of the good life to which we have attached our aspirational notions of happiness: "What happens when those fantasies start to fray – depression, dissociation, pragmatism, cynicism, optimism, activism, or an incoherent mash?" (2011, 2) Elfrieda, one may argue, has successfully accomplished all the tenets of the neoliberal version of the good life and, not having found the happiness they promised, sees no

recourse to her enormous suffering but to die. Her overwhelming wish to end her life, however, disrupts Yolandi's own conception of the good life:

Listen! I want to shout at her. If anyone's gonna kill themselves it should be me. I'm a terrible mother for leaving my kids' father and other father. I'm a terrible wife for sleeping with another man. Men. I'm floundering in a dying non-career. Look at this beautiful home that you have and this loving man loving you in it! Every major city in the world happily throws thousands of dollars at you to play the piano. (Toews 2014, 112)

All throughout the novel, Yolandi compares herself unfavorably to her older sister, who has achieved all the staples of the neoliberal understanding of the good life. As Berlant posits, it seems her attachment to the neoliberal vision of the good life impedes Yoli from achieving the happiness she longs for. However, Elfrieda's death after her continuous pleadings for her sister to help her carry out her decision seems to disrupt Yoli's conceptions of how her life ought to be and sets the family on a path towards reconstruction and re-configuration of their visions of happiness and resilience.

The realization that Elfrieda has been forced into a violent and solitary death by the refusal of society and the bio-psychiatric model to contemplate a peaceful "opting out" of life as a valid choice prompts Yolandi to radically reconsider the model of resilience she has held to so far. In the aftermath of Elfrieda's death, it is Lottie, who has recently buried the last of her fifteen siblings, that is heralded by her daughter as "the absolute embodiment of resilience" (285). However, Lottie's model of resilience is slow, adaptative, and contemplates surrender in the face of unsurmountable odds, re-contextualizing resilience as a capacity to find "new little habitats, to have new little hopes" (318) and moving away from the moral imperative to endure, no matter the cost. As she tells her daughter, "[W]e can all fight really hard, but [...] we can also acknowledge defeat and stop fighting and call a spade a spade" (313). This process of "reworking resilience" (Huebener et al. 2017)⁶ the Von Riesen women engage in is profoundly relational – the dilapidated house they buy with Elfrieda's life insurance money becomes a metaphor of the emotional rebuilding they must do, which is only achieved with the pooling of emotional (life stories) and material labor of different agents. The notion of kinship it proposes still surrounds the blood family as its central unit, which ameliorates its subversive power. However, the final images of *All My Puny Sorrows* recast the truly insurgent message of the novel by re-envisioning Elfrieda's death utopically through Yolandi's imagination. Having travelled together to Switzerland, the two sisters reminisce about their childhood, enjoying the food and the atmosphere before Elfrieda's appointment for her medically assisted suicide, where she will die not alone, but accompanied by her fully accepting sister. By imagining this good death for Elfrieda, Yolandi accepts her sister's wish for death as a legitimate decision and not one born of an obfuscated mind and envisions resisting resilience as a possibility for understanding non-hegemonic realities. If, as Mark Neocleous claims, neoliberal versions of resilience stand "by definition *against resistance*" (2013, 8), Elfrieda is radically resistant against resilience and, in imagining her so, Toews opens an important conversation about the limitations of current workings of resilience in society.

CONCLUSION

Medicine as an institution oversees what is within the bounds of normativity when it comes to the physiological and psychological state of human beings, which it categorizes as “healthy”, and thus outside the surveillance of the medical profession. Thus, the production of knowledge and truth of medicine as an institution is profoundly political, since it will ultimately reproduce a benchmark of normativity that serves hegemonic power. The branches of medicine where the personal biases of those who practice it have more room to roam (those where normativity can be more subjective and not marked by the levels of sodium in a blood exam, for example) are especially delicate areas where, historically, we have seen power relations at play. Especially, perhaps, in the case of psychiatry, which is the branch of medicine that determines the limits from which maladaptive behaviors to society should be deemed pathological, we have seen discourses that speak back to power being categorized as pathological responses and thus medicalized (and consequently, silenced). Nowadays, movements such as critical psychology or activism carried out by those who identify as “psychiatric consumers, ex-patients or survivors” (Morrison 2005, ix) of mainstream psychiatry and their families are particularly watchful of the ways in which psychiatric discourse pathologizes in response to deviations from hegemonic discourse, particularly working “to destabilise mainstream Western psychological expertise” and examining “the moral and political implications of psychological expertise” (Klein 2017, 13). From the health humanities, as scholars trained in the analyses of power relations and their expressions in culture, it is our responsibility to pay close attention to marginal narratives that expose the limitations of contemporary medical practice, opening new venues to think critically about our relationship with health and illness and the policies we use to regulate them.

All My Puny Sorrows is one such narrative, and analyzing it reveals the biases and limitations of the grand narratives of modernity and neoliberal resilience and their pervasiveness in contemporary medicine and psychiatry. The expression of suicidal ideation by Elfrieda, an outright disruption of the societal imperative for resilience, effaces the sufferer, rendering her invisible twofold: firstly, through the confinement to the psychiatric ward and secondly, by rendering the patient’s voice inaudible through a process of infantilization that equates their depressive state and suicidal ideation with a moral flaw or lack of reasoning. Elfrieda is doubly disruptive since, in her overwhelming wish to die, she rejects all the tenets of the good life as unable to give her not only happiness, but even a reason to live. In a provocative novel that is, nonetheless, optimistic and hopeful, Toews offers the reader new avenues for thinking what a good life and a good death ought to be, and how our understanding of resilience may shape them.

NOTES

- ¹ McKenna summarizes the biomedical model of healthcare as one of “microbiology and self-responsibility” (2012, 262) where cure-oriented “episodic care, passive patient reception, and physician dominance” (256) are the norm.
- ² Illness narratives are generally understood as artistic expressions that tackle the experience of illness. They began to gain critical attention as an opposing (or complementary) space to an increasingly technical medicine, where dimensions beyond the physiological experience of disease were left unattended. Arthur Kleinman, Anne Hunsaker Hawkins or Arthur Frank were some of the first to attempt to theorize the field.
- ³ In his proposed categorization, Frank is cautious to warn the reader of the dangers of subsuming “the particularity of individual experience” (76). Frank proposes instead the use of his basic categorization as “*listening devices*” (76) that the reader or listener of an illness narrative may use to pinpoint the ways in which they differ from the archetype and gain meaning from the comparison.
- ⁴ The modern hospice movement, generally understood to have been founded by Dame Cicely Saunders, is concerned with palliative and end of life care, and in its consideration of “total pain” of the patient, which includes physical, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions of distress (Richmond 2005).
- ⁵ Toews describes a Dutch Mennonite community that escaped to Canada during Russia’s Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, when “[t]errible things happened to them there in the land of blood” (2014, 18). Yoli’s narration highlights how the trauma caused by the violent murder of her grandfather’s family was increased by the silence he enforced over the events. He seems aware of the possibility of trauma impacting his descendants through cultural inheritance when he instructs his son not to teach his daughters Plautdietsch, the language of the Dutch Mennonites, if he wants them “to survive” (18).
- ⁶ Huebener et al. proposed the need for “reworking resilience” in order to find a middle ground between an “optimistic orientation” that “emphasize[s] agency and the capacity of actors to creatively exert power” but can “overemphasize the autonomy of actors that are called to be resilient” (2017, 2) and an “skeptical orientation” that criticizes an overreliance on individual entrepreneurial power to cope on their own while ignoring the power and responsibility of collective action to exert radical change.

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Subverting resilience in the psychiatric ward: Finding the good death in Miriam Toews's *All My Puny Sorrows*

Canadian literature. Good death. Health humanities. Resilience. Suicide. Miriam Toews.

This article posits that Miriam Toews's *All My Puny Sorrows* (2014) introduces a critique of how neoliberal visions of resilience have permeated medical discourses on mental health, resulting in a perceived moral imperative over the patient to improve, which the author counters with a model of resilience firmly rooted in interdependence and the social potential of vulnerability. Toews's focus on the narrator Yolandi's struggle with the aftermath of her sister's suicide also troubles the concept of resilience by introducing the idea of assisted suicide as a possible iteration of a "good death", completely circumventing any possibility of recovery or adaptation. What holds the key for Yolandi's recovery and happiness, Toews seems to imply, is accepting her sister's rejection of resilience as a viable option.

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From defeat to resilience: The human cockroach in world literature after Kafka

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The creatures once described by Aristotle as less than perfect (Cole 2016, 16) have been used to defame people over time. They have been instrumentalized for processes of dehumanization and genocide, strategies that are still in place and pervade populist rhetoric today. David Cameron famously invoked the images of biblical locust infestations by comparing migrants with “*swarms* of people coming across the Mediterranean” (2015). Not too long ago also, UK media pundit Katie Hopkins compared migrants with “feral humans”, “spreading like the norovirus”, and “cockroaches” (Jones 2015).

It is these “less than perfect” species that I am calling *bestia sacra*, the sacred beast. The *bestia sacra* is unthinkable outside its metaphorical relationship with the *homo sacer*, in fact the two form a symbiosis as will become clear in this article. Literary representations of the relationship between the *homo sacer* and the sacred beast can be read vis à vis the recent turn in trauma studies away from notions of un-representability towards the necessity of storytelling with its metaphorical language for working through trauma and arriving at some kind of healing. Such acting out and working through (LaCapra 2000, 21–22, 142–144) linked to cultural production can produce the kind of resilience required to cope with trauma, and it is closely tied to the creative ways in which some contemporary authors privilege a species such as the cockroach in their fiction.

I want to demonstrate how world literature politicizes the cockroach in the context of trauma and resilience in the wake of Kafka’s *Die Verwandlung* (1915; Eng. trans. *Metamorphosis*, 1933). Authors have repeatedly engaged with this text by either reviving Gregor or writing Kafka against the grain in that the metamorphosis happens in reverse from roach to human (for example, in Ian McEwan’s novella *Cockroach*, 2019). In some texts the metamorphosis is spiritual rather than physical, the cockroach a catalyst for this kind of transformation, and Kafka’s aura of trauma, abandonment, and sacrifice are still tangible. Contemporary literary resuscitations of Kafka’s protagonist, however, also draw on the resilience of the cockroach for the characters who are being identified with this species, whether as Jews in Marc Estrin’s *Insect Dreams: The Half-Life of Gregor Samsa* (2002), migrants in Rawi Hage’s *Cockroach* ([2008] 2010), the female protagonist in Clarice Lispector’s *A paixão segundo G.H.*

(1964; Eng. trans. *The Passion According to G.H.*, [1988] 2012), or the survivors of Rwandan genocide in Scholastique Mukasonga's *Inyenzi ou les cafards* (2006; Eng. trans. *Cockroaches*, 2016). While Gregor Samsa's entanglement between a human being and a cockroach expresses vulnerability and ultimate defeat, the works of these authors are exemplary in demonstrating how Anthropocene fiction attempts to resist and destabilize the biopolitically charged and dehumanizing agency of the *bestia sacra* as metaphor. I will show how these authors liberate the species *blattodae* from its aura of dehumanization and draw on the resilience of this ancient species in the face of adversity and as a model for human agency.

BESTIA SACRA

Before I turn to these literary texts, some terminology needs clarifying. I understand the *bestia sacra* as a metaphorical companion species of the *homo sacer*. I would argue that as a human being considered to be in some way unclean – in the Middle Ages due to a heinous crime they committed and then biologically unclean due to racist perceptions in modernity – the *homo sacer* is discussed as a rather anthropocentric paradigm by Giorgio Agamben, who focuses exclusively on the sacred nature of the *homo sacer* without much attention to the non-human species the *homo sacer* is metaphorically entangled with. Especially as it implies the so-called conceptual, biopolitical metamorphosis of humans to animals, any discussion of the *homo sacer* also calls for non-human species to be examined in light of the definition of sacredness.

The sacred is closely tied to the notion of uncleanness. As an impure human the *homo sacer* cannot be sacrificed but can be killed by anyone with impunity. The same holds true for the *bestia sacra*, animals whose denigration as unclean makes them unfit for sacrifice. The *homo sacer* is stripped of human rights, reduced to what ancient Greece called *zoē* (animal life). By the same token cockroaches do not have the same animal rights as more cuddly species. Due to his impurity the *homo sacer* “pertains to the Gods” (Douglas 2002, 10), he is dead to the community while still clinically alive, a phenomenon Agamben identifies for the medieval outcast, from whom he draws a trajectory up to the *Muselmann*, the walking dead of the 20th-century concentration camps (1995, 185). The *homo sacer* has stayed with us since 1945, and we encounter them especially in current times amongst refugees and other displaced persons. Agamben, however, uses the word *sacer* in the sense of “cursed” rather than “holy”. The *bestia sacra* as I see it, the demonized or despised animal, partly shares this with the *homo sacer*. I would further contend, however, that the *bestia sacra* in cultural production is more complex, in the sense that the word *sacer/sacra* contains the double meaning of “defiled” and “holy”. Readily crushed by most people the cockroach is according to my definition as much *bestia sacra* as the “bee” with its history of eulogization, even holiness.

In spite of their health benefits (widely used in Chinese medicine) and their far more favorable evaluation by indigenous cultures, cockroaches are generally loathed as vermin in our western cultures. Unsurprisingly, as a species inspiring disgust rather than admiration, the cockroach is not only highly unpopular but has received little attention in conservation efforts. A prevalent association with this loathed

species type is the idea of their appearance in multitudes, closely linked to nosophobia, the fear of disease transmission. This fear of swarming creatures is partly rooted in the 17th and 18th centuries and their widespread obsessions with vermin, of “swarms of imperfect creatures threatening the human body” (Cole 2016, 5). It was widely believed that such creatures were not part of the creation of God but the result of processes of putrefaction (16). Leviticus had already described such species as “abominations” which “creep, crawl or swarm upon the earth. This form of movement is explicitly contrary to holiness” (Douglas 2002, 70). Species that can fly but then crawl on the ground (most cockroaches belong to this type) Leviticus abominates in particular, as they are creatures seen as monstrous due to their nature of being in-between classifications. Such species shall not be eaten, nor can they ever serve as sacrificial offerings.

What is particularly interesting about these abominations, both in human form as the *homo sacer* and their animal equivalent, the *bestia sacra*, is the resilience they can develop in the face of adversity. The abandonment of humans from the human community makes resilience necessary for the sake of survival, so the *homo sacer*’s resilience, if it happens, is a consequence of his being expelled into the state of nature. As for cockroaches, resilience is a chief characteristic that has allowed them to survive for over 350 million years. With water they can go for 90 days without food (Schweid 2015, 6), and once “we have eliminated our own species from the planet, cockroaches will be here to enjoy the leftovers” (159).

Resilience is a process of moving forward after encountering adversity and not returning back, and it is this feature in the cockroach that may both frighten us but also lends itself to metaphorical representations of human resilience, in opposition to the biopolitical reduction of humans to a pest that can be easily eradicated with impunity. We see this reduction in Kafka’s story *Metamorphosis* to the level of an *Ungeziefer*, in its etymology an animal too unclean to be sacrificed, as a literary monument to the anti-Semitism of his time culminating a few years later in the extermination of undesirables as “lice” and “rats”.

SOVEREIGNTY AND RESILIENCE IN MARC ESTRIN’S *INSECT DREAMS*

Like Kafka, the American novelist Marc Estrin captures the anti-Semitism of the early 20th century in his novel *Insect Dreams: The Half-Life of Gregor Samsa* (2002). Having survived his family’s neglect, Kafka’s Gregor Samsa works in a circus in Prague before he escapes Nazi Germany by flying (using his own wings) to New York City where he quickly climbs the social ladder. He becomes a key member of Franklin D. Roosevelt’s kitchen cabinet and advisor to the Manhattan project that develops the atomic bomb. In America too, however, Gregor encounters anti-Semitism, which shows itself especially in the government’s passivity vis à vis Hitler. As he cannot convince Roosevelt to grant exile to the Jewish refugees escaping Nazi Germany, Gregor responds to the President by expressing his “Jewish cockroach view”:

Jews are cockroaches, in a way. They must become hard on the outside from so much kicking around. But they are soft on the inside [...]. Like cockroaches Jews represent

everything not to be digested, everything otherness, everything getting in the way [...]. We always reopen the wound of all-not-accomplished-by-society. So we are fit for only one thing: extermination. (263–264)

The identity between Jews and cockroaches in anti-Semitic stereotyping, alluded to by Kafka as part of the many facets that turn Gregor into a monstrous bug, is made far more explicit in Estrin's novel. Through his playfulness with this metaphor, however, Estrin is able not only to reveal anti-Semitism but also parodies such images in the context of resilience, survival, and Jewish contributions to nuclear warfare. The narrative strand of Albert Einstein's and Gregor's collaboration on the creation of an atomic bomb, for example, refers as much to the superiority and resilience of the Jewish intellect as to the cockroach's ability to survive nuclear war far more easily than humans.

Estrin's roach hybrid transcends the *homo sacer/bestia sacra* position by being aligned with those in power. While in Kafka's story Gregor is set apart from his family and society as a victim of abuse and persecution, Estrin's Gregor becomes *sacer* by being empowered by those in power and through his own heroic efforts in trying to save humanity. In his postmodern version about a human roach full of adaptability, resilience, and global dedication Estrin thus ironically heals the trauma inscribed into Kafka's story. It may come as a strange surprise to the reader that the hero is a man who is half cockroach, but in giving Kafka's Gregor an afterlife spent in fighting "to redeem the world" (461) Estrin takes Kafka's metaphor and the function of sacrifice "to quell violence within the community and prevent conflicts from erupting" (Girard 1988, 15) to another level. In Kafka, the killing of Gregor happens precisely for these reasons, to prevent violence and conflicts from erupting within the family as the nucleus of the community at large. In Estrin's novel, on the other hand, Gregor's resurrection implies a different kind of sacrifice. The author draws on the purported resilience of roaches in Gregor's self-sacrifice to humanity in quelling the various events of political violence of the first half of the 20th century and standing in as a scapegoat for all the victims of persecution and large-scale violence: "For was not Gregor's extreme otherness a spirit connection to [...] the abandoned Jews, the Japanese in camps and those soon to be incinerated [...] and all those others lynched and burned by hooded mobs?" (459)

RAWI HAGE'S ELUSIVE RESILIENCE OF THE MIGRANT AS COCKROACH

We encounter this sort of playfulness with resilience in a hostile environment also in Rawi Hage's migration novel *Cockroach* ([2008] 2010), the story of an unnamed Lebanese refugee trying to survive in Montreal. The central motif of the cockroaches with which the protagonist lives in his drab apartment and identifies to the point of becoming half man, half insect, has also been clearly inspired by Kafka. Parallels abound, such as the boots threatening to crush the human roach as which he imagines himself (101), the image of climbing walls (101), cleaning off the dust from his body (75), or his "ultrasonic insect sounds" (265) that are unintelligible to humans. However, the metamorphosis into a roach saves Hage's protagonist from humanity

rather than humanity killing him off, the way it happens in Kafka's story. Hage's novel is a postmodern parody of Kafka's modernist tale about the gradual loss of sanctuary and protection in what is supposed to be the most protective community, the family with its intimate space of the home. While Kafka describes a young man's gradual decline into animality, stripping him of his identity, marginalizing him from the human community, and leading to self-sacrifice, Hage's roaches show signs not only of resilience but of superiority. In their sovereign status they become a reflection of the illegal immigrant as traditional *homo sacer*, now strangely empowered thanks to a kind of Darwinian survival of the fittest in Montreal's criminal underworld: "[...] the day would come when all my power would surface from below. I shall bring up from the abyss the echoes of rodent and insect screams to shatter the drums of your ears!" (26)

This criminal underground world of Montreal embodies both sanctuary and its loss to the immigrant. On the one hand, he morphs into an imaginary roach as outlaw inside the sanctuary of Canada, represented as state of nature/state of war. However, by withdrawing to what he describes as the underground world Hage's migrant also remains outside of the sanctuary. He stays *friedlos* (without peace) like Agamben's human outlaw of the Middle Ages (1995, 104), as both are expelled *ante portas* of the *polis*. In Hage's and other postmodern texts the state of nature as the *homo sacer's* place of exile is often presented as a mental, psychological one. Due to such unresolved trauma, integration seems impossible, so Hage tells us, making the immigrant and the cockroach one in being excluded, loathed, repressed and coerced to the margins of their habitats. Unlike what Anthony Grenville has described in his work on companion species as aids to social integration for refugees (2021, 177–186), Hage's roaches and the human-size albino roach of his imagination become what I would term an "identification species" in the protagonist's struggle with social integration. The options this unhappy immigrant has are either suicide – which he attempts – or metamorphosis. The latter either goes in the direction of adapting to his host country's expectations of him as an immigrant and becoming a resilient new Canadian or the kind of transformation he prefers, which entails becoming an undesirable species and thus withdrawing from all human affairs.

But Hage's protagonist feels ambivalent about insects. On the one hand, as he explains to his psychoanalyst Geneviève, with whom he is expected to meet after his suicide attempt, he admires the cockroach he becomes, as it makes him free and invisible (2010, 207). Hage's migrant craves the invisibility that comes with not belonging to any place as much as it also tortures him and it is this freedom of the *homo sacer* whom anyone can kill with impunity that is also a highly ambivalent concept. It implies freedom from the social contract but also being free from having any rights at all, from immunity against being killed.

However, insects also terrify him, and he sees them as invasive. They are "murderous in their sheer, vast numbers, their conformity, their repetitiveness, their steady army-like movements, their soundless invasions" (209). The passage is expressive of his sentiment of self-loathing as a migrant, the reference to vast numbers, their expected conformity, and their invasiveness being key terms in this regard. In a way,

in becoming roach and withdrawing into the underworld, Hage's suicidal and deeply cynical migrant refuses to accept his own status as a migrant, many of whom he considers to be filth. He refuses to accept the rights granted him by Canada as a sanctuary for migrants, and he refuses to conform to government expectations of him to be a resilient and happy migrant. As Casco-Solís argues, metaphorically the cockroach "represents the protagonist's rejection of the institutions and citizenship that do not provide the protection and security he needs as a human being. Instead, he will find this protection in the underground" (2021, 189). Hage's migrant as roach thus demonstrates what I would define as an "evasive resilience". In view of his persistent disgust of the invasiveness of both cockroaches and people – "I see people that way [...]. All nature gathers and invades" (Hage 2010, 210) – he is, however, rather resilient in this evasiveness of resilience.

CLARICE LISPECTOR'S ENGENDERED MORE-THAN-HUMAN RESILIENCE

When in Clarice Lispector's novel the *Passion According to G.H.* (2012), the female protagonist G.H. encounters a cockroach in her bedroom (a reference to the disclosure of animality in Gregor Samsa's room) she tries to kill it by slamming the closet door on the animal, but then becomes both mentally and, by eating its inner substance, physically entangled with it. This highly engendered inter-species entanglement leads her to a new self-understanding as a biological rather than socially constructed being, redefining also the way in which she sees herself as a woman. The violence she commits on the animal makes her contemplate whether the roach too is female, "since things crushed at the waist are female" (92). The roach as bare life and Lispector's protagonist may not become one in the end as they do in Kafka, but the novel attempts to describe a unique approximation between the impure beast and G.H., whose passion is this very impurity she feels empowered to imbibe. Although the notion of bare life in Lispector's novel differs from Agamben's theory that it is intrinsic to the nexus between the sovereign and the *homo sacer*, G.H. experiences *nuda vita* as primordial "pre-human/inhuman" life (65, 66). Becoming a cockroach is described as a positive, cosmic experience and sensation of its time-honored resilience built up over 350 million years:

I knew that roaches could endure for more than a month without food or water. And that they could even make a usable nutritive substance from wood. And that even after being crushed they slowly decompressed and kept on walking. Even when frozen, they kept on marching once thawed. For three hundred and fifty million years they had been replicating themselves without being transformed. When the world was nearly naked, they were already sluggishly covering it. (40)

Her desire to touch and even eat part of this "unclean" animal blurs the distinction between human sovereign and loathed species: "I had committed the forbidden act of touching the unclean" (67). Lispector re-evaluates the notion of sacredness and uncleanness in her novel by turning them into positive qualities: "the unclean is the root – for there are created things that never decorated themselves, and preserved themselves exactly as they were created" (69). While the roach does not

transform, G.H. does by the mere act of touching it, waxing “unclean with joy!” (70). The experience of becoming animal is thus an exhilarating one to her, offering a glimpse of the very resilience the roach has shown since the dawn of evolution. Her “self-abandonment” (96), however, is unlike that of the *homo sacer*, who is abandoned by the human community. Hers is by choice bringing her closer to divine knowledge, a cosmic union also contained in the reciprocal gaze between her and the roach. As the cockroach gives her “its fertilizing gaze” (93) G.H. equally gazes at the roach and realizes that they are made of the same primordial substance. As the roach is food to her, she is “equally edible matter” (132), a realization she shares with the Australian ecofeminist Val Plumwood, who was thinking the same after she had been attacked by the crocodile (2012, 18).

By becoming cockroach, G.H. sheds her human vulnerability. This is the opposite of what happens in Kafka’s story where the metamorphosis leads only to vulnerability and defeat. G.H., however, by imbibing the roach’s inner substance not only partakes of the ancient resilience of the species *blattodae*. The transformation from bios to zoë, from political human life to bare animal life, also comes with a sort of Dionysian disintegration of the protagonist’s *principium individuationis* that in its complete dissolution of delineations between the human and non-human leads to ecstasy and to heightened knowledge (Girard 1988, 145–150). In this violent act in which G.H. murders the cockroach to become one with all creaturely life she is able to glimpse into deep time, the very beginnings of life, as well as deep space, what Agamben calls “pure space” (2002, 57). It is the trauma of being human, literally the wound of being alive (as a woman) that is being temporarily healed through this mystic union, making her discover that “the inhuman part is the best part of us” (Lispector 2012, 65). Her engendered resilience results specifically from discovering this more-than-human side in herself.

DEHUMANIZATION AND SURVIVING GENOCIDE IN SCHOLASTIQUE MUKASONGA

This experience of metamorphosis through contaminated diversity is very different in another literary text I want to highlight here, one in which identification with the cockroach from both a female and ethnic perspective is the result of genocidal dehumanization tactics: Scholastique Mukasonga’s memoir *Cockroaches* (2016). Trauma and resilience, the association of the persecuted *homo sacer* with cockroaches are central to Mukasonga’s work on the atrocities committed on the Tutsi population in Rwanda whom the Hutu majority regularly debased as *inyenzi*, cockroaches, culminating in the 1994 killings of approximately 800,000 people (Livingstone Smith 2011, 152–153).

Mukasonga’s cockroach metaphor is ambivalent, however, in that it embodies not only the dehumanization at work in genocide but also signals the resilience of survivors. Like that ancient species which has adapted to the harshest conditions, Mukasonga shows us how she, as alleged *inyenzi*, survives in the face of extreme adversity. This becomes especially clear in her descriptions of her time at secondary school, the Lycée Notre Dame de Cîteaux, where she is continuously exposed to extreme

humiliation by other students and even teachers, to the point that she has to morph into “a paragon of zeal” (2016, 81). In order to be able to study without being harassed, Mukasonga would get up in the middle of the night and lock herself into the toilet, ironically the place where cockroaches are most likely to be encountered. As Mrinmoyee Bhattacharya has pointed out, schools in Mukasonga’s work are sites in which Rwandan biopolitics are being replicated (2018, 86). The school toilet is her only place of refuge inside a place that does not offer any other. Her withdrawal into the toilet recalls Hage’s escape into the underground world. In becoming invisible to sovereign power, both Hage’s immigrant and Mukasonga get entangled with the positive qualities they perceive in cockroaches, their facile slippage into dark spaces and their resilience in surviving the harshest conditions. However, by withdrawing to cockroach terrain, the underworld as he calls it, Hage’s displaced protagonist refuses to show the kind of resilience expected of him as a newly arrived immigrant in Canada, while Mukasonga’s attempt to make herself invisible in the toilet reflects the tenacity of her will to survive and serves the purpose of personal advancement. Her ability to bounce back and move forward shows itself also in later life, in France where she founds an association for orphans, as well as in her continued attempts to work through her childhood trauma by returning to Rwanda.

Her resilience contrasts with the resignation of others, among them survivors like the man she meets as a guard at the Kigali Memorial. Wandering “aimlessly on death’s shores” (Mukasonga 2016, 139) he tells her that remembering what the Hutus kept “telling us: there is no place for the Tutsis on this earth” (139) he has made the company of the dead his home: “Here with the skeletons. This is where I belong” (139). Unlike Mukasonga’s resilience, this is the fate of the *homo sacer* who is rendered over to the gods, considered dead by the community, the subsequent choices being either active resistance, survival in silence, or, as is the case of Mukasonga’s parents, self-abandonment: “My parents were too old to seek shelter [...]. They were tired of being persecuted and pursued. Why bother struggling to survive [...] they waited in their house, waiting for death to come” (143).

Having no place on this earth is the shared destiny also between the *homo sacer* and the *bestia sacra* as the one that is cursed and condemned to extinction, animals of no value, of life not worth being lived. This is less than *nuda vita*, bare life, it is actually the complete negation of a creature’s life. The Rwandan genocide is no different in this regard from the Holocaust, the self-abandonment of Mukasonga’s parents resembling the *Muselmann* in their surrender to fate. Mukasonga’s memoir is a sinister reminder of these repetitive scenarios in genocide, but it also demonstrates the possibility of resistance and resilience in facing trauma.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the literary examples provided here all display the idea of resilience in connection with a positive re-evaluation of the species *blattodea*. They destabilize this metaphor from its political abuse for strategies of dehumanization by engaging with various semantic nuances. In Erskin’s novel this is manifested in the survival of Kafka’s protagonist and his ambition to save humanity from Hitler’s Germany. Er-

skin plays ironically with the idea of resilience in liberating the cockroach from its position of persecuted *bestia sacra* as a metaphor of the *homo sacer* aligning it with sovereignty. By dehumanizing a woman in her union with a cockroach, Lispector enables her to develop an enriched consciousness. Hers is an engendered more-than-human resilience, of a woman unwilling to subject herself to patriarchal structures. She achieves this through her spiritual and physical entanglement dissolving gender and species boundaries. In Mukasonga's memoir, the metaphor is perhaps most clearly stripped of its dehumanizing agency and used instead for a representation of surviving genocide and a resilience in the sense of bouncing back after severe trauma. Here the roach, beyond being an animal metaphor denoting eradication, provides an expression of solidarity in view of survival and finding sanctuary. This also holds for Hage's novel about an unhappy immigrant to whom the cockroach becomes a spiritual identification species in his evasiveness from neoliberal expectations of resilience and happiness. He demonstrates what I have called "elusive resilience" in his refusal to integrate.

"I am interested in these creatures and their history," says the narrator towards the end of Rawi Hage's novel, whereupon a First Nations cook tells him about the cockroach's role in indigenous creation myth (2010, 292). One may forget all too easily that the creatures commonly loathed in our western world are seen very differently in indigenous cultures where they are more readily granted spiritual and ecological sanctuaries. But the literature presented here also does its share in wrestling a blighted species metaphor away from its time-worn aura of loathing and use in the rhetoric of dehumanization. These narratives form part of a new type of text in contemporary world literature, in which various species become the protagonists and feature as catalysts in ecologically sensitive art about precarities of the Anthropocene such as exile and displacement, gender trouble, nationalist isolationism, and the threat to biocultural diversity.

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From defeat to resilience: The human cockroach in world literature after Kafka

Bestia sacra. Homo sacer. Cockroach. Migration. Trauma. Resilience.

Through a selection of literary texts featuring cockroaches in the wake of Franz Kafka's Gregor Samsa in *Metamorphosis* (1915): Clarice Lispector's *A paixão segundo G.H.* (1964; *The Passion According to G.H.*, 1988), Marc Estrin's *Insect Dreams: The Half-Life of Gregor Samsa* (2002), Scholastique Mukasonga's *Inyenzi ou les Cafards* (2006; *Cockroaches*, 2016), and Ravi Hage's *Cockroach* (2008), this article shows how these authors politicize the cockroach as *bestia sacra* between trauma and resilience. These literary works are exemplary in demonstrating how Anthropocene fiction resists and destabilizes biopolitically charged species metaphors with their dehumanizing agency. How do these authors, in writing beyond Kafka's doomed human cockroach, liberate the species *blattodea* from its aura of dehumanization and draw on the resilience of this ancient species in the face of adversity and as a model for human agency?

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Socio-ecological resilience in Sharon Bala's *The Boat People*

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The rapid proliferation of resilience discourse, used to denote the capacity of individuals and ecosystems to adapt in the face of adversity, has given rise to a variety of theoretical conceptualizations and transdisciplinary perspectives (Fraile-Marcos 2020). Socio-ecological resilience is one of the strands of resilience thinking that emphasizes the way “people and nature relate to and organize around change” (Folke, Colding, and Berkes 2003, 354). It has been defined as “the capacity to adapt or transform in the face of change in social-ecological systems, particularly unexpected change, in ways that continue to support human well being” (quoted in Folke et al. 2016, 41). Although this understanding of resilience commonly engages with climate change, it has also been used to deal with other global challenges including “migration issues, political decisions, [or] belief systems” (41). It is in this context that contemporary scholars have questioned the nature of a concept that may be unethically appropriated or manipulated for political purposes.

Brad Evans and Julian Reid's book *Resilient Life: The Art of Living Dangerously* is perhaps one of the most important contributions to the skeptical understanding of socio-ecological resilience and its recent usage in a neoliberal context. Evans and Reid question the political effects of applying the discourse of resilience to the management of contemporary risks and crises, since resilience is now prompted “by liberal agencies and institutions as the fundamental property which peoples and individuals worldwide must possess in order to demonstrate their capacities to live with danger” (2014, 2). Resilience then has become “the new ethics of responsibility” that calls upon individuals to prepare, adapt, cope, and rebound to unexpected circumstances on their own (6). This view of resilience has been described by many scholars such as Jonathan Joseph, Danny MacKinnon, Kate Driscoll Derickson, and Mark Duffield as conservative, since “it privileges the restoration of existing systemic relations rather than their transformation” (MacKinnon and Derickson 2013, 263). In other words, resilience encourages individuals to “prepare for, adapt to and *live with* a spectrum

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of possible, perhaps *unknowable* risks” rather than “planning to overcome predictable or known threats” (Brassett, Croft, and Vaughan-Williams 2013, 223). The aim of preparedness, however, “is not to prevent these events from happening, but rather to manage their consequences” (Collier and Lakoff 2008, 11). This means that resilience promotes a passive attitude on the part of individuals, who are simply encouraged to accept, adapt, and cope with disasters and crises. This conceptual axe of resilience is especially relevant for dealing with recent humanitarian crises posed by refugees. These subjects are often encouraged to become resilient and to adapt to adverse living conditions despite the injustices and structural incongruences they face in host countries.

This article attempts to problematize and deconstruct the current use of socio-ecological resilience as a response to mass migration through the analysis of Sharon Bala’s *The Boat People* (2018). Winner of the 2019 Harper Lee Prize for Legal Fiction and the 2020 Newfoundland & Labrador Book Award, *The Boat People* – inspired by the historical MV *Sun Sea* incident – recounts the story of a group of Sri Lankan asylum seekers who arrive in Canada on a cargo ship in 2010.¹ Drawing on Philippe Bourbeau’s study of resilience, this paper probes Bala’s literary rendering of socio-ecological resilience as a government strategy to deal with refugee arrivals and its current alignment with neoliberal discourses. Moreover, this article explores the principal motifs and formal features used in the novel to produce an aesthetics that highlights the chaos, uncertainty, and hopelessness resulting from the articulation of political notions of resilience. This article will therefore endorse literary theorists’ belief in the active role of literature in the production and reconsideration of hegemonic resilience discourses in the context of forced migration.

NATIONAL SECURITY AND RESILIENCE IN *THE BOAT PEOPLE*

The Boat People follows the story of Mahindan, an asylum seeker widower who arrives in British Columbia with his six-year-old son Sellian looking for a safe place to start a new life after the Sri Lanka’s civil war. Upon their arrival, Mahindan and the 500 Tamil refugees show happiness and optimism, since they expect to receive asylum and protection in a country that prides itself on a humanitarian tradition. However, this idyllic image of multicultural Canada is soon deconstructed when the Tamil asylum seekers find a hostile political environment hindered by discourses based on national security and restrictive refugee policies.

In her analysis of *The Boat People*, Eva Darias-Beautell draws on Jacques Derrida’s theory to explain the paradoxical nature of hospitality as represented in the novel. While hospitality is “often defined as the act of being friendly and welcoming to guests or strangers”, it must be noted that it also “marks the existence of a threshold between oneself and the other, the host and the guest, the national and the foreign” (2020, 70). In the novel, this threshold is grounded at the basis of the national security discourse that dominates contemporary regimes of biopower. This is embodied by the character of the Minister of Public Safety, Fred Blair, who considers the influx of boat people in the country as an imminent threat to the nation’s sovereignty. This

character mirrors Prime Minister Stephen Harper's attitude towards the arrival of Sri Lankan boat people in 2010, when he declares that "Canada is a sovereign nation [...]. We will protect our borders from thugs and foreign criminals and those who seek to abuse our generosity" (Bala 2018, 46).

In light of the chaos caused by the arrival of boat people in the country, socio-ecological resilience emerges as a desirable response to manage the challenging situation. As many contemporary scholars have pointed out, resilience "is often proposed as the solution to a range of otherwise seemingly diverse security challenges including, *inter alia*, flooding, cybercrime, terrorism, financial crises, and social disorder" (Brassett, Croft, and Vaughan-Williams 2013, 222). Accordingly, resilience is intertwined with the notion of security, especially within the context of international migration, since, as Bourbeau argues in his study, the discourse of resilience is considered "a viable strategy for contesting a securitised situation that is deemed inappropriate" (2015, 1959). Drawing on Mark Neocleous' thoughts on resilience, Sarah Bracke similarly contends that resilience "has subsumed and surpassed the logic of security, understood both as a structure of individual subjectivity and as a principle of national policy" (2016, 56). Bourbeau goes even further and distinguishes between three types of resilience, namely resilience as maintenance, resilience as marginality, and resilience as renewal, which will be applied to explore Bala's literary rendition of the articulation of political notions of socio-ecological resilience to deal with the arrival of Tamil refugees in British Columbia.

Minister Fred Blair's national discourse on the security of its citizens can be identified as a resilience-as-maintenance strategy, which, according to Bourbeau, becomes a crucial response "characterized by an adaptation in which resources and energy are expended to maintain the status quo in the face of an exogenous shock" (2015, 1963). Minister Blair appeals to the security of the Canadian population using spurious arguments based on no evidence, as can be observed in some of his interventions: "The vessel and its illegal passengers are part of a larger criminal organization. Make no mistake, there are terrorists on board. We must not let the smugglers win" (Bala 2018, 145). By using a political rhetoric of fear that transforms refugees into a threat to the nation and its citizens, Minister Blair attempts to bring about anxieties, indifference, and rejection towards the Tamil refugees. Consequently, he implements a series of marginal adjustment measures that become part of the national apparatus that controls and limits the lives of asylum seekers in the West. These include the imprisonment of the asylum seekers and the implementation of a bureaucratic process involving a number of detention reviews and admissibility hearings, which need to be passed in order to gain refugee status. Gigovaz, Mahindan's legal representative in Canada, explains the process as follows:

The first step was to prove their identity. The government would inspect their documents. There were many forms to fill. There would be a review to decide if they could leave jail, then a hearing to determine if they could ask for refugee status. And then another hearing to see if they would be given refugee status. It was a process, and the process would take time. No one could say how long. (Bala 2018, 26)

Although the process appears to be logical, Priya – the law student who is trying to understand the incongruences implicit in Canadian refugee policies – perceptively notes that “the detention reviews, the admissibility hearing, [and] the Refugee Board hearing [become] a long series of judgments, each an opportunity for failure and deportation” (49). The novel’s attention to the bureaucratic obstacles and the inextricable gap existing between policy and practice show the resilience of a state biopolitics that attempt to “protect the social cohesion of a society” (Bourbeau 2015, 1963) by adopting a resilience strategy that eschews the opportunity for transformation and renewal.

The use of detention centers to manage migration flows has been identified by Bourbeau as an example of resilience as marginality, as it brings “changes at the margins that do not fundamentally challenge a policy” (2013, 12). Although detention centers are designed as transitory places, more often than not they turn out to be what Serena Parekh calls a “de facto long-term solution” (2017, 3) where asylum seekers become “surplus humanity” (Franke 2010, 318). This mechanism of control only criminalizes refugees who are in turn defined by dehumanizing categories that only emphasize their exclusion and abjection in the host country. Such a dire reality becomes the epicenter of Bala’s novel, as most of the narrative takes place in a prison in Prince George, British Columbia.

Contrary to their optimistic expectations, Tamil asylum seekers are forced to wear handcuffs as soon as they are intercepted off the coast of British Columbia. They are also forced into orderly queues in order to be checked and stripped of their few possessions. In the case of Mahindan, the confiscation of his personal objects representing his most cherished memories – his grandfather’s suitcase and the remaining possessions he carefully stored in it: his wedding album, his wife’s death certificate, and the keys to his house and garage (Bala 2018, 11) – showcases the power of a system that both controls and deprives asylum seekers of agency and humanity. After this episode, Tamil asylum seekers are sent to a detention center where their vulnerability and uncertainty are accentuated as they are subject to “the legal and social systems of Canada represented by individuals who think in terms only of right or wrong” (van Herk 2020, 5). Thus, the detention center emerges as a way of “depriv[ing] refugees of a place in the common realm of humanity, contribut[ing] to their reduction to bare life and impair[ing] the[ir] ability [...] for agency, their ability to be recognized as speaking and acting agents” (Parekh 2017, 100).

In his study, Bourbeau identifies a third type of resilience known as resilience as renewal that “is characterized by responses that transform basic policy assumptions and, thus, potentially remodel social structures” (2013, 16). This type of resilience emphasizes the transformational aspects of the concept, which in the context of international migration implies the reformulation of national discourses and security policies that point at mass migration “as a window of opportunity” (16). I would argue that Bala’s novel does not contemplate this optimistic take on resilience as demonstrated by its circular narrative structure, which begins and ends with Mahindan waiting for admissibility. Its structure rather emphasizes the worst effects of the resilience mechanisms used by Canadian authorities to maintain the status

quo. Bala reinforces the nefarious effects that these mechanisms provoke on asylum seekers through the use of different narrative techniques that echo the irregularities of a system characterized by the adoption of marginal resilience strategies.

Some of these features, which have been already discussed by Darias-Beautell in her analysis of the novel, are the use of very “short and sharp chapters that convey a sense of fragmentation”, lack of “control” and quick pace characteristic of a bureaucratic process which can neither be predicted nor controlled (2020, 72, 74). These short chapters do not follow a chronological order, but instead “move back and forth between Sri Lanka and Canada”, combining the (hi)stories and points of views of different characters (71–72). Such an experimental narrative attempts to mimic the disorientation experienced by the Tamil asylum seekers in prison. Moreover, by removing the “quotation marks for direct speech” (76) and the signs introducing dialogues in the novel, the author constructs a blurred narrative in which dialogues intermingle with the characters’ thoughts, echoing the disturbing and chaotic effect that the incongruences of the system and the disparity of refugee law provoke in the Tamil asylum seekers. These narrative features contribute to the interrogation of the use of resilience as a government strategy grounded in the securitization of national boundaries and, in doing so, to the deconstruction of what Darias-Beautell calls “the utopian dimensions of hospitality” that characterize the Canadian imaginary (71).

NEOLIBERAL RESILIENCE: CRUEL OPTIMISM AND HAPPINESS

Despite the uncertainty and despair caused by the use of resilience mechanisms aimed at protecting national boundaries, Mahindan is constantly moved by his faith in a better future for his son and himself in Canada. His belief in Canadian hospitality does not allow him to envisage the tremendous problems he will have to face in the near future. He constantly normalizes the situation, believing that his separation from his son and even their incarceration is “temporary. Like sending the boy to boarding school” (Bala 2018, 22). His blind faith in the nation’s generosity and social justice leads him to justify the political measures adopted by the Canadian authorities. He thinks to himself that this is the way the Canadians proceed; they “must have their own special procedures” (25).

Moreover, Mahindan entertains fantasies about the possibility of living what Sara Ahmed calls “the good life” (2010, 6) and, as a result, he remains closely attached to “conventional good-life fantasies”, including “upward mobility, job security, political and social equality” (Berlant 2011, 2–3). This idea is visible from the beginning of the novel, as Mahindan constantly dreams of the day he will be released from prison and will be able to rebuild his life again with his son Sellian: “Once he and Sellian got out of detention, Mahindan would get a job. Cars were the same from one country to another. He could work changing tires or even pumping petrol. It did not matter what he did once he got out” (Bala 2018, 86). In order to achieve his fantasies he must follow his own motto: learn English, get a job, find a small place to live (86). As Aritha van Herk argues, this “mantra [...] becomes a recitation of desire, a hope for some future, however precarious” (2020, 8).

Yet, the question is: will Mahindan's optimism allow him to achieve his fantasies of a new beginning in Canada? What are the negative implications of adopting a neo-liberal optimism? As Lauren Berlant claims, the problem is that "there are no guarantees that the life one intends can or will be built" (2011, 192). The Tamil asylum seekers are seduced by promises of a better future and they must be resilient and adapt to adverse circumstances. This means that in order to achieve a Western lifestyle, they are forced to remain imprisoned, thereby yielding some foundational human rights. In other words, the Tamil asylum seekers are encouraged to adopt a resilience that "move[s] fairly swiftly from thinking about the dynamics of systems to emphasizing individual responsibility, adaptability and preparedness" (Joseph 2013, 49). This becomes what Bracke calls the "moral code" every subject must follow in neoliberal times in order to achieve security (2016, 62). In the novel, this is represented through Mahindan's constant concern for his responsibility for his own and his son's future in Canada. As an example, he puts all his effort into learning English, the language that can open up new opportunities for him and bring him closer to the Western lifestyle he has learned to desire. Mahindan also tries to instill in his son the importance of learning English as a prerequisite to assimilate and succeed in Canada: "You need to read and write in English if you are going to succeed in this country" (Bala 2018, 82). Mahindan's life in the detention center is somehow guided by his need to be self-sufficient.

This resilience strategy, however, ignites a sense of possibility which, in Berlant's terms, is nothing but "cruel optimism", that is, "a relation of attachment to compromised conditions of possibility whose realization is discovered either to be impossible, sheer fantasy, or too possible, and toxic" (2011, 24). Contrary to Berlant's contextualization of cruel optimism, which presupposes the agency of the subject attached to conditions of possibility, Mahindan's cruel optimism works toward "undermin[ing] precisely the possibility of substantial transformation", and, by extension, his agency (Bracke 2016, 64). Indeed, Mahindan's attachment to the possibility of a secure and stable life in Canada turns into a limitation that does not allow him to transform the system that oppresses him. Rather, he needs to remain stuck in prison and separated from his son for a long period of time, suspending his own transformation, "even though transformation might be part of its cruel promise" (70).

Such a cruel promise is somehow triggered by the system itself. When Ranga, Prasad, and Mahindan ask about their human rights as well as the process they must follow in order to achieve refugee status, they are not provided with appropriate information. Instead, the imprisoned asylum seekers are told that "it is all very complex, to do with legal definitions and bureaucracy. But not to worry, because the Tamil Alliance had hired lawyers to sort everything out" (Bala 2018, 25). Likewise, when Mahindan attempts to complain about his son being separated from himself in prison, the interpreter quickly says: "This is not Sri Lanka. *I promise you*, the boy is safe [...] there is nothing to worry" (26; emphasis added). By using the language of promising, the system transmits to refugee claimants a sense of security that alleviates the uncertain present. As Claudia Aradau claims, "to promise means to create continuity from the present to the future" (2014, 84). Thus, the Canadian state attempts to hide

the uncertainties and hostility implicit in its bureaucratic system by fostering an optimistic hope of achieving a better future in Canada that requires patience and faith both in the country and in the system. This is the “moral code”, using Bracke’s terms, that subtly guides the lives of asylum seekers in the detention center (2016, 62), which at the same time implies the asylum seekers’ infantilization, ignorance, and the removal of their agency.

UNCERTAIN FUTURES

As the narrative unfolds, Mahindan realizes that his motto or individual aspirations only allow him to endure the long waiting, but not to overcome it. After eight months of imprisonment and almost ten failed admissibility hearings, Mahindan remains in the same situation. The uncertainty that invades him throughout his stay in the detention center is reinforced through the use of stylistic features such as the open ending. By the end of the novel, many asylum seekers, including Prasad, Hema, and Savitri Kumuran, have passed their admissibility hearings. Yet there are many others like Mahindan who are still waiting for their final hearing to take place. The open ending resembles the uncertainty of the refugee system and serves to emphasize the circular structure of a narrative that begins and ends with Mahindan in the same circumstance: waiting for his status to be determined.

His fantasy of the possibility of improving his life in Canada gives meaning to his own stay in the detention center, yet as proved at the end of the novel, it provokes existential despair. It could be argued, then, that the ending of the novel becomes the culmination of Berlant’s cruel optimism and an affirmation of the negative effects that it may provoke on subaltern subjects. It is worth quoting in full how Mahindan experiences this process from the moment he and his son arrive in the country until the present:

Looking back, he thought those had been his happiest moments. When the Canadian boats circled the ship and the helicopter’s blades chopped the sky over their heads. Standing at the top of the gangplank, the sun gentle on his face, gazing out over the parking lot to see the crisp white tents, the Canadians in their comical face masks. Sellian light as a feather in his arms, waving ecstatically at the crowd and shouting: Hello! Hello! That heady expectation, the profound relief, *both felt distant now*, far from his present reality. *Windows that would not open. Guards at every door. Endless waiting.* (Bala 2018, 144; emphasis added)

In this passage, there is a clear contraposition between the vision of a naïve Mahindan, who looks at Canada with optimism, and the reality of an “ongoing limbo” (van Herk 2020, 13). The detention center feels like an inhospitable space inasmuch as its windows remain closed, preventing any exchange with the outside world and the doors are protected by guards, creating boundaries difficult to pass through. The white color of the detention center’s walls no longer symbolizes purity and hope, but rather reflects the emptiness, cold, and feeling of isolation that impregnates the place and, by extension, the Sri Lankan asylum seekers.

The detention center now becomes an outer reflection of the characters’ feelings of doom, gloom, and emptiness: “What Mahindan missed was color. The building

that five months earlier had struck him as modern and clean now felt sterile and heartless” (Bala 2018, 143–144). The luxury of clean water, the whiteness, perfection, and cleanliness of the detention center emphasized by Mahindan upon arrival – which function as a metonym for the country of Canada as a mythic haven, “clean with straight lines” (24) – turns out to be only a cloak that covers up the harsh situation the asylum seekers experience in this place. To put it differently, the precise geometry of the detention center disguises the irregularities committed against asylum seekers and refugees in Canada. The food in the detention center also becomes a reflection of the socio-political atmosphere that dominates Canada at that moment: “The soup was salty. String of noodles floated in the broth. The small orange turned to mush in his mouth. They did not taste like carrots. Canadian food was not bland, exactly. Its flavors were muted, like the colors outside” (252). The lack of flavors and colors metaphorically alludes to the attack on Canadian diversity as a result of national discourses that present international migration as a security threat.

Furthermore, the failure of socio-ecological resilience and the worst effects of cruel optimism on Sri Lankan asylum seekers are apparent at the end of the novel when Mahindan is about to go into his last admissibility hearing and is visited by his son. The father does not recognize him because Sellian looks like a Canadian child who does not play cricket anymore because “no one play[s] that here”, but instead plays ice hockey (Bala 2018, 299). Sellian also speaks English like a native Canadian and Mahindan struggles to understand him well. The Sri Lankan father is gripped by a feeling of happiness for his son, who will prosper in this new country, but at the same time he is overwhelmed by a feeling of sorrow and nostalgia, for he feels he will not witness his son’s progress in this new country: “Mahindan watched Sellian with wonder, this boy who was his son but looked and spoke like someone else’s. [...] The child, in whom Mahindan had once glimpsed his own youth, his wife’s idiosyncrasies was *growing mysterious* to him. *Soon he would be wholly inaccessible*” (239; emphasis added).

During this visit, Mahindan metaphorically touches the Canadian life that is outside the detention center by inhaling the unfamiliar scents of his son (laundry detergent, soap, and shampoo). Yet, Mahindan realizes that those are “foreign smells of an unknown life that now belonged to his son” (Bala 2018, 216–217). It must be noted that although the novel condemns the ethics of the cruel optimism that subtly controls the lives of many displaced people in the detention center, who are not able to transform the system that oppresses them, it does not completely erase the sense of possibility, which is clearly embodied by Sellian, a second-generation Sri Lankan asylum seeker who successfully adapts to a new life in Canada.

CONCLUSION

The Boat People offers an example of the challenges asylum seekers and refugees face when national discourses spread fear and hostility towards the Other. In her account of the MV *Sun Sea* incident, Bala portrays how the policies of containment deprive refugees of agency and freedom. In doing so, the author presents a realistic picture of the uncertainty, precarity, and vulnerability caused by a legal process

that demands asylum seekers and refugees to be resilient. Moreover, by bringing to the limelight the populist national security discourses used by the government to exert fear over refugees, Bala's novel problematizes the interconnected notions of resilience and optimism in neoliberal times. As this analysis demonstrates, *The Boat People* also succeeds in conveying how the Canadian state imbues asylum seekers with hope by hiding the hostility implicit in its bureaucratic system, fostering then a sense of optimism for the future that is tainted with uncertainty. The narrative devices and the structure of the narrative symbolically recreate the uncertainty, hopelessness, and despair resulting from the articulation and implementation of political notions of resilience.

Thus, contemporary Canadian narratives like *The Boat People* demonstrate the potential of fiction to interrogate the paradoxes underlying the concept of socio-ecological resilience, especially within the context of forced migration, thus contributing to the redefinition of hegemonic resilience thinking. In doing so, *The Boat People* fosters a responsive ethics that prompts readers to rethink and reconsider their role as human beings in a global context where refugees and asylum seekers are often marginalized and negatively stereotyped.

NOTES

- ¹ As explained in the article entitled "Sun Sea: Five Years Later", written by the Canadian Council for Refugees, the approximately 492 passengers in the MV *Sun Sea* and the 76 in the MV *Ocean Lady*, who arrived ten months earlier, in October 2009, "represented just one per cent of the refugee claims made in Canada in those two years (there were 33,246 claims in 2009, 23,157 in 2010 for a total of 56,403)" (2015, 1). This gives us an idea of the large number of displaced people who are seeking asylum, protection, care, and social support in Canada nowadays.

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Socio-ecological resilience in Sharon Bala's *The Boat People*

Socio-ecological resilience. Asylum seekers. Neoliberalism. Uncertainty. Sharon Bala. *The Boat People*.

This article examines the notion of socio-ecological resilience and its current alignment with neoliberalism in Sharon Bala's *The Boat People* (2018). Drawing on Philippe Bourbeau's theorizing about the interconnection of resilience and security and contemporary studies of resilience, this article explores the current use of socio-ecological resilience as a government strategy to deal with global humanitarian crises posed by refugees and asylum seekers. Moreover, this article examines the main elements, motifs, and narrative devices used in the novel to produce an aesthetics that highlights the chaos, uncertainty, and hopelessness resulting from the articulation of political notions of resilience in neoliberal times.

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Resilience and ethics of care against racial capitalism in David Chariandy's *Brother*

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The concept of resilience has gained currency in recent years vis-à-vis the tumultuous realities of the so-called *risk societies* (Beck 2005) because it entails the capacity to face and respond to troubles. Departing from the idea that “the very notion of resilience, as the capacity to bounce back from stress and pain, rests intrinsically upon the narrative sequencing of events, responses and adaptive processes” (Basseler 2019b, 26), several scholars in the field of humanities and in literary studies (Sarah Bracke, Susie O’Brien, Michael Basseler, and Ana María Fraile-Marcos, among others) have approached resilience as a relevant analytical lens which may open up a path toward a new “ethics of responsibility” (Evans and Reid 2014, 6). Positioning resilience “as a central emerging concept and concern of the twenty-first century” that can be “constructed through narratives” (Basseler 2019b, 18) stimulates efforts to envision a “cultural narratology of resilience” (21) that may well bring to light the connection between narrative and “the sort of knowledge that may prompt radical resilient ways of being in the world” (Fraile-Marcos 2020, 10). Hence, the focus on resilience in the humanities promotes a shift away from the trauma paradigm¹ toward a post-trauma paradigm². Furthermore, by relying, to a certain extent, on a communal effort to endure and thrive in the present world of ubiquitous risk and ongoing crisis, resilience can be studied hand in hand with the ethics of care, since both resilience and care rely on relationality, allowing people to cater to one another and to develop an “empathic concern for others to resist” and to “question ourselves about our obligations to others” (Slote 2007, 33). I posit that both resilience and care, with their focus on resistance, adaptation, and relationality, hold the potential to herald an ethical function that eschews the ideological trap of neoliberal practices that are premised on individualism and exceptionalism.

Drawing on Robyn Maynard’s seminal *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present* (2017), I offer an analysis of David Chariandy’s elegiac second novel, *Brother* (2017) intending to show how the author’s style and the way he shapes the story falls within the aesthetics of resilience whilst it brings to light the intersection between different forms of resilience and the ethics of care in the face of “Anti-Blackness discourse”.³ The novel is set in Scarborough, at the outskirts of Toronto in the early 1990s and tells the story of Michael and Francis, two young Black

Canadian brothers who live with Ruth, their hard-working Trinidadian mother. She desperately wants a better life for her sons and works herself to the bone to scrape a living. Throughout the story, Michael and Francis struggle against the prejudices and low expectations that confront them as young Black men. Francis loves music, especially hip hop with its beats and styles, and he dreams about becoming a professional musician. Michael, on his part, dreams about Aisha, the smartest girl in their high school, who is determined to find a life somewhere else. But suddenly, their dreams are shattered and everything changes, because of a tragic shooting. The police violence that results in the allegedly lawful killing of Black youths brings about a familial tragedy that exposes the fatal effects of racial prejudice. Canadian scholar Robyn Maynard has conceptualized “the use of race and racial hierarchies to justify unequal power relationships and make them appear natural” (2017, 57) as a rehabilitated version of racial capitalism. In *Brother*, such forms of Anti-Blackness attach “Blackness to criminality and danger” and thus rationalize “state violence against Black communities” crystallizing the pervasive idea that “Black people are presumed to be guilty in advance” (Maynard 2017, 10). In this way, the state violence premised on racial capitalism showcases the way in which “Canada’s Black population has been excluded from those seen as ‘national subjects’ and denied many of the accompanying protections and rights” (11).

As a means to counteract these forms of violence against Black Canadians, the novel puts forth resilient methods of resistance that revolve around Michael’s ethics of care towards his mother, especially after Francis’s violent death. Thus, in what follows I read David Chariandy’s *Brother* using the novel’s articulations of resilience (drawing on Basseler 2019a, 2019b; Evans and Reid 2014; Fraile-Marcos 2020; Bracke 2016a, 2016b) and ethics of care (following Held 2006; Sevenhuijsen 1998; Slote 2007) against Canadian racial capitalism (Maynard 2017; Tator and Henry 2006), and aim to prove how the interplay between resilience and care acts as a healing mechanism of “self-repair” (O’Brien 2017, 58) in the violent context of the story. I also suggest that such interplay fosters a mode of survival characterized by “a concern not only for individual welfare but for good relationships” (Slote 2007, 12), which prompts collaborative acts of resilience representing an ethical stance to fight the ongoing practices of racial capitalism in Canada. The article is divided into two parts: the first one discusses the way in which the story represents the violence of racial capitalism and the establishment of anti-Black policies in Canada. The second section showcases an ethics of care that is grounded in collaborative acts of resilience that constitute healthy ways to survive the pervasive violence of the nation-state against Blacks and racialized peoples. In so doing, *Brother* comes across as a relevant resilience narrative while contributing to “their embedment in larger cultural and national narratives” (Basseler 2019b, 29).

RACIAL CAPITALISM AND ANTI-BLACKNESS

If in his debut novel *Soucouyant* (2007) Chariandy reconfigured Caribbean myths around an unnamed son returning home to Scarborough to take care of his mother, who suffers from Alzheimer’s disease, in his second novel the author revisits the scene

of his own adolescence. Michael's role as the novel's narrator underlines the "significance of storytelling in the process of building psychological resilience" (Basseler 2019b, 20) as well as the importance of storytelling as a healing tool.

The novel opens with Michael's recollection of the time Francis took him to climb a hydroelectricity pole that provides a great view of their city. Francis warns Michael about the danger of touching two live wires that could potentially become a conduit for the electricity coursing around them. This initial risk the two brothers are facing stands as a metaphor of the Beckian risk society and the many dangers they are exposed to throughout the story. The opening metaphor extends its meaning to represent the way in which trying to climb up the wrong way may entail getting burned in the racially-divided Scarborough: "touch your hand to the wrong metal part while you're brushing up against another, and you'd burn" (Chariandy 2017, 2). The hydroelectricity pole also stands as a symbol of guidance in itself. Symbolically, Francis is guiding his brother through the slippery surface, thus providing the readers with a sense of the mentorship needed to survive the many challenges that Scarborough poses. This initial chapter that acts as a prologue of sorts is wrapped up with Francis emphasizing the importance of Michael following him closely and always remembering. In other words, this first episode encapsulates the whole ethos of the novel: the potential of resilience in the tumultuous reality of an impoverished neighborhood, the importance of establishing an ethics of care by bonding with those you love the most and the necessity to always remember the stories that help society to understand the injustices of the present.

Early in the first chapter the reader is introduced to Aisha, a childhood friend of Michael's who had been living overseas but has now returned to Scarborough because her father is in intensive care with cancer-related problems. The reunion is used to talk about Michael and Francis's mother. In Michael's view, "Mother worked as a cleaner in office buildings and malls and hospitals. She was also one of *those* black mothers, unwilling to either seek or accept help" (10). As Ruth works long hours as a cleaner, her sons are often at home without her supervision. Ruth is fiercely protective and equally worried that the boys will ruin their lives by falling in with bad crowds and negative influences. A single mother after the boys' father disappeared when they were very little, Ruth stands for many Caribbean Canadian migrant women who earned a living working as domestics and managed "to keep their families intact when men had to be absent for employment or other reasons", thus occupying "a central role and not merely a supporting position" (Carty 1994, 205) in their communities. As Linda Carty argues, "[s]ince their arrival in Canada, it is the women of the African Canadian communities who have kept the communities going" though they "have never had their rightful place in history" (1994, 205). Through the character of Ruth, Chariandy pays homage to the Caribbean women who migrated to Canada in the second half of the 20th century and whose lives were conditioned by the Canadian state ideology and its endeavors to control the economy. According to Robyn Maynard, "housing and land were two major forms of economic advancement withheld to Black Canadians in many cities and towns", resulting in forms of economic "segregation that barred Black families from housing," which

eventually “played an important role in preventing Black economic mobility” (2017, 37). Preventing social mobility favors the informal economy and organized crime that underlie the stereotypes connecting the Black poor “to drugs, hypersexuality, danger and criminality” (40). It is against this background that Ruth grows worried and gets furious when she learns that Francis is spending time at Desirea’s, the barbershop that functions as the neighborhood’s hub for Black youths. Ruth perceives the barbershop as a suspicious spot linked to drug dealing and shouts out: “You are my son!’ [...] ‘You will never be a criminal” (Chariandy 2017, 25). Michael witnesses this furious scolding in awe of his mother pointing out the impact of her words and how she uttered them: “Maybe it was the way Mother pronounced the word, briefly stepping out of the Queen’s English and into the music of her Trinidadian accent. *Cri-mi-nal*” (25).

The impoverished and derelict neighborhood where the family lives alongside their marginalization and the difficulties that accompany “the dangers of the climb” (2) not only expose the difficulties that poor Black people face in the current society of risk but also situate the setting of the story within the ideological premises of racial capitalism, whose roots can be traced back to slavery.⁴ Despite its many positive outcomes, Rinaldo Walcott sees Canada’s official multiculturalism as having fostered the invisibility of “the existence of blackness in this country” (2003, 14), while Maynard claims that it served to overshadow Canada’s role in “supporting the causes of Black (and brown) displacement” (2017, 57). In so doing, multiculturalism “has masked the ongoing policy of Black subjection that has undergirded official and unofficial state policies, regardless of language centered on formal equality and rights to cultural retention” (57).

In *Brother*, physical and economic segregation reinforce the status quo of racial capitalism through the way in which both (Black) brothers “are rendered simultaneously invisible”, as Gugu D. Hlongwane notes, and therefore “devalued and socially marginalized”, which makes them “a target of state surveillance and police harassment by dominant Canadian culture” (2021, 172). In these circumstances, Francis’s and Michael’s own neighborhood becomes the target of the racist policies of racial capitalism:

The world around us was named Scarborough. It had once been called “Scarberia”, a wasteland on the outskirts of a sprawling city. But now, as we were growing up in the early ‘80s, in the heated language of a changing nation, we heard it called other names: Scarlem, Scardistan. We lived in Scar-bro, a suburb that had mushroomed up and yellowed, browned, and blackened into life. (Chariandy 2017, 13)

The overlapping of racial capitalism and anti-Blackness through stereotyping can be best appreciated in the novel in the moment that recounts the reflection Michael and Francis see when looking into a newspaper box. This powerful metaphor is a symbol for Canada’s inordinate mistrust of young Black men. When detailing the atmosphere of fear and segregation that permeates Scarborough, Michael gives details of how he and his brother grow up seeing the “stories on TV and in the papers of gangs, killings in bad neighbourhoods, predators roaming close” (16). As if looking themselves in this mirror that reflects the reality of racial profiling and ste-

reotyping, Michael goes on to explain that “[o]ne morning, I peered with Francis into a newspaper box to read a headline about the latest terror *and caught in the glass the reflection of our faces*” (16; emphasis added). This episode not only supports Ruth’s fear of her children being targeted as criminals but also evinces the profound impact that the sensationalized media and the discourse attached to power represent in passing on the infectious values of the anti-Blackness imagery to Black young men.

The pervasive power of anti-Blackness can also be perceived when the two boys suffer continuous nightmares, very much influenced by their seeing other Black and brown boys suddenly pitched to the pavement by the police and arrested, hearing rumors of boys getting jumped and beaten, and seeing news stories about supposed predators and gang killings that make them feel vulnerable and unsafe (16–18). Michael’s nightmare corroborates the greatest fear of young Black boys and their unrelenting parallelism with criminality and social danger: “The criminals, Michael. The criminals will be caught by the police and punished. They do not stand a chance. Please try to understand” (155).

What the boys are terrified of is the unequal way Canada treats Black subjects because of its factual composition of different categories of citizenship which, in effect, “delineate who ‘belongs’ to the realm of humane treatment and state protections, and who is excluded – deemed [...] disposable” (Maynard 2017, 159). That is why when little Michael naively holds that “We’re lucky here. We’re very safe”, Francis overtly shuts off the argument asserting: “We’re not. We never were” (Chariandy 2017, 155). It is thus not strange that out of this feeling of insecurity and suspicion the boys are constantly stopped by the police for no manifest reason (29). Michael’s apparently ingenuous association between racial profile and his Black skin proves that also in Canada the “tropes of anti-Blackness that were created centuries ago are reproduced within the racialized surveillance and punishment of Blacks, migrant and refugee communities” (Maynard 2017, 161).

In this suffocating context of fear and anti-Blackness, Francis does not abide by the policies of racial profiling and anti-Black prejudice and will see it to the bitter end. The night of a concert that Francis’s friends had prepared at Desirea’s, the police show up on an alleged neighbor’s complaint that they could smell pot smoke: “they appeared in force at the front door, six of them at once in bulky vests, and when they asked to be let in, we understood that it wasn’t really a request” (Chariandy 2017, 116). The disproportionate action that follows becomes a battle between the agents and the Black boys, resulting in Dru, the pub’s owner, being pushed and forcibly interrogated. Francis cannot restrain himself and lashes out: “Don’t touch him!” he shouted” (117).

Although in this case the police find nothing and leave, the following altercation, when Francis and Michael go to Desirea’s to attend DJ Jelly’s audition, results in a more tragic outcome. Jelly and Francis are best friends and spend their days spinning records at Desirea’s. When a hip-hop concert comes to town, Jelly sees his opportunity to prove himself and auditions to be the opening act. The day of the audition there is a doomed atmosphere right from the moment in which Francis and his crew arrive. The police follow suit in tactical gear exhibiting coercive moves as “other

forms of systemic racism” that, down the line, prove that in the context of racial capitalist practices it is simply “race that impacts police treatment” (Myanrad 2019, 107). Carol Tator and Frances Henry explain that the “long and heated debate over racial profiling reflects the deep chasm between the White political, cultural, and social systems – which have long been dominant and rarely change – and the individuals and groups who suffer from the dis-enabling and marginalizing effects of those systems” (2006, 7). Put bluntly, the novel shows that “racial profiling is a manifestation of ‘democratic racism’ in which bias and discrimination ‘cloak their presence’ in liberal principles” (8). This racial profiling triggers Francis’s killing at the hands of the Canadian police, a tragedy that will haunt Michael and his mother thereafter.

The second part of my analysis aims to bring to light the novel’s emphasis on acts of care and collaborative resilience as relevant mechanisms for surviving the stifling practices of racial capitalism.

ETHICS OF CARE AND COLLABORATIVE ACTS OF RESILIENCE AS SURVIVAL

The day of the audition represents a turning point in the novel. Under the premises of racial profiling the police order those attending the try-out to line up against the wall and show ID. When Francis protests this unjust treatment, the police unholster their guns and warn Francis not to move. However, when one of the cops grabs his friend Jelly’s arm he confronts the police: “No,” Francis said. “You tell me. What did he do?” (Chariandy 2017, 158). In an attempt to contest the way he is perceived, Francis shouts “you think I’m dangerous” (159) and he is shot to death: “it was over. I don’t even remember hearing the shot. My brother just fell” (159). Francis’s murder not only confirms that “the policing of Black bodies” is all the more grounded in “the policing of an anti-Black social order” (Maynard 2017, 40) but also that the violence underpinned in such vicious practices responds to an accepted “relationship between Blackness and criminality [that is] enormously effective as a means to justifying and maintaining Black subjection” (41).

After Francis’s death, Aisha’s return to Ruth and Michael’s lives at a moment when they are hardly coping with grief serves to revisit the tragic event that tears their lives apart. Ruth’s “complicated grief” (Chariandy 2017, 66) turns to a mourning silence. Michael, on his part, seems to adhere to Lily Cho’s contention that the “injunction to ‘move on’ demands a forgetting” (2011, 116). Consequently, Michael shows no interest in meeting people who could bring back memories of his late brother. When Aisha tries to convince him to host a gathering at the apartment to pay tribute to her father and Francis, Michael declines: “I don’t think so, Aisha, my Mother doesn’t need a group of strangers in her home” (Chariandy 2017, 65). This incapacity to revisit the painful past is reinstated when Michael disapproves of Jelly’s visit to his mother and invites him to leave their apartment: “This isn’t a good idea, Aisha [...] I’ve warned you. I don’t want Mother disturbed or confused. She’s fragile” (89). However, refusing to remember only prevents him “from moving forward by making sense of the past” (66). Thus, the novel implies that the only way to cope with a catastrophe is by clinging to those you care for to walk the path of remembering.

In this fashion, the story puts together the ethics of care and resilience as the path for survival and healing. *Brother* thus follows the pattern of resilience narratives, where “the overcoming of trauma and a positive outlook take center stage” (Basseler 2019b, 28).

The importance of remembering proves crucial to bring wounded people together in their way toward survival because, as Francis prophetically demands at the story’s opening, “‘if you can’t memory right,’ he said, ‘you lose’” (Chariandy 2017, 2). Since memory can be an act of resilience in itself (Fraile-Marcos and Noguero 2020) the act of remembering constitutes the first step toward coming together and healing. By stressing the importance of coming together, the story presents a type of resilience that refuses to conform to the individuality attached to the neoliberal ideology that is intent on exploiting subaltern resilience (Bracke 2016b, 851–852). Certainly, Francis’s death exposes the importance to nurture a specific way of being resilient by means of cultivating a collective ethics of care that emphasizes human dependency and the need for substantial care from others. When Michael understands that when abandoned by policies that should protect lives, the only way out is accepting that “caring involves a ‘displacement’ of ordinary self-interest into selfish concern for another person” (Slote 2007, 12), he engages in “a caring relational practice” (Held 2006, 39) with Ruth, thanks to Aisha. This practice, which “involves attentiveness, and responding to needs” (30), will eventually start their process of healing and re-establish their relationship.

Brother illustrates that the care ethics is “characterized by a concern not only for the individual welfare but for good relationships” (Slote 2007, 12). Although Michael affirms that his “relationship with Aisha appeared to be based upon the most fragile and quiet of connections” (Chariandy 2017, 51), she joins in the communal ethics of care by taking an active part in helping him to get to grips with his and his mother’s reality. This is enacted the very same day that they bury Francis, when Michael goes for a walk only to return to find neighbors crowded outside their home, offering their condolences with looks of distress. Inside, Ruth has emptied all the cupboards and moved the furniture whilst she is hammering at the floor, complaining of the havoc she herself has created. From this point on, Michael develops a “sense of responsibility for a vulnerable being in need of one’s care” (Held 2006, 92) and his life becomes utterly devoted to looking after his mother: “From that moment, Mother became someone I could care for” (Chariandy 2017, 168). At this point Michael understands care as “an attitude and as a form of action” (Sevenhuijsen 1998, 4). In other words, it becomes a specific and communal way to adopt a compromised resilience that is played out through collaborative acts. This is even more openly manifested when dealing with the relationship between mothers and their children. In this case, Slote defends that “caring needs to be completed in some kind of acknowledgement or acceptance of caring on the part of the one(s) cared for” (2007, 11). Just as Ruth cared for, provided for and defended their sons when they were little, now it is Michael’s turn to take over and stand up to care for his mother, proving that the ultimate ethics of care involve the bidirectionality of “the mother’s caring and the relationship between mother and child” (11).

Aisha also plays a pivotal role from the start in Michael's ethical awakening because, even though he initially refuses to talk to her following the shooting, she lovingly pushes her way into the house with food thus committing to an ethics of care that favors "mutual concern, and empathetic responsiveness" (Held 2006, 15). A relevant instance of the kind of revisiting of the past that triggers resilience and healing takes place when Aisha insists on walking with Michael to the library. This creates the opportunity for him to tell her what really happened with Francis. Michael concludes that according to the Canadian authorities the killing was deemed "lawful" (Chariandy 2017, 171). To rebuke the "judicial void" (Menon 2004, 4) around this state confirmation of racial capitalist violence, Michael places the reader in the very moment in which he visits the library again and once there, he meets a former friend of Francis's with whom he relished the song "Ne me quitte pas". The song's lyrics – "I will create an area / Where love will be king / Where love will be the law" – act as the premise to reveal the homosexuality of his brother: "He loved a young man named Jelly" (Chariandy 2017, 174). Thus, Francis's death at the hands of the police is revealed both as a murder and as an act of love on Francis's part to defend his lover. This revelation, resulting from revisiting the past, is a turning point toward acknowledging the importance of "caring relations" (Held 2006, 54). After it, Michael decides that he has to achieve healing and closure by reuniting with Jelly and Aisha. The library acts literally and symbolically as a repository of memories and (his)stories and is offered as a resilience-building place where the shared memories around Francis pave the way toward the final act of communal care. This resilience-building place builds upon the barbershop as the spot where these young Black men found solace. As Hlongwane puts forth: "[t]he clearings of barbershops, historically regarded as sanctuaries in Black discourses in the West, help restore the humanity of Black men. These small businesses accomplish that restoration by enabling Black men to exercise and cultivate their creativity; such is the function of Desirea's, the barbershop in *Brother*" (2021, 173). These locales serve as sites for the creation of collaborative acts of resilience against oppression. The library, therefore, allows Francis's memories to be redrawn and redirected so that Michael's picture of his brother and, eventually, of his family changes and makes him change his mind with regards to getting reunited with his painful past in order to accommodate his present.

The novel ends with a significant reunion. In the last lines of the story, Aisha and Jelly join Michael and Ruth as the latter is being discharged from the hospital, to finally see "a new day" (Chariandy 2017, 176). They go together to be "all at home now, the four of us" (176). As the novel proceeds to its closure, the reader is reassured that memory "manifests itself as the element that saves us from alienation" (Fraile-Marcos and Noguerol 2020, 152). The characters' shared memories are the basis for collaborative resilience, communal care, and bonding, proving not only Audre Lorde's statement that care can be a valid "act of political warfare" (1988, 131) but also that "connection and affectivity should be recognized as important sources of moral reasoning" (Sevenhuijsen 1998, 12). While they eat and accommodate themselves to one another for the first time since Francis's death, Jelly puts on a record. To everyone's astonishment, Ruth "[g]estures upward" (Chariandy 2017, 177) to have them all listen

to “Ne me quitte pas”. The song reclaims Francis’s memory while affirming the collaborative acts of care and resilience that have helped them build resilience in the face of racial capitalist “oppressive social structures” (Held 2006, 37).

CONCLUSION

David Chariandy’s multilayered novel *Brother* strongly evinces anti-Blackness in Canada and offers the ethics of care as the basis of resilience against the ideological and political premises of racial capitalism. As Blackness is projected as tantamount to criminality in the eyes of the authorities, the novel’s Black characters develop to foster a compromised resilience through an ethics of care that privileges “processes of connection” (Sevenhuijsen 1998, 13) as a sensible way for endurance and survival. Rejecting the individuality that is assigned to the resilient subaltern, the novel opts for collaborative acts of resilience based on a commitment to care for one another. In this vein, the ethics of care becomes a way to be resilient against discriminatory Canadian policies toward poor Black people. As Canada’s violent history and ongoing abuse toward Blacks and other racialized communities is brought to the forefront, the novel challenges the myth of Canada as a beacon of equity through its multicultural policies. Ruth, Michael, Jelly and Aisha’s reunion at the end of the novel not only “re-script[s] their belonging” (2011, 329) to use Chariandy’s own words, but also serves to emphasize the importance of the ethics of care as a particular way to be resilient “not only [for] mere survival, but also [for] flourishing in the midst of difficulties” (Fraile-Marcos 2020, 1).

NOTES

- ¹ Literary trauma studies was established in the early 2000s as a critical field which examines how literature deals with the personal and cultural aspects of trauma and its outcomes and engages with such historical and current phenomena as the Holocaust and other genocides, 9/11, climate catastrophe or the ever-present unsettled legacy of colonialism.
- ² The post-trauma paradigm, as studied by Michael Basseler (2019b), Kurtz (2018) or Balaev (2014), aims at focusing on the capacity to resist and endure rather than focusing on the suffering that accompanies the trauma paradigm.
- ³ The novel was longlisted for the 2017 Scotiabank Giller Prize and has received the 2017 Rogers Writers’ Trust Fiction Prize, the 2018 Toronto Book Award, and the 2018 Ethel Wilson Fiction Prize.
- ⁴ This nuanced form of racism relies heavily on the use of race and racial hierarchies and segregation to justify uneven power relations and make them look natural and necessary. Hence, the concept of racial capitalism makes it possible to “understand the ongoing economic subjugation [...] as well as the enormous wealth divisions that persist between the white and racialized or Black peoples” (Maynard 2017, 58).

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Resilience and ethics of care against racial capitalism in David Chariandy's *Brother*

Resilience. Ethics of Care. Racial Capitalism. Anti-Blackness. Violence. David Chariandy.

This article reads David Chariandy's elegiac novel *Brother* (2017) through the lens of resilience thinking in tandem with the ethics of care. Staged in a suffocating context of police violence and surveillance and the ideological premises of Canadian racial capitalism, the plot revolves around Francis and Michael, two Black Canadian brothers from Scarborough. The story unfolds Francis's tragic death while trying to protect his friends from the police. To counteract the Anti-Blackness that is proffered by the nation-state, the novel opts for collaborative acts of resilience based on a compromise to care for one another. The ethics of care become a way to accommodate a compromised resilience that reveals the shortcomings of Canadian multiculturalism policies.

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Words that matter: Yindyamarra, Wiradjuri resilience and the settler-colonial project in Tara June Winch's *The Yield*

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In recent decades, the concept of resilience has gained currency in various scientific disciplines (MacKinnon and Derickson 2012, 254), including the social sciences and humanities, which have also contributed to problematizing and critiquing sometimes reductive perceptions of the concept. Critical analyses of various cultural narratives within literary scholarship pointed to the complexity and double-edged nature of resilience, echoing recent critiques of resilience as having been co-opted by the neoliberal, late capitalist regime (Bracke 2016, 851) due to its capacity to move away from collective accountability for social injustices by placing emphasis on “individual responsibility, adaptability and preparedness” (Joseph 2013, 40). Such complexity is visible, among other groups of literary narratives, in contemporary Indigenous cultural production.¹ On the one hand, resilience is used to evoke the positive connotations of adaptation and persistence, highlighting survival, resistance and continuance of Indigenous peoples and their cultures – in Gerald Vizenor’s terms “survivance”² – despite settler-colonial policies of extermination and persisting pressure to assimilate. On the other hand, Indigenous narratives also started to communicate a sustained critique of resilience as perpetuating settler-colonial dominance and cultural hegemony – for example, through endorsing or even appropriating selective traditional Indigenous knowledges and principles (particularly those related to ecological awareness and land management) by environmental and eco-critical discourses, while simultaneously denying Indigenous people their political, cultural, and land sovereignty.³

Contemporary Indigenous narratives originating in settler colonies, such as Canada, the USA, Australia, and Aotearoa/New Zealand, often tell intricate stories of resistance, reclaiming, and healing, but also stories which simultaneously foreground the precarity, vulnerability, and marginalization of Indigenous lives which are still disempowered in the current settler-colonial project⁴ and governed by dominant neoliberal regimes. In his introduction to *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, Daniel Heath Justice explains that Indigenous stories have the power to “heal the spirit

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as well as the body, remind us of the greatness of where we came from as well as the greatness of who we're meant to be, so that we're not determined by the colonial narrative of deficiency" (2018, 5). Given that increasingly, Indigenous literatures are also framed within the transnational turn (Sharad 2020, 2–4) and consumed globally, even though not unproblematically (Ng 2018, 3), I believe that analyzing Indigenous narratives can be useful for a better understanding of concepts such as resilience, which on the one hand draws on the ability of the subaltern to survive and adapt but on the other it can also foreclose the possibility of other, differently organized worlds (Bracke 2016, 851). Thus, on the example of a recent Australian Indigenous novel, *The Yield* by the Wiradjuri⁵ writer Tara June Winch (2019), this article demonstrates how a contemporary literary text can be instrumental in unpacking the entangled notions outlined above and drawing attention to the double-edged nature of resilience. By close reading several key moments from the novel, it shows how the text creates intentional ambivalence by highlighting, on the one hand, the linguistic and cultural renewal (that I call resilience-as-survivance) but how it also questions resilience of Indigenous existence by pointing to the ongoing oppressive nature of the current settler-colonial project, whether in the space of mainstream museum or environmental degradation (that I call resilience-as-risk).

The Yield, awarded the prestigious Miles Franklin Literary Prize in Australia in 2020, foregrounds the dialectic of precarity and loss on the one hand, and resilience and reclaiming on the other. Three voices take turns narrating: in the present time, the young, displaced Wiradjuri woman August returns to her hometown (tellingly named Massacre Plains) from England to attend her grandfather's funeral. Similarly to many Indigenous narratives of return and healing, this character must come to terms with her Indigenous cultural legacy and family, as well as continuing dispossession and loss. In other words, August's story is one of "returning to Country, family, language, and culture" (van Neerven 2019) but also of working through both individual and collective trauma. This part of the narrative is rather conventional both in its realist style⁶ and themes which draw on the collective experience of the historical trauma of colonization. The second narrating voice belongs to August's grandfather, Albert Gondiwindi, whose life story, covering a large part of the 20th century, is encoded in the entries of the dictionary of Wiradjuri words which he was composing in the last years of his life. The dictionary plays a crucial role: not only does it provide an insight into Wiradjuri culture as the translations are always accompanied by a fragment from Albert's life, but it also reclaims the almost lost language. As such, it becomes a key piece of evidence of Wiradjuri cultural resilience in the Native Title⁷ legal battle and in preserving the Country vis-à-vis the power of extractivist industries. Albert's story-through-dictionary also provides a more experimental framing to the novel. The third narrating voice belongs to the 19th-century Lutheran missionary, Reverend Ferdinand Greenleaf, who, after decades of his service at Massacre Plains and after having witnessed the growth as well as the decline of the Mission that he established, comes to an awareness that his presence damaged, rather than benefitted the Wiradjuri. His letter that he writes at the end of his life to the British Society of Ethnography is a testimony to the 19th and early 20th century state- and

Church-induced assimilationist policies, and to the rise of nationalism and racism underlying the newly established settler nation.

RESILIENCE-AS-SURVIVANCE

The positive connotations of Indigenous resilience-as-survival are most clearly articulated through the stories of Albert and August Gondiwindi. In spite of having a first-hand experience of assimilationist and racist policies, having been taken away from his family and grown in a Boys' Home, Albert ends up leading a content, meaningful life enhanced by a happy union with his wife Elsie and their central position within the local Indigenous community. His resilience-as-survival is facilitated mainly through the guidance of his Ancestor spirits who regularly visit him (Albert calls this time-travelling) in order to teach him about Wiradjuri Country and Law, so that in due time Albert can become a fully initiated keeper of Wiradjuri culture and language. However, Albert's position is tested during the most tragic moment in his life which plagues him with guilt. He fails to protect his granddaughters, August and Jedda,⁸ both already traumatized by their absent, incarcerated parents, from being sexually abused by a member of their extended family. Jedda's attempt to entice the perpetrator away from her younger sister leads to her disappearance that keeps haunting August throughout her life, until it is later revealed that Jedda has been killed by the perpetrator. Once Albert realizes what happened and confronts the abuser, he acts according to the Wiradjuri Law, with a payback: he spears Jimmy in his leg but before he can extract the location of Jedda's body, Jimmy dies. This confrontation and execution of justice occurs completely outside of settler law and dominant regime. It could be argued that this co-existence of the two systems of law attests to the slippages in the imposition of the settler nation-state's governmentality on Indigenous populations, and the survival of the millennia-lasting system of tribal justice.

August's resilience-as-survival consists in taking over from Albert and making Wiradjuri Country and Law visible to the settler nation-state. Her journey to achieve this is both physical and spiritual. She suffers from multiple traumas while still a teenager: dysfunctional parenting, sexual abuse, and the haunting image of her missing sister lead to her anorexia, general numbness and apathy, lack of emotional response, inability to create meaningful human connections, and a tendency to run away from problems. As in many Indigenous narratives of return and healing, it is the reconnection with Country and family that finally wakes her up from the state of "long hibernation" (Winch 2019, 294). The novel is at pains to suggest, however, that this is a complex, lengthy and gradual process, which is visible, for example, in how August relates to the surrounding landscape and her home place. At first, August perceives the landscape around the Prosperous House, her family's home, from a detached perspective of a tourist: "visual heat that radiated from the split bitumen and the sparse foreboding landscape" where everything is "browner, bone drier" (13) provides a bleak outlook which is matched only by the prospect of the opening of a huge tin mine, to which everyone, including the Gondiwindi family, seems resigned. Gradually, August begins to feel at home again, not only literally in the Prosperous House

where “she remembered where everything was” (183), but also in her spirit when she starts learning, both Wiradjuri and settler way, about the history of the place. She realizes that she is to inherit the custodianship of the land from her grandfather, land which is about to be destroyed by the mining company. Suddenly, “she was here, she thought, and she cared about something and for her family for the first time in forever” (294). While everyone else dismisses the idea of Albert’s last project, August suspects early on that he was on to something, that “he was trying to explain how the land was special” (188). This would prove crucial for lodging a Native Title claim that could, in theory, stop the mine. The result of such a claim, however, would be heavily dependent on the sound evidence of what has been termed as a continuous occupation of the land by the Indigenous claimants.⁹

One piece of such evidence can be the proof of existing language. The notion of cultural resilience-as-survival helps unpack the novel’s thematization of the survival of the Wiradjuri language. This is presented through several paradoxes and ironies: while traditional Indigenous storytelling has been now conventionally recognized as an important tool and method of preserving cultures and justified as such vis-à-vis Western privileging of writing, the novel reveals that eventually it is the language recorded in a provisional written dictionary that would serve as evidence in the future Native Title claim. The following conversation between August and Aunt Nicki, a middle-class Aboriginal woman working for the town Council, points to the well-known history of Indigenous languages disappearing under the assimilationist doctrine and to the role of Native Missions in the process:

‘There’s no language here. Our people’s language is extinct, no-one speaks it any more so they can tick that box on their government forms that says “loss of cultural connection.” You see?’

‘Poppy taught us some.’

‘Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Toes song? Yeah, he taught me that too. But I mean language that is connected to this place, this landscape.’

‘Nana told me last night Poppy was writing a dictionary.’

‘Even if he was writing it, won’t change anything. They grew up on the Mish, remember, and language wasn’t allowed.’ (146)

Nevertheless, Aunt Nicki is proved wrong, as this particular language does survive in two written records: Albert’s dictionary lists fragments of both Wiradjuri language, a “language in a state of resurgence” (van Neerven 2019), and Albert’s biography.

The use of the dictionary entries also contributes to the novel’s specific poetics. Paul Sharrad stresses that the entries “present a fundamental challenge to monologic language and form” and “break narrative flow and disturb the smooth dominance of English” (2020, 11). To add to this narrative complexity, the actual *New Wiradjuri Dictionary* (2010) by Stan Grant Sr. and John Rudder, which served as a model for Albert’s dictionary, is added at the end of the novel in full length, signifying the connection with the reality outside of the fictional world of the novel. What is more, it is listed in a reversed alphabetical order, emphasizing the cultural difference even more. However, even though Albert’s dictionary gets lost after his death, his archi-

val research which August traces leads to the discovery of the original list of 115 Wiradjuri words composed by the Reverend Greenleaf in order to make a connection with the people he was trying to convert to Christianity (Winch 2019, 151). Together with Greenleaf's letter/testimony which records the history of the Prosperous Mission, it becomes a crucial piece of evidence of the Wiradjuri's survivance and also Reverend's biggest contribution and a kind of redemption for his role in the decline of Wiradjuri culture. The irony that archival research, conventionally a Western means of organizing information and knowledge, must be relied upon to bear witness to the Wiradjuri cultural survival is not lost on the readers.

RESILIENCE-AS-RISK

There are probably very many alternative models to resilience. Danny MacKinnon and Kate Driscoll Derickson, instead of resilience which they perceive as too tied to neoliberal capitalism, offer the concept of resourcefulness which, in their view, could overcome some of the limitations of resilience tied to power distribution (2012, 263). Sarah Bracke also voices an important critique of resilience as being part of neoliberal governmentality (2016, 851) and warns that resilience can contain attempts "by the centres of power to incorporate subalternity into the contemporary neoliberal political economy" (853). In this article, I relate resilience predominantly with risk as something which may increase a person's vulnerability to both external and internal factors and expose them to danger or harm. This connection can be then useful in helping counterbalance the overly positive, but already compromised connotation of the concept of resilience.

Apart from rehearsing the more conventional representation of resilience as the ability to "bounce back" and somehow to always recover from whichever catastrophe or crisis comes in the direction of Indigenous communities,¹⁰ Winch's novel also challenges this conception of resilience by critiquing the continuing and pervasive nature of the settler-colonial project and showcasing how it co-opts Indigenous resilience. This critique transpires in several moments in the novel. Firstly, there is a number of sometimes more, sometimes less subtle details that point directly to the colonial violence and the history of genocide, assimilation, and racism embedded in the settlement of Australia. Among others, it is the name of the fictional town of Massacre Plains, abbreviated by the characters to just "Massacre", that unapologetically targets the space of settler-colonial violence, one, as Ellen van Neerven reminds us in her review of *The Yield*, "without a treaty" (2019, n.p.). It is also the references to painful mementos of the 19th and 20th centuries that surface in the fragments of both Albert's and Reverend Greenleaf's stories. These mementos include policies of forced removals of Indigenous children by the authorities with the aim of creating a class of dependent, cheap labor and domestic servants; racially motivated violence and frontier brutality of early settlers in remote areas; displacement and assimilation through concentrating Indigenous families and clans in missions, making them dependent on government rations; coerced conversion to Christianity, resulting in the loss of Indigenous languages, cultures, sovereignty; and the land being gradually controlled by settler ownership. All of these markers of colonial violence func-

tion in the novel in the same way they function in most Indigenous narratives: as interventions in hegemonic narratives and sites of anti-colonial protest. They are also a reminder that Australia is a “postcolonizing”, rather than postcolonial, nation-state (Moreton-Robinson 2003, 3),¹¹ as becomes clear from the fact that the Prosperous House, home of the Gondiwindi family, must be destroyed and the inhabitants dispossessed yet again in order for the settler state (represented by the mining company) to economically prosper.

Secondly, the novel’s critique of settler colonialism is visible in the representation of Australia’s mining industry, as it demasks how the Australian nation-state’s existence and economy based on extraction of resources¹² is founded on the eradication of Indigenous sovereignty and on the possession of the land through dispossession of Indigenous peoples. This logic has been theorized by Patrick Wolfe who argues that settler colonialism “destroys to replace” (2006, 388) in the sense that in order for the settler colony to expropriate and re-possess land and resources to succeed economically, the original populations native to the land must be erased and replaced by the settler-colonial society. Thus, the key goal is the dispossession of Indigenous people, which only then leads to cultural genocide. Wolfe makes it clear that “the primary motive for elimination [of the Native] is not race (or religion, ethnicity, grade of civilization, etc.) but access to territory. Territoriality is settler colonialism’s specific, irreducible element” (2006, 388). This scenario is clearly visible in Australia where mining and other extractivist industries, alongside pastoralism and agrobusiness, have always been a major factor in taking up the land in remote parts for exploration and extraction, irrespective of close proximity of Indigenous communities and their sacred sites, thus effectively dispossessing Indigenous people.

It is well-known that mining companies use their enormous financial resources to co-opt dissent and opposition, be it environmental campaigns or Indigenous land rights claims, by various kinds of sponsoring benevolent activities, crisis communication management and investment into the local communities’ infrastructure. The novel demasks these strategies when August has a chance to see educational kits donated to the town’s school by the mining company in Massacre Plains which, not surprisingly, turn out to be indoctrinated with the company’s values and promises of prosperity, employment, and care of the community’s needs:

The graphics were as chaotic as a Happy Meal Box. Crosswords featured words like emerald, diamond, ruby, iron, ore, silver, opal. A mole in a hard hat was the mascot. He wore a tiny orange waistcoat. There were drawings of industrial drills burrowing down into the layers of the earth, a cross-section view. In one of the layers the designers had drawn a skeleton of a stegosaurus. (Winch 2019, 243)

In short, August is quick to evaluate this as “pure propaganda – bite-size, child-size, colourful, cheery brainwashing” (243). Apart from eliminating the potential opposition from the local town through promises of employment and investment (depicted in the novel by various minor characters welcoming the mine as an opportunity and targeting both green activists and the Gondiwindi family for challenging the proposal), the mining company also has to eliminate the Gondiwindi family. Not because they would be the rightful owners of the land, as it turns out that the land is legal-

ly Crown land, de facto owned by the government, but because they are attached to the land through their ancestry – in other words, they belong. And Indigenous belonging, as Aileen Moreton-Robinson explains, “continues to unsettle non-Indigenous belonging based on illegal dispossession” (2003, 4). Thus, in Wolfe’s logic of elimination, the Gondiwindi family, who threaten the interests of the settler-colonial nation-state through their belonging, must be displaced and dispossessed.

Ironically, the fact that this plan does not come to fruition is due to the presence of a group of young environmental activists who settle (as settlers do) the peak of Kengal rock, a Wiradjuri sacred site, to organize a blockade and lock-in to protest the mine. This setup seems to be pointing to a classic conflict between “green” and “black” politics, but in fact it evolves into a curiously queer encounter between August and Mandy, one of the activists, which foreshadows what is still a rare synergy between the usually white eco-activism and Indigenous land rights activism. August is supposed to be on her home territory, having the authority of coming from the line of traditional owners, and she approaches the female activist with a hint of a condescending smirk upon hearing they are “water protectors” (Winch 2019, 134). In contrast, August comes across as rather ignorant, after Mandy gives her a lecture about the geology of the Kengal rock and the general topography of the place, clearly based on her archival research, while also acknowledging its spiritual significance. August feels she has been “made small by this woman” (136) but is also impressed by her knowledge and confidence. This confidence turns queer when Mandy’s seemingly blunt “I noticed you” (137) is softened by her touch of August’s hair and compliment of her eyes. August’s confused but not unfriendly response provokes a reading that implies a sexualized subtext (even though it is not developed further in the novel) which complements the otherwise explicitly politicized dynamic between the two women, and by extension the two groups.

This dynamic is further probed in the following short exchange between August and Mandy which again indicates uneasy politics dovetailing the relationship between the two political groups whose agendas sometimes overlap but most often they clash:

‘Whose mob are you?’ August asked [...].

‘What do you mean?’

‘I mean, are you Koori or what?’¹³

‘No, I just care.’

‘That’s nice.’

‘You think I’m not allowed?’

‘I didn’t say that, I said it’s nice – it’s nice that you give a shit.’ (135–136)

The tension present in this exchange subtly refers to a long history of strained relationships between Indigenous and environmental activist groups, mostly based on the environmental organizations overlooking the intersections of racism and colonization and the implications of settler colonialism for Indigenous communities’ sovereignty (Pickerill 2018, 1123). It is the Indigenous character in this exchange, however, who offers a reconciliatory gesture and a promise of future alliance, which materializes later when the green activists, apart from orchestrating

a boycott by locking themselves to the machines, also coordinate a distraction in the form of firing the land, thus appropriating a traditional Indigenous farming technique. The strategic but spontaneous alliance between the Indigenous family and the eco-activists, based on mutual respect, is effective only to the point of attracting media attention but otherwise is too small-scale to stop the bulldozers assisted by the police.

The third aspect of the novel which unsettles the settler-colonial project is the museum – another representation, apart from the mine, of neo-colonial space and an extension of the settler-colonial project. It shows most clearly when August and Aunt Missy visit an ethnographic museum where Indigenous artefacts, including those from Wiradjuri culture, are displayed in glass cases. The visit of the two Indigenous women to look for artefacts belonging to their own culture opens into multiple meanings. They look for objects that were stolen in the past by the station-owning settler family of neighbors who, on the one hand, allowed the Gondiwindi family to stay in the Prosperous House, therefore on Country, but on the other hand they were also complicit in the history of exploiting Indigenous farmhands as cheap, most commonly unpaid labor. In a racist bout, Eddie, the last descendant of this family and August's childhood friend, shows her museum index cards that he discovered as a proof that his father donated very precious objects and artefacts to the museum, most of them much older than the European presence on the continent: message sticks, axe heads, anvil stones, wooden clubs, shields, and, finally, milling grinding stones, anvil stones and fire stones (Winch 2019, 218–219) which prove not only the presence of a sophisticated culture but also the “evidence of agricultural activity, dated: circa, 10000 years” (219). This betrayal is also framed with irony: the objects and artefacts preserved in the museum can now validate a Wiradjuri Native Title claim.

The two Gondiwindi women's visit to the museum is confrontational for them: the space teems with colonial authority, the size is intimidating, the space sterile, the displays designed to tell a familiar story of one vanishing nation and the progress of another. Declan Fry interprets the museum as a “fraught site” which embodies “liberal condescension and masquerade, and the hypocritical tableau of milling security guards who intervene to prevent the two Wiradjuri women from photographing Country” (2020, n.p.). While the visit makes the aunt “sick to the guts” (Winch 2019, 263) and in her vexed state she even confronts the guards, August likes the museum and is even prepared to go through the humiliating experience of having to fill in paperwork in order to “book a viewing” of the collection of her own culture's artefacts (264). However, at that moment, August also begins to feel the weight of the custodianship of the land inherited from her grandfather:

August wanted to hand the papers back and to tell them everything, draw them close and whisper that their lives had turned out wrong, that she and her family were meant to be powerful, not broken, tell them that something bad happened before any of them was born. Tell them something was stolen from a place inland, from the five hundred acres where her people lived. [...] tell them that she wasn't extinct, that they didn't need the exhibition after all. (264)

This quote communicates the core values of Indigenous resilience-as-survival, but the power of the message is undermined by the fact that August only imagines voicing such an empowered critique of the settler-colonial space but in the end, she does not and remains silenced.

As the novel comes to a conclusion, the resilience of Wiradjuri culture surfaces through various fragments: it mirrors in Albert's tape on which he speaks (as opposed to writing the dictionary), carefully pronouncing the Wiradjuri words; in the detailed anthropological research based on the museum collections which estimates the Gondiwindi culture to be thousands of years old, "tick[ing] the boxes to classify as a civilization" (307); in the burial ground containing the bones of former Indigenous Mission residents, which was unearthed when the mining bulldozers started digging; and, finally, in the "resurrected language, brought back from extinction" (307) by both Albert's spoken and Reverend's written lists of words that matter, words which had the power, if not to stop the mine, then at least to lead to events that did. In this optimistic scenario, even the land seems to be partly restored as the river, dry for decades, fills with water after heavy rains which then impacts the resilience of the entire ecosystem.

YINDYAMMARA, IN LIEU OF A CONCLUSION

One of the Wiradjuri words in Albert's dictionary is *yindyamarra*. It translates somewhat uneasily into English as respect, but its complex meanings also include to give honor, go slow, take responsibility, live well, show gentleness and kindness (Burambabili Gulbali 2017, n.p.).¹⁴ For the Wiradjuri people, Albert writes in his dictionary, *yindyamarra* is "a way of life" (Winch 2019, 106). It could be argued that it is a principle that may be juxtaposed to the concept of resilience as a yet another alternative, one that explains better the intricacies of Indigenous lives. In the novel, Albert's dictionary entry explains that "only equals can share respect, otherwise it's a game of masters and slaves – someone always has the upper hand when they are demanding respect" (106). Having the knowledge of one's own language is a key player in this equality, but the novel goes beyond the mere demonstration of the resilience of Wiradjuri language and culture. Indeed, it places emphasis on the inseparable relation between the language and the land, just as Stan Grant explains in an interview that, "the language doesn't belong to people, it belongs to land" and that for the Wiradjuri, "language is who you are and where you belong" (Burambabili Gulbali 2017, n.p.).

However, the novel also presents an interesting paradox in terms of who calls for respect towards the language and the land. Again, it is the white female environmental activist, Mandy, who not only reminds August of the significance of Indigenous languages for cultural renewal and by extension the Native Title, but she also stresses that it is imperative for settlers to learn at least "a handful of words [of] the local language" (Winch 2019, 298), just like migrants or even tourists do after they arrive in a foreign country. It is Mandy who voices a critique of settlers who "don't have the vision, the respect, to bother learning the native language!" (299) In other words, it is not just the preservation of the Wiradjuri language but also the respect shown

by the settlers (and any other migrants) who must learn this language, that can secure the equality Albert Gondiwindi had in mind. Mandy also seems to understand that “learn[ing] to respect the culture where we [settlers] live [...] [is] learn[ed] through looking after the land” (299), thus adhering to the principle of *yindyamarra*. The novel even performs this textually when it opens and concludes with Albert’s voice which introduces and comes back to the Wiradjuri word for Country, prompting the readers to try pronouncing it themselves: “*Ngurambang* – can you hear it? – *Ngu-rambang*. If you say it right it hits the back of your mouth and you should taste the blood in your words. Every person around should learn the word for *country* in the old language, the first language” (1). This echoes the imperative for settlers formulated by Mandy: they should not only hear but also speak, feel and taste the Indigenous language. This could be a central message of the novel: it shifts the weight from resilience which is imposed on Indigenous peoples and their cultures towards decolonization, meaning that the burden of active engagement with Indigenous cultures and languages is upon the settler population. This could also tie in nicely with another important concept listed in Albert’s dictionary, *gulba-ngi-dyili-nya*, “to know yourself, be at peace with yourself” (157) – in other words, perhaps a more effective alternative to reconciliation.

NOTES

- ¹ The term Indigenous is used as a neutral term referring to the native inhabitants of settler colonies of Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the USA. The term Aboriginal refers specifically to Indigenous peoples of Australia. This article uses Indigenous, Australian Indigenous, and Aboriginal interchangeably.
- ² Vizenor first introduced the term survivance in his 1993 book *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance* but since then he has been developing and commenting on the concept in other, more recent publications. In *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence* (2008) which Vizenor edited and introduced with the chapter “Aesthetics of Survivance”, he defines and describes survivance in the following way: “Native survivance is an active sense of presence over absence, deracination, and oblivion; survivance is the continuance of stories, not a mere reaction, however pertinent. [...] Survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, detractions, obtrusions, the unbearable sentiments of tragedy, and the legacy of victimry” (1).
- ³ For a detailed discussion of how global calls for Indigenous resilience may perpetuate colonial practices, see Lindroth and Sinevaara-Niskanen 2019.
- ⁴ Settler colonialism can be defined as “an ongoing system of power that perpetuates the genocide and repression of indigenous peoples and cultures. Essentially hegemonic in scope, settler colonialism normalizes the continuous settler occupation, exploiting lands and resources to which indigenous peoples have genealogical relationships” (Cox 2017).
- ⁵ Wiradjuri refers to the largest Aboriginal group in New South Wales. They are the traditional custodians of areas bordered by the Macquarie, Lachlan, and Murrumbidgee Rivers (Narradera, n.p.).
- ⁶ In their reviews, both van Neerven and Sharrad refer to the style as “Aboriginal realism” (van Neerven 2019, n.p.) and “social realism of a long line of Australian novels” (Sharrad 2020, 10). However, I contest this perspective as *The Yield* arguably interweaves a realist plotline with passages informed by Aboriginal mythology and spirituality (e.g., Albert talking to and being guided by the spirits of his Ancestors). In addition, the novel draws on the so-called Aboriginal Gothic, which works with the concept of haunting and the idea that monstrosity dwells in the colonial violence (see Bellette 2022).

- ⁷ Native Title is the result of the Native Title Act passed in 1993 which reacted to the Australia High Court decision in “Mabo v. Queensland (No. 2)”. In this so-called “Mabo Case”, the doctrine of *terra nullius* was overturned and the fact that Indigenous people have occupied the land prior to European settlement was recognized. Native Title sought to recognize the claims by Aboriginal traditional owners to their lands (for more details, see AIATSIS 2022).
- ⁸ The name Jedda resonates in Australian cultural production as a strong reference to a 1955 film of the same title made by Charles Chauvel. In the film, Jedda is an Aboriginal girl growing up on a station in the care of a white woman and raised to assimilate and forget about her Indigeneity. Alice Bellette claims that Winch’s strategy in using the name Jedda might also be “subverting the settler-colonial gothic trope of the lost white child, where Jedda as a character may also represent the spectre of missing Indigenous children across the globe but particularly in Australia, with its ongoing racist policies of child removal” (2022, n.p.).
- ⁹ The Native Title claims involve extremely complex legal proceedings. Indigenous claimants are supposed to prove a continuous and unbroken connection to their Country since colonization. However, in many cases this is very difficult, if not impossible, due to the systemic nation-state’s policies of extermination and assimilation of Indigenous peoples and their cultural genocide. For an overview, see a detailed explanation of the Native Title process on the Kimberley Council website (Kimberley Land Council).
- ¹⁰ Thinking about Indigenous resilience cannot bypass the increasingly vocal literary discourse which frames colonization as an apocalyptic event that Indigenous people already survived. This framework has become popular among an increasing number of contemporary Indigenous writers who explore post-apocalyptic futures and Indigenous survival in genre fiction such as sci-fi, horror, speculative fiction, dystopic fiction, fantasy, and futuristic fiction. Critically acclaimed Australian examples of such fiction by Indigenous writers include Alexis Wright’s *the Swan Book* (2013) and Claire Coleman’s *Terra Nullius* (2017b). Coleman herself commented on Indigenous apocalypse: “We don’t have to imagine an apocalypse, we survived one. We don’t have to imagine a dystopia, we live in one” (2017a).
- ¹¹ Australian Indigenous scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson uses the term “postcolonizing” to refer to Australia as the nation-state in which “migrancy and dispossession indelibly mark configurations of belonging, home and place” (2003, 23) and where “the active, the current and the continuing nature of the colonizing relationship [...] positions us [Indigenous people in Australia] as belonging but not belonging” (2003, 38n).
- ¹² Mining is a major contributor to the Australian economy; the country is one of the world’s largest exporters of coal, iron ore, bauxite, alumina, and many other resources. About 60 percent of mining sites in Australia are found in remote spaces and in close proximity to Indigenous communities (Transparency International Australia 2020, n.p.). In many remote places, opening or operating a mine is highly controversial and the relationships between Indigenous and other rural communities and mining companies are often very tense.
- ¹³ “Koori” is a term used for Indigenous people from south-east Australia, predominantly New South Wales and Victoria.
- ¹⁴ The complexities of the concept of *yindymarra* as a Wiradjuri way of life are introduced and explained in a short educational video “Yindymarra Yambuwan”, all in Wiradjuri language, prepared in collaboration with the Wiradjuri community and patroned by Dr Stan Grant Sr. AM, Flo Grant and Jimmy Ingram. The project is part of the website created by Burambabili Gulbali Incorporated association with the aim to “manage and maintain [First Nations’] own knowledges, identities, and ways of being and living” (2017, n.p.).

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Words that matter: Yindyamarra, Wiradjuri resilience and the settler-colonial project in Tara June Winch's *The Yield*

Indigenous resilience. Resilience-as-survivance. Yindyamarra. Tara June Winch. *The Yield*.

This article explores the implications of the concept of resilience in contemporary Indigenous narratives in which resilience is commonly evoked in reference to the adaptation and persistence of Indigenous peoples and their cultures despite the settler-colonial policies of extermination and persisting pressure to assimilate. Simultaneously, however, Indigenous narratives also present a sustained critique of resilience as perpetuating settler-colonial dominance and cultural hegemony through co-opting Indigenous adaptability by global neoliberal governmentality. The analytical part uses the example of a recent Australian Indigenous novel, *The Yield* by the Wiradjuri writer Tara June Winch (2019), to demonstrate how a contemporary literary text can be instrumental in unpacking the entangled, double-edged nature of resilience. A close reading of several key moments from the novel points to its intentional ambiguities which not only highlight the linguistic and cultural renewal (which I call resilience-as-survivance) but also problematize Indigenous resilience by critiquing the ongoing, oppressive nature of the current settler-colonial project, whether in the space of the mainstream museum or environmental degradation (which I call resilience-as-risk).

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Violence, relation and beauty in Toni Jensen's "Women in the Fracklands"

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NATIVE AMERICAN WRITING AND RESILIENCE

In this article I offer a culture-specific and narrative-focused contribution to the current theory of resilience – which is gaining relevance in Indigenous studies in general and Native American studies in particular – based on an analysis of “Women in the Fracklands”, by Métis US writer and professor Toni Jensen. This autobiographical essay, originally published in 2017, became the starting piece of *Carry: A Memoir of Stolen Land* (2020), a memoir-in-essays composed of sixteen sections which weave personal narrative with history to draw a map of violence in America. It is mostly focused on contemporary gun violence, but also includes family and workplace violence, mass shootings, women’s rape, trafficking and murder, as well as the ongoing history of exploitation of Indigenous peoples and lands. The author, born and raised in rural Iowa, mentions her Irish descent and identifies as Métis through her paternal line (2020, 175). On interview, she has vindicated the presence of Métis people in the US, where she grew without literary role models until she read Louise Erdrich in her twenties (Smith 2021). The situation of the Métis people, or the mixture of an Indigenous tribe with French – sometimes Irish or Scots Irish – trappers and traders, is very different in Canada – her family is originally from Alberta (Smith 2021) – where they have been a government recognized Indigenous group since 1982. Although she embraces a positive cultural connection to her late grandmother and the memory of her care, songs and stories, the narrator’s relation to her parents – especially her violent Métis father – is complicated, to say the least. Jensen’s identification as Indigenous is thus presented as both inheritance and choice, for she finds a sense of community and purpose in her involvement with issues that have to do with Indigenous peoples in general and women in particular, like the Dakota Access Pipeline protests (NoDAPL) and the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women movement (MMIW). Hence, her identification and activism under-

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score the common struggle of North American Indigenous peoples against the settler colonial forces on both sides of the border.

As my analysis of “Women in the Fracklands” sets out to prove, Jensen exposes the overlapping of violence against land and humans – with a special emphasis on violence against Indigenous women in and around fracking sites – and articulates relationality and beauty as signposts of activism and resurgence. I consider her unveiling of the Indigenous environmental ethics of interdependency an essential decolonizing imperative, insofar as it is the only potentially effective way to respond to the combined forces of settler colonialism, global capitalism and the sexism upon which both rest. Hence, in spite of the nature of the issues she deals with, Jensen resists pathologization or victimization and her stated intention is to transmit a sense of “the beauty of the landscape and the tribal history of each place” (McEwen 2020, 143). With this in mind, I examine how the text articulates the inextricable connection between bodies and places that characterizes Indigenous relational worldviews (Coulthard 2014; Simpson 2017), and thus participates in the necessary reconceptualization of Native American resilience.

In the context of indigeneity, and most clearly when dealing with climate change and its impacts, resilience is brought to the fore as a strength of Indigenous peoples which enables them to cope and prosper, and it is articulated in three fundamental themes, namely, adaptation, vulnerability and care (Lindroth and Sinevaara-Niskanen 2016, 131). Native Americans, specifically, have often been set as symbols of resilience in the face of genocide, as examples of “human survival and resilience under the most adverse conditions” (Grandbois and Sanders 2009, 578). These conditions include, but are not limited to, settler colonial strategies of dispossession (loss of lives and lifeways, stealing of lands, forced removal), assimilation (the allotment policy, boarding schools and the taking of children from their homes, urban relocation programs), and extractivism (exploitation of Indigenous bodies, lands and cultures), all of which leads to a legacy of historical transgenerational trauma that continues to this day. In the last few years, a considerable number of studies have been published about the resilience of specific Native American demographic groups, emphasizing kinship, culture, the sense of place, storytelling and spirituality as their main protective factors.¹ Additionally, some contributions to the theoretical foundation of Native resilience have been offered, like the braided resiliency framework, which accounts for “mind, body and spiritual forms of resilience” (Elm et al. 2016, 358). Needless to say, the various ways in which Native Americans struggle to thrive in today’s world while maintaining their cultural identity, as observed in the work of Indigenous scholars, artists and activists, still deserve more visibility. At the same time, the persistence of the sexist and racist structures of settler colonialism compels us to examine how resilience is highly compromised through rupture, dispossession and trauma. In light of the particular circumstances of the Indigenous peoples of the United States, we should start by reflecting on whether this is the most adequate frame to account for such conditions.

Resilience is both an extremely useful and promising concept and one that is ambiguous and controverted, to such an extent that, depending on how the main

elements of resilience – namely, heterogeneity and volatility – are “mobilized in different iterations of resilience, they can serve conservative or progressive political aims” (O’Brien 2017a, 41). Exposing the “alignment of the discourse of resilience and neoliberal ideology” (Fraile-Marcos 2020, 3) is especially important in this context, for viewing Indigenous peoples as more resilient because they have survived the terrible effects of colonialism may be used to obscure the present conditions of their oppression. In fact, resilience has been considered “a technique of neoliberal governance” (Lindroth and Sinevaara-Niskanen 2016, 135) which sets out the definition of “the proper and responsible indigenous being” (131) as “vulnerable, adaptive and caretaking” (139) and excludes “those ways of being that do not exhibit the expected essentialised features of indigeneity” (139). As a result, “[a]s long as indigenous peoples are reduced to resilient beings, they will not be political” (139). We should thus see them as so much more than merely resilient beings, and resilience should be reconceptualized to match their current political vindications.

In this respect, we need to challenge the understanding of the progress from trauma and dispossession to resilience and healing as a linear kind of narrative. These are all complex, dynamic stages that are constantly being defined and negotiated as part of a spectrum, colonialism is not over, and there is no original shape or previous stable system to go back to. Resilience is not a finish line, it is not a process that can ever be completed or fixed, and it is by no means the opposite of transformation, of the flow of life. We can continue by remembering that resilience is both individual and communal, human and environmental, and that the forces that require its activation are not only external but also structural. Moreover, “resilience as a discourse and as a concept itself cannot be universally secured through ‘one-size-fits-all’ solutions” (Amo-Agyemang 2021, 7). Instead, we need to anchor the study of resilience “in the cultural, historical, and geographical specificity from which distinct notions of resilience emerge” (Fraile-Marcos 2020, 17–18). Last but not least, resilience should not be used by non-Indigenous peoples as a means to extract knowledge about human survival under adverse conditions in a way that apprehends indigeneity as a primitive, close-to-nature entity, or as an excuse for not taking responsibility for how neoliberalism benefits us. In sum, we need to listen to Indigenous peoples’ own resilience-building as opposed to trying to impose any critical frame on their lives, experiences or artistic expressions.

The connection of narrative and resilience has been emphasized by resilience theorists like Susie O’Brien, who claims that “resilience is a narrative, a collective fiction of the possibility for surviving present and future disasters” (2017b, 61), or Ana María Fraile-Marcos, who posits that “stories are not only repositories of ancestral knowledge but also agents of change intertwined with global processes” (2020, 12). In the specific context of Native American cultures, narrative has often been associated to identity and cultural survival, to such an extent that storytelling is generally considered the key to Indigenous literary activism and resurgence. Yet, from a non-Indigenous perspective, this association should be handled with care. First, underscoring the importance of the storytelling tradition should not be understood as referring to the past exclusively. Stories were never meant to be fixed or static; they

are dynamic, contradictory, changing, and they come in different expressive forms. Second, tying storytelling with resilience appears to affirm the centrality of stories to Indigenous life but “in practice, it arguably reinforces colonialism by simultaneously upholding stereotypes of traditional Indigenous culture and framing storytelling within neoliberal models of resilience” (O’Brien 2020, 43). Stories should not be “disembedded from the human and nonhuman relationships they express and reduced to tools for enhancing productive capacity” (43). Leanne Simpson also expressed her concern with the risk of making Indigenous resurgence merely cultural and obscuring its political component (2017, 49–50). Hence, it is important to highlight a definition of “resilience as embedded in Indigenous body and land sovereignty” (De Finney 2017, 11), and to remember that Native American stories are, above all, an expression of life as relationship.

“THE WORK OF STITCHING YOURSELF BACK TOGETHER”: RELATIONALITY AS EMBODIMENT OF TEXT, BODY, LAND

In Native American worldviews, relationality is foundational “to the nature of being” (Gonzales 2020, 2) and “to the world’s structure” (6), for “relationships formed the basis of reality” (1). Being is understood as being-with, which involves a sense of openness that includes all there is, animate or inanimate, other people, other creatures, the present and the past. Such emphasis on relations is made manifest most clearly in the Indigenous place-centered ethic that Glen Coulthard describes as “grounded normativity”, a mode of reciprocal relationship which teaches us about “living our lives in relation to one another and our surroundings in a respectful, non-dominating and nonexploitative way” (2014, 60). This points to a culture-specific understanding of embodiment, since, as Simpson states,

the original knowledge, coded and transmitted through complex networks, says that everything we need to know about everything in the world is contained within Indigenous bodies, and that these same Indigenous bodies exist as networked vessels, or constellations across time and space intimately connected to a universe of nations and beings. (2017, 21)

Thus, in the Native American context, embodiment refers to the lived experience of peoples in connection to the land, and is articulated through storytelling. Pointing to the interrelation of narrative, place and bodies, “Women in the Fracklands” engages in a “body poetic” which, as Neil McLeod claims in his theorization of Cree poetic discourse, “connects our living bodies to the living Earth around us” (2014, 89). In his view, “[t]hrough relations, we are able to create the web of understanding of our embodied locations, and extend it to a wider context of collective historicity and through a poetics grounded in dialogue and an open-ended flow of narrative understanding” (94).

Relationality is the key motif of “Women in the Fracklands”, both at the formal level – with its articulation of an embodied aesthetics of resilience that emerges from a direct engagement with the world – and at the level of content, including a reflection on narrative as constructing reality and theorizing being as being-with. The text is segmented in six numbered sections, juxtaposing a variety of storylines

which combine personal and historical narrative. Jensen plays with generic categories, and the text is simultaneously memoir, essay, poetic prose, history, natural philosophy, ecological treatise and activist manifesto. It is made out of fragments which are stitched together through association, approximation and evocation. Interestingly, using the second person instead of an autobiographical “I”, the text requires reader involvement, calling on “you” to come to terms with the strikingly contrasted images of decadence and resilience that Jensen presents us with. This recalls Hertha Wong’s theorization of Native American autobiography as “community-life-speaking” (1992, 20), a definition which underscores its communal and oral nature. It also points to the “co-creative” nature of meaning in storytelling through the collaborative efforts of listeners-readers (Brill de Ramírez 2015, 4) which the reader-scholar is urged to have in the presence of Indigenous memoir, to allow them to come into relationship with and become part of the story (Portillo 2017, 9). Moreover, making language not only an artistic and activist tool but also a theme in itself, Jensen engages with dictionary definitions – the Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary accompanies her as she writes – to examine the different layers of meaning of certain words, and to connect one topic to another. All this is in tune with Native American women’s autobiographical discourses, more often than not “multiple-voiced life stories” which “cannot be confined by generic definitions of autobiography that are grounded in an individual privileged subjectivity” and “offer critical paradigms for rereading and unmapping indigenous multilayered histories and identities” (2).

Because the Native Americans’ relation to their lands is the ultimate settler colonial objective, the reconnection of Indigenous bodies to the land that the project of Indigenous resurgence is based on (Simpson 2011, 2017) is an essential element of resistance and decolonization. In fact, “Indigeneity centers on cultivating relationships in a given place in order to regenerate life” (Gonzales 2020, 3), which is exactly what Jensen’s text sets out to do. The correspondence of land, human life and language is established from the first scene, located in Magpie Road, which is part of the Little Missouri National Grassland in western North Dakota: “On Magpie Road, the colors are in riot. Sharp blue sky over green and yellow tall grass that rises and falls like water in the North Dakota wind” (Jensen 2020, 3). This scene of land echoing water is part of a larger map of storied places that Jensen is drawing in words through contrast and connection. Yet, the landscape is threatened by men in gear the narrator mistakenly takes as hunters, and as she tells us soon after,

Magpie Road lies about two hundred miles north and west of the Standing Rock Reservation, where thousands of Indigenous people and their allies have come together to protect the water, where sheriff’s men and pipeline men and National Guardsmen have been donning their riot gear, where those men still wait, where they still hold tight to their riot gear. (4)

Magpie Road and Standing Rock are connected through the violence of men in gear – sheriff’s men, pipeline men, National Guardsmen – as a response to Indigenous peoples’ defense of their bodies, lands and waters. The violent reaction from the au-

thorities that the water protectors at Standing Rock have met with is just the tip of the iceberg of the exploitative colonial and sexist political, social and economic structures. Not coincidentally,

Magpie Road is part of the Bakken, a shale formation lying deep under the birds, the men in the truck, you, this road. The shale has been forming over millions of years through pressure, through layers of sediment becoming silt. The silt becomes clay, which becomes shale. All of this is because of the water. The Bakken is known as a marine shale – meaning, once, here, instead of endless grass, there lay endless water. (4–5)

The shale, lying deep under layers of sediment as a result of years of pressure, is always in the process of becoming: from sediment to silt, to clay, to shale. Similarly, the power of time and the pressures of history are the factors that determine the nature of the land – and the people – today. Historical and cultural trauma “is passed down, generation to generation, [...] it lives in the body” (12–13). Yet, as the narrator admits, “On a road like this, you are never alone. There is grass, there is sky, there is wind” (13). It is precisely by connecting to the world around her that this narrator can find the language to express and recreate herself as a being in relation: “You wrote things down. You began the work of stitching yourself back together. You did this on repeat until the parts hung together in some approximation of self” (13).

“YOU CARRY THEIRS, AND THEY CARRY YOURS”: RESISTING WASTE BY NAMING TROUBLE

The result of what Jensen describes as an overflow of crime – rape, human trafficking, and an epidemic of missing Indigenous women – is that Indigenous lands and bodies are treated as waste. However, there is no resignation to remain the “wasted lives” (Bauman 2004) or “ungrievable lives” (Butler 2004) that settler colonialism categorizes them as, and there is still place for examples of growth and regeneration. Thus, whenever lands and bodies are invaded and threatened, the reaction is to protect them by strengthening community. This is made most visibly in the water protectors’ camp to protest the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) or Bakken Pipeline (2016–2017), which evidences how the seeds of resurgence are planted in the wastelands. It is obvious that the individual and the group – people, lands – are attacked together, that sexism and colonialism work together, so they must be denounced together, resisted together. In her exposure of how bodies, land and all beings are the victim of violence around fracking sites, bearing witness to sexist and racist events and giving literary voice to the victims, Jensen is connecting her memoir to testimonio, “an affirmation of the individual subject, even of individual growth and transformation, but in connection with a group or class situation marked by marginalization, oppression, and struggle” (Beverley 1989, 23).

Described as a threat to birds, women and the land, men are the ones who violate this previously fertile land and convert it into a wasteland, a place of death:

Men drill down into the shale using water and chemicals to perform the act we call hydraulic fracturing or fracking. [...] In the Bakken in 2001, more than a thousand accidental releases of oil or wastewater were reported, and many more go unreported. Grass won’t

grow after a brine spill, sometimes for decades. River fish die and are washed ashore to lie on the dead grass. (Jensen 2020, 4–5)

Due to greedy human action, the Bakken is thus the symbol of utter waste, compared to Chernobyl (9). Yet, “[t]he Bakken is not Chernobyl because the Bakken is no accident” (9). The extractive industry here is part of the unfinished business of settler colonialism, which treats Indigenous lands and bodies as waste through overexploitation and violation.

Moreover, this kind of violence is unambiguously gendered. As the narrator finishes photographing the grass that looks like water in Magpie Road, the two men she took for hunters – who are actually pipeline employees in their gear – make their second pass, revving and slowing, threatening her with a gun:

They are not bird hunters. This is not a sporting moment. The way time suspends indicates an off-season moment. The one in the button-down motions to you out the window with his handgun and he smiles and says things that are incongruous with his smiling face. (5–6)

The men are, in fact, hunting, and the narrator is the prey, in an area where “[t]he influx of men, of workers’ bodies, into frackland towns brings an overflow of crime” (6) which especially affects Indigenous women, raped, trafficked and murdered at alarming rates. Driving around the fracklands area to do research for a novel, the narrator draws a map of violence against women, talks to victims, stays in hotels, documents the sites of assaults and human trafficking. A parking space at the Wolfcamp Shale in Texas is full of trucks and “[i]n the morning, the parking lot is all trash can. Beer bottles and used condoms and needles, the nighttime overflow” (7). At a different hotel between South Dakota and Wyoming, upon witnessing the transaction of a roughneck and a hotel clerk, she illustrates the transient and ambivalent nature of survival and the objectification of women in the fracklands area, “a place that’s all commerce”: “The men sway across the lot, drunk-loud, and one says to the other, ‘Hey, look at that,’ and you are the only *that* there. When the other replies, ‘No, I like the one in my room just fine,’ you are sorry and grateful for the *one* in an unequal measure” (8). Part of her fracklands protocol is to take photographs of the rooms she stays in, rooms where women are bought and sold (6), then she uploads the pictures to a website that helps find women who are trafficked, who have gone missing.² She has learned to be patient and wait to perform this ritual until she has checked out of her room, “[b]ecause it is very, very difficult to sleep in a hotel room once you learn a woman’s gone missing from it” (6).

These individual efforts are the only way to try to keep herself and other women safe in a context where the police represents another form of state-sanctioned violence, as seen in the series of common questions in victim’s interrogation, shaped as accusations: “Why were you there on the road?; What were you wearing, there on the road?; Why didn’t you call the police?; Why were you by yourself?; What did you do, after?” (10–13). The narrator’s answers delve in details of violence against Indigenous women, who “are almost three times more likely than other women to be harassed, to be raped, to be sexually assaulted” (10), connected to her early memories

of violence – “Because your first memory of water is of your father working to drown your mother” (11) – or to violence against Indigenous peoples – the “water cannon” at Standing Rock, the dog cages in the Sheriff’s Department to contain the “overflow” of arrested protesters (12). All this is related to violence against the environment epitomized by the construction of the DAPL, but not limited to it. The violence on the land connects us all, affects us all, “[b]ecause everywhere is upriver or down” (11). This is why she is drawing this map of violence, unveiling its different layers and intersections: “Because these times make necessary the causing of trouble, the naming of it” (11). She does so by offering her testimony for the sake of the larger community, acknowledging her individual experience in connection: “Because all roads lead to the body and through it. Because too many of us have these stories and these roads and these seasons. Because you carry theirs and they carry yours, and in this way, there is a measure of balance” (11).

“BECAUSE THEY LIVED, YOU CARRY THE NEWS”: COMMUNITY, HISTORY AND RESILIENCE

Part of the work of stitching the self back together comes from the inseparability of time and space, whereby Jensen connects these times with other times, the stories of which are all written on bodies and lands. The historical perspective is essential for her account of resilience, and being the descendant of people who survived entails a responsibility in the present:

Because to the north and west of Magpie Road, in the Cypress Hills of southern Saskatchewan, in 1873, when traders and wolf hunters killed more than twenty Assiniboiné, mostly women and children in their homes, the Métis hid in those hills and lived. Because they lived, they carried the news. Because they lived, you carry the news. Because the massacre took place along the banks of a creek that is a tributary that feeds into the greater Missouri River. (Jensen 2020, 12)

This reference to a massacre that occurred in Canada near the US border, where both Canadians and Americans were involved, points to the Indigenous peoples’ common struggle against the forces of colonialism, and to survival as a political act of resistance. Moreover, the narrator thus uncovers the different layers of violence and historical trauma that converge today, establishing a direct line between past and present, her Métis ancestors and their descendants. By connecting rivers and people, she acts as a symbolic tributary, writing to denounce and overcome inherited trauma, and to fight for justice. Clearly, survival is both individual and communal, and it includes people and rivers, the dead and the living, past, present and future: “Because these times and those times and all times are connected through lands and bodies and water” (12).

This sense of self in radical relation to others is the key to Jensen’s activist response to settler colonial wasting, and it allows her to end on a positive note in the final section of her text. Here she describes Standing Rock during the NoDAPL protest as a place of struggle where one risks becoming a past-tense body, freezing in a blizzard, being bitten by police dogs, dying of hypothermia after being shot with the water cannon or struck by a tear gas canister. The irony of having water cannons used against

the water protectors in the harsh North Dakota winter serves to highlight institutional violence against the NoDAPL protesters. It also enhances the idea of incongruity introduced in the previous description of the men who chased the narrator while driving in the fracklands, whose smiles showed no correspondence with their words and intentions. Such incongruity – or the inconsistency of things that are expected to be in correspondence – cannot be said to be fully overcome in the end, of course. Yet, the text offers a restoration of a sense of correspondence based on a relational conception of time and an emphasis on community which becomes the key to this narrative of resilience.

In spite of violence, then, this is also a place where the people gather “to pray, to talk of peace” (14); where the protesters welcome helpers from other tribes and conditions; where life flows and single moments can be precious and hopeful. At Standing Rock, the narrator accounts for the making of a home, which may be temporary yet beautiful. As she says, “You sort box upon box of donation blankets and clothes. You walk a group of children from one camp to another so they can attend school” (13). These children may be treated as waste by settler colonial powers, as less valuable than the cows who are allowed to graze on this land and protect their calves (14), but they also signify regeneration and continuity. In this place of violence, the narrator vindicates the way “the days pass in rhythm” (13) and life never stops flowing: “The night before the first walk, it has rained hard and the dirt of the road has shifted to mud. The dirt or mud road runs alongside a field, which sits alongside the Cannonball River, which sits alongside and empties itself into the Missouri” (13–14). Rain mixes with dirt, which shifts to mud, which becomes part of one river, then another. The narrator does not romanticize – the water is not always clear or clean – but posits that we can always count on constant transformation. The flow of time, an important motif in this part of the text, is associated to resilience, as seen in the integration of the narrative present with the near future, which she introduces by means of prolepsis:

On this day, it is still fall. Winter will arrive with the Army Corps’ words – no drilling under Lake Oahe, no pipeline under Lake Oahe. The oil company will counter, calling the pipeline “vital,” saying they “fully expect to complete construction of the pipeline without any additional rerouting in and around Lake Oahe.” The weather will counter with a blizzard. After the words and the blizzard, there will be a celebration. (14–15)

The narrative moves back and forth in time, anticipating the good news about the pipeline to come in the following winter, which will again turn into bad news for the protesters. These transitions point to a story which cannot be accounted for in linearity, because it is larger than single individuals or a specific community. It is a story of struggle and resilience which continues even if we know there will be ups and downs, even if we cannot be certain about the final outcome.

Although, expectedly, we are not offered a closed, happy ending, the narrator exerts her control over the story to water the seeds of resilience and leave us with the possibility of hope. The protester community at Standing Rock is a sign of collective power, proof of how when people come together for something fair and urgent, things change for good, even if change is not always visible. After anticipating the fu-

ture of the struggle, the narrator comes back to the narrative present and to the beauty of the single moment:

This bridge lies due south of the Backwater Bridge of the water cannons or hoses. But this bridge, this day, holds a better view. The canoes have arrived from the Northwest tribes, the Salish tribes. They gather below the bridge on the water and cars slow alongside you to honk and wave. Through their windows, people offer real smiles. (15)

As opposed to the incongruence of the gunned men who threatened and chased her earlier, these smiles mean exactly what they are supposed to mean: there is a direct connection between the inside and the outside, the signifier and the signified. The water protectors are all fighting together for a common purpose, caring for the land and for one another. The result is correspondence, beauty. The final paragraph enhances these ideas and connects them to ritual in relation to nature:

That night, under the stars, fire-lit, the women from the Salish tribes dance and sing. [...] You stand with your own arms resting on the shoulders of the schoolchildren, and the dancers, these women, move their arms in motions that do more than mimic water, that conjure it. Their voices are calm and strong, and they move through the gathering like quiet, like water, like something that will hold, something you can keep, even if only for this moment. (15)

Thus is a single moment made into a momentous event which places great value on beauty in spite of violence, and which changes the focus from pain to agency and self-empowerment.

CONCLUSION

“Women in the Fracklands” is an important contribution to autobiographical writing by Native American women “who tell and write their stories of survivance” and articulate “a place-based and land-based language”, whose “autobiographical discourses express communal storytelling practices that embody ancestral identities across multiple regions, times, and spaces” (Portillo 2017, 17). It also offers an interesting, culture-specific view on Indigenous resilience which articulates the ethical, epistemological and ontological value of Indigenous relationality, challenging the settler colonial logic of categorization, and becoming a decolonial tool of self-awareness and empowerment. The text exemplifies how the complex integration of body, text and nature that articulates contemporary Native American identities is both rooted in place and in a constant journey; grounded in tradition and intent on living in the present and the future. Understanding that we are relational beings in connection to the world – including other beings, the land, stories, and history – is a call to remain both humble and hopeful. We know that making people and lands into waste is not a mere side effect of settler colonialism and neoliberalism; it is right at the center of this ongoing exploitative project, which is not only racist but also deeply sexist. As Jensen denounces in “Women in the Fracklands”, bodies, lands and waters are being violated; yet, it is possible to react against their invasion and proposed destruction in an alliance that emphasizes agency and regeneration, denouncing the present conditions of oppression and thus reinforcing sovereignty on a par with resilience. The Salish women the narrator admires at the end of the text

are much more than simple victims or waste bodies, although obviously this is part of how they are treated. Yet, here they are, dancing together, reinforcing the group, mimicking and conjuring water, bringing an ocean to the middle of this wasteland, showing, as Leanne Simpson would say, that “after everything, we are still here” (2011, 12), and demonstrating the beauty of resistance, and the resistance in beauty.

NOTES

¹ See for example Grandbois and Sanders 2009; Elm et al. 2016; Burnette 2018; or Tolliver-Lynn et al. 2021.

² See <http://traffickcam.com/about>.

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Violence, relation and beauty in Toni Jensen's "Women in the Fracklands"

Métis. Native American women's autobiography. MMIW. NoDAPL. Relationality. Resilience. Toni Jensen.

Through a close reading of Métis US writer Toni Jensen's "Women in the Fracklands", a stand-alone chapter in her memoir-in-essays *Carry: A Memoir of Survival on Stolen Land* (2020), this article aims at making a culture-specific and narrative-focused contribution to the current theory of resilience. It does so by emphasizing Jensen's denouncing of violence against Indigenous bodies and lands – particularly women in and around fracking sites – and her articulation of the Indigenous value of relationality as the embodiment of lands, bodies and language. The resulting account of resilience is both individual and communal; simultaneously based on the connection to place and history and focused on the present and the future; affirming sovereignty and becoming a decolonial tool of visibilization and empowerment.

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Re-examining the “Hero’s Journey”: A critical reflection on literature selection for affective bibliotherapy programs on resilience

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Affective bibliotherapy is a practice which “uses fiction to help the reader connect to emotional experiences and human situations through the process of identification” (Shechtman 2009, 21). Readers identify with the emotions and experiences of characters, following them on their journey to overcome obstacles and challenges. The author of this article works within a third sector organization that uses affective bibliotherapy in schools as a preventative measure for young people to learn resilience coping mechanisms and skills in order to help them navigate difficult developmental transitions and life experiences. This paper addresses the challenges of selecting literature for such programs. This type of resilience literature often refers to “a heterogenous set of creations”; for example, the fairy tales of Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm (Reyzábal 2014, 121). Such literature foregrounds the “Hero’s Journey” trajectory that moves through a predictable, developmental arc: an exposition (resting position), which is then interrupted by an obstacle to be overcome, followed by the highest point of tension in which one must act in the face of adversity (the climax), before finding resolution when transformation or healing is successfully achieved. This arc can prove extremely useful for bibliotherapy in that it views resilience as a replicable process and ensures that participants gain a transferrable resilience toolkit, e.g. problem-solving techniques, critical thinking, and assertive communication. Yet, a simplistic linear model that achieves a predictable outcome is inadequate on its own for understanding the complexities of real lives. Whilst the aforementioned arc is apolitical and privileges an image of resilience in which “an essential, relatively stable and evolving self develops a chronologically appropriate and coherent biography”, there is a need to utilize literature that exposes how these types of stories repress and exclude difference (Aranda et al. 2012, 551). Therefore, this article incorporates an awareness of vulnerability research into the design of ethical bibliotherapy interventions, because “through its focus on power and the limitations of individual agency, vulnerability research is concerned with political dimensions that prevent progressive changes from occurring” (Miller et al. 2010, Conclusions and Ways Forward section, para 1). In essence, the replicable resilience model promised by the Hero’s Journey needs to be tempered with literary texts that

depict the additional vulnerabilities and barriers that complicate the resilience journeys of young people from marginalized communities.

Therefore, taking two literary texts used in the author's current pre-teen and mid-teen resilience bibliotherapy programs – “Grace” by Darcie Little Badger (2019) and an extract from *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas (2017) – this paper highlights how these texts are significant in that they foreground characters who face not only universal obstacles but additional cultural, social, and political factors that hinder their capacity to act. Grace is Lipan Apache (a Native American tribe) and Starr is a young “Black girl”. Both teenagers attend schools made up of predominantly White peers and face racial and cultural discrimination for being seen as Other. Through analysis of these alternative narratives, privileging of the Hero's Journey arc in bibliotherapy is cautioned, and an approach which incorporates learning of the external factors that shape and alter how we perceive resilience encouraged. In this article, which analyzes three resilience narrative frameworks, it will be argued that the Hero's Journey constitutes an example of the privileged “Resilience Found” arc, whilst “Grace” and *The Hate U Give* exemplify two alternative narrative trajectories, identified by Kay Aranda et al. as “Resilience Made” and “Resilience Unfinished” (2012).

AFFECTIVE BIBLIOTHERAPY'S USE OF THE “HERO'S JOURNEY”: MODEL STRENGTHS AND PURPOSES

Schectman notes that “the term bibliotherapy is made up of two words: *biblio*, originating from the Greek word *biblus* (book), and therapy, referring to psychological help. Simply stated, bibliotherapy can be defined as the use of books to help people solve problems” (2009, 21). It is a practice that is used for all ages and to address many different issues such as grief, stress, and anxiety, and has been cultivated in many sectors by therapists, counsellors, and librarians, among others. Often, however, affective bibliotherapy is used as a preventative measure for children and young people in order to equip them with a wellbeing toolkit or life skills that will foster resilience that can be applied in any future time of need or difficulty. The Hero's Journey narrative has been particularly prominent in therapeutical practices, counselling and narrative therapy (Lawson 2005; Dybiczy 2013) and, in affective bibliotherapy, it is common to look at “literature as a laboratory on its own, with each text taken as a case-study” (Mahdiani 2021, 28). Children and young people in these sessions often engage in conversations about the character, their actions, and the consequences of these actions at different points in the story in order to help them frame their own problems in a similar way and to facilitate healing or learning.

The author's organization, for example, often selects literature with a universal narrative structure identified by Gustav Freytag, who illustrated a linear model using five sequential segments that include the following: an exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and denouement (1900). This is consistent with Joseph Campbell's 1949 coining of the Hero's Journey or monomyth. Campbell also found that most stories from mythology follow this pattern where the hero sets out and receives a challenge or call to action before undergoing transformation and returning with new knowledge about the world and one's self. As Phillip Dybiczy states, Campbell

identified five fundamental narrative elements common to myths across cultures and across historical epochs: a *Call to Adventure*, *Crossing Beyond a Threshold*, *Overcoming Trials and Tests*, *Receiving Aid*, and *Facing a Supreme Ordeal Yielding a Reward*. These basic elements are what comprise the monomyth (2012, 271).

These journey steps and tropes are used to encourage discussion that will help participants carry out a situational analysis of the environment, context and characters after the exposition; to identify the problems that arise with the rising action; to consider what the consequences of the character's actions might be after the highest point of tension in the climax; to examine those consequences further in the falling action; and to encourage final reflections on lessons learned at the story's resolution. The stories thus act as a lesson in what Aranda et al. term, "the classic epistemological position of resilience" (2012, 550), with Jon Franklin claiming that there is a "deeper satisfaction that comes when the reader learns with the character. [...] The story is an artificial experience. It doesn't moralize but, like all experience, it teaches" (1986, 90). In essence, through identification with the character, it is anticipated that the participants undergo transformation themselves during the course of the story, re-emerging at the close of the session with new knowledge.

This approach is characteristic of much affective bibliotherapy and Angelo Gianfrancesco (2010) has suggested that resilience literature tends to be associated with those tales and stories with an "outline almost prototypical in line with the proposals of Vladimir Propp and Bruno Bettelheim" (Reyzábal 2014, 121). Such narratives are designed to foster psychological growth, the development of life skills and the notion of rebirth after adversity. It stands to reason then that this universal narrative framework ties in neatly with Michael Basseler's assertion that "the very notion of resilience, as the capacity to bounce back from stress and pain, rests intrinsically upon the narrative sequencing of events, responses and adaptive processes" (2019, 26). In this way, stories are often used in affective bibliotherapy to impart skills in problem-solving; in critical thinking; and to highlight how traits such as kindness, self-confidence, bravery, and self-care are all intrinsic qualities that support resilient individuals to succeed and overcome challenges. This suggests that resilience can be related to intrinsic qualities *within* individuals but also that resilience can be *learned* (Coutu 2002), with narratives becoming "tools for generating and propagating indirect experience and knowledge" (Mahdiani 2021, 18). This means resilience can be viewed as both a process (in line with the prototypical arc) but also as a series of traits that can be learned and cultivated by young people to develop a more resilient self.

These Hero's Journey narratives *have* been effective and are popular for portraying images of resilience and triumph in spite of hardship. For example, Jack Zipes calls fairy tales and folktales irresistible, highlighting how they endure because of their capacity to impart universal lessons of hope, depicting individuals who triumph in spite of overwhelming odds (2013). These narratives can help young people to feel less alone knowing that facing challenges and difficulties is an inevitable part of life. Many of these types of stories are coming-of-age or developmental narratives and that is why they tend to be so popular for use with children and adolescents. The Hero's Journey can reassure young people by helping to "set in place a structure of respons-

es to possible threats” and supports them in identifying problem resolution strategies that can be applied to their own lives (Reid 2019, 36). The benefits of the Hero’s Journey framework is also evidenced by Alison Habens who examined if there were additional benefits of using the mythic narrative structure and archetypal characterization for overcoming trauma in relation to other forms of literature such as memoir and autobiography (2018). Habens investigated whether “some imaginative engagement with archetypal narratives could be more effective in helping people resolve difficult memories or chart positive approaches for the future” (2018, para 6). The findings suggest that the Hero’s Journey template received a more positive participant response in terms of being more “helpful” in the creative writing therapy sessions than a pure Life Writing format, with the monomyth arc helping them to view their own lives from “a new perspective” (2018, para 14). There is thus evidence to suggest the potential benefits of these archetypal narratives to foster resilience.

Nazilla Khanlou and Ron Wray have highlighted, however, “a growing convergence in the approaches and tools that make up the current mixed bag of resilience interventions” (2014, 71) and there is certainly much evidence out there to suggest the need for diverse literary materials in bibliotherapy (McCulliss and Chamberlain 2013). Therefore, it is important for organizations who use bibliotherapy to consider their current approaches and practices, the impact of bibliotherapy interventions, what learning about resilience should look like, and the broader implications and ethics behind it. The use of the Hero’s Journey, though it has proven useful, also needs to be critically revised and interrogated.

LIMITATIONS AND PROBLEMS WITH THE USE OF THE “HERO’S JOURNEY” IN RESILIENCE EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Whilst there are clearly benefits of using the Hero’s Journey or Freytag’s universal narrative structure pyramid to help children and young people learn about some of the traits of resilience and to establish a replicable process for approaching challenges, this is too simplistic once children start to develop into their pre-teen and teenage years, when external social and environmental factors start to hold more sway over their identity formation and self-determination. The monomyth often does not factor in the social, political, and environmental determinants on an individual’s resilience. Indeed, many of those fairy tales and folk tales identified as prototypical resilience case-studies are essentially ahistorical, set “Once upon a time”, outside of contextual realities. In this way, it is easy for the Hero’s Journey monomyth to portray a stable and evolving self who is universal in appeal, developing in a neat, linear fashion. This neat story type suits the interdisciplinary nature of affective bibliotherapy because “Psychology too is known to construct or invent and privilege a particular conception of the individual, even when recognizing the influence of the social” (Aranda et al. 2012, 551).

The Hero’s Journey is the narrative of “Resilience Found” according to Aranda et al., where the heroic individual discovers innate qualities that nurture their awareness of their resilient self (550). However, by using this repetitive model to help young

people learn about resilience, individuals who are not like the heroic and transformed characters, and who cannot achieve neat and complete healing in this linear fashion, are often viewed as somehow deficient or lacking in normal or natural attributes associated with the characters in the stories. This highlights how “the non-resilient subject is then conceived in opposition to this psychological norm” and often these young people can “become the targets of psychological interventions” (2012, 551). This problematically suggests that everyone should have the same, or at least very similar, story maps and sequenced lives, when in fact resilience shape-shifts and has different guises in different contexts. Race, gender, and social background all need to factor in our teaching of resilience as a multifaceted and fluid concept, because not all children and young people have the same “protective factors” such as family support, socioeconomic status, community support, etc. (Fleming and Ledogar 2008, 7) It is certainly important to acknowledge and foreground “the powerful role societal norms play and the authority of experts to control and regulate what constitutes normal, healthy or good outcomes” because “normative understandings of the resilient subject potentially further serve to repress or exclude difference” (Aranda et al. 2012, 551). Sometimes things do not work out, the “Happily ever after” ending cannot be achieved because of forces beyond the child or young person’s control, and this needs to shape our depictions of what constitutes a resilient subject. The following section analyzes two different texts, currently being used in the author’s work in affective bibliotherapy resilience programs for pre-teen children (11–12 years) and mid-teens (14–17 years), for their depiction of resilience. These texts offer alternatives to the Hero’s Journey arc, highlighting the need to expand the corpus of material used in bibliotherapy in order to encapsulate the many faces of resilience.

“RESILIENCE MADE”: NATIVE AMERICAN RESISTANCE IN DARCIE LITTLE BADGER’S “GRACE”

In contrast to the “Resilience Found” narrative that the Hero’s Journey represents, with privileged or special characters journeying both within and without to discover their own strength and innate qualities for fostering resilience, Aranda et al. point out a second alternative: the narrative of “Resilience Made” (2012, 552). Darcie Little Badger’s story “Grace” is one prime example of this: “Resilience Made is the constructionist story of resilience, whereby resilience is not something we have but something we do” and “Wellbeing and resilience are therefore argued to result from the ongoing iterative and interactive navigations and negotiations between selves, communities and environments” (552). In essence, the “Resilience Made” narrative favors the idea of resilience as a process, as something which is developmental, rather than stemming from intrinsic traits of heroic individuals who are born to succeed. Grace is a member of the Lipan Apache tribe who must navigate new environments persistently, drawing from the cultural strength her people have shown both historically and in the present: her tribe having spent their lives “surviving in small enclaves after the world figured we all died” (Little Badger 2019, 7). The Lipan Apache were once a powerful, nomadic tribe from the southern Great Plains but their numbers have dwindled significantly due to warfare from the 19th century onwards. According

to the *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, “their descendants presently live among the Mescalero Apache in New Mexico and the Tonkawa and the Plains Apache in Oklahoma. The Lipan are not a federally recognized tribe, and little of their culture remains” (May 2007, para 1). The fact that her tribe’s very existence is no longer officially recognized highlights the complex challenges to her identity that Grace faces, and it also explains her determination to record her tribe’s culture and history through her actions and words. She uses her knowledge of history and her heritage to *make* her own resilience and to establish her confidence in her ability to overcome difficult situations. For example, Grace draws on the innate spiritual connection her tribe feels to nature: “Someday, we’ll go home. It’s there, waiting, never really stolen. But until then, we gotta live like a pair of dandelion fluffs in the wind and drift around until the day comes to settle and grow [...] each new land has its own troubles” (7). As Iris HeavyRunner and Joann Sebastian Morris state, “resilience is not new to our people; it is a concept that has been taught for centuries. The word is new; the meaning is old” (1997, para 1). There is a concept of “natural resilience” that Native American cultures make their children aware of, illustrated through the environmental imagery and symbolism employed in the language of the story, highlighting how a huge part of Native American resilience is their sense of connectedness to the power of the natural world (para 11). Grace discovers in nature, for example, the importance of emotional and assertive communication, “Mama says I showed the loons how to really cry, and sometimes the birds and I screamed at each other, like we were sparring with our voices” (Little Badger 2019, 8).

Through her process of adaptation to new environments, Grace creates her own mechanisms for resilience, “When you’re a stranger trying to fit in, it helps to find something familiar and use it as a life raft. Gives you confidence. At least, that’s what I’ve experienced” (9). In essence, Grace uses her awareness of her connectedness to the natural world to give her that sense of belonging, of having a place despite her tribe’s nomadic existence and stolen homeland. The environment is a constant source of familiarity wherever she goes as it remains unchanging and she takes comfort and confidence from using nature’s processes to develop her own resilience strategies: learning to float, adapt and take root, like a dandelion fluff, to grow and find sustenance in whatever soil she lands in. It is also interesting that, in the exposition, Grace tells us her life story, another unique part of the Native American understanding of resilience: “I’m alive because my great-grandma, great-great-grandma, and great-great-great grandma resisted the men who tried to round them up and kill them or steal everything that mattered” (7). It is through her awareness of her family and tribe’s history, that she recognizes her own inherited and innate strength that she can draw upon to overcome challenges. This background is Grace’s introduction to one of her stories of oppression where a boy, Brandon, tries to kiss her without consent. It is clear in the way that she draws together these seemingly disparate cultural, historical, familial and personal stories that Grace sees all of the threads as part of her own developmental narrative. As HeavyRunner and Morris state:

Our children’s cultural strength or resilience can also be fostered by the oral tradition of storytelling. Children can learn to listen with patience and respect. Our stories can

be told over and over; they are developmental. At every step we learn something new. In essence, we grow up with our stories. They are protective factors that convey culturally specific high expectations, caring, support, and opportunities for participation (1997, para 12).

In this way, resilience is no longer seen as a linear process with neat closure, rather it is an ongoing process that is almost cyclical in nature. This is fitting because, according to Joseph Brown, “everything an Indian does is in a circle, and that is because the Power of the World always works in circles, and everything tries to be round” (1988, 35). This narrative too is cyclical: Grace shares the story of her birth, history and growth before proceeding with the current flashback she wishes to relate. In the end we come full circle, with Grace bringing us back to the present and reminding us that she has already moved on to a new place (Little Badger 2019, 9). Brandon is introduced in the story with his “prehistoric-themed chess set with dinosaur-shaped pieces” acting as a red herring for his outdated world view in terms of gender and ethnicity, insisting on getting an answer from Grace concerning “where are you *from*?”; with Grace recognizing the true prejudice behind his insistence, “I realized it was that kind of question. Where are you from, brown-skinned girl?” (9–10). Winning the chess game, Brandon insists that his prize should be a kiss, and Grace tells us how “I tried to pull away, but Brandon’s grip tightened [...] ‘Stop,’ I said” (10–11). Grace’s initial reaction is to escape from the situation, to “throw all my belongings into a few cardboard boxes and leave my personal baggage behind” (12), but she recognizes from her tribe’s history that she needs to formulate her own resistance now and stand up for what is right. She forms this resilience using the cultural, familial, and personal strength garnered from the stories she carries within. It is interesting that this text is meta-aware in illustrating how Grace does not follow the typical, neat trajectory of the Hero’s Journey, noting how “Home had always seemed beyond our reach, like we were knights chasing the Holy Grail” (12). Her life is cyclical, with each land’s challenges acting as layers of development building up her resilient self but with no end point; like a tree that grows outward in rings, taking up more space. In this way, Grace exemplifies HeavyRunner’s point that Native American tribes embrace oral storytelling as a key element of their resilience, as she continually circles back to stories of her tribe’s strength, her heritage, and her connectedness to nature to guide her own actions and cement her own self-belief. Grace draws on all of the resilience her people, her family, and she herself, have “made” to tackle the bigger injustices represented in this situation with Brandon (13). Not everyone is a hero wielding a sword, there are quieter ways to display strength.

When her teacher forces her to work with Brandon on a test, this causes Grace to draw on all of the resilience she has made for herself and to confidently assert her right to work on her own. It is important to note Ms. Welton’s response: “I understand it’s difficult sometimes, but in the real world, you need to associate with all kinds of people. Find ways to get along and work together. It’s important” (16). The teacher’s response here exposes how often we fail to see the various different social, political and environmental factors that hinder the capacity of some individuals

to act and that not everyone has the same baseline level of privilege. Grace's response exemplifies her awareness of this injustice:

Real world? Did she think that everyone younger than eighteen lived in a simulation? I leaned forward and continued in an-almost a whisper, afraid I'd start shouting otherwise. "Brandon tried to kiss me, and I said no. Now he's treating me like garbage. I don't have to work with anybody who disrespects me that way. *Ever.*" (16)

Grace's words here highlight how the "real world" has definitely entered into the space of the classroom. Just like the monomyth stories that promise a stable environment for heroic resilience to follow its destined course, her teacher seems to assume that the school is a world somehow set apart, where the dynamics of power and privilege hold no sway. Grace corrects her teacher here in order to highlight how she refuses to give up her agency, asserting her right to control her own life and her awareness of her own social and political vulnerabilities. It is this acute awareness of her place in history and society, as well as that empowering knowledge of her heritage and "natural resilience" stemming from her culture, family, and sense of connectedness to the environment that make up the various ingredients of Grace's "Resilience Made". This type of "Resilience Made" narrative, that combines individual resilience with an awareness of social and cultural determinants, assists to "repoliticize narratives" and ground them in specific contexts (Aranda et al. 2012, 553). It is an interpretation of

resilience as resistance where individualized notions of risk are not manifestations of individual vulnerability or moral failing, but of social disadvantage and inequalities. Moreover, recognizing and validating difference in resilience does much to challenge or disrupt the dominant normative discourses and criteria and gives voice to marginalized stories. (553)

However, this type of resilience narrative still tends towards "the binaries of individual and society, culture and nature [...] and leaves the focus of theory and research on an inner and social outer world" (553). For example, Grace continually progresses, each cyclical layer of development constituting a story that she learns from, growing bigger and stronger like the trunk of a tree and its many rings of wisdom. Throughout, Grace maintains a very clear and stable sense of who she is and where she is going – the outside world does not impinge on her identity or shake her sense of self. In contrast, the final work this paper will examine, takes the complexity of the interplay between internal and external pressures on an individual's identity and resilience further to depict a narrative of "Resilience Unfinished" (553).

"RESILIENCE UNFINISHED": AN EXTRACT FROM *THE HATE U GIVE* BY ANGIE THOMAS

Extracts from longer pieces of fiction are also used in addition to short stories for affective bibliotherapy sessions. These extracts are able to stand alone as scenes or contained scenarios that the participants can learn from. One extract is from the novel *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas where Starr, a Black teen, faces the hy-

pocrisy of her predominantly White school peers who stage protests about the death of Kahlil, Starr's friend who is shot by a policeman in a racially motivated attack right in front of her. They protest not because they believe in the injustice of the event but because they want to get out of class: "Hell yeah. Free day. I'm game" (Thomas 2017, 182). This extract comes after news of Khalil's death has spread in the media, and reveals that Starr not only has to fight against a society that is prejudiced towards her race but she also has to confront one of her best friends, Hailey. This type of "Resilience Unfinished" narrative highlights how, "the psychosocial subject is ambiguously conceived, being imbued with agency, but equally constrained, subjected to broader discourses or forces from elsewhere" (Aranda et al. 2012, 554). This means that identity and performativity are a huge part of this type of resilience narrative, with Starr certainly being "a gendered subject who is the product of a complex interplay of discourses, norms, power relations, institutions and practices" (554). Starr attends a fancy suburban prep school, an extreme contrast to the poor Black neighborhood where she lives. This means that Starr has been forced to split her identity in order to adapt to both situations. She has what she calls, "Williamson rules" that apply when she is away from her homeplace of Garden Heights to determine how she behaves in a predominantly White setting (Thomas 2017, 183). In this extract, angered by Hailey's enthusiasm for protesting just to get out of class, Starr's neat split in persona starts to fall apart, her two worlds collide and sit uncomfortably together, a world of privilege colliding with a world of oppression:

They're so damn excited about getting a day off. Kahlil's in a grave. He can't get a day off from that shit. I live it every single day too. In class, I toss my backpack on the floor [...]. When Hailey and Maya come in, I give them a stank-eye and silently dare them to say shit to me. I'm breaking all of my Williamson Starr rules with zero fucks to give. (183)

She is stifled by this need to repress what she sees as her Black culture and identity at school. For example, when Hailey hurts Starr with a racist remark during a basketball game: "Dammit, Starr! Hustle! Pretend the ball is some fried chicken. Bet you'll stay on it then" (111), Starr's pain turns to concern that she has fallen into a stereotype: "They probably heard me crying: great. What's worse than being the Angry Black Girl? The *Weak* Black Girl" (115). Starr thus struggles to discover a stable sense of self, being shaped by prejudices from society, racial injustice, personal trauma and the split of her dual lifestyle. As Aranda et al. state, when the "resilient subject is re-imagined as performative rather than as stable and socially constituted, then this subject and their resilience becomes unfinished, always in a process of remaking or becoming" (2012, 555). This highlights how, for many individuals, resilience is not always linear and straightforward.

Not only does the multiplicity of Starr's sense of self, that continually manifests and implodes, mark her as different from the heroes of the monomyth, her capacity to be resilient is also hindered by the competing narratives that undermine her perspective on the world and serve to silence her: "I don't respond. If I open my mouth, I'll explode" (Thomas 2017, 184). For example, in this extract, Starr doubts herself and her feelings of hurt and injustice because of the different perspectives of those around her, with Hailey insisting her racist basketball outburst was nothing: "Lighten

up! It was only game talk” (112). This lack of understanding and affirmation of Starr’s feelings and story hinders her capacity for resilience. As Cyrulnik states,

When there is a match between the narratives of self, family, and culture, traumatized people feel supported and can undertake the work of building resilience. But when a discrepancy prevents affected persons from expressing themselves because the stories around them silence them or give an interpretation of the facts that is incompatible with that of the subjects, the work of resilience will then be difficult. (2021, 101)

It is only when Maya confirms Starr’s suspicions of Hailey’s racism that she is able to expel her self-doubt: “That’s not why Hailey unfollowed you. She said she didn’t wanna see that shit [Black Lives Matter material] on her dashboard” (Thomas 2017, 250). We learn here that Maya has her own trauma related to Hailey’s prejudice: “Do you remember that time she asked if my family ate a cat for Thanksgiving?” and Starr is horrified to hear that both she and Maya played along with Hailey’s supposed joke: “She claimed it was a joke and laughed, I laughed, and then you laughed. I only laughed because I thought I was supposed to. I felt like shit the rest of the week” (251). Both have been forced to repress their true selves and feelings to be accepted socially. It is only at the conclusion of this extract that the two start to find comfort in having validated one another’s trauma: “‘We can’t let her get away with saying stuff like that again, okay?’ She cracks a smile. ‘A minority alliance?’” (252). Thomas’s characters foreground how the capacity for resilience is greatly impacted by social, political and environmental forces but also by the complex interplay between these forces and the individual’s developing sense of self. This highlights how messy resilience can be and that closure is not a necessary component of a successful resilience journey. Starr clearly displays strength and resilience here in spite of all of the hardships she faces. Her ability to bounce back is heroic despite no conclusive “happily ever after” closure or complete healing.

CONCLUSION

Overall, in highlighting some of the benefits of using the Hero’s Journey in affective bibliotherapy sessions to foster a universal resilience toolkit, this article has foregrounded the problematic nature of sole dependence on this type of resilience literature. Instead, this paper posits that bibliotherapists must work to incorporate not only examples of Aranda et al.’s “Resilience Found” narratives but also narratives of “Resilience Made” and “Resilience Unfinished” into their programs. It is essential that we adopt this layered approach which privileges learning of not only the intrinsic traits that individuals can draw on for resilience but that also promotes an awareness of external cultural, social, and political vulnerabilities that many young people face – in the cases of Grace and Starr, this constitutes their ethnicity, race and gender – factors that inhibit and reshape their resilience journeys in more complex and nuanced ways. For example, this necessitates the incorporation of story resolutions that are incomplete or “imperfect”, like the extract from *The Hate U Give* and the cyclical nature of the protagonist’s development in “Grace”, informed by her Native American heritage. These texts make young people aware that they are not responsible for the external pressures that factor in their identity development and prevent complete

healing. There is no one size fits all when it comes to resilience, instead the concept shapeshifts and morphs in different contexts.

Literature in bibliotherapy interventions needs to increase awareness of how resilience is often complicated, messy, and non-linear and, just because a young person's story does not match the neat monomyth arc does not mean that their resilience efforts are somehow lesser or "unheroic". "Grace" and the examined extract from *The Hate U Give*, exemplify texts that add layers of thematic and formal complexity to the resilience journey: instead of intrinsic or heroic qualities, Grace draws from her connection to nature, to her heritage, to her family, to her community, to the power of storytelling, in order to develop her own self-confidence and ability to adapt and fight to protect her own agency and sense of identity. Meanwhile, Starr's use of performativity to adapt and thrive in a hostile environment highlights her capacity to cope with difficult situations whilst also showing how her strategy simultaneously causes a fracturing of her own sense of self. Texts with this level of thematic and formal complexity are needed on resilience bibliotherapy programs in order to highlight the multi-faceted nature of resilience. To this end, this paper hopes to contribute to ongoing research that is delineating representations of resilience, highlighting the importance of critiquing and examining the structural, formal and thematic narrative features of literature for affective bibliotherapy programs in order to prioritize the importance of increasing awareness of the many faces of resilience.

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Re-examining the “Hero’s Journey”: A critical reflection on literature selection for affective bibliotherapy programs on resilience

Affective bibliotherapy. Resilience. Children and young people. Hero’s Journey. Vulnerability.

This article critically examines the Hero’s Journey arc, popular in affective bibliotherapy for children and young people. Privileging this archetypal model of resilience represses and excludes difference. It posits two alternatives, foregrounding characters who face additional cultural, social, and political factors that hinder their capacity to act, and argues that bibliotherapy must be inclusive, incorporating stories that offer alternative depictions of resilience that are complicated, messy, and non-linear but no less “heroic”.

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Robert B. Pynsent's contributions to the study of Slovak literature

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Professor Robert Burton Pynsent (1943–2022), who taught Czech and Slovak literature for decades at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies (SSEES), now part of University College London, would have been an exceptional figure in any field, but in the area of Slovak literary criticism in English he was literally one of a kind. While his early work focused mostly on Czech literature, after 1989 Pynsent devoted increasing attention to Slovak writing, in his idiosyncratically erudite and inimitably iconoclastic style. This set him apart from his academic counterparts in North America, who worked almost entirely on modern Czech literature; there was almost no other scholarly research in English on Slovak literature, except by a few North American Slovak émigrés with a generally nationalistic bias. Fortunately for Slovakia, Pynsent's disdain for anything “popular” (which included the best-known Czech writers such as Karel Čapek and Milan Kundera) and his fascination with obscure works (which included all of Slovak literature) led to his insistence, almost unique in Anglophone Slavic scholarship, that Slovak literature was not only equally worthy of attention, but was often better than Czech. This did not mean, of course, that he followed the received wisdom of domestic Slovak literary criticism; indeed, it can sometimes feel as if Pynsent's statements are an attempt to provoke rather than to provide strictly objective analysis, but his claims are always stimulating and usually illuminating. As his colleague and successor at SSEES Peter Zusi observed, “No one who spent time with Robert could think of Czech and Slovak as ‘small’ literatures, and the intellectual energy he fostered in students and colleagues was generated from the conviction that no matter how much one read, it was never enough” (2003, 77).

In September 1987, Pynsent brought together leading British, Slovak, and international scholars for a conference on Slovak literature at SSEES, the first on this topic held anywhere. The participants included his mentor at Cambridge, Karel Brušák, who “initiated the serious study of Slovak in the United Kingdom,” and his London colleagues David Short and Donald Rayfield, among others (1990, ix–xi). Their contributions were published in Pynsent's edited volume *Modern Slovak Prose: Fiction since 1954* (1990), which as Susie Lunt has noted “is the first such book to be

published in the West on this significant period in Slovak literary history and one of the first to present truly engaging, non-establishment interpretations of contemporary Slovak works” (2000, 116). In his introduction, with an extensive overview of the leading contemporary Slovak writers, Pynsent gives his insight into the inequalities within the federal republic, suggesting that Slovaks were more committed to the Czechoslovak idea than Czechs: “It is common for an educated Slovak to speak good Czech, but it is rare for an educated Czech to speak good Slovak. Among other things, that might suggest that Slovaks have a greater sense of Czech-Slovak unity than the Czechs” (1990, 23). He also claims that the international invisibility of Slovak literature reflects external social forces rather than quality: “It is the Slovak language that has hitherto kept most scholars and readers in the West ignorant of Slovak literature. [...] Slovak literature has not grown in isolation but a certain isolation has been imposed on Slovak literature” (37). His own chapter presents Ján Johanides, whom he considers the most original Slovak novelist of the 1980s: “One may see in his choice of blood as the foremost vehicle of philosophical metaphor a form of atavism or morbid sensationalism, but one may not deny that it serves the useful function of guiding the reader through his thought” (97). It is followed by a comparative Slovak-Georgian study by Rayfield, who later published the English translations of Peter Pišťanek’s *Rivers of Babylon* series in his own Garnett Press.

Pynsent’s most ambitious work was his editing of an encyclopedia of East European literature published in 1993.¹ He contributed over half of the Slovak and Czech entries, including those on contemporary writers like Johanides, Rudolf Sloboda, and Pavel Vilikovský, while the other Slovak entries were written by Karel Brušák. Even in this usually neutral format, Pynsent did not withhold his personal opinions, dismissing Dominik Tatarka’s “dissident’ works” as “egocentric sensualism and nostalgic folksy didacticism,” while again praising Ján Johanides, whose “gift for representing the bizarre, and his concern for essential values and transcendental truths” made him “the most complex and versatile writer Slovakia has produced” (1993, 165, 393). The volume includes concise literary histories, in which Pynsent rejects the modern tendency of tracing Slovak literature back to the Great Moravian Empire:

In 20th-century Slovakia it has become a convention to state that the beginnings of Slovak literature lie in the Church Slavonic literature composed by Greeks on the territory of what is now Slovakia and in Old Czech literature. Furthermore, it has become normal to treat anything written in Czech, Latin or even Hungarian on Slovak territory, and anything written by Czech writers of ‘Slovak’ provenance, as part of Slovak literature. That is academically untenable. (545)

In Pynsent’s view, “The main turning-point in Slovak literature, the time when it achieves a degree of self-assuredness, and [...] a simple, specifically Slovak manner of expression, is in the fresh intimate verse of Krasko and Jesenský” in the early 20th century. He points out that the Slovaks “broke away from Socialist Realism sooner than the Czechs [...] and from the 1960s onwards developed a lively, sometimes eccentric, tradition” in both poetry and fiction (546). Whether intended as

self-referential or not, this same description of “lively and eccentric” might be applied to his own critical approach.

In the following year Pynsent published *Questions of Identity* (1994), containing four chapters loosely connected by the theme of Czech and Slovak nationality, of which only the second, “The Myth of Slavness: Pavel Josef Šafařík and Jan Kollár”, is focused on Slovak writers. Although both Šafařík and Kollár are “borderline” figures claimed by both Slovak and Czech literary history, he notes that they “together created a complex new myth of Slav nationalist deliverance. Like any myth it looked to the future as well as the past, and like any nationalist myth it had a utopia as its goal” (43). While his fourth and concluding chapter in this volume is primarily devoted to the “Czech martyr complex”, it also presents his observations comparing the contemporary Czech and Slovak national character, including the difference between their émigré communities, noting that “Slovaks are more vociferous in their nationality than the Czechs,” and that “nostalgia [for] praise of the war-time puppet Slovak State would not have been permitted to appear in print in socialist Czechoslovakia [as it did] in émigré periodicals in Germany and Canada” (150). Echoing his earlier critical remarks toward Slovak literary historiography, he notes that in current scholarly editions of 19th-century Slovak authors, their texts originally written in Czech are usually translated into modern Slovak: “In an area where the linguocentricity of its nationalism was emphasized because of the closeness of Czech and Slovak, such editions amounted to a falsification of history” (152). At the same time, he observes that the “normalization” period fostered a growing national self-confidence among the Slovaks, who “appear to have a self-confidence about what a Slovak is which one might compare with that the English, Scottish or Welsh” (152). He also points out that the “difference between the Czech and Slovak languages is probably smaller than that between standard English and Lallans” (i.e. Lowland Scots; 156), perhaps subtly alluding to his own birthplace of Renfrewshire in the west-central Scottish Lowlands.

Pynsent further discussed Slovak identity in a broader Central European context in another edited volume, *The Literature of Nationalism* (1996). While his own chapter is focused on Czech women writers, Pynsent’s introduction does include several reflections on Slovakia. Writing in the immediate aftermath of the Yugoslav civil war, and with several contributors covering South Slavic literatures, Pynsent compares the Slovak case most directly with the Croatian attempt to distance itself from Serbian, in reference to his preferred topic of historical mythmaking: “It is no doubt telling that the Croats and Slovaks, both formerly under Magyar rule, have a similar central myth: the Croats’ Thousand-Year Dream, the Slovaks’ Thousand-Year Yoke/Groaning. Within the mythic structure of each nation or *ethnie* is a belief in a shared history” (6). His greatest concern, however, remains the contemporary “falsification of history”, for which the early years of Slovak independence provided an alarming example:

Well in time for the beginning of the 1994–5 academic year a school textbook of Slovak history was published under the sponsorship of the National Bank of Slovakia, *Starý národ – mladý štát* (An old nation, a young state). The first of the four authors listed

on the title page is an historical novelist, Milan Ferko (born 1929).² [...] St Cyril's Prologue to the Gospels is called 'the first Slovak poem' and Prince Slavomír's rebellion against the Franks (871), 'the First Slovak Uprising'. One might assert that such a history book is simply a necessary academic evil when a new state is establishing itself, but, in fact, it does matter what children are taught at school and falsification of this sort does contribute to what Gellner summarises as 'the repudiation of all order, consistency and objectivity'.
(7)

By alluding to the Czech-British Ernest Gellner's work on nationalism, Pynsent's sharp critique places Slovakia at the center of one of the most pressing issues of post-socialist Europe.

The following year, Pynsent and Igor Navrátil co-edited the collection *Appropriations and Impositions* (1997) based on an international conference held in Slovakia in 1994. Unlike the previous volume on East European literatures, it is largely focused on British writing, including Scottish, Irish, and Welsh, but the introduction (co-authored with Navrátil but largely bearing Pynsent's inimitable style) prominently features Slovak literary history. In examining "the nationalist manipulation of memory", it contrasts the historicist approach by writers "whose language had been a vehicle for high culture" and in which "history is used to create a present," with "active atavism", in which writers "whose present language has never been a vehicle for high culture will tend to create its history on the basis of the present" (xv–xvi). Pynsent's own chapter, while nominally focused on the themes of violence, humor, and mysticism, provides a wide-ranging survey of recent fiction (1989–1994) that could be seen as a continuation of his lengthy introduction in *Modern Slovak Prose* (1990). Although his articles often indulge in sweeping critical judgments on Slovak (and even more frequently, Czech) writing drawn from his extensive reading, Pynsent rarely comments as directly on Slovak society itself as he does in the following passage (albeit inspired by a passage in Johanides):

What does appear to me to exist in Slovak culture, that of the streets and the villages, is a certain Mediterranean aggressiveness, something that does not concur with the educational values of the high culture on which Slovaks are nourished. Thus the intelligentsia is likely to feel somewhat alienated from their so-called roots. (1997, 198)

While it discusses not only Johanides and Vilikovský but other well-established figures like Sloboda and Ladislav Ballek, the chapter characteristically mentions lesser-known works of the period such as the dramatist Miloš Janoušek's prose collection *Nevoskové panoptikum* (Nonwaxen panopticon, 1993), which Pynsent compares with both Jaroslav Hašek and Gejza Vámoš (219).

In 1999, another Slovak studies conference was held at SSEES that focused more on socio-political than cultural developments, but the resulting collection *Slovakia after Communism and Mečiarism* (2000) includes two separate contributions by Pynsent.³ In his first article, he focuses on the work of Peter Pišťanek, whose work is "self-consciously aesthetic", although "[his] dominant mode is satire, and his devices belong to that mode, the grotesque, parody, the burlesque, and vulgar language" (89). He disputes the claim that Pišťanek is misogynist: "Since male brutality to women has been a major theme of Slovak literature since the 1960s, the lit-

erary critic may well come to the conclusion that Pišťanek is satirically commenting on Slovak men's behavior towards women" (95). He highlights Pišťanek's reaffirmation of "the existence of the comic tradition in Slovak literature, which has been evident since the National Awakening" despite being overshadowed by the legendary (and Pynsent implies, overrated) "greatness of Czech humour" and "self-irony" (107).⁴

The second and longer of Pynsent's chapters introduces his own term, the "Genitalists", for writers who use phallic imagery as a metaphor for post-socialist existence, in contrast to another group he terms the "Barbarians".⁵ Although the focus of this essay is on contemporary literature, he begins with the 19th century, contrasting the "Romantic nationalist" Ľudovít Štúr with his lesser-known contemporary Štěpán Launer: "Where Štúr saw Slovak salvation in Russia, Launer saw it in Germany [...] [One] may see in them the foundations of the two currents of thought that have afflicted Slovak thinking, created Slovak political camps" (117). He sees their viewpoints represented in two trends of contemporary writing: "the Barbarians, a group who tried to re-invent the Western 1960s in 1990s Slovakia [...] are the Štúrites, and the second camp, the Genitalists, are the Launerites. The Barbarians are tired young modernists, the Genitalists 'Postmodernists,' [or] 'neo-Decadents'" (120).

Although he again mentions Vilikovský and Johanides, as well as feminist writers such as Dana Podracká and Jana Juráňová who "have so far had little impact on Slovak literary or social development" (118), Pynsent's focus here is on the so-called Genitalists, characterized through their "ironisation of male genitalia and an explicit concern in their fiction with modern Theory, especially French varieties" (119), who include Tomáš Horváth, Marek Vadas, Michal Hvorecký, and Balla. Although Balla's debut had appeared only three years earlier, Pynsent sees him as "play[ing] more constructively with the deconstruction of his narrators than the rest of the Genitalists I have mentioned" (123–124). This was a prescient judgement for that time, since although all of these authors (apart from Horváth, who later moved in the direction of literary theory) have continued to publish successful fiction, Balla can be seen in retrospect as the most consistently productive and acclaimed writer of that generation.

The other literary chapter in the volume, by Tim Beasley-Murray, describes Slovakia as a deeply polarized society of "Urbanists" and "Ruralists", and associates the Genitalists with the former group, attributing their enthusiasm for Western literary theory for its "the relativist and pluralist bias [...] as a model of cultural plurality. Thus, embracing literary heteroglossia through intertextual play with other languages is the embracing of a notion of Slovakia, tinged with Czechoslovakia-nostalgia, tolerant towards its Hungarians and other minorities" (2000, 80). For Beasley-Murray, however, these writers "seem unaware" that critical theory "serves as the philosophical justification and literary expression of the ideology of liberal, free-market democracy" (83). He critiques their "fundamentally flawed" understanding of theory, in which "a rigid and dogmatic theoretical model of textuality is being applied to the process of literary creation," although he also describes Balla as "the most in-

teresting of the Genitalists,” in whose work “Slovak literature has begun to go beyond the dichotomy of theory and of life” (86).

According to Rajendra Chitnis’s monograph (based on his dissertation supervised by Pynsent), *Literature in Post-communist Russia and Eastern Europe*, the 1990s was distinctive in bringing together “formerly sanctioned writers” from the older generation with newly emerging younger ones: “The Slovak emphasis on the continuity between the writers of different generations reflects the emergence of a more urgent confrontation in Slovak literature between those writers who had a liberal, pluralist understanding of culture, and those who propagated a conservative nationalist view” (2004, 18). Chitnis also discusses the Genitalists, whose “ironizing of the phallus, as a symbol of the Slovak stereotype of male potency [...] may be seen as a unifying motif in the Slovak fiction of the Changes” (18). He follows Pynsent’s argument that 1980s Slovak literature developed more freely than Czech, and suggests that “by tracing postmodernism in Russian or Slovak literature back to the 1960s, when it supposedly appeared in Western literature, critics implicitly sought to demonstrate that Russian or Slovak literature had not, as suspected, fallen behind the dominant currents in Western literary culture” (20).

While Pynsent’s scholarship brought much-needed attention in English to modern and contemporary Slovak writing, his prolific engagement with this topic during the decade of 1990–2000 ran against the gradual decline of literary studies as an academic field. As Chitnis said in a Czech obituary which echoed his affectionate eulogy at Pynsent’s memorial service, “Pynsent loathed the direction British universities had taken in the last decades of his career, which in his opinion reflected a wider change in society’s attitudes to knowledge, teaching, the meaning of life, and the way we perceive and treat each other” (2023, 120). Nonetheless, Pynsent’s work laid the foundation for the continuing study of Slovak literature in the UK, which waned upon his retirement but has revived with the appointment of Chitnis (previously at the University of Bristol) as professor of Czech and Slovak at the University of Oxford.

Another of Pynsent’s legacies for Slovak studies in English is his influence on Julia Sherwood, a former student and later close friend who has emerged as the leading promoter of Slovak fiction in English, which she translates jointly with her husband Peter Sherwood (who was Pynsent’s colleague and taught him Hungarian). At Pynsent’s suggestion, as the first volume in Karolinum Press’s new “Slovak Classics” series, the Sherwoods translated Ján Johanides’s 1995 *Trestajúci zločin* (he also provided the English title *But Crime Does Punish*). Pynsent’s afterword, which discusses not only the novel but Johanides’s general literary career, was the last work he published in his lifetime. Characteristically, it takes him less than two pages to propose a “Genitalist” interpretation of the narrator’s name: “Ondrej Ostarok’s initials OO could indicate the two testicles Ostarok lost in Valdice, perhaps at the hands or feet of the frustrated homosexual warder who just cannot get his penis into Ostarok’s anus” (2022, 87–88). This allusion to the practice of torturing political prisoners is not “anti-homosexual”, but it establishes Ostarok as “a witness to the horrors the Stalinists imposed on Czechoslovaks, and to the fact that the 1960s was actually largely eyewash” (88–89). This dismissive reference to the heavily idealized period

of the Prague Spring reforms as “eyewash” (i.e. nonsense) is a quintessential example of Pynsent’s mythoclastic approach. This unsentimental perspective extends even to Johanides, whose *Slony v Mauthausene* (Elephants in Mauthausen, 1985) he dismisses as “an entirely political or politicized novel and that does not suit the author’s creative mentality” (94). As Julia Sherwood has recalled, Pynsent could be equally dismissive of his own erudition: on one occasion when preparing a podcast interview with him (which was unfortunately never completed), “Robert managed to scold me for the fact that I planned to introduce him as ‘the greatest expert of Czech and Slovak literature in the Anglophone world’. When asked how I should introduce him, he answered: ‘Say that I’m just a normal old sod’” (2023).

Pynsent had warm friendships with several Slovak writers, but his direct impact on Slovak academic circles seemed relatively limited, although the Slovak contributions to a collection on Central European literary history (Cornis-Pope and Neubauer 2004) by Dagmar Garay Kročánová [Roberts], who was a visiting researcher at SSEES, reflect a similar skepticism toward the use of nationalistic narratives in literary analysis. In his appreciation published in Slovakia soon after Pynsent’s death, Peter Darovec notes that he “did not remain only in the role of a ‘foreign observer’, but also actively entered into the current Slovak critical reflection of contemporary art,” and besides “significantly contribut[ing] to the visibility of Slovak literature in English-speaking countries, [he] also had the ambition to actively shape the form of Slovak literary discourse” (2023, 7). Recounting Vilikovsky’s visit to London, when Pynsent introduced him as a “Genitalist” to the displeasure of the diplomatic delegation, Darovec observes that Pynsent’s “elegantly provocative” behavior is reflected in his writing: “It would certainly be beneficial if these relaxed and relaxing manners served at least as a partial inspiration for today’s literary academics, who are often sealed up in their inaccessible languages and concepts” (7).

For an aspiring scholar of Central European literature in the mid-1990s such as myself, when almost no contemporary Slovak fiction was available in translation, Pynsent’s descriptions of it came as a revelation. It was thanks to his summary in *Modern Slovak Prose* that I chose to read and later translate Vilikovsky’s *Večne je zelený...* (1989; *Ever Green is...*, 2002), the English title of which I took from him (as well as acknowledging this influence by inserting a semi-hidden allusion to him in the margin notes). Two decades later, in the afterword to *But Crime Does Punish*, I found a footnote referring the reader to my translation of Vilikovsky as an example of “works which could not be published before 1988” (Johanides 2023, 96), and felt generously complimented by this implicit stamp of approval in Pynsent’s final work.

Although I did not know Pynsent as a professor or colleague, my encounters with him at SSEES were brief yet memorable. On the first occasion, at a postgraduate conference in 2001, I introduced myself to him just before my panel as a doctoral student of comparative literature with a still vaguely-defined dissertation topic related to national identity and translation studies. “That sounds very... modern,” he told me with a distinctly dubious expression. However, he was more favorably impressed by my paper (the last of the evening) on Pier Paolo Pasolini’s final play *Bestia da stile*, set in Czechoslovakia and featuring the real-life Slovak poet Laco Novomeský, yet

so obscure that even Pynsent apparently had not read it. His comments during our stroll toward dinner were so enthusiastic that I could not resist quipping cheekily, “I do hope it wasn’t too modern then”. As I had expected from his writing, he seemed amused rather than annoyed by this mild audacity. While I only saw him in person one other time, I would like to think that my own work (while different in style and content) bears a trace of my earliest encounters with Pynsent’s “lively and eccentric” explorations of Slovak literature.⁶

NOTES

- ¹ The same volume appeared simultaneously in both US and British editions; the latter under the title *the Everyman Companion to East European Literature* (London: Dent, 1993).
- ² Pynsent’s separate article two years later on Milan Ferko’s brother Vladimír and his son Andrej, also novelists, concludes that the latter’s novel about an emigrant tinker reveals that “the typical plebeian, the pure Slovak, is base, selfish, intolerant, narrow-minded and intensely uneducated” (1998, 282). The piece caused a minor incident when the younger Ferko contacted SSEES to complain about it.
- ³ This event was attended by two future prime ministers from strikingly different political orientations, Robert Fico and Iveta Radičová.
- ⁴ Pynsent even finds an intertextual allusion to the title of Vilikovsky’s *Večne je zelený...* (1989; *Ever Green is...*, 2002): “Instead of Goethe’s golden tree of life, Pišťanek has the pompous American-trained Czech Vice-Admiral Sosna declare, ‘Ever green is the tree of practice’” (2000, 94).
- ⁵ In an editorial note, Pynsent observes wryly that the version of the essay published a year earlier (1999) had “censored those parts of the account of the Barbarians and the Genitalists which they considered ‘un-Slovak’”; thus the SSEES volume was printing the full version with the deleted sections marked in bold (2000, 115). These include a quote from Balla’s *Leptokaria* (1996): “For the sake of perfect ecstasy, I’ll live off orgasms. I’m attached to a pot full of water, which trickles down a tube into my throat, into my penis; [...] finally my balls, which fill my mouth, retract in a spasm and my sexual organs spurt out their contents straight into my stomach in quite astonishing ecstasy. Then everything is repeated, constantly – forever” (Pynsent 2000, 125).
- ⁶ My thanks to Rajendra Chitnis and Julia Sherwood for providing me with otherwise unobtainable sources.

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Robert B. Pynsent's contributions to the study of Slovak literature

Robert B. Pynsent. Slovak literature. Nationalism. Ján Johanides. Genitalists.

This article provides an overview of the most important works on Slovak literature by the leading British scholar in the field, the late Robert B. Pynsent, from his edited collection *Modern Slovak Prose* (1990) to his afterword for the translation of Ján Johanides's *But Crime Does Punish* (2022). His themes range from nationalism in 19th-century writers to the ironization of sexuality in the post-1989 generation, for whom he coined his own term, the "Genitalists".

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VINCENT JOUVE: Pouvoirs de la fiction. Pourquoi aime-t-on les histoires?
[The power of fiction. Why do we like stories?]

Malakoff: Armand Colin, 2019. 191 s. ISBN 978-2-200-62709-6

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Vo svojej najnovšej knihe *Sila fikcie. Prečo máme radi príbehy?* rozoberá francúzsky literárny teoretik Vincent Jouve znovuobjavenie „fikčných príbehov“ v posledných rokoch. V tejto súvislosti si kladie otázku, prečo siahame po knihách (a filmoch či seriáloch), čím sú pre nás pútavé a aké stopy v nás zanechávajú. Načrtáva problematiku fungovania fikcie v prvom rade z hľadiska príťažlivosti naratívnych príbehov.

Autor knihy, ktorý vyučuje francúzsku literatúru na Univerzite v Reims, hľadá vo svojom uvažovaní odpovede na zdanlivo jednoduché otázky, siahajúce k Aristotelovi či k Platónovi, ktoré sa týkajú podstaty beletrie, pričom čerpá z poznatkov pragmatiky, poetiky, naratológie, teórie čítania či kognitívnej psychológie. Pozoruhodným spôsobom prepája teoretické uvažovanie o danej téme s praktickou ilustráciou na početných príkladoch diel patriacich do literárneho kánonu (James Joyce, Marcel Proust, Lev N. Tolstoj, Fiodor M. Dostojevskij, Franz Kafka, Marguerite Duras, Émile Zola, Miguel de Cervantes a i.) a kinematografie (seriály *Hra o tróny* a *Zúfalé manželky* alebo filmy *Zachráňte vojaka Ryana* či *Lovec jeleňov*). Prístup autora ukazuje ambíciu presiahnuť rámec spoločenskovedných disciplín, napríklad smerom k matematike (k teórii pravdepodobnosti Andreja N. Kolgomorova a teórii informácie Clauda E. Shannona) a ku kognitívnym vedám (Jean-Louis Dessalles). Jouve patrí k etablovaným autorom na poli francúzskej literárnej vedy. Svedčí o tom vydanie viacerých odborných publikácií, ako napríklad *La Lecture* (Čítanie, 1993), *L'effet-personnage dans le roman* (Efekt-postava v románe, 1998), knihy *Poétique du roman*, ktorá doteraz vy-

šla v piatich vydaniach (Poetika románu, 2001, 2007, 2010, 2015, 2020), *Pourquoi étudier la littérature?* (Prečo študovať literatúru?, 2010) či *Nouveaux regards sur le texte littéraire* (Nové pohľady na literárny text, 2013). Výskumný záujem autora a ohlas na jeho knihy dáva tušiť, že máme dočinenia so solídnu reflexiou čitateľskej skúsenosti.

Kniha *Sila fikcie* naznačuje tri okruhy uvažovania autora v súvislosti s fikciou: záujem („l'intérêt“), emóciu („l'émotion“) a estetické cítenie („le sentiment esthétique“), pričom venuje osobitnú pozornosť účinkom fikčného naratívu. Na fikčný text nazerá z trojakej perspektívy: ako na naratívny text, na fikciu a na umelecké dielo. Jouve sa pritom neobmedzuje len na román ako na najrozšírenejší literárny žáner. Jeho záber je omnoho väčší, pretože doň začleňuje aj televízne seriály, filmy a komiksy, čo zdôvodňuje ich vysokou mierou popularity medzi súčasnými konzumentmi kultúry a skutočnosťou, že ide rovnako o fikčné naratívy. Okrem toho má jeho dielo aj didaktický charakter, pretože v závere ponúka nástroje skúmania estetického pôsobenia fikčných textov, ktoré aplikuje pri analýze konkrétnych vybraných úryvkov.

Hneď v úvode prvej kapitoly sa autor zamýšľa nad spôsobom, akým si fikčný príbeh získava pozornosť. Aj keď vyzdvihuje prirodzenú schopnosť fikcie vyvolať emócie, na prvé miesto kladie záujem, ktorý podľa neho prináša širšiu škálu významov (záujem v zmysle priaznivej pozornosti, zvedavosti a vnímania hodnoty diela). Emóciu chápe najmä ako afektívny prejav, zatiaľ čo záujem má epistemický charakter. Text v nás môže aktivovať súčasne obidva sprievodné javy čítania, emócie aj záujem, alebo iba jeden

z nich, a napriek tomu nás dokáže osloviť. Jouve ďalej rozlišuje naratívny záujem, respektíve záujem o rozprávanie („l'intérêt narratif“), čo si vyžaduje aspoň minimum nepredvídateľnosti („l'inattendu“), a hermeneutický záujem („l'intérêt herménétique“) či, inak povedané, komplexnosť („la complexité“).

V prvom prípade sa Jouve zmieňuje o troch prvkoch naratívneho napätia, konkrétne o prekvapení („la surprise“), napätí („le suspense“) a zvedavosti („la curiosité“), o ktorých hovorí švajčiarsky naratológ Raphaël Baroni v rovnomennom diele (*La Tension narrative*, 2017). Jouve uvažuje aj o pravidlách fikcie, za ktoré považuje požiadavku minimálnej ilúzie, rešpektovanie autorsko-čitateľskej dohody a predpoklad záujmu (o texte a všetkých jeho prvkoch sa predpokladá, že zodpovedajú nejakému motívu). Veľkú pozornosť venuje spomínanému konceptu nepredvídateľnosti, resp. odchýlke od prototypov, ktorá sa môže týkať rozprávania v zmysle nášho poznania sveta a psychológie postáv – ide o diegetickú nepredvídateľnosť („l'inattendu diégétique“, 32 – 33) – alebo výpovede v zmysle naratívnych a literárnych konvencií (36) – autor túto skutočnosť označuje pojmom nepredvídateľnosť výpovede („l'inattendu énonciatif“). Pri jednom aj druhom type nepredvídateľnosti nastáva spochybnenie očakávaní buď subjektu, alebo čitateľa príbehu.

V druhom prípade vystupuje do popredia spomínaný hermeneutický záujem. Keďže samotné odchýlky, či vybočenia z prototypov nedokážu dostatočne ozrejmiť záujem čítajúceho subjektu, autor siaha po pojme komplexnosť, a to buď na úrovni zmyslu – sémantická komplexnosť („la complexité sémantique“) –, alebo formy – formálna komplexnosť („la complexité formelle“). Zmienená komplexnosť vypovedá o miere explicitnosti textu a netýka sa jeho prístupnosti, ktorá má byť naopak jednoduchá: „Najzaujímavejšia je teda taká výpoveď, ktorá má najlepší pomer hustoty informácií a jednoduchosti prístupu,“ hovorí autor (50, prel. S. R.). Uchopenie proble-

matiky (kognitívny prístup) podmieňujú tri faktory: rozlišovanie („la discrimination“, v texte ju naznačuje kvalitatívna alebo kvantitatívna atypickosť napr. postáv, situácií atď.), lokalizácia („la localisation“, časová a priestorová blízkosť/vzdialenosť má vplyv na čitateľskú pozornosť a mieru explanácie) a štruktúrovanie („la structuration“, súvisí s opakovaním, komplementárnosťou a pod.).

Druhá kapitola sa zameriava na otázky, prečo potrebujeme vo fikcii cítiť emócie a na čo vlastne emócie slúžia. Odhliadnuc od všeobecnej definície emócie ako reakcie na vonkajší alebo vnútorný podnet, jej klasifikácie a od funkcií, autor sa zmieňuje o emóciách vo fikcii, ktorých špecifickosť nespočíva v spôsobe ich vzniku, pretože sú totožné s emóciami v skutočnom živote a produkuje ich naša pamäť (a nie príbeh), ale súvisí s ich spracovaním (70). Jouve rozlišuje vo fikcii univerzálne/antropologické („les émotions universelles/anthropologiques“), kolektívne/sociálne („les émotions collectives/sociales“) a individuálne emócie („les émotions individuelles“). Práve široké spektrum emócií, ktoré môže človek pri čítaní pociťovať bez toho, aby za to znášal dôsledky, predstavuje hlavný prínos fikcie (Jouve tu má na mysli napr. čitateľský pôžitok pri násilných alebo erotických scénach, ktoré umožňujú pri čítaní prekročiť zákazy platné v skutočnom svete). V súvislosti s emóciami ďalej fikcia umožňuje predchádzať potlačeniu emócií, rozvíja emocionálnu inteligenciu či zvyšuje prispôsobivosť recipienta. Ak fikčný naratív prirodzene nejaké emócie vyvoláva, emocionálna intenzita („l'intensité émotionnelle“) sa môže podľa Jouva rôzniť v závislosti od troch faktorov, ktorými sú (časová, priestorová, afektívna, sociálna) blízkosť („la proximité“), nepravdepodobnosť („l'improbabilité“, opakovanie rovnakých scénárov znižuje našu citlivosť) a postupnosť („la gradualité“, odkazuje na existenciu hraníc v pozitívnom zmysle – cieľový bod/„le point de mire“ – aj v tom negatívnom – efekt steny/„l'effet de mur“). Príťažlivosť príbehov sa teda vo

všeobecnosti viaže na naratívny záujem (čo sa bude diať?), hermeneutický záujem (čo to znamená?) a na silu emócií. Ako Jouve pripomína, ide o samostatné zložky, preto môžu byť v texte zastúpené v rôznej miere (niektoré diela kladú dôraz na komplexnosť, iné na hĺbku emócií). Nemajú však výlučný vplyv na to, ako na nás fikcia pôsobí, pretože treťou, neredukovateľnou zložkou je podľa neho aj estetické potešenie.

Podstatne stručnejšia je v porovnaní s ostatnými kapitolami tretia kapitola. „L'art du récit“ (Umenie príbehu) prináša zamyslenie nad estetickým pôžitkom z čítania (alebo pozerania) príbehu, ktorý v zmysle toho, čo tvrdí Gérard Genette, vyplýva zo záujmu subjektu o formálny aspekt diela. Naproti tomu má estetické vnímanie u niektorých teoretikov, medzi inými u Jeana-Mariho Schaeffera, širší záber, ako hovorí Jouve, a zahŕňa napríklad aj pôžitok zo samotného čítania (pozerania) príbehu, pretože „estetická recepcia je činnosť perцепčná, emocionálna a intelektuálna“ (96). V prípade fikcie možno navyše hovoriť o fikčnom pôžitku, ktorý implikuje ponorenie do fikcie, respektíve to, že človek uverí na vymedzený čas čítania tomu, čo číta. Estetické a fikčné uspokojenie alebo, povedané slovami Romana Jakobsona, primárne poetická a referenčná funkcia jazyka, sú preto podľa Schaeffera v konštantnom napätí. Samotné ponorenie čitateľa do fikčného príbehu predpokladá jeho citovú angažovanosť a v zásade vylučuje kritický odstup. Ako Jouve konštatuje, ponorenie nie je nevyhnutnou podmienkou rozkoše z čítania. Môžeme ju pocítiť aj vtedy, keď máme zábrany (príkladom je situácia, keď je hlavným hrdinom negatívna literárna postava, napr. v románe Michela Tourniera *Kráľ tmy*, 1997, či Jonathana Littella *Laskavé bohyně*, 2008). Jouve zdôrazňuje, že „mimetické ponorenie a estetické uspokojenie odkazujú na dve odlišné skúsenosti, ktoré sa nemusia prekrývať“, no aj napriek tomu sa v procese čítania „často zamieňajú“ (106 – 107). To je aj dôvod, prečo hovorí o dvoch typoch emócií: situačné emócie („les émotions situationnelles“) vyvoláva uvedená si-

tuácia, zatiaľ čo estetické emócie („les émotions esthétiques“) vyplývajú z formálnych kvalít príbehu.

Štvrtá kapitola upriamuje pozornosť na spôsob, akým nás fikcia ovplyvňuje, a v konečnom dôsledku predstavuje vyústenie Jouvovho teoretického uvažovania o danej problematike. Otvára ju otázka, prečo vlastne túžime čítať (alebo vidieť) príbehy, na ktorú autor vzápätí odpovedá vyzdvihnutím upokojujúcej, resp. kompenzačnej hodnoty fikcie. Všetky príbehy sú v prvom rade odpoveďou na nejakú túžbu a plnia funkciu, ktorá vo všeobecnosti pripadá ideológiám a náboženstvám. Podľa Jouva však príbeh dokáže skĺbiť vo svojej podstate dva protichodné impulzy, a to potrebu bezpečia a túžbu po nových zážitkoch. Fikcia odkazuje na existujúce kultúrne, antropologické a estetické modely tým, že prináša napríklad známe situácie, no zároveň z nich vybočuje, keď kladie znepokojujivé otázky alebo nastoľuje nové prístupy. Má didaktickú funkciu, pretože prostredníctvom vzťahu analógie, ako hovorí Jouve v súlade so Schaefferovými myšlienkami, umožňuje konfrontáciu „s (udalostnými, emocionálnymi, tematickými) konfiguráciami, ktoré nepoznáme (v skutočnom svete sme ich nemohli zažiť prakticky ani morálne) a dokonca sme si ich ani nepredstavovali“ (128). Otvorením skúmania možností sa text pre čitateľa stáva príležitosťou obnoviť svoje vnímanie skutočnosti. Fikcia pritom nemusí priamo modifikovať presvedčenia čitateľa; stačí, že rozšíri jeho poznanie a sprostredkuje skúsenosť, ktorá je za iných okolností neprenosná. Jouve nazýva toto formovanie aj existenciálny tréning („l'entraînement existentiel“), ktorý prebieha štyrmi spôsobmi: projekciou („projection“), adaptáciou („adaptation“), vymedzením („démarcation“) a vyvrátením („réfutation“). Fikcia nás v neposlednom rade vedie k tomu, aby sme zaujali postoj, kriticky prehodnocovali svoju vlastnú skúsenosť a prehĺbili si kognitívne, analytické a interpretačné schopnosti. Ide samozrejme o známe fakty, ktoré autor presvedčivo demonštruje na početných úryvkoch.

O poslednej, piatej kapitole v krátkosti len toľko, že je konkrétnou realizáciou skúmania textu z hľadiska príťažlivosti fikcie a aplikáciou načrtnutého pojmoslovía. Ide pritom o kombináciu objektívneho prístupu k textu a jeho (nevyhnutne) subjektívnej interpretácie. V troch románových úryvkoch (Zola, Proust, Duras) si autor na jednej strane všíma záujem a v rámci neho nepredvídateľnosť, komplexnosť a prístupnosť, a na druhej strane identifikuje emóciu z hľadiska blízkosti, nepravdepodobnosti a postupnosti. V súvislosti s účinkami čítania analyzuje otázku kompenzácie a implikácie.

Sila fikcie. Prečo máme radi príbehy? Vincenta Jouva reflektuje do veľkej miery aktuálne (kognitívne) výskumy v oblasti teórie literatúry, ktoré sa pri textových analýzach diel čoraz častejšie sústreďujú na postavenie čitateľstva a recepciu diela. Autor tak nadväzuje na pragmatický prístup k textu a obnovený záujem literárnych teoretikov o čitateľa pozorovateľný od 70. rokov 20. storočia (Wolfgang Iser, Hans Robert Jauss a Umberto Eco, vo Francúzsku Philippe Hamon a Michel Picard), ktorý je v slovenskom literárnovednom prostredí zachytený v prekladovej tvorbe len minimálne (výnimkou je Eco), no zároveň prináša nové pojmy a me-

todologické možnosti uchopenia literárneho textu. Na otázku uvedenú v podnápise odpovedá Jouve v texte jasne, systematicky a presvedčivo. Navyše sa usiluje zohľadniť aj neliterárne javy a virtuálne svety, v ktorých sa čoraz častejšie odohráva náš život a ktoré, ako hovorí autor v jednom z rozhovorov (*Vox-poetica.com*), majú veľa spoločného s fikčnými svetmi. Otázna je však napríklad aplikovateľnosť jeho teoretického uvažovania v prípade detských a mladistvých, t. j. neskúsených čitateľov (v súvislosti s konštatovaním, že emócie pri čítaní vznikajú na základe osobných spomienok). Slabým miestom publikácie je chýbajúca bibliografia, ktorá by poskytla potrebný súhrnný prehľad ťažiskových teoretických prác a zdôraznila interdisciplinárny záber knihy (čo samotný text potvrdzuje). Vo všeobecnosti však možno povedať, že dielo *Sila fikcie* sprostredkúva staré obsahy v novom šate, vo svetle aktuálnych potrieb a očakávaní, ktoré sú prínosné nielen pre literárnu vedu, ale môžu mať omnoho širšie využitie aj v ďalších oblastiach spoločenskovedného bádania.

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PETER GETLÍK: Pohyb ku kognitívnym adaptačným štúdiám. Adaptácia ako hra [Moving towards cognitive adaptation studies: Adaptation as play]

Košice: Univerzita Pavla Jozefa Šafárika v Košiciach, 2022. 272 s.

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V skúmaní umenia na Slovensku nie je kognitívnovedný prístup bežný. Jeho interdisciplinárna metodológia je náročná a vyžaduje si nielen strategické myslenie, ale aj vytrvalosť, lebo k (publikačným) výsledkom sa dospieva pomalšie, keďže musia spĺňať nároky viacerých vedných odborov. Každý kognitívnovedný výstup si preto zasluhuje pozornosť a zvlášť to platí, ak ide o prácu z radov perspektívnej mladej generácie vedkýň a vedcov. Týka sa

to aj knihy odborníka na kognitívno-hu-manitné bádania Petra Getlíka z Univerzity Pavla Jozefa Šafárika v Košiciach, ktorý vydal monografiu *Pohyb ku kognitívnym adaptačným štúdiám* s podtitulom *Adaptácia ako hra*.

Monografia patrí do sféry adaptologickeho výskumu s mediálnym a literárnym záberom. Autor napríklad rozoberá adaptácie literárnych diel na filmové médium, (nové) inscenácie divadelných aj nediva-

delných predlôh, nové spracovania už realizovaných filmových námetov a podobne. Cieľom je objasniť a modelovať *adaptáciu ako hru*. Idea hry a hravosti už bola v adaptačných štúdiách a celkovo v umenovedách prezentovaná (Johan Huizinga, Julie Sanders, Linda Hutcheon, Petr Bubeníček a iní), ale aktuálne sa žiadalo systematicky prehodnotiť doterajšie prístupy a poznatky podľa inovatívneho a univerzálnejšieho kognitívneho hľadiska. V tejto úlohe sa autor orientuje s rozhladom a nadväzuje najmä na Torbena Grodala, Patricka Hogana, Jaaka Pankseppa a Rogera Cailloisa. Systematicky sa vyrovnáva s fenomenologickým, systémovoteoretickým, psychologickým, sociálnym či kultúrnym poznaním fenoménu hry a prehodnocuje ho cez neurokognitívny a empirický priemet. Naráža pritom na obmedzenia fenomenológie (22, 56), na slepú uličku dekonštruktivismu (56) či vyčerpanosť axiologického rámca pri probléme vernosti (24).

Getlík svojimi analýzami upozorňuje na limity bilaterálnych vzťahovaní. Zdôrazňuje, že „[v] nekognitívnych prístupoch, kde chýba integrujúci rámec neustále sa adaptujúcej vtelesnenej mysle, napríklad nie je úplne zrejmé, ako sa centrálné vyrovnat s rozvetvujúcim sa výskumným projektom adaptačných štúdií“ (35 – 36). To možno vzťahovať aj na „autonómnú“ literárnu vedu, keď vytláča kognitívnovednú perspektívu do „extraliterárnosti“. Lenže objasňovanie literárnosti je nevyhnutne naviazané na literatúru, resp. literárnu komunikáciu a opačne, pretože ak skúmame literatúru, nevyhnutne s ňou komunikujeme, pri čítaní, analyzovaní a interpretovaní zapájame svoju kogníciu, myseľ a dokonca aj telo, čím iniciujeme procesy literárnosti, hoci si to nemusíme uvedomovať. Kognitívnovedná perspektíva nie je preto extraliterárna, len má komplexnejší interdisciplinárny záber, čo potvrdzuje aj Getlíkova monografia.

Kognitívnovedný metodologický prístup autor dôkladne a presvedčivo objasňuje aj vďaka tomu, že neuvažuje len na teoretickej úrovni, ale hypotézy a úsudky kon-

frontuje s empirickými štúdiami. Využíva poznatky kognitívnych vied: kognitívnej filozofie, kognitívnej lingvistiky, informatiky, psychológie, kognitívnej antropológie, kognitívnej biológie a kognitívnej neurovedy, ale aj kognitívnej a klasickej literárnej vedy, kognitívnej a klasickej filmovej vedy a mediálnych štúdií. Vzniká tak originálny model *adaptácie ako hry* zo zorného uhla neradikálneho konštruktivismu. Model je teda konštruovaný, ale nie je len „myslený“, lebo je overovaný dostupnými vedeckými dátami experimentálneho a empirického pôvodu. Autor tvorivo otvára nové aspekty a ponúka nové riešenia aj čiastkových problémov komplexu adaptácií, pričom vhodne zaraďuje i názorné interpretačné vstupy. Napríklad upriamuje pozornosť na hravé kombinácie predchádzajúcich adaptácií, humor a parodovanie alebo subverzívnosť adaptácií. Analyzuje ich osobitosti, ale zároveň objavuje ich mnohé kognitívne súvislosti. Nezaobíde sa pritom bez konceptu *adaptácia ako adaptácia* (prebratie a/alebo prispôbenie), kde je dôležitý zážitok z adaptácie. Ústredným je tu princíp pohybu, pričom autor pri vzťahovaní kvalít a kategórií vyzdvihuje skôr ich vývinovú postupnosť (kontinuum či gradient), menej sa odvoláva na emergentné, skokovité kvality procesov. Na základe modelu PECMA (percepcia, emócia, kognícia a motorická akcia) Torbena Grodala opisuje procedurálne scenáre na prekonávanie filtrov prostredia, ktoré podmieňujú vznik adaptácií vo forme asimilácií, rekombinácií prvkov prostredia i súťaživých javov. Objasňuje tiež kognitívno-emočné parametre, ktoré ustanovujú chápanie/verifikovanie reality, kontrafaktuálne podmieňovanie alebo simulatívne myslenie, pričom sa exponujú primárne emočné systémy ako SEEKING a PLAY. Autor dáva do pozornosti, že hravosť môže redefinovať status reality a pomáha spracúvať odpor či zlyhanie v adaptačných aktivitách.

Model *adaptácie ako hry* rozvíja Getlík naratívne, ale pre lepšiu predstavu modelu by bolo prínosné tiež jeho obrazovo-sche-

matické znázornenie. Svoje využitie by určite našiel aj menný register.

Peter Getlík uchopil adaptologickú tému tvorivo a inovatívne. Pozoruhodná je jeho schopnosť vidieť aj rozporné stránky preberaných i vlastných konceptov a navrhovať a systematicky overovať možné riešenia. Zdôrazňuje, že jeho model *adaptácie ako hry* nebráni rozmýšľať o ďalších vlastnostiach adaptácií, už aj preto, že adaptácia a hra nie sú totožné kategórie. Pre odbornú

verejnú, ktorá by sa chcela pripojiť k tomuto typu výskumu napríklad aj v oblasti literárnej vedy, sú k dispozícii jasné metodické návody. Monografia je priekopnícka v umenovede na Slovensku a môže zaujať aj v medzinárodnom prostredí.

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ZUZANA KOPECKÁ: Symptómy literárnej moderny v slovenskej a českej medzivojnovnej próze [Symptoms of literary modernism in Slovak and Czech interwar prose]

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Monografia Zuzany Kopeckej – ako vychádza už z jej samotného názvu – si za hlavný cieľ kladie identifikovať symptómy literárnej moderny, a to prostredníctvom komparatistického výskumu s interdisciplinárnymi presahmi (autorka zohľadňuje filozofický, historický, psychologický, sociologický a politický kontext podmienajúci výslednú podobu textu i jeho interpretáciu). Uvedený výskum buduje na základe analýzy ťažiskových analytických kategórií, akými sú v tomto prípade pohyb v alternatívnom priestore, intímna topografia postavy, naratívny čas či fenomén fragmentárnosti. V kontexte napĺňania vytýčeného cieľa považuje za reprezentatívnu „autorskú vzorku“, etablované česko-slovenské kvarteto a príslušné diela: *Muž s protézou* (1925) od Jána Hrušovského, román *Dům o tisíci patrech* (1929) od Jana Weissa, román *Ztracený stín* (1931) od Egona Hostovského a román *Pisár Gráč* (1940) od Jozefa Čigera Hronského. Ide totiž o tvorbu generačne príbuzných autorov, ktorých medzivojnovná literárna produkcia vznikla ako obraz sebaopozujúceho sa človeka plného vnútorného napätia a diskontinuity. Monografia vychá-

dza z úspešne obhájenej dizertačnej práce na túto tému, ktorá vznikla v Ústave svetovej literatúry SAV pod vedením literárnej vedkyne Márie Bátorovej.

Jednotlivé kapitoly monografie sú z hľadiska štruktúry dôsledne premyslené. Zuzana Kopecká má rozhľad v domácej a zahraničnej sekundárnej literatúre, čo jej napomáha postupne inkarnovať do kontextu slovenského i medzinárodného literárneho výskumu inovatívne závery. Cez model Márie Bátorovej *autor – text – čitateľ a ich kontexty* nadväzuje na koncepciu hermeneutického kruhu, a to najmä z toho dôvodu, že hermeneutické tendencie cez prizmu uvedeného metodologického modelu, ktorý zohľadňuje kontexty, motivujú nerezignovať na textocentrické východisko, ale pristupovať „k nemu v interpretačnom procese ako k artefaktu s určitou výpovednou hodnotou, ktorá sa mnohokrát javí až vtedy, keď je reflektovaná v sieti súvislostí“ (18). Umožňuje jej to vstúpiť nielen do filozofického diskurzu literárnej moderny, ale zvoliť i markantný postup (cez optiku introspekcie), v dôsledku ktorého „jednotlivé symptómy literárnej moderny nadobúdajú špecifickú umeleckú formu a takto sú identifikovateľ-

né ako výraz konkrétneho autorského štýlu“ (31). Ako totiž autorka správne konštatuje, umenie moderny, ktoré zaznamenáva problematický vzťah medzi jednotlivcom a spoločnosťou v 20. storočí, nevzniká na základe poetologického kľúča literárneho romantizmu, ale na základe „vnútornej rozorvanosti protagonistu“ (35), ktorý sa pokúša o návrat k stratenej homogenite (k existenčnému „strediu“). Toto je zároveň obzvlášť pozoruhodný interpretačný rozmer nosnej témy monografie, ktorý sa stáva aj akýmsi spojovacím elementom v rámci analyzovaných diel, t. j. reflektovanie túžby návratu jednotlivých protagonistov k stratenej existenčnej stabilite, k existenčnému „strediu“.

Ešte predtým však Zuzana Kopecká ozrejmuje historický kontext kreovania slovenskej i českej moderny v medzivojnovom období, a tým aj slovenské a české literárnovedné prístupy k vymedzeniu moderny. Jej cieľom je vnímať modernu ako pojem tvoriaci súčasť slovenskej a českej umeleckej produkcie, kde sa vymedzenie tohto fenoménu v literárnovedných prístupoch výrazne líši a do popredia sa „nevyhnutne dostáva potreba reflektovať najvýraznejšie autorské prejavy moderny práve cez individuálnu umeleckú tvorbu“ (44). Potvrďuje tým svoju domnienku, že ide o jednu z línií literárnej moderny, ktorá reaguje na vyhrotený vzťah medzi moderným subjektom a spoločnosťou, prenikajúci do psychického sveta protagonistov.

Takto pripravené výskumné pole poskytuje autorke možnosť pristúpiť k interpretačnej fáze vymedzených ťažiskových kategórií a začína analýzou pohybu protagonistov v alternatívnom priestore, ktorý je podľa nej výsledkom procesu zvnútorňovania umeleckej perspektívy a korešponduje s prepojením literárnej moderny s introspekciou. Originálny snový svet, v ktorom sa protagonisti pohybujú, považuje totiž za istú „alternatívu k zložitosti destabilizovaného sveta“ (49), pričom práve táto alternatíva sa podieľa na výslednej „individualite symptómov literárnej moderny v konkrétnych autorských poetikách“ (49). Dokazuje to interpretáciou

snového sveta hlavného protagonistu románu Jána Hrušovského *Muž s protézou*, a to cez Seebornov pohyb v alternatívnom snovom priestore. Na ňom je možné „demonštrovať psychický stav subjektu a jeho snahy nájsť východisko z tmy, zvukov a pachov snového lesa, ktorý je sám o sebe alegóriou“ (51). Sujetový plán románu Jana Weissa *Dům o tisíci otcích* je vystavaný na snovom priestore na úkor reálnych časopriestorových súradníc a sen v prežívaní hlavného protagonistu Petra Broka dominuje. Pre Kopeckú je takéto vykonštruovanie snového sveta, kde sa jedinou istotou stáva identifikácia subjektu v konkrétnom priestore a jeho reakcia na mimovoľným pohybom, „zároveň dynamickejšou metaforizáciou problematiky ľudskej existencie v určitej životnej fáze“ (59). V súvislosti s autorkinými interpretačnými stanoviskami by azda bolo zaujímavé spomenúť i esej francúzskeho filozofa a literárneho kritika Gastona Bachelarda, ktorá má v českom preklade názov *Dům rodný a dům onirický*. Aj v jeho uvažovaní je snenie zviazané so stredom, v ktorom snívajúci hľadá oporu v samote nejakého dostredivého miesta a obrazy onirického domu so schodiskom predstavujú vertikálnu os zostupu do hĺbín človeka. V Hostovského románe *Ztracený stín* zas významový rozmer pohybu presahuje do viacerých rovín a pohyb postáv sa prelína s ich psychológiou. Keďže hlavný protagonista Josef Baška nedokáže čítať psychológiu postáv z tvárovej mimiky, je to práve detail gesta, ktorý sa stáva ťažiskom psychologických mikrolektúr. Autorka si všíma fakt, že aj počiatočné náznaky osobnostnej premeny, ktoré presahujú do roviny vnútorného sveta protagonistu, vyjadril Hostovský opäť cez dynamický detail. No a Hronského román *Pisár Gráč* predstavuje alternatívny priestor, cez ktorý dochádza k najvýraznejšiemu prieniku do abstrakcie, v podobe cirku. Zastupuje ambivalenciu 20. storočia a jeho znaky „funkčne vypovedajú o pozícii individua v absurdnom svete, kde je človek iba hercom, klaunom či bábkou“ (72).

I ďalšie minuciózne interpretácie vytýpaných kategórií, ako intímna topografia

postavy, naratívny čas či fenomén fragmentárnosti, predstavujú v uvažovaní Zuzany Kopeckej špecifiká, ktoré v analyzovaných dielach „dotvárajú výpovednú hodnotu umenia symptomaticky referujúceho o určitom životnom výseku a existenčných podmienkach, teda o širších kontextoch vlastného vzniku“ (173). A interpretáciou uvedených kategórií dochádza aj k výrazným presahom literárnovedného výskumu do filozofie, pretože práve „filozofický diskurz v tomto ponímaní rámcuje modernu, ktorá má svoj špecifický pendant vo sfére estetiky – v literárnej tvorbe odrážajúcej filozofickú modernu doby“ (175).

Napokon treba oceniť, že autorka monografie vychádza z koncepcie medziliterárnosti Dionýza Ďurišina a nezabúda na stredo európsky kultúrny priestor. Naďalej

odhaľuje to, čo typologicky spája stredo-európskych autorov a snaží sa „začleniť slovesné umenie relatívne malých národov do koncepcie svetovej literatúry“ (45). Dokazuje to svojimi interpretačnými zručnosťami a precíznou komparáciou analyzovaných diel s tvorbou uznávaných zahraničných autorov. Jej originalita spočíva i v tom, že sa na známe diela slovenskej a českej literatúry, ktoré boli v minulosti podrobené viacerým analýzám cez prizmu rôznych interpretačných kľúčov, pozerá špecifickou tvorivou optikou. Prináša tak nový pohľad na tvorbu autorov, ktorí patria do kánonu slovenskej a českej literatúry.

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**MILOSLAV SZABÓ: Kráska a zvrhlík: Rasa a rod v literatúre
19. a 20. storočia [The Belle and the Pervert: Race and gender in 19th- and
20th-century literature]**

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Autorom knihy *Kráska a zvrhlík*, s podtitulom *Rasa a rod v literatúre 19. a 20. storočia*, je Milošlav Szabó, historik a germanista, ktorý pracoval vo výskumných inštitúciách v Nemecku, Rakúsku, Českej republike a na Slovensku a momentálne pôsobí na Filozofickej fakulte Univerzity Komenského v Bratislave. Vo svojom výskume sa Szabó dlhodobo zameriava na štúdium dejín antisemitizmu a katolicizmu na Slovensku a v Rakúsku v 19. a 20. storočí. Je autorom niekoľkých monografií: *Boh v ofsajde* (2004), *Rasa a vôľa. Alfred Rosenberg a Mýtus 20. storočia* (2004), *Klérofašisti: Slovenskí kňazi a pokušenie radikálnej politiky (1935 – 1945)* (2019), *Potraty: Dejiny slovenských kultúrnych vojen od Hlinku po Kuffu* (2020).

Vo svojich knihách Szabó často pracuje s umeleckou literatúrou. Beletria narába s emóciami viac než historická spisba a istým spôsobom ich konzervuje, zachytáva histó-

riu v inej, intímnej rovine. Zároveň literatúra často odzrkadľuje realitu a dianie v spoločnosti, dokonca ju niekedy ovplyvňuje. Tak ako dnes aj v minulosti ľudia podvedome nasledovali naratívy a modely, ponúkané prostredníctvom literárnych diel, zvlášť, ak sa stali súčasťou kánonu. V najnovšej knihe Szabó skúma nielen to, ako sa rasizmus prejavuje v dielach klasikov ako Svetozár Hurbán Vajanský, František Švantner, Ludmila Podjavorinská, Gustav Meyrink či Thomas Mann, ale hľadá aj pôvod týchto stereotypov. Cez literárne texty odhaľuje, aké formy a prejavy rasizmus nadobúdal v nemeckej literatúre, ktorá sa mnoho ráz stávala pre slovenskú vzorom. Hneď v úvode upozorňuje, že k fenoménu rasizmu chce pristupovať inak, než je v spoločenských vedách bežné a zaužívané (18). Nesnaží sa dokazovať nesprávnosť takéhoto svetonázoru. Pomocou vied o kultúre si všíma fenomény, ktoré sú

väčšmi späté s každodenným životom. Szabó ukazuje, že rasizmus nepramení len zo pseudovedeckých teórií, ale predovšetkým zo strachu z rasového miešania.

Autor použil v titule literárny tróp „kráska a zvrhlík“, pretože ústrednými motívami jeho úvah sú obrazy zvodnej cudzinky a predátora, násilníka. Tieto dva rodovo vyhranené motívy tvoria aj pôdorys členenia publikácie rozdelenej na celky „Pekná cudzinka“ a „Predátor“. Knihu Szabó koncipoval chronologicky, začína 19. storočím a pokračuje reflexiou diel napísaných v priebehu 20. storočia.

Na úvod prvej časti sa Szabó pokúša definovať „peknú cudzinku“ a tvrdí, že v európskej kultúre sa príťažlivosť a strach z odlišnosti už od stredoveku spájali s predstavou krásnej a tajomnej cudzinky. Spravidla išlo o reprezentantky etnických alebo náboženských menšín: Židovky, moslimky a Rómky, ktoré predstavovali Orient, pričom tu autor metodologicky vychádza zo Saidovho ponímania orientalizmu (24). Osobitne si všíma rodinné pozadie Vajanského a jeho obavy z „miešania rás“, najmä v próze *Letiace tiene*, a uvádza ich do súvisu s dobovou spoločenskou klímou. Vajanským nastavené rasistické filtre následne projektovali obrazy Židov, ktoré pretrvali dlhé desaťročia. Bolo to obdobie, keď jedinou „národnou inštitúciou“ zostala rodina a zmiešané manželstvá sa poctívali ako hriech a odrodilstvo (31). Strach z cudzoty zmenil vnímanie exotiky – atraktívne sa stalo hrozbou. Odlišnosť vyprodukovala strach, že „naše sa kontaminuje“.

Medzi analyzovanými príkladmi sa nachádza jedna spisovateľka, dnes známa skôr ako autorka kníh pre deti, Ludmila Podjavorinská. Autor si všíma, ako v poviedke nazvanej *Protivy* Podjavorinská narába s etnickými až rasovými stereotypmi, židovskú dievčinu zobrazuje ako pomstychtivú a krutú ženu, u ktorej preváži „peňazobažnosť, vlastná celému jej národu“ (39). Pri podobnom zovšeobecňovaní vlastností, ktoré sú údajne vlastné národu ako celku, už môžeme podľa Szabóa hovoriť o literárnom antisemitizme.

Antisemitizmus sa na prelome 19. a 20. storočia nešíril len v uhorskej časti monarchie, ale aj na územiach dnešného Česka a Rakúska. Szabó vyberá román Gustava Meyrinka *Golem*, kde pražské geto symbolizuje liaheň rodovej, rasovej a sexuálnej dekadencie (47), aj keď román bol navonok koncipovaný ako pocta kabale, čo však vrátili jej renomovaní znalci.

V ďalšej časti Szabó približuje prozaické dielo Jána Hrušovského *Zo svetovej vojny*, v ktorom autor opisuje dojmy vojakov zo stretnutí s inými etnikami, predovšetkým s Ukrajincami a so Židmi. V románe *Svety Martina Rázusa* sa zasa sústreďuje na opis rabovačiek, keď sa navrátilci po skončení prvej svetovej vojny vrhli na židovských krčmárov a vyhánali ich z obcí. V tejto súvislosti Szabó upozorňuje na odkaz „rozžúreného obra“, ktorý je alúziou na pražského Golema, a opis židovských obydľí plných „všelijakého haraburdia a nečistoty“ (63) pripomína vyššie spomínané zobrazenie pražského geta.

V časti nazvanej „Považská Carmen“ je krásnou orientálkou rómska dievčina. Ako upozorňuje Szabó s odkazom na literárneho historika Florianu Krobba, „Cigánka“ predstavuje príslušníčku iného etnika, ktoré podobne ako židovské žilo medzi inými európskymi národmi dlhé storočia bez toho, aby sa asimilovalo. Rómka sa od Židovky odlišuje v dvoch zásadných aspektoch: nereprezentuje prekliate náboženstvo a neusiluje sa o splnutie (65). Postavy Carmen a Esmeraldy sa v európskej literatúre tešia popularite už od svojho vzniku a zároveň sa spájajú s demonizovaním ženskej sexualit. Tieto rasistické a sexistické predstavy sú v európskej kultúre 19. a 20. storočia hlboko zakorenené a nevyhol sa im ani ďalší pertraktovaný autor, český spisovateľ Jozef Sekera v románe *Deti z hlinenej osady* z roku 1952.

Na príklade románov Jana Otčenáška *Romeo, Julie a tma* a *Námestie svätej Alžbety* Rudolfa Jašíka z 50. rokov 20. storočia Szabó poukazuje na fakt, že po druhej svetovej vojne dochádza v literatúre k „prepólova-

niu“ stereotypov; v dôsledku holokaustu sa zo Židovky ako stelesnenej hrozby rasového rozkladu stáva vzor čistej a nevinnnej svätice (82).

Prvú časť autor uzatvára analýzou literárneho spracovania genocídy v Rwande v roku 1994 z pera švajčiarskeho spisovateľa Lukasa Bärfussa v románe *Sto dní*. So slovenskou či českou literatúrou ho spája fakt, že ide o vyrovnávanie sa „malého“ národa s nedávnou rasistickou minulosťou.

V druhej časti publikácie *Kráska a zvrhlík* Szabó obracia pozornosť na postavy mužov obťažujúcich „nevinné dievčatá s bielou tvárou“. Nespútaná sexualita sa tu predpokladá pripisuje zvrhlíkovi, cudzincom, orientálcom. Rasistické stereotypy vychádzali z obáv o stratu vlastného ja, predstavovali strach z morálneho rasového úpadku a zániku na kolektívnej úrovni. Szabó uvádza paralely medzi lynčovaním Židov v Európe (na príklade Hrušovského poviedky *Žid*) a mučením černochoch v USA. Aj tu presakuje tabu rasového miešania, ktoré sa netýkalo iba černochoch, ale aj domorodých „Indiánov“ (napr. *Posledný mohykán* Jamesa F. Coopera), pričom za znásilnenie sa považovalo len násilie voči „bielej“ žene. Vplyv amerického rasizmu na nacistický antisemitizmus sa neobmedzoval na právne normy, ale v podobe demonizovania údajných židovských predátorov bol badateľný aj v umeleckej produkcii, napríklad vo filme *Žid Süß* z roku 1940, ktorý poznala široká verejnosť aj v Slovenskom štáte. Tejto historickej postave a jej zobrazovaniu sa Szabó venuje v druhej kapitole druhej časti knihy, pričom si všima hlavne rodové stereotypy.

Antisemitizmus obdobia fin de siècle v beletrii narábal s biologickými metaforami o Židoch, hovoril o nich ako o parazitoch na tele kresťanského ľudu. Ako uvádza Szabó, obviňovanie z cudzopasníctva pracovalo s metaforou krvi, a práve symbol krvi spája parazitizmus so sexistickým rasizmom a antisemitizmom. Predstavám parazitovania predchádzali obrazy židovských úžerníkov, ktoré zanechali v slovenskej kultúrnej pamäti hlboké stopy (136). Szabó poukazuje

na sugestívne obrazy premeny židovského úžerníka na parazita, na motív vampirizmu či metafory krvi, ktoré sa vinú celým Švantnerovým dielom, od *Nevesty hól'* až po *Život bez konca*. Upozorňuje na protižidovský rozmer diela *Nevesta hól'*, ktorý si literárno-historický výskum začal všimáť len nedávno. V románe *Život bez konca* sa jeho autor vzhľadom na vedomie o holokauste pokúsil obraz židovského parazita neutralizovať, ale aj tak sklzáva do stereotypov o przení rasy. Švantnerova novela *Sedliak* by sa na prvý pohľad, slovami Szabóa, dala charakterizovať ako posun od literárneho antisemitizmu k filosemitizmu. Židovské postavy však naďalej ostávajú cudzie, nepatria k majorite a stále predstavujú potenciálnu hrozbu.

Publikácia Miloslava Szabóa *Kráska a zvrhlík* prináša aktualizovaný pohľad na množstvo historických osobností, diel, udalostí, kultúrnych odkazov na realie a hnutia, ako aj mnohé zaujímavé detaily, ktoré sa koncentrujú okolo témy literárneho antisemitizmu v priestore strednej Európy. Kniha je prehľadná, obsahuje rozsiahly poznámkový aparát, v druhom vydaní by som zvažila doplnenie menného registra. Predstavuje ukážku interdisciplinarity a potrebného umenia kooperácie medzi históriou a literatúrou, upozorňuje na fakt prepojenia prítomnosti s minulosťou. Potvrdzuje opakované vzorce myslenia a správania ľudí i návratné ideologické omyly a pozornosť, ktorú spoločnosť venuje falošným hrdinom či prorokom. Autor v úvode dokazuje, že slovenskí extrémisti ešte aj dnes používajú vo svojich pamfletoch či stereotypizujúcich obrázkoch striktné vymedzené rodové roly. Radikalizovanie sa v súčasnosti odohráva na sociálnych sieťach, odborníci hovoria o „digitálnom fašizme“. Pritom rasistické a sexistické obrazy nie sú ničím novým, pramena v dobových modeloch, ktoré Szabó analyzuje čitateľsky priťažlivou formou. Prostredníctvom knihy poukazuje na potrebu pracovať s termínom literárny rasizmus či literárny antisemitizmus aj v prípade uznávaných mien literatúry, ako príklad

uvádza Štúra či Vajanského. Literárna história sa doposiaľ dostatočne nezaoberala konceptualizáciou literárnych prejavov antisemitizmu, preto túto publikáciu považujem za veľmi prínosnú a potrebnú pre rozvíjanie diskusie. Kniha je obohatená o komentované dobové karikatúry, obrazy zo zbierok, tematické plagáty k filmom. Vďaka tomu pôsobí vizuálne podnetne a okrem zainteresovaných môže vynikajúco poslúžiť v školskom prostredí.

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Maďarskojazyčný vedecký zborník *Na zahraničných policiach kníh: Štúdie o cudzojazyčnej recepcii Pétera Esterházyho* je výstupom širokej vedeckej spolupráce hungaristiek a hungaristov najrôznejšej proveniencie od Británie a Francúzska cez strednú, južnú a východnú Európu po Japonsko a USA. Skúma fakty a aspekty recepcie literárnej tvorby prominentného maďarského autora P. Esterházyho, predstaviteľa stredoeurópskeho postmodernizmu, vo svetovom kontexte. Sústreďuje sa na špecifiká literárneho transferu a otázky umeleckého prekladu.

The Hungarian-language edited collection *On Foreign Bookshelves: The Reception of Péter Esterházy in Translation* is the outcome of a wide scholarly collaboration of Hungarian-literature scholars hailing from all over the world, including Britain, France, central, southern and eastern Europe, Japan and the United States. It analyzes the reception of the prominent Hungarian writer Péter Esterházy, a representative of Central European postmodernism, in the world context, focusing on the specifics of the literary transfer and the issues of literary translation.

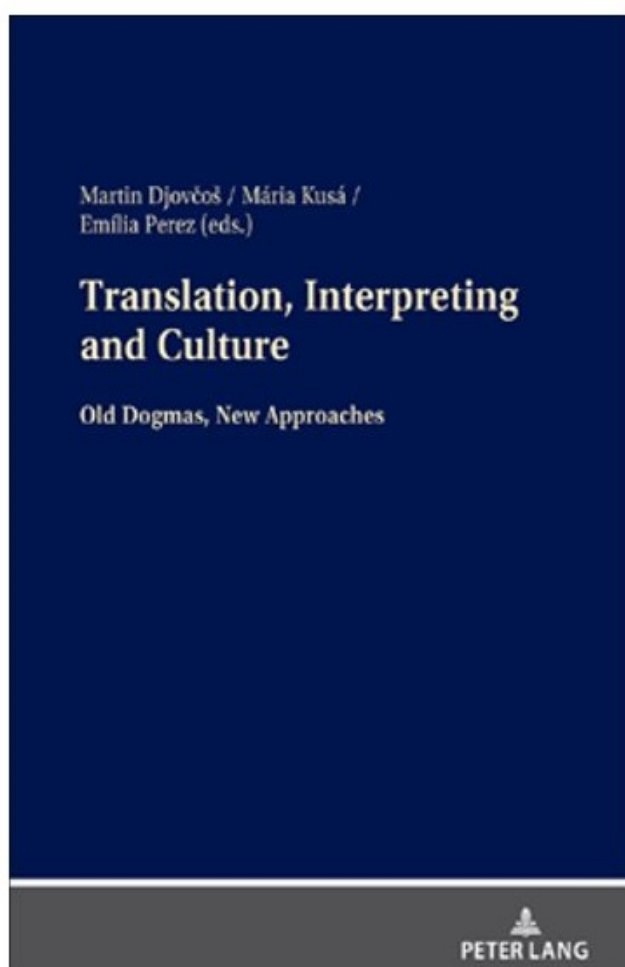
JUDIT GÖRÖZDI – MAGDOLNA BALOGH (eds.): *Külföldi könyvespolcokon. Tanulmányok Esterházy Péter idegen nyelvi recepciójáról*. Budapest: Reciti Kiadó, 2022. 388 s. ISBN 978-615-6255-59-4. <https://www.reciti.hu/2022/7403>.



Kniha *Preklad, tlmočenie a kultúra: Staré dogmy, nové prístupy* o strete starých a nových prístupov k prekladu a tlmočeniu sa zameriava na teoretické, metodologické, empirické, ako aj paradigmatické napätia a prieniky medzi rôznymi tradíciami v prekladateľských a tlmočnických štúdiách. Robí tak nielen z generálneho, ale aj z geografického, sociokultúrneho a politického hľadiska, pričom jej cieľom je podporiť vzájomnú komunikáciu a odhaliť synergie medzi najnovšími výskumnými trendmi a už existujúcimi metodológiami a prístupmi.

The book *Translation, Interpreting and Culture: Old Dogmas, New Approaches* about the clash between old and new approaches to translation and interpreting focuses on the theoretical, methodological, empirical as well as paradigmatic tensions and intersections between various traditions in translation and interpreting studies. It does so not only from a generational perspective but also from geographical, sociocultural and political points of view, aiming to foster communication among them and reveal synergies between the latest research trends and pre-existing methodologies and approaches.

MARTIN DJOVČOŠ – MÁRIA KUSÁ – EMÍLIA PEREZ (eds.): *Translation, Interpreting and Culture. Old Dogmas, New Approaches*. Berlin: Peter Lang, 2021. 286 s. ISBN 978-3631838815. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3726/b18335>.





Hoci je koncept odolnosti – schopnosti prispôbiť sa nepriaznivým podmienkam a vzchopiť sa – priam všadeprítomný i problematizovaný, v literárnej vede zatiaľ silnejšie nerezonoval. Toto číslo sa snaží uvedenú medzeru zaplniť: analyzuje súčasné naratívy, ktoré tematizujú odolnosť ako ústrednú mnohostrannú paradigmu umožňujúcu postihnúť realitu a subjektivitu. Uverejnené štúdie skúmajú globálne vnímanie pojmu odolnosť a mapujú estetiku kritickej odolnosti, ktorá otvára nové cesty k poznaniu, nádeji a k pozitívnemu konaniu.

Resilience, the capacity to adapt to adversity and rebound, has become a ubiquitous and contested concept, yet approaches to it from the field of literary criticism are still scarce. This issue contributes to filling in this gap by probing current narratives, from which resilience emerges as a central multifaceted paradigm allowing to apprehend contemporary reality and subjectivity. The ten articles gathered here interrogate the global currency of notions of resilience, while mapping an aesthetics of critical resilience that opens new paths to knowledge, hope, and positive agency.