



# CONFETTI

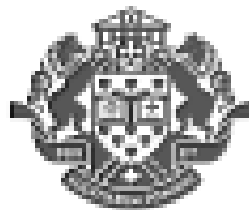
Un journal de littératures  
et cultures du monde

A World Literatures and  
Cultures Journal

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# CONFETTI

**Un journal de littératures et cultures du monde**  
**A World Literatures and Cultures Journal**



**Comité de révision / Editing Committee**

Véronique Bélinge, Agostino Delannoy et / and Zac Tabler

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Paul Birt, Joerg Esleben, Cristina Perissinotto,  
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## BIENVENUE / WELCOME

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We are very pleased to be celebrating the third issue of *Confetti*, created by another talented and inspired cohort of students in the Master's program in World Literatures and Cultures. This collection of literary essays and scholarly articles is a testament to the continued dynamism and diversity of the program and the creative and intellectual energy of its participants.

La Maîtrise ès arts en littératures et cultures du monde est un programme d'études interdisciplinaire et bilingue en sciences humaine qui offre une formation axée sur la recherche et l'évaluation des formes de contacts, de relations et d'échanges multiculturels, interculturels et transculturels. The students in the program and the faculty members involved with it come from a broad range of academic disciplines and cultural backgrounds. Our shared passion for studying cultural expressions from around the world complements our immense diversity of approaches, and this combination leads to exciting and often unexpected synergies. L'atmosphère intime de nos séminaires donne lieu à des échanges enrichissants et permet aux étudiants d'apprendre les uns des autres et de se mettre au défi d'élargir leur réflexion. In one short year, the faculty and student members of the program get to know and collaborate with each other in the development of the students' individual research programs. This collection presents some of the fruits of that labour.

So let's bring out the multicoloured stuff that the journal takes its carnivalesque name from and let's celebrate and congratulate the authors and editors of this excellent endeavour.

Joerg Esleben

Directeur, Département des langues et littératures modernes

Chair, Department of Modern Languages and Literatures

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Tout comme les deux volumes précédents parus en 2015 et 2016, ce troisième volume du journal *Confetti* résulte entièrement du travail assidu et dédié des étudiants de la Maîtrise ès arts en littératures et cultures du monde (MA in World Literatures and Cultures), un programme unique au Canada : bilingue, interdisciplinaire et dynamique. As program director, it is my honour and great pleasure to write a few introductory remarks to this exciting third volume of *Confetti*, crafted entirely by our students, which brings together literary works and scholarly articles that encompass different approaches, both creative and critical, and research methodologies to analyze a variety of narrative expressions, from novels and film to rap music and lesser-used languages. Ce volume comporte deux sections qui illustrent remarquablement l'étendue des thèmes abordés dans le cadre de nos séminaires : *La ville : vécue et imaginée / The City: Lived and Imagined* et *Représentation, expression et identité / Representation, Expression and Identity*.

Dans la première partie, *La ville : vécue et imaginée / The City: Lived and Imagined*, les lecteurs sont invités à déguster les réflexions sensibles et créatrices sur quatre métropoles des deux côtés de l'océan Atlantique. From Emily Cervený's *Full Circle: Montreal* we are taken to *Paris* by Éloïse Chopin from where this voyage on the border between the real and the imaginary takes us to *Antwerp* by Agostino Delannoy to end in Italy with *A Girl and Her Bicycle: Udine* by Katarina Ghdaye.

The second section, *Représentation, expression et identité / Representation, Expression and Identity* is comprised of five chapters. Dans *Le Palestinien dans l'objectif israélien : l'orientalisme éclairé d'Eran Riklis*, Véronique Bélinge analyse deux films du réalisateur israélien sous le prisme des théories d'Edward Said. In *Kanye West's*

*Postmodern Anxiety: Who Takes the Rap?*, Marcelle-Anne Fletcher offers an analysis of Black masculinity as articulated in the well-known rap artist's lyrics at the intersection of feminist, literary and psychoanalytic theories. Eliana Fortunato, dans *L'arbeshe : une langue minoritaire d'Italie méridionale*, illustre un cas de revitalisation linguistique et ses enjeux politiques à l'exemple d'une des 12 langues minoritaires protégées en Italie. In *Third World Women or the Struggles of a Feminist Identity in Development: Female Characters in Khaled Hosseini's Novel "A Thousand Splendid Suns"*, Orsolya Nemeth-Kilinc applies Nancy E. Downing and Kristin L. Roush's feminist identity model to demonstrate the limits of the dominant 'Third World Woman' discourse within Western feminism and emphasize the strength of the female characters in the novel. The concluding chapter by Zac Tabler, entitled *Longing for Belonging: Transculturality and Identity in Two North American Novels*, compares one American and one Canadian novel and the struggles people from various backgrounds face regarding identity and belonging in North America's highly hybrid urban landscapes.

En somme, le présent recueil donne un riche aperçu des formes d'expression culturelle variées à travers le monde. In the name of the professors who have taught and supervised these creative and dedicated students, I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to the editors and the contributors.

Agatha Schwartz  
Directrice, Maîtrise ès arts en littératures et cultures du monde  
Director, Master of Arts in World Literatures and Cultures

**La ville : vécue et imaginée**  
**The City: Lived and Imagined**



## Full Circle: Montreal

By Emily Cerveny

Ah, Mount Royal, the 'Mountain'. The ancient remains of an eroded volcanic complex. The green heart, today a park. Designed by Frederick Law Olmstead (the designer of New York's Central Park), much of his original landscaping design was neither completed nor carried out. Ascent to the summit's lookout offers a lovely panoramic view of the urban landscape and the St. Lawrence River all year round. In addition to being the city's largest green space, Mount Royal is the site of some of the largest cemeteries in North America, which are lovely and peaceful despite their solemn purpose. The mountain remains a witness to all that takes place here. Before the arrival of Europeans in the 16th century, various First Nations communities, particularly the St. Lawrence Iroquoians, occupied settlements on the island and in the surrounding area.<sup>1</sup> Upon contact, the French established a fur trading post, which subsequently became a mission and colony. Originally named Ville-Marie, the city was founded in 1642. Montreal's history is reflected in virtually every name encountered on the island. Walk around and take note of the names of parks, metro stations, street signs and commemorative plaques. With a bit of research, a mental image of those considered the most important figures in the city's history is pieced together.

The trees on Mount Royal glow with varying hues of orange, red, and gold. Given the time of year, inhabitants attempt to take advantage of any warm weather while it lasts. It is the final opportunity to visit the city's outdoor markets before they close during the colder months. Jean-Talon Market is one of the largest and most varied, hosting

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<sup>1</sup> See *Hochelaga National Historic Site of Canada*. URL: [historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=12017&pid=0](http://historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=12017&pid=0).

dozens of vendors selling fresh local produce. Moving through the stalls is a stimulating sensory experience, of unlimited edible possibilities. The market is also a prime location for dumpster diving, as some vendors allow people take their discarded food at the end of the day. Items can also be procured from the huge dumpsters, where the extent of food waste is blatant, and many times, unnecessary. Chilly, blustery winds soon infiltrate the streets, catching people off guard as they walk around corners. It is the season of Halloween and crunchy rustling leaves. Of dampness, and increasingly shorter, moody, crisp days. Savouring a delicious, warm, freshly baked Montreal-style bagel from St-Viateur Bagel is a wonderful experience. This bakery is one of the best spots to procure the famed food, and is even open 24/7. That is dedication!

The trees on Mount Royal are bare, branchy things, dusted in frost or cloaked in heavy snow. This season is the stuff of legends among international students, some of whom have never experienced snow before. Winter here has a unique atmosphere that is difficult to describe, bringing equal parts awe and frustration. Go for a walk at night. Snowy blankets cover the city, muffling traffic and urban noise. Christmas lights decorate trees and buildings on most major streets, and remain hanging during the cold months, contributing to the festive ambience. In the air lingers the smell of freshly fallen snow, its very specific sound, and its feeling underfoot. A hockey puck hits the boards of the neighborhood ice rink. Ghostly wisps trail from noses and mouths, as light from windows illuminates the frozen ground with a soft glow. Montreal is composed of 19 large boroughs; they bring to mind 'burrow', which is what homes really become during the chilly months. Thanks to the 'Underground City' (known as RESO), located in the downtown core and connected to the metro system, it is possible to spend an entire

day out and about without putting a foot outside. The city also has a special task force: late at night, capacious dump trucks and special ‘snow vacuums’ collect piles of snow from the streets and shuttle it away to depositories.

Despite the cold, which on occasion falls below 30 degrees Celsius, the city’s inhabitants understand the importance of getting out and keeping the imagination active during these short days. The chilly months are a time of unique festivities. Igloofest, Nuit blanche, and Luminothérapie are some of the cultural events that bring city-dwellers together in celebration of light, music, art, and winter in all its frozen glory. The ‘Quartier des spectacles’ and Place des Arts are appropriately named for a reason! There are many enjoyable outdoor activities to try, such as snowshoeing, tobogganing, ice skating, skiing, and, of course, hockey. Failure to mention the sport would seem scandalous, as fans of the Montreal Canadiens (or Habs) are some of the most dedicated, and on occasion, riotous.<sup>2</sup>

The fauna with whom we share living space is often overlooked, but it is very much present in Montreal. There is nothing quite like walking five blocks very late at night to a *brasserie*, when the wind is so cold the distance travelled to get there seems eternal. But there is nothing like sitting in a cozy place with good friends enjoying a tasty brew or hot cider during the darkest days. There is *especially* nothing like doing the latter, and having a mouse scurry across the middle of the floor! The bartender said simply, “mice must find ways to stay warm too...”

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<sup>2</sup> See *A List of Significant Hockey Riots in Canada*. URL: [www.thehockeynews.com/news/article/heres-a-list-of-significant-hockey-riots-in-canada](http://www.thehockeynews.com/news/article/heres-a-list-of-significant-hockey-riots-in-canada).

Eventually, the urban grey becomes monotonous, and profuse amounts of slush can only be tolerated for so long. The trees on Mount Royal slowly take on a viridian hue that deepens with every passing week. Teasing are the increasingly pleasant temperatures; the air is fresh, sometimes stinky. At this point, anything above 10 degrees Celsius calls for a t-shirt, and people shed their layers. The river begins to thaw while the city's rhythm shifts again. The skyline gradually loses its steamy trails as heating systems shut down. Slowly, green shoots and flowers emerge in planters and gardens. The only permanent outdoor flowers are likely the four depicted on the official city flag. A fleur-de-lis, a rose, a shamrock, and a thistle symbolize the four European nationalities who shaped Montreal: the French, English, Irish and Scottish, respectively. This is a multicultural place. Over a quarter of the population belongs to a visible minority, and the constant flow of people from various global areas contributes to the city's worldly feel. Today, 87.5% of children attending school in French are allophones (their first language is neither French nor English)<sup>3</sup>, and over half the population is bilingual in both French and English. Foreign ears may perk up upon hearing *français*.

To circulate within the city, the metro is a reliable friend. Each station is decorated with art or is architecturally interesting in some manner. Montreal is the only city outside of Paris that has an original Hector Guimard Art Nouveau gate, one of many access points into the system's innards at Victoria Square. The metro has its own voices which keep you company. One is the rumble of the train car engines; another, typically female, announces the stop names along the way. One may come to miss them. Many people use bicycles, and it's one of the only places you'll find some commuters on bikes in the

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<sup>3</sup> See *Mauvaise Langue* by Marc Cassivi, p. 22. URL: [thehockeynews.com/news/article/heres-a-list-of-significant-hockey-riots-in-canada](http://thehockeynews.com/news/article/heres-a-list-of-significant-hockey-riots-in-canada).

winter. It appears owning a car is more hassel than it's worth, between the obnoxious gasoline prices and the ticket police ready to pounce as soon as your parking time expires. It is only *half* a joke that they are rumored to hide in nearby bushes...

Despite the various forms of public transport, Montreal is a very walkable city, a place that keeps legs strong. The fine for Jaywalking is over a hundred dollars, but seemingly everyone does it anyway. The city's topography is varied; sometimes very flat, and hilly in other locations. In Old Port, the ground under the soles is different. The area retains its historic soul, its cobbled streets, which produce their distinctive sound under the weight of feet, cars, and sometimes horse carriages. It is a place to briefly rewind time, and imagine the city hundreds of years ago, its life sustained by the port, a drastically different horizon. Cracks usually form during this exercise, as modern features inevitably jump out. Montreal is home to a great juxtaposition of architectural styles, from Gothic Revival churches, classic grey French edifices, and art deco buildings, to skyscrapers, disused factories, and the famous Habitat 67. The city's heartbeat begins to increase. Tam-tams, a weekend drum circle held on Mount Royal, resumes as people get ready for the coming heat. Church bells, some chiming hourly, ring with a clearer sound; a sound that gives the impression that the days are getting brighter, and that anything is possible.

The trees on Mount Royal are a deep, lush green. They provide cool shelter from the heat that casts a smog upon the city, on some days humid and weightly. Terraces become flooded with people enjoying food and drink. A new wave of cultural events and festivals emerges, which include the Montreal International Jazz Festival, Osheaga, Nuits d'Afrique, Under Pressure, and Comic Con, to name a few. The city understands

the importance of celebrating design, culture, and the arts as sources of daily well-being and inspiration. In 2006, Montreal was named a UNESCO City of Design, and it is one of only three cities in the world to carry this title.<sup>4</sup> It is home to many successful enterprises in a wide variety of sectors, including music, fashion, art, design, film, video games, local businesses, and more. If you can't get out of the city, there are a number of options. Hang out in the many parks and green spaces. A bit of nature is vital in metropolitan areas, and greatly aids in diffusing tension and stress. The forest paths on the Mountain are excellent locations for escaping hot stone and concrete. Other options include the Botanical Gardens and Biodome, or the man-made beach at the waterfront of Old Port.

The days are longer, the sun, hotter; the city pulses with a vibrant energy. People stay out late, and streets echo with voices, occasional laughter, the chime of bottles. Air is heavy, but light breezes bring whispers of refreshing cool. The winds leave clouded, inky traces in late twilight skies. Admire a sprinkling of stars on clear nights. These skies are a disappointing sight compared to the few dark places left in the world however. Gazing from a balcony into night, one may experience yearning for another season. The secret, though, is to enjoy and experience what each has to offer, as they come.

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<sup>4</sup> See *Montreal, Canada, appointed a UNESCO City of Design*. URL: [portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=30945&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.htm](http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=30945&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.htm).

## Paris

Par Éloïse Chopin

### LE CORPS

Paris est une noix de coco. Quand d'autres villes sont des abricots : l'abricot est moelleux, tu penses l'avoir apprivoisé à la première bouchée, mais tu te heurtes au noyau, tu n'approcheras finalement jamais l'entièreté du fruit. Paris est un autre fruit. Paris est cette noix de coco que tu t'échines à tenter d'ouvrir; il te faudra sûrement plusieurs essais. Arme-toi de patience, essaie un nouvel angle si tu veux en déguster le jus si savoureux et la chair si croquante. Quand tu auras trouvé sa faille, Paris s'ouvrira à toi. Tu n'as pas mesuré la portée de tes actes. Paris est maintenant tienne et sera toujours là, quelque part en toi. Aujourd'hui, tu fais tes premiers pas dans Paris, et il n'est pas facile de trouver ses failles. Je vais t'aider... un peu...

Que fais-tu avec ce plan ? Pourquoi veux-tu à tout prix marcher dans les pas des autres touristes ? Paris ne se visite pas avec un plan, mais avec son intuition : laisse l'âme de Paris s'insinuer en toi et guider tes pas. Sors des sentiers battus : c'est ainsi que tu découvriras Paris. Marche au gré de tes envies, où que tu sois à Paris, et il y aura toujours un métro pour te ramener à ton auberge. N'aies pas peur de te perdre dans cette immense fourmilière. Au fur et à mesure de tes déambulations, tu découvriras l'âme de Paris : au creux de ses jardins secrets, au détour de ses fontaines et statues qui incrustent les façades haussmanniennes et ornent ses parcs, dans ses portes de bois sculptées et dans ses rues qui n'en finissent jamais et qui ne se ressemblent pas. Paris est si immense... il semble toujours que de nouveaux lieux soient à découvrir, ces lieux t'apparaissent et disparaissent au gré de l'humeur de Paris. Paris est magique.

À Paris, il faut lever les yeux. Ne te contente pas de regarder autour de toi : regarde plus haut ! Tu découvriras les vieilles enseignes des commerces parisiens, les réclames du siècle passé peintes sur les hauteurs de murs. Tu découvriras aussi les graffitis qui ornent les murs de tous nos quartiers, et plus particulièrement ceux du 18<sup>e</sup> arrondissement et de ses entrepôts délaissés. Il n'est pas rare que ces *tags* paraissent avoir été peints par des illusionnistes, tant ils semblent inaccessibles et avoir été créés en un instant fugace. Ici, les tagueurs sont des fantômes qui disparaissent au creux des ombres parisiennes une fois leurs méfaits accomplis. Ils sont l'âme des jeunes Parisiens que tu croises, enivrés et hagards, au petit matin dans le métro, heureux d'avoir vécu une nouvelle nuit parisienne.

Ne cherche pas à suivre les pas d'un Parisien : il connaît déjà sa ville, il est rapide, il va trop vite, sans égard à la beauté qui l'entoure. Il l'oublie, la côtoyant tous les jours. Si tu es perdu, interromp-le dans sa course effrénée, et tu trouveras un enfant regardant sa ville pour la première fois; il est perdu quand il s'agit de donner une direction, car seul, il s'oriente d'instinct dans la ville qu'il connaît si bien.

Flâne dans les parcs – de Belleville au Jardin alpin, entre dans ses serres d'Auteuil, explore chaque recoin de ses jardins, déambule dans ses passages couverts, vadrouille sur ses quais du canal Saint-Martin à la Bastille, fais le tour de la ville, entre dans ses superbes cours intérieures. N'aies pas peur : personne ne te remarquera ! Vagabonde sur sa petite couronne en suivant les anciens rails du tramway parisien. Mais surtout, n'aies pas de dessein dans cette ville : Paris s'ouvre à toi quand tu n'attends rien d'elle. De jour comme de nuit, sans but, déambule dans Paris !



Paris est une autre, quand le jour s'éteint. Une marche dans les rues silencieuses et sinueuses de Paris n'a pas d'équivalent, les lumières et les reflets sur la Seine donnant à la ville une nouvelle saveur. Les monuments, déjà si beaux à la faveur du jour, deviennent fantasmagoriques. Paris devient ta maîtresse pour une nuit. Paris est une ombre, Paris est le clair-obscur. Cette pierre blanche qui la compose se régénère pendant la nuit pour t'offrir ses plus beaux éclats au matin venu. Si tu regardes bien, tu pourras voir le sang de Paris circuler paisiblement dans la pierre au rythme de la Seine. Les pierres sont les veines de Paris : suis le cours des pierres, et tu trouveras son cœur. Paris est cette pierre si apaisante la nuit et si éblouissante le jour. Paris est si belle la nuit : musarde dans la nuit parisienne du Sud au Nord. Même si tu empruntes les mêmes rues qu'à l'orée du jour, c'est une autre que tu découvriras. Les heures passeront en un instant alors que tu traversera ses arrondissements si variés, ne sentant plus les pavés sous tes pieds, comme dans un rêve éveillé. Au petit matin, seul restera le sentiment que ta nuit n'était qu'une illusion, mais une si belle illusion. C'est une autre définition de Paris : Paris est une illusion qu'il te faut réussir à saisir.

Paris intramuros est sûre : tu peux t'y promener sans te soucier de savoir si la rue que tu empruntes était dans un autre temps un coupe-gorge. En arpentant ses artères sombres, à peine éclairées par ses réverbères si particuliers qu'on ne trouve qu'ici, tu redécouvriras ces vitrines que tu as vues quelques heures plus tôt à la lueur du jour. Ah Paris ! et ses vitrines si belles, si variées, si élégantes. À Saint-André-des-Arts, la nuit est si mystérieuse, les vitrines de ses rues t'éblouissent avec leurs compositions florales, leurs livres anciens, leurs manuscrits, leurs robes de haute-couture, leurs pâtisseries raffinées et leurs animaux empaillés. Ses vitrines te racontent une histoire... celle de

Paris... tend l'oreille. À chaque saison, elles te montreront une autre facette de notre ville-lumière.

Profite de cette belle nuit pour faire une halte au 8, rue des Halles, et arrête-toi devant la maison Aurouze. Je te confie ici un des secrets parisiens visant à impressionner ses visiteurs. La vitrine de la maison Aurouze est figée dans le temps, combattant depuis plus d'un siècle le plus grand nuisible parisien : le rat. Son créateur est d'ailleurs l'inventeur de la fameuse tapette à souris ! Sa vitrine est effrayante et pourtant fascinante : des rats d'égouts, centaines eux-aussi, sont suspendus à des pièges à ressort. On raconte que c'est la seule rue de Paris sans rats, tant cette boutique les épouvante. Et pourtant, ils sont partout dans cette nuit silencieuse, et ils ont accompagné ta promenade. Ce sont les habitants du Paris souterrain. On pense que pour chaque Parisien, ce dernier compte deux rats. Ils ont appris à se faire discrets, mais si tu es attentif, ils deviendront les compagnons de ta balade nocturne. Le Parisien a une relation ambiguë avec le rat : il le craint comme la peste qu'il a répandue dans ses rues. Or, le rat est aussi son sauveur du temps de la guerre, lorsqu'il ne restait guère plus que lui à manger. Les deux vivent leur vie côte à côte sans se voir. Deux éléments indissociables de cette immense fourmilière dont tu foules les allées.

Un dernier secret sur les rats de Paris... tu les trouveras aussi à l'Opéra de Paris, aussi étonnant que cela puisse paraître ! Eh oui, puisque les rats de l'Opéra sont ces très jeunes danseuses qui accompagnent les plus grands ballets parisiens. Une histoire, dont j'ignore si elle est vraie, raconte que le bruit de leurs pointes dans les combles de l'Opéra pendant les répétitions est pareil au bruit produit par les rats qui courent dans les greniers parisiens.

## LA BOUCHE

Quand tu arpentas Paris, tu t'étonnes. Tu la pensais si plate, et elle t'a étonné avec tous ses monts. Si Paris est ainsi faite, c'est pour t'ouvrir l'appétit. Paris a tout prévu avec ses restaurants, et elle fera tout pour sublimer ta découverte et t'attacher à elle. Tu commenceras, le matin, par découvrir la brioche parisienne et la brioche de Nanterre, pareilles au goût, mais si différente d'aspect – l'une étant privée de tête. Le lieu parfait pour déguster ton premier petit-déjeuner est le Café de Flore. Jadis, tu aurais pu y boire un café en compagnie des Picasso, de Beauvoir et Sartre. Aujourd'hui, tu pourras te régaler de croissants, une invention – semble-t-il – volée à nos amis autrichiens. Tes croissants seront forcément accompagnés d'un pain au chocolat.

Tu as peut-être entendu parler de ce conflit qui oppose le Sud et le Nord de la France depuis la nuit de son invention. Le pain au chocolat s'appellerait en fait « chocolatine » selon les habitants du Sud de la France. Gare à toi si tu fais l'erreur d'appeler cette pâtisserie « chocolatine » à Paris ou « pain au chocolat » à Bordeaux : tu risques de faire chou blanc. Te voilà maintenant dans la confidence ! N'oublie pas de commander un café bien serré et une orange pressée pour accompagner tes croissants, brioches et pains au chocolat. Tu as maintenant tout en main pour déguster un copieux petit-déjeuner parisien !

Il te faudra ensuite marcher, arpenter Paris pour digérer ce petit-déjeuner et te préparer à savourer ton prochain repas. À Paris comme ailleurs en France, la nourriture est sacrée. Les Français ont mille et une expressions ayant trait à la nourriture; en voici

quelques-unes qui feront le bonheur des Parisiens si tu les utilises : « Faire chou gras de quelque chose » : en tirer profit. « Je ne suis pas dans mon assiette » : je me sens mal. « Ce n'est pas du gâteau » : c'est difficile à faire ou à comprendre.

« Il ne faut pas en faire tout un pâté » ou « N'en fais pas tout un plat » : ce n'est pas la peine de dramatiser la situation. « Ne me raconte pas des salades ! » : ne me mens pas ! L'expression « Va te faire cuire un œuf ! » n'est pas une invitation à vous faire à manger, mais plutôt à déguerpier avant que votre interlocuteur ne s'énerve.

La nourriture et la gastronomie sont au cœur de la culture française. Si tu ne veux pas faire une indigestion à Paris, prends ton temps et discute avec des amis autour de ses bons petits plats.

Pour le repas de midi, je te propose d'aller découvrir une spécialité parisienne : la sole de Marguery, inventée par Jean-Nicolas Marguery sous l'empire de Napoléon III. Tu ne pourras pas déguster ce délice dans le restaurant où il a été créé, car celui-ci est aujourd'hui fermé. Tu pourras toujours découvrir ce lieu en te promenant sur les Grands Boulevards. Je te conseille d'aller déguster ton repas dans une brasserie parisienne ornée d'immenses glaces qui se reflètent à l'infini et qui rappellent la fameuse galerie des Glaces de Versailles. La recette de Marguery fut un des secrets les mieux gardés de Paris jusqu'à ce qu'un New-Yorkais, un certain M. Brady, tombe amoureux de la recette et s'en empare. Voilà pourquoi tu peux maintenant trouver cette merveilleuse sole à New York, dans l'un des restaurants de l'illustre Brady. Les Parisiens en sont un peu vexés, mais fiers néanmoins, car Brady considérait ce plat comme le « mets suprême ». En entrée, tu pourrais te laisser tenter par une délicate soupe de cresson – aussi appelée

potage cressonnière –, un délice qui te mettra en appétit. Après avoir succombé à ces deux plats, tu devras manger du fromage. Il est en effet interdit, sur les terres parisiennes, de ne pas prendre de fromage. Tu pourras déguster un brie de Montereau, de Nangis, de Melun ou encore de Meaux, car si ces fromages portent tous le même nom, pas un n'a le même goût ! Tu ne me crois pas ? Goûte donc ! N'oublie pas d'accompagner ces fromages d'une fameuse baguette parisienne ! Il n'y a qu'à Paris que la baguette soit à la fois si tendre et si craquante.

À Paris, on est toujours pressé, sauf quand il s'agit de manger. On discute, on rit, on prend son temps ! Tu auras compris qu'avec la variété de plats que nous mangeons au cours d'un même repas, si on veut pouvoir s'offrir un dessert, il faut se donner le temps... de digérer, bien sûr ! Et le dessert, à Paris comme partout ailleurs en France, est presque vénéré. Tu pourras goûter une religieuse (la petite sœur de l'éclair), un moka (une génoise recouverte de crème au beurre au délicieux parfum du café du même nom), une tarte Bourdaloue (une tarte aux poires délicatement fourrée de crème d'amandes et nappée d'un glaçage à l'abricot), des macarons (pâtisserie connue internationalement, née dans le quartier Belleville), un flan parisien, une amandine, un saint-honoré, un pithiviers, des madeleines...

La liste des desserts parisiens est encore longue, et plus encore si j'y inclus tous les desserts français. Le secret des desserts parisiens est de prendre ce qu'on appelle ici un « café gourmand » ou « thé gourmand ». La boisson choisie te sera servie avec des mignardises, c'est-à-dire cinq ou six petites parts de différents desserts. Tu n'as donc pas à choisir. La tentation est si grande dans la ville-lumière !

Je vais te confier un dernier secret sur Paris : il n'est pas rare ici de marcher jusqu'à l'aube après s'être perdu dans la contemplation de toutes les beautés et poésies de la ville, avoir dansé toute la nuit sur du jazz au Caveau de la Huchette, dans le quartier latin, ou avoir refait le monde autour d'un verre de vin rouge, assis dans les amphithéâtres du quai de Jussieu. Il existe un remède connu uniquement des Parisiens pour recommencer à arpenter les rues de Paris au petit jour ou pour partir travailler en oubliant les séquelles physiques de la nuit passée. Ce remède s'appelle la Gratinée des Halles : une soupe à l'oignon gratinée garnie d'une tranche de pain et de gruyère râpé.

« Le cœur de Paris est une fleur / Une fleur si jolie / Que l'on garde dans son cœur /  
Que l'on aime pour la vie » – Charles Trenet

Que ce soit par son architecture, ses couleurs, ses parcs, ses œuvres d'art, son histoire, sa pierre, sa nourriture, ses secrets ou sa poésie, je suis sûre que tu ne sortiras pas indemne si Paris te conquiert !

## Antwerp

By Agostino Delannoy

Everything starts at the central train station. But it probably began with the harbour. The harbour always was its main advantage in comparison to other cities. Merchandises go through the harbour. All types of it: valuables ones, cheap ones, raw ones, some with added value, and even edible ones. What goes through the port is what makes the living of part of the city. But people still go through there as well, although there was a time when it was much busier with passengers. Like when it was the main entryway to the country. Or the main exit too. This is where people had to go when they wanted to go to the Mediterranean or England or Scandinavia during the Middle Ages. This is where they also had to go during the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries when they wanted to immigrate to America. They would first take the train and then make their way to the harbour. The train would stop at the main train station.

Today, this is where it all starts. It is called Antwerpen Centraal. They say it is the most beautiful station in the world. Well, not the inhabitants themselves, but people from far away<sup>5</sup>. The people that live there do not even see it anymore – it just became part of the décor. Everyone walks in the station as if nothing was special about it. The only people looking up are the few tourists and small children that are not yet used to it. They are the only ones that pay attention to its beauty: the other people just pass through it. The other people do not pay attention to the four separate levels of trains. They do not pay attention to its architecture. They also do not pay attention to the gilding and the bas-

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<sup>5</sup> Jaime Cunningham, “Stations: A Destination That Matches the Journey”, *Newsweek*, New York, January 10, 2009; Dennis Green, “All Aboard! 12 Beautiful Railway Stations from Around the World”, *Mashable*, New York, August 25, 2014.

reliefs, to the central clock or the glass ceilings. But the tourists do. For them, this is where it all starts.

When they get out of the station, they emerge on a busy street, usually full of cars, buses and streetcars. The zoo is behind the train tracks. This is where the kids always want to go. On the left side of the station is the diamond district. This is the city where approximately eighty percent of the world's diamonds go through. They do not stay in the city – they just come and go. If one walks a bit past the diamond district, they will find an Orthodox Jewish neighbourhood. Like in Venice and Amsterdam, Jews were somewhat tolerated in the sixteenth century and onwards, but many perished during World War II when they were forced out of the city by the occupying forces. However, some came back and the community is still present and very active. For someone not used to Orthodox Jews who walks through the parks in that area, like the Stadspark, it might look like time has stopped. But time never stops in Antwerp. Things must keep moving. Things must keep coming into the city and things must keep being shipped out of the city. And so do people. They always move. Well, except during the night when things finally calm down, but the rest of the day, people always move. They do not have a choice, if they want their city to stay rich, and consequently to stay beautiful. The city must pay for the restoration of all these buildings, like the train station.

Antwerpen Centraal. And if the tourists decided to go to the right when they exit the train station, what would they find there? Chinatown. Yes, the place that people refer to as “Chinatown” with a small smile on their face. Well it is more of a street than a “town”. Or actually, a section of a street. Chinatown is very small; it is just a few Chinese restaurants and stores that happen to be on the same block. As if they had been forced to



move there. That street is dirty. There are always papers and other things on the sidewalks. It also is a smelly street. Perhaps the city does not clean it as often as other busier streets. Perhaps it is because not many people go there so they do not see the point of cleaning it often. Perhaps it is because it is getting closer to the harbour. Or perhaps it is because the people in Chinatown are always moving stuff from a store to another, from store to restaurant, that the street is dirty. Things fall from carts sometimes, it is something that happens. Things are always moving in Chinatown. Like in Antwerp. It is part of the same city after all.

But what else is there on the right? If we go to the northwest of Chinatown, we find the Begijnhof. This is where, during the Middle Ages and until recently, the beguines would live. They would move to the Begijnhof for a few years, sometimes for the rest of their lives. But they could always move out. In and out – not like in convents.

On the way back from the Begijnhof, we can see the opera house. De Koninglijk Vlaamse Opera – or the Royal Flemish Opera. Another place where people gather, go in, go out. From there, if we go down De Keyserlei<sup>6</sup>, we are back to the train station.

It is always there that it begins. The place from which trains depart and to which they all arrive. Vertrekken en aankomen.<sup>7</sup> If after walking out of the station we walk straight, on De Keyserlei, we will get to Meirstraat.<sup>8</sup> The *premetro*<sup>9</sup> runs under it. De Meir is the shopping district of the city. There are always people on this street, people walking up or down the street, with bags in their hands, smiles on their faces, eating a

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<sup>6</sup> De Keyserlei is a street in central Antwerp.

<sup>7</sup> Translation: Departures and arrivals.

<sup>8</sup> Meirstraat is the main street of the shopping district of Antwerp.

<sup>9</sup> The *premetro* is an underground tramway.

sandwich, a waffle, or enjoying tea or coffee in a café, on a patio when the weather allows it. People look worry free on this street.

Up Meirstraat is a shopping centre, on the left to be exact. They say it is the prettiest one in Europe. Gilding everywhere, high ceilings, bas-reliefs, glassed domes, and all this with classical music in the background. During pride week, they even add rainbow flags. Once again, the inhabitants do not see its beauty. Only the tourists take pictures and look up. Only the tourists look at the ceilings and not at the clothes for sale.

Still on the left, and after the shopping centre, is Rubenshuis. Rubens lived here for a few years. The building was his house and studio. Now people can visit it. The house is on a quiet square that has several overpriced cafés with nice patios, a few steps away from all the craziness of Meirstaat. If one continues past Rubenshuis, they will find several small art galleries and designer shops. But this is not it. It is important to go all the way down Meirstraat, to keep moving. This is where the historical centre is.

To get to the historical centre, one must walk in front of a modern tower. Then only he or she can access the old town. The tourists will find themselves on a big square. Cars and buses are not allowed on it, but oddly streetcars go around it. Things must keep moving in Antwerp. Nothing can ever stop. When the streets become too narrow even for streetcars, then the flow of people takes over. A never-ending flow of people going into the historical centre. This is where we find the most tourists. They walk in the square in front of the Onze-Lieve-Vrouwkathedraal, take pictures of the cathedral and of the statues next to it, only to realize that one of them is a person painted in an oxidized

copper colour. Even the statues move in Antwerp. And at the end of the day the statues go home to their families. Things come and go in Antwerp.

A little further is another square, where the *stadhuis*<sup>10</sup> is located. The façade is full of flags. It is an imposing building. There is a big fountain in the middle of the square. There is no one painted in oxidized copper colour on this one though, the water would take the paint away. No one would give money to a normal person standing in a fountain.

Things move in Antwerp. Going down the street from the *stadhuis*, we get to a bigger street. That one is very busy. On the other side is the Schelde.<sup>11</sup> There we can see the boats coming and going. Bringing merchandise in the city, taking merchandise away from the city. Things never stay put in Antwerp.

Antwerpen Centraal. Where it all starts. Trains leaving and arriving on four different levels. People moving on four different levels, getting in and out of the train station. It is surrounded by buses and cars and taxis and streetcars and the *premetro*. Everything is moving around Antwerpen Centraal. People, like merchandise, always move. Time never stops. We can stare at the central clock in the station to be a witness to it. But if we take even a second to pause, at any hour, in any place, we can see how beautiful the city is. If we have a few minutes, we can allow ourselves to drift in the city to enjoy it for what it really is. And if we have several hours or days, then, like the tourists, we can make time stop and let ourselves be amazed by all the small things we take for granted. Antwerp never ceases to impress, provided the onlooker gives the city a chance of entering their world.

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<sup>10</sup> Translation: City Hall.

<sup>11</sup> The Schelde is the river that runs through Antwerp.

## **A Girl and Her Bicycle: Udine**

By Katarina Ghdaye

This is the first in a series of *A Girl and Her Bicycle*. This adventure will take us through the city of Udine in Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Italy. The story follows the daily adventures of a girl blending in with the locals to explore and live in the city she calls home. Through her point of view, your imagination should be active as you picture the sights described here in your own mind. Let's begin.

Starting her morning early, the girl enjoys her espresso and croissant at the local café newly opened on the roundabout of via Chiusaforte. Locals in Udine start their day early in order to finish their work and errands in time for lunch; following their lead, our protagonist pays for her coffee and hops onto her bike into town. Avoiding the traffic of the hospital in the morning, the girl decides to pedal down via Freschi to take the bike path southbound on via del Cotonificio. She pedals alongside the traffic passing by the old cotton factory, that which lent its name to the street, out of commission for years like so many other production firms in the town. Now, merging onto via Martignacco, she passes by one of the many canals in the city, which add to the Venetian vibe that still resounds to this day in Udine. The sunlight, at this time in the morning, shines between the trees lining the length of the canal as the freshly baked pastry smell wafts in the air from Carlet. Our protagonist must abstain from her urge to have a second breakfast and continue pedalling on. Approaching the roundabout, cyclists must yield to oncoming traffic for their own safety. Once the coast is clear, the girl gains speed and makes her way back onto the cycling path on via Moro. She waves to the gentleman who owns Cuor di Panna, her favourite *gelateria* in town. She will most likely come back in the evening

to take a litre of the heavenly chocolate flavour home. Via Moro merges with via Mantica and our protagonist stops and parks her bike in front of the university building. As she walks into Mantica, she is greeted by the reception staff and the throngs of student smokers outside of the grand wooden doors.

Entering the building our protagonist attends her class of the day. A couple hours later she makes her way into the courtyard connecting Mantica to Palazzo Antonini. The gardens are lush green today and many students have decided to sit and read or socialize on the benches. She stops for a moment to admire the main foyer of the *palazzo*, the wooden beams stretching across the ceiling and the blue, white and red shield of Udine atop the left doorframe. To her it almost mimics the PepsiCo logo. Continuing through Palazzo Antonini, she finds herself famished and decides to enjoy a student favourite for lunch. Grateful that she wore comfortable sneakers today, since walking in the city centre would be uncomfortable without proper support, she makes her way down the narrow sidewalk of via Gemona to Piadina Mia. The students crowd the popular lunch spot and the girl is greeted by the friendly owners and orders her *rotolo* to go. Walking back to her bike she munches on the *rotolo* and greets a few colleagues sitting in the piazza in front of Palazzo Antonini. The *piazza* has a simple bubbling fountain with an older stone arch now used as an entryway for a garage. The contrast between the old and the new in this city is ever present.

Hopping back on her bike the protagonist leaves the smooth paved roads from this morning and starts her way further into the city centre on the beautiful but sometimes painful cobblestones. She learned from her first week that shock absorbers and a seat cushion would be a necessity. Biking down via Bartolini one could stop by the canal and

take a faux-Venice photo, as many tourists seem to do in that spot. Or just a few steps further is the town library. With three sections in the three different buildings one could walk into Palazzo Bartolini and admire the busts and archives on display for the public. The stairs inside the *palazzo* are grandiose, giving the students the sense of true academic importance as they make their way into the building to study.

Today the girl decides that she will walk her bike along the historic via Mercatovecchio after passing the library. This street has limited traffic, allowing other cyclists the privilege to bike down the wide cobblestone street only keeping an eye out for busses or pedestrians. Taking a stroll down this street, one may notice the beauty of the shops with their high-end fashion displays and the archway which they are situated under, but very rarely does anyone let their gaze wander upwards to admire the buildings themselves. With worn out frescoes decorating the buildings and many houses now boarded up and vacant, the city is silently calling for a restoration project. In fact, many of the arcades and pillars in the city centre have traces of frescoes and ornamented designs, some become replaced, some still there underappreciated by the population always on the go. Another contrast of new and old, fashion fades, but beauty is forever and that has never been a truer statement for via Mercatovecchio.

Finally, the girl arrives to Piazza Libert . la Loggia del Lionello. Its columns and pointed arches are what have remained from the Venetian Rule of the city; the rose-coloured stone against the white give it a warm and welcoming aura. This structure is part of city hall; it has been merged to the new part of the building which again contrasts the new against the old. Inside La Loggia one might come across tango classes, public readings, wedding shows or even recently: pop music videos. Now turning

towards the hill the girl parks her bike against the railing leading up to the castle. The castle, which is now home to the archeology museum, is situated on the only hill in the whole city. The myth goes as follows: Attila the Hun ordered his soldiers to fill their helmets with dirt to construct a hill in order to watch neighbouring Aquileia burn.

As she approaches the gate, on top of the entrance she notices the winged lion of San Marco, symbol of Venice. On the ground is the shield of Udine. Taking the stairs up to the top our protagonist finds herself out of breath, but not from the physical task itself, rather from the outstanding views on a clear day from the top. From any side of the hill one can admire the beauty of the region, the Alps that surround the city, the red clay rooftops of the town and the fountain of Piazza Primo Maggio down below. The bar on the lawn of the castle is usually filled at this hour; many businesswomen and men have a seat outside and enjoy their *spritz aperol* or *ugo*. No student would ever be found up here with a drink in hand as they would opt for a less expensive option down in Piazza San Giacomo.

Our protagonist now walks back down the ramp and finds a hidden bubbling fountain on the side of the castle walls; she cannot help but wonder what types of magical stories have happened in this very spot. Walking down the ramp she notices in the arcade some young adolescent romances, some newly arrived immigrants and some elderly men, all sitting on various benches. These scenes in front of her capture the essence of Udine in this century. The clock strikes two pm now and the girl looks up to admire the buttocks of the two bronze statues that ring the bell. A running joke between her classmates is to achieve that perfect gluteus form, which was an aesthetics admired centuries ago and now

has made its return to the current generation. Once more the girl thinks about the contrast of the new and the old.

The girl now unlocks her bicycle and makes her way to Piazza San Giacomo, a square surrounded by bars and cafés. Children swarm the fountain in the middle during the day and young adults cozy up there after the sun sets. It was recently host to a scene in a recent Italian film titled *Un Bacio*. Walking around this square is as uncomfortable as biking across it, not only because of the number of people present, but also because of the round stones that make up the pathways. The locals will normally sit at a bar in the sunlight. Therefore, depending on the rotation of the sun throughout the day, the bar owners will either turn a profit or be left hanging. It's quite amusing to walk through the *piazza* at different times of the day to see where the crowd has shifted. The houses above the bars are rumoured to cost hundreds of thousand Euros, some even millions depending on the recent restoration done to the interior. But their façades is what makes for the ideal backdrop to have a glass of wine.

The girl and her bicycle do not find any of her friends so she starts her round at the bars outside of the square. La Bicietta, known for its addictive fries, La Polse, where one can order a bruschetta and wine for just one euro, and Glass, where they infamously 'lose' a few glasses every week, are the normal hotspots for students. By contrast you can usually find the older generations enjoying a Sicilian treat at Dusci, usually after they've walked out of mass from San Pietro Martire, a slightly easy to miss but grandiose church in the heart of the city centre.



Aside from the one Austrian tour group there aren't usually tourists flooding the city and our protagonist fell in love with the city for that reason. She had the opportunity to live an authentic local experience and in contrast to neighbouring Venice or Trieste, which are flogged by tourists. In Udine, she can stop and admire the city when she stumbles upon a new angle of beauty without having to say 'no' to selfie sticks or be trampled over by tour groups. Occasionally on weekends, non-city dwellers come into town, but they add to the life rather than take away from it.

Our protagonist realizes her lunch break has gone on long enough and decides to bike to the nearest Despar to buy some groceries. Loading up her bicycle's basket, she rides off away from Piazzale Osoppo and the traffic back home to study. She passes her first apartment on via Forni di Sotto in the city where she created fond memories, and learned to block out the ever-present ambulance sirens. She smiles while gazing up. Someone honks at her as if telling her to pay attention. She comes back to reality and decides tomorrow at lunch to visit the Duomo to admire the frescoes in the bell tower once more. But today, we leave her as she rides off home.

**Représentation, expression et identité**  
**Representation, Expression and Identity**

# Le Palestinien dans l'objectif israélien : l'orientalisme éclairé d'Eran Riklis

Par Véronique Bélinge

## *Résumé*

Dans cet article, j'avance que dans ses films *Les Citronniers* (2008) et *Mon fils* (2014), Eran Riklis articule une critique modérée du discours orientaliste employé historiquement pour dépeindre les Palestiniens dans la presse, au cinéma et dans la littérature tout en perpétuant ce discours. Faisant fond sur les ouvrages *L'orientalisme* et *The World, the Text and the Critic* d'Edward Said, j'estime que le cinéaste tente d'éviter les représentations orientalisantes qui inhibent ce que Said appelle la « critique laïque », fondée sur la connaissance de l'histoire, la reconnaissance de l'importance des circonstances sociales et la capacité analytique d'établir des distinctions (« World » 16;290) pour parvenir à un orientalisme éclairé, c'est-à-dire ancré dans son monde, mais qu'il échoue à cette tâche.

Mots-clés : cinéma; Edward Said; Eran Riklis; orientalisme; Palestiniens

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## **Introduction**

Né à Jérusalem en 1954, Eran Riklis incarne, par son éducation cosmopolite<sup>12</sup> et ses thèmes de prédilection, la seconde génération du mouvement Kayitz ou « Jeune Cinéma israélien », notamment caractérisé par une critique nouvelle du militarisme israélien et l'inclusion d'acteurs palestiniens. (Ginsberg et Lippard 433) En abordant dans ses films la délicate question de l'occupation israélienne du point de vue de l'occupant *et* de l'occupé (341), le cinéaste s'inscrit dans le paysage discursif actuel du cinéma israélien, ouvert non seulement aux débats sur le multiculturalisme et sur la théorie postcoloniale, mais aussi aux lectures « transgressives » du récit national israélien. (Shohat 249) Ben-Zvi-Morad explique qu'au cours de la première décennie du XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle, le cinéma israélien s'est de nouveau intéressé au conflit israélo-palestinien après l'avoir délaissé

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<sup>12</sup> Riklis grandit aux États-Unis, au Canada et au Brésil avant de retourner en Israël à l'adolescence. (Schoumann 179) Il étudiera ensuite le cinéma à la National Film School de Beaconsfield, en Angleterre.

pendant 10 ans pour se concentrer sur des problématiques personnelles et sociales. La cinématographie israélienne contemporaine, ajoute l'auteur, jette un regard plus lucide sur la tradition cinématographique passée. (290) Selon Kubicek, ce nouveau cinéma, dont se réclame Riklis, s'inscrit en faux contre la tradition orientaliste en dépeignant moins l'Arabe comme l'Autre érotisé et exotique, et davantage comme un voisin, comme une personne ordinaire avec qui l'Israélien a plus en commun qu'il n'y paraît. (212) Riklis, qui se définit volontiers comme un réalisateur « du monde » (Cassivi), donne la parole à la minorité palestinienne et aborderait l'occupation israélienne d'une manière plus polyphonique<sup>13</sup> que ses prédécesseurs.

L'analyse des films *Les Citronniers* (2008) et *Mon fils* (2014) d'Eran Riklis révèle qu'en dépit de son intention manifeste de brosser un portrait du Palestinien qui soit plus juste et, surtout, plus critique de la position israélienne, le cinéaste se heurte aux écueils de l'orientalisme. Dans cet article, j'avance qu'Eran Riklis articule une critique modérée du discours orientaliste employé historiquement pour dépeindre les Palestiniens tout en perpétuant ce discours. Faisant fond sur les ouvrages *L'orientalisme* et *The World, the Text and the Critic* d'Edward Said, j'estime que le cinéaste tente d'éviter les représentations orientalisantes qui inhibent ce que Said appelle la « critique laïque », fondée sur la connaissance de l'histoire, la reconnaissance de l'importance des circonstances sociales et la capacité analytique d'établir des distinctions (« World » 16;290) pour parvenir à un orientalisme éclairé, c'est-à-dire ancré dans son monde, mais qu'il échoue à cette tâche. Dans les pages qui suivent, je tâcherai de démontrer que ces

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<sup>13</sup> La polyphonie désigne un « procédé d'écriture qui consiste à superposer deux ou plusieurs lignes, voix ou parties mélodiquement indépendantes, selon des règles contrapuntiques ». (CNRTL)

deux films représentent une forme d'orientalisme éclairé en ce sens qu'ils remettent en question, chacun à leur manière et à un degré différent, les illustrations archétypales de l'Autre palestinien, tout en se rendant coupable de telles représentations. Dans un premier temps, je mettrai en relief les origines sionistes de l'antisémitisme à l'égard des Arabes. J'attacherai ensuite à démontrer qu'Eran Riklis aspire à faire un cinéma « du monde ». Je ferai enfin une revue des deux films et j'expliquerai en quoi ils s'écartent de la voie orientaliste tout en s'engageant sur cette dernière.

### **Contexte sociohistorique de production : du sionisme à l'antisémitisme à l'égard des Arabes**

Dans son ouvrage phare intitulé *L'orientalisme*, Edward Saïd décrit la façon dont la mouvance sioniste à l'origine de la création d'Israël a engendré un antisémitisme paradoxal, nourri par un peuple sémitique oriental, les Juifs, à l'endroit d'un autre peuple sémitique, les Arabes : « Par tout un enchaînement de circonstances, le mythe sémitique a bifurqué dans le mouvement sioniste; l'un des Sémites a suivi la voie de l'orientalisme, l'autre, l'Arabe, a été forcé de suivre celle de l'Orient. » (477;503) Plusieurs facteurs expliquent ce glissement. Né en Europe occidentale à la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, le sionisme exprimait les mêmes velléités de domination territoriale que l'impérialisme européen. (Saïd, « Question » 69) Lorsqu'ils ont été confrontés à la présence d'un autre peuple en Palestine, explique Abu-Lughod, les sionistes ont nié l'identité nationale des Palestiniens et ont assimilé ces derniers aux Arabes pour en justifier la subordination ou le transfert. (201) En opérant un tel amalgame, ils ont conféré aux habitants de la Palestine les connotations négatives dont l'Occident affublait déjà les Orientaux : arriérés, sous-développés, non civilisés. (201) De plus, en retranchant de l'identité israélienne le souvenir de l'exil et de l'altérité, deux aspects pourtant fondamentaux de la conscience

collective juive, le sionisme a empêché toute reconnaissance des droits de l'Autre palestinien. (Meiri 241) Fondamentalement occidental (Kubicek 212), l'État juif s'est construit essentiellement sur le rejet et l'assujettissement des Arabes, lesquels sont devenus, sous l'apartheid israélien, synonymes de dégradation, de menace, d'irrationalité et de brutalité. (Said, « Question » 87-88) Dans le cinéma israélien, cet antisionisme s'est traduit historiquement par des représentations archétypales des Arabes, qui ont presque toujours été dépeints de trois manières éculées : i) comme des êtres primitifs et inoffensifs au grand cœur; ii) comme des êtres diaboliques et sournois; iii) comme l'Autre érotisé, mais défendu. (Naaman 4)

### **L'ancrage du texte dans le monde : quand l'occupant représente l'occupé**

S'il aspire à faire un cinéma « du monde » et critique, Riklis ne peut faire tout à fait abstraction du carcan orientaliste qui caractérise non seulement la tradition cinématographique d'Hollywood, mais aussi celle d'Israël, dans lesquelles, pour reprendre les mots de Said, « L'Occident est un agent. L'Orient est un patient. L'Occident est le spectateur, le juge et le jury de toutes les facettes du comportement oriental. » (« orientalisme » 198) En tant que juif et citoyen israélien, Riklis représente la majorité dominante, l'occupant. Lorsqu'il choisit de représenter la minorité dominée, l'occupé, celui-ci doit nécessairement reconnaître l'ancrage de ses films (et des films dont il s'inspire) dans le monde. Comme l'explique Said, « les textes sont ancrés dans le monde. Dans une certaine mesure, ce sont des événements, et même quand ils semblent le nier, ils font néanmoins partie du monde social, de la vie humaine et, bien sûr, des moments historiques dans lesquels ils sont situés et interprétés. » (« World » 4) Société et culture, affirme Said, ne peuvent être qu'étudiées ensemble (« orientalisme » 69), et tout

texte est relié aux réalités existentielles de la vie humaine, de la politique, des sociétés et des événements. (« World » 5) En s'intéressant aux répercussions que le conflit israélo-palestinien peut avoir sur le quotidien de l'Autre occupé, qu'il s'agisse des Palestiniens de Cisjordanie (*Les Citronniers*) ou des citoyens israéliens d'ethnicité arabe (*Mon fils*), le cinéaste israélien se donne un mandat difficile : parler d'une réalité qui n'est pas la sienne. L'analyse des deux films susmentionnés montre que si Eran Riklis déploie un effort louable pour articuler une « critique laïque » de l'occupation israélienne, il parvient difficilement à dépasser sa position de réalisateur occidental et d'occupant israélien.

### **Les Citronniers**

#### **L'intrigue : une rencontre entre l'occupant et l'occupé**

En 2008, Riklis décide d'aborder de front, dans *Les Citronniers* (2008), le conflit israélo-palestinien. Il y présente le point de vue d'une femme palestinienne vivant en Cisjordanie, au pied de la frontière qui sépare Israël des territoires occupés. Depuis plus de 50 ans, Salma, maintenant veuve depuis une dizaine d'années, vit sur la plantation de citronniers que lui a léguée son père et dont elle assure l'exploitation. Son existence modeste et routinière est toutefois chamboulée dès le début du film par l'arrivée, de l'autre côté de la ligne verte, de nouveaux voisins : le ministre israélien de la Défense et son épouse. Suivant les recommandations des services secrets, qui estiment que la plantation pourrait servir de couvert aux terroristes du Hamas (particulièrement agités par les temps qui courent), le ministre décide de procéder au déracinement des citronniers pour des raisons de sécurité nationale. Pour Salma, il est hors de question de laisser l'État israélien lui arracher le legs de son père. Elle décide donc, avec l'aide d'un avocat palestinien, d'intenter une poursuite contre l'armée israélienne. Si sa cause peut

sembler désespérée à première vue, elle ne laisse pas indifférente Mira, l'épouse du ministre, qui trouve la destruction de la plantation complètement exagérée, mais qui est, elle aussi, prisonnière des contraintes que lui imposent ses liens étroits avec le pouvoir israélien.

### Une critique directe, mais modérée

Dans *Les Citronniers*, Riklis réarticule des textes ayant trouvé écho par le passé auprès de son auditoire. Fondée sur les nombreux récits d'expropriation tragiques rapportés notamment dans la presse palestinienne<sup>14</sup>, l'intrigue n'est pas sans rappeler l'épisode biblique du combat de David contre Goliath, dans lequel un héros improbable affronte un adversaire colossal. Le récit sert de prétexte à l'énonciation d'une critique directe à l'endroit d'Israël<sup>15</sup> et de la tradition cinématographique du pays. Le film, expliquent Burgin et Kubicek, accuse la politique israélienne d'empêcher les Arabes et les Juifs de trouver un terrain d'entente. (Burgin 82; Kubicek 213) De plus, Riklis a sciemment baptisé le ministre de la Défense « Israel ». Si ce prénom illustre le patriotisme, la masculinité et le pouvoir, Ben-Zvi-Morad estime que son nom de famille, « Navon » (*sage* en hébreu), ressemble aussi sur les plans orthographique et phonétique au mot « n'vor » (*éclairé* en hébreu), qui désigne une attitude humaine, voire progressiste à l'égard des Arabes. (285) Le fait que Mira quitte son époux à la fin du récit pourrait d'ailleurs être interprété comme la désagrégation inéluctable du pouvoir israélien au fur et à mesure que ce dernier s'enfonce dans la rigidité. La dualité du personnage de Mira,

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<sup>14</sup> Dans *L'Occident terroriste*, Chomsky évoque la transplantation par l'armée israélienne d'une oliveraie depuis Hébron, en Cisjordanie, jusque dans une colonie juive où l'on souhaitait aménager un parc; toute l'économie du village palestinien en question a été détruite. (168)

<sup>15</sup> Ce regard non complaisant du réalisateur à l'endroit du militarisme « éclairé » israélien est d'autant plus surprenant que le film a reçu, en vertu de la nouvelle loi sur le cinéma adoptée en 2000, un important financement de l'État juif. (Burgin 82)



qui voudrait se faire entendre, mais qui s'avère muselée par son mari et par l'État, exprime quant à elle l'autocritique adressée par Riklis sur la façon dont le cinéma israélien représente traditionnellement le conflit. (286) La démarche du réalisateur, qui propose une réflexion sur sa société et son art, s'apparente à la « critique laïque » théorisée par Said. Sa critique demeure toutefois modérée. Selon Ben-Zvi-Morad, bien qu'Israël et Mira incarnent respectivement des courants opposés de la société israélienne (la branche militariste et la gauche modérée), ils représentent tous les deux l'hégémonie israélienne. (284) De plus, si le film dénonce l'impossibilité pour les deux parties du conflit d'entrer en réel dialogue du fait de la perpétuelle intransigeance du gouvernement israélien, Riklis ne fournit pas de piste de solution, comme s'il admettait que l'État juif a déjà épuisé tous les recours possibles.

#### La femme orientale : un mythe persistant

« Pourquoi l'Orient semble-t-il suggérer, non seulement la fécondité, mais la promesse (et la menace) du sexe (...) ? »

(Said, « orientalisme » 238)

Bien que *Les Citronniers* ait le mérite de donner voix à une femme palestinienne qui subit les répercussions de l'occupation israélienne *et* qui fait preuve d'agentivité en luttant pour ses droits, le film n'est pas exempt de représentations qui participent au discours orientaliste. Dans un premier temps, Riklis met en opposition le personnage de Salma et celui d'Israël. La femme palestinienne, qui semble figée dans le temps, est confinée à sa plantation et à sa cuisine, où elle prépare quasi rituellement des achards de citrons, comme si toute la culture palestinienne pouvait être réduite à ce symbole

exotique. (Ben-Zvi-Morad 287) Elle nourrit en outre un attachement viscéral à sa plantation, qui cadre avec les traditions cinématographiques israélienne et palestinienne, qui tendent à présenter la femme comme se substituant à la terre. (Harris 91) Le rapport de séduction qu'elle développe avec son avocat, de plusieurs années son cadet, évoque quant à lui le mythe de la passion et de la sensualité féminines orientales. Cette représentation tranche avec le ministre, qui incarne l'État israélien, rationnel, pragmatique et calculateur. Dans un second temps, Riklis établit un fort contraste entre Salma, femme arabe traditionnelle (agricultrice, unilingue, démunie et confinée à sa communauté) et Mira, la femme occidentale moderne (professionnelle, cosmopolite, polyglotte et privilégiée). (Burgin 83) L'image orientaliste de la femme palestinienne atteint son paroxysme dans la scène où les agents de sécurité chargés de protéger la résidence du couple israélien pénètrent la plantation de Salma pour y cueillir des citrons en vue d'une fête mondaine, alors que celle-ci n'a même plus le droit d'accéder à sa propriété. La fureur et le décontenancement de Salma, qui se débat tant bien que mal, pour reprendre les fruits de sa terre, contraste avec l'incrédulité et le calme de Mira, qui se contente de balbutier de vaines excuses. Le règlement de la poursuite intentée par Salma qui, grâce à la seule présence de Mira au tribunal, obtient une maigre victoire (ses citronniers ne seront pas déracinés, mais taillés partiellement), semble suggérer que l'Autre occupé ne peut vraiment rien accomplir sans la généreuse magnanimité de l'occupant.

Dans *Les Citronniers*, Eran Riklis tente une critique ouverte de l'occupation israélienne en Cisjordanie et des différentes branches du gouvernement israélien, mais

perpétue paradoxalement le discours orientaliste sur lequel prend assise l'expansion coloniale juive en Palestine.

### *Mon fils (Dancing Arabs)*

« Loin d'être un concept statique, notre identité ou celle de "l'autre" résultent d'un processus historique, social, intellectuel et politique très élaboré qui se présente comme un conflit impliquant les individus et les institutions dans toutes les sociétés. » (Said, « orientalisme » 533)

### L'intrigue : quand l'occupé prend la place de l'occupant

Dans *Mon fils* (2014), Eran Riklis porte au grand écran le roman de l'écrivain israélien arabe Sayed Kashua, paru en 2002. (Mitchell 1) Le cinéaste s'inspire très librement du récit autobiographique de Kashua pour aborder la question de l'altérité dans le contexte de la cohabitation des Juifs et des Arabes<sup>16</sup> dans l'État juif. Le film raconte le passage à l'âge adulte d'Eyad, un brillant garçon arabe de l'agglomération de Tira, en Israël. Admis dans un prestigieux pensionnat juif de Jérusalem qui réserve quelques places seulement à des étudiants arabes, Eyad se trouve doublement confronté à sa propre étrangeté.<sup>17</sup> En dépit de son inconfort initial et des moqueries dont il fait parfois l'objet, Eyad persévère dans ses études et développe une amitié sincère avec Yonathan, un étudiant de son âge à l'humour cynique atteint de dystrophie musculaire, et une relation amoureuse avec Naomi, une camarade de classe ashkénaze. La quête de soi poursuivie

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<sup>16</sup> L'État hébreu abrite plus de 1,6 million de Palestiniens.

<sup>17</sup> Les Palestiniens, rappelle Said, sont des déplacés, qu'ils vivent chez eux ou à l'étranger. (Said et ss. 260)

par le jeune homme au fil de ses rencontres l'amène à se forger, au sens propre comme au sens figuré, une identité nouvelle. Confronté de plus en plus au racisme à l'égard des Arabes, Eyad en vient à usurper l'identité de Yonathan, confiné à son lit par la maladie, et va jusqu'à substituer l'identité du jeune Juif à la sienne au décès de ce dernier, le tout, avec le consentement de la mère de Yonathan, qui perd son fils et en gagne un nouveau.

### Une critique sévère, mais sans solution

Dans un effort de « critique laïque » plus convaincant que son film précédent, Riklis brosse à grands traits de références intertextuelles un portrait critique du regard orientaliste et dénigrant que la majorité dominante (israélienne) porte sur la minorité dominée (arabe). Dès son arrivée au pensionnat, Eyad, qui porte un médaillon illustrant son prénom en lettres latines, se fait appeler Ayid. Las de corriger camarades et professeurs, il finit par accepter cette désignation. En plus de représenter l'Autre arabe dans son propre pays, Eyad, dont le prénom signifie « homme puissant », est paradoxalement rebaptisé « celui qui revient » ou « celui qui rend visite au malade » par le groupe dominant. « Surdéterminé de l'extérieur », pour reprendre les mots de Fanon (113), Eyad fait aussi l'objet de moqueries, de blagues islamophobes, de préjugés et de contrôles d'identité par les forces de l'ordre. Soucieux de mettre en relief les racines de cette discrimination à l'endroit des Arabes, Eran Riklis ne manque pas d'inclure de nombreuses références à l'histoire de la Palestine. Que ce soit dans les reportages télévisés sur la guerre civile au Liban ou sur la guerre du Golfe, ou encore dans les leçons d'histoire relatant la première guerre israélo-palestinienne, la représentation de l'Autre accentue ce que Said appelle « la dichotomie simpliste entre, d'une part, Israël, État démocratique épris de liberté, et les mauvais Arabes, totalitaires et terroristes ».

(« orientalisme » 68) Même le personnage juif de Yonathan dénonce d'un humour incisif les préjugés injustes dont sa société affuble les Arabes.

Les renvois au corpus littéraire israélien ne sont pas en reste<sup>18</sup>. Dans la scène charnière du film, Eyad est contraint d'« éprouver son être pour autrui » (Fanon 108) et confronté à l'alternative suivante : se conformer passivement à ce que l'on s'attend de lui ou dénoncer le discours orientaliste présent dans une multitude d'œuvres littéraires israéliennes ainsi que l'absence de toute reconnaissance de ce fait politique dans le matériel scolaire. Il fait allusion au roman *My Michael*, d'Amos Oz, dans lequel des jumeaux arabes font l'objet d'un désir inconscient chez le personnage principal, Hannah, qui est juive. Tandis que le mari d'Hannah représente l'univers scientifique, rationnel et laïque généralement associé au juif ashkénaze idéal, membre productif d'une société occidentale, l'Arabe constitue un tabou exotique et l'Autre politiquement et sexuellement défendu. (Shohat 216; Naaman 4) Si la courageuse prise de position d'Eyad incite sa copine Naomi, une juive, à révéler leur amour au grand jour, comme pour résister aux préjugés de sa famille et de ses amis, elle aura aussi pour effet de précipiter la quête d'identité et d'indépendance du jeune homme, dont l'issue sera le renoncement à son identité palestinienne et l'ouverture sur l'Europe occidentale.

Les écoles et les manuels scolaires sont souvent les premiers véhicules par lesquels les sociétés transmettent officiellement, intentionnellement et systématiquement des récits nationaux, puisqu'ils possèdent l'autorité et la légitimité voulues pour le faire. (Adwan et ss. 202) De nombreuses scènes du film se déroulent à l'école, le film ne manque pas de souligner à quel point la sélection du contenu pédagogique historique et

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<sup>18</sup> Eyad fait notamment allusion aux auteurs S.J. Agnon et A.B. Yeoshua.

culturel en Israël, tant chez les juifs que chez les Arabes, contribue à perpétuer le sentiment d'altérité à l'égard de l'autre groupe et s'inscrit dans la pensée orientaliste.<sup>19</sup> Petit, Eyad apprend de son enseignant, un militant communiste, qu'Israël est une fiction et qu'il habite en fait en Palestine. Au pensionnat, il apprend qu'Israël était sous mandat britannique, alors qu'il s'agissait en fait de la Palestine. Le jeune homme ne tarde pas à percevoir avec une ironie désabusée la manière dont l'Autre est démonisé par chaque parti. (Houpt 2015) Une analyse du matériel pédagogique utilisé dans les écoles juives et arabes de l'État juif montre effectivement qu'en général, les manuels scolaires tant israéliens que palestiniens tendent à délégitimer l'Autre et à lui attribuer la responsabilité de l'éclosion et de la continuité du conflit, et mettent l'accent sur les atrocités commises par l'Autre. (Adwan et ss. 202)

En permettant à un personnage arabe de dénoncer sciemment l'orientalisme qui caractérise le corpus littéraire israélien, Riklis remet en question la culture dont il se réclame et s'interroge, en tant que cinéaste, sur la possibilité de dépasser ces représentations archétypales de l'Autre arabe.

### Dépasser l'orientalisme

Dans *Mon fils*, Eran Riklis cherche à dépasser le discours orientaliste auquel il participe lui-même dans ses films et qui colore particulièrement le milieu scolaire israélien. Or, il perpétue à certains égards, et non sans une certaine bienveillance, la représentation orientalisante de l'Arabe. Qu'il s'agisse du maître d'école palestinien aux

méthodes rétrogrades et violentes, du père d'Eyad, ancien « terroriste »<sup>20</sup> et sympathisant indéfectible de l'Organisation pour la libération de la Palestine (OLP), de la grand-mère d'Eyad, musulmane dévote et admiratrice de Saddam Hussein, ou encore d'Eyad lui-même, Arabe tantôt passif, tantôt rebelle, qui ignore comment utiliser ses couverts et qui démarre une cantine clandestine, distribuant bagels, houmous et zaatar depuis sa petite chambre au pensionnat, le film est truffé d'illustrations orientalistes plutôt bénignes, certes, mais qui révèlent au moins une chose : la difficulté de se libérer entièrement du carcan orientaliste.

Au-delà de ces stéréotypes, le film présente une force indéniable. En confrontant son personnage principal à ce que Kristeva appelle « l'étrangeté constitutive de notre psyché » (269), le réalisateur place le spectateur israélien devant, pour reprendre les mots de l'auteure, « l'étranger qu'il rejette, mais auquel il s'identifie pourtant » (276). Il reste à savoir si cette « inquiétante étrangeté » ressentie à la fois par Eyad<sup>21</sup> et par le public israélien, ce « choc de l'autre, l'identification du moi avec ce bon ou mauvais autre qui viole les limites fragiles du moi incertain » (278) pourront générer une réflexion vraiment critique qui permettra de surmonter, au cinéma comme dans d'autres sphères de la société, les obstacles du discours orientaliste.

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<sup>20</sup> Le discours sur le terrorisme, qui est en soi une forme d'orientalisme, sert les intérêts politiques de l'État israélien et sa politique d'expropriation et de ghettoïsation des Palestiniens. (Morton 36)

<sup>21</sup> Le titre anglais du film, *Dancing Arabs*, s'inspire d'une expression familière désignant les Arabes qui dansaient de joie pendant la guerre du Golfe, en 1991, à la vue des missiles irakiens menaçant la ville israélienne de Tel-Aviv. (Cassivi) Or, l'anecdote qui a inspiré à Kashua le titre de son roman autobiographique *Les Arabes dansent aussi* est tout à fait différente. Dans le roman, l'auteur et son amie Kashia, elle aussi arabe, expriment leur profond dégoût à l'égard des Arabes qu'ils observent sur le plancher de danse d'un bar. Le narrateur affirme que les Arabes ne devraient pas avoir le droit de danser à cet endroit, et Kashia renchérit en les décrivant comme « les personnes les plus laides de Jérusalem, des bons à rien qui se prennent pour Dieu ». (173)

## Conclusion

« Les bons films ne fournissent pas de réponses... Ils les remettent en question. C'est parce que leur cœur n'est ni à l'est, ni à l'ouest, mais avec leurs personnages et avec leur cinéma : orientaux, occidentaux ou les deux. » (Bursztyn 209)

*Les Citronniers* et *Mon fils* d'Eran Riklis s'inscrivent dans ce que Kubicek décrit comme le cinéma israélien contemporain, moins eurocentrique et plus polyphonique que celui des années 1980. (213) En rupture avec la tradition cinématographique du passé, ce cinéma englobe des points de vue opposés ou « contrapuntiques », pour reprendre l'expression privilégiée par Said, sur l'histoire de l'État juif et de la Palestine et s'attache à écrire non seulement l'histoire des gagnants, mais aussi celle des dominés. (Shohat 271) En réfléchissant, à même ses films, sur la société et sur la discipline artistique dont il est issu, et en puisant notamment dans les riches corpus du cinéma palestinien et de l'histoire du Moyen-Orient, Riklis cherche à créer un cinéma « ancré dans le monde », c'est-à-dire enraciné dans la réalité sociale contemporaine. S'il aspire à formuler ce que Said appelle une « critique laïque », le cinéaste ne parvient toutefois pas dépasser complètement le discours orientaliste qui entrave une telle entreprise et dont il cherche à se détacher. Les deux films analysés dans ces pages illustrent non seulement les répercussions politiques que la pensée orientaliste a eues et continue d'avoir dans le contexte du conflit israélo-palestinien, mais aussi la difficulté, même pour un artiste conscient et critique d'un tel discours, de se libérer d'une tradition culturelle aussi solidement établie.



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# Kanye West's Postmodern Anxiety: Who Takes the Rap?

By Marcelle-Anne Fletcher

## *Abstract*

This paper will examine the representations of Black masculinity in the lyrics of poetry. Rap music, like other works of poetry, can be analyzed within multidisciplinary frameworks. Specifically, this scholarly work will conduct a comparative analysis of Kanye West's rap songs entitled "Hey Mama" and "Mama's Boyfriend" to illustrate the ways in which recorded music is subject to the disciplinary production of hegemonic masculinity that is both patriarchal and heteronormative. A feminist, literary and psychoanalytic interpretation of this poetry reveal how lyrical language, artistic experience, and musical genre function to produce thematic suggestions of the Oedipus complex.

Keywords: Black masculinity; Oedipus complex; performativity; patriarchy; rap lyricism

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Since its debut in the late 1970s, rap music has not received serious attention by intellectuals – particularly academics – in the field of comparative literature.<sup>22</sup> By rap music, I mean the style of popular music where lyrics (typically rhyming) are spoken rhythmically over an instrumental backing which has a strong background beat that emerged as early as the late 1970s.<sup>23</sup> Rap music, one of many artistic expressions of Hip-Hop culture, has managed to achieve the highest forms of aesthetic; not only in Black communities in North America but also in mainstream North American society and elsewhere in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century. Allusions and direct references to rap lyricism are found in (but certainly not limited to): TV advertisements, fashion, art, theatre, and other forms of entertainment in the postmodern era. Literature has been redefined by a number of authors but Terry Eagleton develops a very different, inclusive definition. In his chapter "What is Literature?" Eagleton (1983)

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<sup>22</sup> That is not to deny the work of "hip-hop scholars" or scholars that have viewed hip-hop culture as a unit of study in anthropology, sociology, psychology, music, etc.

<sup>23</sup> As defined by *Oxford English Dictionary*.

posits that any literary work can be defined as literature so long as it is revered by a person. (5) In his sense, what constitutes literature changes and evolves throughout history and the category of literature is laden with “assumptions by which certain social groups exercise and maintain power over others.” (16) This broader definition illuminates the germaneness of rap lyricism to the field of comparative literature.

Rap artists, poets by another name in the twentieth and twenty-first century, have presented scholars with an opportunity to question hierarchies of comparison as well as (in)validate some theoretical approaches to literature. All literature, whether highbrow or lowbrow, should elicit an interest for scholars as to how or why consumers of literature identify with characters or speakers; as well as how it informs consumers’ values, morals, desires, and ethics. Jean-Louis Dufays, Michel Lisse and Christophe Meurée, in their chapter entitled “Théorie de la littérature : une introduction” contend that literature evokes rationality and passion in its reader. Similarly, Louise Rosenblatt argues that reading can be aesthetic or efferent. According to Rosenblatt, “aesthetic reading involves experiencing the text fully, living through the events of the text as they are encountered.” (Schweickart and Flynn xi)

In this essay, I am interested in examining how rap lyricism can be better understood using the tools of comparative literature. There is certainly more than one way to interpret literature, and rap music (poetry) is no exception. In an attempt to engage this marginalized content, I will critically engage various rap songs within feminist, psychoanalytic, and literary frameworks. The content analysis conducted in this essay examines lyrics as multifunctional narratives. Rap music remains an art form dominated

by male artists. Consequently, I'm interested in exploring how masculinity is informed and upheld in rap lyricism.

Judith Butler's notion of 'performativity' – that racial and gendered identities are constantly being performed is useful. Her theoretical concept of 'performativity' suggests that identity is constructed through a repetitive performance. Not only are rap artists performers in music videos and at concert venues but these expressive songs can be said to be gendered 'performances' of the artist's identity – the strong Black man, the hustler, the trickster, and so on. In "Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Subversions", Butler argues,

The disciplinary production of gender effects a false stabilization of gender in the interests of the heterosexual construction and regulation of sexuality within the reproductive domain. The construction of coherence conceals the gender discontinuities that run rampant within heterosexual (...) contexts in which gender does not necessarily follow from sex, and desire, or sexuality generally, does not seem to follow from gender – indeed, where none of these dimensions of significant corporeality express or reflect one another." (110)

Butler interrogates our understanding of the gendered and racialized self that is taken for granted as natural, stable, and rational. In the comparative content analysis of Kanye West's rap songs related to motherhood, Butler's 'performativity' provides a conceptual framework that identifies culturally hegemonic forms of masculinity.

Professor of Sociology, Patricia Hill Collins, also demystifies hegemonic masculinity and how Black men participate in this system of power. Hill Collins explains,

Hegemonic masculinity is fundamentally a dynamic, relational construct. Because it is constantly tested by the behaviors of others, such masculinity must always be achieved. These relations are not merely interconnected; they reflect the hierarchal power relations of a racialized system of sexism that frames the multiple expressions of masculinity and femininity available to African American men and women, as well as all other groups. In the American context, hegemonic masculinity becomes defined through its difference from and opposition to women, boys, poor and working class men of all races and ethnicities, gay men, and Black men. (186)

Hill Collins illuminates the dynamism and fluidity of masculinity for African-American men. Masculinity is achieved by actively opposing or subjugating women, the working class, Blackness. Thus, my essay will explore the ways in which rap artist Kanye West achieves masculinity by differentiating himself from these groups.

Since I am dealing with the subject of manhood, and Kanye West attributes his own manhood to the close involvement with his mother, the psychoanalytic approaches developed by Sigmund Freud help to reflect this masculinist world of men; more specifically, the Oedipus complex, in which a child successfully becomes a gendered subject. In “Psychoanalysis”, Terry Eagleton summarizes:

The early 'dyadic' or two-term relationship between infant and mother, that is to say, has now opened up into a triangle consisting of child and both parents; and for the child, the parent of the same sex will come to figure as a rival in (the child's) affections for the parent of the opposite sex. (154)

What becomes a comfort to a boy is that he has the capacity to become a patriarch and is introduced to the symbolic role of manhood by a father figure. A psychoanalytic approach to rap music seeks to understand the relationship between language, the unconscious, and symbolic order. Similarly, Harold Bloom, who is indebted to Freud's work, rewrites literary history in terms of the Oedipus complex. In *The Anxiety of Influence*, Harold Bloom likens poetry to a symbolic and violent escape from the 'anxiety of influence' caused by a poet who came before them (Eagleton 183). Since all literary works are expressions of the unconscious and in continuous dialogue with other texts, it can be argued that rap music is an attempt by rap artists to subvert the influence of their oppressive fathers. By borrowing Harold Bloom's notion of 'strong' and 'weak' poets from his theory of poetic influence, I explore a method of analysis that incorporates literary theory, poetry, and masculine identity.

Several rap songs, without any awareness of it, are thoroughly Oedipal. A young man, who lives with his mother, treats his mother with the gentleness of a lover, resents his father, and grows up to eventually replace the father as the 'man of the house'. Kanye West – a famous American rapper – offers concrete examples that identify how a rap artist navigates the Oedipus complex to adapt to his pre-given social and sexual role as a

Black man. A close examination of “Hey Mama” and “Mama’s Boyfriend” elucidate Oedipal motifs in Kanye West’s music.

“Hey Mama” (2005), by American hip-hop artist and international success Kanye West, is a song dedicated to his mother that idealizes her and describes his affection towards her. Kanye West released this autobiographical song when he was 28 years old. “Mama’s Boyfriend” (2011) is a song that illustrates Kanye West’s resentment of his mother’s boyfriends and describes the way he competes with them for her attentions. The Chicago-born rapper released this song when he was 33 years old. In both songs, the story of his passage through the Oedipal complex is rather straightforward which I will discuss below.

To begin, rap music is a narrative in which the speaker and the protagonist are the same. This is evident with Kanye West’s use of present tense and first-person perspective in his music. In both songs, boyhood events are recalled and function to develop plots. As Peter Hühn states, “Plots in poetry are typically constituted by mental or psychological incidents such as perceptions, imaginations, desires, anxieties, recollections or emotions and their emergence and development.” (21) The two songs present events that are pivotal in Kanye West’s transition from boyhood to manhood. Hühn contends, “In poetry, plots typically refer to ideas, memories, desires, emotions, imaginations and attitudes which the agent in a monological reflective and cognitive process ascribes to himself as his plot.” (24) The plot of Kanye’s “Hey Mama” is constituted by the speaker’s specific experience of his mother as a source of inspiration, pride, and the imaginative reproduction of his childhood. The plot of “Mama’s Boyfriend” is constituted by Kanye’s specific experience of his mother’s boyfriend as a source of



anxiety, antagonism, and the imaginative reflection of how he inevitably becomes the men he didn't like as a child – his mother's boyfriends.

The narration of these songs in his late twenties and early thirties, the recollection of his memories, anxieties, desires reflects a regression to his childhood. It is important to note that after the divorce of his parents, Kanye lived with his mother and was estranged from his father which helps explain his mother's dating patterns.<sup>24</sup> Kanye regresses to a younger, childish stage when he says, "This little light of mine and I'm finna let it shine / I'm finna take y'all back to them better times." (Kanye "Hey Mama") He alludes to a popular gospel song for children and brings his listeners back to his past by narrating a flashback. Similarly, in "Mama's Boyfriend" the first verse begins: "He walked in our lives I was only five / Superman pajamas I was super duper fly." (Kanye "Mama's Boyfriend") He, in this case, is his mother's boyfriend who Kanye is introduced to at the age of five. Kanye effortlessly transitions from present tense to past tense as a narrator to produce an atmosphere of immediacy and nostalgia. Moreover, his use of "mommy" and "mama" are terms of endearment that suggest a closeness to his mother as well as a naivety that is Oedipal.

According to Freud, if a boy is unable to successfully overcome the Oedipus complex he may: be sexually incapacitated; be unable to enjoy satisfying sexual relationships with women; privilege the image of his mother above all other women. (Eagleton 155) Kanye not only appears to privilege the image of his mother but he also

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<sup>24</sup> According to an interview in the *Daily Mail* as of April 30, 2015. URL: [www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-3062897/A-young-Kanye-West-looks-mild-mannered-shy-Washington-DC-Metro-never-seen-childhood-photos.html](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-3062897/A-young-Kanye-West-looks-mild-mannered-shy-Washington-DC-Metro-never-seen-childhood-photos.html).

treats her with the tenderness of a lover. For example, in “Hey Mama” he likens his mother’s beauty to poetry. He says:

Can the choir please  
Give me a verse of “You Are So Beautiful” to me?  
Can’t you see, you’re like a book of poetry  
Maya Angelou, Nikki Giovanni, turn one page and there’s my mommy  
Come on mommy just dance with me  
Let the whole world see your dancing feet. (Kanye “Hey Mama”)

West refers to Joe Cocker’s “You Are so Beautiful” (1974) which can be interpreted as a love song. This interpretation is validated by the artist’s use of simile. Kanye compares his mother’s beauty to the poetry of famous Black, American poets Maya Angelou and Nikki Giovanni. Moreover, he implores his mother to dance with him. Dancing is typically a bodily expression of pleasure; a form of physical closeness; or a sensual activity. Regardless of the reason for dancing, which cannot be ascertained from this line, Kanye West treats his mother like an object of desire. Comparably, in “Mama’s Boyfriend”, Kanye says:

Yeah I know she look good but you need to stop staring  
I drew a picture of her that’d make her proud  
But the door was locked and the TV up so loud  
I screamed out, “I ain’t going to sleep no time soon!”  
And when I do, I’m sleeping in my mama’s room!”  
(Kanye “Mama’s Boyfriend”)

In this song, he uses artistic representations to express his love for his mother. He repeats this pattern in “Hey Mama”, when he professes,

You know I love you so

I never let you go

Wrote this song just so you know

No matter where you go our love is true. (Kanye “Hey Mama”)

Both the portrait and the song are intended to impress his mother. Moreover, Kanye admits that his mother is physically attractive and it distresses him that her “good looks” garner the attention of other men. Once again, he treats his mother like an erotic object that is looked upon and elicits feelings of desire and pleasure. He grapples with this anxiety, intimating that he stays up late at night in the hopes that his mother and her boyfriend refrain from having sexual relations in her bedroom. This castration anxiety – the boyfriend impedes Kanye from sleeping in his mother’s bed – is a source of emotional stress.

The trope of a jealous lover is frequently conveyed in Kanye West’s songs. In “Hey Mama”, he says, “And you never put no man over me / And I love you for that mommy can’t you see?” (Kanye “Hey Mama”) He admits that he adores his mother because she did not prioritize the needs of other men or pursue her romantic interests with other men because of her relationship with her son. This possessiveness toward his mother is overrepresented in “Mama’s Boyfriend”. He raps, “You know I scrutinize, like, ‘Who this newer guy?’ / I’m my mama boyfriend, I’m her little husband / I was the man of the house when [there] wasn’t.” (Kanye “Mama’s Boyfriend”) Not only is Kanye protective of his mother, questioning the sincerity of his mother’s boyfriend, but he believes he is his mother’s boyfriend or husband. Here, Kanye performs the role of a man and a lover because a child can only pretend to be a patriarch and husband.

To successfully overcome feelings of resentment towards the parent of the same sex, the child must replace the oppressive male figure as patriarch. Kanye West's mother, a single, Black woman complicates the image of the head of a patriarchal household. Traditionally, women are responsible for emotional and physical nurturing and men are breadwinners. In the case of Kanye's mother, he says,

I was three years old, when you and I moved to the Chi  
Late December, harsh winter gave me a cold  
You fixed me up something that was good for my soul  
Famous homemade chicken soup, can I have another bowl?  
You work late nights just to keep on the lights  
Mommy got me training wheels so I could keep on my bike  
And you would give anything in this world. (Kanye "Hey Mama")

Consequently, in patriarchal American society, the image of a mother who nourishes her sick child, teaches her son practical skills, and works long hours evokes sympathy from listeners. Kanye will rectify this ostensible problem by eventually becoming the patriarch which I will discuss later. The image of a bike will resurface in "Mama's Boyfriend" as a weapon to impair his mother's boyfriend. He states,

I don't like you n\*gga  
If I was old enough, I'd fight you n\*gga  
I want to run over you with my bike, you n\*gga  
Don't go to sleep at night, you n\*gga. (Kanye "Mama's Boyfriend")

The violent imagery of a child's bike being weaponized and the use of racist and derogatory slurs supports the notion that Kanye thoroughly resents the oppressive

patriarchal figure. Likewise, in “Hey Mama”, Kanye discusses his mother’s lover in derogatory terms. He says,

Seven years old, caught you with tears in your eyes

Cuz a n\*gga cheatin’, telling you lies, then I started to cry

As we knelt on the kitchen floor

I said mommy I’mma love you ‘til you don’t hurt no more

And when I’m older, you ain’t gotta work no more

And Imma get you that mansion that we couldn’t afford. (Kanye “Hey Mama”)

What is striking about this verse is the emotional distress felt by Kanye when his mother’s boyfriend is revealed to be unfaithful and a liar. He promises to love his mother more deeply than any other man and that he will restore the patriarchal order in their household. As I mentioned above, Kanye West’s single, working mother disrupts the notion that a man should be responsible for contributing to the household financially. As Butler argues, “gender is a project which has cultural survival as its end, the term strategy better suggests the situation of duress under which gender performance always and variously occurs.” (113). Evidently, his mother brings the money home (which is viewed as a masculine activity) because there is no man eligible to be the head of the household. The oppressive traditional nuclear family unit directs Kanye to adopt the role of his “mama’s boyfriend” and “her little husband”. In the same vein, Kanye performs masculinity under duress because he hurriedly and prematurely becomes the patriarch to protect his mother from the oppression of labour.

In “Mama’s Boyfriend”, Kanye’s mother’s boyfriend is presented as an inappropriate head of household because he does not look like a middle-class patriarch. He maintains,

And the last thing I want to see is mama’s new n\*gga  
You old Old Spice wearing, short chain wearing  
Dress shoes and jogging pants wearing, church sock wearing  
When you first stop caring about your appearance?  
(Kanye “Mama’s Boyfriend”)

Kanye West produces an image of a man who wears cheap cologne, unstylish accessories, and has an unkempt appearance. Judith Butler reminds us that coherency of a masculine or feminine identity is critical to the project of cultural survival. In addition to the boyfriend’s actions, which have proven to be unscrupulous, his appearance also makes him unsuitable as a patriarchal figure. Men subscribe the norms of hegemonic masculinity upheld as appearance by dressing appropriately for their age and gender. Since the mother’s boyfriend does not, the listener supports the notion that Kanye should be the patriarch.

As mentioned above, the traditional nuclear family assumes the mother will stay home to look after the household while the father works to provide the material things. Kanye declares that he will replace his father entirely and take care of his mother. In a Freudian sense, that is how he negotiates the Oedipal complex. First, he promises, “(...)when I’m older you ain’t gotta work no more / And I’mma get you that mansion that we couldn’t afford.” (Kanye “Hey Mama”) Essentially, he promises that when he is extremely wealthy, he will provide his mother with a mansion where she can subscribe to

the patriarchal norms of femininity (i.e. not working outside of the home). Indeed, he advances, “Since you brought me into this world, let me take you out / To a restaurant, upper echelon / I’mma get you a Jag, whatever else you want.” (Kanye “Hey Mama”) When Kanye reverts to present-tense, he boasts of his extravagant wealth. He maintains that presently he can take his mother to upscale restaurants, buy her a luxury vehicle, and anything else she desires. In other words, he has become the patriarch he wanted to be.

The nature of his relationship with his mother is not questioned, in fact, taking care of his mother’s needs is mentioned in other songs. For example, in “Big Brother”, he says, “... [Jay-Z] got me out me out my momma crib / Then he help me get my momma a crib” (Kanye “Big Brother”). Once again, it is taken for granted that this is ultimately that his mother wants to properly fulfill her role as a woman in patriarchal society. Here we see societal expectations and the unconscious converge in Kanye’s lyrics; Kanye restores the symbolic order by becoming the patriarch.

In “Mama’s Boyfriend”, Kanye recognizes that he replaces the patriarchal figure entirely. Self-consciously, he admits,

Twenty years later, where has the time gone?  
Now you see I’m dating, having problems of my own  
Now that I’m grown the tables turned around  
I never thought I’d ever raise another n\*gga’s child

He don’t like his mama’s boyfriend just like me. (Kanye “Mama’s Boyfriend”)

Arguably, Kanye’s inability to enjoy satisfying sexual relationships with women is the result of the Oedipus complex. He does manage to become a man by becoming someone else’s mother’s boyfriend. Regrettably, he becomes the oppressive patriarchal

figure to a little boy who does not like him. As Hill Collins reminds us, masculinity is achieved by the exertion of authority over women and boys. The child's disdain for Kanye is understandable but it does not effect change or convince the artist to break the cycle. Kanye says,

'You gonna marry my mom?' Look, I don't read palms  
And I don't read Psalms but I did take little man to church  
Took little man to school  
Look, little man, kids don't make the rules  
Even though I ain't raised you, you your mama's angel  
Don't get it twisted, baby boy, I'll Ving Rhames you.  
(Kanye "Mama's Boyfriend")

Kanye's presence reinvigorates the cycle of father oppresses child, child resents father, child becomes a father, father oppresses his child. Despite his wavering devotion to the child's mother, he reasons that children do not determine the terms of sexual or romantic relationships between adults. Furthermore, Kanye actually threatens to harm the child if he challenges him. "I'll Ving Rhames you" alludes to the film *Baby Boy* (2001) where the conflict between two men vying for the attentions of one woman becomes a physical altercation. Kanye's uses of "baby boy" underscores the idea that his unconscious struggles with the memory of his own oppression by the patriarchal figure as a child. "Baby boy" is also a violent utterance to establish Kanye's position as a dominant masculine figure.

Another example of Kanye's transition from boyhood to manhood is the hook in the song "Mama's Boyfriend". Repeatedly, he says, "I never liked you n\*ggas / Who knew one day I'd be just like you n\*ggas / Uh, alright you n\*ggas, uh, alright you n\*ggas



/ When I become my mama's boyfriends?" (Kanye "Mama's Boyfriend") He confesses that he has become a man like his "mama's boyfriends" – aggressive, domineering, unfaithful and a liar. This painfully self-aware confession does not disturb the restoration of symbolic order in the nuclear family. Although he is self-aware, Kanye appears oblivious to the disciplinary practices that support this ideological project. What is interesting is not that Kanye has internalized this identity but that by subscribing to this masculine identity he is viewed as a man, as powerful, important and useful. Kanye's discussion of his mother fails to reflect the organizing principles of identity. As Butler succinctly puts:

According to the understanding of identification as an enacted fantasy or incorporation, however, it is clear that coherence is desired, wished for, idealized, and that this idealization is an effect of a corporeal signification. In other words, acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this on the surface of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause. (110)

Ultimately, both songs signal Kanye West's wish to effect a coherency of gender informed by patriarchal norms. By buying his mother cars, mansions, taking her to expensive restaurants, allowing her to quit her job, he believes he is protecting his mother from the pressures of the dominant culture. In reality, however, he is reinforcing the pressures of the hegemonic culture that require mothers to fulfill their feminine roles in the home.

Both “Hey Mama” and “Mama’s Boyfriend” are thoroughly Oedipal in a Freudian sense. Firstly, the male rapper (who regresses to childhood) resents his father and fatherly figures for castrating him; he adores his mother to the extent of treating her like an object of desire; he has many failing relationships with women which he attributes to his parents’ divorce; and finally, once he becomes successful he fulfills his fantasy to take care of his mother. While Freud’s theory does not fully represent Kanye West’s household, we understand that Kanye does negotiate the Oedipal complex by replacing his father entirely. I provide several supporting examples where Kanye attempts to fulfill the romantic and emotional void in his mother’s life much like a husband and father would. I also demonstrate how Kanye confirms his status as a man by financially supporting the women in his life – particularly his mother. Finally, I prove that Kanye becomes a man (in the patriarchal sense) because he not only becomes the dominant figure in women’s lives but because he also subordinates other weaker men, including children.

A feminist, psychoanalytic and literary reading of “Hey Mama” and “Mama’s Boyfriend” offers a fruitful insight as to how these songs are informed by societal gender norms and the unconscious. While these songs intended to portray Kanye’s mother, the head of household, as a strong yet nurturing figure that pushes him towards ambitious exploits, she is a figure that also lures him back home and causes him to reimagine his romantic love for her. That is not to say that Kanye West is actually in love with his mother because intimate male-female relationships are confined to systems of heterosexism. Even the child of a “working mother” is unable to imagine a world in

which the protection and care of women is not a duty reserved for her sexual and romantic partners.

These songs are very exciting to analyze thematically, however, I am not interested in pathologizing rap artists – who are predominantly young, black males. I do not wish to pathologize marginalized groups that have been historically silenced, infantilized and demonized. My intention was to illustrate the ways in which Hip-Hop lyricism does not escape the disciplinary production of hegemonic masculinity that is patriarchal and heteronormative in nature. I only wish to argue that rap music, like other works of poetry, can be analyzed with Freudian or quasi-Freudian frameworks to elucidate meaning. A content analysis that looked at themes, paratextuality and intertextuality, and social context was used to examine the question of society and the unconscious in terms of concrete literary examples.

To illustrate my argument, I drew on the music of Kanye West, a rap artist whose work often deals with kinship, family, and romantic pursuits. This essay looked at the intertextuality of Kanye West, to demonstrate how he negotiated his seemingly immutable complex and pre-given social and sexual roles. Freudian and quasi-Freudian Oedipal conceptions tend to be staunchly patriarchal ones that concentrates on father-son relations. Given the social location of Kanye West and since this is an essay that looks at forms of masculinity, the Oedipus complex appeared to be an appropriate tool for analysis. The formulation of these songs is exemplary of symbolic and actual masculine violence. I say masculine violence because the exertion of power over women, children and other men is typically normalized for men.

The songs of rap artists should be viewed as dramatizations of their inner world. Given the influence of rap music, to deny the imaginative and artistic value of rap lyricism is to suggest it is not a site of knowledge that represents complex relations of power. Kanye's music is an example of how multidisciplinary approaches to rap music consider how lyrical language, artistic experience and musical genre function to produce thematic suggestions that are not obvious in society. Rap music since its debut at the end of the 1970s has been representative of the postmodern human experience: alienation, dehumanization, absurdity, and enigma invoked by the nuclear family unit and meaningless, oppressive labour. Thus, the genre is certainly a provocative area of study well-suited for intellectual discussion. I believe rap lyricism can enhance the study of poetry as well as be better understood using the tools of comparative literature and other disciplines.

For future research, scholars could build upon and extend this research in a number of ways. For example, scholars could analyze other rap artists to identify whether Oedipal themes are pervasive in the musical genre of rap or other genres. Perhaps they would discover artists who subvert the oppressive nuclear family unit. Future research could also attempt to identify whether the way female or male rappers describe mothers and fathers differently. I hope that my exploratory analysis helps to construct a conversation about symbolic male violence and psychoanalytic feminism. Literary interpretation, feminism and psychoanalysis do not have to be divorced from rap music. In fact, they can broaden what is discussed in literature, such as volatile emotions of resentment, desire, tenderness, and so on.

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## L'arbreshe : une langue minoritaire d'Italie méridionale

Par Eliana Fortunato

### *Résumé*

L'arbreshe est une langue parlée en Italie méridionale, reconnue comme l'une des 12 langues minoritaires désignées comme « historiques » et protégées par la loi italienne (article 2 de la loi 482/1999). Dans un milieu aussi linguistiquement hétérogène que l'Italie, l'arbreshe cohabite avec les dialectes locaux et la langue nationale, mais fait néanmoins l'objet d'un projet de revitalisation linguistique dans un cadre européen où la conservation des variétés parlées revêt une très grande importance. Les configurations politique et linguistique de cette revitalisation font de l'arbreshe un cas d'étude intéressant et inédit de langue minoritaire ayant amorcé, non sans défis, son ascension sociale et linguistique dans un contexte peu propice à la normalisation des dialectes. L'étude des processus de sauvegarde et des aspects historiques de cette langue peut contribuer à sa conservation et à celle d'autres langues minoritaires qui présentent les mêmes caractéristiques environnementales et de développement.

Mots-clés : langues en contact; langue minoritaire; politique linguistique ; revitalisation linguistique

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### **Introduction : L'arbreshe, une langue minoritaire méconnue**

Dans un monde qui a toujours connu l'échange et le contact entre plusieurs cultures et civilisations, il est crucial d'analyser les motivations qui poussent certains peuples à entrer en contact avec d'autres, de même que les effets de ces rencontres. Le présent article a pour but de fournir un exemple de ce genre de phénomène, en analysant plus particulièrement le cas de l'arbreshe, une langue minoritaire présente dans plusieurs régions du Centre-Sud de la péninsule italienne. Cette langue constitue une variété d'albanais parlée au Sud de l'Albanie et qui est arrivée en Italie avec les vagues migratoires de la période d'invasions du peuple ottoman (du XV<sup>e</sup> au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle). En Italie, l'arbreshe ou arbëreshe (dans ses deux dénominations principales) est reconnue comme l'une des 12 langues minoritaires désignées « historiques » et protégées par la loi italienne (article 2 de la loi 482/1999). En Italie, l'arbreshe est parlée dans les régions

méridionales des Abruzzes, du Molise et des Pouilles ainsi qu'en Campanie, en Basilicate, en Calabre et en Sicile. Dans un milieu aussi polyédrique que l'Italie, l'arbreshe se mélange aux dialectes locaux et à la langue nationale dans un cadre européen dont la diversité des langues parlées constitue l'une des caractéristiques les plus importantes. (Voir les figures 1 et 2 et le tableau 3). Cette langue a fait l'objet de nombreuses études et a suscité un grand nombre de débats. Selon De Miceli, « Les Arbresh, éventuellement, n'intéressent l'Italie méridionale et la Sicile que par les problèmes qu'ils soulèvent. » (53). Cela dit :

Identifier les acteurs de la diaspora qui suivit la mort de Georges Castriota Skanderbeg, en Italie méridionale et particulièrement en Sicile où ils s'étaient retirés au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle, les chemins parcourus depuis leur patrie d'origine, l'idée de maitresse qui orientait leurs pas, les conditions de leur installation et le contexte qui concourait au développement de leur nouvelle vie. Certes, les difficultés de l'entreprise ne nous échappaient pas ; mais, malgré la rareté des documents, l'immense littérature suscitée par l'épopée de G. SKANDERBEG, et la ténacité des traditions qui l'enveloppaient nous encourageaient à l'essai. Il s'agissait, vraiment, d'une rigoureuse et fondamentale recherche et cela stimulait les élans d'un investigateur à la découverte de l'Homme. (De Miceli 57)

Un tel contraste est encore aujourd'hui perceptible dans la situation géolinguistique italienne. L'arbreshe peut aussi être définie pas seulement comme une langue minoritaire,

mais aussi comme une « langue d'immigrants » (*immigrant language*), c'est-à-dire la langue :

*of numerically larger and stable groups, with intentions of putting down roots within a local community; languages that are used systematically by the immigrant group and that are able to leave their mark in the linguistic contact make-up with the host community.*

(Barni 221)

L'arbreshe est donc capable de laisser des traces dans les variétés locales qui l'entourent. En effet, du fait de sa position géographique stratégique dans la Méditerranée, l'Italie a été le cadre de nombreuses vagues migratoires. À chaque lieu sujet à un tel contact, la langue a subi plusieurs influences, et ce, jusqu'à tout récemment.

### **L'arbreshe, une langue minoritaire reconnue par la loi**

En novembre 1999, l'Italie a adopté les *Normative in materia di tutela delle minoranze linguistiche* (Règlement régissant la protection des minorités linguistiques historiques). Les langues minoritaires concernées ont bénéficié de ce règlement, puisqu'elles constituaient des « péninsules » linguistiques représentant des pays dont la langue minoritaire était officiellement et largement parlée. Selon la Constitution italienne, il incombe à la République d'éliminer tous les obstacles qui peuvent empêcher la participation à la vie citoyenne. (Coluzzi 31) L'arbreshe est en effet une langue dérivée de l'albanais moderne. Officiellement, l'histoire des Arbreshes commence avec l'exil qui suivit la guerre ottomane. Cela dit, leur installation en Italie a des racines plus profondes. Celle-ci est d'abord attribuable à un événement politique, militaire et religieux. (De



Miceli 59-60). Comme définition du peuple arbreshe, on peut utiliser la description de De Miceli, qui affirme que les Arbreshes sont les immigrants et les descendants d'immigrants de la terre d'Albanie qui se sont réfugiés en Italie méridionale et en Sicile après 1467 pour des raisons politiques et qui se sont fondus aux résidus d'autres vagues migratoires gréco-albanaises antérieures ou postérieures, motivées par des circonstances variées. Un premier flux migratoire découla de l'alliance entre Skanderberg et la papauté, qui garantissait la protection de l'Europe chrétienne face à l'expansion islamique. Le pape Paul II promettait protection et accueil au peuple albanais. Pour cette raison, comme le souligne Prato :

it is not surprising, therefore, that Arbëreshe settlements were established along the Adriatic coast of the Papal State, in the territories of Venice (...) and especially in the Kingdom of Naples (81)

C'est en raison des persécutions religieuses qu'une seconde vague migratoire succéda à la première. Après la mort en 1468 de Gjeorgj Kastriot Skanderberg, considéré comme le seul patriote albanais en mesure de bloquer l'avancée ottomane sur le territoire est-européen et d'unifier le territoire albanais, l'invasion ottomane obligea le peuple albanais à fuir l'occupation des Turcs et, par conséquent, les persécutions religieuses.

En effet, comme l'explique Prato :

new waves of migrations occurred in the sixteenth century, especially after the fall of the Southern Mediterranean Venetian cities to the Ottomans. These new migrants arrived in Italy without possessions or money and hoped to find a better life in the established Arbëreshe settlements (81)

La rapidité avec laquelle le peuple arbreshe s'est déplacé témoigne de la naissance abrupte d'un contact entre deux entités qui, avant ces événements, n'avaient eu que des échanges sporadiques et superficiels.

Il est clair que si la poussée ottomane est à l'origine du grand exode épiro-albanais qui marqua l'avènement du peuple Arbresh, les racines du phénomène remontent à plus loin et datent d'une autre débâcle : celle des Siculo-Catalans de Grèce, qui fit de la Sicile la terre d'élection des immigrants. Dans les divers cas concernés, il a été question d'affaires militaires. La constitution du peuple arbresh ne résulte pas d'un ensemble de vagues migratoires clairsemées et motivées par des raisons économiques et d'apports successifs au conglomérat albanais-grec déjà en place, mais à des déplacements plus ou moins importants de familles militaires venues s'installer ou guerroyer dans des lieux qui allaient plus tard servir de terres d'accueil à ceux et celles qui choisirent, à la fin du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle, l'exil plutôt que l'apostasie, et la fuite face aux inéluctables représailles des envahisseurs. (De Miceli 66-67)

Le nouveau règlement, qui entérine l'article 6 de la Constitution italienne en matière de protection des minorités linguistiques, repose donc principalement sur des fondements sociopolitiques. En effet, la loi 482/1999 (article 1, alinéas 1 et 2), se lit ainsi :

*1. La lingua ufficiale della Repubblica è l'italiano.*

*2. La Repubblica, che valorizza il patrimonio linguistico e culturale della lingua italiana, promuove altresì la valorizzazione delle lingue e delle culture tutelate dalla presente legge.*

[Traduction : La langue officielle de la République est l'italien; La République, qui valorise le patrimoine linguistique et culturel de la langue italienne, promeut et valorise les langues et les cultures protégées par la présente loi.]

L'article 2 affirme :

*1. In attuazione dell'articolo 6 della Costituzione e in armonia con i principi generali stabiliti dagli organismi europei e internazionali, la Repubblica tutela la lingua e la cultura delle popolazioni albanesi, catalane, germaniche, greche, slovene e croate e di quelle parlanti il francese, il franco-provenzale, il friulano, il ladino, l'occitano e il sardo.*

[Traduction : En vertu de l'article 6 de la Constitution et en harmonie avec les principes généraux établis par les organisations européennes et internationales, la République protège la langue et la culture des populations albanaise, catalane, germanique, grecque, slovène et croate, et de celles qui parlent le français, le franco-provençal, le frioulan, le ladin, l'occitan et le sarde.]<sup>25</sup>

Bien que la loi soit sans équivoque sur le sujet, les efforts nationaux visant à préserver ces langues minoritaires ont été très faibles dans la majorité des cas. Pour des langues telles que le frioulan, le sarde ou le ladin (c'est-à-dire pour les régions de la Frioul-Vénétie julienne, de la Sardaigne et du Trentin-Haut-Adige), les projets de politiques linguistiques se sont avérés très dynamiques et ont obtenu la reconnaissance totale du groupe linguistique minoritaire. Dans le cas de l'arbreshe (surtout dans les régions des Abruzzes et du Molise), cependant, les initiatives de protection ont été

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<sup>25</sup> Libellé original présenté dans la *Gazzetta Ufficiale* (n° 297) du 20 décembre 1999, traduit par Tina Célestin. URL: [www.axl.cefan.ulaval.ca/europe/italie\\_loi1999.htm](http://www.axl.cefan.ulaval.ca/europe/italie_loi1999.htm).

confiées à des groupes locaux et à peu de chercheurs et d'universités, ce qui est insuffisant pour ce cas de bilinguisme institutionnel qui nécessite une formation et une planification linguistique très approfondie et concentrée (Consani 74). Ce qui est le plus préoccupant est de savoir comment aider ces langues minoritaires à survivre. Dans le cas de l'arbreshe, selon Francesco Altimari, il ne suffit pas de transcrire l'oral, puisque cela équivaldrait à réduire la langue au petit nombre de mots utilisés par la communauté et, surtout, codifiés au prisme de la langue italienne, dans une logique de « sous-développement linguistique et culturel » (Consani 76). La langue arbreshe serait ainsi assujettie à l'hégémonie de la langue nationale, et l'adjectif qui la caractérise, « minoritaire », deviendrait le symbole de son infériorité.

Il importe aussi de souligner comment la langue arbreshe s'est éloignée de l'albanais normalisé. L'arbreshe moderne présente des variations qui ne sont pas acceptées dans l'albanais normalisé moderne. Altimari estime donc qu'il faut prendre en compte les variantes de l'arbreshe parlées « au-dessus du toit-linguistique protecteur de l'albanais commun écrit ». (77) Selon lui, une dispute entre les défenseurs de la variante et ceux de la normalisation est inutile. La solution serait de continuer à valoriser la base linguistique même pendant l'enseignement de la langue albanaise chez les locuteurs de la langue arbreshe. Ce faisant, on limiterait la distance entre la langue d'origine et celle qui s'est déplacée et qui, aujourd'hui, présente des variations remarquables, mais pas très éloignées de l'albanais. En outre, cette initiative faciliterait la transition depuis le milieu familial vers le milieu scolaire : on stimulerait l'apprentissage de la langue albanaise normalisée tout en respectant la base de dialecte italo-albanais de l'élève, qui fait partie de son identité. La mise en œuvre d'une politique linguistique visant le plurilinguisme et

le pluriculturalisme permet l'acquisition d'un bilinguisme « composé » qui englobe la langue du foyer *et* la langue de la société. Le tableau 3 présente des exemples qui illustrent les propriétés phonologiques des quatre communautés albanophones de la région du Molise (voir le tableau 3).

Comme on peut le constater, il est crucial d'insérer le graphème /y/ dans l'enseignement de l'albanais écrit pour différencier les paires minimales, qui se neutraliseront si l'on ne garde pas la distinction phonétique dans la forme écrite (Consani 79).

### **Contact avec les langues locales et tentatives de revitalisation**

Si l'enseignement de la langue arbreshe est répandu dans les régions où cette langue s'est installée, cela ne signifie pas que la langue soit employée par ceux et celles qui l'apprennent. L'enseignement est l'une des activités qui peut freiner la disparition de la langue. (Consani 165) Cela sous-entend toutefois un défi de taille : mettre en valeur une langue aussi minoritaire dans une société de plus en plus caractérisée par l'omniprésence des médias et réseaux sociaux en italien. Très souvent, la langue minoritaire est principalement détenue par les personnes âgées. C'est l'enseignement en milieu scolaire qui peut redorer l'image que l'on se fait de sa propre langue et faire en sorte que l'on accorde à cette dernière intérêt et dévouement. Comme l'affirme Prato :

*The Italian debate on linguistic minorities and their integration in Italian society brings to light key ideological bases of the project of multiculturalism. Historical and contemporary evidence suggests that in order to understand such a project we must address the underlying*

*complex web of political and economic interests, which in turn interlink with cultural and national identity. (97)*

Le multiculturalisme est la clé pour créer un monde où la tolérance et l'intégration entre les deux communautés, albanaise et italienne, peut générer une revitalisation simultanée des deux langues. C'est une réflexion métalinguistique qui peut contribuer à une nouvelle et profonde redécouverte de sa propre identité à travers celle d'un peuple avec lequel on est en contact.

Aujourd'hui, nombre de minorités linguistiques et de dialectes italiens peuvent être considérés comme des langues en danger ou, le dit Coluzzi, des *endangered languages*. (116) Examiner l'histoire linguistique de l'Italie permet de comprendre comment l'importance accordée à l'italien et son rapport avec les autres langues présentes sur le territoire, des dialectes en majorité, ont changé. Avant l'unification du territoire italien, en 1861, chaque territoire indépendant avait sa propre langue et sa propre variété locale. C'est seulement dans les années 1960 que l'on a adopté une politique vigoureuse de diffusion de la langue italienne et que les citoyens ont commencé à être très exposés à cette dernière. Grâce à l'essor économique du pays, l'accès aux nouveaux moyens de communication comme la télévision a augmenté. De plus, des émissions telles que *Non è mai troppo tardi. Corso di istruzione popolare per il recupero dell'adulto analfabeta* [Traduction : Il n'est jamais trop tard. Cours d'instruction populaire pour la récupération de l'adulte analphabète], permirent d'enseigner l'écriture et la lecture en italien à plusieurs générations. Ce faisant, par contre, elles entraînèrent une régression des dialectes, créant chez les locuteurs une opinion plus négative de la langue dialectale ou minoritaire qui, jusque-là, avait pourtant représenté pour eux la seule façon de s'exprimer

dans le foyer familial et dans les petits milieux agricoles, et ce, surtout dans le Sud de la péninsule.

*Si può parlare di regresso nell'uso dei dialetti, anche se è innegabile la loro ancora notevole consistenza: resistono alle spinte unificanti, ma in modo variabile e differenziato per ceto e strato sociale, classe di età, livello cultural, area geografica, ecc. Se a ciò che concerne i dialetti, considerati nella loro "purezza" o nelle forme di contatto con il resto dello spazio linguistico italiano, si aggiungono le forze che alimentano almeno alcuni degli idiomi delle minoranze di antico insediamento, abbiamo ancora un'identità linguistica nazionale caratterizzata dalla compresenza di un ventaglio ampio di idiomi, varietà e registri, pur se il polo dell'italofonia è sempre più in espansione e la tendenza all'unificazione linguistica appare sempre più decisa. (Consani 272)*

[Traduction : « On peut parler de régression dans l'utilisation des dialectes, même si leur consistance est encore indéniable : ils résistent aux poussées unificatrices, mais d'une façon variable et différenciée selon la classe et la stratification sociale, l'âge, le niveau culturel, la zone géographique, etc. Si l'on considère les dialectes, dans leur « pureté » ou dans leurs formes de contact avec le reste de l'espace linguistique italien, et qu'on ajoute les forces qui alimentent au moins certains idiomes des minorités d'ancienne installation, on a comme résultat une identité linguistique nationale caractérisée par la coprésence d'un vaste éventail d'idiomes, variétés et registres, même

si le pôle de l'italophonie est de plus en plus en expansion et la tendance à l'unification linguistique apparaît toujours plus nette. »]

De plus, comme l'affirme Coluzzi,

*If the language one speaks is made to seem inferior, a kind of 'deformation' of the official majority language, if it is only spoken in a circumscribed marginal area in a limited number of situations and for a limited number of functions, if it does not help social mobility or even hinders it, if it is not developed, used at school or in the mass-media, its speakers may decide to give it up in favour of the official high status language, a mastery of which, they believe, will give them and their children more opportunities in life and greater social status and respect. (Coluzzi 114)*

Ce n'est que plusieurs années plus tard que les dialectes s'introduisirent enfin dans des émissions télévisées, à la radio et dans la littérature, en tant qu'aspect important et symbolique de la culture italienne. Auparavant, les dialectes avaient surtout fait l'objet de représentations comiques ou stéréotypée. Enfin, avec l'adoption de la loi 482/1999, le gouvernement italien a voulu régir officiellement la sauvegarde des minorités linguistiques. Or, la perception des locuteurs à l'égard de leur propre langue avait déjà subi au fil des décennies la même minorisation que celle des dialectes italiens.

Si la promulgation de cette loi constitue un progrès bien tardif, les exemples d'initiatives de conservation et de protection de la langue arbreshe sont multiples. Dans la région du Molise, principalement dans la ville d'Ururi, après l'entrée en vigueur de la loi régionale 15/1997 et de la loi nationale 482/1999, on a assisté à un renforcement des activités consacrées à la promotion de l'arbreshe. Plus particulièrement, la valorisation et



la protection de la langue arbreshe ont été intégrées au programme d'enseignement à titre d'objectifs fondamentaux d'un parcours scolaire complet, en harmonie avec une vision interculturelle. Comme le souligne Consani :

*Si è rilevato che la lingua arbëreshe ha mantenuto, dopo oltre cinque secoli, le antiche caratteristiche con i sostrati e con gli adstrati. Perciò il confronto lingua arbëreshe-albanese-italiano acquista oggi importanza fondamentale per uno studio motivato da parte degli alunni e dei cittadini; inoltre la lingua arbëreshe assume una funzione di mediazione linguistica e di interfaccia culturale. (Consani 349)*

[Traduction : On a découvert que la langue arbëreshe a gardé, depuis plus de cinq siècles, les anciennes caractéristiques du substrat et de l'adstrat. Pour cette raison, la comparaison arbereshe-albanais-italien revêt aujourd'hui une importance fondamentale qui peut contribuer à une étude motivée par les étudiants et les citoyens; en outre, la langue arbëreshe remplit la fonction de médiation linguistique et d'interface culturelle.]

Donc, si les activités culturelles de la communauté aident la langue à être vivante, l'école joue quant à elle un rôle fondamental dans la préservation de la langue chez les nouvelles générations. Représentations théâtrales, apprentissage comparé et approche interculturelle : voilà les principaux moyens employés pour atteindre les objectifs fixés.

Un autre exemple est la situation de l'arbreshe dans la ville de Villa Badessa, dans la province de Pescara, dans les Abruzzes. Dans la seule communauté alloglotte arbreshe de la région, la langue arbreshe s'est maintenue en vie grâce aux rituels religieux. En effet, la liturgie ecclésiale suit en tous points le rite gréco-byzantin en langue arbreshe. En

outre, l'iconographie et les chansons sont des moyens de garder la langue vivante. Des initiatives sont mises en œuvre non seulement dans la sphère religieuse, mais également dans l'administration communale avec l'octroi de fonds en vue de la restructuration des édifices publics et des habitations du centre-ville pour conserver tous les aspects traditionnels de la culture arbreshe, même les matériaux utilisés pour leur construction. En plus de susciter un intérêt chez les nouvelles générations :

*è interessante sottolineare che se le giovani generazioni badessane hanno dimenticato l'arberesh (...), esso tuttavia persiste, come lingua di ritorno, in quei pochi individui "scolarizzati", oggi comunque ultracinquantenni, che a suo tempo hanno potuto frequentare con profitto un regolare corso di studi e che oggi, avvalendosi di quegli strumenti culturali acquisiti a scuola, avvertono la necessità di un ritorno e di una riscoperta della cultura degli avi (Consani 355)*

[Traduction : Il est intéressant de souligner que si les nouvelles générations de Badessa ont oublié l'arbereshe (...), cette langue continue d'exister comme langue de retour pour ceux qui ont eu accès à l'école, aujourd'hui plus que quinquagénaires, qui, dans leur temps, ont eu l'occasion de suivre avec succès un cours d'études régulier et qui, aujourd'hui, en profitant des outils culturels appris à l'école, perçoivent la nécessité d'un retour et d'une redécouverte de la culture de leurs propres ancêtres.]

D'autres initiatives caractérisent les communautés arbreshes des autres régions plus au Sud, notamment en Sicile, dans la ville de Piana degli Albanesi. Comme l'explique Eda Derhemi :

*Piana has enjoyed relatively high economic prosperity and has constantly regarde dits different language and culture as a source of prestige and self-appreciation. (...) The Arbresh of Piana have always considered themselves to be Italians who in addition have Albanian origins (...) (365)*

Cela dit, même si les conditions semblent être particulièrement positives, dans cette communauté, la langue dominante demeure l'italien. Les deux problèmes principaux sont l'absence d'une version écrite de l'arbreshe et, par conséquent, d'un enseignement de cette langue dans le milieu scolaire. Il importe ici de noter la différence entre la situation de l'arbreshe à Ururi (en Molise) et à Piana (en Sicile), et, par le fait même, les répercussions d'un faible système scolaire qui ne valorise pas la transmission de ce dialecte italo-albanien. En effet, comme l'explique Derhemi, la langue arbreshe est contaminée par l'italien à un point tel qu'elle en perd son essence. La langue est effectivement utilisée dans la communauté, mais seulement dans des occasions secondaires, puisqu'elle conserve le statut de langue informelle que lui ont conféré ses locuteurs.

*This dramatic change occurs at school, during the years in which Arbresh speakers, while enriching and developing their Italian skills, do not add anything to their knowledge of the language. On the contrary, in a competition for domains, Italian wins and Arbresh loses. I noticed that although almost everybody in simple informal communication is naturally inclined to use Arbresh, it is often difficult to maintain its use in a long conversation. The language rapidly*

*becomes overloaded with elements from Italian vocabulary and expressions, until a complete switch occurs.* (Derhemi 368)

La langue n'étant pas valorisée, elle est naturellement reléguée à l'état de sous-langue ghettoïsée et destinée à la vie familiale et aux événements non officiels. L'une des retombées concrètes d'une politique linguistique faible est la variabilité dans la langue au sein d'une même communauté. Dans son étude, Derhemi fournit quelques exemples de variations :

Variantes du verbe « manger » : hëndur, hënder, hëndrur, hëngër et ngrënë

Variations dans la prononciation : « na jemi e biem » devient « namebiem »

« ai ish e pasjar » devient « shepasjar »

Ces exemples montrent comment « the lack of a written language has caused confusion about the use of the progressive aspect among young speakers » (Derhemi 371). Beaucoup d'efforts ont été déployés pour isoler ce problème. Un livre de grammaire arbreshe, *Udhëtimi*, a été créé pour l'arbreshe de Piana et publié en 2001, mais il a entraîné un débat très néfaste. La langue normalisée dans le livre, bien qu'elle résulte d'un mélange équilibré d'albanais et d'arbreshe, n'est pas perçue comme une version normalisée de l'arbreshe parlé à Piana degli Albanesi. En effet, peu d'écoles l'ont adoptée, et peu d'élèves pouvaient faire des liens entre la langue du livre et leur variété propre. Peut-être qu'il est désormais trop tard pour remédier à cette situation. Comme le suggère Derhemi, il faudrait cerner les aspects positifs du travail et en améliorer les aspects les plus controversés. En effet, ce livre fait partie des quelques ressources dans lesquelles l'arbreshe peut trouver une place définie, même si :

*the language that has served as a model for Udhëtimi is not a codified language with a normative grammar, orthography and pronunciation. It is a simple mixture of features from Arbresh and Albanian. This, clearly, is no solution for the language of Piana (Derhemi 379)*

En effet, Derhemi soutient l'usage de l'albanais normalisé comme fondement d'une langue arbresh écrite unique.

### **Conclusion**

En conclusion, il est possible de constater que la normalisation d'une langue fait toujours l'objet de débats. Puisque chaque langue représente une culture, normaliser une langue signifie un peu encadrer une culture qui, dans la réalité, revêt de multiples visages. Il est donc normal d'assister à la distanciation du locuteur quand il voit pour la première fois sa propre langue normalisée. De la même façon, pour le locuteur d'une langue minoritaire, la comparaison avec le monde dominant est plus difficile. Sa propre identité est menacée si rien n'est fait dans l'immédiat. La plupart du temps, quand on s'aperçoit du danger, une partie de la langue et donc de sa propre identité a déjà disparu. Dans le texte de Bullaro, on peut lire sur l'histoire de Carmine Abate :

*[he] was born in an Arbëresh speaking community in the southern Italian province of Calabria, region greatly affected by economic emigration. Abate's Italian experience was quite unique in that, like many immigrants, he learned Italian not at home, but in primary school. Abate describes this experience, "Quando ho cominciato a*

*scrivere, non potevo scrivere nella mia madre lingua come qualsiasi altro scrittore del mondo che è nato in un Paese come l'Italia, la Francia o Inghilterra che scrive nella sua madre lingua. Ho dovuto scrivere in una lingua diversa, in italiano, e quindi all'inizio mi sono sentito una sorte di transfugo linguistico, cioè una persona costretta ad abbandonare la sua lingua che non sa scrivere per abbracciare un'altra lingua". (...) Abate's literature recommends that individuals select the most personally significant aspects of all their various cultures and languages to create a unique hybrid identity." (Bullaro 111-112)*

[Traduction : Quand j'ai commencé à écrire, je ne pouvais pas écrire dans ma langue maternelle comme ces écrivains du monde qui sont nés dans un pays comme l'Italie, la France ou l'Angleterre, et qui écrivent dans leur propre langue. Moi, j'ai dû écrire dans une langue différente, l'italien, et donc, au début, je me sentais comme un infidèle linguistique, c'est-à-dire une personne contrainte d'abandonner sa langue parce qu'elle ne ne sait pas comment l'écrire, pour en adopter une autre.)

Le protagoniste se sent perçu comme un étranger dans son propre pays. Il lui manque une identité. Il se trouve entre deux réalités. Comme l'explique Bullaro,

*The Arbëresh are perhaps an archetype in Italian hybridity ; they are a minority group with a long history of being different from and sharing many of the same experiences with other Calabrians, Italians and emigrants. (Bullaro 112).*

Cela peut devenir un état d'âme encore plus fort si on le considère dans un cadre plus vaste comme celui de l'Union européenne. Le *Cadre européen commun de référence pour les langues* (CECRL), publié par le Conseil d'Europe, a pour but de promouvoir le plurilinguisme dans des différents domaines de compétence ainsi que la coexistence de plusieurs réalités culturelles. Or, aujourd'hui, le problème est que dans la majorité des cas, il n'y a pas de politique linguistique rigoureuse qui soit appliquée adéquatement à l'échelle locale. Un exemple de cela est le cas de l'arbreshe. Le présent article met en relief le caractère ambigu de la politique linguistique appliquée à cette langue et en montre les forces et les faiblesses. Tout dépendra principalement de l'initiative de groupes locaux qui, dans la plupart des cas, ne reçoivent pas le soutien financier ou logistique voulu pour mener à bien des projets de valorisation linguistique.

Sauvegarder une langue signifie préserver une identité et une culture, encore plus dans le cas des minorités linguistiques. De la même façon, définir une langue nationale signifie souvent créer une identité nationale, ce qui pourrait ne pas respecter les autres réalités linguistiques. Il est possible de faire les deux en prenant soin d'offrir les mêmes possibilités de valorisation à tous les locuteurs de chaque langue. Une juste planification et une juste conceptualisation des ressources valables constituent la meilleure solution à un phénomène qui caractérise le territoire italien depuis longtemps et qui demeure bien présent encore aujourd'hui. De cette façon, il serait possible de vivre dans une société plurilingue qui revitalise l'échange et le contact entre plusieurs cultures et, surtout, entre plusieurs peuples et identités.

Figure 1

Dialectes régionaux et langues minoritaires parlés en Italie



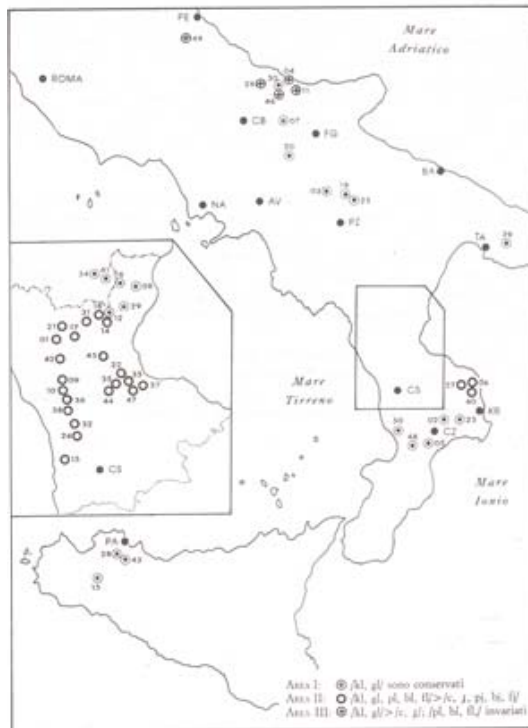
Source : De Tullio, Mauro. « Linguistic Variety and Linguistic Minorities ». *Italian Cultural Studies: an Introduction*, edited by David Forgacs and Robert Lumley, Oxford University Press, 1996 : 88-101.

Figure 2

Carte des zones linguistiques albanophones en Italie



TAVOLA I



Source : Altimari, Francesco et Leonardo Maria Savoia. *I Dialetti Italo-Albanesi: Studi Linguistici e Storico-Culturali Sulle Comunità Arbëreshe*. Bulzoni Editore, 1994.

Tableau 1

Tableau récapitulatif du peuplement des Albanais dans le Sud de l'Italie

REGION	PROVINCES	COMMUNES	S. km <sup>2</sup>	HABITANTS	DENSITE/km <sup>2</sup>
Lucanie	Potenza	6	210.41	14739	70.00
Pouilles	Poggia	8	351.16	29199	83.15
	Tarente	10	132.73	39759	299.54
	Lece	1	81.62	21918	268.53
Campanie	Avellino	1			
	..... Benevento	1	45.42	3564	78.45
Abruzzes	Pescara	1	6.50	637	98.00
Molise	Campobasso	8	321.47	29115	90.58
Calabre	Cosenza				
	Catanzaro	50	992.34	102108	102.54
	Reggio.C				
Total Italie Péninsulaire		86	2141.65	241039	112.54

Source : De Miceli, Jean. *Les Arbresh (Italo-Albanais) des origines (XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle) à nos jours*. Université de Lille III, 1996.

Tableau 2

Proprietés fonologiche des quatre communautés albanophones du Molise

TABELLA 1  
Specificità fonologiche delle quattro comunità albanofone molisane

Lemma	Albanese comune	Këmarini/ Campomarino	Munxhufuni/ Montecilfone	Porkanuni/ Portocannone	Ruri/Ururi
Desiderio	Mall ['maɫ]	['maɣ]	['maɣ]	['maɣ]	['maɣ]
Mamma	Mëmë ['məmɔ]	['məm]	['məm]	['mə:m]	['mə:m]
Della noce (gen.)	Arrës ['arəs]	['ares]	['ares]	['arəs]	['arəs]
Il pane (acc.)	Bukën ['bukən]	['bukən]	['bukən]	['bukən]	['bukən]
Il cielo (nom.)	Qielli ['ciɛti]	['kjeli]	['cili]	['cjeʎza]	['cjeʎza]
Il tavolo	Tryesa ['trjesa]	['trisa]	['trisa]	['trjesa]	['trjesa]
(Egli) chiese	Lypinj ['lypiŋ]	['lipi]	['lipi] ['lipu]	['lipi]	['lipi]
Scrivere	shkruanj ['ʃkruaŋ]	['ʃkrwɔŋ]	['ʃkrɔŋ]	['ʃkrwɔŋ]	['ʃkrwɔŋ]
Occhio	Sy ['sy]	['si:]	['si:]	['si:]	['si:]

Source : Consani, Carlo et Paola Desideri. *Minoranze Linguistiche: Prospettive, Strumenti, Territori*. Carocci, 2007.

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# **Third World Women or the Struggles of a Feminist Identity in Development: Female Characters in Khaled Hosseini's Novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns***

By Orsolya Nemeth-Kilinc

## ***Abstract***

This paper examines the main female characters in Khaled Hosseini's novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. While many argue that Mariam and Laila represent the typical 'Third World Woman' described by Chandra Talpade Mohanty, my argument is that a feminist identity development analysis reveals their struggles of an awakening feminist awareness and critical consciousness. By using the feminist identity development model designed by Nancy E. Downing and Kristin L. Roush as a tool of analysis, this paper aims to deconstruct the limits of the 'Third World Woman' discourse within Western feminism and acknowledge the diversity of female characters in this novel.

Keywords: feminist identity development, Third World Women, Afghan women, Khaled Hosseini, feminist discourse

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## **Introduction**

In this paper, I am going to examine the main female characters in the Afghan writer, Khaled Hosseini's novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007). While many argue that the representation of Afghan women in this particular novel is another example of the dominant Western feminist representation of the 'Third World Woman', I will demonstrate that there are traces of a feminist identity development process behind the representation of these characters.

On the one hand, I will base my main assumptions on Chandra Talpade Mohanty's notion of the 'Third World Woman'. On the other hand, I will use Nancy E. Downing and Kristin L. Roush's 'Feminist Identity Development Model' as a tool to critically examine the main female characters, Mariam and Laila and their feminist identity changes. In this context, my main research question is: Are Mariam and Laila represented as traditional 'Third World Women' or are they evidences of the struggles of a feminist

identity development process in a 'Third World' country like Afghanistan as depicted in this novel?

### **Third World Women or The Struggles of a Feminist Identity Development?**

To begin with, Mohanty highlights that 'Woman' a cultural and ideological composite 'Other' constructed through diverse representational discourses is an arbitrary representation of 'women' – "the real, material subjects of their collective histories" – set up by particular cultures (259). 'Third World Women' - including Afghan women - is "an image which appears arbitrarily constructed, but nevertheless carries with it the authorizing signature of Western humanist discourse" (260). Mass media and numerous literary works contribute to the descriptive discourse of women in the 'Third World' countries as ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family-oriented, victimized, sexually constrained, and oppressed. Mohanty argues that "a homogeneous notion of the oppression of women as a group is assumed which produces the image of an 'average third world woman'" (261). The same Western feminist representation can be found about Afghan women in many academic and literary works. For instance, Sonali Kolhatkar, Vice-President of Afghan Women's Mission also highlights that "in almost every portrayal of Afghan women in the Western media, mainstream or alternative, shapeless blue clad forms of Afghan women covered with burqa dominate" (4). It means that "women have a coherent group identity within the different cultures discussed, prior to their entry into social relations" (Mohanty 262). In other words, prior to any real analysis, Afghan women are generally described as 'typical' Third World Women a powerless and oppressed group. The question is whether the Afghan-born Khaled

Hosseini's book is another example of this dominant Western feminist discourse or whether the narrative challenges it.

In order to be able to answer this question, we must first examine the female characters in the novel. To do so, I will use the 'Feminist Identity Development Model' by Downing and Roush. They wrote their article '*From Passive Acceptance to Active Commitment: A Model of Feminist Identity Development for Women*' from a feminist perspective "on the premise that women (...) must first acknowledge, then struggle with, and repeatedly work through their feelings about the prejudice and discrimination they experience as women in order to achieve authentic and positive feminist identity" (695). They propose a five stage model of this process: passive acceptance, revelation, embeddedness-emanation, synthesis, and active commitment. *Passive acceptance* is the first stage of this process when a woman is "either unaware of or denies the individual, institutional, and cultural prejudice and discrimination against her" (698). This is the stage where sex-role stereotypes are seen as normal, even advantageous by a woman and men are considered to be 'naturally' superior to women. Stage two is the *revelation*, "precipitated by one or a series of crisis or contradictions that the woman can no longer ignore or deny" (698). Downing and Roush also notice that some women make the transition to this stage suddenly, but this process might be further complicated by the "perceptual distortions (698) caused by a traditional female socialization. The third stage, called *embeddedness-emanation* is a time for the "discovery of sisterhood" (700). The authors emphasize that the barriers for women to reach this stage may be very significant and imposed by others or by society. Nevertheless, the newly discovered connectedness of 'sisterhood' provides the woman with a supportive environment which strengthens her

new identity formation. *Synthesis* is the next stage where a woman can “value the positive aspects of being female” (702). Finally, the last stage of the process is called *active commitment* which “involves the translation of the newly developed consolidated identity into meaningful and effective action” (702). However, the authors argue that few women can truly evolve to this final stage, and they assume that women may stagnate at a specific stage, most often the stage of *revelation* or *embeddedness*. Notwithstanding, they highlight that the “progress from stage to stage is determined not only by the woman’s readiness, but also by the unique interpersonal and environmental context of her life” (702).

Assuming that the female characters in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* are examples of the ‘Third World Woman’ discourse would mean that we can categorize them as stagnating in the first stage (*passive acceptance*) of the feminist identity development model. For instance, it would mean that throughout the novel, Afghan women are described through the lens of the ‘typical’ Western representation of Third World Women: oppressed, powerless; passively accepting their inferior role in their society. However, by analyzing the characters of Mariam and Laila, I argue that the representation of Afghan women in Hosseini’s novel is not another example of the ‘Third World Women’ as per Mohanty’s definition, but rather the evidence of difficulties of the feminist identity development process a woman faces in a ‘Third World’ country under a repressive regime. In order to prove my assumptions, I am going to analyze the two main characters to reveal their process of feminist identity development throughout the novel.



## Feminist Identity Development in the Novel

### Mariam

The character of Mariam is stigmatized from the very beginning of the novel as being a *harami*, an illegitimate child of Jalil, a wealthy man and his servant, Nana. Mariam was born in 1959 in Herat, Afghanistan. Nana, her mother was disowned by Mariam's father who is from a wealthy family and owns a cinema in the small town of Herat. He has officially three wives and nine children. For his illegitimate child, Mariam, he arranges a small house out of town and visits her every Thursday. In order to fully understand Mariam's identity development process, we must first examine her mother's character and its impacts on Mariam.

Nana's character reveals a woman between the stages of *passive acceptance* and *revelation*. She accepts the place imposed on her by society and the discrimination against her, although she continuously criticizes the rigid patriarchal system of Afghan society. Her isolation with her daughter at a lonely cottage outside the town and the minimal exposure to any social interactions could not further her feminist identity development. When Mariam dreams about getting education, Nana claims that "there is only one skill a woman like you and me needs in life, and they don't teach it in school (...) and it's this: *tahammul*. Endure" (Hosseini 17, emphasis in the original). Nana reflects her disappointment in men and in life on Mariam: "There is nothing out there for her. Nothing, but rejection and heartache" (Hosseini 18). Nana's continuous feelings of anger and guilt about her fate are the evidences of her anticipated evolution to stage two. Furthermore, Moreland argues that "woman in this stage restricts her social contacts to a

small number of people who are comfortable and accepting of her intense feeling” (in Downing and Rush 700). Nana has only Mariam in her life, the only person she can count on and share her life with. When Mariam chooses her father instead of her, she loses her spiritual support with whom she had been comfortable to share her intense feelings. Due to her tragic death, her character cannot evolve fully to the second stage.

For the child Mariam, Nana is rather a negative role model unable to support her dreams about education; therefore it is rather her father who represents the joy in her early childhood. She only sees the outside world through the eyes of her mother and of her father and that vision of the world seems to be completely contradictory: a world of injustice and sorrow opposed to a world full of joy and happiness. Mariam first becomes disillusioned on the day of her fifteenth birthday. As a gift, she asks her father to take her to his cinema, but he does not show up that day and Mariam decides to find her father in the town. However, when she finds the house her father refuses to accept her in his home and she ends up sleeping on the street in front of her father’s house. It is here that Mariam realizes that her father does not fully recognize her as his daughter because she is a *harami*, a *persona non grata*. In the morning, when the driver forces her to return home, Mariam finds that her mother committed suicide. The world of the child Mariam falls apart and she is taken to live in her father’s house that she was previously refused to enter.

It is in her father’s home that the first time in her life she can hear the insincerity in her father’s voice. Mariam becomes aware of her real social situation, as well as of her role as a female in Afghan society and it makes her remember her mother’s words: “I’m the only one who loves you. I’m all you have in this world, Mariam, and when I’m gone

you'll have nothing. You'll have nothing. You are nothing!" (Hosseini 19). The impact of her mother's words and her father's lies open up the first steps toward her awakening feminist identity and act as a catalyst resulting in the first signs of a critical consciousness.

Mariam's childhood ends with her arranged marriage. Forced by her steps-mothers and her father's lack of opposition, she marries Rasheed, a much older shoemaker from the capital city of Kabul. When the three wives of Jalil inform Mariam that they found a potential husband for her, Mariam has to face her subordinate social status. She is a burden for her father's family. Unlike her step-sisters who are the same age and who can go to school and prepare for university studies, Mariam is a *harami* and thus destined for a different future. Although Mariam begs her father not to force her to marry, he is under the control of his wives. He chooses to obey his wives in order to keep the family peace instead of saving his daughter from an unfortunate destiny. On the one hand, this shows women's power in marriage, especially when united, even in a very traditional society. On the other hand, Mariam's marriage demonstrates well that Hosseini acknowledges the lives of women of different classes and castes in Afghanistan and avoids describing them as a homogenous group. We can thus see that Hosseini's image of oppression is set at the intersection of gender and class.

After the official ceremony, when Jalil tries to say goodbye to Mariam, she refuses to talk to him. We can witness the first signs of *revelation* in this act. She does not want to accept her role imposed on her by society that stigmatizes her as a *harami* and actively expresses her anger and disappointment toward her father. Nonetheless, Mariam and Rasheed continue their lives in Kabul where she soon becomes aware of her husband's

conservative, ultra-religious and abusive personality. He demands her to wear a burqa claiming that “where I come from, a woman’s face is her husband’s business only” and he condemns those men who “lost control over their wives” (Hosseini 65). Although we can see the oppression of Afghan women through Rasheed’s character, the author also describes the diversity of marriages and women in Kabul thus eschewing a homogeneous representation of Afghan women-men relations. Mariam sees her own adversity in the ‘modern’ Afghan women who are not covered by a burqa, who can wear make-up, high-heel shoes and skirts. She daydreams about their life, but the gap between them and her own life does not allow for an alternative conceptualization of herself; she accepts her faith and with it, her inferior status in her marriage. Her character goes back and forth between *passive acceptance* and *revelation*. Mariam “carefully selects associates and experiences so as to avoid contact with ideas that may upset her sense of equilibrium as a woman” (Downing and Roush 698). She denies seeing the negative aspects; she suppresses them because of the fear of her husband whose abusive personality frequently leads to physical brutality. Therefore, she prefers to concentrate on the only good thing in her life, her pregnancy. She wants to prove to herself that Nana was not right about her destiny and even a *harami* can have happiness in life. However, after some years of marriage and several miscarriages – a situation that exacerbates her husband’s abuse – she feels worthless and a burden yet again in her life.

### Laila

Unlike Mariam, Laila is coming from a very different family background and from a younger generation. She was born in 1978 – in the year of the Soviet occupation – as the third child of Fariba and Hakim a “modern, relatively liberal” (Sentov 264) Afghan

family from Kabul. Hakim, her father is a university teacher and her mother, Fariba is a housewife, but not in the traditional way. She only wears a hijab (a headscarf) and she regards herself as equal to her husband in their marriage. Hakim, as a real intellectual always encourages Laila to study: “I know you’re still young but I want you to understand and learn this now (...). Marriage can wait, education cannot. (...) Because a society has no chance of success if its women are uneducated, Laila. No chance” (Hosseini 103). Consequently, Laila’s feminist identity formation differs from the very beginning from Mariam’s.

When Laila’s mother learns that her sons – who joined the Mujahedeen in fighting against the Soviet regime – became martyrs, she loses her zest for life (Sentov 265). Laila turns to her father and her best friend, a Pashto boy. Tariq and his family love Laila and provide her family with love and warmth. With time the friendship between the two young people evolves into romantic love, but the war is back to Kabul and Tariq’s family has to leave the country. Before he leaves, he asks Laila to marry him and go with them but she would not be able to leave her parents alone. Their farewell ends up in passionate love-making. Later on, Laila’s parents – on their way to flee from Kabul – are killed in a rocket attack that seriously injures Laila. After a long recovery, she wakes up at Mariam’s house.

As we can see, Laila was raised in an atmosphere of equality between man and woman. Although she did not go through the feminist identity development process, we can put her character on the fourth stage, called *synthesis*. Thanks to her intellectual parents and her education, she has a positive feminist identity and she can value the positive aspects of being female. She does not accept discrimination against women and

the conservative male oppression over women. As Down and Roush describe this stage: she is “able to transcend traditional sex roles, make choices for herself based on well-defined personal values, and evaluate men on an individual basis” (702). Nevertheless, at this point in the novel she has not yet evolved to the final stage of *active commitment* due to her circumstances.

*Mariam and Laila: The “Birth of a Sisterhood”*

Rasheed becomes very eager to have Laila, a young and attractive woman as his second wife who could finally give birth to a much coveted male offspring and, despite Mariam’s opposition, he proposes to her. Having realized that she is pregnant with Tariq’s child, Laila quickly realizes that her only chance of survival under the oppressive regime is to accept the marriage proposal. At the beginning Rasheed treats Laila like a treasure, a soon-to-be-mother of the child that Mariam could not give him. Mariam in turn, does not hide her hostility towards the girl, therefore Laila does not share her secrets with Mariam about her pregnancy and the two have a very impersonal and unfriendly relationship. Although Mariam accepts the traditional gender roles of her marriage, the ‘newcomer’ acts as another catalyzer in her critical feminist identity consciousness. At first, however, she cannot deal with the new situation, her role as a servant in the family and Laila, the second and for the time being preferred wife of her husband.

When Laila gives birth to a baby girl, Aziza, this ‘failure’ displeases Rasheed and he becomes abusive also toward his new wife. As the relationship between Rasheed and Laila worsens, he blames Mariam and starts to beat her with his belt but Laila intervenes. This is the first time Laila stands up against him in order to protect Mariam. Her strong

feminist identity and her values push her to protect another woman from the abuse of their common husband. She demonstrates that she is ready to fight for the values she was raised with and in which she believes. From now on, the two women's relationship takes a huge turn and during their habitual evening 'tea sessions' in the garden they become not only friends but also allies.

Mariam's character slowly evolves to the third stage of *embeddedness-emanation*, which means that she is finally able to verbalize the oppressed woman in herself. As a consequence, she "develops a close emotional connection with" (Downing and Roush 701) Laila. As Downing and Roush highlights "this connectedness provides the woman with a reflection of her new frame of reference, the opportunity to discharge her anger in a supportive environment, and affirmation and strength in her new identity" (701).

One day, Laila decides to share her secret with Mariam. When Mariam realizes that just like herself, Aziza is also a *harami*, she understands the special relationship between herself and Aziza which was so manifest from the little girl's birth. Furthermore, Laila tells of her plan to escape from Rasheed and asks Mariam to go with them. As Mariam realizes that Laila and Aziza became the only joy in her life, she decides to join them. This is the moment when the two women decide to escape from their abusive husband, a sign of sisterhood, a "strong female friendship" (Downing and Roush 701) that encourages them to take action. However, their plan fails and, as unaccompanied women, they get arrested by the police. During the interrogation, Laila remains loyal to the values of her upbringing. She questions the new Mujahedeen rules in the name of equality between men and women, but in vain. In turn, Mariam's newly evolving feminist identity collapses under the harsh treatment.

Afterwards, Rasheed's brutal retaliation almost kills the three of them. He first beats Laila and closes her in the room with Aziza whom he suspects not to be his child, than he brutally thwacks Mariam and closes the severely bleeding woman in the tool shed. While the two women are described here as oppressed 'Third World Women' and victims of their husband's brutality, the fact that they tried to escape is still a sign of their struggle against it. As Downing and Roush emphasize: "progress from stage to stage is determined not only by the woman's readiness, but also by the unique interpersonal and environmental context of her life" (702).

Two years later, the Taliban come to power and bring even stricter rules for the whole society, especially for women in the name of 'true Islam'. Laila is pregnant with Rasheed's baby at this time, and as a consequence, treated very well by him for the time being. She gives birth to a baby boy under dreadful circumstances in a hospital that has no anaesthetics for her C-section surgery. Rasheed names him Zalmi. He is the favourite of his father; he brings him everywhere and he buys his long-awaited son everything. However, as their financial situation worsens, Rasheed first wants Aziza (about whom he learnt that she is not his daughter) to beg for money on the street corner. When Laila opposes him, he hits her. When Laila hits him back, he gets angry and comes back with his gun to threaten Laila. After his shop burns down in a fire, Rasheed loses his job and he takes out his despair on the two women by beating them. Nevertheless, although for the time being they must remain in this abusive marriage given the external circumstances, Laila and Mariam are not passive victims as various episodes of their resistance demonstrate. When Rasheed sends Aziza to an orphanage, her two mothers visit her risking reprisal by the Taliban that do not permit women to go outside without a



male escort. The two women's sisterhood and friendship help them to support each other in this difficult period.

Laila's character is close to the final stage of *active commitment*. As Gordan and Almutairi also highlight: "Through the growth of her personality in these levels, the ideas of the mind and circumstances that result in conflicts, transgression from the standards and lastly level of resistance are captured in the novel" (245). Laila's persistent resistance, sometimes overt, sometimes covert, is evidence that not all Afghan women are passive victims. Mariam in turn is encouraged by Laila's strong commitment, but her character has not yet fully evolved to the next stages. She stagnates in the stage of *embeddedness-emanation*, although Laila's friendship gives her the opportunity for further expansion. In this context, Gordan and Almutairi emphasize that "(...) the perspective of Afghan womanhood (...) shows that Afghan females displays a very simple yet resolute method of level of resistance that highlights the originality of Afghan femininity within their culture and community" (240).

Many years later, Tariq appears in front of the house where Laila and Mariam live. Laila realizes that Rasheed deceived her by telling her that Tariq had died in order to be able to marry her. Tariq and Laila's happiness of reunion does not last long because Zalmai tells his father about the strange visitor at their home. The furious Rasheed attempts to strangle Laila, but Mariam intervenes and kills him with a shovel. The anger over her long years of oppression and abuse breaks out from Mariam and gives her strength to act. This is the main catalyzer moment in her life, when she finally sees the moment ready to free herself from the oppression of her husband. The author also emphasizes this fact by adding that this was the first moment in Mariam's life she made a

decision *alone* about her own life. The fact that, when interrogated by the police, she confesses to having committed the crime alone in order to save Laila and the children's life is not only a sign of her love and sacrifice for them but also demonstrates her readiness to accept death as the ultimate liberation from a life full of suffering that she feels has come full circle.

In the prison Mariam is regarded as a "hero" among the other women because they found her action exemplary for all oppressed women. The author highlights that most of the prisoners were arrested because of escaping from home which is considered a crime under the Taliban regime. This again shows the struggles of Afghan women fighting for their freedom and indicates that they are not stuck in the first level of their feminist identity development process. They are ready to take action, they do not simply resign themselves but resist, even if this resistance comes with a high price.

While Mariam's public execution represents one of the many shocking examples of the Taliban regime, one must not see it as the main evidence to describe her character as an oppressed 'Third World Woman'. The way she behaves during her interrogation, we can feel that morally she stands over her executioners. Before her execution she feels at peace; she was born a *harami* but she will die as a beloved person and a free woman. In sum, Mariam's character evolves throughout the novel reaching the third stage of *embeddedness-emanation*. Downing and Roush argue that many women stagnate at this stage or might even "revert to earlier stages when their skills are insufficient to respond to the demands of current life stresses" (702). Mariam's character represents this stagnation and going back and forth between different stages, but it is still the evidence of progress in her feminist identity development process:

“Mariam demonstrates the battles of the Afghan females who live in the conservative / Orthodox community and the knowledge she obtained from decades of sustained various sufferings as a woman. They indicate the females who are split between the conventional principles and discovering their personal feeling of self turned off from community and responsibility” (Gordan and Almutairi 244).

In the last chapter we can witness Laila’s full evolution to the last stage of her identity development process. After the fall of the Taliban regime, Laila, Tariq and the children who had been living in Pakistan decide to return to their homeland. Back in Kabul, Laila works in the orphanage in order to help improve the lives of many children. Due to this commitment, her character fully evolves to the *active commitment* stage; she uses her feminist identity to take meaningful and effective action “a deep and pervasive commitment to (further) social change” (Downing and Roush notice: 702).

### **Conclusion**

The analysis of the feminist identity development process of Mariam and Laila reveals that describing the female characters in Khaled Hosseini’s book as typical ‘Third World Women’ is simply overlooking the complexity, diversity and multiplicity that these female characters represent in the novel. The author rather acknowledges the diversity of Afghan women, the unique context of their lives and environment. Concepts of the family, household, religion and class are used within their specific local cultural and historical contexts which all support the idea of an intersectional rather than a homogenous perspective of their representation. The author pays attention to emphasize the different social, familial and individual backgrounds that shape the two women’s

feminist identity development. In this context, we must also acknowledge that Hosseini always gives a precise description how different historical events, such as the changing regimes affect the individual lives of Afghan women with different backgrounds.

Mohanty's notion of the 'Third World Woman' and Downing and Roush's 'Feminist Identity Development Model' gave the main theoretical framework and tools for my analysis. As Mohanty suggests: "Sisterhood cannot be assumed on the basis of gender; it must be formed in concrete, historical and political practice and analysis" (244). What I examined here is how "the two females came together by war and destiny" (Gordan and Almutairi 244); how the sisterhood formed between Mariam and Laila in a unique historical and political moment in Afghanistan and how it played a role in their individual feminist identity development process. I also highlighted the argument that "a central component (...) of feminist identity development is the development of critical consciousness" (Brodsky et al. 5). In other words, the progress from the lack of awareness of gender oppression to critical consciousness and finally the motivation for change is a crucial turn in the process of a woman's feminist identity development process. The novel offers one literary example of this moment of awakening awareness and critical consciousness and proves that Afghan women, although in some respects are victims of male dominance also manifest various acts of resistance.

Finally, just as Downing and Roush highlight, "greater attention needs to be focused on the intrapersonal and interpersonal, institutional, and cultural forces that both catalyze and impede progress through stages" (707). In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, we could see some of these catalyzers that induced a critical consciousness and the progress of the main characters' feminist identity development. Although according to Brodsky,

the model of Downing and Roush does not “capture multiple, intersecting aspects of identity and social context” (Brodsky et al. 6), I have demonstrated that it can be applied in an intersectional context and thus deconstruct the limits of the ‘Third World Woman’ discourse within Western feminism.

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## Longing for Belonging: Transculturality and Identity in Two North American Novels

By Zac Tabler

### *Abstract*

The concepts of transculturality and cultural hybridity describe the process of two or more cultures coinciding in a space, whether that be an individual's psyche, a city, or an entire nation. These concepts explain how, when cultures encounter one another, a cultural genesis occurs. Within North American literature (USA and Canada), a plethora of novels depict the immigrant or refugee experience, showing their characters grappling with the challenges of learning a new culture and creating a sense of home. This paper employs the lens of transculturality and cultural hybridity to better understand how the characters in two novels come to represent (or not) transcultural individuals as they cope with the sociocultural challenges of a transcultural experience.

Keywords: identity, transculturality, immigrant, cultural hybridity, belonging

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The notion of culture, by its very definition, is difficult to define. Its presence is unequivocally felt, its results certainly witnessed, and its manifestations unquestionably perceived, but it is nevertheless something that remains amorphous, nebulous, even ambiguous. Unlike in the hard sciences where microscopic organisms or the force of gravity or oxygen molecules are studied and equally as intangible to the layman's naked eye, culture is a human construct. It is what defines, in part, who we are; yet many remain oblivious to its effects. Culture plays a pivotal role in the creation of a personal identity for the human psyche and, when combined with personality and idiosyncrasy, results in the human experience. Within literature and the arts, culture is something that has been examined from numerous perspectives. Recently, the intermingling of cultures has come under the lens of the scholar, critic, and artist alike, and it is to this occurrence that we will now turn. In order to explore this further, two novels will be analyzed: Cristina Henriquez's 2014 novel *The Book of Unknown Americans* and Dionne Brand's 2005 novel *What We All Long For*.

*The Book of Unknown Americans* follows the lives of two immigrant families in Delaware in the United States. The Riveras have recently immigrated to the United States from Mexico looking for care and special education for their daughter, Maribel, who suffered a serious head injury a few months prior. The Toros, whom the Riveras meet because they live in the same apartment building, are from Panama and have been in the United States for years, yet still foster faint hopes of one day returning home. Much of the novel is about integrating into American society and the difficulties that come along with such a task. The narrative focuses on the shared experiences of the Riveras and the Toros, in addition to the numerous other immigrants from Central and South America who are their neighbors. Mayor, the Toros' youngest son, and Maribel eventually develop a relationship which becomes key to the plot of the narrative. Relationships are an essential theme in the novel in general, including the relationship one has to a sense of home. For the Toros and the Riveras, creating a sense of belonging proves a much more challenging task than they had envisioned.

Relationships, identity, and belonging also take centerstage in *What We All Long For*. The novel takes place in Toronto and centers on the interwoven stories of four friends: Tuyen, an artist whose parents came to Canada as refugees from Vietnam; Carla, Tuyen's best friend and love interest who struggles with her brother's delinquency and her mother's suicide; Jackie, who owns a clothing-store and whose parents came to Toronto from Nova Scotia looking to start anew; and Oku, a black graduate student in literature and an amateur poet who is hopelessly in love with Jackie and whose overbearing immigrant father complicates his life. The narrative is told through alternating perspectives of these four characters, and through their experiences Brand

demonstrates the struggles of identity and belonging within the urban Canadian landscape of today. One thread that all four share is their conflictual family ties. For one reason or another, they all seek to distance themselves from their families. It is this struggle in common that brought them together as friends: they were able to forget about their troubled relationships when they were together.

The city of Toronto is a living, breathing character in *What We All Long For*. It is the space within which the identity renegotiation and restructuring takes place for the characters in Brand's novel. Sylvia Langwald describes Toronto in *What We All Long For* as a 'glocal' space, or "as a crossroads of intercultural encounters that impacts on identification and family cohesion" (Langwald 124). Langwald makes use of the term glocal, originally a business and management term and a mix of 'global' and 'local', in her analysis of the spatial relationship Toronto has with the individuals in the novel. Brand harkens to this notion in the opening chapter: "But at any crossroads there are permutations of existence. People turn into other people imperceptibly, unconsciously, right here in the grumbling train" (Brand 5). The mixing of the local and the global blur the lines of identity and space, creating a mixture of many individuals. Indeed, the philosopher Wolfgang Welsch also sees transculturality as "able to cover both global and local, universalistic and particularistic aspects..." (Welsch). Later on, Tuyen considers to herself "Yes, that was the beauty of this city, it's polyphonic, murmuring" (Brand 149). Brand presents Toronto to the reader as a city in the midst of cultural renegotiation itself, even hybridization of cultures within the urban sphere, a place where "there are Eritrean accountants, Colombian café owners, Latvian book publishers, Welsh roofers, Afghani dancers, Iranian mathematicians, Tamil cooks in Thai restaurants, Calabrese boys with



Jamaican accents...” (Brand 5). Langwald studies this notion of a multicultural Toronto, but focuses on the second-generation experience, which all four characters in the novel represent. She contends it is within the second-generation experience that the ‘glocal’ truly takes shape (Langwald 124).

The characters in both novels, to varying degrees, represent transcultural or hybrid individuals. Transculturality and hybridity have been defined and redefined over the years and several interpretations of the concepts will be used to better understand the characters and their situations. However, one of the first instances where transculturality is examined was by Welsch in his text “Transculturality – the Puzzling Form of Cultures Today.” He challenges the traditional model of culture as a singular force, opting instead for the term transculturality, which he defines as “a consequence of the inner differentiation and complexity of modern cultures” (Welsch). He contends that “cultures today are extremely interconnected and entangled with each other” and that modern cultures “are in general characterized by hybridization” (Welsch). On the macro-level, Welsch’s conclusion of cultures as inherently hybrid is paramount to the contextualization of these two novels. Between both novels, the reader encounters American, Canadian, Mexican, Panamanian, Vietnamese, Jamaican, and Italian cultures, among others. In framing my analysis, it is essential to keep in mind that culture in the two narratives is portrayed not as a singular creation but instead as a naturally hybrid occurrence, in accordance with Welsch’s conclusions. Brand echoes this sentiment when she writes “they all...felt as if they inhabited two countries – their parents’ and their own” (Brand 20).

However, human experience is paramount to understanding identity and belonging, thus the individual characters of the novels are the objects of curiosity. Welsh and other scholars, such as Gloria Anzaldúa and Néstor García Canclini, have also examined transculturality and hybridity on the individual level. Welsh on the one hand makes the distinction between civic and cultural identity, arguing that they are not one in the same. He underscores the importance of crossing over cultural boundaries, literally and figurately (Welsh). Anzaldúa similarly fashioned the term *mestiza consciousness* to designate a “consciousness of the Borderlands”, or those individuals who are “a product of the transfer of the cultural and spiritual values of one group to another” (Anzaldúa 208). Canclini also nods to the transculturality of the individual, stating that “often hybridization emerges from individual and collective creativity” (Canclini xxvii). In short, the role of the hybrid individual in crossing cultural borders and establishing a new identity is supreme. Welsh concurs: “Wherever an individual is cast by differing cultural interests, the linking of such transcultural components with one another becomes a specific task in identity-forming” (Welsh). The characters within these two novels are examples of these hybrid border travelers. Their experiences within the pages exhibit how identities are formed, reexamined, shattered, and reconstructed.

Tuyen in *What We All Long For* is an excellent example of a hybrid individual, or more specifically as the inheritor of Anzaldúa’s *mestiza consciousness*. Tuyen’s family struggles are particularly poignant throughout the narrative. Her parents lost their youngest son, Quy, as they were boarding the boats to take them away from Vietnam. He was separated from them in the crowd and her parents have dedicated their lives to finding him again. Tuyen, her other brother Binh, and her two sisters grew up in Quy’s

shadow, their parents always thinking about how to find him again. Her mother spends her days desperately composing letters in broken English, sending them with hefty money attachments to private detectives and missing persons organizations across the world. Tuyen also worked in her parents' restaurant, but loathed it. This, combined with her family's obscured apathy towards her as the youngest child, created a desire to throw off her cultural heritage, move to downtown Toronto, and pursue her dream as an artist. In the novel, the narrator explains that Tuyen "rebelled against the language, refusing to speak it. At five she went through a phase of calling herself Tracey because she didn't like anything Vietnamese. She used to sit at the cash register, her legs hanging from a stool, reprimanding people older than she to speak English" (Brand 21).

From a young age, we see Tuyen struggling with her cultural identity. Homi Bhabha's concept of the Third Space also accurately defines Tuyen's shift of identity for a more neutral ground. In Bhabha's words, the Third Space "constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity" (Bhabha 157). Bhabha favors this Third Space as a locale where cultural hybridity can take place. He emphasizes the importance of language for culture, and because of Tuyen's rejection of the Vietnamese language as the carrier of her cultural heritage, she is moving into that Third Space where she can renegotiate her cultural identity anew. Indeed, Tuyen was forced to act as a sort of linguistic and cultural translator for her parents as she was growing up. Tuyen and her brother Binh "were required to disentangle puzzlement; any idiom or gesture or word, they were counted on to translate...the children were their interpreters, their annotators and paraphrasts, across the confusion of their new life" (Brand 67). For her parents, Tuyen and her brother were

“that desired and ineffable nationality: Western” (Brand 67). These passages exemplify how Tuyen and her brother straddle the borders of cultures in terms of their relationship to the Vietnamese language. According to Bhabha, “the disruptive temporality of enunciation displaces the narrative of the Western nation” (Bhabha 156). By being a part of both cultures, Tuyen and Binh contribute to this displacing of the Western nation – in this case, Canada.

In addition to being a resident of Bhabha’s Third Space, Tuyen also exemplifies characteristics of Anzaldúa’s mestiza consciousness, as mentioned above. Her depiction of la mestiza’s experience as “a struggle of flesh, a struggle of borders, an inner war” mirrors Tuyen’s thoughts. Standing in her family’s restaurant’s kitchen, Tuyen “felt a sense of comfort and contradiction. What was that unease? she wondered. Why had she wanted as far back as she could remember to ‘not be them’? Not be Vietnamese” (Brand 69). Anzaldúa explains: “the counterstance refutes the dominant culture’s views and beliefs, and, for this, it is proudly defiant...Because the counterstance stems from a problem with authority – outer as well as inner – it’s a step towards liberation from cultural domination” (Anzaldúa 209). Tuyen’s ultimate goal in life has always been this liberation from cultural domination. She did not want to be defined by her family’s cultural heritage and all the emotions of injury, defeat, and sadness at the loss of her parents’ first son which accompanied it.

Tuyen’s art is a means through which she can reexamine her cultural heritage and define the borders of her identity. She uses it “to stave off her family – to turn what was misfortune into something else” (Brand 149). Harkening to Bhabha’s Third Space, Anzaldúa has this to say about the new consciousness: “That third element is a new

consciousness – a mestiza consciousness – and though it is a source of intense pain, its energy comes from continual creative motion that keeps breaking down the unitary aspect of each new paradigm” (Anzaldúa 210). Tuyen’s most important “creative motion” is her *lubiao*, a massive wooden and metal structure she is building in her apartment. In the latter part of the narrative, she invokes the titular phrase and asks strangers on the streets of Toronto ‘What do you long for?’ She collects these longings en masse and incorporates them into her art and hangs them from the *lubiao*. Tuyen’s search for the longings in others demonstrates her sliding into the mestiza consciousness, where she can break down “each new paradigm” of culture’s falsely unitary frontiers. Her collection of longings contributes to the manifestation of the new collective mestiza consciousness, eliminating the highlighted differences between people in favor of the paradigm of a shared human experience. The *lubiao* is a physical manifestation of the symbolic collective consciousness of the human psyche. Cultural identity is stripped away for a simply human identity, one where our needs are refracted through others and where similarities trump difference. Bhabha necessitates this breaking down of neat cultural barriers when he states: “the Third Space...challenges our sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force...kept alive by the national tradition of the People” (Bhabha 156). Relatedly, Tuyen considers her art “the representation of that gathering of voices and longings that summed themselves up into a kind of language, yet indescribable” (Brand 149).

Tuyen’s cultural identity is muted through her art. She uses it as a means to dissociate herself with her family struggles and, consequently, with the identity her family had placed on her since birth. In essence, art creates a medium through which she

can enter into Anzaldúa's mestiza consciousness, where the goal "is to break down the subject-object duality that keeps her a prisoner and to show in the flesh and through the images in her work how duality is transcended" (Anzaldúa 210). Tuyen embodies this new consciousness. Anzaldúa states that "the new mestiza copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity" (Anzaldúa 209). Langwald emphasizes Toronto's "transitoriness and changeability" and the fact that it is "...polyphonic, international, fragmented, and contradictory" (Langwald 125). It is for these very reasons that Tuyen loves Toronto. She frequents its bars, its art scenes, its shops and events. She chooses to enter this space of ambiguity and ambivalence as a means to recreate herself vis-à-vis the preconstructed identity her culture and family heritage had decided to impose upon her.

In *The Book of Unknown Americans*, Mayor Toro also experiences issues of establishing his personal identity, grappling with his family's cultural heritage and pressures to uphold socio-cultural norms from Panama. For instance, Mayor lives in the shadow of his older brother, Enrique, who is a star soccer player. Mayor, in contrast, doesn't have much talent for it. It is a source of constant personal torment for him, exemplified when he, albeit humorously, reflects "Enrique might have been the next Pelé, but I wasn't even in the same galaxy as Madonna" (Henriquez 16-7). He becomes so discouraged that he stops going to practice, yet lies to his father about it, whose only hope for Mayor is to measure up to Enrique in his ability to play soccer. Mayor's comparison between Pelé, a Brazilian soccer star, and the American pop icon Madonna demonstrates his cultural hybridity. He is able to peer across the gap of cultures and draw an entertaining comparison regarding upholding cultural stereotypes intrinsically linked with

identity, such as the false notion that all boys from Central and South America must be good at soccer, or that all Americans love Madonna. Enrique as the older brother, on the other hand, spent considerably more time growing up in Panama and consequently comes to represent for Mayor what his parents value in a child. Although Celia and Rafael Toro love their sons equally, their approach to their relationship with Mayor in the novel is expressed as dually parental bewilderment and hopefulness: they are not quite sure what to do with Mayor, but hope that it will work out in the end. There is a type of cultural disjoint presented here, wherein the parents as members of the home culture are unsure of their actions in regards to a child who has grown up entirely in the context of the new culture.

That being said, Mayor is in a stage of life that is different than Tuyen's; as a teenager still in high school and living at home, he is at much less liberty to break away and establish his identity anew. Regardless, Mayor reflects on this struggle throughout the book. Due to being the child of Hispanic immigrants, he is unfortunately subject to discrimination and bullying at school, getting nicknames such as "Major Pollo" and "Major Pan in the Ass" – 'Pan' short for Panamanian (Henriquez 15). At another point, a boy is harassing Mayor and quips "My dad says all you people are from Mexico" (Henriquez 69). In divergence from Tuyen's experience, Mayor is presented as a victim of cultural oppression from society. Mayor's relationship with his family is a positive one, or at least not one entirely stressed by cultural baggage. In opposition to Tuyen's choice of defining herself negatively as not Vietnamese, Mayor questions how to define himself as both American and Panamanian. Tuyen comes to represent detachment from her home culture, whereas Mayor embodies attachment to two cultures at once.

However, there is one characteristic that Mayor and Tuyen share: the mestiza collective consciousness. Anzaldúa states that the mestiza “can be jarred out of ambivalence by an intense, and often painful, emotional event which inverts or resolves the ambivalence” (Anzaldúa 209). For Mayor, the arrival of Maribel into his life is this jarring experience. It is not painful, yet it is emotional – it is the first time he has ever fallen in love. After he fends off another student who is sexually harassing Maribel in the apartment parking lot, Mayor reflects that afterwards, “...something between Maribel and me changed. I felt this weird protectiveness over her...” (Henriquez 74). Anzaldúa’s argument that this change takes place subconsciously explains Mayor’s inability to describe the feeling (Anzaldúa 209). For his identity formation, these newfound feelings of protectiveness and guidance for Maribel demonstrate his bridging of the cultural gap of the ‘local helping the newcomer.’ For instance, he speaks to Maribel in Spanish, yet teaches her about American holidays and pop culture. He is acting as a cultural translator for Maribel, which in turn is helping him to define his biculturality as both American and Panamanian.

For Tuyen, this jarring experience is the sudden arrival of her long-lost brother, Quy, which happens abruptly near the end of the narrative. Her reaction is total and complete repulsion. She is thrown into a state of shock at the arrival of this ghost sibling who has haunted her life and who has been the sole contributor to her sentiments of loss and resentment towards her family. All at once, the identity she has been carefully constructing for years as distinct from her family and Vietnamese culture is shattered entirely. Much like Mayor with Maribel, she feels a sudden protectiveness over the parents she had so vehemently rejected: “Was she so hateful as to prefer that Quy had not



been found? (...) One thing, she decided, her mother and father could not be hurt...They deserved kindness, and Tuyen doubted whether this ghost could deliver it” (Brand 300).

The experience that Anzaldúa presaged in her text came to pass for both Tuyen and Mayor. In strict opposition to what these two characters had expected, these events engendered feelings of protectiveness toward the home culture they had both struggled to negotiate: Tuyen rejecting it entirely, Mayor stumbling along the balance beam between American and Panamanian expectations. In essence, it is the inversion of their perspectives toward their cultural heritage. Due to these events, they now feel compelled to protect what had been the source of their discomfort for so many years. Perhaps this is what Anzaldúa described as the “massive uprooting of dualistic thinking” that leads to the establishment of the mestiza consciousness.

Relatedly, Mayor’s parents also serve a similar purpose for Maribel’s parents, Arturo and Alma. Alma and Celia, Mayor’s mother, quickly become friends, and Alma is immediately impressed by the ease with which Celia navigates life in America. In one chapter, she considers Celia’s makeup and her hair and her earrings, comparing it to her friends’ in Mexico, “who used nothing but soap on their faces and aloe on their hands and who kept their hair pulled into ponytails...” (Henriquez 55). Celia makes it her mission to make the Riveras feel welcome and to ease their transition into the American lifestyle, socially and culturally. Arturo welcomes this transition more so than Alma. At one point, he blatantly tells her “You have to think like a gringa now...You have to believe that you’re entitled to happiness” (Henriquez 123). This demarcates the lines between the lifestyles, demonstrating how the Rivera family as a unit are grappling with troubles of identity and belonging. They see the Toros as a success story of immigration and

compare it to their desperate situation of financial burden and lack of skills for a successful life in the United States. Much like the characters in *What We All Long For*, the Riveras attempt to define their identities negatively vis-à-vis the American identity. Due to the fact that they came to the United States for Maribel's sake, the drive to integrate culturally is not necessarily as high as it was for the Toros, who made a conscious choice out of necessity in order to run away from the dangers of political upheaval in Panama.

Arturo's situation – forced to do menial labor that he is highly overqualified for – is a melding of citizenship and culture which posits a unique question for the notion of belonging: can Arturo truly belong in the American context if he does not fit into the social stereotypes and stigmas of Mexican immigrants in the United States? He is indignant to the fact that he works at a mushroom farm, but sees little way out of it for Maribel's sake. Similarly, a parallel question can be applied to the Torontonians context: can Tuyen, Oku, Jackie, and Carla belong to the urban space they so admire while also begrudgingly accepting the cultural baggage from their immigrant families that they try so hard to forget? Langwald's 'glocal' concept to describe Toronto can also be equally applied to Arturo, Alma, and the other immigrant families who occupy the urban space of the apartment building. The cultural hybridity emanating from the characters necessarily manifests itself in a glocal context. For example, Langwald makes use of the image of the crossroads in *What We All Long For* to frame her analysis of glocal spaces in Toronto (Langwald 125). When the crossroads imagery is applied to the urban space of the apartment building in *The Book of Unknown Americans*, similar notions of "permutations of existence" emerge (Brand 5). In essence, the glocal is representative of cultural

hybridity in that it is a mixing of local practices with global cultures in one physical space or individual. However, as Anzaldúa explains, this coming together of cultures results in an “inner war” and being “sandwiched between two cultures” (Anzaldúa 209).

For the final portion of the essay, analyzing Cristina Henríquez and Dionne Brand’s inspirations for the books serves to contextualize the themes and conclusions delineated above. Interestingly, their lives demonstrate the experiences of the characters in each other’s novels: Henríquez is the daughter of a Panamanian immigrant and Brand was an immigrant from Trinidad and Tobago to Canada (Garvey 757). As such, the characters in *The Book of Unknown Americans* channel Brand’s life experience as an immigrant in a new cultural context, whereas the characters in *What We All Long For* mirror Henríquez’s experience as the child of an immigrant family. This is a unique twist of artistic presentation, as the authors’ works demonstrate a reflective representation of one another’s lives, if only thematically.

Henríquez has spoken at length about her inspiration for *The Book of Unknown Americans* and her reasons for writing the novel. She has this to say about one of the major themes in the book which, according to her, is finding ‘home’: “For me this book was about home...it’s always this shifting concept and I think the idea of what home is boils down to this sense of belonging and the way I always think about it is the place where your soul sighs” (Henríquez YouTube). Henríquez’s use of the word home is also a representation of personal identity. She explains how every character in the book has a unique perspective on their home, such as Mayor who feels his place is in the United States in contrast to his father Rafael who “has two homes” due to his immigrating to the United States from Panama as an adult (Henríquez YouTube). In short, Henríquez is

speaking to the concepts of cultural hybridity and transculturality. Arguably, one's "home" is synonymous with one's culture, and as we have seen above cultural hybridity posits unique challenges to the creation of a sense of belonging for a transcultural individual. These same themes can be equally successfully applied to *What We All Long For*.

This paper has explored the concepts of cultural hybridity and transculturality among the various characters in *The Book of Unknown Americans* and *What We All Long For*. It has been demonstrated that transculturality is a "messy" situation, in that it is not a clear mixture of two distinct cultures but instead an amalgamation of several cultural identities, practices, and heritages. This can be a painful experience for the hybrid individual, creating spaces of contention among belonging to a particular identity or culture.

This process then poses the question: does one culture have to be the dominant one? Should this always be the case? Bhabha, Anzaldúa, and Welsch seem to advocate a symmetry among cultural identities, yet this situation may be considered too utopian for reality. For Mayor, the American culture is dominant; for Tuyen, it is Anglo-Canadian culture. Yet as shown above, both are still transcultural individuals. Must the coming-together of cultures always be a painful experience for the human being whose psyche is serving as the battleground of identities? Can cultures not exist symbiotically in the same space?

In order to begin answering these questions, the study of transculturality and cultural hybridity must move beyond the pages of academia and into the cityscapes of

modern society. Urban centres are hotspots for cultural intermingling, which necessarily produces real examples of the characters presented above. Human migration, whether due to refugee crises or immigration movements or war, predicated dialogue between cultures. As this dialogue intensifies, its results emanate into cultural hybridity. The very practice of establishing oneself in a new cultural context creates the mixing of cultures; however, as Welsh and other scholars have cautioned, we should not think of culture as defined by the arbitrary borders of political geography. Indeed, as Canada continues its mission to welcome thousands of refugees within its borders from around the world, it would do well to understand the possible outcomes when cultures come into contact with one another. As the global political climate is in the midst of potential paradigm shifts, it is now more essential than ever to keep in mind the impact of culture on not only individual relationships and settlement integration, but also wellbeing and even mental health on a national scale. On the final page of *The Book of Unknown Americans* is this passage, which beautifully encapsulates the migrant desire, as well as demonstrating intertextuality with the title of *What We All Long For*: “Maybe it’s the instinct of every immigrant, born of necessity or of longing: Someplace else will be better than here. And the condition: if only I can get to that place” (Henriquez 286). Longing for belonging, a firm identity, and a better place are functional human prerogatives. Yet what is vital in today’s world is changing that longing into action.

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