

Otherness: Essays and Studies 8.3

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Edited by Matthias Stephan

Otherness: Essays and Studies

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reconstructing history and writing national identity in England's Heroicall Epistles", *The Seventeenth Century*, Vol XXXIII, No. 4, Oct 2018; "'Of polish'd pillars, or a roofof gold': Authority and Affluence in the English Country-House Poem" in *Contested Spaces of Nobility in Early Modern Europe*, (Ashgate, 2011); "Drayton's 'Silent Spring': Poly-Olbion and the Politics of Landscape" (*The Cambridge Quarterly*, June 2010). She has edited *Aspects of Modernity: American Women's Poetry* (Jadavpur University Press, Kolkata, 2014), co-edited *The Word and the World*, (Loreto College and Earthcare Books, Kolkata, 2009) and was the editor of *Critical Imprints Vol V* (2017). She received the Charles Wallace Trust Visiting Fellowship (2014-2015) at CRASSH (Centre for Research in Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities), University of Cambridge, UK with a Joint Visiting Fellowship at Wolfson College, Cambridge.

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Introduction: Multiplicity of Methodologies

by Matthias Stephan

As we wrap up another tumultuous year, one in which we again face an increasing and increasingly global crisis, we find that we are again buffeted by the breadth and quality of scholarship around the topic of Otherness. In our inaugural issue, in 2009, which stemmed from a series of seminars on the topic at both Mary Immaculate College and Aarhus University, Maria Beville noted the “wide range of approaches to otherness” that this seminar series offered. *Otherness: Essays and Studies*, in the 15 issues we have published since, has only expanded on this diversity.

Those seminar series drew largely from fields in literary and cultural studies, considering the real-life impact of our discussions of alterity, and how Otherness plays out in discursive modes and the impact of those discussions on the public debate. Our general issues, much like the first issue, which has a focus on literary output, have over the years spread the notion of Otherness, and the fields from which we draw excellent scholarship. While we continue to interact with literature and culture, this increasingly includes various forms of media and social science approaches, and the range of texts (of all forms) that our contributors interact with

has broadened, from an early focus on British and American literature, to an increasingly global draw of not only subject matter but scholars as well.

Additionally, we have also been privileged enough to have guest editors for special issues on a range of themes and approaches: Historical Fiction and Historiography (2.1, 2011), Transcultural Studies (3.1, 2012), Philosophy (4.1, 2013), Performing Arts (5.1, 2016), Critical Animal Studies (5.2, 2016), Fandom and Celebrity Studies (6.1, 2018), Urban Studies (7.1, 2019), Representation of the Other/ La Représentation de l'Autre (7.2, 2019), and Shakespeare Studies (8.2 (2021). Through these special issues, we have learned from and considered a wealth of scholarship – and helped to expand the ways in which Otherness can be understood. There is no shortage of the use of Otherness, both to depict and describe the structural processes on which our societies were founded, and by which they continue to operate, as well as to continue to challenge these notions moving forward. We could not have anticipated, in our inaugural issue, how integral the studies of alterity would become, and we are both encouraged, and somewhat saddened, by how crucial we feel these approaches are still in 2021.

In this third issue of 2021 (after an absence in 2020) brings together six scholars from across the globe, and using the most diverse set of methodologies that we have presented in *Otherness: Essays and Studies*. This is certainly true for a single issue, and, depending on exactly which method one studies the issue, likely true for the entirety of the journal's history. The issues draws from studies of poetry – classical Roman, British, Indian, Irish and Japanese – to studies of sociology, uses of ethnography in both documentary film and sexual assault studies, and linguistic studies of othering of non-native speakers.

The issue opens with **Sukanya Dasgupta**'s consideration of the critical potential of rereading of classical texts, specifically focusing on the lesser considered *Heroides* by Ovid. In presenting the ways in which both the 16th century British poet Michael Drayton and the 19th century Bengali poet

Madhusudan Dutt engage with the Ovidian source material, she is able to draw out the “immense generic possibilities of the *Heroides*, and how this in turn became a means to resist literary and political authority.” She does this by focusing on the epistolary elements of each newly produced text, and how it engages with the generic modes and critical potential of this interaction between the older ‘original’ and each of the newer texts cultural and historical present, refracting the classical “to suit their own age and time and assert themselves as quintessentially “renaissance” in spirit.”

Aoileann Ní Éigearthaigh follows this with a different take on the interaction between cultures through poetry. While Dasgupta presents contrasting readings of past texts, Ní Éigearthaigh considers the intersecting influences on the poetic work of Northern Irish poet Sinéad Morrissey in her Japanese sequence. Morrissey spent two years in Japan, producing poetry throughout and published upon her return to Belfast. The article considers the evolution of Morrissey’s poetry, and use of form, as her engagement with the language, poetry, and especially culture of Japan grows – with the more understanding creating the largest different in Morrissey’s output. Through a combination of close reading of Morrissey’ poetry and important theoretical input, Ní Éigearthaigh is able to present an openness to the other, through an engagement with the foreign culture and ability to absorb and engage – even with a culture that would remain, in some aspects, “impenetrable to the outsider.” The combination produces an insightful consideration of the limits of intercultural understanding, and the importance of openness with those considered Other.

Continuing with an engagement with Japan, but shifting methodological focus dramatically, **Naomi Berman** and **Flavio Rizzo** consider the cultural phenomenon of the *hikikomori*, “a term used to describe a form of extended social withdrawal.” This notion historically has a connection to Japan, though the work by Berman and Rizzo challenge the notion that this concept is culturally

determined or should be read as essentially a Japanese phenomenon. Additionally, they challenge the notion that such behavior, especially in the twenty-first century, should be considered, as is often the case, pathological – and should rather be considered as a social expression. Through a psychological and cultural analysis, they argue for a reframing of people for which this designation is appropriate, and encourage a consideration of how pathology and Otherness have been and continue to be used to police boundaries of social difference, rather than identification of either true mental illness or behavior dangerous to an individual. They, from their own different methodological backgrounds, argue for “us to re-examine boundariness in contemporary social life, particularly an ostensible artificial distinction between inside and outside, thus reframing the social location of hikikomori in the public imaginary.”

M. Emilia Barbosa takes us across the globe, from the isolate citizens of Japan, to the traditional tortilla makers of Indigenous Guatemala. This process, with its long and labor-intensive process, is not only a mode of food production, but transmission of culture, and one which Barbosa argues engages with “the complex interplay of power and representation within national identity.” Using notions from postcolonial and Indigenous studies, Barbosa considers the documentary film *Lix cua rahro* (to use the Maya term) and the performance of Sandra Monterosso – a film which engages with the traditional *tortillera*, but has important considerations of cultural appropriation, representation, and authenticity. Barbosa’s detailed analysis interrogates the essentializing stereotypes of Indigenous people, and especially domestic workers and women, as fitting into stereotypes and not allowing them the space or possibility of articulating their own identity, nor challenging these hegemonic norms. By drawing on postcolonial discourse, and considering the auto-ethnographic methods of Monterosso, Barbosa is able to see the intersections between self-expression, Occidentalism, anthropology and testimonial. She argues that “[a]uto-ethnography as

carnavalesque practice is a powerful way of destabilizing authority that often leads to rethinking identity” and through her article brings attention to Monterosso’s performance and its possibility to allow indigenous Guatemalan people to choose their own fate and express their agency.

Lynsay Hodges also draws on the autoethnographic, though uses that as a different methodological expression than that often used in postcolonial theory. Hodges uses what they deem “phenomenological autoethnography” in their reconsideration of the language used to describe and frame sexual assault. As they describe, their methodology allows them to both claim legitimacy and outline the basis for their continued engagement with autoethnographic description of past experiences, documented by journals and creative expression. Using that as a basis, Hodges places their experiences in conversation the concepts of the abject and the monstrous, using those Othering devices to understand their own embodied experiences and driving their methodological motivations in relaying the results to a larger audience. As they argue, “monsters exist through the Self’s construction of itself, in which its vulnerability and other perceived ‘negative’ characteristics are projected onto the Other.” Yet, in considerations of sexual assault, the ‘raped subject’ is often both subject and abject. Their presentation provides explanatory material for the process undergone by those experiencing trauma that abject their own selves, and the processes that one undergoes in so doing. As their title suggests, the language that one uses in describing embodied experiences is vitally important.

The final paper in this issue also focuses on the use of language. **Anna Bothe Jespersen** and **Miša Hejná** use sociolinguistic analysis to consider the role of immigrant second language speakers of Danish, and hypothesize that they are cast as “the linguistic *other* on the margins of the standard/non-standard dynamic.” By using surveys of native Danes and immigrants, they consider the role of language switching and its perception by both groups with regards to its frequency and

affective meaning. Their research highlights the awareness of both groups of language switching (from Danish to a global English), and the potential for this to be taken as a sign of otherness. As they note, “Not speaking “perfect Danish” – a frequently mentioned phrase in both groups – thus seems to index out-group membership: you do not speak like us, you are not like us.” While their work remains unable to ascertain a conscious strategy among native Danes, their analysis provides a basis for further research, and insights into the potential for othering in standard language practices among native speakers.

As one can see, there is a great breadth of methodological difference among the articles in this issue of *Otherness: Essays and Studies*, which, I argue, attests to the importance of using the lens of Otherness as insight into an array of cultural, linguistic and social phenomena. As the world becomes increasingly global, and our crises become shared among a greater percentage of the world’s population, Otherness is an essential means of ensuring that all are considered and that we don’t rush into ‘solutions’ that leave some, if not most, behind.

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Ovid Revisited

Locating the *Heroides* in Michael Drayton and Madhusudan Dutt

Sukanya Dasgupta

"The letter, the epistle...is not a genre, but all genres, literature itself"
(Derrida 1980, 48)

The history of the English reception of Ovid's *Heroides* has begun to be written rather recently. Whereas the impact of the *Metamorphoses* on English literature forms part of the mainstream of English literary history, the *Heroides* has perhaps only received the attention it deserves in connection with the history of the epistolary novel and feminist literary history (see Kaufmann 1992). Both areas often engage with issues which are at the heart of Ovid's text – such as the finding of a literary voice, the articulation of emotion, and the attempted heroization of the domestic and the private. In particular, the *Heroides* provides the stimulus for the extensive attention paid to the writing of the female voice and the articulation of female desire. What has not been fully explored however, is the epistolary dimension of Ovid's text; how later writers were deeply influenced by the immense generic possibilities of the *Heroides*, and how this in turn became a means to resist literary and political authority.

This paper will seek to compare and explore the ways in which one Ovidian text – the *Heroides*, was received, appropriated and manipulated by two writers: the 16th century English Renaissance poet Michael Drayton and the 19th

century writer of what was termed the ‘Bengal Renaissance’— Michael Madhusudan Dutt. Separated as they are by time, context and language, Drayton’s *Englands Heroicall Epistles* (1597) and Dutt’s *Bīrāṅganā Kābya* (1862) engage in highly productive and transformative relationships with Ovid’s *Heroides*. Not only do both texts show a remarkable sensitivity to the generic implications of the Latin work, but they also become sites for the exploration of the cultural competition fostered by the interaction of old texts with new. How do the two writers manipulate genre to comment on gender dialectics in their poems? Are both these works responses to rhetorical imperatives within their respective cultures as they adapt Ovid’s text? Do Dutt’s heroines, like Drayton’s, recover a degree of textual authority through an independent critical engagement, by turns resistant and identificatory, with their Ovidian sources? What parallels do we see in the two poets’ engagement with Ovid’s text and what are the points of departure? I will attempt to explore whether the reception of an Ovidian text by two poets – Drayton and Dutt – can be seen as a marker of the concept of a cultural paradigm of the Renaissance, occurring as it were, in two different periods of history and in different cultures. Each writer represents different degrees of engagement with a source text; each discloses something about the conditions of its production and the immediate concern of its author, and about the potential for meaning of Ovid’s text itself. Dutt, writing during the Bengal Renaissance, must have been acutely aware of the difference from the European Renaissance in historical circumstances and cultural location. Yet, both Drayton and Dutt, by their adaptations of Ovid’s text, carefully construct a narrative of loss and recovery and attempt to shape a textual culture, taking cognizance of Elizabethan politics and the constraints of the colonial situation in India respectively. The *Heroides* thus become a paradigm for resisting literary and political authority by two poets in two entirely different time periods and locations.

In Drayton's case, by the 1590s there had been a broad shift in English secular culture, away from models like Virgil's *Aeneid*, long approved by humanist scholars, towards a less stable but more vivid and pliable Ovidian corpus. Although Ovid's oeuvre had a place in humanist educational programmes, educators were cautious if not apprehensive, particularly about a text like the *Heroides*. Erasmus stressed that a letter should be amusing and novel like Ovid's love letters, but warned against using them in "classroom exercises for those of tender years" (Erasmus 1985, 24). For Elizabethan writers like Spenser, Chapman, Drayton and Nashe, Ovidianism was not a retrospective mode but an immediate allusive language through which poets competed with one another in the literary marketplace. One feature of the *Heroides* which might account for its popularity in the sixteenth century is the work's overt rhetoricity, the prominence of the role of language in the construction of character. The construction of the self in the text, the fashioning of a persona and the way that the role of the addressee just as much as the role of the writer is defined by language, are concerns common to all types of letter writing in the early modern period. In the case of the *Heroides*, the distinction between the voice of the author and the assumed persona of the poet is at its clearest. In Latin poetry this distinction already exists to some extent in subjective elegy and in the Horatian and Ovidian epistle, but much more prominently as performance in the *Heroides*. The work's 'duplicité' has interested readers since the Middle Ages. R.J. Hexter shows how the writer of an accessus to a twelfth century manuscript edition of the *Heroides* makes the distinction between the authorial intention and that of the letter-writer herself: "In qualibet epistula habetur duplex intentio actoris et mittentis" (Hexter 1986, 163). (In each of the epistles there is a double intention, of the author and of the sender). This doubleness that underwrites every utterance in the text – the basis for much of the linguistic ingenuity and wit in the *Heroides*, would have been specially attractive to Renaissance writers and the octavo format of Drayton's *England's*

Heroicall Epistles – rather than the quarto of Drayton’s earlier publications – conveys as much the author’s ambition as the publisher Nicholas Ling’s confidence that it would sell well (Marotti 1995, 288). Claudio Guillen draws attention to what he calls the Renaissance “awareness of the letter” (1986, 91) as a form that presents or declares itself as a piece of writing or correspondence. To write a letter was to define and create a ‘self’, to shape an image of oneself (91). The primary generic affinity of the letter was not to the verse epistle as Ovid writes it, but to the ‘familiar’ letter as cultivated by Cicero. By using historical and not mythological characters who write these “heroicall epistles” to each other, Drayton is able to create fictional selves who select and interpret historical events to offer their versions of the past (1931). This interaction and indeed fusion of historical and personal factors are not found in Ovid’s *Heroides*. Ovid’s epistolary interpolations into the mythological record from the perspective of wives and mistresses left behind by the patriarchal traditions of epic and tragedy serves Drayton as a means rather than as an end to his desire to reconstruct an Ovid he may imitate in a positive manner, offering his readers a patriotic and indeed politically subversive work.

During the Elizabethan period, the most pervasive model for feminine epistolary discourse was Ovid’s *Heroides*. George Turberville’s translations of this Ovidian text was published in 1567 as *The Heroicall Epistles of the Learned Poet Publius Ovidius Naso* and it went through five editions between 1567 and 1597, the year in which Drayton’s *England’s Heroicall Epistles* was first published. The *Heroides*, already a work of some 4000 lines, was doubled by Turberville’s translation and went through four editions by 1600, no doubt helping to make the legendary heroines and their stories much more familiar. That Michael Drayton fully intended to build his *England’s Heroicall Epistles* on a dual principle is suggested by their very title and confirmed quite explicitly by the poet in the section addressed to the Reader where he states that an endeavour to

imitate Ovid's *Heroides* has been coupled with that of disseminating historical information (Drayton 1931, 130). Drayton's intention of manipulating the genre itself is evident from his comments on the use of the term "Heroicall": he refers to "Ovid (whose Imitator I partly professe to be)" but goes on to explain that he has "interwoven matters historicall" so that his epistles do not seem unduly passionate (1931, 130). It was inevitable that this conscious departure from Ovid and an enlargement in subject matter would have repercussions on the form and the content of Drayton's text. As I will contend, Drayton clearly had a political purpose behind the inclusion of historical characters who give their distinctive versions of English history. Drayton deals with personalities drawn from different ages and introduces a format of paired epistles – the letters between two lovers constituting a unit. Consequently, while the psychology of the women writers is revealed in their respective letters, it is always countered by a male point of view that the paired epistles encapsulate. This in turn radically alters the orientation of the work. The title of Ovid's work indicates that his letter writers are all women taken from mythology. Drayton may have derived the term "heroicall" from Ovid and indeed directly from Turberville's title, but he puts it to a completely new use (Ovid, Turberville and Sabinus 1567).

In the *Heroides* where mythological women write letters to their lovers lamenting their lost loves, Ovid uses the epistle form to define and illuminate character. The narrative context is rendered irrelevant as each letter focuses on the condition of the heroine's mind – her anger, remorse or anguish. The interest chiefly lies in the subtle variation of tone and mood and the world of concrete events is replaced by a world of psychic projections. Different characters, according to their narrow, self-contained preoccupations, interpret myths and legends. For instance, Cassandra's prophecy of the coming war becomes for Paris' lover, Oenone, a forecast of a personal calamity rather than a national disaster:

That day spoke doom for wretched me
On that day did the awful storm of changed love begin. (Ovid 1914)

In Ovid's text, single epistles illustrate aspects of the human psyche and each heroine is seen in the light of the myth to which she belongs. Duncan F. Kennedy has noted that Ovidian scholarship has often downplayed the epistolary form, viewing the *Heroides* more as tragic soliloquies (Kennedy 2002, 219). One question that engages us in any discussion of epistolarity is the ultimate *destination* of letters. Often the addressee is spatially and temporally absent and though letters may have an intended destination, there is no guarantee they will ever reach or that the addressee will ever get to read it. There is however, another addressee at hand in the *Heroides*: i.e. the reader of Ovid's poem or the 'external reader' who imposes a further perspective beyond that of the heroines and heroes or their formal addressees. Similarly, there are two notional authors: the figure from legend as well as Ovid the writer. It is this complex figure of the addressee/reader and a kind of dual authorship in Ovid's text that would attract later writers of epistles like Drayton and Madhusudan Dutt who would wish to manipulate the literary tradition for distinct political or subversive purposes.

That Drayton invited a political and topical reading of his epistles is evident from the design of the entire work. He returned to the epistolary form of the Ovidian original and, developing the paired letter and reply form modelled in some of Ovid's epistles, he places the heroine's emotional complaints in dialogue with their addressees, the other writers of verse epistles, the dedicatees and the reader. Thus he recasts women as letter-writing agents in English political history and they also serve as commentators in a discussion upon the rights of subjects and the appropriate limits to sovereign power directed at print readers. Drayton has largely been viewed (rather uncharitably) as an old fashioned minor poet with modest talent and a follower of Spenser who was lacking in individual talent (see

Bush 1945, 76-80; Norbrook 1992, xxxii; Grundy 1969). It is only recently that Drayton's political or literary intentions have begun to be noticed (Helgersen 1992, 14-15; van Es 2007, 256-7; Hadfield 2004). By adapting Ovid's epistolary form and making a personalised identification with it, Drayton positions his poetry within literary traditions. His women letter writers continue to be women who are violated or abandoned by politically powerful, sovereign men, but by granting these women a kind of epistolary agency and autonomy, Drayton is also proclaiming the value of authorial labours as his own, that can circulate without sovereign or courtly patronage.

Drayton wrote this work in 1597 but it was revised in 1598 and 1599 with the incorporation of new sets of epistles. In the first edition, four sets of epistles refer to the reigns of the deposed kings Edward II, Richard II and Henry VII. The epistles between Walter de la Poole and Queen Margaret also portray the characters against the background of a complex struggle for power during the War of the Roses. In the last years of Elizabeth's reign the delicate question arose as to who her successor should be and when Peter Wentworth raised the succession question in his "A Pithie Exhortation to her Majestie for establishing her successor to the crowne" (1593) he was promptly sent to the Tower (Hurstfield 1961, 372). Francis Osborne points out how Parliament encouraged the Queen to marry but "they were so moderate as to pass by all mention of a Successour, every ungratefull to her ears during the whole Series of her raigne..." (1658, 58). The succession question was thus a delicate and risky topic but in his first 1597 edition of *Englands Heroicall Epistles* Drayton includes a set of epistles between Mary Tudor, Queen of France and Charles Brandon, whose descendants complicated the Elizabethan succession question. In the last set of epistles in this edition, Drayton sympathetically portrays Lady Jane Grey, granddaughter of Mary and Charles Brandon, who was proclaimed Queen after Edward VI's death but subsequently executed in 1554. Lady Jane Grey had close contacts with the Genevan and

Calvinist communities and her marriage to Guilford Dudley, son of the Duke of Northumberland signalled the opening moves in a campaign to set aside the established line of succession. Jane Grey's nephew Edward Seymour was the Suffolk claimant to the crown during Elizabeth's time and Drayton's sympathetic portrayal of Jane Grey as a Protestant martyr at this time was both clearly a political move.

If commenting directly on the succession question was legally prohibited, writing about deposed monarchs was equally hazardous. The deposition of Richard II was frequently seen as an analogy to the overthrow of the Queen. That Shakespeare's play dealing with the deposition and murder of Richard II was arranged to be performed by the Earl of Essex's supporters the night before his return to London from Ireland and the possible use of the deposition scene (never printed in Elizabeth's reign) in Essex's rebellion, have been noted by various critics. Against this background, Drayton introduces a set of epistles between Queen Isabel and Richard II, the latter making the dangerous admission in the 1597 edition that his deposition was just punishment for his sins:

Our Empire's bounds did never stretch so farre,
So wise in peace, so politique in warre,
Never did all so suddenly decline
But justice is the heavens, the fault is mine. (Drayton 1941, Vol V, 115)

These, as well as other politically volatile lines referring to the king as a "barraine trunk" were removed in Drayton's revised 1599 and 1600 editions. Having lost sovereign power, Richard lacks rhetorical agency and is stripped of his identity: the hand that guided a sceptre can now barely govern a pen.

Equally subversive were the dedications that Drayton used at the beginning of each set of epistles. It was generally perceived that Robert Devereux, the Earl of Essex was the successor of Philip Sidney. Drayton's 1597 edition had as the dedicatees, members of the Russell and Bedford families as well as Lord

Mounteagle and Henry Howard – all of whom were associated with Essex, whose favour with Elizabeth was beginning to wane, leading to his final revolt and execution. This seems to me to be a specific political intervention on Drayton's part. After Essex's campaign against the Earl of Tyrone in Ireland failed however, Drayton replaced these dedicatees with new ones in his revised 1598 edition. Although this move may suggest that Drayton was indeed careful not to offend the political powers that be, he also points out in a letter to the Reader appended to the epistles that his dedicatees are "over-matched" by the letter-writing English kings and queens in his work. In other words, Drayton seems to give the reading public and their judgement regarding his work precedence over courtly patronage and royal endorsement: he draws the terms of an emerging literary discourse from the Ovidian verse epistle, the dedicatory letter and chronicle history to articulate pluralist ideas of community and sovereignty.

Drayton's continuous use of paired epistles is not only one of his innovative departures from his Ovidian source but is also an interesting device by which he is able to contrast male and female states of mind. The women deliberately resist flattery realizing that it leads the way to distortion and semantic manipulation and emphasize on historical facts and concrete experience. For instance when Owen Tudor concludes that the union between him and Queen Katherine is sanctioned by destiny, Katherine immediately counters that by rejecting the imposition of chance and by asserting her freedom of choice: "So I (a Queene) besoveraigne in my choyse" (1941, II, 1.1145, 205). The men on the other hand seek to control the flux of events through language. Their greater involvement in the realm of public affairs acts as a contrastive factor. The male suitors use elaborate Petrarchan and Ovidian rhetoric in the description of their heroic deeds, their noble lineage or their military prowess and see the women primarily as objects of their desire. The women counter this by being sceptical of appearances and by rejecting flattery of any kind. This kind of gender

confrontation provides a parallel to the encounter of the sexes on a historical or political plane when the women are often victimized. Rosamond has to be kept in a labyrinth away from Henry II's jealous Queen since she has no status in his family or in society; Mistress Jane Shore is viewed by Edward IV as a material possession and hence compared to rubies, pearls and diamonds. The public, orthodox stance in the letters written by the men may be contrasted with the subversive, deconstructive and private stance adopted by the women writers. The women are also brought into the foreground by presenting a critique of the male point of view. In his epistle to Alice, Countess of Salisbury, Edward the Black Prince uses the blazon to describe Alice's beauty but also views her as his potential, personal possession:

Thy Cheeke, for which mine all this Penance proves,
Steales the pure whitenesse both from Swans and Doves:
Thy Breath, for which, mine still in Sighes consumes,
Hath rob'd all Flowers, all Odours, and Perfumes. (1941, II, 135-138, 179)

In her answer to his epistle, Alice ironically highlights the dilemma of women who are expected to conform to the desires of men and society:

To men is graunted privilege to tempt,
But in that Charter, Women be exempt:
Men win us not, except we give consent,
Against our selves unlesse that we be bent.
Who doth impute it as a Fault to you?
You prove not false, except we be untrue;
It is your Vertue, being Men, to trie,
And it is ours, by Vertue to denie.
Your Fault it selfe serves for the Faults excuse,
And makes it ours, though yours be the abuse. (1941, II, 33-40, 182-3)

The Ovidian feminine voice is also used by Drayton to challenge and question the masculinist understanding of English chronicle history. A case in point are

Drayton's epistles between Edward IV and Mistress Jane Shore. This story was already in circulation due to Thomas Churchyard's "Shore's Wife" published in the 1563 edition of the *Mirroure for Magistrates* (Campbell 1938). Jane Shore is a commoner, a mere goldsmith's wife, unmoored from her social class by being the king's lover, but who is ultimately used, commodified and abandoned. From this subaltern position she provides an impassioned but rational and articulate critique of sovereign power (see Steible 2003). Here, Drayton extracts the feminine complaint from chronicle history, drawing it into a discussion about English nationhood. But Drayton is doing something interesting here: his Jane Shore acknowledges the dangers of the Ovidian legacy (that Drayton is using by choosing the epistolary form) when she accuses Edward IV: "Romes wanton Ovid did those rules impart; /O, that your nature should be helped with Art." (1941, II, 102-103). By making Jane Shore wary about Ovidianism, the King is shown as a letter-writer who uses the Ovidian rhetorical arts for nefarious purposes. Like Ovid's epistles, Drayton's women letter-writers remind the reader that they are grounded in certain conditions, practices and equipment (there are many references to events unfolding as the letter is being written, or to instruments of pen, ink, paper etc.) but here the material context locates their discursive agency in a debate about English politics.

Fame, power, public recognition and ambition – all so important to the men –are consciously repudiated and disdained by the women writers of the epistles. In *England's Heroicall Epistles*, Drayton opens up a private, personal perspective, particularly a feminine perspective, but he goes beyond that in creating paired epistles. Drayton's heroines critique and comment on male conduct, particularly sexual conduct, whilst manipulating early modern culture's norms for women's textual production; his female letter-writers manage to negotiate the impediments to self-expression they initially encounter, going on to articulate morally and politically incisive forms of complaint. The opening letters

between Matilda and King John for example, generate a cogent critique of power relations. Using the hyperbolic language of flattery to distort reality, King John ignores Matilda's religious sensibility, interpreting her refuge in a convent as an indication of her devotion towards him. Matilda, in her reply, recognizes John's "flatt'ring Tongue" as distorting the truth:

So from the Rocks, th'alluring Mermaids sing:
In greatest Wantst'inflict the greatest Woe
Is ev'n the utmost Tyrannie can doe. (1941, II, 108-110)

Similarly, Rosamond's letter to Henry II, written from the labyrinth in which she is imprisoned, opens with a cogent, almost legalist critique of sovereign power. Implying that when a sovereign acts as a private man he should be subject to the law as everyone else is, Rosamond invokes her rights and questions Henry's abuse of monarchical power, asking why he should buy "unlawful pleasure" with "kingliemagestie" (Drayton 1941, II, 29-30). Henry's powerful masculine rhetoric in his reply to her does not, as Deborah Greenhut contends, reflect the "failure of feminine speech" (1988, 142). On the contrary, Henry pledges that if his name has offended Rosamond, "If written, blot it, if engraven, raze it" (Drayton 1941, II, 123, 128), offering her the kind of discursive power over his name and his destiny that he has wielded over her earlier.

The gender dialectics that this device of 'pairing' generates, become in turn a reflection of the historical dialectics that form the basis of these epistles. The women, through their interpretations of 'history' offer a perspective that is different and often a critique of the kind of 'history' presented by the men. It is precisely this merging of personal and historical elements that mark Drayton's most interesting departure from Ovid's *Heroides*. But Drayton does not move merely from the historical to the personal: rather, he gives history a human angle by viewing the historical *through* the personal, that is in terms of its impact on the lives and personalities of individual historical characters. At the same time the

paired epistles suggest that he views historical problems as reflecting more general human problems – for instance, gender encounters. Raphael Lyne contends that in Drayton’s *England’s Heroicall Epistles* poetic conventions “are recruited to a patriotic cause” but while he suggests that this is not an overt mode of political engagement (Lyne 2001, 147), I would argue that Drayton’s use of an apparently apolitical, aesthetic form itself becomes a strong political statement.

Madhusudan Dutt was of course, writing in an entirely different era and context, when he took up Ovid’s *Heroides* as a source text for his *Bīrāṅganā Kābya*. The philological affinity between Greek, Latin and Sanskrit gave the latter a seminal status not just as an Indo European language but also as a direct input for the study of the *litteraehumaniores* in India. In the late 18th century, Sir William Jones, for instance, considered the kinship between the Graeco-Roman and the Hindu worlds to be linguistic, but also cultural and intellectual. This late-eighteenth-century phase of British engagement with Indian culture had an enduring status in the imagination of the indigenous Hindu elite in Bengal. Subsequently in the 19th century, Indians saw themselves as heirs to the legacy of European letters and culture. Just as European Renaissance humanists like Pico della Mirandola and Pietro Bembo had fostered the development of the vernacular languages, in 19th century Bengal one felt entitled to apply similar methods to shape one’s own language and culture. The flowering of culture and the arts in the long nineteenth century is often referred to as the ‘Bengal Renaissance’. Misleading though the term may be, it will be used here for the sake of convenience and there is no doubt that it introduced certain social and cultural changes and that it inaugurated and opened the way to a fresh encounter between two modern vernaculars (i.e. English and Bengali) and culture systems. Because the 16th century European Renaissance was assimilating the past, it could define its own cultural context; 19th century Bengal was interacting with an expanding contemporary culture, and being colonized by that culture, could not interact with

the same independence of operation, being controlled by various press acts and a British controlled education system.

Madhusudan Dutt was born in 1824 in a remote village in Jessore district (now in Bangladesh). In 1843 he converted to Christianity, but took the name Michael only in 1847. His education at Hindu College and Bishop's College, Calcutta would lay the intellectual and cultural foundations for his later literary career. Although at Hindu College Madhusudan encountered a significant quantity of Western classical literature in translation, it was not until he enrolled at Bishop's College in 1844 that he began to master Latin and Greek. In his later Bengali works, Orientalist Indo-European scholarship would serve as a key cultural filter through which the poet read Graeco-Roman and indeed Sanskrit literature. His works include a Bengali play dramatizing a Hindu version of the Judgement of Paris, a retelling of the Sanskrit epic the *Ramayana* using a number of Vergilian and Homeric tropes, a Hindu response to Ovid's *Heroides* and a Bengali prose version of the first half of Homer's *Iliad*. Though steeped in contemporary British literary culture, his Bengali works bypassed the literary trends of his British contemporaries and by subverting contemporary British constructions of what constituted "classical", he also highlighted counter-currents within the Western classical discourse.

I will attempt to examine in the following section, Madhusudan's response to the Graeco-Roman classics in his 1862 text, the *Bīrāṅganā Kābya* (based on the *Heroides*) and try to highlight the subversiveness that underpins it. It is in this text's complex engagement with Ovid's *Heroides* that its originality lies. While it is clearly evident that Ovid's influence lies beneath the generic surface of this text, the work shows a kind of proto-nationalist antipathy towards the West; at the same time, I suggest that he uses this text as a tool to resist and undermine the hegemony of elite Hindu culture as well. In *Englands Heroicall Epistles*, Drayton was using English historical characters through whom he could assert a sense of

patriotic pride while adopting a kind of anti-establishment stand, often against monarchical power; Madhusudan draws extensively on the Sanskrit and medieval Bengali epic traditions by choosing heroines from Hindu mythology who write epistles to their husbands or lovers but the *Bīrāṅganā Kābya* is also perhaps his most antinomian reception of a Graeco-Roman text. It may be noted at this juncture that Madhusudan prefaces the *Bīrāṅganā Kābya* with a citation from the *Sahityadarpana*, a Sanskrit treatise composed by the Bengali aesthetician Visvanatha. The citation goes thus: “It is agreed (by the learned) that women may reveal their feelings – by the sending of letters” (Kane 1923). Although the Hindu literary tradition has no genre of epistolary poetry as it were, Madhusudan cites this passage from a Sanskrit aesthetics treatise to suggest that the potential for such a genre is embedded in the indigenous tradition itself. Madhusudan’s import of a Roman genre, the Ovidian epistolary elegy becomes an extension of an idea already present in nascent form, in the Hindu tradition.

Madhusudan’s interest in the *Heroides* itself was an unexpected mid-nineteenth century response to the Graeco-Roman canon. Ovid’s oeuvre in general, and his *Heroides* in particular, were largely out of vogue and indeed out of favour in mid-nineteenth century Britain for his perceived moral decadence and aesthetic artificiality.¹ The title, Madhusudan’s own Sanskritic coinage, literally means ‘warlike women’ or ‘heroes’ women’ and takes Ovid’s *Heroides* as a generic literary model though Madhusudan could only finish 11 of the intended 21 epistles. Like Ovid, the poems treat the elegiac themes of love and the plight of women separated from their beloved, but on a more fundamental level the text uses Ovid’s *Heroides* to say something about the nature of illicit readership, to challenge the idea of what makes a classic and to resist literary authority – both European and Hindu. Given Ovid’s reputation in the 19th century, Madhusudan’s

¹In 1842, Emma Garland, a female poet from Liverpool composed her English translation of the *Heroides*, but there is no evidence that Madhusudan had read her translation. He was, however, in all probability, familiar with Pope’s *Eloisa to Abelard*.

reading would go against the grain of contemporary Western classical taste or even against the spirit of contemporary Western notions of what was defined as ‘classical.’ As an Indian living in colonial India, the very fact that Madhusudan could read extensively in Latin was itself somewhat illicit. By adapting the *Heroides* for the benefit of Bengali readers, Madhusudan was intensely conscious of his status outside the definition of the typical classical reader of Greek and Latin. The *Heroides* was a classical text that arguably belonged more readily to subaltern readers like Madhusudan than to traditional white, male readers of the Graeco-Roman classics.

There is no doubt that the basic generic architecture of the *Bīrāṅganā Kābya* is markedly Ovidian and many of the formal features recall the Ovidian model. Madhusudan intended to write 21 epistles (the same number as in the *Heroides*) and although only 11 were published he did leave notes for a further 6 epistles. The individual poems are of comparable length to Ovid’s letters and they follow Ovid’s apparent law of composition for *Heroides* 1-15 that “each individual epistle be autonomous” (Barchiesi 2001, 29) and do not invite a response. There is also an Ovidian distribution between well-known and obscure writers and one of the Hindu heroines Sakuntala certainly reminds one of Ovid’s Medea in her dual role as both epic and dramatic heroine. Sakuntala’s epistle to Dusmanta perhaps resonates most obviously with Penelope’s letter to Ulysses in the *Heroides*. Both heroines are eminent figures in their respective mythologies and their stories are similar: both suffer the absence of a husband with whom she will be ultimately reunited. The distribution of the Hindu source texts in the *Bīrāṅganā Kābya* also reveals an Ovidian presence: some of the heroines inhabit the same source text and this leads to ironic contrasts of perspective. For instance, Bhanumati’s epistle to Duryodhana (Epistle 7; Riddiford 2013, 238-9) comes straight after Draupadi’s letter to Arjuna. The two addressees here are arch enemies in the Hindu epic *Mahabharata*. This ironic juxtaposition resonates with

Ovid's positioning of Briseis' epistle to Achilles (*Heroides* 3) and Oenone's epistle to Paris (*Heroides* 5). If Paris' seduction of Helen sparked the Trojan War, it was Duryodhana's shameful treatment of Arjuna's wife Draupadi that led to the great war in the *Mahabharata*.

But Ovid is not only present in the *Bīrāṅganā Kābya* in an architectural, formal sense. Sometimes a number of Ovidian situations and myriad resonances of Ovid are refracted in a single Bengali epistle. The *Bīrāṅganā Kābya*'s fifth epistle by Surpanakha recalls that of Helen's (*Heroides* 17), Ariadne's (*Heroides* 10) and her sister Phaedra's (*Heroides* 5). Like Ariadne's love for Theseus, Surpanakha's love of Lakshmana crosses the lines of enmity, both women being attracted to their kinsmen's sworn enemy. As a confession of love destined to fall on deaf ears, Surpanakha's epistle also recalls Phaedra's while her situation is reminiscent of Helen's, the difference being that while Paris' abduction of Helen leads to the Trojan War, it is Lakshmana's cruel rejection of Surpanakha that leads to the war of Lanka. At times of heightened elegiac tension Ovid emerges almost verbatim: Oenone's epistle to Paris (*Heroides* 5) is recalled in Kekayi's ferocious and emphatic denunciation of Dasaratha's faithlessness, accusing him of being the greatest exponent of heretical wickedness (*Bīrāṅganā Kābya* Epistle 4; Riddiford 2013, 238).

At the same time, one must take cognisance of Madhusudan's own description regarding literary appropriation: "In matters literary, old boy, I am too proud to stand before the world, in borrowed clothes. I may borrow a neck-tie, or even a waist coat, but not the whole suit" (Murshida 2004, 107). Madhusudan's interest in the *Heroides* as a literary model had much to do with the subversive possibilities entailed by the Latin work's generic identity. What then, could possibly be the literary and cultural purposes for which Madhusudan may have turned to Ovid in the first place? The Bengali epistles, which are imagined to have taken place before the narrative of the *Mahabharata* was composed, seem, like

Ovid's *Heroides* to have the paradoxical advantage of "temporal priority" over their source texts, making the source texts look like "later...appropriations or recuperations of the legendary authors' works" (Kennedy 2002, 206). The epistle thus becomes a vehicle for elegy to challenge the authority of epic. The special capacity of epistolary elegy to challenge the authority of epic was perhaps one of Madhusudan's chief reasons for being attracted to the *Heroides* as a model for the *Bīrāṅganā Kābya*. Madhusudan was keen to challenge Hindu religious doctrine in his revisions of the Hindu epic tradition where the hero Rama is seen as an avatar of the supreme deity Vishnu. The *Bīrāṅganā Kābya* is filled with elegiac denunciations of members of Rama's family: Kekayi and Surpanakha (in Epistles 4 and 5) take it in turns to cast doubt on the probity and heroism of Rama's father and brother, respectively. While Kekayi attacks Dasaratha, Rama's father for his preferential treatment of Rama over Bharata, Surpanakha's humiliation and anguish in the hands of Lakshmana (Rama's brother) is emphasized. Similarly, in the extraordinarily vitriolic Epistle 11 where Queen Jana writes to her husband King Niladhvaja to avenge the death of their son Prabira who has been killed by the hero Arjuna, Jana notes that her husband has made peace with Arjuna, their son's killer because Arjuna is apparently divine. Arguing that Arjuna is not a god at all and that her husband is mistaken to treat him as one, Jana addresses a key theological issue of the *Mahabharata*, challenging the Hindu doctrine of *Naranarayana* which holds that the hero Arjuna is in fact the deity Nara (conjoined with the god Krishna as Narayana).

It is also interesting to note the disparity of knowledge and power between the male epic narrator and the female elegiac voice. Bhanumati, for instance, says of Sanjay's epic narration in Epistle 7: "I cannot understand what I hear – I am a simple woman!" (Riddiford 2013, 159). Here Bhanumati describes herself as ignorant and naïve in the face of the authoritative account given by the *Mahabharata*. Yet, despite this public declaration of female weakness, one sees

an appropriation of the epic narrative and an attempt by the women to affect the events related to them. Like Briseis in *Heroides* 3, who appeals to Achilles to reinvent himself as an epic hero who is also an elegiac lover, Bhanumati thrusts her elegiac, feminine and subjective point of view on to their male addressees. Indeed, women like Bhanumati go one step further than Ovid's heroines by mediating their husbands' 'reading' of their own epic story: Duryodhana hears his wife's elegiac interpretation of Sanjay's epic narrative even before being able to consider it for himself.

From a very early stage, the discourse of colonial politics in British India was gendered: the colonized society was 'feminized' as opposed to colonial 'masculinity' and this was seen as a justification for India's loss of independence (Bandyopadhyay 2004, 381). In his lecture entitled "The Anglo Saxon and the Hindu", delivered in Madras (1854), Madhusudan uses a Vergilian allusion from the *Aeneid* at the beginning: "quisnovus hic nostrissuccessitsedibushospes!" (Madhusudan translates this as "Who is this stranger who has come to our dwelling?"; Dutt 1942). Here Madhusudan is following the familiar trope of gendering the European power as masculine and the colonized Indian as feminine, whereby Aeneas stands for the Anglo-Saxon and Dido for Hindustan, but the citation chosen by Madhusudan of course prepares us for one of the most tragic episodes in the *Aeneid* and reminds us of intrusion and violation that one associates with the Aeneas-Dido relationship. By foregrounding the women in the *Bīrāṅganā Kābya*, Madhusudan gives this 'feminine', colonized society a voice in the face of the 'masculine' colonial power whose authority it lives under. He is the 'colonial-feminine reader', so to speak, articulating his (feminine) colonial society's attitude towards the (masculine) Anglo-Saxon rulers.

What conclusions can one infer then, about how and why Ovid was reworked in two different cultures? Can one generalize about these two specific instances being a cultural marker of the concept of a paradigm of the

Renaissance? The operation of language and textuality as a guiding factor behind a civilization is perhaps the most basic criterion of what one would call a 'renaissance'. The late Middle Ages in Europe and indeed in England, like the 'medieval' or Islamic period in Indian history, produced vast quantities of texts. But literacy and textuality were then viewed as the defining condition of particular pursuits, for instance the clergy, but also groups of rulers, administrators and merchants. To view these factors as basic to the entire functioning of society implies a paradigm shift, whether in sixteenth century England or in nineteenth century Bengal. European Renaissance humanism had fostered the development of the vernaculars by an organic development from classical humanist philology. As time elapsed, the potential for the vernaculars for all literary and intellectual purposes was more stridently asserted. In the nineteenth century, both in Britain and on the continent, oriental studies developed from a general interest in the languages, originating with classical Greek and Latin in the Renaissance. The philological affinity between Greek, Latin and Sanskrit was instrumental in the latter's importance. Its mythology and ancient history provided a ready parallel with Graeco-Roman culture. This affinity, rooted in language, created a deep bond between cultures otherwise alien and considered hierarchically unequal and it led to Orientalist scholars like Sir William Jones composing nine odes, Homeric in conception and Pindaric in form to nine Hindu deities. The Oriental Renaissance thus underwent a turn of intent on being transmitted to Indian soil. Greek, Latin and Sanskrit all harked back to the same source and thus conqueror and conquered could independently trace a comparable line of growth.

Hence the classical Renaissance of Europe did not simply clone itself in Bengal by a direct resort to classicist premises. Instead, the 'old' European humanism nurtured on Graeco-Roman antiquity and now extended to the Sanskritist Oriental Renaissance came to support a 'new' humanism founded on the encounter of English and Bengali: this absorbed the scientific, religious and

social thought of the times, melding two current orders of learning and ethics. Once lodged in India, especially in Bengal, the Oriental Renaissance turned its creative paradigm to new purposes. This textualization of culture seems to constitute the defining principle of a “renaissance”. It opened the way to a fresh encounter between modern vernaculars and culture systems, fostering a new organic growth from Bengal’s cultural condition. In Madhusudan Dutt’s later Bengali works, Orientalist Indo-European scholarship would thus serve as a key cultural filter through which the poet read Graeco-Roman and indeed Sanskrit literature. For him, traditional Hindu culture becomes the dark force from which salvation comes through modern learning routed through the English language, purveyed through a vernacular when that vernacular has been developed on lines derived from European materials and practice. Contemporary anglocentric culture entered the current Bengali vernacular and placed it within an English oriented education system. Most importantly perhaps, this new learning reflected a desire for socio-political change. The vindication of the vernacular makes textuality a general factor in social exchange.

In the light of this, many similarities may be seen between Drayton’s and Dutt’s endeavours. Drayton uses the *Heroides* subversively to forge a sense of community, to question ideas about sovereignty and to challenge existing power relations, not just between men and women but also between monarch and subjects. By specifically using *English* historical characters rather than classical mythological ones, Drayton endorses the importance of the vernacular and asserts the importance of English history, contributing to the later notion of English nationhood. For Drayton the old classical language was Latin, the new vernacular was English. For Madhusudan Dutt, the old Sanskrit is replaced in his work by the vernacular Bengali but his adaptation of a western classical form itself is facilitated by his English-style education in a colonised land. In this sense, the two writers respond to rhetorical imperatives within their respective cultures as they

adapt Ovid's text. Dutt's heroines, like Drayton's, also recover a degree of textual authority through an independent critical engagement with Ovidian sources. In the *Bīrāṅganā Kābya*, Madhusudan gives many of the heroines of Hindu mythology a voice that had been denied to them in traditional accounts, just as Drayton's historical women letter-writers, abandoned by their lovers are given a voice denied to them in English chronicle history. In Madhusudan Dutt's work, Kekayi, Rukmini, Bhanumati, Jana, Surpanakha and others are merely marginal characters in their source texts and the elegiac epistles provide them with the opportunity of articulating views that were not accommodated in the older Hindu tradition. Drayton's epistles, as we have seen earlier are not merely 'historical' – indeed we cannot really rely on these subjective notions of history that each character provides, which is why Drayton attached 'Notes' to each epistle to provide a corrective idea of history. The motivating factor behind Drayton's work was political. Madhusudan's interest in the *Heroides* and his reception of this text may be also seen to reflect many processes of social reform in 19th century Bengal as well as a comment on contemporary politics. The status of women became the focus of the reformist agenda among modern, educated Bengalis, who urged reforms of customs that they considered distortions. The consequent promotion of women's education, the Widow Remarriage Act and the outlawing of "suttee" were legitimated among the Hindu community on the authority of revisionist readings of the ancient Sanskrit treatises. At the same time, by giving Hindu mythological women a platform to assert their views, Madhusudan is not only engaging in gender politics but may be subversively commenting on the contemporary colonial situation.

Can one then conclude that, despite the differences in detail, both case studies reflect a kind of encounter of languages and cultures that could make us extend the term "renaissance" to these processes? In both cases an ancient language and cultural site are assessed against a new one as contrastive, but they

participate in each other's being even when they are seen to be in apparent conflict. A comparable process may be seen in all other movements that are designated "renaissance": we have what is called the "12th century Renaissance" in Europe when there is a modification of West European Latin civilization by the indirect re-entry of Greek elements as mediated and extended by Arabic and Islamic culture; more recently we have the "Harlem Renaissance" with the decisive entry of the American Black community into a new universe of metropolitan literary expression even while using it unprecedentedly to articulate their new distinctive culture. By their respective critical engagements with their Ovidian sources, I would submit that these two texts, in their own ways, refract Ovid's *Heroides* to suit their own age and time and assert themselves as quintessentially "renaissance" in spirit.

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Between Here and There

Liminality and the Tolerance of Oppositions in Sinéad Morrissey's Japanese Sequence

Aoileann Ní Éigearthaigh

Northern Irish poet Sinéad Morrissey spent two years living and teaching English in Japan, during which time she wrote the Japanese sequence of poems included in *Between Here and There* (2002). The collection also contains poems written after her return to Belfast. She prefaces the text with an unnamed poem in which she assesses the impact her years in Japan have had on her poetic imagination, suggesting that the dislocation caused by her immersion in such an alien culture, with its alarming juxtaposition of nature and industry, caused her voice to: “slip [...] overboard [...] the day I fished on the Sea of Japan/ within sight of a nuclear reactor” (Morrissey 2002, 9). The second stanza of the poem reflects on the complexities of learning to see through the lens of another culture:

At first I didn't notice,
My flexible throat full of a foreign language
And my attention on the poison of the puffer fish (9).

It is worth pondering the contradictory reactions captured in these lines, as they are indicative of Morrissey's nuanced engagement with Japanese culture. They suggest a willingness to embrace a different voice, “my flexible throat”, but immediately introduce a barrier, predicated on the linguistic difficulties encountered by a language that is so evidently “foreign”. Her focus on the “poison

of the puffer fish” suggests both a fear of unknown elements of Japanese culture and a fascination with what, to western eyes, is surely a risky culinary experience. Perhaps most significant is her admission that her initial distraction by these conventionally touristic elements of Japanese culture prevented her from paying closer attention to the subtle ways in which her immersion is beginning to change her perspective, her admission that “at first I didn’t notice” suggesting perhaps that she later succeeded in engaging with Japanese culture on a deeper level.

This essay argues that tolerance of and empathy for the other are central to Morrissey’s reflections on her years in Japan. It assesses her determination to resist the impulse to interpret her experience through the lens of her western gaze, choosing instead to welcome the sense of otherness created by the profound cultural disorientation and embracing the expansion of her poetic voice that results from her “experience of total strangeness” (Suhr-Sytsma 2010, 266). Irene De Angelis suggests that Morrissey’s engagement with Japan is best expressed through the Japanese concept of *ma*, which she explains is: “Linked to Zen Buddhism, it expresses a moment in space or time in which the human mind is enlightened. It is a pause between two stages of life, which is constant change. *Ma* is inbetweenness, being neither ‘Here’ nor ‘There’. It is an evocation of things which cannot be expressed” (De Angelis 2012, 151). This essay argues that Morrissey attempts to locate herself in this liminal space of inbetweenness and exchange, in which sensation is more eloquent than speech and the other is embraced for its enriching “total strangeness”. The essay will also assess whether Morrissey succeeds in using the additional insights gained during her years living in Japan to challenge hegemonic perspectives on social and political roles when she returns to Northern Ireland after her travels.

In his book *Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Imagination, Education and Democracy* (2004), James Conroy argues that Capitalism has eroded the interrelationships that are crucial to the successful functioning of a democratic

society, replacing them with the narrowest conception of individualism based on self-centeredness and a withdrawal from community. This conflation of individualism with isolation has resulted in a significantly diminished social discourse predicated on the silencing of alternative perspectives and consequent limiting of what is permissible for a society to discuss: “The tendency to occlude the voice of the other is particularly apparent with respect to the increasingly hegemonic claims of a globalized economy” (Conroy 2004, 24). Conroy advocates for liminality as a means of challenging the “discursive closure that hovers over liberal democracy” (Conroy 2004, 57). Based on the work of Arnold Van Gennep and Victor Turner, liminality is defined as an ambiguous, unstructured space, where traditional certainties are suspended and new models of human interaction can thus be developed: “An interstitial condition, it is to be found between categories, on the margins, neither at the centre nor on the outside” (Conroy 2004, 7). The key attribute of liminality is that the consensus it facilitates is based on the accommodation of differences between individuals, not on their erasure: “Communitas does not merge identities; it liberates them from conformity to general norms” (Turner 1974, 274). In a society predicated on the fear of the outsider and consequent “reduction of the self to sameness and from there to consumer”, liminality acknowledges otherness both within and outside the self: “Communitas is built not on extinguishing otherness but precisely in recognising strangeness as an inherent condition of all. What the transitional figures in the liminal period or space have in common is their explicit estrangement from the normatively structured environment of everyday life” (Conroy 2004, 57). In the light of hegemonic mechanisms operating in contemporary society to close down what is permitted to say, the embrace of linguistic openness is a key means of resistance.

Travelling to different cultures has long been acknowledged as a means for the individual to expand their horizons. Michel Foucault's insistence that space rather than time is central to the construction of identity in the contemporary world (Foucault 1986, 22) suggests an ideal global citizen for whom access to different cultures through travel and the interconnectivity facilitated by social media have resulted in liberation from restrictive traditional models of identity, allowing for the development of: "new, dynamic ways of thinking about identity which go beyond older static models, such as national identity and the notion of 'rootedness'" (McLeod 2000, 216). A global identity thus becomes synonymous with the embrace of fluidity and the easy transcendence of traditional boundaries and borders. Wolfgang Welsch argues that transculturality, which he defines as the inherent hybridization of all cultures because of increased mobility and communication technologies, is the most significant model of social interaction today. An interesting consequence of transculturality, he suggests, is that no culture today is "absolutely foreign any longer" (Welsch 1999, 199).

Although Welsch's intention with this phrase is to suggest a vibrant interconnectedness, it could also be interpreted in view of Conroy's warning about the erasure of cultural differences due to hegemonic mechanisms operating to impose homogeneity. Moreover, Welsch cautions against conflating an ability to travel to and admire another culture with the open-mindedness and perseverance needed to fully embrace and adapt new cultural practices, explaining that "multiculturalism", whereby a number of different – but not necessarily interacting – cultural groups coexist, continues to be a more accurate reflection of many societies. Multiculturalism, in other words, does little to challenge conceptions of culture as a monolithic, homogenous construct and can indicate the presence in society of cohabiting but crucially *distinct* cultural groups, thus perpetuating rather than transcending the divisions that exist between them (Berg

and Ní Éigeartaigh 2010, 10). This is perhaps particularly apparent when the interaction is between a perceived dominant culture and a more marginal one, resulting in the unequal transfer of influence noted by Edward Said in his analysis of the hegemony of the western gaze: “Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient [...] a discourse [...] by which European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively” (Said 1978, 11). This deliberate exoticization of other cultures as a means of solidifying one’s own place at the centre is exactly why a liminal stance is so essential, ensuring that traditional hierarchies are destabilized and all individuals, cultures and values are invited to participate in: “undifferentiated, egalitarian [...] relationships” which tend to “ignore, reverse, cut across or occur outside of structural relationships” (Turner 1974, 274).

Irish and Japanese literary engagement can be traced to the writer and translator Patrick Lafcadio Hearn (born 1850), who was raised in Ireland and settled in Japan in 1890, eventually becoming a Japanese citizen. Hearn was particularly interested in Irish folklore, and his translations inspired significant Japanese interest in Ireland and its traditions. The late 19th century also witnessed huge interest across Europe and America in Japanese art, particularly prints by Hiroshige and Hokusai, which was then filtered back into Irish culture through the work of poets like W.B. Yeats (Suhr-Sytsma 2010, 247-250). The success of Hearn’s introduction of Irish and Japanese culture is evident in *Our Shared Japan* (2007), an anthology of eighty-five twentieth-century Irish poets who cite Japan as a significant influence on their work, which was published to mark the fiftieth anniversary of diplomatic relations between Ireland and Japan (Suhr-Sytsma 2010, 245). This tradition of Irish poets interacting with Japan was based in part on the perceived parallels between two island nations, somewhat isolated from centres of cultural dominance.

In 2002, Mitsuko Ohno interviewed a number of prominent Irish poets with the aim of exploring: “the possible creative interaction among poets in Ireland and Japan” (Ohno 2002, 15). Their responses reveal a number of prominent themes, which relate to Welsch’s concerns over the conflation of multicultural and transcultural exchanges. What most of the respondents to Ohno’s questions have in common is a profound admiration for Japanese culture but a deep-rooted sense of its otherness, which they employ a number of tactics to address. Many of the poets depend on a series of intermediaries to negotiate their engagement with Japanese texts. Séamus Heaney notes that he came to Japanese culture indirectly through the Imagist movement, and suggests that it is the underlying sense of structure that most attracts him: “A general anti-slovenliness. A sense of inner rule. A reticence and a precision” (Ohno 2002, 20-21). Several of the poets cite Japanese print culture as the lens through which features of the Japanese aesthetic are most easily accessible to them. Ciarán Carson, for example, pondering on a Hokusai print, notes its: “clarity, its movement, its sense of humour” (Ohno 2002, 19). Another approach is to seek common ground with the Japanese literary tradition, with many of the writers focusing on perceived similarities between poetic forms like the haiku and early Irish syllabic verse: “I tried to write a poetry that had the clarity of Early Irish syllabic verse: a style which had some kinship with the haiku” (Carson in Ohno 2002, 19), an approach that resonates uncomfortably with Conroy’s indictment of the drive for sameness in contemporary capitalist culture. Eavan Boland expresses her interaction with Japanese culture in terms of opposition: “so different and yet so recognizable – as if it was an alter ego of our western pastoral” (Ohno 2002, 18), a phrase that is reminiscent of Said’s critique of western culture for seeking in the Orient a foil to its own practice. Although it is unfair to accuse the writers of consciously expressing western dominance in their reactions to Japanese culture, it is

undeniable that they look to Japanese poetry as a foil, something that is different, apart from themselves, that they can use to transcend the limitations of the western gaze. Suhr-Sytsma suggests that many of the poets based their literary engagement with Japan on the prepackaged forms and traditions produced with western eyes in mind: “throughout the twentieth century established Irish poets have persisted in associating Japan with a particular aesthetic derived from woodblock prints and translations of haiku” (Suhr-Sytsma 2010, 246). What distinguishes Sinéad Morrissey from this tradition was that she lived in Japan for two years, thus transcending this limited insight into Japanese culture and taking the time to develop her own perception on her surroundings.

At first glance, the title of Morrissey’s second volume of poetry *Between Here and There* (2001), which contains poems written during and after an extended period of travel, appears to maintain a sense of binary opposition between those written at home (“Here”) and abroad (“There”). The collection is arranged achronologically, with the poems written in Belfast on Morrissey’s return from her travels in the first section, and the Japanese poems in the second, an arrangement which could suggest that Morrissey is adopting the common trope of the traveller returning home from her sojourn, enriched by the experiences encountered overseas. However, Morrissey’s title is not meant to suggest a linear progression between two spaces. Rather she invites the reader to join her in an indeterminate liminal space “between” two known entities, crucially changing the focus of her poetic engagement with Japan. Asked in an interview what exactly lies “Between Here and There”, Morrissey responded: “Nothing. It’s being inbetween that counts. It’s tolerance of transitions” (De Angelis 2005, 47). This essay traces her success in maintaining this “tolerance” in her poetic engagement with Japanese culture, arguing that throughout her poems she maintains an openness to the often indecipherable cultural texts and practices she encounters. She does so by allowing herself to occupy a liminal space, both deeply absorbed

in but crucially disconnected from Japanese culture. She adopts what Suhr-Sytsma characterizes as “the ethical stance of unknowingness” (Suhr-Sytsma 2010, 267), opening herself up to encounters with the other, receptive to new insights and willing not to be able to fully rationalize or understand what she experiences.

Like many Irish writers, Morrissey’s first encounter with Japan was a literary one. In an interview she explains that when she first arrived in Japan and was grappling with the almost overwhelming cultural dislocation, she turned to the Japanese-inspired poetry of Michael Longley for guidance, before realizing that his texts would block rather than open up her access to Japan: “Longley’s voice was a false beginning for me, because it wasn’t my voice and [...] because my experience was so different to that Haiku aesthetic” (Suhr-Sytsma 2010, 266). The essence of a haiku for many of its Irish admirers is to distil experience down to what Cathal Ó Searcaigh defines as “small luminous moments of insight” (Ohno 2002, 27), a process which suggests a detachment of individual moments from their context. Morrissey’s reaction to Japan took the opposite form, her verse: “became freer [...] There’s more energy in the Japanese poems” (Meade 2002-3). Unlike Ó Searcaigh, she does not attempt to isolate moments of insight, rather she revels in the continuum of everyday activities and sensations she encounters. Her long, expansive lines suggest an eagerness to dive in and experience as much as she can, without mediating it or restricting her insights to single moments. Her success comes in part from what she calls her “sustained existence” in Japan (Meade 2002-3), an experience made possible by her participation in the Japanese Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme, an initiative founded by the Japanese government in 1987 to improve the standard of English language teaching in Japan. Living in Japan allowed Morrissey to learn Japanese (De Angelis 2012, 150), meaning that her engagement with the local people and their cultural practices were not filtered through the gaze of others.

For many Irish writers, the Chinese characters (*kanji*) in which Japanese is written create an additional barrier to their reading of texts. Heaney expresses admiration for the intricate composition of the characters, but the script constitutes an aesthetic rather than an emotive experience for him: “Visiting Japan helped me to appreciate the ‘material culture’ aspect of Japanese poetry, its link with calligraphy, its tendency to mark paper uniquely as well as to mark time” (Ohno 2002, 20). Unlike most of the Irish poets interviewed by Ohno, Morrissey studied Japanese for two years, so she is able to embark on her own process of translation, an engagement with another culture that Paul de Man suggests: “canonizes, freezes an original and shows in the original a mobility, an instability, which at first one did not notice” (quoted in Venuti 1992, 8). This means that she is able to appreciate the nuances embedded in the *kanji* in the manner suggested by Conroy, as an additional metaphorical layer that complements the meanings inherent in the words themselves. What excites Morrissey most about the *kanji* is that they unify sound, vision and meaning, so that: “meaning comes in flashes, rather than being linear. It’s so much more intricate and beautiful and multidimensional than English” (De Angelis 2012, 150). She dedicates a number of poems to the symbiosis she perceives between the *kanji* and the objects they represent. In “To Imagine an Alphabet”, she visualizes the objects brought to life through the careful placing of the strokes of ink: “There are stories in skeletons/ And after the three fluid/ Lines that are Mountain, the four/ That are Fire” (Morrissey 2002, 54). She is, however, struck by the permanence of the characters, noting that there is something repressive in the fixed meanings enshrined within the fusion of signifier and signified: “The spokes of the world went down/ In a language that/ Went everywhere, stayed put” (Morrissey 2002, 54). Moreover, she is aware that as a non-native speaker, she will never be fully admitted into the etymological secrets legible only to those who have inherited them, reflecting in “To Encourage the Study of Kanji” that: “some other mind made them and still since then/

they've shrunk to a hint at a fairytale" (Morrissey 2002, 53). Although she admitted in an interview that she had chosen to spend her JET years in Japan precisely because it would be "a bit more culturally remote" than other cultures (Suhr-Sytsma 2010, 261), it appears as though this acceptance of impenetrability is not, after all, sufficient for her and she begins to explore ways of imposing herself into the language. She realizes that in order to inhabit the language, she needs to enter it as a metaphor, expanding its limited significance by inserting her own sensibility and voice: "I hear moaning and see constriction in a picture the colour is cinnamon the taste is chalk" (Morrissey 2002, 54). This active intervention, she explains, is the only way in which anyone can express their individuality through language: "they become ideological, and their connectedness to the objects in the world which they are trying to describe becomes infused with all of these extra significances" (De Angelis 2005, 49).

Morrissey begins to deconstruct the meticulously arranged *kanji*, allowing her imagination to infuse them with life: "I get lost in a landscape of noisy ideas that cross and flare in fireworks of strokes" (Morrissey 2002, 54). She also begins to embellish the characters with extra notations that will help her to remember what they are supposed to symbolize: "Like a child who paints a smile/ Over signatures [...] I draw windows leaking/ On the kanji for Rain" (Morrissey 2002, 55). This will render the *kanji* meaningless for any other reader, but will allow Morrissey to stretch the characters beyond their preconceived limits, thus liberating the potentially myriad underlying resonances they may contain. Her poetic language thus becomes collaborative, acting as an intermediary between the individual and the collective, its role to: "stand at the interstices of the world and the word, the personal and the public, and the local and the universal, and in so doing has a crucial role to play in maintaining discursive openness" (Conroy 2004, 143).

Conroy insists that poetic language derives its transformative power through its use of metaphor, a device he defines as: “perennially straining at the edges of meaning in its attempt to exact a little more truth” (Conroy 2004, 150). Certainly a determination to resist the tourist gaze and seek out hidden resonances is a theme in several of Morrissey’s Japanese poems. “Goldfish”, the first poem she wrote in Japan (Meade 2002-3), begins with a typical outsider’s mistake: “The black fish under the bridge was so long I mistook it/ for a goldfish in a Japanese garden” ((Morrissey 2002, 43). Morrissey is initially conditioned by the tourist gaze to impose her reading on the fish, rather than respectfully waiting to learn its true identity. She reiterates her mistake towards the end of the poem: “I mistook the black fish for an oriental goldfish”, the pointed addition of “oriental” specifically indicting the arrogant western gaze for exoticizing and thus misinterpreting what it is seeing. Observing the movement of the fish in the water, she has an inkling that its swimming in deepening circles serves as a metaphor for the enlightenment Japanese philosophers seek through meditation: “they wanted to go/ to the place where closing eyes is to see” (Morrissey 2002, 43); and yet as an outsider, she acknowledges that her understanding of Japanese culture can only ever be partial: “the flash of gold/ on its belly meant it carried its message for the element below it/ always one story down Zen masters attaining one story down” (Morrissey 2002, 43). This is an interesting choice of poem with which to start the Japanese sequence as it suggests a certain tension between Morrissey’s desire to attain a deeper insight into Japanese culture and her struggle to disentangle the myriad stream of sensations and information that crowd through her imagination:

I understood the day I closed my eyes in Gifu City I saw Japan
for the first time saw what I had seen the gate to the Nangu
Shrine by the Shinkansen stood straddled before my head and I
held out my hands to touch it and felt changed air it wasn’t
there but I walked into it continually [...] (Morrissey 2002, 43).

These lines evoke a sequence of impressions so numerous and so rapid they can only be sensed, not narrated. The confused temporal references, “saw what I had seen”, convey the dislocation felt by a tourist in an alien culture and the repeated use of the personal pronoun suggests a certain retreat from the overload of new sensations. However, the poet is willing to grant herself the space to absorb the atmosphere and traditions surrounding her, the pause in her actions, “I /held out my hands to touch it”, offering a chance to occupy an interstitial moment before reality imposes itself on anticipation. The final lines suggest a similar willingness to occupy a liminal space in which the poet can both acknowledge the unknowability of the surrounding culture, but nevertheless be profoundly moved by it. The poet feels “changed” by her experience, although she knows that she has not achieved any revelation – she never does find out what the correct name for the “goldfish” is, after all. It is perhaps enough that she is willing to embrace the position of cultural outsider, “I walked into it continually”, keeping her mind open and her senses primed for new insights.

It is not, of course, always easy to assume the role of detached observer. In “February”, which Suhr-Sytsma notes is one of the few poems written during Morrissey’s second year in Japan: “after the cultural honeymoon had ended, embodies her struggle to control more negative perceptions” (Suhr-Sytsma 2010, 271). She expresses her frustration at environmental policies which facilitate the destruction of the natural world by the rapacious growth in consumerism: “Each field is marked/ for the administering of cement [...] Factories chew through a mountain beyond my window/ and each time I look it’s less” (Morrissey 2002, 56). Her despair at the decimation of the landscape causes her briefly to revert to a tone of western superiority, her impulse to denigrate the lack of enlightenment evident in such decisions: “There is no kindness in me here. I ache to be kind, but the weather/ makes me worse. I burrow and sneer” (Morrissey 2002, 56). She explains in an interview that this disrespect of the environment was one of the

things she found most difficult to reconcile, particularly as it seemed to contradict the veneration of the cherry blossom as iconic symbol of Japan: “There was a tension there, not wanting to be continually judging a foreign culture based on my idea of what is right and wrong, and still feeling outraged and annoyed” (Meade 2002-3). Morrissey is not alone in her dismay that the glorification of the Japanese landscape in the widely disseminated prints by Hokusai and Hiroshige is not the reality. Joseph Woods, co-editor of *Our Shared Japan*, who like Morrissey spent two years in Japan on the JET programme, also describes the necessity of divesting oneself of the tourist gaze and learning instead to appreciate the beauty one can find in the most unexpected of places:

Over time I learned that countryside means a very different thing in Japan; you can walk down a congested street and see a tiny garden, maybe five feet square and that is where the peace is [...] It was one of my most valuable learning experiences in the early days, to perceive nature in the smallest of things and ways. (Ohno 2002, 29)

The long, unencumbered lines of the poem allow Morrissey the space to confront her mixed emotions, eventually realizing that although the season of the cherry blossom is brief, it is glorious and may perhaps be sufficient after all to mitigate against the greying industrialization of the landscape: “There will be days when fruit trees, like veterans/ left standing here and there in pools of shade, will forget about use and bloom” (Morrissey 2002, 56). In her acceptance of the transience of beauty, Morrissey resists what Suhr-Sytsma calls the temptation to conclude the poem with: “an angry Yeatsian lament for the premodern past” (Suhr-Sytsma 2010, 272). Instead she constructs a patient empathy through her poetic voice, a willingness to embrace what Sharon Todd calls the “small, transformative moments [...] of delicate care” central to the process of learning (Todd 2014, 232).

Morrissey's determination to resist predetermined readings of Japanese culture and willingness to inhabit a liminal space on the edges of comprehension can perhaps be attributed in part to her upbringing in Troubles-era Northern Ireland, a society in which deep-rooted hostilities and strictly obeyed tribal loyalties continue to result in clearly-delineated divisions at every level of social interaction.¹ Morrissey's parents were unusual in eschewing the traditional ethno-historical binary, immersing themselves instead in a series of non-partisan causes as members of a local Communist Party, a break from the norm Morrissey cites as contributing to her "sense of dislocation, of belonging to neither community", although as De Angelis notes it also left her with enormous freedom (De Angelis 2012, 148). Images of entrapment and coercion are common in Morrissey's poems about Belfast, as is her distrust of language, predicated on the ability of those in positions of dominance to manipulate and distort the truth. Her cynicism can be seen in "Tourism", a poem written after her return from Japan, that exposes the hypocrisy of attempts being made to package the Northern Ireland Troubles as a tourist experience. Morrissey describes the tours that have been organised to bring tourists to streets synonymous with the violence: "We take them to those streets/ they want to see most, at first,/ as though it's all over and safe behind bus glass/ like a staked African wasp" (Morrissey 2002, 14). These lines indict both the tourists for their voyeuristic interest in a conflict they could never hope to understand, and the organizers of such tours for their objectification of those whose lives were marred by the sectarian violence and their pretence that the divisions of the past have been resolved. They also suggest that we should read the Japanese poems, which are significantly placed in the second section of the collection, with an awareness that tourists will inevitably be guided towards those elements of a culture considered most appropriate for their consumption. She is

¹ For a detailed analysis of Morrissey's critique of the deep-rooted sectarian divisions in Northern Ireland and their impact on the development of her poetic voice, see Ní Éigearthaigh 2017, 127-150.

equally dismissive of the tourist industry that has been created around the shipyards where the Titanic was built, noting the irony that a disaster like the Titanic is as uncontentious a symbol as the Northern Ireland tourist board can manufacture. This determination to paper over the unresolved conflict without addressing the ongoing binary divisions which characterize the relationships between the communities is at the heart of the hypocrisy revealed in the poem: “Our talent for holes that are bigger/ than the things themselves/ resurfaces at Stormont, our weak-kneed parliament” (Morrissey 2002, 14). In an interview, Morrissey explains the poem was driven by her anger that politicians were allowing their personal histories to overshadow their responsibilities to pull Northern Ireland out of its divided past: “anger because there wasn’t a combined effort by anyone involved to take the fabulous chance for peace and just implement it - for everyone to compromise and come into the middle ground” (Meade 2002-3). Her clear message is that the binaries must be deconstructed and the other accommodated if Northern Irish society is going to move away from the divisions of the past. Achieving this is dependent on the construction of a liminal space in which the past can be interrogated in an honest, non-contentious way and new, flexible narratives of identity embraced.

In her rejection of fixed political and linguistic positions, Morrissey is representative of a younger generation of Northern Irish writers no longer willing to adhere to the limits imposed on their autonomy by the conflict. Maureen Ruprecht Fadem notes that “spectrality” is a common feature of contemporary Northern Irish writing, with writers deliberately eschewing definite words and recognizable locations in order to undermine the power of the dominant discourse in determining what can and cannot be said:

recent work coming out of the North is defined by a peculiarly ghostly disposition of metaphor, figure, and image [...] Works convey not just a critical

borderedness, of location, genre, voice, narrative, perspective, and language, but a spectrality in the crafting and textures of the text. (Fadem 2015, 19)

The determination to adapt this flexibility in both voice and perspective is evident in a number of the poems included in *Between Here and There*, written after Morrissey's return to Belfast. The weight and stultification of Northern Ireland's history is captured in "In Belfast", in the description of its public buildings "ballast of copper and gravitas", the houses that seem to be fighting "the weight of the sky", and the river "simmering at low tide and sheeted with silt" (Morrissey 2002, 13). Morrissey suggests that her travels have disengaged her somewhat from the stranglehold of this obdurate history, allowing her to imagine her own identity and path: "what I have been given/ is a delicate unravelling of wishes/ that leaves the future unspoken and the past/ unencountered and unaccounted for" (Morrissey 2002, 13). This is a beautiful summation of the gift her years as a tourist have granted her, suggesting that what she has learned is not how to see more clearly, but rather to embrace the freedom that a lack of certainty can confer. Extricating herself from the preconceived narratives will not be easy: "The city weaves itself so intimately/ it is hard to see" (13), but Morrissey's determination to resist the fixed certainties the conflict has imposed on its inhabitants is evident in the closing line of the poem: "in its downpour and its vapour I am/ as much at home as I will ever be" (13). As in the Japanese poems, Morrissey suggests that her stance will be a liminal one, embracing uncertainty and ambiguity as the portal to more nuanced and fulfilling insights.

Morrissey is aware that language has been tainted by the conflict and that words are thus no longer able to accommodate alternative perspectives. The only option is to reject the restrictive binary logic of accepted terminology, seeking instead the liminal, metaphorical language espoused by Conroy, which tolerates – even welcomes – ambiguity and opposition. This respect for difference can be

seen in a sequence of poems about Japanese festivals, mass events for commemoration and celebration which are known as *matsuri* (De Angelis 2012, 148). Many of the festivals merge spiritual and secular themes, most intriguingly in the very sexually explicit imagery employed to celebrate seasonal demarcations. “Summer Festival”, for example, describes a ritualized sexual encounter which features in a procession through the community: “What do you think when you see a mâché vagina/ being rammed with a penis as broad as a battering ram/ so that children disguised as elements shriek with joy?” (Morrissey 2002, 50). Morrissey’s question challenges her own – and indeed her readers’ – reactions to the display, suggesting an initial shock that such graphic sexual imagery would be considered appropriate in a parade attended by children. However, she realizes that the discomfort she feels is due to learned ideas, specifically the prevalence of taken-for-granted binaries that structure and divide natural human experiences in the western world: “I was shocked and puzzled, initially, but very interested in it too. It had none of the prurience of Western eroticism, at least the old-fashioned eroticism didn’t. It didn’t seem to be a sexually guilty culture in the same way as the West is” (De Angelis 2012, 149). There is an honesty to the Japanese performance of sexuality that encourages Morrissey to challenge her reactions to it, noting in “Spring Festival” that: “the vaginas on shrines reduces me to the facts of life” (Morrissey 2002, 49). Being forced to confront her own discomfort by this unembarrassed celebration of sex allows her to recognize the limitations her cultural upbringing has imposed on her world view.

She undergoes a similar process of self-evaluation in “Between Here and There”, the title poem in the collection, in which she ponders on Japanese attitudes to death and commemoration. The poem begins in a graveyard reserved for unborn babies, whose monuments are indecipherable to Morrissey: “No one seems sure of the reason why aprons/ are tied to the necks of stone babies in

temples” (Morrissey 2002, 46). Her tone here is factual and she seems content with the lack of an authoritative explanation for the practice. De Angelis notes that although Morrissey feels uncomfortable with the austerity of the cemetery, she knows that she cannot access the Japanese understanding of death and that the only role she can play is that of respectful observer: “suffering is culturally encoded, and cannot be re-encoded in a different cultural system” (De Angelis 2012, 147). Here again we see Morrissey content to accept that there are elements of Japanese culture she will never, as an outsider, have access to, although it is possible to read a hint of judgement in her reaction to the lack of personal tributes marking the burial plots: “There’s a graveyard for miscarriages under Ikeda Mountain/ as stark as a bone field. No flowers, tangerines, sake or aprons” (Morrissey 2002, 46). Significantly, she returns to the devastating personal toll of miscarriage in “Stitches”, one of the poems written after her return to Belfast, reflecting specifically on the linguistic rupture that results from the unexpected end of a pregnancy. The excitement sparked by the idea of a new baby, she suggests, requires an expansive vocabulary to capture the sense that one’s world is about to grow in previously unexperienced ways: “There has been extravagance in speech/ and every spilled, exploded word has been a stitch/ in a blanket made for an imaginary baby” (Morrissey 2002, 28). The loss of this dream of a new life and the future that will now remain forever unachieved reminds the poet of the ephemerality of words: “Later the screen said darkness – no spine, no heart./ And the stitches came apart” (Morrissey 2002, 28). Although she does not explicitly relate this to her earlier reactions in the Japanese graveyard, Morrissey’s inability to find the language to express the loss of a pregnancy mirrors the impenetrability of the monuments and the unexpressed grief they embody. Her comment that: “No one seems quite sure....” can perhaps be read as indicative not so much of a cultural misunderstanding but rather of a universal human experience so personal

and yet so devastating that it can never be captured through language, but hovers instead in the liminal spaces beneath.

What is interesting about the resonances between these meditations on grief is that they suggest empathy as a crucial means of transcending one's own cultural gaze in order to understand the other. In spite of her willingness to open her mind during her years in Japan, there were many elements of Japanese culture and language that remained impenetrable. She is more successful when she allows herself the space to personalize her encounters with Japanese culture, diving below the often unreadable surface meanings of words and monuments and immersing herself in the universal flux of emotions that lie beneath. Her expansion of the metaphorical meanings of the *kanji* by incorporating her own sensations into the interpretative process, for example, may not add much to the authentic meanings of the texts, but it does allow her to claim their significance for herself, thus expanding her poetic encounters with the language. It is also significant that she attributes much of this expansiveness to her ability as a woman to transcend the specifics of her own cultural position and empathize with others. Her deconstruction of the complex form of the *kanji* is reminiscent of Helene Cixous' exhortation to the feminist writer to choose a voice that will allow them to be unmediated, unembarrassed and free:

Voice! That, too, is launching forth and effusion without return [...] And this is how she writes, as one throws a voice – forward, into the void. She goes away, she goes forward, doesn't turn back to look at her tracks. Pays no attention to herself. Running breakneck. Contrary to the self-absorbed, masculine narcissism, making sure of its image, of being seen, of seeing itself, of assembling its glories, of pocketing itself again. The reductive look, the always divided look returning, the mirror economy; he needs to lose himself. But she launches forth; she seeks to love (Cixous 1997, 153-4).

Cixous' argument that women writers are particularly adept at undermining language as they have long experience of inhabiting the margins of official discourse is a common theme in the writings of Northern Irish women (Ní Éigeartaigh 2017, 134-7). Many of the poems in Morrissey's third collection *The State of the Prisons* (2005) draw a contrast between the limitations of learned language and the infinite flexibility that can be found beyond its margins, liminal spaces occupied most commonly by women. What is also significant in Cixous' exhortation is the suggestion that women's voices gain in strength and power through their embrace of the other, rather than losing their individuality in this transaction. Embracing the perspective of the other thus results in growth rather than dilution. In "On Omitting the Word 'Just' from my Vocabulary", Morrissey reflects on pregnancy as a means for women to occupy several planes of subjectivity simultaneously. She notes that the limited meanings conveyed by words could never contain the myriad insights of women who are witnessing their bodies expand and accommodate in ways that defy description: "And here I am in a room I don't recognize [...] I must be somewhere Scandinavian./Where weather is decisively one way/or the other, and summer [...] or winter, will not brook contradiction" (Morrissey 2005, 33). Women are more likely to inhabit the "fissures" between these binaries and to seek out unexplored spaces where they can expand and embrace the other: "My own audacity in coming here/ astounds me. Yet I step purposefully./ I swell uncontrollably" (Morrissey 2005, 33). Morrissey's image in this poem is reminiscent of Luce Irigaray's powerful evocation of pregnancy as the ultimate symbol of tolerance and accommodation of the other, the female body nurturing both sexes equally: "(T)here has to be a recognition of the other, of the non-self, by the mother [...] The difference between the 'self' and the other is, so to speak, continuously negotiated" (Irigaray, 1993, 40-1). Although not directly applicable to the Japanese poetry which was written before her marriage, Morrissey had in fact just met her future husband, an

American living temporarily in Japan like herself, and her poems reflect on the process of falling in love and learning to think of herself as a subjectivity that is now, as a consequence of an additional identity as part of a happy couple, in the process of expanding beyond the limits of her own consciousness. Many of her poems link the expansion of her poetic gaze through her immersion in Japanese culture with the parallel development of her romantic relationship, the success of which Todd notes is predicated on “respecting the otherness of the other”: “our becoming is in a sensible, material relationship with an other which simultaneously enables us to exceed ourselves, to engage with the mystery of the unknowability of the other” (Todd 2014, 241).

Returning to “Goldfish”, the poem in which Morrissey first introduces us to her attempts to engage with the intricacies of Japanese culture in a respectful, nuanced way, what is most striking about her account of her growing understanding of what the fish may represent is her professed willingness to balance her own impressions with what she learns from others. Although she references zen philosophy as one potential source of enlightenment, it is crucially the insights shared by her boyfriend, who has been living in Japan for longer, that open her eyes to the underlying resonances: “And when you talked me through/ Gifu one end to the other eyes closed I saw what I would never/ have seen (Morrissey 2002, 43). Her boyfriend’s knowledge does not limit or structure her perceptions, on the contrary Morrissey welcomes the additional perspectives that she can now integrate with her own. This image of expansion through communion with another person is noted by Emmanuel Levinas, who emphasizes that it enhances rather than diminishing one’s individuality: “The relation with the Other, or Conversation, is [...] an ethical relation; but inasmuch as it is welcomed this conversation is a teaching” (Levinas 1991, 50-1). This perception of learning as a liminal space where knowledge is communicated through exchange rather than as a directive from teacher to student is at the heart of what Todd argues is its

transformative power. Expanding on Conroy's argument that liminality is crucial in facilitating the coexistence of different but respectfully balanced perspectives, Todd defines education as constituting: "small, transformative moments [...] of 'delicate care' that disrupt the commonplace. It is nothing overt or explicit, nothing that can be articulated fully through words, but a subtlety of presence that allows a bit of birth in all its messiness to enter" (Todd 2014, 232). Through these encounters, she suggests, we can "shift the borders of our self-understanding", but only if we are willing to take risks, to move outside our comfort zone and exceed the limitations our experience so far imposes on our understanding. Todd draws on Irigaray's image of maternal expansion to depict education as fundamentally based on "respecting the otherness of the other", so that the teacher-student relationship becomes one of "mediation and exchange" (Todd 2014, 241). Crucially, allowing one's thoughts to be modified by the insights of another is not indicative of the homogeneity Conroy argues is encouraged by formal education in capitalist societies. On the contrary, Todd argues: "Such porosity is not about becoming fused or unified, but only works from a respect for the other's becoming" (Todd 2014, 241). Morrissey concludes her poem with a beautiful image of her growing communion with her boyfriend, suggesting that like the Zen masters, their accommodation of each other's insights will open up a world of infinite possibilities: "I/ falling into you, story by story, coming to rest in the place where closing eyes is to see!" (Morrissey 2002, 43).

This retreat from the absolutes of knowledge and signification, and privileging of the sensed rather than seen, is reminiscent of the pre-linguistic "semiotic" stage to which Julia Kristeva suggests the feminist writer should return in search of her unmediated, flexible voice (Kristeva 1997). This essay has argued that Morrissey's willingness to invite encounters with the other and her receptiveness to new insights gained during her years in Japan are predicated on her willing adoption of such a liminal perspective, her poetic voice expanding as

she embraces the myriad resonances, some indecipherable, that she senses in the texts and practices she reflects upon in her poems. Although some elements of Japanese culture and language remain impenetrable to the outsider, Morrissey's empathy and openness to the strangeness of the texts and practices she encounters enables her to develop a nuanced and flexible poetic voice that also has the potential to transform her engagement with the divided, restricted society of her native Northern Ireland.

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Re-inventing isolation

Imagining the other in seclusion

Naomi Berman and Flavio Rizzo

Introduction

Late capitalist imaginaries of Japan include characterisations of an insecure political economy and unspoken fears and anxieties accompanying the vicissitudes of neoliberalism, significantly altering traditional norms, interpersonal relationships, and individual identities. This is particularly the case for young people where a sense of unease and anxiety has steadily been increasing. According to a global youth survey, Japanese young people are unhappier than most (Varkey Foundation 2017) and consider their lives too stressful (IYF 2017b). Moreover, a sense of apathy and disconnection with government, 76% of Japanese young people feel their government does not care about their wants and needs (IYF 2017a), accompanying Japan's 'silver democracy' has resulted in it being the third-lowest country for youth citizen

participation (IYF 2017b). Not long prior, the neoliberal reform that was taking hold of Japan in the 1990s led to the emergence of group of “retreatists”; young people who are unable to conform to the vagaries of post-industrial life (Toivonen, Norasakkunit, and Uchida 2011, 6). Since this time an insidious narrative of the hikikomori, characterised by personal failure, social reclusiveness, and often mental illness, quickly became commonplace in the mediascape. These depictions were buttressed by pathologising psycho-medical portrayals of individuals who were considered as suffering from acute withdrawal from family and society.

Originating in Japan, hikikomori is a term used to describe a form of extended social withdrawal. While it was first applied to describe a neurotic condition causing a state of acute social withdrawal, it became more popularised by Japanese psychiatrist Tamaki Saito (1998) when he provided an account emphasising the cultural characteristics contributing to the phenomenon in his book *Hikikomori: Adolescence without End*. The Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare categorises hikikomori as anyone who has withdrawn from employment and social activities, and not left their room/home for more than six months. There are also suggested co-occurring psychiatric disorders such as schizophrenia (Kondo et al. 2013). Hikikomori is now recognised as existing in many parts of the globe (e.g., Spain, South Korea, France, Italy, Australia and the USA) (Kato et al. 2012; Teo et al. 2015)), however it remains a significant issue in Japan.

In a previous paper we argued that psychological explanations of hikikomori privilege reductionist and essentialising models of subjectivity that position the self as a set of ambiguously defined character traits and behavioural patterns (Berman and Rizzo 2019). We problematised the mainstream, largely institutionally ordained, explanations for hikikomori, and the persistent construction of hikikomori as deviant subjects. Indeed, it was only very recently

(April 2019), that the Tokyo Metropolitan Government relocated its hikikomori support services away from the jurisdiction of juvenile delinquency and into the more appropriate health and welfare division (McKirdy 2019). The routine and unproblematic constructions of hikikomori include a separation from ‘responsibility’, isolation from social contacts and interaction, and an abandonment of the public sphere generally (Yong and Kaneko 2016). We argued that such beliefs disguise the role and significance of discourses shaping broader social relations and normative forms of sociality.

Whereas our first paper attempted to show how psychology and culture collide through hikikomori imaginaries, this current paper seeks to advance this initial conversation by offering a deeper discussion of prevailing cultural, and counter-cultural, narratives and explores the opportunities provided by possible alternatives. Guy Debord’s (1983) depiction of the self as a trajectory from *being* to *having* and from *having* to *appearing*, is of value here, for when applied to hikikomori, the lived experience seems to take a further step from *appearing* to a distant and filtered passive *witnessing*, a passivity that reinvents itself as a dynamic presence when it encounters its cultural reincarnations and online narratives. In trying to unlock the complexity of self-reclusion, this paper argues that it is impossible to understand this phenomenon in normative terms. We seek to move beyond our initial examination of limited and limiting configurations of self that have emerged through the social, cultural and institutional discourses that reduce hikikomori to those who are simply “unable to enter society or adapt to their surroundings” (Suwa and Suzuki 2013, 193), and explore the ways in which these manifestations of self as other are being contested and challenged in cultural media texts.

We previously pointed out how the discursive confines framing our understandings rely on largely orientalist and myopic constructions. Here we ask, what if we remove such orientalist lenses? What would take the place or fill the

gap in the constitutive reasoning surrounding this phenomenon? Moreover, the question of how we are to resolve the uneasiness that surrounds hikikomori, or more specifically, those who disconnect from the (offline) social world remains extant. In problematising the pre-eminence of a distinct set of narratives that interact to discursively frame hikikomori, our intention is not to add to the existing explanatory claims, but rather to offer alternate approaches for understanding the social location of hikikomori within the public imaginary. By reframing narratives of hikikomori beyond normative discourses, we hope to open up new possibilities for concepts such as isolation, at the same time also recognising that this pathway is beset with conflict and tensions. This has important implications for hikikomori as lived-experience. A key dimension of our approach in this paper is the adoption of an interdisciplinary lens bringing together cultural/media analysis with sociological perspectives. Rather than reproducing limiting or constraining notions of self that so many treatments before have done, this linking of disciplinary perspectives attempts to provide a set of analytical coordinates that opens up possibilities for discovering dimensions and expressions of self that are emerging out of hyper contemporary trends, from immersive gaming to notions of audiovisual bingeing.

Mainstream hegemonic cultural portrayals: tensions and contractions

A persistent trope surrounding hikikomori is how it is cast as a culturally specific phenomenon, despite its existence (albeit in smaller numbers) in countries around the world. The label ‘culture-bound syndrome’ emerged out of a silent collusion between psychological fields, media, and the public imaginary (Sakamoto et. al 2005; Slater and Galbraith 2011; Teo and Gaw 2010). This has contributed to various cultural portrayals in popular media such as the perpetual *Nihonjin-ron* myth (social anthropological explanations of Japanese cultural uniqueness) (Hendry 1998) and other supposedly ‘unique’ Japanese cultural practices such as

tokō-kyōhi (school refusal), or *otaku-zoku* (obsessive anime and manga fans). Although Heinze and Thomas (2014) point out that once *otaku* entered a global stage, the negative image soon shifted, and they become the embodiment of digital vanguards - poster boys and girls for the “postmodernization of culture” in the Japanese imaginary (Azuma 2009, 10) - ultimately elevated to hero status in one particularly popular television series *Densha otoko*. After this point the baton of social threat had been passed “by the otaku to the hikikomori” (Heinze and Thomas 2014, 154). Such perspectives localise hikikomori with a form of counter-cultural tendency (indeed an adaptive strategy) as a response by young people to the constraints of Japanese society. The social trap that rotates around such forceful adherences to harmony remains an essential social hiccup, the role of mainstream behaviour and Japanese normative social behaviour remains essential.

Arguably what differentiates acute social withdrawal as it occurs in the West from the Japaneseness of hikikomori, lies in the social and institutional reaction to the person’s withdrawal, which is usually accompanied by frantic efforts to remedy this situation through psychological, social and medical interventions (Heinze and Thomas 2014). Often cast as non-conformist behaviour, some have gone so far as to identify a set of ‘risk factors’ for this supposed rejection of dominant cultural ideals around ‘harmony-seeking’ (Norasakkunkit and Uchida 2011, 2014; Saito 2013). Such reductionist notions of risk factors underline the essential unbalance in hikikomori portrayals with its heavy reliance on autism spectrum disorder, emphasising a fundamental bias in favouring a clinical understanding, particularly the harmony-oriented frameworks within which youth are forced to carve out a sense of belonging. Such orientalist depictions are often supported by mainstream media accounts. The ‘shut-in’ or recluse, with an unhealthy obsession with video games or manga trope persists in Japanese cultural media texts. Hikikomori characters such as those found in the

popular television and manga examples *Chäos;HEAd* or *Rozen Maiden* paint an image of individuals living in solitude whose only resort is to find comfort in the company of figurines or wind-up dolls that come to life.

The role of changing architectural arrangements and their effect on family dynamics and the ways in which individuals occupy domestic spaces is another key tension often underplayed in hikikomori treatments. Stemming out of the environment of discontinuity and reimagining of the Japanese family unit with a fundamental shift towards non-authoritarian parenting, the hikikomori generation is the by-product of super-imposed model of family behaviour that had no precedent in Japanese society. These models were borrowed from US sitcoms defining the rising new spirit of “my home-ism” (Hashimoto and Traphagan 2008, 8). This new social order rotated around home ownership, and the space of these ever-shrinking dwellings became a sort of micro-utopia of family life. Family life based on the salaryman model where the husband’s absence is countered by the raising of the professional housewife and accompanying consumption of domestic goods as part of post-war aspirational normativity (Allison 2013). If we fast forward these first signs of artificiality and seeds of alienation to the multiplication of the visuals of super-imposed models of social behaviour of contemporary Japan and juxtapose the basic understanding that isolation itself is embedded in the current economic system, it is as if through the hikikomori phenomenon we are witnessing a further shift in the lived experience as envisioned by Guy Debord (1983). The transition into notions of appearing as the morphing of being. Appearing here seen both as the manufacturing of self-narratives and the psychological short-circuit created by fears of perceptions of self by others. Here transnational audiovisual streaming platforms with their uniform offering across boundaries further problematise the very shift Debord envisioned.

In the modern urban condition, social relations are characterised by a discombobulating of space and location as the self is simultaneously near and distant, connected and separated, included and excluded from others. Importantly, the social ambiguity arising out of the contradiction between being simultaneously inside and outside shapes patterns of sociality. What is crucial to underline here is how ambiguity itself, *aimai* in Japanese, is central to Japanese social relationships and the pursuit of social harmony. By extension it also plays a crucial role when it comes to national identity (Tamamoto 2003). At the one hand there is a unique social landscape, whereby old categories of social relations enter a new foggy era, and on the other hand there exists shadowy understanding of social relationships that characterise Japanese norms of sociality. The result of these two dynamics is destabilising when it comes to the hikikomori, as ambiguity here becomes the ultimate impenetrable shield. The hikikomori are both victims of *aimai* and perpetrators of its dysfunctional understanding.

Moreover, as Allison (2012) argues, diminishing social ties, support and sense of belonging have contributed to the development of an awareness of a 'relationless society' (*muenshakai*) in post Fordist Japan, whereby the aspirational normativity engendered by my-homeism has been replaced by a sense of displacement and ungroundedness. Much of the problematisation stems from (collective) fears around loneliness, isolation and the perceived (or constructed) 'threat' to society that solitude poses. This signals key questions regarding expectations that people participate in society in normatively equal ways. Indeed, Chan and Lo (2013) explore social withdrawal in the context of the 'hidden youth' of Hong Kong, which is ostensibly a preferred lifestyle for such individuals. The authors assert that there is a correlation between length of withdrawal and improved quality of life (insomuch as social support exists). Other research has concurred by showing evidence of personal growth through self-seeking (Heinze and Thomas 2014).

Part of the tension surrounding hikikomori can be located in traditional humanist orthodoxy that views social and individual aims as inherently incommensurable (Rousseau 1997, 1979); Mill 1999). Rousseau (1979) for example, was concerned with how society constrains the individual, and is a threat to individual liberties through institutional arrangements, such as education, that privilege the production of citizens and thwart individuality. Such processes are assisted by idealised notions of community and social belonging, and the types of interactions and ways of being that these forms give rise to. In an examination of “communal being-ness as the source of ontological meaning” Studdert describes ‘communing’ as the being-ness arising out of ongoing action held in common with others (2016, 622). Borrowing from Hannah Arendt (1958), he posits that this action, sociality, is the totality of day-to-day interactions with others, occurring everywhere and between everything, whereby identity is borne moment-to-moment and is, crucially, both a temporary and shared outcome. Through actions our human being-ness is revealed; we simultaneously show ourselves and are seen by others in the public arena. “As we act in public, our being-ness emerges through these actions and is recognized and sustained as ‘who we are’ and ‘who you are’” (Studdert 2016, 626). In the case of hikikomori, the removal of oneself from the public arena not only stymies the fulfillment of these common (civil) expectations around sociality, but in the nexus of communing and the social world hikikomori remain perpetually unseen.

‘The stranger’ and forms of non-belonging

In an examination of the techniques for social survival individuals deploy to cope with post-modern urbanity, Simmel describes how, in order to preserve the self in the face of over stimulating urban conditions, an individual cultivates a veneer of indifference; a blasé attitude (Wolff 1950). Such an adaptation strategy militates against the loss of individuality and autonomy attenuated to city dwelling (Frisby

and Featherstone 1997). Over time this gives rise to a form of psychological detachment from the social world, which is at the heart of psychic survival in metropolitan life. This process of self-differentiation (as well as other processes) throws into question our taken-for-granted assumptions around concepts such as detachment and highlights a need to reconceptualise it. For Simmel the types of relationships and emotional connections formed in the metropolis are largely tied to the money economy and are embodied in the concept of “the stranger”, an individual who is fixed to a particular spatial group, but at the same time does not belong (Wolff 1950, 402). The stranger insinuates that at the heart of modernity is a confluence of remoteness and proximity; one who is simultaneously inside and outside society (Wolff 1950). The supposed ‘detachment’ of hikikomori from broader social ties results in a state of non-belonging whilst maintaining a presence. That is, whilst still being a member of a household, community and nation, hikikomori are simultaneously near and far, yet the tension between nearness and distance only serves to reinforce that which is not common.

Following Simmel, another symbolic interactionist Erving Goffman (1963) further explored strategies for coping with what he identified as the anxiety and fear engendered in interactions with others. He examined how strategies of adaptation, or managing encounters with strangers, are enacted in everyday cosmopolitan life. Goffman describes an embodied strategy of ‘civil inattention’, manifest as avoiding eye contact, which is intended to create space for strangers in public spaces. The ultimate act of avoiding responsibility and by extension ‘othering’, the individual does not look and does not see the other. Similarly, hikikomori could be seen as a form of civil inattention, but the management of proximity is symbolic, and in many cases coexists with online engagement with others. The chosen anonymity does not occur in public and therefore gives rise to a different set of rituals. While Simmel’s stranger embodies a form of sociality brought about by the increased demands for social interaction coupled with

greater anonymity in metropolis living, Goffman's constellation of norms and rituals that amount to civil inattention serve to create and sustain social order.

The conflicts and contradictions between inside and outside engendered in both Simmel's and Goffman's concepts are particularly salient for hikikomori. A common descriptor applied to hikikomori is to call it *tatemae* / *honne* whereby the individual is seen to fail at successfully integrating their social identity (outside face) with their personal (inside) desires. As a cornerstone of the system of classification in Japan, Hendry (1987) shows how this movement between multiple selves in everyday social practice (speech forms) is an entrenched aspect of socialisation and thus mechanism for social control. However, whereas civil inattention relies on a consensus or mutual agreement between interactants (to ignore one another), in the case of hikikomori this consensus is ostensibly absent. This is because civil inattention necessarily arises out of direct interactions between individuals who are compelled by the immediacy of the encounter to manage it. The 'non-encounter' in hikikomori, while removing the consensual attribute of civil inattention, is no less an 'averted gaze'.

Part of the negative portrayal of hikikomori in medical and popular media discourses is predicated on the idea of 'choice', or as Overell (2018) states their construction as willful subjects.¹ This notion is drawn from Sara Ahmed's (2011) exploration of the moral distinction between will and willfulness in 17th century literature whereby willfulness was depicted as a perversion of the promise of will:

The willful character insists on willing their own way, without reference to reason or command. Willfulness could be described as a character perversion: to be willful is to deviate, to will one's own way is to will the wrong way. (Ahmed 2011, 240)

In literature this willfulness is embodied in the willful child, which threatens the continuity of the family. For hikikomori, this willfulness extends beyond the

¹ This spelling is consistent with Ahmed's intention of highlighting the presence of 'will.'

spoilt child trope and the family unit out to the national familial imaginary threatening social order (Overell 2018). Rather than submitting to national power and governance whereby individuals identify their will with “what is already willed” (Ahmed 2011, 245), the will of hikikomori does not align with the collective will of the family, community, and society. Yet for Overell, the willfulness of hikikomori is not passive, they should be seen as active willful subjects. Moreover, she argues that to construct hikikomori as a mode of “willful refusal” both sustains the deviant subjectivity, whilst simultaneously acting as a form of Queering in its resistance to dominant values (Overell 2018, 206-207). Through their (perceived) rejection or failure at fulfilling Japanese notions of hetero-masculinity, namely expectations of becoming a salaryman and a husband, hikikomori can be understood as an act that serves as a signifier of the fractures in contemporary Japanese heteronormative neoliberalism (Overell 2018).

This “productivity principle” and pursuit of private ends is not peculiar to Japan but is a dominant part of the modern West (Brown 2015, 41). Brown coins the term *homo oeconomicus* to describe a process of entrepreneurialising of the self, where the self is configured in economic rather than political and civil terms. Within the context of neoliberal values as individuals and families become responsibilised, notions of citizenship, that previously corresponded with a concern for the public good, are replaced with a notion of the citizen as *homo oeconomicus* (Brown 2015). Correspondingly, neoliberalism co-opts peoples’ need for achievement, power and self-esteem, which are granted in exchange for industriousness. As Nandy argues:

The mythology of modernity rests on the belief that these needs can be satisfied if only an individual works hard, is adaptable and psychologically healthy. That is, there is no insurmountable institutional constraint on anyone having a sense of achievement, potency and personal worth; all failures in this respect, the modern belief goes, are actually failures of culpable individuals, not of structures (Nandy 1987, 66).

This pervasive culture of productive work configures those who exist outside of it as less or non-productive, lacking in social utility, and thus to be managed.

Such sociological insights outlined above assist in illuminating the complex interplay between the self, the other and social and cultural practice, as well as offering a fresh perspective on a topic that up to now has been beset by incongruous and dispiriting debates. With our work we seek to share alternate ways of understanding the hikikomori experience, and the conditions of possibility that are presented when persisting and limiting portrayals are cracked open. The interdisciplinary framework helps us look beyond normative psychological explanations while also avoiding wholly culturally deterministic narratives perpetuated in the media and institutional discourses. Thus, an interdisciplinary exploration of this issue feels both urgent and overdue in highlighting the sociological significance and critical cultural analysis of hikikomori narratives.

Hikikomori as a form of resistance

More recently there has been an emergence in the mediascape of texts designed to resist mainstream negative portrayals of hikikomori. Notably, in 2016 *hikikomori shinbum* ('newspaper') was founded by an ex-hikikomori, originally as a protest against the rising number of support groups who were using force to bring hikikomori out of their rooms: a popular interventionist action that some critics argue ignores human rights (McKirdy 2019). The bi-monthly hard copy and digital circulation's key mission is to provide a counter-narrative to the often sensationalised and inaccurate depictions of hikikomori reported by the media. It includes a collection of essays by and interviews with hikikomori and experts, as well as information and events for supporting families with hikikomori members. Another online magazine, also produced by hikikomori, called *hikipos* also advocates for the empowerment of hikikomori by providing a platform for their

perspectives to be heard. These attempts to give a ‘voice’ to hikikomori offer a symbolic emancipation from the media-driven negative portrayals and treatment of hikikomori by Japanese society. Further unpacking these negative projections is key to opening up a crack into these normative hiccups.

Re-imagining isolation – the ‘postmodern hermit’

Much of the mainstream cultural discourse on hikikomori disguises an alternate narrative that is rendered through social media, chat lines and counter-popular culture reshaping and to some extent creating a hikikomori mythology. Within these boundaries it is interesting to understand the role of ‘the unperceived’. The idea of being self-reclusive by extension unlocks a large space left open by situations that one will never get to witness. This simple subtraction of direct experience (being locked at home) initiates a sort of mythical encounter, an imagining, that intersects with, and transforms, the pragmatic space of a tangible experience. Moving beyond the idea of a common ground of shared knowledge, we go towards a dynamic in which the particular and the subjective are at the center. This hazy knowledge that arises from self-reclusion becomes a crucial seed for further imagining. What elements go into the creation of mytho-poetic spaces and experiences and how are those interpreted and transmitted across different cultural, linguistic, and formal boundaries is a question that needs exploration. The act of rising up against an imposed reality builds identity and the act of severing contact with the outside has to be considered both as a propulsive force just as much as a refraining impulse; this is a nodal point.

Conclusion

A central theme throughout this paper has been to show that there is a need to reconceptualise agency and experience in hikikomori imaginaries. Using an interdisciplinary framework, we have attempted to argue that agency here is not

merely the subversion of expectations and traditional norms. Indeed, Nandy in describing Ghandi's theory of non-violent conflict resolution, argues that the oppressed victim, "... becomes a nonplayer for the existing system—one now plays another game, refusing to be either a player or a counter-player" (Nandy 1987, 34). This involves not just freedom from the conditioning influence of ideal norms, but to not be configured by them at all. In this way, hikikomori can be seen as an emancipatory practice. Glynos takes this one step further, in an exploration of self-transgression as psychoanalytic freedom, by asserting that "... a condition of freedom is the uncoupling of transgressive enjoyment and the desire to conform to an ideal. One way of accomplishing this uncoupling would be to eliminate the desire to conform to the above ideal" (2003, 15). The notion of extinguishing the desire to conform to an ideal is what enhances freedom, yet the web of audiovisual materials create the friction out of which conforming itself becomes a liminal space of constant and fluid change.

This paper has offered an exploration of the conflicts and contradictions in the realm of the social world. In its most sinister incarnation, hikikomori embodies public anxiety around social disintegration and fragmentation. In its most benign form, it is merely "social ineptness" (Heinze and Thomas 2014, 158). Hikikomori exists in a liminal space of public understanding and private experience of self; simultaneously socially integrated yet set apart from society. There is a need to problematise the (reverse) orientalist impulse to clump hikikomori along with *tokō-kyōhi* or *otaku-zoku* in a cultural fetishisation process. Sociologist Ishikawa Ryōko (2007) underlines the importance of a rethinking of the phenomenon as a long-term process where self-inquiry is central. Hikikomori's existence, or more specifically the social reactions to its existence, highlights a need for a reconfiguration of traditional notions of the individual and society.

Up until now, hikikomori exists in the public imaginary as an overdetermined concept, and the existing definitions and explanations fail to fully account for the ways in which hikikomori themselves challenge prevailing narratives of self. bell hooks (1996) argues that media is a form of ‘informal pedagogy’ and in this way it is powerful in shaping popular public discourses in the domains of race, sex, and class. However, the ‘teachings’ she refers to equally apply to hikikomori and thus need to be identified and understood, including the tensions existing in the relationship between psychology and culture whereby various media sources perpetuate a set of misleading representations of hikikomori that highlight the importance of popular culture as a source of knowledge of social issues. Here there are crucial implications for how we understand the ‘isolation’ part of hikikomori and our ontological boundaries in social life. In cultivating a separate existence from the outside world hikikomori forces us to re-examine boundariness in contemporary social life, particularly an ostensible artificial distinction between inside and outside, thus reframing the social location of hikikomori in the public imaginary.

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Auto-ethnographic Performance and Self-Empowerment in Sandra Monterroso's *Lix cua rahro/Tus tortillas, mi amor* (2004)

M. Emilia Barbosa

In Guatemala, the epitomic role of indigenous women as cultural reproducers is embodied in millenary practices such as tortilla-making. For centuries, women in Guatemala have maintained the daily acts and gestures necessary to feed their families and have passed on the same technique and the memories attached to it to several generations. The cultural manipulation of and social expectations placed on women's bodies' conditions how Maya women and their descendants act and think of themselves in everyday life. Socially assigned gender and ethnic scripts such as the *tortillera* reveal the fetishization of indigeneityⁱ and the complex interplay of power and representation within national identity. Diane Nelson reported one ALMG (Academia de Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala) leader's saying, "A Maya woman is not a woman unless she makes tortillas" (2001, 333). To the point is the explanation that comes afterwards in her article where she states that unlike Mexican tortilla-making where a press is often used, in Guatemala the small, fat traditional tortillas are patted out by hand in a process that can take several hours, from preparing the corn to rolling the tortillas for each

meal (2001, 333). Thus, “the only authentic tortilla is made of corn ground by hand and rolled out in hours of painstaking labor” (2001, 333). In consequence, the women’s work is naturalized and glorified as a means of preserving the culture and maintaining tradition, a reason to be prideful and as something that defines them too.

After a long history of subalternity, Guatemalan women are appearing as autonomous political subjects and slowly starting to occupy the public sphere, as documented by Ana L. Carillo (1992, 113 and forth). Nowadays, both *Ladinas*ⁱⁱ and indigenous women coincide in their fight to promote women’s rights, as discussed by Betsy Konefal, Manuela Camus, and Diane Nelson. I argue that Guatemalan women have been subverting, contesting, and resisting traditional power discourses by different means and strategies, including in tortilla-making. Maya women and their descendants manifest their strength and ability to rewrite history and to pass on core communal values and beliefs, which is the case in daily activities such as tortilla-making; this is a daily ritual practice in which women use a set of gestures and a given rhythm culminating in making tortillas effectively and consistently.

In this essay, I analyze Sandra Monterroso’s performance, *Tus tortillas, mi amor* (2004), or *Lix cua rahro* in Q’eq’chi Maya, a performance work that breaks down the ethnic, generic, and social label *tortillera*. While deconstructing the epitomic Guatemalan *tortillera*, Monterroso also constructs her own ‘anti-story’ as a possibility for resistance. Because Monterroso herself self-identifies as a non-indigenous woman, and even though she has been learning and practicing one of her indigenous grandmother’s native tongue – Q’eq’chi; Maya – to which she was also exposed as very young child, her auto-ethnographic exploration into tortilla-making becomes problematic. In order to debunk the Guatemalan *tortillera*, Monterroso conveys her message to the spectators about the ongoing and unstable process of identity-production using a combination of bodily strategies, the

spoken word, and auto-ethnographic exploration.ⁱⁱⁱ I understand auto-ethnography as a qualitative research method that combines different aspects of social studies; auto = self, ethno = culture, graphy = research process. It is a controversial topic in ethnography and its meaning and consideration has been shifting more recently as personal narratives become more instrumental in understanding subaltern and silenced voices: “The meanings and applications of autoethnography have evolved in a manner that makes precise definition difficult” (Ellingson and Ellis 2008). Approaching this performance through an auto-ethnographic approach allows for a better understanding of Monterroso’s own subject position, artistic engagement, and the complex critical mediation she proposes as a form of embodied anthropology.^{iv} This performance is thus about the conflicts of identity as Monterroso questions, records, **analyzes, expands on, and voices her own point-of-view or lived experience while going through the same traditional process of tortilla-making well-known in Guatemala.** In this article, I analyze one of three performance strategies^v employed by Monterroso in *Tus tortillas*, and I focus solely on her auto-ethnographic exploration. Ultimately, *Lix cua rahro* re-signifies the epitomic Guatemalan *tortillera* while opening up a venue for a counter-narrative or new social script, which I argue is anchored on a long-standing genealogy of hybridity and the hard-won contemporary status of *Ladina* women in all fringes of Guatemalan society.

Tus tortillas, mi amor is a 24-hour performance reduced to a 12:30 minute video with a mix of Spanish and English subtitles, including some references in Q’eq’chi’ Maya, which is the mainly spoken language in the video. It won first prize in the 3rd Central American Video Art Contest in San José, Costa Rica, in 2004 and, in addition, also won a special prize for its “precise recording as a performance” (Díaz 2004). It depicts a woman of mixed race seated at a kitchen table chewing corn as she performs a ritual pronouncing Maya Q’eq’chi’ words and spitting the corn into a mixing bowl for tortilla dough preparation. This

performance was filmed from overhead, giving the impression that everything is smaller than in real life, as if tied to the ground.

The scenario resembles the Maya kitchen in Guatemala City's ethnographic museum. It has terracotta tiles on the floor, a display of blue metal pots hanging on the walls and strategically positioned in distinct working stations, and several maize cobs and distinct natural dried herbs and elements recalling the staples of the traditional diet in the region. The background is purposefully darkened, while the projected light from above focuses on the kitchen table where the performer enacts her tortilla-making process. As the performance progresses, the lighting and camera increasingly focus more on the performer, her body, the tortilla-dough, and the tortilla-making process. Her body and the salivated corn pulp intermingle many times through a careful manipulation of camera angles and perspectives. In the video screening, at 25 seconds, she starts speaking, intoning an incantation in her grandmother's native tongue, and for each utterance, subtitles show on the screen, first in Spanish, and a couple of seconds later, in English. At 4:05 minutes, there is a close-up of the *olla* or pot with a repugnant fermenting pulp that seems to be moving all by itself. Then, at 5:20 minutes, she slowly spits into the pot a long stream of saliva, water, and a mashed corn pulp, which forms all together. From minutes 5 to 8, sweat and tears are also incorporated into the dough that the performer now steadily kneads. At around minute 9, while she proclaims in Q'ekchi' Maya that "she [the woman] fornicates" (Monterroso 2004), an assembly line of small balls of dough, like chicken eggs, is slowly laid down on the table, and at 10:33 minutes, above the subtitle "soul and body" (Monterroso 2004), Monterroso is stamping a heart shape into her now flattened out tortillas, and begins to pour her blood into each one of these indentations.^{vi} Lastly, at 12:10 minutes she starts to cook the tortillas in a pan, and then serves them warm in a basket for the camera. The last minutes of the performance are reserved for a voice off that repeats the title of the poem and

the performance again, “Lix cua rahro,” which is then displayed on the screen successively, in Spanish, followed by English.

The act of *tortillar* explored in *Tus tortillas* is a performance that replicates a simple daily activity, and uses a traditional domestic setting, the kitchen, to deconstruct the apparently homogenous identity of indigenous women and their descendants in Guatemala. The performer engages in a strategy that allows for the visibility of mainstream representations of the *tortillera* that make her Other and leads to rethinking and reconstructing her own subjectivity and identity in a “new” hybrid iconography. I contend that such a careful set up and manipulated setting are crucial in giving the spectators a sense of intimacy and allowing them to engage with what is not traditionally available – the private space of the Maya women and their descendants’ home. In *Lix cua rahro*, Monterroso goes through a visible transformation while embodying and becoming a new kind of *tortillera* – one that is purposefully detaching herself from the Ixil Museum’s traditional Maya kitchen and ethnic Other. She resists the spectators’ gaze or scopophilia by becoming ‘hard to read’ and somewhat resistant to appropriation when compared to the widely circulated ‘text’ or iconography on indigeneity and femineity in Guatemala. Confronting ingrained notions of authenticity and an historical devaluing of indigenous people’s *cosmovisión* [worldview], Monterroso sheds light on her own flow of identity-production by juxtaposing her own corporeality to anticipated representations of ethnicity and gender.

In the scope of daily practices, smaller acts of rebellion and resistance are part of what constitutes the site of struggle and contradictions that is indigenous women and their descendants’ identity. In the fight for identity as human right, indigenous women play a key role by passing down customs and knowledge from generation to generation – a fundamental contribution for the preservation of indigenous peoples’ social, cultural, economic, and political traditions (Mejía

López 2006). The appropriation of gestures long thought to be socially and culturally meaningless – such as *tortillar*, creatively reenacted by Monterroso in this performance, can potentially lead to re-signifying practices that question and deconstruct the national narrative of symbolic violence that corrupts Guatemalan women's daily lives, particular indigenous women and their descendants. Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has theorized symbolic violence as “a form of power that is directly exerted on the bodies and, just like magic, without any physical coercion”^{vii} (Bourdieu quoted in Plaza Velasco 2007, 135). It is thus a symbolic force, a violence, which “acts in an insidious, invisible, and gentle manner in the deepest of the body”^{viii} (Plaza Velasco 2007, 135). Unlike physical or direct violence, symbolic violence works ‘gently’ until it fulfills its goal of mining and controlling the subject from inside, as a self-regulatory or self-censorship mechanism. In the poem/incantation that accompanies this performance, Monterroso talks about a “killer of white butterflies” as a male presence that destroys the woman's soul according to Maya mythology (Monterroso 2004). I interpret this never-seen-but-felt male presence as an indirect reference to Guatemalan women's current struggle with gender violence.

Presently, the women's situation in Guatemala has failed to improve due to the predominance of a *machista* culture of violence in which women are constantly objectified and relegated to the ancestral domestic sphere. Typically, young indigenous women learn to *tortillar* starting around three years old and develop into accomplished *tortilleras* after many years of practice. From the kitchen and starting at a tender age, this adaptation and domestication of the indigenous women's bodies to the national narrative of submission and subalternity takes shape. Traditionally, indigenous women were confined to the domestic sphere, subdued in their communities to the leadership of their male relatives and leaders, and considered virtually incapable of any form of agency. Nowadays both critics and scholars observe with Michel Foucault that power

implies its own resistance. In Antje Lindenmeyer's summary, "Foucault claims that the body is permanently inscribed by power relations seeping into everyday life in the form of disciplinary practices" (1999, 49). Howbeit, subjects markedly introduce resistance to such disciplinary practices in different degrees and according to distinct circumstances, in a constant process of give and take. In *Lix cua rahro*, Monterroso herself introduces change and subverts the narrative while recording step-by-step her own artistic and auto-ethnographic process.

Several anthropologists comment on Maya cultures' connection to maize, as well as several major literary works like Miguel Ángel Asturias' *Hombres de maíz* (1949). The Maya sacred book, the *Popol Vuh*, also extensively focuses on the connection between maize cultivation and Maya subsistence and origin myths. To this day, corn is one of the fundamental diet staples in Mesoamerica and a symbol for the sun and inner strength. Millions of women in Guatemala, particularly indigenous women, engage in the preparation of corn tortillas daily. Linda Green reports, "Mayas receive their education in part through growing, preparing, and eating corn" (1999, 18). Either it is through their everyday experiences, at the *milpa*, or at home, that Maya children in rural areas learn the vital importance of corn both to their survival and to their culture. On a typical day, "young girls copy their mothers as they use their hands to shape the corn dough into tortillas, producing the unmistakable rat-tat-tat that one hears coming from Maya kitchens at mealtime" (Green 1999, 18). For Green, corn epitomizes Maya identity as through the social relations involved in its production, it "weaves a thread that connects Maya people with their ancestors and sacred spirits and their future through their children" (1999, 18). Corn's ubiquity in Maya culture is, in essence, emblematic of an identity closely related to its land and what it provides them with. Having corn tortillas to eat can be the difference between survival and dispossession, and for many Maya corn thus becomes agency^{ix}. Likewise, *tortillar* can also display agency and become a practice of resistance.

Indigenous women's key role as cultural reproducers is recognized internationally and that same recognition puts pressure on the Government and local authorities and institutions, many times by the presence of NGOs on the field in Guatemala. Monterroso's performance dialogues with this dynamic network of power, identity, and affects that are disseminated and converge in the daily practices and way of living of contemporary Maya women. Her careful orchestration of the tortilla-making process and its even more detailed record-keeping allows the spectator to vicariously engage in her own simulation of this complex rethinking and inquiry into indigenous identity and its reproduction.

In *Lix cua rahro*, Monterroso shows agency and a willingness to play with the traditional *tortillera* script by engaging with what Gust A. Yep describes as an "I" constantly changing faces in the cultural borderlands (2004). Monterroso as a subject questions Guatemalan identity, paying special attention to the ingrained symbolic violence that is at the core of national narratives of gender and ethnicity, which matches Dwight Conquergood's notion of ethnography as embodied research and inquiry (1991). Starting from inside the very same space of domesticity and gendered confinement, the kitchen, Monterroso repositions herself as a hybrid. This process, in turn, allows for reassigning self-value and subjectivity at the communal and national levels. Monterroso's performance is a work of patience that culminates in showcasing the value of daily practices and suggests that women's re-enactment of certain practices can bring about resistance and the power to decide who, what, and how cultural markers are embodied and perpetuated. Essentially, Monterroso brings elements of transgression into the millenary tradition of tortilla-making that ultimately transform it. Her embodiment in this performance translates into a border crossing between the *tortillera*'s assigned social role and her own rebellion against it. Concurrently, Monterroso expresses her ambivalence between her indigenous background and her current *Ladina* status. In this manner, Monterroso's performance brings visibility to issues

of contemporary identity and cultural imagery, while questioning the commodification of the Other. The efficacy of her performance depends largely on her ability to subvert such traditional socially assigned script as *tortillera* subjectivity.

According to Madan Sarup, telling one's story brings with it transformative power, as the process of constructing identity runs parallel with the process of narrating our life-story (1996, 15). Even though individuals cannot always control the effects of their narratives, or the instances of its construction, and most importantly, how they will be interpreted or acted upon, certain narratives become what Sarup designates as "anti-stories" due to their non-linear progression and logic, as privileged sites of resistance. The main focus in anti-narratives is on the subject's agency and power to change the progression of the story according to his/her will and needs. As a sophisticated ongoing process of affirmations and contradictions, influences and idiosyncrasies, identity is a complex process that involves defining and erasing, putting together what one is, in contrast to what one is not (Sarup 1996, 24). I contend that Monterroso plays with the notion of "passing" as an indigenous woman while being a *Ladina*, a strategy that allows her to change the national social scripts on Mayaness and femininity. "Passing" is a cultural and social process typically undergone by people who wish to fit in or assimilate to a new culture, which is common with immigrants in a foreign country, and can be enacted with different purposes in mind. Rueyling Chuang mentions, for example, the cases in which "to become a member of another cultural group [equals] to be accepted, to gain personal benefits, [or] to avoid persecution" (2004, 55). Therefore, the act of "passing" can be aimed upward or downward, and it can be passive or active, depending on the circumstances of each individual. In the Latin American context, it is common to talk of *superarse* or to move upwardly, either crossing ethnic, social or cultural boundaries which often implies "shedding the Indian" or leaving behind what is

perceived as a shameful origin. In this performance, Monterroso engages in a contrary move by which she focuses on empowering and bringing dignity and visibility to the *tortillera* and, therefore, to indigenous women.

Even though Monterroso's is a solo performance and a *sotto voce* "text," her intent to speak for a multitude as depicted in the poem *Lix cua rahro* as "We, women" corresponds to her new hybrid plurivocal artistic exploration. Exploring subjectivity and lived experience, auto-ethnographic performance can function as a plurivocal "text" that promotes a space for expression and evocation of a plurality or collectivity of voices in many instances perverting the boundaries between insider/ outsider, subject/ object, and Self / Other. Monterroso's engagement in a complex strategizing with Maya hermeneutics and making her voice heard while embodying the *mujer* Maya leads to a particular ventriloquism that seeks to expand on the possibilities for transcultural understandings of the Guatemalan *tortillera*. Considering Guatemala's ethnic fabric, Diane Nelson identifies the '*mujer* Maya' "as a construct, a boundary marker, a prosthetic" (2001, 314). Citing Allucqu re Rosanne Stone, Nelson clarifies that "the prosthetic makes up for something missing, it covers over an opening, it overcomes a lack of presence" (2001, 314). Thus, "like a peg leg," the *mujer* Maya "supports the nation's limping political economy" (2001, 314), while proving that Guatemala is up to the challenge of modernity, but maintaining the traditions that identify and legitimate it as an indigenous nation. Nelson's collected anecdotes about the *muchachas* or the *tortilleras* that inhabit Guatemala's national imagery and cultural tropes (2001) are at the core of her analysis of how the *mujer* Maya in the *Ladino* home is a source for anxiety and how its existence is very informative of the layered social, ethnic, gender, and cultural dynamics in the nation. Therefore, by changing the script of the millenary *tortillera*, Monterroso's performance provides a first-person artistic narrative of resistance or 'anti-story', and goes against a romanticized version of the Maya

past that still lingers on the limbo of the ethnographic museum and on Mayaness as a commodity. In the same sense of expanding on the plurivocal exploration of indigenous women's identity through the embodied process of the *tortillera*, Chang argues that "autoethnography benefits greatly from the thought that self is an extension of a community, rather than it is an independent, self-sufficient being, because the possibility of cultural self-analysis rests on an understanding that self is part of a cultural community" (2016, 26).

For Mary Louise Pratt, autoethnography is a concept linked to the complicated relationship between the colonized and the colonizer, and to resistance practices and hegemonic discourses offered by the native account. Thus, it has more to do with one's own culture than with literary autobiography, "autoethnographic texts^x [...] involve a selective collaboration with and appropriation of idioms of the metropolis or conqueror [that] are merged or infiltrated to varying degrees with the indigenous idioms to create self-representations intended to intervene in metropolitan modes of understanding" (1999, 501). Monterroso's own voice is more than ventriloquist, particularly considering how she self-explores her own subject position and privilege. Thinking of Monterroso's *Tus tortillas* as self-exploration implies considering what is at stake with auto-ethnography. Even though this performance does not fully correspond to the auto-ethnographic genres explored by several critics, it satisfies most of the requirements to be considered at least auto-ethnographic inquiry for it fulfills specific criteria, particularly if we shift the focus from writing to performance and think in terms of an audience instead of a reader. Auto-ethnographic accounts are often criticized as not being real science for lack of objectivity and auto-ethnographic genres are criticized "for being biased, navel-gazing, self-absorbed, or emotionally incontinent, and for high jacking traditional ethnographic purposes and scholarly contributions (Maréchal 2010, 45). However, major defenders of this form of qualitative research such as Ellis emphasize the

“narrative truth” of auto-ethnographic accounts, for it is not so important that art represent life accurately, rather the focus should be on the usefulness of the story or narrative (2004, 126). Likewise, in the case of performance, the focus should be the embodiment’s effect on the spectators. In the same fashion, Arthur P. Bochner contends that the real issue with auto-ethnography is “what narratives do, what consequences they have, and to what uses they can be put” (2001, 154), and consequently, what performances do, what consequences of effects they promote, and how useful they can be, for instance, to question rigid identity solutions, to contest authority, or to increase awareness, is crucial. In essence, what matters in *Tus tortillas* is its verisimilitude, which for Ellis and Bochner is the fact that it invokes in the readers/spectators a sense that the process embodied is lifelike, believable, and possible (2000, 751). Because Monterroso shows and embodies, rather than tells or narrates the lived experience of the *tortillera*, her self-exploratory art is key as a counter-discourse to socially assigned scripts and hegemonic power struggles that have been oppressing the *mujer* Maya. As her embodiment results in expanding ethnic positions to find her own, Monterroso’s practice is often subversive and ironic. Contrary to traditional social behaviors, Monterroso, a *Ladina*, fully embraces and embodies an indigenous woman in her *tortillera* exploration.

Auto-ethnography as carnivalesque practice is a powerful way of destabilizing authority that often leads to rethinking identity. Since “everyday practices are increasingly pervaded by impulses for self-documentation and the reproduction of images of the self [,] the radical dissolution of the ethnographic ‘I’ and the eye blurs distinctions between ethnographic representations of others (ethnography) and those others’ self-representations (autoethnography)” (Maréchal 2010, 44). Consequently, Monterroso’s great care and attention in recording *Tus tortillas* – a feat precisely for which she won a prize-adds to the new current of hybrid forms and registers that explore the manifestations of the

Self and the social construction of identity^{xi}. Auto-ethnography is better understood as cultural practice, and as ethical practice, as story that re-enacts an experience by which people find meaning and through that meaning are able to cope with the trauma of said experience.^{xii} Similar insights have been developed by Deborah E. Reed-Danahay, Carolyn Ellis, and Garance Maréchal, among others. At the performance level, auto-ethnographies “contribute to remaking self and identity as a *site* for the negotiation of social, cultural, and political dialogue, often in a carnivalesque form” (Maréchal 2010, 44). Likewise, each of Monterroso’s gestures and her embodiment contribute to an accumulation of experiences that, as geological strata, ultimately constitute her identity, both as performer and individual, subject and object of study. Her “passing” can be understood as what V. Chen and D. Tanno identify as a “double vision” since “a person’s dual identity or multiple identity is no longer perceived as an ‘either/or’ choice, but ‘both/and’” (quoted in Chuang 2004, 55). Thus, problems often arise as there is a tendency to misunderstand an identity situation such as the one embodied by Monterroso because her identity is a combination of both/and simultaneous existence, rather than neither/nor. Often, she will be perceived as someone trying to “pass” the imaginary line between privilege and oppression.

Ultimately, it is the performative aspect of “passing” that is crucial to understand how Monterroso disrupts the national narrative of upward mobility through whitening by embodying the practices and behaviors of a *tortillera*. In fact, Monterroso *becomes* a *tortillera* [my emphasis]. Considering “passing” an act one performs by acting or mimicking a certain set of behaviors and practices, it follows that it is by performing that which is Other to her, that an individual becomes someone else, an ambivalent “I”; and therefore, Monterroso increases her social and cultural status. Whitening or creolizing her gestures would equate to denying her indigenous ancestry, while just sticking to a traditional Maya reenactment would be the same as disregarding her *Ladina* and privileged position

in Guatemalan society. Instead, her “passing” is ambivalent and could easily be interpreted as shooting either upwardly or downwardly, since what really matters is her “in-betweenness”, to borrow Doris Sommer’s expression^{xiii}. Consequently, Monterroso’s ability lies in the fact that as a hybrid subject, she disrupts any preconceived and expected representations, for she is a subject-in-construction and in permanent contradiction and affirmation. Pointing towards that sense, her words in the performance mention an “uncertain image” (Monterroso 2004) as if an idea is still taking shape and this identity construction is still taking place.

While her identity construction materializes, Monterroso openly manifests her intent to seduce and to fit into a new paradigm of indigeneity. Her own words presenting *Tus tortillas*: “It [her spoken words-poem-incantation and her performance] connotes the controversy of a *Ladina* woman that wants to be accepted by the same Maya culture and tries to seduce her” (Monterroso 2004). Thus, Monterroso is, to borrow Sommer’s expression, “recognizing [herself] as the Other’s Other, as the potential object of another (asymmetrical) desire” (1999, 30). In this sense, her “passing” becomes an open dialogue with her own heritage through her relearning of her *abuelita*’s language and through the embodiment of the long practiced daily ritual of *tortillar*. In *Tus tortillas*, Monterroso proves that there can be and there are, in fact, variations to the dichotomic line that assigns Guatemalan citizens to the subject positions of *Indios* or *Ladinos*.

While hybridizing the *tortillera*, or flipping/re-signifying it, Monterroso is a mediator between said speakers and listeners in the speech act of representation. She does not pretend to be speaking for anyone else but herself; while exploring her own path she also bridges the gap between those that cannot speak and those that refuse to listen, for she embodies a visual scream that resounds in high pitch across the complete social spectrum. Her locus of enunciation is problematic; however, as she provides alternative paths of resistance to the *mujer* Maya by literally embodying her representation, walking in her shoes, and by doubling it,

she displays the hidden violence implicit in the “housewivication” of Guatemalan women, and complicates for the audience their understanding of categories such as femininity, Mayaness, and humility. There is no stable image of the *tortillera*, and Monterroso by displaying other possibilities contributes to de-stabilize “naturalized” notions of femininity and Mayaness that have been consistently oppressing women in Guatemala. Her “anti-story” or counter-narrative is in fact a critique of such naturalization of symbolic violence against women, and of the exclusion of the *mujer* Maya from the daily democratic practices of the nation.

Nevertheless, does Monterroso have the right to speak for the *mujer* Maya?, I ask. Nelson argues that “the transparency of access to subjectivity, the very category of “woman”, and the move to “speak for” the Other made by anthropologists, whites, feminists, first worlders, and solidarity activists, and so on (all locations I must speak from) have been stumped (bewildered, and made political) for some time now” (2001, 318). Ellis reminds us that performance theorists such as D. Conquergood and Ronald Pielas claim that “performers should not try to speak ‘for a community,’ but instead should be engaged in shared conversations in which they speak ‘to and with the community’” (Ellis 2004, 208). Thus, “performance is not so much representational as it is dialogic and conversational” (208) and personifying a cultural icon like the *tortillera* complicates representational issues, even if it also opens up a dialogue with the public about femininity and indigeneity in contemporary Guatemala.

I contend that this performance becomes a transgressive act by emphasizing that the iconic *tortillera* is an unstable “text.” Consequently, there is a need for an emergent, situated, and reflexive construction that renames and reclaims a particular and personal experience, in this case that of Monterroso. In that sense, as a personal embodiment that disrupts and disturbs master narratives, *Tus tortillas* is political, rather than cathartic, for it empowers the *mujer* Maya and her descendants as autonomous social subjects capable of writing their own

history and of re-creating their own cultural icons and practices. At the same time, it urges the spectators, echoing Ellis's words, "to be critical, appreciative, and bear witness to personal suffering and lived experience" (Ellis 2004, 209). In this manner, spectators have the burden of competence in interpreting and producing meaning out of Monterroso's performance; however, as a critic, can I speak of a privileged locus of interpretation?

A locus of interpretation for *Tus tortillas* would have to be situated, and circumscribed to the lived experiences of the spectators themselves, taking into consideration what Sommer identifies as the "site of trouble [that] is the underdeveloped place where reader [spectator] response meets political imperatives [and] the inordinate difficulty that educated readers [spectators] have in recognizing themselves as textual targets" (1999, 13). Although Monterroso does make a considerable effort to make her performance available to Western spectators, it remains problematic how an indigenous audience would react and respond to her performance, most likely in a distinct manner. Her emphasis on reviving her indigenous fluency and her exploration of her own ethnic background, nevertheless, make her complicit with the indigenous subaltern's employment of a specific strategy of resistance. Often it is not that the subaltern cannot speak, but that the colonizers cannot listen or chose to suppress, ignore, or simply fail to understand native "texts" and their meanings. In Sommer's opinion, "To ask if the subaltern can speak, as Gayatri Spivak had asked, misses a related point. The pertinent question is whether the other party can listen" (1999, 20). In response, Monterroso's performance as is, becomes a complex interweavement of *cosmovisiones*, colliding different possibilities of meaning from two very distinct epistemologies. "Fluidity, ambiguity, and hybridity are 'threatening' [to the audience] because they represent the possibility of an in-between, of contamination and obfuscation of not only personal, but also epistemological boundaries" (Eileraas 1997, 137). That the meaning of Monterroso's performance

for a Maya audience might be distinct from an Occidentalized one, only solidifies the argument that her careful recitation of the Maya Q'eq'chi' poem *Lix cua rahro* and the latter orchestrated embeddedness with her own body fluids work in tandem to infuse her performance with coded meaning and symbolic understanding that is unavailable at a first impression. Relying on the power of Maya hermeneutics, her performance stands as a subtle, but not less poignant critique of the imported system of knowledge and meaning production of the invaders, most notably through the ethnographic model of Western Academia and its reified notion of indigeneity. Thus, her *tortillera* conspicuously undermines the representations of the *mujer* Maya enclosed in the ethnographic museum, from which it stemmed, and instead reveals the fallacies of Mayaness as spectacle, a commodity available to vast audiences.

Continuing my line of inquiry, how does Monterroso's locus of enunciation affect her performance? Noticing the position from which one speaks is fundamental for the success of *Tus tortillas* because without fully acknowledging her own hybridity and ambivalence as a cultural subject, Monterroso would not be able to display the fissures and interstices in the iconic *tortillera* as the metonymic amalgam that condenses the specificity of Guatemalan identity politics. Monterroso needs to carefully strip and bare the nakedness of her own problematic identity to highlight her fragmentary and in-construction subject position as a Maya descendant and the endless meanings for the "*tortillera*." Patrick Slattery, cited by Ellis, makes a case for arts-based autoethnography in the sense that "arts-based inquiry experiments with alternative ways to transform what is in our consciousness into a public form that others can take in and understand" (2004, 215). Thus, "arts-based researchers include the artist's subjectivity and present their work as embodied inquiry – sensuous, emotional, complex, intimate [and] they expect their projects to evoke response, inspire imagination, give pause for new possibilities and meanings, and open new

questions and avenues of inquiry” (215). Therefore, Monterroso is moving in while moving out of the iconic *tortillera* in *Tus tortillas*, and she does so in order to produce a specific effect, unsettle the audience, and to open new possibilities for the *mujer* Maya and her descendants. Provoking in the public the need to rethink contemporary notions of femininity and indigeneity in Guatemala, what matters is the usefulness of her performance, besides the aesthetic aspect or its artistic *mise-en-scène*. She wants to contaminate or infect others, to curse them, with what she sees as the need to create her own *tortillera*, thus with their own likewise problematic and inquiring cultural icons.

Monterroso is also addressing the academia with *Tus tortillas*, mainly those American anthropologists doing ethnography in her country, and she reacts against their authority and skewed view of indigenous people or their “scientific” Occidentalism. Certain anthropologists such as Kay B. Warren have long addressed such ethical and methodological issues, especially concerning, as she had already stated in 1997, “the fact that the US political and military involvement in Guatemala was part of the problem” (1997, 40), even if anthropologists like herself did not support them. Furthermore, indigenous scholars that often function as organic intellectuals in Gramsci’s sense, also rebel against such depictions and outsiders’ contribution to reify Maya identity. For instance, Victor Montejo writes that “Indigenous people have always complained that anthropologists do not listen to them, that instead they have represented native people with the anthropologist’s preferred images: “primitives”, “minorities”, “backward”, or just “informants” (1992, 16). Moreover, Montejo makes the point that it is the colonizer that does not listen: “We Mayans find it difficult to deal with the academic world because if we tell the “experts” what is Maya, they are reluctant to listen; instead they find it more scientific (comfortable) to tell us what it is to be Maya, or to define Maya culture” (1992, 17). Warren explains that Pan-Maya critics of anthropology have denounced “the use of ethnographic interviews and autobiographical accounts

which underscore individualism and divisions within the Maya community” (1997, 41). Spivak’s notion of strategic essentialism is more necessary than ever for Maya survival as understood from the complex strategizing of ethnic organizations. While Mayanists seek to represent themselves in a politically advantageous manner, Monterroso as an artist and auto-ethnographer strips them bare, exposing the contradictions inherent to the Maya discourse of gender complementarity and overall harmony in the home as in nature.

Most significantly, and beyond such complex gaps in understanding and worldview, *Tus tortillas*’ ambivalence allows it to fluctuate between being read as a typical “intercultural text”, to borrow Pratt’s expression (2008, 7), and as a *testimonio* (2008, 222). However, Monterroso is not a subaltern, rather a privileged *Ladina*. As an intercultural text, *Tus tortillas* would always be in-between the Maya and the Western worldviews, unstable. While *testimonio*, it would give authority to subaltern voices. Notwithstanding, this performance is not a *testimonio* or testimonial representation, rather an exploration into the repertoire, because it is more focused on the embodiment of certain cultural and identity practices than on the writing Self of subalternity and the intricacies of a “rhetoric of particularism” to use Sommer’s term (1999, 1). In *Tus tortillas*, the idea of transcultural production, appropriation, and circulation of “texts” and cultural practices is scrutinized, but only to the extent that it relates to Monterroso’s personal path to reinventing the *tortillera*. Monterroso’s performance is a form of auto-ethnographic inquiry^{xiv}, even though not necessarily coinciding with what is contemporarily understood as auto-ethnographic performance or an auto-ethnographic “text.”

In conclusion, Monterroso’s focus is on evocative self-exploration since “Evocative stories activate subjectivity and compel emotional response” (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 744). Evocative performance is at the intersection of auto-ethnography and performance studies, wherein certain postulates hold true: both

the performer and the audience are key elements of research; the performer's embodied experiences create an effect and have an impact on the audience; the goal is to provoke emotion and a reaction in the spectators, and to do so in a controlled environment, in order for further analysis to take place. Hence, what is performed on stage or staged can be a multitude of representations, including daily behavior and practices as life history and the difference being that the performer is also constructing a portrait of the Self while fully embracing the Other.

This performance brings to the forefront questioning of the Guatemalan hegemonic narrative on indigenous women, their domestic work, and their social invisibility. Through the minutia's repetition of their daily tortilla-making, this enactment of millenary gestures showcases how any disruption to their social script as *tortilleras* brings visibility to their erasure, particularly considering how fundamental they are to the traditional indigenous narrative. As social reproducers and likewise as tortilla-makers, indigenous women make viable this narrative that feeds Guatemala as a nation of indigenous people and a glorious native past. Monterroso's performance questions this cultural instance from the intimate space of domesticity-the kitchen-and reflects the tedious, monotonous, and often unappreciated work of tortilla-making. Monterroso's inquiry contrasts heavily with the cultural and symbolic glorification of the indigenous past and the current heteropatriarchal capitalist structures of power that keep global indigenous women literally and metaphorically in the nation's kitchen.

In this complex and sophisticated performance, the "truth" value produced is embodied implicitly in a discourse that, in a personal subjective manner, tends to reduce indigenous women and tortilla-makers to a common denominator – they're all domestic workers in the epitomic nation's kitchen – without considering their distinct subject identities and struggles. By essentializing them as one and embodying that problematic "common" indigenous-gendered-identity,

Monterroso's auto-ethnography fails as all auto-ethnographic exploration can potentially fail as it records, analyzes, and voices only **one** subject's point-of-view or lived experience. The value of this careful form of inquiry-self-inquiry-and experience-recording lies in the access it provides to a specific form of narrative, discourse, or subject position and in the complex meta-reflection that it ensues from its own narrators/observers/subjects-cum-objects-of-study. However, since performance art inherently disrupts conventions and suspends presumed values and judgements, Monterroso plays in this performance with that access and displaces the self-reflection to another level of fictionalized poetic dissonance through usage of the Q'eq'chi Maya symbolic incantations that show up in the video as simultaneous Spanish and broken English subtitles. Even though she clearly shows what a *tortillera* is – and here I see a direct reference to the Textile and Mayan Museum in Guatemala City where anyone can find an ethnographic representation of the typical Maya kitchen with a figure of an indigenous woman engaged in tortilla-making – Monterroso's goal is achieved by disrupting this narrative and alternatively, using her artistic license, juxtaposing to it another tale of a rebellious woman who doctor's her lover's food and follows a non-traditional destiny of her own choosing. This freedom to choose their own fate and the agency to keep themselves free of oppression and violence is fundamentally what indigenous Guatemalan women and their descendants lack, and that is what Monterroso's performance aims to sublimate artistically with this performance.

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ⁱ For a thorough analysis of what it means to be indigenous and who defines it in the Latin American context, particularly considering the Guatemalan case, see the works of Brent Metz.

ⁱⁱ My Translation from the Spanish original.

Ladin@ in the Guatemalan context is a term that refers to the mestizo or mixed-race population of the country, and is officially recognized as a distinct ethnic group by the Ministry of Education, who bases its working definition of the term on a monograph by Ronald Soto-Quirós and David Díaz Arias: "The ladino population has been characterized as a heterogeneous population which expresses itself in the Spanish language as a maternal language, which possesses specific cultural traits of Hispanic origin mixed with indigenous cultural elements, and dresses in a style commonly considered as western" (Soto-Quirós and Arias (2006) cited by Reyes de Marín (2019) based on the MINEDUC original 2008 document). What is relevant for this essay is the understanding that *Ladina* women in Guatemala are a distinct social category in contrast to indigenous women who still observe the ruling and lived in their original communities.

For further exploration of the complexities and the construction of this term, which is not to be confused with Sephardic Jews designations, namely its problematic instrumentalization, see Rodas Núñez 2006 and Soto-Quirós and Díaz Arias 2006.

ⁱⁱⁱ For a detailed account of this term and its history, see Reed-Danahay 1997.

^{iv} For Estebán, "embodied anthropology" is a form of anthropology from which "ones questions the multiplicity of selves [Is] that characterize the scientific work through its connections to biography, research, and social and historical context" (2004, 2 footnote). Thus, the issue in question is considering anthropology's dual dimensions of self-observation and auto analysis, culminating in a broader picture of one's lived experience.

^v I have analyzed the embodiment strategies in this same performance in Barbosa 2016 and I address the poetic disobedience and incantation as another in a forthcoming publication in 2022.

^{vi} The poem that accompanies this performance, *Lix cua rahro/Tus tortillas, mi amor*, is available at the end of this essay as an Annex.

^{vii} My Translation from the Spanish original.

^{viii} My Translation from the Spanish original.

^{ix} For more on the role maize has in Maya worldviews and their sense of place through connection to the land, and women's connection to perpetuating its symbolic meaning and presence in daily rituals, including storytelling and food preparation, see Goody 2002 and Huff 2006.

^x Pratt theorizes autoethnographic text as "a text in which people undertake to describe themselves in ways that engage with representations others have made of them" (1999, 501).

^{xi} In fact, there are new hybrid genres and methods that blend ethnography and autoethnography such as "witness narratives in cases of social violence and repression; private folk ethnography in households and specific collective settings; and testimonies of daily life in captivity, total institutions, armed conflicts, or self-reflection on symbolic violence" (Maréchal 2010, 45).

^{xii} For the benefits of auto-ethnography, see Chang 2016.

^{xiii} Doris Sommer calls attention to what she identifies as "the lesson of passing," through a careful examination of Henry Louis Gates, Jr.'s [*Authenticity, or the Lesson of Little Tree*]: "The lesson of passing, Gates concludes, is that 'No human culture is inaccessible to someone who makes the effort to understand, to learn, to inhabit another world'" (cited in Sommer 1999, 17). Sommer adds that this availability is what makes minority critics angry "because ethnic cultural content is eaten up by white consumers who are careless of the people they cannibalize" (Sommer 1999, 17).

^{xiv} For a definition of performance ethnography, see McCall 2000.

ANNEX

Lix cua rahro/Tus tortillas, mi amor

El día se aclara
The day is clearing
Mala suerte embrujada
Bad luck bewitched
Cada pueblo con su respectivo idioma
Each people with it's own language
Amar hasta rayar el alba
To love until the dawn is grate
[rahoc tixto toj iq'uec' re ("love until the break of dawn")]
Amasar
To knead
Alma y cuerpo
Soul and body
Nuestros antecesores
Our absent ancestors
Amar hasta rayar el alba
We love until the dawn is grate
Frialdad
Coldness
Se le están rodando las lágrimas
Tears are rolling down
Matador de mariposas blancas
Somos mujeres
He is a white butterfly killer
[aj camsinel pepem pompori ("killer of white butterflies")]
We are women
[Ixko ("we are women")]
Vagina
He's darkness
Xk'ajyinal
Su oscuridad
Tomar mujer es tabú
To take a woman is taboo
Imagen incierta
Soledad
Loneliness
[Junatalil ("loneliness")]
Yumbetac
La mujer fornicia
She fornicates
K'un besinc
Enamorar
To fall in love
Xk'ajyinal
Su oscuridad

He's Darkness
[xk' ojyinal ("your darkness")]
Ixka
Somos mujeres
We are women
Amn iz'ejcual
Alma y cuerpo
Soul and body
[amn tz'ejcual ("body and soul")]
Culb
Corazón de palo tirado en la montaña
Heart of stick thrown in the mountain
Xquiq'uel
Mi sangre
My blood
Xk'ajyinal
Su oscuridad
He's Darkness
Aj pujuyer
Guardacamino
She guards way
Soledad
[voz off] Lix cua rahro
Tus tortillas mi amor
Your tortillas mi love

Versión Inglés – 2 –
Guatemala México Mayo 2004

(My literal transcription from the online video by Sandra Monterroso)
[Translation according to Sara Garzón, 2015]

‘I *am* Raped’ The Raped Subject as Monstrous Other

Lynsay Hodges

You see it in their eyes, first of all. Whatever light glimmered in them before extinguishes and all you are left with is your own image reflected back at you, hopeful that this time, the response might be different. But it never is. Sometimes it feels like you are making progress. That you are finally beginning to leave it in the past, back where it belongs. But then occasion has it that you feel you should tell someone about it. It is precisely in these moments that you are confronted with a terrifying fact. I was not raped, no: I am raped. There is a key difference here. It ensures that the acts of violence remain ever present, a stigma on the raped subject's sense of self. They can never escape their past. (Hodges)

The above excerpt of a phenomenological autoethnographic study that I conducted (more on this methodology below) explains the process by which the subject becomes not a survivor of sexual violence, but a *raped subject*: that is, the disclosure of acts of violence against the person leaves an indelible trace of that violence on them, a stickiness of signs and affects that mean they are forever associated with it within the eyes of another (see Ahmed 2014). When this occurs, the rape is ever-present: the individual was not raped, but *is* raped. With such associations adhered to them, their ‘discreditable stigma’ (see Goffman 1968) is fully revealed. They can now be known as none other than this person to whom

terrible acts have occurred, leaving invisible yet still perceptible scars upon them. They are marred by these and yet they cannot remove them.¹

I have written elsewhere on how the raped subject is an abject being to themselves (Hodges forthcoming). Here, I also briefly mentioned the ways in which they are rendered monstrous in the eyes of others. As I write:

Abjection of the subject does not exist solely in their own eyes. As Margrit Shildrick demonstrates, that which is deemed abject or monstrous is that which exposes the vulnerability of an enclosed, individualised and autonomous self... The monster threatens precisely because of its vulnerability to harm, as it is this vulnerability that demonstrates to the monster's interlocutor that they, too, are vulnerable. The rape victim/survivor, then, becomes a monster within society. Whether seen through the eyes of pity or disgust... they are abjected by others just as much as by themselves. (Hodges forthcoming)

It is this brief aside in that essay that I wish to expound on more fully here. This paper therefore explores the ways in which the raped subject is constituted as a monstrous Other. As we shall see, though, the very fact of their monstrosity is predicated on the fact that they constantly threaten to escape their confinement into the role of Other (Shildrick 2002). As such, the boundaries between Self/Other, inside/outside, pure/impure, normal/abnormal *et cetera* break down, as the monster is revealed to be that which is abjected in order to construct ourselves as Selves, but whose presence continues to threaten (Shildrick 2002; Kristeva 1982). This construction, therefore, is inherently fragile. As such, the ontological security that is usually experienced by the Self becomes challenged, as the monstrous being threatens to engulf it, taking it in and challenging its notions of inviolability and autonomy (Laing 2010, 44; Shildrick 2002, 51). In these respects, then, the raped subject is just one of many monstrous subjects whose precarious Otherness are used to construct the notion of the Self, despite the fact

¹ This is why I prefer to use the term 'raped subject' throughout, instead of victim or survivor: it is more honest in how the subject is treated by others and how their subjectivity is therefore constructed for them by these others.

that this reliance constantly threatens to destroy that which it creates. As such, the Self must reject, *abject* the raped subject, using isolation, projection, and what Laing (2010, 47) describes as 'petrification' in order to constitute them as a thing, an object of the Self's experience, as opposed to a subject in their own right.

Therefore, throughout this paper I shall take the reader on a journey of first understanding the concept of monstrosity and abjection. I then detail the ways in which this is psychologically dealt with by the Self when encountering a monstrous Other. Once this abstract discussion has taken place, I explain how this applies societally due to a variety of power structures. I then bring in the raped subject and explain how and why they are monstrous. Finally, I deal with the manner in which the raped subject is treated because of their monstrosity. However, it should be noted that this can be more widely applied to a variety of monstrous Others, as there is commonality in these methods, and so will be of use to scholars in areas outside of sexual violence research. In total, however, this paper aims to be an intervention into this aforementioned field, to further detail the frankly atrocious ways in which raped subjects are Othered and therefore treated with disregard and contempt.

However, before we begin to go further into how this all operates, it is prudent to first outline the methodological underpinnings of this paper.

Methodology: Phenomenological Autoethnography

As briefly mentioned above, the methodological underpinnings of this paper is something that I call 'phenomenological autoethnography'. But what *is* this perhaps peculiar sounding method?

Key to this is first an understanding of what both phenomenology and autoethnography seek to do. What binds these two traditions together is the emphasis on lived experience. As Henry S. Rubin writes, "phenomenology attempted to account for essences and experience as the derivatives of embodied

subjectivity rather than as external discursive forces” (1998, 267). As such, instead of looking outwards into structures of meaning, traditional phenomenology attempted understanding from the perspective of being-in-the-world. This embodied approach necessarily implies lived experience, even if an attempt at bracketing (as in the Husserlian approach) is made. However, as Rubin goes on to note, this separation from wider structures of power is only possible if these do not constantly impinge on the subject – a rare occurrence indeed. As such, a more critical or perhaps post-phenomenological approach is aware of these and their effects on the body’s being-in-the-world and its experiences of human phenomena such as cognition, perception, embodiment and affect/emotion (for an exemplary account of the latter, see Ahmed 2014). Structural relations are therefore considered in the same breath as an individual’s experience, as these are wedded together.

As such, “a phenomenological method can return legitimacy to the knowledges generated by the experiencing “I””, and it “works to return agency to us as subjects and to return authority to our narratives” (Rubin 1998, 267; 271). Lived experience of the world, which includes lived experience of power and oppression, is given primacy in this kind of phenomenological research. This has serious crossovers with autoethnography, which “[u]ses deep and careful self-reflection – typically referred to as “reflexivity” – to name and interrogate the intersections between self and society, the particular and the general, the personal and the political” (Adams et al. 2015, 2). Indeed, in feminist research such as my own, reflexivity such as this is not a luxury but should, in fact, be mandatory: as Liz Kelly notes, “[u]nlike non-feminists, we do not choose reflexivity as one research practice amongst many; it is integral to a feminist approach to research” (1988, 5). This is a recognition that subjectivity always bears upon our research and must be accounted for. Both methods of phenomenology and autoethnography, then, can seek to situate the feminist researcher within their

society and analyse their experiences in such a way as to create rigorous, academic data that far exceeds the notion of 'mere' journal keeping that can sometimes tar both methods.

The method for this particular paper is simple. It is drawn from a wider project in which I wrote a plethora of vignettes on my lived experience as a raped subject. Whilst that particular project was largely more focused on affective experiences, and much of it forms my other work (Hodges forthcoming), I maintained an awareness of wider culture. After all, without a wider culture that is structured by various forms of oppression, I would not have been raped in the first place. It was from two vignettes in particular that the kernel of this project at hand was borne: from the found awareness, already stated above, that the rape remains constant ("*I am raped*") and from the understandings of abjection of the raped subject.

I have attended previously to the feelings of self-abjection that raped subjects experience (Hodges forthcoming). Needless to say, the experience of sexual violence deeply changes the subject's relationship with themselves. Indeed, there is a plethora of research into the ways the raped subject experiences themselves and their relationship to what happened to them: stand-out examples also written from the first-person perspective of lived experience are the works of both Karyn L. Freedman (2014) and Susan J. Brison (2002). Liz Kelly (1988) also surveys 60 women in their experiences of a 'continuum' of sexual violence, including acts such as flashing, domestic violence, rape or 'forced sex', and incest. Some of my own conclusions on the self-abjection of the raped subject have also been demonstrated in other research, such as that of Bülent Diken and Carsten Laustsen, who also come to the conclusion that "the rape victim often perceives herself as an abject, as a 'dirty', morally inferior person. The penetration inflicts on her body and her self a mark, a stigma, which cannot be effaced" (2005, 113). As such, I do not wish to attend to the individual's psychology here as it has been covered in more detail elsewhere by both myself and others.

Instead, the focus of this essay is the further enunciation of how the raped subject is marked as and formed into a monstrous Other, as was also revealed by my authoethnographic writings. As mentioned, key to this was the recognition, borne from introspection on a number of my own experiences and contrasting that to wider culture, that the rape remains forever ‘stuck’ (see Ahmed 2014) to the raped subject as a stigma and therefore something to be treated with disdain. Additionally revealed was the fact that the rape of the subject is a constant reminder to others, too, that they are vulnerable to potentially irreparable harm. This vulnerability is central to the conception of monstrosity used in this essay. It is to this that we can now turn.

Monstrosity: A Definition

Before I can more fully explore the points revealed in the introduction above, we must first come to an understanding of what monstrosity actually *is*. To do this, I will be drawing primarily from the work of Margrit Shildrick (2002) in her book *Embodying the Monster: Encounters with the Vulnerable Self*. As the title to this book reveals, key to the understanding of monstrosity is a corollary understanding of vulnerability. As Shildrick writes, vulnerability “is characterised... as a negative attribute, a failure of self-protection, that opens the self to the potential of harm” (2002, 2). As such, “[t]hose who too readily admit or who succumb to vulnerability are either weak or unfortunate, beset by moral and/or material failure” (71-72). Vulnerability is therefore seen as a characteristic of the Other, who is marginalised on the basis of their ‘failure’ to be free from harm or impurity of some kind. The Self, on the other hand, conceives of itself as pure, inviolable and in constant control, distinct from that which surrounds it and enclosed by the boundaries of the body (but, crucially, is *not* the body itself) (50-51).

This conception of the Self can be threatened, however, by the presence of those Others who expose the disavowed fallacies on which it is predicated: that is,

those Others that prove that the Self is not fully autonomous, that its boundaries can be breached, that it is vulnerable to harm and to dirt and to corruption of all kinds, that embodiment is crucial to its constitution and expression. They must therefore be expelled in order to attempt to establish the Self in the ways it perceives itself as written above. However, "[a]t the very moment of definition, the subject is marked by its excluded other, the absent presence which primary identification must deny, and on which it relies" (Shildrick 2002, 5). The Other therefore cannot be fully expunged, for they are required in order for the Self to create itself in opposition to them. It is this that causes them to be monstrous, for their very existence is a threat to the Self that cannot be fully negated even as they are abjected. As Julia Kristeva writes, "from its place of banishment, the abject does not cease challenging its master" (1982, 2).

The monster is therefore that which the Self attempts to create as its Other whilst constructing itself via binary oppositions. What the monster contains is all that which is repudiated by the Self during that moment of creation: vulnerability, a lack of fixity in boundaries and identity, an absence of total control, its association with the body (as opposed to being a separateness contained within it). The Self has a disquieting recognition of this fact: the monster "threatens to expose the vulnerability at the heart of the ideal model of body/self" (Shildrick 2002, 54). It therefore must be abjected, kept at a distance, lest its touch becomes contagious and dissolves the differences that the Self so cherishes. Yet a part of it is also fascinating: "it is nonetheless a privileged object of the gaze" (73), that "arouses always the contradictory responses of denial *and* recognition, disgust *and* empathy, exclusion *and* identification" (17). These feelings of disgust are central to the experience of the monstrous as abject, but following on from Rina Arya (2017), I also find the need to point out the centrality of feelings of fear. Because the abjected, monstrous Other so threatens the Self, they are not only to be reviled but also cause feelings of terror. However, because they are such a

borderline case – one that triggers both feelings of recognition and rejection – they remain compelling in the face of this.

The Threat of Ontological Security

The monster is therefore that which causes a deeply disturbing existential crisis within the Self. What is of use to describe this process is the concept of ‘ontological insecurity’, as proposed by R.D. Laing (2010) in *The Divided Self*. What I am not interested in is how this is pathologised by Laing in his role as a psychiatrist. Indeed, Laing establishes a binary between secure/insecure that is less useful and accurate than an understanding of the phenomenon as a *spectrum* of experience. What I argue is that, while the Self is usually ontologically secure, when it encounters the monster, it is so deeply threatened that it is triggered into having an episode of ontological *insecurity* until the menace is neutralised.

So, what is ontological insecurity? To understand this, we must first understand its ‘opposite’. As Laing writes:

A man [sic] may have a sense of his presence in the world as a real, alive, whole, and, in a temporal sense, a continuous person. As such, he can live out into the world and meet others: a world and others experienced as equally real, alive, whole, and continuous. Such a basically ontologically secure person will encounter all the hazards of life, social, ethical, spiritual, biological, from a centrally firm sense of his own and other people’s reality and identity. (2010, 39)

To be ontologically insecure, then, is to experience one’s sense of being as somehow unreal, fractured, discontinuous, even ‘dead’. Such an individual constantly feels “precariously differentiated from the rest of the world, so that his identity and autonomy are always in question” (2010, 42). As Laing states, “[i]t is, of course, inevitable that an individual whose experience of himself is of this order can no more live in a ‘secure’ world than he can be secure ‘in himself’”, so that “the ordinary circumstances of everyday life constitute a continual and deadly threat” (42).

While Laing writes, as stated above, as though there is a marked boundary between ontological security/insecurity such that it constitutes a binary, it is not difficult to posit instances in which individuals who are typically secure in their selves suddenly experience a deep sense of insecurity. I argue that an encounter with the monstrous triggers such an experience, in that it confronts the conceptions that the Self holds of its own being in such a way as to deeply challenge its sense of identity and control. This results in what Laing calls the threat of 'engulfment', in which the individual's sense of identity and control is profoundly disputed by the threat of relatedness with an Other. When the monster approaches, *encroaches*, it is felt as a potential contaminant, that its own lack of fixed identity and its own vulnerability may become 'catching'.

The Self must therefore defend against such instances. Laing (2010, 44) argues that the typical response to the anxiety of engulfment is isolation. It therefore tries to isolate itself from monstrosity: if it does not come close, if it remains unseen, if it is abjected, it cannot expose the Self to ontological insecurity or, indeed, dissolution.

There is another tactic, however, that can also be used. Laing (2010, 46-47) states that another anxiety experienced by the ontologically insecure is 'petrification'. This inheres from the fact that the individual needs to be constantly reminded of their own personhood. However, to do so is also to risk seeing others as people, and therefore opening oneself up to the possibility of understanding oneself as not a subject but an *object* of another's experience. I do not necessarily believe this is a threat that the monstrous poses to the Self, in that the monstrous is barely recognised as another person. It is this fact — the monster being denied of personhood — that serves as another defence against the ontological insecurity that monstrosity threatens. By denying the subjectivity of the monstrous Other, the Self is preserved as the one that experiences, as opposed to being the one that is experienced. As such, the monster can be contained as something more easily

discarded, more readily abjected. Indeed, this process of petrification to the point of abjection can so severely infringe on the other's personhood that they are not even constituted as an object: as Kristeva writes, the abject is "[a] 'something' that I do not recognize as a thing" (1982, 2, with "only one quality of the object — that of being opposed to *I*" (1).

Projection

A term that I appropriate from psychoanalysis², projection is described in *Feminism and Psychoanalysis: A Critical Dictionary* as "a process whereby the subject's ego disowns unacceptable impulses by attributing them to someone else; the intolerable feelings are then perceived as coming from the other person who, from then on, appears to the subject as a persecutor" (Wright 1992, 352-353). As such, we can argue that a similar process happens here, although it is not desirous impulses that we speak of. Those qualities the monster owns are those that are repressed by the Self in order to construct itself as a Self. These are then projected onto the monster. By placing these conceptions onto the monstrous Other, they are both acknowledged but not integrated into the psyche in order to protect itself. This allows the Self to place the monster at a distance to it, by turning it into a threat to itself.

Projection in psychoanalysis refers to psychic attributes being placed on others that may not be truly based in the other's reality (for example, selfishness may be projected onto them when this is not characteristic of them). They therefore constitute a phantasy of the other. However, projection in this instance, in the way I use the term here, does accurately describe the reality of the Other as the

² It should be noted here that I do not accept many of the basic premises of psychoanalysis, for example the theories of psychosexual development and, in particular, the Oedipal complex. However, there are times when it can be engaged with in a limited capacity to elucidate on certain psychical processes that it has more accurately observed. This, I believe, is one of them, to some degree. I therefore use the term 'appropriate' here to more accurately describe my engagement with the tradition: taking what is of use, altering it to fit our purposes, and discarding the rest.

vulnerability inherent in the monster *is* true, in that all – both Self *and* Other – are vulnerable, embodied, have their agency limited by external factors, and their identity is not self-contained but instead based on relationality with other subjects and the world. I therefore argue that my use of the term projection at least partially removes it from the realm of psychoanalysis and instead describes more of a phenomenological process through which characteristics of the subject's being are accurately perceived but then repressed for the Self and, instead, are cognitively ascribed to the Other, because they are also accurately perceived as existing in them.

Society's Monsters

So far I have dealt with the phenomenological experiences of the monster. While this gives us some hints to whom society perceives as the monstrous Other, it is absolutely essential to explore this further for two reasons: firstly, because to not do so decontextualises the investigation at hand, rendering it an exercise in abstraction which fails to be of any political or sociological utility; and secondly, because to understand why the raped subject is a monstrous Other, we must have an understanding of this Other's positioning within society. It is to this point that I now turn.

As Kristeva notes, the "abject and abjection are my safeguards. *The primers of my culture*" (1982, 2, emphasis added). It is important to break down this quote into its two parts. The first refers to those processes that have already been detailed, those through which the monster is abjected in order to protect the Self, because to not do so results in "a reality that, if I acknowledge it, annihilates me" (2). The second is revealing. By stating this, Kristeva points to *the centrality of abjection in the formulation of the social*. As she goes on to write, "[t]o be sure, if I am affected by what does not yet appear to me as a thing, *it is because laws, connections, and even structures of meaning govern and condition me*" (10,

emphasis added). This therefore demonstrates that what we consider to be abject or monstrous is not a 'natural' occurrence but is instead deeply indebted to the socio-cultural.

This is a socio-cultural context that is structured by various power relations and systems of oppression. Indeed, the conceptions of the Self that are fundamental are also socially constructed, as Shildrick notes, calling them "the ideal of the humanist subject of modernity" (2002, 5). As such, all that is considered the opposite of this is constructed as the monstrous Other that continually threatens the Self, which must be constantly guarded against. So who does Shildrick identify as operating in this role? Basically, all marginalised and oppressed peoples: "[t]hat which is different must be located outside the boundaries of the proper, in [B]lack people, in foreigners, in animals, in the congenitally disabled, and in women" (5). She charts a genealogy of how this is established throughout her book, drawing on a variety of disparate texts such as Aristotle's writings, medieval teratologies and historical conceptions of motherhood and pregnancy, among many others. Through this, she demonstrates that the ideal subject, the ideal Self, is one that we would recognise as those most privileged in our current society, and that this is constructed through its opposition to those that continue to be maligned. I argue, however, that the list she gives is incomplete: to it, we can add other axes of marginalisation, such as queerness and madness. And, of course, crucial to this essay is, I contend, one more: those who have been sexually violated.

This explanation of the social elements of monstrosity thus reveals that it is not only in the individual encounter with the monstrous that signs are associated with it: in fact, it cannot be just this, because that does not account for the way these signs seem to 'stick' to some bodies more than others. I would like to dwell on this point – *stickiness* – more, as I have mentioned it in passing throughout this essay without so far fully enunciating on the process that underlies it. To this, I

turn to the work of Sara Ahmed in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. As she argues, “stickiness depends on histories of contact that have already impressed upon the surface of the object” (2014, 90). It is difficult to tell the origin point of this contact, of what impressed on which first, “because stickiness involves... a chain of events” (91) that become difficult to discern, especially over time. It is not always necessary, however, to detect an origin to describe the stickiness of signs and affects to an object. What is important is that “signs become sticky through repetition” (91): by the associations being repeated, again and again and again, they build and build until they appear to be ‘natural’ qualities. As such, “[t]he sign is a ‘sticky sign’ as an effect of a history of articulation, which allows the sign to accumulate [affective] value” (92). As such, we can say that monstrosity as a characteristic of the Other becomes stuck to them through the continued repetition of this association as well as others, such as the projection of vulnerability. This comes with affects attached, such as fear and disgust, but also intrigue and pity. The more and more this attribution circulates throughout the ‘affective economies’ that Ahmed (2014) also describes, the more a person – or group of people – becomes associated with it. It is this movement through affective economies that also allows the Self to learn of these monstrous associations before even coming into contact with the Other themselves. As such, they are taught that *this* ‘type’ of person is an embodiment of monstrosity, which then invites them to be treated as such (that is, through abjection and the defence mechanisms described above).

The Raped Subject as Monstrous Other

Rape Crisis England and Wales (2020) reports that 20% of women and 4% of men have experienced some form of sexual violence since the age of 16³. Additionally, approximately 97,000 rapes, attempted rapes, or assaults by penetration occur

³ Information on sexual violence perpetrated against non-binary individuals is unavailable.

every year in England and Wales (2020) – that is, roughly eleven per hour, or one every five-and-a-half minutes. This is an astounding number, illustrative of the prevalence of the experience of being a raped subject.

Additionally, as Linda Martín Alcoff explains, “[f]undamentally, sexual violations occur in the whole human being, body and mind” (2018, 13). As Ann J. Cahill (2001, 3) writes, “it is is a sexually specific act that destroys... the intersubjective, embodied agency and therefore personhood” of the raped subject. This, combined with the research by Diken and Laustsen (2005) on the self-abstracting feelings of the raped subject, shows that we must take seriously the psychological impact of sexual violence on the individual who is forced to undergo it (as I have done elsewhere (Hodges forthcoming)). If the numbers are as large as Rape Crisis states – and there is absolutely no reason to disbelieve these – then there is simply an astonishing amount of individuals going through a considerable degree of trauma and pain relating to their lived experience of rape. As already stated in the methodological section above, this has been covered in detail elsewhere.

This, however, also shows the importance of theorising on the ways in which they are treated in society, as it is surely this that has an effect on how the raped subject feels about themselves and what has happened them – again, lived experience does not exist in a vacuum from its social context but is deeply tied to it. As Alcoff also points out,

“Sexual violations transform us. Both victims and perpetrators are transformed, as well as their families, friends and social circles. Just the knowledge that such events are real possibilities in one's life, however remote, has an impact even on those who have no direct experience of them.” (2018, 110) (emphasis added)

This therefore demonstrates that we must pay attention to the ways sexual violence transforms those proximate to it, but who have not experienced it. Enter stage left, then, those that are disclosed to: those that come face-to-face with the

raped subject and must recognise the vulnerability inherent in their position. And recognised it is: it then *becomes* 'them': they are it and it is they. As I outline in the introduction to this essay, the act socially sticks to the raped subject in the process described above using Ahmed's (2014) framework, haunting them in a way that cannot be easily exorcised. This constitutes them as perpetually raped, as a *raped subject*. These phantoms both exist because the raped subject is monstrous whilst also being that which constitutes them as such. They are, in a sense, caught in a tautology.

Indeed, this may elucidate further on why Alcoff can describe rape as a form of social death: the raped subject is inherently robbed of their subjectivity outside of that of being raped; they are therefore 'dead' socially, non-existent apart from this fact (2018, 65). This is demonstrated in the 'consequences' of sexual violence on the raped subject that Kelly outlines:

loss of safety, loss of independence or autonomy, loss of control, loss of confidence and self-esteem, loss of memories, loss of status (for migrant women who leave a violent husband this may include loss of residence 'rights'), loss of trust, loss of a positive attitude to sexuality, loss of housing and property, loss of jobs, children and educational opportunities, loss of support networks including relatives and friends, loss of health and, in the most extreme cases, loss of life itself. (1988, 189)

As such, the lives of raped subjects can be completely destroyed by the violence they have experienced in many different ways. This further demonstrates the ways in which they socially 'die': robbed of many parts of psychological self-conception as well as of material resources that would relate to the sense of self and its place in the world, raped subjects become nothing but that: *raped*.

Stigma and monstrosity

But why *does* this rape stick to the subject, as I have stated? In many ways, it constitutes a form of stigma, which Erving Goffman describes as "the situation of

the individual who is disqualified from full social acceptance” (1968, 9) due to breaching societal norms. In a social situation, “evidence can arise of his [sic] possessing an attribute that makes him different from others in the category of persons available for him to be, and of a less desirable kind... He is thus reduced in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one” (12). Crucially, “[b]y definition, of course, we believe the person with a stigma *is not quite human*” (15, emphasis added). We see here, then, that to be a stigmatised individual is to be monstrous, seen as that which is excluded from being considered a human subject, a Self. This corresponds to what has been described above: the monstrous Other which the Self constructs itself in opposition to; the petrified creature to protect against ontological insecurity; that which is abjected, which cannot even be properly considered a ‘thing’. Stigmata can therefore be considered the sticky aspects of monstrosity, as well as the markers of social death.

As I have also written elsewhere, the stigma of rape inheres from the fact that “I am revealed in my failure to conform to a specific social rule: *do not get raped*” (Hodges forthcoming). This is the message of a rape culture that promotes victim culpability when discussing the causes of sexual violence, instead of focusing on the fact that people should not be raping others under any circumstances. As such, the raped subject is one who carries the stigmata on their body as the trace proof of their failure to conform to a social rule or norm. It is this, in part, which makes them monstrous.

Abjection and vulnerability

As was outlined earlier in this paper, a key element of what forms the monster is their vulnerability. To understand the raped subject’s threatening vulnerability, it must be remembered how the Self constructs itself. Again, the Self is *not* the body, but is instead contained by it. This body mediates the Self’s relationship

with the world: it serves as the boundary between what is inside (me) and what is outside (not me). Crucial to the Self's sense of identity, control and autonomy is maintaining this distinction, as that which cannot be crossed because the Self is inviolable.

There are, of course, instances in which this separation can be menaced or nullified. One example that befalls most people would be periods of illness (and it is the reminder of this that the disabled Other threatens the Self with). However, the example I would most like to dwell on here, due to the nature of this paper, is rape. Rape is a complete and total destruction of the Self's sense of identity and autonomy. To be raped is to have the notion of the Self's inviolability come crashing down. It is to be harmed in one of the most horrifying ways imaginable. That which is maintained as outside violently forces its way to the inside. The centre of the Self is annihilated, as it is annihilated in any encounter with the abject as we saw Kristeva (1982, 2) describe above (see also Hodges forthcoming). We can see that it meets Arya's exposition of the abject as that which "encroaches on the boundaries of the self, [operating] as a threat, calling being into question" (2017, 56). Indeed, as I have argued elsewhere, rape is one of the most abject encounters one can possibly experience, to the point that the raped subject's sense of self is altered in the aftermath into something abject itself (Hodges forthcoming). And as the quote from Kelly above shows, there are a variety of losses that a raped subject experiences in the aftermath that is outside of their control, further demonstrating their vulnerability to harm and ill.

Rape is therefore a violent reminder of the body and the Self's vulnerability to harm. However, it does not just remind the raped subject of this. When disclosing the fact that one has been raped, the raped subject is not merely disclosing a stigma (as outlined above), but is also, as the quote from myself in the introduction states, reminding their "interlocutor that they, too, are vulnerable" (Hodges forthcoming). It is also in this sense that they are rendered monstrous:

not only are they marked as an Other on the basis of their own vulnerability, their very being serves as a perpetual reckoning for the Self regarding their own violability. As such, their very presence threatens to break down the careful distinctions that the Self puts in place in order to construct and maintain itself.

Object of the gaze and affective reception

We have therefore seen how the raped subject is a monster in terms of their stigma and their vulnerability. What should now be analysed is the ways in which they are treated as a monster. As the opening to this paper details, the raped subject's image is forever changed in the eyes of the Self, constantly marred by that which assailed them. They have not been raped, they *are* raped.

The usage of the word 'image' above is chosen here purposefully, for it highlights that the raped subject is conceptualised as something which is experienced as the object of the gaze. As I outlined above using quotations from Shildrick (2002), the raped subject as monster is a spectacle for the Self to consume. While they do not wish to touch it (as it is conceived of as contagious), the Self certainly wishes to look upon it, inspect it, examine it.

This investigation of the raped subject is not only conducted with the eyes, however:

They want to know everything. They want the gory details. When? Who? How many times? Was it violent? Did it hurt? Will you report it? Why not? Are you getting counselling? Have you been tested? Who else knows? Can I tell so-and-so? Why not? I need someone I can talk to about this too, you know.

As this additional element of the phenomenological autoethnography reveals, the Self so loves to put to questioning that which it deems is its monstrous Other, all the better to scrutinise it. It is here that there are parallels to the complex web of power and pleasure in the confessions and examinations that Foucault describes:

This [task] produced a twofold effect: an impetus was given to power through its very exercise; an emotion rewarded the overseeing control and carried it further; the intensity of the confession renewed the questioner's curiosity; the pleasure discovered fed back to the power that encircled it. (1981, 44-45)

Yes, the Self does indeed enjoy, with a morbid curiosity, searching for all the intricacies of the monster that lies before it. As Shildrick writes, "they [the monster] may elicit the contradictory responses both of horrified disengagement, and of fascination and recognition" (2002, 73). We must not ignore the affectivity here. Both horrified and intrigued, sickened and enraptured, the Self exercises its power over the abject raped subject, consuming them as one would a text. Perhaps, as an aside, this is why "depictions of rape are a pervasive part of this culture, embedded in all of its complex media forms, entrenched in the landscape of visual imagery" (Projanksy 2001, 2): the Self is enthralled by that which it abjects in order to create itself as a Self.

Furthermore, in Kelly's study, many women reported issues in the affective way they were received when disclosing. This is where the affective economy that Ahmed (2014) describes when talking about stickiness comes into play: it instructs the interlocutor on the societally 'acceptable' ways to respond to the monstrous disclosure, based on what emotions stick to the signification of the revelation of raped subjectivity. However, while these may be *socially* accepted, they are often found to be unacceptable by the raped subject themselves, in that they are often extremely distressing for them to experience. As Kelly writes, "[m]any women felt that they were treated as victims and that attitudes towards them changes. Responses of horror, anger, pity, disbelief or blame upset many women" (1988, 204), and some people go so far as to have revenge fantasies on their behalf which they loudly express (204). Indeed, I have personally experienced people of all genders having revenge fantasies quite independent of my own thoughts and feelings on the matter, but expressed in such a way as to pull me into them in disquieting ways that centres *their* anger.

We can see how these affects tie in with the gaze and questioning. There is a curiosity involved in receiving the monstrous disclosure, as I have already outlined. But it also provokes other feelings, such as those of pure horror or of pity. These are put upon the raped subject, making it their responsibility to deal with the emotions of the person they are disclosing to, in a form of what Arlie Russell Hochschild (2012) calls ‘emotion work’, even if that person then reverts to the myths of rape culture to blame the raped subject for their own violation. This emotion work is in fact a form of unpaid labour that is just as tiresome and alienating as other forms of work, and puts the onus of the emotion management of the entire disclosure from both parties squarely onto the raped subject. Furthermore, these emotions of the person being disclosed to are reflected in their questioning, as well as the dying light in the eyes outlined in the introduction to this piece, tying in with Kelly’s note above about the changed perceptions and attitudes towards the raped subject (1988, 204). In all of this, we see the responsibility for how the disclosure is handled is passed onto the raped subject themselves, who is treated as a text to be read and interrogated whilst performing emotion work for the the person being disclosed to as they experience a number of ‘stuck’ emotions that are indicative of the fact that they find the raped subject to be monstrous: something horrifying yet compelling, something to be pitied whilst also reviled.

Ontological insecurity and defence mechanisms

To become the object of this affectively charged scrutiny reveals the ‘petrification’ process, as enunciated by Laing (2010), that was detailed above: the personhood of the raped subject is absolutely denied, constructing them as a thing or, in extreme cases of abjection, not even a thing. This is to protect the Self from the threat of engulfment by the raped subject’s monstrosity. If the process of investigation is not carefully managed, the inherency of vulnerability signified by

the raped subject threatens to overwhelm the Self, denying it of the foundational lies that it is based upon: of separateness, inviolability and control.

This also constitutes a form of isolation, yet another defence mechanism, as was also shown above: by marking the raped subject with their stigma, there is a schism between them and the rest of society. They are figuratively isolated from all of the Selves that comprise it, kept at a distance to prevent from their pollution.

Projection, which has also been written upon here, serves as the final measure of protecting against the monstrous raped subject. By projecting vulnerability and other conceived-as-negative qualities onto the raped subject, the Self can then abject them afterwards in a manner that prevents conscious identification with them, which would reveal the Self's own vulnerability. The repressed elements of the Self can therefore be acknowledged, but only as qualities of that which it is not.

Through these ways, the demarcation between the Self and its monstrous Other can be managed. A complex combination of these three tactics operate when the Self comes into contact with the raped subject. To not do so would reveal that the Self is also vulnerable to being raped, to having its boundaries transgressed, to losing all sense of autonomy and choice.

The threat of further violence

Finally, there is one area that I shall only touch on briefly, as it is certainly something deserving of further research elsewhere, but is still important to note: the threat of further violence against the raped subject. In Kelly's study, she found that there was "[a] number of instances of men using knowledge of past abuse as a justification for their abusive behaviour" (1988, 201). Men who were disclosed to at some point, men who the raped subject therefore trusted with their monstrous secret, would occasionally go on to then abuse the raped subject and use their previous violation(s) as an excuse for this behaviour. This demonstrates the way

in which the monstrous Other is vulnerable in more ways than just emotional and symbolic violence: they may, in fact, be physically and/or sexually attacked because of their status, with further violence done to them by this stigma being used as the justification for this attack. As already mentioned, more research in this area should be conducted: as Kelly (1988) found, much existing research in repeated victimisation came to unsatisfactory conclusions, often revolving around supposed victim culpability and 'learned helplessness', both of which blame the raped subject for their violation. As such, this is something that desperately needs to be handled with a more delicate and, certainly, a more feminist approach.

Conclusion

This paper has sought to elucidate on the raped subject as a monstrous Other. As I have argued throughout, monsters exist through the Self's construction of itself, in which its vulnerability and other perceived 'negative' characteristics are projected onto the Other. However, this is an unstable process, with the Other constantly threatening to overwhelm the Self, exposing the fallacies on which they are based. The Other is therefore monstrous, a threat to the Self, something to be abjected. Yet they are also that which commands the attention of the gaze, eliciting a sense of interest in them. The raped subject is one of these monsters. Rarely conceived of as a survivor because the rape is ever present, the violence clinging to them is perpetually a stigma. The Self must therefore protect against them using a variety of processes such as isolation, projection and petrification, all the while investigating them, because despite how much they disgust and terrify the Self, the exercise of this power over the monstrous raped subject generates a captivating sense of pleasure. Indeed, this sense of power over the raped subject may lead to them then being violated again by those they disclose to. As the opening to this essay says: "I was not raped, no: I *am* raped". This is what it means to be a monster.

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Second language learners of Danish as the linguistic *other*

Anna Bothe Jespersen and Míša Hejná

Danes are reportedly fond of normative cultural and linguistic expression (Kirilova, e.g. 2004; Kristiansen 2003, 2009; Normann Jørgensen 2013; Normann Jørgensen & Quist 2001, and references below). For instance, the Danish language has been described as one of the most standardised languages in Europe (Pedersen 2003, 9) and most Danes speak something greatly resembling Copenhagen Danish (Kristiansen et al. 2013; see also Monka 2015, Monka and Hovmark 2016, Maegaard et al. 2019).¹ Ways of speaking that do *not* resemble the Copenhagen standard are often devalued: speakers from all over Denmark have been found to share the same attitudes to Danish dialects as speakers from the linguistic norm centre, devaluing their own traditional dialects in comparison with the “modern” Copenhagen standard (Kristiansen 2009, 2017, 119; see discussions in Maegaard and Quist, 2020). In other words, “[c]ultural variation, and especially linguistic deviation from the norm, is not very well received in Denmark.” (Normann Jørgensen 2013, 41, translation by the first author; see also Thomas 1990, 7).

This situation has led to what Jørgensen and Quist describe as “an unhealthy climate of monolingualism, monodialectalism, and monoculturalism”

¹ Spoken Danish is generally thought to vary primarily in its speech melody (Kristiansen 2017, 118; Grønnum 2005, 340).

(2001, 42). Of course, English, as a globalizing language, plays a large role in Danish society, but as Haberland and Preisler note, Danish fulfills the role of a central language in Denmark: it is used in primary, secondary and tertiary education, in newspapers, books, and on TV as well as other media (2014, 15). English is known by large segments of the population: 86% in 2012 (Eurobarometer 2012, 23) and 99% among secondary students in 2018 (Eurobarometer 2018, 1). Yet studies have not found evidence that Danish is suffering domain loss (Preisler 2009; 2010). Furthermore, the language has not yet been vernacularised in Denmark, that is, it has not yet taken up many of the roles of a “naturalised” language in the Danish context, and is instead mainly used for business, higher education and international communication (Haberland and Preisler 2014).

The general mastery of English as an international language, together with the abovementioned attitudes to variation and normative expression, all play a part in the meeting between Dane and immigrant.² In this paper, we assess the hypothesis that Danes tend to attach less value to non-standard language, and argue that this dynamic can cast immigrant second language speakers of Danish as the linguistic *other* on the margins of the standard/non-standard dynamic. We do so by giving voice to the immigrants and Danes themselves, letting speakers from both groups assess the social meanings and potential emotional impacts of a certain linguistic culture clash: strategic language switching.

This paper thus aims to take a sociolinguistic perspective on what happens in the meeting between first and second language speakers. Given Danish native speakers’ “fear of variation” (Normann Jørgensen 2013, 43), how do they react

² It is important here to distinguish between different types of immigrants, since these are welcomed into Denmark to different extents. This term may cover refugees, settled immigrants and their families, and guest workers. Here, we use the term for all non-native speakers of Danish in Denmark. See Benediktson (2015, 10-12) for a review of different terms for immigrants in Danish, and Frølund Thomsen (2006) for Danish attitudes to Western and non-Western immigrants.

when confronted with second language speech? Previous work (Benediktsson 2015) has provided evidence that Danes may simply switch into English when language learners attempt to initiate conversations in Danish. Here, we endeavour to expand on this issue by using two surveys issued to immigrants and native Danes in order to explore whether these switches happen, why native speakers might switch languages, and what the impact of switching on second language speakers might be. In doing so, we use comments from both surveys to attempt to tap into the social forces that push immigrant second language speakers onto the linguistic periphery. We work from the following research questions:

1. How frequently do the switches occur?
2. What do learners of Danish and native-speaking Danes view as the main reasons for the occurrence of switches into English?
3. How are such switches perceived and interpreted by learners and native speakers?

In what follows, learners report that Danish-initiated conversations with native Danes are frequently switched into English by their interlocutors, and that this often results in a negative reaction from the learners. Learners and native speakers disagree as to the exact frequency of these switches, with the learners reporting many more switches than the Danes. The native speaking respondents' reasons for the switches are primarily seen as linked to politeness and communication efficiency in the face of difficulty of understanding,³ although their comments on the survey indicate that many are, however, aware that such switches may affect language learners negatively. We discuss the implications of

³ The Danish language has been reported to be notoriously difficult to learn, and is frequently mentioned as such by both linguists and laypeople (Skovholm 1996; Basbøll and Bleses 2002; Grønnum 2003, 2008; Koldbye 2009; Normann Jørgensen 2013, 43; Larsen 2016; Mikkelsen 2017; Mellish 2020a, 2020b). Note, however, the counterarguments presented by Schachtenhaufen (2021), and Jespersen and Hejná 2021a.

this awareness on the social meanings of the switches, and argue that the phenomenon of native speakers switching away from Danish can contribute to our understanding of the status of non-native speakers and language in Denmark.

1.1 Attitudes to second language Danish learners and their speech

The fondness for a linguistically and culturally homogeneous ‘us’ noted by e.g. Normann Jørgensen and Quist (2001), Kristiansen (2003, 2009, 2013) and Normann Jørgensen (2013) has been argued to spark xenophobic attitudes towards immigrants and immigration. For instance, Fernández-Armesto writes that that “[t]he Danes have a not altogether deserved reputation for tolerance” (1997, 33) – since the 1980s, successive political parties have adopted increasingly strong-worded critiques of immigration, especially with regard to non-Western immigrants, with the leader of a recently almost-elected party (Rasmus Paludan of the *Hard Line* party) publicly burning copies of the Quran. The increasingly openly intolerant rhetoric of these hard-right parties, and their large numbers of votes (another right-wing nationalist party, the Danish People’s Party, gained 21.1% of the votes at the 2015 national election) speaks to changes in the acceptability of such views in the general public. We illustrate the ongoing discussions of xenophobia in the public sphere with Figure 1, a collection of photographs from Aarhus taken by MH over the course of 3 years.

Figure 1: Top pane on the left: concerns who will save Syria, taken in early 2017. Bottom pane on the left, taken later in 2017, *ikke os* (“not us”) is added; Pane on the right: *ikke* (“not”) is crossed out and *os* (“us”) is circled with a heart, taken in 2020. The sticker appearing at the top of the photo reads *SORT / SART* “black / fragile”. All photographed in Aarhus, Denmark, by MH.



Such political developments are not unique to Denmark. However, in combination with an appetite for linguistic homogenisation and the relatively small size of the speech community, Denmark is not necessarily an easy place to integrate for a second language speaker (Benediktsson 2015). Indeed, currents of systemic antipathy towards foreigners and immigrants are thus associated with negative attitudes towards language learners. Holmen (2004) and Gitz-Johansen (2003) describe what they see as a political aversion to a stronger focus on second language Danish teaching, which is viewed as “remedial language instruction reserved for school beginners and newly arrived refugees for a limited amount of time” (Holmen 2006, 2), rather than the sustained and developing effort targeted at learners at all levels, which is needed for immigrants to successfully learn the language (Jespersen and Hejná 2019; Jespersen and Hejná 2021b).

Politically and publicly expressed attitudes to immigrants thus carry over into attitudes towards their language. Several researchers have criticised the general societal attitude towards spoken second language Danish (see Normann Jørgensen and Quist 2001) as well as the attitude at language centres, where the difficulty of the language is seen as a positive thing, in that it may ‘sort the wheat from the chaff’, that is, expose second class speakers of Danish (Normann Jørgensen 2013, 43; translation by AJ). The value judgements of second language learners lie to a high degree in their spoken Danish – “and it must be a form of Danish indistinguishable from the native standard language” (Normann Jørgensen 2013, 42). Apart from the reported difficulties of the Danish language (see Footnote 3), learners are thus also faced with value-judgments of their speech. In this way, attitudinal studies consistently find that foreign-accented Danish is often systematically given low ratings on all parameters (H. J. Ladegaard 1992, U. Ladegaard 2002; Maegaard 2005, 73-74). The studies that present a more mixed set of results, e.g. Quist and Jørgensen (2002, 9), also generally report that Danes

tend to associate L2 Danish with negative personality traits such as lower intelligence. However, it is worth noting that this general pattern is modified by geographic closeness: while Danes are generally not able to geographically place most L2 accents (Kirilova 2004, 92, 94), voices perceived to belong to German speakers are, at least in Kirilova (2004, 93) judged more positively than those of native speaking Danes.

1.2 Otherness in Denmark

Our interpretation of the abovementioned attitudes to second language speech relies on theories of otherness that explicate the relational social identities claimed by native and non-native speakers: a dominant group (“Us”) constructs an out-group (“Them”, “the Other”), by stigmatising a difference that can work as a boundary delimiting the groups (e.g., Fanon 1963; Said 1978; Duncan 1993). As Okolie puts it, “identity has little meaning without the “other”. So, by defining itself a group defines others... Power is implicated here... Often notions of superiority and inferiority are embedded in particular identities” (2003, 2). In this way, the non-native *other* is constructed as opposed to a (standard-speaking) norm centre (Giles 2016; Giles and Powesland 1975; Llamas et al. 2009).

In delimiting *linguistic* otherness, we thus argue that speakers draw on sociolinguistic resources (see section 1.3 below). Our analyses are aligned with Bourdieu’s thoughts on *legitimate language*:

[W]e can state the characteristics which legitimate discourse must fulfil, the tacit presupposition of its efficacy: it is uttered by a legitimate speaker, i.e. by the appropriate person, as opposed to the imposter ... and addressed to legitimate receivers; it is formulated in the legitimate phonological and syntactic forms ... except when transgressing these norms is part of the legitimate definition of the legitimate producer. (Bourdieu 1977, 65)

From the viewpoint of the linguistic centre, both levels of legitimacy are violated by second language speakers on the periphery: by being immigrants, and thus

outsiders, a fact which is also detectable through their non-adherence to legitimate linguistic norms, second language speakers are not legitimate speakers of Danish. Second language Danish, then, can be argued to be constructed and reproduced as “the linguistic other”, different from, and lower in value than, standard Danish, as spoken in the linguistic norm centre of Copenhagen.

1.3 Signalling otherness and sameness through linguistic means

Otherness and sameness, or outgroup and ingroup, are essential reference points as the individual is navigating their social reality. They react to and interact with this reality through a number of semiotic means, of which language is a key example. The speaker signals their belonging to various *speech communities*⁴ through employing, perceiving, and manipulating linguistic features. These are chosen from a *feature pool* (Mufwene 2001) of linguistic traits used to signal in-group membership in those communities. As an American in the UK, for instance, they might consciously or unconsciously accommodate some of their speech sounds to those of their British peers (such as producing the “e” in “skated” with their tongue higher and further towards the front of the mouth), but might keep her American “r”-sounds in “car” and “birth” (rather than saying “cah” and “buhth”). Sounds that overtly signal American-ness, and which speakers are consciously aware of using, such as pronouncing an “r” after vowels, are more likely to be kept by speakers in diasporic contexts than sounds they are not aware of pronouncing differently from their new communities, such as “oo” (Labov 1972).

Linguistic features are not born with social meaning. Over time, features such as postvocalic “r” become linked with particular ways of speaking, and thus with particular social groups who speak in those ways, in a process known as

⁴ A speech community is a group of speakers identified by linguists primarily on the grounds of social coherence, and which is often used as a unit for linguistic analysis – see Patrick (2008) for a discussion of this concept, with definitions on pages 577 and 593.

enregisterment (Agha 2003, Johnstone 2016). The links between linguistic features, social practices and persons who engage in such practices are multiplex and dynamic, and the social meanings of a particular linguistic feature therefore shifts over time, and depending on the contexts and audience of the conversation in which it is produced. Furthermore, these links are not direct: a linguistic feature does not directly signify, or *index* (Ochs 1992, 1993, Eckert 2008), a certain social category (such as “foreigner”), rather the relationship between language and social categories is mediated by social meanings at a more local level. A linguistic feature may thus index “foreigner” through its association with certain acts or activities which are linked to the concept of “foreigner”. In the Danish context, a lack of differentiation between certain vowels which are pronounced with very similar articulatory gestures, such as the vowels in “mile”, “mele”, “mæle”, could be linked with the local meanings of “linguistic clumsiness” and “incompetence”, which could index “foreigner”.

As hinted at above, some of this identity work is carried out without the speaker consciously knowing it. Our foreigner may be signalling her status as foreigner without meaning to do so, just by mixing up a few vowel sounds. However, some identity work is carried out as strategic social action through creating and managing a *social persona* (Coupland 2001, 2002, 2006; Snell 2010, 631). A central component of this strategic use of language is stance-taking (Ochs 1992). *Stance* refers to the processes by which speakers use language (and other semiotic resources) to position themselves and others, draw social boundaries, and lay claim to particular identities and knowledge during conversations. Stance represents one of the speaker’s key ways of signalling her belonging to prestigious speech communities, but also of excluding others from those same communities. While stance-taking can be expressed through the use of certain linguistic features, or combinations of features, it can also be expressed at a more global level by changing speech styles, dialects or languages. This is known as *code-*

switching (Giles and Powesland 1975). For instance, Giles has described how when as a young Englishman he would go into a Northern Welsh pub, “the entire gathering there [would] switch to the Welsh language from previously talking in English...” (2016, 1). Code-switching is often done to highlight a shared social identity and in-group membership or, as in Giles’ example, to perform antagonism towards an out-group member (Giles and Powesland 1975, 172-73; Llamas et al. 2009, 386).

In other words, language, whether used consciously or unconsciously, is a key resource for signalling and maintaining implicit boundaries between us and the other. In what follows, we draw on such sociolinguistic theories to analyse interactions between first- and second-language Danish speakers.

2 Methodology

We now turn to the two online questionnaires used to investigate what happens when non-Danes attempt to engage native speakers in a Danish-language conversation. One of these surveys was presented to non-native Danish speakers, in English (Survey 1), and the other to native Danes, in Danish (Survey 2). Survey 2 was created after Survey 1, and the questions, response options, language and design were matched as closely to Survey 1 as possible. Both sets of respondents were approached via two methods. Firstly, the links were disseminated through social media, most prominently Facebook. Here, the authors primarily approached groups whose social interaction centres on relevant activities, such as the “Learners of Danish in Denmark” Facebook group (such groups – “communities of practice” – are often approached by linguists). Secondly, we employed an email-based version of the snowball method, that is, dissemination to relevant parties (e.g. students at language centres; acquaintances of the authors), who then pass the survey link on to other potentially interested parties, and so on.

In what follows, we describe the questionnaires and the individuals who filled them in, and present the statistical methods we use to analyse their responses.

2.1 Survey 1

We analysed 409 responses to the first survey, which was intended for non-native Danish speakers. Respondents who did not report learning Danish in Denmark (9) were left out of the analyses. The remaining respondents were aged between 16 and 62 (mean = 29.7, median = 28). Of these, 76.5% self-classified as women and 22.2% as men. Their mother tongues were varied, but as some of them were marginally represented, the individual answers were grouped based on the structural properties of these languages (Scandinavian, English, West Germanic other than English, Slavic, Romance, Baltic, Indo-Aryan, Finno-Ugric, non-Indo-European spoken primarily in Asia). We also asked participants about their highest-level Danish exam, the length of their language acquisition in months, and the range of contexts in which they use Danish on a day-to-day basis. The responses to these questions were investigated as part of initial analyses of the dataset, but the results will not be addressed here due to space constraints. We refer the interested reader to the datasets which contain all responses included in this paper, and which we provide links to below.

The survey was presented to the participants in English. A pre-completed version can be viewed here: <https://tinyurl.com/34efv754>. The full dataset can be viewed here: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1E8qoubDD6yCwIEvRJiPvjt8L2k9YrMp4BBtRlDzee6Q/edit?usp=sharing>. Questions of special interest for this paper include the following:

- Has it happened to you that you started speaking Danish but the Dane(s) switched into English? (Multiple choice)

- Why do you think they switched? (Multiple choice, multiple answers possible)
- How did these switches into English make you feel? (Open ended)

In order to quantify the participants' reaction to the switches from Danish to English, open-ended responses to the question 'How did these switches make you feel?' were classified in grouped categories (positive, negative, and mixed). This classification relied on our own assessment of the overall emotive theme of each response. In the vast majority of cases, this was relatively straightforward. However, these classifications nonetheless reflect the authors' subjective readings of the comments, and need to be borne in mind when discussing the data.

2.2 Survey 2

We analysed 134 responses to the second survey, which is aimed at native-speaking Danes. This number excludes two respondents who did not complete the form, and three respondents who report not being able to speak English at all. In Survey 2, our participants are highly comparable with those of Survey 1: they are aged between 16 and 63 years of age (mean =33.04 median = 30), and 73.1% are women, while 26.9% are men. The participants report speaking between 1 and 4 languages in addition to Danish (mean =2.1, median = 2).

A pre-completed version of the questionnaire for Survey 2 can be found via this link: <https://tinyurl.com/c59a6m9u>. The responses to survey 2 can be viewed here:
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1ynQz6psWEK_c2oQXHvHnlyMAjO1V_kXIJ6IgAejNzADM/edit?usp=sharing. Questions of interest to this paper include the following:

- Have you experienced being approached by a non-Dane speaking Danish, where you have switched languages to English during the conversation? (one answer possible)
- If so, why did you switch languages? (multiple choice)
- How do you think non-Danes might feel if the conversational language is switched to English? (open-ended)

We also asked the participants where in the country they were located and asked them to assess their ability to speak English in day-to-day interactions. Data collection and calculations of average scores for multiple option answers were completed in ways similar to Survey 1; and the questions in Survey 2 were based on the results from this survey in order to allow us to explore various aspects of the responses in the original survey.

2.3 Statistical analysis

In order to locate and analyse potential patterns in the learners' reactions to the switches, we made use of so-called regression analysis. Linear regression is a statistical method which enables analysis of the relationship between a *dependent* variable, which is the focus of the analysis, and any *independent* variables, which may contribute to any patterns in the behaviour of the dependent variable. Because our analyses rely on survey data, we used an *ordinal* regression model to tap into the ordinal, e.g. numerically ordered, data, which result from a survey of the type employed in this paper. Our analysis did not include random effects (that is, ways of quantifying any variation in the data that does not pertain to the independent variables).

The analysis is performed through building a statistical *model*, which constitutes the researcher's attempt to systematise the variability found in the data, in this case, the survey responses. The model is set up by the researcher, who

chooses the maximal set of independent variables that might be able to account for the variability in the dataset. The regression analysis is then performed to test the viability of the independent variables chosen by the analyst, and how well these are able to explain the data. The researcher then removes any independent variables that do not contribute to explaining the patterns found in the analysis, so that they end up with a *final model*, which only includes those variables that are important to the analysis: here, those that have a direct impact on the survey responses. The final models presented in section 3 thus only include some of the independent variables mentioned below.

Our analysis was conducted by selecting the dependent variable, namely the second language learners' REACTION to the switches from Danish to English, and adding all independent variables we think might affect that REACTION: the second language speakers' AGE, GENDER, FIRST LANGUAGE, DANISH LEVEL, and LANGUAGE OF INITIATION. The latter refers to the language chosen by L2 learners to initiate conversations with Danes. All independent variables except participants' first language were kept in the model. For more information on the contribution of individual variables on the respondents' frequency of switching, see Jespersen and Hejná 2021b.

The analysis was conducted through the statistics programmes *R* (R Core Team 2020) and *RStudio* (R Studio Team 2020), and we employed the package *MASS* (Ripley et al. 2020). Model selection, that is, the choice of the model that best describes the data, was carried out with the *aov()* and *compare_performance()* functions, and checked with *stepAIC()*. We used *ggplot2* (Wickham et al. 2020) and the *viridis* colour palettes (Garnier et al. 2018) to present the results graphically.

3 Results

We first present the self-reported results from the survey distributed amongst non-native learners of Danish. We then show the results from the survey distributed amongst Danes. The results from the two studies are contrasted and interpreted in the discussion, where we also suggest the sociolinguistic reasons why Danes may be switching languages, and what social meanings such switches might index.

3.1 Study 1 - Second-language learners of Danish

3.1.1 Have the learners experienced code-switching?

We begin by taking a look at whether the learners actually attempt to use Danish in their daily interactions with Danes, thus addressing Research Question 1. When asked whether they ever initiated conversations with Danes in Danish, rather than in English, 34.6% of the learners of Danish report always initiating conversations with native speakers in Danish. In addition, 11.5% report doing so often and 18.2% sometimes (total = 258, or 64.3%). On the other hand, none of the learners respond that they never attempt to start conversations with Danes in Danish. We can therefore safely say that all the learners who responded to our survey have had experienced situations in which a Danish interlocutor might have switched into English – in fact, the majority of the learners describe actively seeking out interactions in Danish in their everyday life.

We then ask the learners whether they have experienced trying to initiate conversation with a Dane in Danish but having the Dane switch the conversation into English. More than half of the learners have encountered this phenomenon frequently. 24.2% of respondents think this happens to them fairly often, 40.2% often, and 35.6% always (total = 219, or 54.6% of responses). Only 13.2% report that this has never happened to them. We can therefore see not only that such switches happen, but that they are perceived by our participants to happen rather

frequently.⁵ Furthermore, when the interlocutor has switched languages into English, our participants report that they mostly accepted the switch: in 74.3% of cases, respondents write that Dane-initiated switches into English result in the conversation continuing in English.

3.1.2 What is the impact of the switches on learners?

In addition, we are interested in exploring the participants' reactions to the switches from Danish into English, thus addressing Research Question 2. Here, we approached the topic by asking our participants an open-ended question ('How did these switches make you feel?'). We then categorised their responses as "positive", "negative" and "mixed". Note that we are not only interested in how many of our participants describe feeling positively or negatively about these switches, but also in whether there is a relationship between those feelings and the frequency with which the switching is perceived to occur. If the frequency of switches were to have an effect on the participants' response, that would suggest that switching languages may be a causal factor in that response. In order to be able to investigate such a correlation, we built a statistical model which examined the statistical relationship between the frequency of switches and the participants' responses to how switches made them feel. We also took the speakers' background, such as their age and gender, into account. The details of this model can be found in the section *Statistical analysis* above.

Our statistical model is found to account for a large amount of the variance found in the data ($R^2 = .42$, $\chi^2(42) = 420.2$, $p < .0001$). In other words, our chosen combination of independent variables consisting of the frequency of switches and the participants' background has a strong and statistically significant effect on their reported reactions to the code-switching. We then look into what part of our

⁵ For more detail on the factors that might influence the frequency of switches, see Jespersen and Hejná 2021b).

combined model had the strongest effect on the participants' emotional response, and find that the strongest predictor of this response is how frequently they had encountered switching ($\chi^2(18)=322.86, p<.0001$). The relationship between these two variables is such that the more frequent the switches, the greater the odds for a negative response: participants are more than twice as likely to recount a negative reaction when they report that Danes "always" switched into English than when their answer is "not often" (log odds = 2.36, $SE = 0.48, p>.0001$). We illustrate the gradient nature of this relationship in Figure 2.

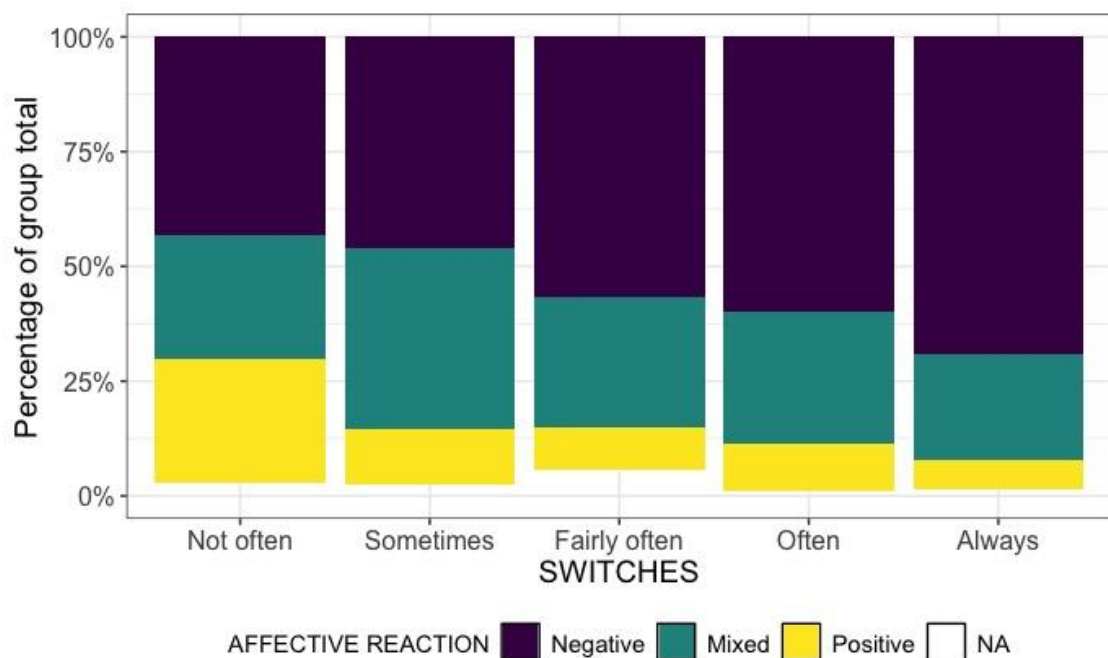


Figure 2: An illustration of the relationship between participants' reactions to their interlocutor switching languages (represented by coloured blocks) and the frequency with which those switches occur (represented on the x-axis). The y-axis indicated the percentage of respondents conveying each reaction. "NA" indicates missing answers: not all respondents answered all questions.

Here, we see how an increasing frequency of switches leads to a gradual increase in negative reactions (represented by purple blocks). In this way, the participants who do not encounter switching often report a more varied set of emotional responses to Danes switching the conversational language to English, whereas more than 65% of respondents who always encounter switches describe having negative reactions. Overall, 57.9 % of the learners express negative reactions to the switches. Most of the remaining reactions are “mixed” rather than positive.

3.1.3 How is switching interpreted by learners?

We have seen that the phenomenon of Danes switching into English when approached by a learner of Danish is perceived by the learners to happen rather frequently. We have also seen that such switches engender negative reactions in many of these learners, and that their reactions become markedly more negative the more switches they encounter. In this section, we delve deeper into the learners’ comments, treated in the section above as “positive”, “negative” or “mixed”, to see if we can tap into how learners interpret the switches. This analysis helps us tap into the social meaning of switching as experienced and perceived by learners, and thus addresses Research Question 3. We also look into why learners think Danes might switch the conversation into English, which provides us with insights into which social strategies the learners think their interlocutors are employing.

First, we turn to the learners’ reactions. While some of the positive responses were fairly minimalist (‘Fine’; ‘Good’), many others expressed relief at the greater ease of conversation arising from speaking English rather than Danish. Examples include the following:

- ‘Happy because they made it easier for me’
- ‘Sometimes.. as a relief. There's always a point when it feels intimidating that you can't follow the conversation. So it is nice when

someone notices you can't follow and speaks to you in English.'

[sic]

The other main theme of the positive comments was the perception that Danes switching languages were doing so to be helpful, for instance

- 'I feel they very kind and would like to help more with understandable languages'
- 'Like they wanted to help'

The latter set of comments links the switches to a set of social meanings: Danes switch in order to convey helpfulness and a sense of accommodation to the perceived taxing conversational situation experienced by a learner struggling with the Danish language.

The mixed/neutral comments also fell into two main categories. Firstly, there were those that did not express a preference for either language, or did not associate any specific feelings with the switches, for instance:

- 'I didn't really care which language they spoke'
- 'No particular feelings about it'
- 'It doesn't bother me at all, I continue speaking Danish'

The other camp consisted of those comments that were truly "mixed": these conveyed mixed feelings, and more consisted of multi-layered emotional reactions that did not fall neatly within our binary "positive"/"negative" categories.

- 'Depends very much on context, sometimes relieved because it is easier, sometimes disappointed because I thought I was fluent enough'
- 'Acceptable. Nothing new.'

The negative group of responses includes a wider range of reactions, and we will therefore focus on these responses in greater detail. We categorised them into four main themes, described below. Two of these were reactive and did not seem to assume that the switches were connected with social meanings. The first

of these two consisted of a group of responses that conveyed the respondent's frustration and anger with the switches and with their Danish interlocutor. Examples include the following:

- 'I find this really impolite and annoying.'
- 'Pissed'
- 'Angry and confused as Danes does not often speak English better than I speak Danish' [sic]

A few of these comments became downright unpleasant, with one participant describing Danish as a '[g]arbage language for garbage people'.

Another set of reactive responses turned the reactions inward rather than outward, and indicated the learners' feelings of shame, sadness and a diminished confidence in their Danish-speaking abilities. These learners felt

- 'Ashamed of my language skills'
- 'Sad because I was trying very hard'
- 'Like I am incapable to say even the simplest things in Danish' [sic]
- 'Like I'm imposing on the Danes' patience. Demotivated to actually learn Danish.'

However, many learners also seemed to perceive a motive behind the switches. These motives again centred on two key themes. The first of these was the conveyance of the learner's lack of worth (linguistic, presumably), and a sense of an underlying power dynamic between the learner and native speaker, who would feel

- 'Stupid and not good enough'
- 'humiliated. I have been putting sooo much effort into learning Danish and the culture of Denmark and I feel unappreciated. feels like my efforts are not reciprocated.'
- 'Irritated, undervalued, like i was told "you're not good enough, please do not even try"'

The second set of perceived meanings build on this sense of the societal power dynamic to make the learner feel a sense of otherness. Such responses include:

- ‘Annoyed and discriminated’
- ‘Impotent og afvist’ [powerless and rejected]
- ‘Like an outsider’
- ‘I feel a bit sad that they assumed already that I can’t understand nor speak danish just by my looks...’

It is clear that the intensity of feeling in those learners who convey negative responses to the switches is often not negligible, and that these feelings may have implications for their motivation to seek out and maintain conversations in Danish with native speakers, and thereby for their continued learning trajectory.⁶ It is also clear that many of these learners associate the switches with certain social meanings, including the signalling of a power hierarchy between language learner and native speaker.

Seeing as many learners seem to perceive such connections, it is interesting to examine the learners’ responses to the question “Why do you think they [the native speaker] switched?”. In the survey, this question was multiple choice with multiple answers possible, with the additional option of learners coming up with their own reasons. From our prearranged set of 10 answers, the most frequently selected option (48.6% of respondents) was “Because they were being polite and keen to help”, with the rest of the top five reasons being “Because they thought I didn’t understand” (43.8%), “Because they thought of my Danish as not good enough” (37.5%), “Because of my Danish accent” (37.5%) and “Because speaking Danish to me seemed to inconvenience them” (27%). Most of the rest of the prearranged options centred on making the conversation

⁶ One learner indicated that their emotional response had developed with their improved linguistic skills: ‘In the first year in Denmark I perceived [switching] as considerate because my Danish was still bad. Now, with my Danish skills being quite alright, I tend to feel offended - it makes me feel insufficient and inadequate’ [sic].

flow, although one of the lesser-chosen answers (4%) was “Because I look different”.

Apart from the second most frequently chosen option, the rest of the top five hinged on switching as a reaction to the learner, rather than as a facilitator of communication. Learners again interpret the switches as either politeness or rejection on the part of the native speaker. This again links in well with our analyses above, as well as answers to open comments sections not analysed here. Both of the prearranged answers to do with native speakers’ evaluation of the learner’s language skills and pronunciation are also in the top five responses, and in the open comments sections eight learners chose to elaborate on this theme, for instance:

- ‘they refuse to speak Danish when they hear it's not perfect’
- ‘If they dont seem friendly or if they seem uncomfortable because my Danish isnt perfect’ [sic]
- ‘They are rude, whenever you try to speak Danish with them they tell you you shouldn't do it until you don't have an accent anymore’.

It is clear that many learners think the switches occur based on characteristics of their spoken language (and, to a much lesser degree, on their exterior⁷). In order to explore why native speakers switch, and whether they attach similar social meanings to the switches, we will examine the responses to our second survey.

3.2 Study 2 – Native speakers of Danish

3.2.1 Are the native speakers conscious of switching languages?

In order to hear the native speakers’ side of the story, we need to first make sure our native speaker respondents actually interact with non-native speakers on a

⁷ Most of the answers provided by the learners themselves referred to specific contexts or persons, and were not easily generalisable.

fairly regular basis. Luckily, it seems they do: none of the Danish respondents report that they “never” interact with non-Danes, and the majority (54%) answer that they interact with them “every day” or “fairly often”, with a further 23.7% “sometimes” interacting with language learners. We also need to know if our Danes can actually speak English. Three of our Danes report not being able to speak English at all, and these have been excluded from the analyses. The rest of the Danes speak an average of 2.14 second languages (English included; median = 2, SD = 0.86), and all but 7 have taken English at elementary school level or above, with most having completed high school level English exams (67.4%). Overall, they can therefore be said to be relatively proficient.

We can now look into how often our Danish respondents describe switching from Danish to English when interacting with a non-Dane who initiates conversation in Danish. Their responses differ from those of the learners: the Danes most frequently reply that they “never” (21.2%), “very rarely” (27.3%), or “not often” (14.4%) switch into English (total = 62.9%). 37.1% chose the options “sometimes” and “fairly often”. None of the respondents have chosen the “almost always” or “always” options. This contrasts with the learners’ experience, of which more than half chose the group of options ranging from “fairly often” onwards, with 35.6% reporting this “always” happened to them.

3.2.2 How is switching interpreted by the native speakers?

While Danish native speaking respondents may not perceive switching to occur as frequently as the language learners, it is nonetheless possible that the two groups attach similar social meanings to the switches. We now attempt to tap into the indexical links between switching and social meanings by describing the Danes’ responses to the question “Why did you switch languages?” This question was set up in the survey as a checkbox with multiple answers possible, similarly to the corresponding question in Survey 1. Our Danish speakers generally choose

responses which hinged on maintaining good communication: 52% give as one of their responses that they were not able to follow the conversation, and 28.4% of respondents report that their interlocutor could not follow. 11.8% indicate that they switch to avoid a conversational breakdown, and 43.1% respond that they switch to keep the conversational pace up. Participants are less likely to report their own language skills or habits, or the characteristics of their interlocutor, as reasons for the switches. Indeed, only 2.9% of the Danes respond that they switched because of their interlocutor's language or accent. This contrasts starkly with the experience of the language learners as described above. Compared to the perceptions of the language learners, the Danes also rarely report switching to be polite or signal willingness to help (18.6%).

We also ask the native speakers to assess the impact of switching languages on language learners: "How do you think non-Danes might feel if the conversational language is switched to English?". This question is, as was its equivalent in Survey 1, open-ended. Of the 79% of participants who volunteer a response, 59.9% anticipate that switching into English will affect the non-Danish interlocutor negatively. Words used to describe the imagined feelings of the learners include "frustrated", "irritated", "dejected", "demotivated", "attacked", "disrespected", "patronised", and "rejected". 2% of the native speakers' comments indicate that the learners might feel discriminated against, either on the basis of their language or exterior. Both their perceptions of the proportion and to some extent the types of negative reactions are thus very similar to the learners' actual reported reactions: 57.9% of learners describe having negative reactions, and 59.9% of native speakers think switching languages might cause the learners to have such a reaction. It is interesting to note that 3.5% of the Danes give the reason for anticipating negative reactions that they have experienced being non-native speakers in a foreign country themselves and remember the frustrations arising from trying to communicate with native speakers. A further 4.4% indicate

that non-native speakers in their social networks have explicitly discussed switches into English with them, and let them know that such switches are frustrating to learners.

We also have 20.8% mixed responses, primarily conveying the message that context and individuality are important: switching might be perceived as more negative in some contexts, and "...[s]ome people might be offended that you give up on [communication in] Danish". A few (4.5%) mention that they "don't know" or "don't care", or think their second language speaking interlocutor would not care, about the switches into English. Several Danes (8.9%), on the other hand, anticipate learners to feel positively, e.g. "relief", "increased ease of conversation", and "being treated politely", in response to the switches. Given the fact that when asked why they switch languages in a previous question, the Danes themselves indicate in 19% of responses that one of their reasons for switching is to be polite, it is interesting that only 1 response to the question of potential emotional impact mentions that non-native speakers might feel it is the polite thing to do. It seems that Danes are aware that these switches are likely to be perceived negatively by the learners, even if they are performed by Danes wholly or in part as a means of conveying politeness.

4 Discussion and conclusion

We began this paper by presenting the reader with previous reports that Danes are, as a society, seen as sceptical of cultural and linguistic variation, and by speculating that this might have consequences for learners of Danish as a second language. Specifically, we argued that the Danish awareness of linguistic norms and standards, and the homogenised speaking patterns found by researchers across the country (e.g. Monka 2015, Monka and Hovmark 2016, Maegaard et al. 2019), could have the effect of casting non-native speakers as the linguistic other. We have examined this hypothesis through the lens of a previously reported

phenomenon (Benediktson 2015), whereby Danes, when approached by non-native speakers initiating conversation in Danish, switch the conversational language to English.

Our first Research Question was directed at investigating how frequently the respondents think the switches happen. We found that both learners and native speakers were aware that these switches happen though there was some disagreement between the two groups as to how often switching occurs. It is important here to note that the surveys represent self-reported data, and that it is possible that the Danes are under-reporting, or the learners over-reporting, the phenomenon. More interesting for our purposes is the answer to Research Question 3 (How are such switches perceived and interpreted by learners and native speakers?). Firstly, the two groups are in relative agreement as to the potential reactions of learners to the switches: the majority of learners report negative reaction to this particular form of code-switching. Furthermore, a very similar proportion of the Danish respondents imagine this reaction from the learners. Furthermore, the specific types of feelings engendered by switches are also reported in very similar words and proportions, suggesting many Danes might be aware of the emotional impact of switches on non-native speakers. This awareness, especially awareness of specific reactions, suggests the existence of indexical links between the action of switching languages and a specific set of social meanings. Both participant groups explicitly mention the switches eliciting reactions that are linked to a Danish interlocutor's negative evaluation of a learners' spoken language, and their highlighting of the immigrant-native power dynamic. But why might such social meanings be connected to the switches? One explanation could lie in the connection between non-standard language as produced by non-natives and linguistic stereotypes of "linguistically incompetent" immigrant speakers. Not speaking "perfect Danish" – a frequently mentioned

phrase in both groups – thus seems to index out-group membership: you do not speak like us, you are not like us.

The switches into English, then, seem to be *available* as a resource to index social antipathy through the associations between non-standardness, linguistic incompetence and societal power dynamics. However, this availability does not necessarily mean such switches are actually employed as strategic social action. In other words, we do not know whether some Danes *consciously* switch into English to convey this particular set of social meanings. Attempting to grapple with this problem, our Research Question 2 asked why the switches happen. Here, the water gets murkier. It is, however, worth noting that though many Danes seem to be aware of the potential negative impacts of switching on learners, and though they themselves list many of the same types of negative impacts of the switches described by the learners, most nonetheless still report performing such switches themselves. Furthermore, though many Danes list politeness as a potential reason for switching, only one Dane thought learners might interpret switching as a display of politeness. Taken together, this combination of an awareness of the negative impact and meanings likely to be perceived by learners and the fact that many Danes nonetheless (self)report switching languages, and are thus aware of switching themselves, suggest a potential for strategic motives. This is not to say that all our Danish respondents consciously switch strategically, or even that the majority does. A certain proportion of the switches must be caused by genuine communication difficulty. Given the majority of responses from both groups that highlight other reasons for the switches, this can, however, not be the whole story. However, it does indicate that switching might in some cases result from stance-taking behaviours from the native speakers, effectively pushing the learner out of the Danish speech community and into “foreign”, English-speaking territory.

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ABSTRACTS

Ovid Revisited:

Locating the *Heroides* in Michael Drayton and Madhusudan Dutt

Sukanya Dasgupta

Abstract

It has been fairly well established by now that the European Renaissance provided a model that has been modified to suit other periods and cultures. In this context, the article will seek to compare and explore the ways in which Ovid's *Heroides* was received, appropriated and manipulated by two writers: the English Renaissance poet Michael Drayton and the 19th century writer of the Bengal Renaissance - Michael Madhusudan Dutt. Separated as they are by time, context and language, Drayton's *Englands Heroicall Epistles* (1597) and Dutt's *Bīrāṅganā Kābya* (1862) engage in highly productive and transformative relationships with Ovid's *Heroides*. Not only do both texts show a remarkable sensitivity to the generic implications of the Latin work, but they also become sites for the exploration of the cultural competition fostered by the interaction of old texts with new.

Between Here and There:

Liminality and the Tolerance of Oppositions in Sinéad Morrissey's Japanese Sequence

Aoileann Ní Éigeartaigh

Abstract

Northern Irish poet Sinéad Morrissey spent two years living and teaching English in Japan, during which time she wrote the Japanese sequence of poems included in *Between Here and There* (2002). This essay analyses Morrissey's poetic engagement with Japanese culture, arguing that throughout her poems she maintains an openness to the often indecipherable cultural texts and practices she encounters, without ever trying to impose her own reading on them. She does so by allowing herself to occupy a liminal space, both deeply absorbed in but crucially disconnected from Japanese culture. She adopts what Suhr-Sytsma characterizes as "the ethical stance of unknowingness", opening herself up to

encounters with the other, receptive to new insights and actively renegotiating the set meanings contained within cultural practices, thus liberating the potentially myriad underlying resonances they may contain.

Keywords:

Sinéad Morrissey, Japan, Northern Ireland, liminality, tourist gaze

Re-inventing isolation:

Imagining the other in seclusion

Naomi Berman and Flavio Rizzo

Abstract

Late capitalist imaginaries of Japan include characterisations of an insecure political economy with significant alterations to traditional norms, interpersonal relationships, and identities. Since Japan's neoliberal reform in the 1990s an insidious narrative of the hikikomori, characterised by perceived personal failure, social reclusiveness, and mental illness, has become commonplace in the mediascape. This paper offers a discussion on othering as emerging in prevailing cultural and counter-cultural narratives of hikikomori, and in an attempt to challenge traditional orthodoxies around the individual and society, explores the opportunities provided by possible alternatives. In trying to unlock the complexity of self-reclusion, this paper argues that it is impossible to understand this phenomenon in normative terms and highlights the ways in which these manifestations of self as other are being contested and challenged in cultural media texts. In problematising the pre-eminence of a distinct set of narratives that interact to discursively frame hikikomori, our intention is not to add to the existing explanatory claims, but rather to offer alternate approaches for understanding the social location of hikikomori within the public imaginary. Hikikomori exists in a liminal space of public understanding and private experience of self; simultaneously socially integrated yet set apart from society. Its existence, or more specifically the social reactions to its existence, highlights a need for a reconfiguration of traditional notions of the individual and society.

Keywords:

Othering, Cultural Studies, Hikikomori, Popular Culture, Isolation, Seclusion

**Auto-ethnographic Performance and Self-Empowerment
in Sandra Monterroso's *Lix cua rahro/Tus tortillas, mi amor* (2004)**

M. Emilia Barbosa

Abstract

This article addresses how Sandra Monterroso's auto-ethnographic performance, *Tus tortillas, mi amor* (2004), or *Lix cua rahro* (Q'eq'chi Maya), breaks down the ethnic, generic, and social label *tortillera*, while constructing the *tortillera*'s own possibility for resistance. Recreating in video format the painstaking labor of traditional tortilla-making in Guatemala, the artist somewhat unexpectedly unravels a first-person narrative of resistance while she rethinks her own hybrid *Ladina* identity. With humor and performative intensity, Monterroso documents possible tales of passion and agency told in her abuelita's native tongue, Q'eq'chi Maya while showcasing Guatemalan women's rebellion against imposed millenary fates as tortilla makers, housewives, and gender oppression's victims. Monterroso conveys her message to the spectators about the ongoing and unstable process of identity-production using a combination of body talk and the spoken word, while succeeding to resist their gaze by becoming "hard to read," somewhat resistant to appropriation when compared to the widely circulated "text" or iconography on indigeneity and femininity in Guatemala. To produce such an effect, Monterroso's body talk brings to light her own flow of identity-production by juxtaposing the performer's corporeality to anticipated representations of ethnicity and gender.

Keywords:

Tortillas, Tortilla-making, Guatemalan women, indigeneity, and femininity

"I am Raped"

The Raped Subject as Monstrous Other

Lynsay Hodges

Abstract

In this paper, I argue that the raped subject is a monstrous other, drawing on Shildrick's (2002) writing on monstrosity and its vulnerability. If the monster is that which exposes the qualities that the self projects onto its other during its moment of self creation – that is, vulnerability and a lack of fixity and autonomy – then the raped subject is primed to be constructed as monstrous, as they perpetually remind the self that they, too, are vulnerable to inconceivable harm. They instill in the self a sense of ontological insecurity (as per Laing 2010): they threaten the dissolution of that which forms its identity. As such, they must be

abjected, kept at a distance using a variety of defence mechanisms, chiefly isolation, projection, and what Laing (ibid.) calls ‘petrification’. However, the monster also invites a sense of intrigue towards it: the self therefore investigates it, scrutinising it under its gaze, all the better to know it and expose its secrets. For to know that which most disgusts and terrifies the self is to exercise power over it, bringing about a sense of pleasure from this examination. The raped subject, then, has the acts perpetrated against them ‘stick’ to them as a stigma, ensuring that the violence remains ever present: “I was not raped, no: I *am* raped”. They are constituted as a thing through petrification or, more extremely, as a not-thing in the case of abjection. As such, the raped subject serves as a case study of the many societal monsters that are required for the current conception of the self to exist.

Second language learners of Danish as the linguistic *other*

Anna Bothe Jespersen and Míša Hejná

Abstract

The Danish language is undergoing rapid standardization: traditional dialects are rapidly disappearing, and studies of language attitudes show that Danes strongly favour standard language over non-standard varieties such as regional dialects. This paper looks at the values and attitudes attached to another type of non-standard Danish, namely that spoken by learners of Danish as a second language. It argues that the dynamic whereby social prestige is strongly associated with standard, or “fluent”, Danish, can cast immigrant second language speakers as the linguistic *other* on the margins of the standard/non-standard dynamic. The paper gives voice to the immigrants and Danes themselves, letting speakers from both groups assess the social meanings and potential emotional impacts of a certain linguistic culture clash: language switching, where Danish interlocutors switch into English when hearing Danish spoken with a second language accent. The analysis draws on responses to two surveys, administered to first and second language Danish speakers. It finds that both groups of speakers are aware of the switches, and also that both are aware of the negative impact of switches on second language learners. Both groups mention that speaking “perfect Danish” can be essential for membership and belonging to Danish society, and are aware that switching from Danish to English as a response to second language speech can convey a sense of sociolinguistic exclusion and othering.

Keywords:

L2 speech; second language learning; code-switching; Danish; indexicality.