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University "Ștefan cel Mare" of Suceava  
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University "Ștefan cel Mare" of Suceava

# The Colonial Canon

PHILOSOPHY, SOCIAL AND HUMAN DISCIPLINES SERIES

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Volume I



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# RESEARCH PAPERS



# Canonicity, canon, canonizable and the implications of transcultural communication

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## Abstract

*Harold Bloom, in the Western Canon, selected only twenty-six sine qua non writers and, invoking Giambattista Vico's New Science, where human history was distributed in three phases – Theocratic, Aristocratic, and Democratic – introduced another one, the Chaotic Age (represented by Freud, Proust, Joyce, and Kafka).<sup>1</sup> Bloom did not expel this newly proposed Age, as it was also the container of beauty and strangeness, as Walter Pater desired for Romanticism.*

*What has happened since 1994 to the status and condition of the canon? The article takes aim at describing the implications of the science of communication for the process of selecting values. At the same time, it follows the role played by various intercultural concepts in valuing cultural heritage and contemporary creations. The main purpose of the study is to configure the blueprint of an arch-canon founded on interdisciplinarity and the latest advances in different sciences, with a special touch on linguistics and discourse analysis.*

**Keywords:** *canon, Harold Bloom, aesthetics, transdisciplinarity, hierarchy.*

In the epoch of convergence and performativity, the competition, but also the interpenetration of disciplines, have become inevitable. Is it a loss from the point of view of aesthetics? It may be for the aesthetics of the 17th century, when an artistic product had to involve wholeness, sublimity and assimilation of tradition. In postmodernity, the manifestations of beauty became versatile and pluralistic. Contemporary culture would adopt an incompatible position if it scorned the contributions of cultural studies, translation studies, performance studies, critical media studies and so on and so forth. The former canon made room for an

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<sup>1</sup> Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon: The Books and School of Ages* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994), 2.

interpenetration of canons. The new modality of realizing the selection for the canon requires open-minded and well-read critics, able to promote the most vital values resulted from the study of cross-sections through the concentric canonical sphere. The new arch-canon is a “canon-in-the-cloud” that lets in and out elements of excellence coming from the satellite-like and interdisciplinary canons.

This complex and heterogeneous canon is informed more and more by poles of radiation and influence, for instance by translators and anthologists, not only by critics: “A translator and an anthologist (who not infrequently are one and the same person) are coauthors of the canon to a degree that has never been sufficiently acknowledged”.<sup>2</sup> Besides, media are the most important propeller of the value-engine. At the same time, in a media-dominated frame, the game of offer and demand implies fast and unpredictable moves. The privileged position of being listed at the stock exchange of the arch-canon will be shorter than it used to be during the Canon contemporary with the Theory. The new canon has to face the plethora of multi-field theories. To ignore the fact that media will play an increasing role in promoting (non)values would mean to abandon the fight for intellectual authority in a heterogeneously constructed world. Even a pillar of modernism like T. S. Eliot has been recently perceived as connected to the values of postmodernism – i.e., to the open text, to the solicitation of the reader’s participation, and to the indeterminacy of meaning.<sup>3</sup> Every *-ism* seems to be related to a new form of communication.

#### *Intercultural and transcultural communication --reception*

Conditions of communication are inflected by habitus. Apart from Bourdieu’s definition of the notion, Rapport and Overing<sup>4</sup> emphasized those transposable dispositions which generate structured social practices. Understanding the conditions of habitus allows the generator of discourses, endowed with agency, to insert in them manipulative or propagandistic ingredients. Thus, literature can very well function as a platform for public relations or advertising. Every author / publisher assesses readers’ objectives and needs before elaborating narratives. Postmodernism also resorted to multi-layered

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<sup>2</sup> Piotr Wilczek, “The Literary Canon and Translation. Polish Culture as a Case Study,” *Sarmatian Review* (September 2012), 1689.

<sup>3</sup> Jennifer Ashton, *From Modernism to Postmodernism. American Poetry and Theory in the Twentieth Century* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 2.

<sup>4</sup> Nigel Rapport and Joanna Overing, *Social and Cultural Anthropology. The Key Concepts* (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2003), 19.

discourses in the post-totalitarian epoch and revived the importance of cultural symbols (flags, statues, and religious icons), exactly as in the medieval epoch.<sup>5</sup>

In order to deconstruct the toxic discourses of a MacDonaldised and Disneylandized postindustrial society, reception has to resort to mediated discourse analysis, as it includes the social identities and social relationships made possible by certain discourses.<sup>6</sup> Actions are transformed into texts and texts into actions in a never-ending entextualization. The reception of literature is basically intralingual translation and every literary-encoded message is decoded in panoplies of meanings, depending on the level of communication between the works of art and their readership. Respecting the pattern of everyday communication, the feedback offered by readers is influenced by context, noise, mood, level of decoding, filters and so on.

Getting closer to Cultural Studies, communication implies an exchange of points of view, if we take into consideration genuine communication, non-biased and detached from agenda setting schemes. Even in the cultural field we are trapped in what J. Habermas called *communicative actions*. Culture would be blocked at the level of samizdat without being helped by communication to establish its context.<sup>7</sup> Thus, intercultural communication relies on rationality, especially linguistic rationality. In order to gain access to dialogue – and what is reception or hermeneutics unless genuine dialogue? –, communicators have to be able to perceive different cultures from a perspective of informed understanding.<sup>8</sup>

The interdisciplinarity of the new arch-canon relies even more on the fluency of communication with the consumers of values. In the context of a liquefying world, the questions of transitoriness, relativism, and contingent values suggest a versatile and negotiable canon. Obviously, the conflict with the old Canon, cumulative, shared by intellectuals and specialists around the world, is unavoidable. One argument in favor of the new system of valorization is that the old-fashioned way of sanctifying artefacts actually sidelines their impact on the cultural market. The “classical” way of legitimating works for their inclusion into an ever-lasting pantheon may be a cultural practice of the past. Some fields have

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<sup>5</sup> cf. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1997).

<sup>6</sup> Ken Hyland and Brian Paltridge, eds., *Continuum Companion to Discourse Analysis* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 10.

<sup>7</sup> Knoblauch in Aldo Di Luzio, Susanne Günthner and Franca Orletti, *Culture in Communication Analyses of Intercultural Situations* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2001), 5.

<sup>8</sup> John Corbett, *An Intercultural Approach to English Language Teaching* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd, 2003), 2.

always been more exposed to canonicity than others and, consequently, more acutely informed by political and social forces.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, many ideology-driven influencing factors cultivate the confusion between a valuable product *per se* and its effects on the commercial or ideological market. That is why communication theories can be helpful in telling apart the genuine value-consumption from the artificially stimulated one. By “artificiality” I understand mundane criteria used in the selection of and promotion of sub-values as first-hand values.

### *Communication and canon projection*

The construction of every canon necessitates interactivity/communication but also hedging measures so that the selected values would not have their position too early disputed by other competing would-be values. Genuine communication is founded on a hierarchy of hypotheses, although the top-down distribution inside the canon is suspect.

The probability of misunderstanding intervenes when the factors involved in negotiating the canon lack mindfulness, as they are not able to refresh their grid of selection and to be open to new information and multiple perspectives.

If we want to maintain the creation of the canon at a dialogic level, we have to strive for obtaining a flux capable of achieving aesthetic elevation. Social constructionists state that the constitutive dialogue creates and alters not only relationships, but also the entire social construction. Thus, our discussions are part of the all-comprising competing discourses, but also of the on-coming discourses. Present and future communication forms a dialectical flux which makes impossible the predictability of an issue. Nothing manages to preserve its autarchic state. This is quite normal if we admit to the spiraling inversion of the contrasting voices in a relationship: the dominant role is assumed in turns, depending on the circumstances.

The usefulness of the theories of communication for the explanation of canonicity is undisputable. They prove that everything in the universe comes under representations of communication. Likewise, they make explicit the complexities and obstacles that inform the process of communication. Building the canon coincides with investing continuously in communication. The impasse is that communication can be genuine – in a utopian representation – or – more often than not – fake, biased or mimicked.

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<sup>9</sup> Rakefet Sela-Sheffy, “Canon Formation Revisited: Canon And Cultural Production,” *Neohelicon* XXIX, 2 (2002): 141-142.

*Ableism, enculturation, and mixophobia*

Local and non-didactic canons are more predisposed to ableism, paying significant tribute to social success. The process of acculturation intervenes periodically and with the merging of cultures canons blend too. Ageism can affect the structuring of the canon. Many works of art become dated and later epochs do not find them irreproachable. For instance, some works can be banned from the canon under the accusation of chauvinism. Canons are informed by political correctness too. Even aesthetic selections are a matter of chronemics, evolving under specific temporalities.

This is why the arch-canon needs to be as cosmopolitan as possible. But in spite of the existent lingua franca at a certain moment, cultural noise invariably influences the climate of selection. Translations are salient in this case, and they are the result of biased negotiations. Canons develop their own “languages” as they target larger or restricted categories. Lateral canons intently assume different structuring principles in order to highlight injustice and marginalization; but, without aesthetic buttressing, they get outdated sooner than later.

On the other hand, colonialism takes the form of enculturation. The ethos of a group is absorbed into a more central culture at a certain moment. The center invades the peripheral canon. As in pragmatics, a certain culture attains the felicity conditions when its canon gets to be the most successful. The confrontation of canons (colonization and reverse colonization) moves from heterophily to interlanguages as an intermediary stage in intercultural communication.

The initial mixophobia of the central canon has made more and more place to the melting pot approach. Thus, the canonizing process is ever-changing and includes, besides aesthetic/truthful contributions, ingredients that belong to various sociolects.

*Liquefaction to deconstruction: a world of fractals*

The elaboration of the canon comports distinctions in terms of the relationship between modernism and postmodernism. Jennifer Ashton insisted on the transformations suffered by the regime of texts. The Eliot-type modernism adopted the autonomy of the text (or what postmodernism would call the “closed text”) and the determination of its meanings, whereas the postmodern text will be “open” and indeterminate in terms of meaning.<sup>10</sup> Reader-response theory tries to reduce ambiguity, but ultimately this is an issue related to the cultural level of the

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<sup>10</sup> Ashton, *From Modernism to Postmodernism*, 1.

readership. The acceptance of an increased openness for our messages implies a reduced intention of dominance in the act of communication. If we take serious account, though, of Jürgen Habermas's description of modernism as a sequel to the Enlightenment project, it results that the canonizing process relies solely on rationality and equity.

Conversely, the multi-faceted profile of postmodernism, under the umbrella of a complex and contradictory postmodernity,<sup>11</sup> attracts a softened approach to conceiving the canon. In such conditions, there resist no solid, impenetrable frontiers between stylistic and socio-cultural phenomena. Zygmunt Bauman contested the cultural dams built by high modernism. For him, modernity was a process of liquefaction from the start. If solids cancel time, liquids, on the contrary, boost time perception.<sup>12</sup> Mainstream canon is thus overflowed by tributaries which melt the "solids".<sup>13</sup> Building up the canon could be fueled up by liquefaction or, oppositely, could be pulverized into countless petty, irrelevant selection criteria. Even Bauman warned about the decomposing blabbering of culture industry. The "exhilarating freedom to pursue anything" and the "mindboggling uncertainty" as to what is worthwhile pursuing induce a state of "all-deriding, all-eroding, all-dissolving destructiveness".<sup>14</sup> The key word here is "all". Without it, we could consider the creative destruction's utility, as it dismembers fossilized structures and invites to a more flexible reassembling.

Liquefying structures may help the process of canonization as much as they may break it into countless exchanges of insignificant content. Too much freedom to pursue anything in a society enjoying destructiveness leads to axiological confusion. This abyss of relativism engenders irony as defense in front of confused axiology.

Irrespective of individual preferences, one cannot reject the fact that contemporary culture has become polycentric and pluralistic. Quantum physics, the theory of chaoplexity, theories of chaos, and theories of the fractal have all contributed to put the previous epistemological certainties into perspective. Nowadays it is plausible and scientifically sustainable for opposed paradigms to coexist: creation is accompanied by destruction, randomness by determinism, disorder and unpredictability by strict rules (especially in coding). We speak more

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<sup>11</sup> Adam Sharman, *Tradition and Modernity in Spanish American Literature: from Dario to Carpentier* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), XI.

<sup>12</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press and Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 2.

<sup>13</sup> Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, 4.

<sup>14</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Intimations of Postmodernity* (London: Routledge, 1992), VII-IX.

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and more about a posthuman body and about cyborgs, together with the correspondent ethical sets. How could we maintain the same criteria, centuries-old, for constituting the canon? This is a world more and more perceived as a media-projected concoction. Resisting to the new developments coincides with the sheer disputation of the necessity of a canon: “Deconstruction's effect on the canon has been to open it, or it should be. Indeed, it should be more radical than that. Under the aegis of deconstruction there should be no canon.”<sup>15</sup>

*The canon in relation to hyper-literature*

Innovations inside the canon have never been so accelerated. As the mainstream culture, the hierarchy was pulverized into many hierarchies. A few decades ago, many writers were still nostalgic as to the function of the arch-critic; nowadays they realize that such a dream is anachronistic. This transformation has been supported by the multiplication of printing houses, fact that induced both anarchy and democracy. In order to be persuasive, literary critics have to assume a propagandistic role, too. The new public consumes literature and quasi-literature in an undifferentiated way. A mannerist and ultraconservative methodology for assembling the hierarchy affects the readers' response. Hiding behind untranslatable jargons trammel the communicational process and mutual influencing. Contemporary life may be less elevated, but it surely is more complex and heterogeneous. We all live under the “Harlequin countercultural umbrella”.<sup>16</sup> In such conditions, the intellectuals responsible for shaping the canon should be in possession of an encyclopedic cultural background. Decentralizing the critical action assures the avoidance of the tendency towards the unjust eliminations and the preservation of arthritic cultural products.

The canon-makers, as leaders of opinion, are bound to take into account the new forms of creativity and agency. We live in a culture bombarded with computer-generated movies and wherein readers benefit of choices of narrative trajectories and endings in virtual space. The “participant novel” or “interactive fiction” informs a larger-than-life space which integrates asymmetrical fractional dimensions, infography, holography, informatics, supersonics and many others. Long ago deconstruction dismantled Saussure's binary model of the sign. Inside

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<sup>15</sup> Adams Hazard, “Canons: Literary Criteria/Power Criteria,” *Critical Inquiry* 14, no. 4 (Summer, 1988), 760.

<sup>16</sup> Christopher Gair, *The American Counterculture* (Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 9.

the experimental space, the most creative one, of course, should signifiers play freely.

Although Theodore Nelson published the book *Literary Machines* in 1981 – here he launched terms like *hypertext* and *hypermedia* – very few writers and critics fathomed these concepts. Nelson hoped that with the help of *Xanadu*, a specially designed software, he will be able to unify the electronic literature. Hypertext can be understood as non-sequential writing able to branch out. The readers would have thus the possibility to choose their reading itinerary. The interactivity of the digital literature is assured by the links which connect bits of text which can be accessed in a fortuitous order. Readers create their own fictional texts in a nonlinear manner. Hyper textual fictions emerged at the beginning of the '80s.<sup>17</sup> Chronology, spatial vicinity and fluent plots, distributed in chapters, were abolished. The text became a gallery of signifiers, instead of a structure of signifiers. There is no end and everything is reversible.

In Nelson's opinion, this new type of text arrangements is a *docuverse* that is the sum of all texts existent in the global network. The reader is transformed into an author-dispatcher. Some textualist ideals are shared: texts are capable of self-generation and there is no clear boundary between the author and the reader. The new type of communication implies that nobody reads, but everybody writes. The aesthetic appraisal becomes a difficult enterprise. The reader is invited to become a combinatory writer.

Additionally, in the last two decades SMS poetry has developed vertiginously. There are competitions and prizes offered for this new literary branch. Mobile phones become books. Espen Aarseth baptized hyper-literature "ergodic literature". There is an increased liberty of reading following different vectors. The work upon the form influences the content, too. The archetype of this dislocating literature can be found in Charles Dickens's serials wherein plot and characters were changed depending on the reader's will. By offering the reader the possibility to mix fragments, the author establishes a literary partnership. The slogan of the hyperwriters is "Screening is way up!".

B.S. Johnson, in 1969, used in *The Unfortunates* unbound pages which were to be shuffled and read at chance. Every page becomes a *texton*, and the chosen orders are called *scriptons*. This non-linear chaotic reading order offers readers the chance to become "readers-as-authors". There is, then, an intertextual version of hyperliterature which is named *derivative work*. In *Ftrain*, Paul Ford included

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<sup>17</sup> Michael Joyce, *Afternoon. A story* (1987).

thousands of links, references, and fragments from other text which could be *remixed*.

Nora Boyle dwelled upon the digital reading in connection to hypertext (HTML). She invoked Einstein's theory of relativity, which specified that time can move backwards and forwards. The on-line cyber-writers are called Digerati; they don't write, they transmit. Could the building of the canon ignore these new developments? In 2005, the Dutch Government appointed a Committee for Developing the Dutch Canon.<sup>18</sup>

We may be heading towards a "low frequency" literature, as Jonathan Carr, editor at *Minima Magazine*, warned. The medium does not simply wrap the context: they intertwine now. But hyperliterature is not only about shuffling chapters and pages, but also about intensifying the written material with the help of sound and image. The leap from one narrative hub to another, with the help of links, announces many potential stories. The text is not possessed but rented. The original becomes fluid and generates simulacra.

The theory of cybertext considers that all texts are machines projected to accomplish certain actions. For instance, Mark Eskelinen's *Interface* from 1997 is a tripartite work that begins as a novel and is taken further on internet in an equation built on the authorial input and the readers' feedback.

Interactivity tackles combinations with kinetic techniques, as in Jim Rosenberg's *Intergrams* (1997). Here, the *simultaneities* (the layers of text are juxtaposed so that by moving the cursor one can read separate layers) build a syntax "externalized" in graphic symbols which interrelate the fragments of text. In Robert Kendall, *A Life Set for Two*, 1996, readers can select "the atmosphere" of a text from a "menu".

The first hyper-textual novel, *Afternoon. A Novel*, by Michael Joyce, consists of 539 lexias and 951 links that connect them. This structure enables various styles of reading (a different set of lexias, in various orders), which engenders different stories, or a frame-story which includes the reader's stories too. This process was coined *humanistic computing*. An acronym for these innovations was created: MUD (multi-user-domain).

Several mainstream writers strove to trespass the boundaries of traditional literature. Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire* contains a *Foreword* followed by a poem, whereas the plot consists of an extensive commentary and an *Index*. The reader can go through and interpret the four sections assuming an optional order.

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<sup>18</sup> <http://cntcoen.nu/informatics.Aspx?id=5&ean/=e>.

Julio Cortazar's *Rayuela* has 155 chapters. The author proposes in the beginning a certain reading order, but the reader may ignore it and opt for other approaches.

There have been more than twenty years now of experimentation in a field which affects not only the form, but also informs the content of literature. A canon neglectful of these developments would be on the brink of obsolescence.

*Discourse theory approach in shaping the arch-canon*

There are state-of-the-art studies about practices, utterance interpretation and processing, and about acts of speech. The pragmatic inferences begin to rely more on analyses of non-assertive acts of communication. The pragmatic turn, as we know, values sentences in communication more than isolated sentence structure. The new developments in the realm of the philosophy of language connect it overtly to communication theory. The phenomenon is closer to continental European pragmatics than to the Anglo-American one. The former is interested macro-pragmatics, which includes socio-pragmatics, cross-cultural and intercultural communication, and ideology. This integrative development is very useful for hermeneutics, especially when, allegedly, the researcher tries to clarify Gricean implicatures, which are haphazard sayings or meanings without a limp expression, or "the speakers implicate while readers infer".<sup>19</sup>

If linguistics is informed by idealizations, then applied linguistics is accountable for linking languages to the process of thinking in matter-of-fact everyday life situations. The same happens with literature: the reader-response approach is preoccupied with the transaction between the artefact and its readership in relation to the context wherein this is accessed.

Postmodernism showed that literature and language are not self-contained, neutral systems, but politicized forms of thinking and feeling. In order to identify and understand these cultural ingredients we need a multifunctional hermeneutics. Noam Chomsky pleaded for a universal grammar but nobody could plead for a uniform reception and assessment of literary products. The mediated discourse analysis posits that all actions are mediated through cultural tools. It results that our discourses are both *situated practices*, tied to quantitative and qualitative configurations, and *community practices*, tied to various communities within particular disciplinary narratives.<sup>20</sup> Through entextualization we reify language as

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<sup>19</sup> Keith Allan and Kasia M. Jaszczolt, eds., *The Cambridge Handbook of Pragmatics* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 4.

<sup>20</sup> Ken Hyland and Brian Paltridge, eds., *Continuum Companion to Discourse Analysis* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 13.

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text, much in the same vein as a structuralist approach. Structuralists were more preoccupied with the structure of language, which made possible the linguistic performance, than with the actual performance in its multiple representations. *Langue* was more important than *parole*. Signs, in the Saussurean tradition, generated sense through reciprocal reference and not through interaction with an external and hybridized world. Selection and combination were realized strictly syntagmatically.<sup>21</sup> It was Roland Barthes the one who understood to subsume all cultural practices to semiotic analysis.

For the literary discourse to function at all levels, Grice's cooperative principles are still standing: the maxim of quantity (quantity of information), the maxim of quality (adequate evidence), the maxim of relation (relevance), and the maxim of manner (coherence, concision). But, of course, they are imperative only at the communicative level, otherwise, the literary discourse gladly surrenders to redundancy, deformation, irrelevance and prolixity or ambiguity. However, the phatic function would not be annihilated through these tactics, only diminished in terms of a thinned public.

*Linguistic contours*

Contemporary literature covers more and more frequently the full spectrum of linguistics signs (organized by C.S. Peirce into a triad: iconic, indexical and symbolic). Peirce's type of semiotics, as we know, is processual, paying attention to protean contexts, whereas Saussure's was linguistically oriented and based on the arbitrariness of linguistic sign. A triadic paradigm was opposed to a dyadic one. Then, with the advent of poststructuralism, the conditions of truth became loose, if not evanescent. As to our topic, literature doesn't have to stick to the principles of logic in order to secure a public. Literature professes an inter-discourse communication, which results in access to all milieus.<sup>22</sup>

The *epistemic theory of vagueness* contends that there is no firm borderline between disciplines. Accordingly, a reality is neither true, nor false, everything depending on context. Thus, this theory uses concepts and ideas as "contextuality" and "accommodation" – in the wake of Grice (1975) –, cooperative principle and

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<sup>21</sup> Chris Barker and Dariusz Galasinski, *Cultural Studies and Discourse Analysis. A Dialogue on Language and Identity* (USA: SAGE Publications, 2001), 4.

<sup>22</sup> Ron Scollon and Suzanne Wong Scollon, *Intercultural Communication. A Discourse Approach* (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 2.

the associated conversational maxims. The levels of specificity will vary depending on the situation.<sup>23</sup>

Again, language in use flexes itself in relation to the status of language users, to the context of interactions, and to the communicative goals pursued by communicators. Truth-conditional semantics analyses sentence meaning in the light of formal rigor and logical plausibility, but in compliance with evolving states-of-affairs. To these, the meaning supplied by other sources has to be added. Language theories may enlarge their scope when they confront with the use-centred, social-interactionist views on language. We get closer hereby to speech acts and their intentionality. In much complex interactions, the speakers adjust their utterances to suit the hearers while also being mindful of the context and of the assumed shared background knowledge, otherwise hearers tend to become over hearers. From the point of view of pragmatics, an overhearer may misinterpret the message for want of appropriate contextual information. In this equation, a locutionary act is followed an illocutionary one which also assumes a performative dimension. Finally, the perlocutionary act evades the intentionality of pragmatics and enters the sphere of the theory of discourse. As we know, pragmatics includes the study of speaker meaning, of contextual meaning, and how speakers communicate more than they say. This involves presuppositions, conversational implicatures, references, deixis or “pointing”, and speech acts. Modern developments of linguistic studies confirmed Ferdinand de Saussure’s conception that language is not an organism developing its own accord but a collaborative construct belonging to linguistic communities. Theory welded to individual functional acts could create what Searle coined in 1969 as “felicity conditions”. According to these, the speaker will provide that valuable (sincere) information which is desired by the hearer.

The “social turn” in language studies and the parallel “turn to discourse”, occurred towards the end of the 20th century in the social sciences, redirected researchers and theorists towards the “processual”, “constitutive” and “ideological” aspects of the language. Culture has become gradually understood as cultures which include also institutions and mentalities. Linguistics accepted connections to ethnoanthropology in what was called the “postmodern turn”. Consequently, a cross-fertilization of discourse analysis and linguistic pragmatics became possible. The result was *discursive pragmatics*, a concept theorized by Jan Zienkorovski, Jan-Ola Ostman and Jef Verschueren in their eponymous book

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<sup>23</sup> Ulla Connor and Thomas A. Upton, *Applied Corpus Linguistics. A Multidimensional Perspective* (The Netherlands: Rodopi, 2004), 1.

*Canonicity, canon, canonizable and the implications of transcultural communication*

published at John Benjamin's Publishing House Company in 2011. The accent falls on points of convergence, eclectic studies of real-life discourses and interdisciplinarity. Ethnomethodological conversation analysis also focuses on common-sense reasoning and social action work.

These new perspectives understood individual agency and power structures as dialectically interrelated. The same type of tension persists in Discourse Studies: appeared as a reaction to structuralism in anthropology and linguistics, the discipline includes both a theory of social life and of language. Ethnomethodology preceded conversation analysis which confined itself to the study the "here and now" of interactions, which mainly described rules governing interactional patterns, that is to say turn-taking structures and specifics of relevant conversations. Umberto Eco also referred to the importance of the Dynamical Object as a *terminus a quo*, meaning of course the language in action, as a flux between interpretants.<sup>24</sup>

*Discourse, acceptability, and ambiguity*

French poststructuralism postulated that the social space is a *discourse* containing sub-discourses which organize regimes of power and inequality. Unequal opportunities, social-leverage and marked identities are pointed and legitimized through ideologies. It is basically what Foucault understood by the historical nature of discursive practices. If there is no discourse free of ideology, free of paradigm, then it is obnoxious to speak about objectivity, progress and neutrality. From this relativism or skepticism, a more comprehensive and sincere perspective may ensue. Grammaticality is not the same with acceptability, the latter being related to the speaker's performance. The canon should be conceived in relation to the latter concept.

In Chomsky's vision, an acceptable sentence must appear natural and appropriate in a given text, besides it being grammatically irreproachable.<sup>25</sup> Acceptability has to take into account ambiguity and vagueness, concepts which have preoccupied for a while semanticists and pragmatists.

We can infer that there are two roads to follow in relation to shaping the canon: on the one hand, we face the problem of communication; on the other hand, there is the problem of assessing and valuing. For instance, performative linguists

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<sup>24</sup> Umberto Eco, *Kant and the Platypus. Essays on Language and Cognition* (A Harvest Book, Harcourt Inc., 1999), 3.

<sup>25</sup> Noam Chomsky, *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1965).

will be interested in how people perform the verbal actions enacted by others.<sup>26</sup> Literary critics will tackle the axiological problem. In between, there are translators who have to fluidize and localize, but also to realize the selection in some specific situations.

Discourse theory may run the risk of reifying language by insisting on some ideologized stance. Preventively, inter-discourse communication constitutes an integrative and moderating paradigm. If we were to surpass the binary impasses of literature versus language, structural versus communicative approaches, language elitism versus language populism, and language versus culture, we should accept that languages are an issue of social justice. This means that the processes of communication and selection involve additional aspects besides competence and performance. Paradigm shifts stress the “hyphenated areas” of research, which means both interdisciplinarity and disciplinary delimitations.<sup>27</sup> Otherwise put, the relations between language and context, science and aesthetics should always be grammaticalized, whereas the formation of the canon needs to take into account the acceptability condition too.

#### *Literary communication in postmodernism*

If the modernist worldview insisted on the individuals’ sense of separateness, postmodernity produced a colorful type of alienation. The new *Zeitgeist* acquiesced comprehensiveness, even if it continued to record dystopian social models.

Anyway, postmodernity was more homogeneous than postmodernism. Hans Bertens (in *The Idea of the Postmodern: A History*) identified two postmodernisms. The first was a *familiar* one and it manifested in the early 1960s (Thomas Pynchon’s *V* [1966]). In the course of the 1970s it reached its peak (Pynchon’s *Gravity’s Rainbow* [1973], Carlos Fuentes’ *Terra Nostra* [1975], Robert Coover’s *The Public Burning* [1975], and George Perec’s *La Vie; mode d’emploi* [1978]). The second postmodernism would be one of *difference* and it assimilated the French poststructuralist thinking. Pynchon’s *Vineland* (1990) confirmed this turn by showing more “realistic” style and content.

Also Frank Palmieri positioned Pynchon (and Foucault) in the center of this displacement. In his opinion, the high postmodernism dominated the sixties,

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<sup>26</sup> Robinson Douglas, *Performative Linguistics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 4.

<sup>27</sup> Jacob L. May, *Pragmatics. An Introduction* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 5.

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seventies, and eighties, whereas the late postmodernism was the dominant form of production in the nineties and the beginning of the new century.<sup>28</sup>

Pynchon's fiction would have evolved from representations of radical paranoia, towards an interest in local Ethicon-political possibilities. So, the climate-of-opinion changed and has been changing so far<sup>29</sup> and the criteria for delineating the canon vary accordingly.

*The Canon versus the super-arch-canon*

The canon in the English speaking world has been remolded under the influence of later developments in technology. Cultural studies, post humanism, transhumanism, communication and performance studies, critical media studies, and translation studies joined efforts in demythologizing the aesthetic isolationism of the New Criticism. The new developments do not dispute the primacy of aesthetic / truthful criteria used for informing the canon, but they disclose the fact that we cannot ignore the complexity of contemporary society. My research envisages new approaches in selecting items for the new arch-canon, with reference to specialized canons and also personal canons. How much is utopia and how much is dystopia in building an arch-canon in the English speaking world? Can we create a canon which will serve pure communicative purposes and not colonialist ones?

One of the applications of the canon is the creation of anthologies, which are distinct from miscellanies insofar as miscellanies collect writings on the same topic without a selective ordering. Anthologies, in their turn, inform the canon too, so their relationship is a two-way one. The term "anthology" comes from Greek where it originally indicated a "collection of flowers". It suggests evolution, hierarchy and institutionalization.<sup>30</sup> In Spain, for instance, *Biblioteca de Autores Españoles* started in 1946 and was crucial in the designation of the canon.

The canonical wars are waged at least at two levels: the theoretical one and the national one. For example, the American canon strove, at a certain stage, to strengthen the image of democratic nationalism and praised the works of Henry David Thoreau and Mark Twain. In parallel, New Criticism encouraged those authors who stressed the formal aspects of texts.

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<sup>28</sup> *apud* Ian D. Copstake, ed., *American Postmodernity: Essays on the Recent Fiction of Thomas Pynchon* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2003), 8.

<sup>29</sup> Gene Wise, "Paradigm Dramas," *American Quarterly* 31, no. 3 (1979): 295.

<sup>30</sup> Barbara Mujica, "Teaching Literature: Canon, Controversy, and the Literary Anthology," *Hispania* 80, no. 2 (May, 1997): 203-215.

In *The Unusable Past* (1986), Russell Reising describes three paradigm revolutions concerning the American canon: the *genteel* tradition of the transition from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the *social and political* approach to canon supported by critics such as Granville Hicks and V. L. Parrington, and the *Agrarian/New Critics* approach. After World War II the movement for human and civil rights affected again the cultural paradigm. The monolithic tradition was fissured by the opening up of the canon, provoked by the acknowledgement of the minor traditions as integral and valuable components of the American cultural heritage.

A more flexible canon is the consequence of twists in literary and cultural theorizations. Marjorie Perloff, for instance, described the modern/postmodern divide as becoming more and more salient (*21<sup>st</sup> Century Modernism: The “New” Poetics*). However, the modernist T. S. Eliot pleaded for the autonomy of the text (for the “closed” text, as postmodernists later called it), whereas the postmodern text proclaimed its “openness” and its indeterminate meaning. Even contemporary researchers like Jennifer Ashton, a decade ago,<sup>31</sup> maintained the gap between modernism and postmodernism. In this sense, the irrelevance of the reader for the existence of the masterpiece is strongly preached in modernism (by Gertrude Stein, for example) and the reader’s response is not something critical to literature. However, the reader-response theory questions exactly such autonomous aestheticisms: could an author generate a masterpiece without nurturing the thought of an ideal (and imponderable) reader/receptor at least?

### *Conclusion*

The conclusion of this research is that today’s canon cannot be built from a unitary perspective. Even when I asked humanist academics about their opinion on the canon their first reaction was: about what? Therefore, the common denominator is somehow lost. Researchers should also take into account the fact that postmodernism as a stylistic arc is closed and there is no reigning cultural paradigm left to gather various approaches. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we remain only with ideologies and, sadly enough, they nurture ambitions to inform the canon.

Postmodernism was characterized by heterogeneity, but was still capable to construe a canon, be it subjective and biased. In the interval of the sliced and islands-based post-postmodernism the only hope for a respectable canon is the

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<sup>31</sup> Ashton, *From Modernism to Postmodernism*, 13.

acceptance of a threesome palette: interdisciplinarity, transdisciplinarity, and cross-disciplinarity.

New concepts, specific to the sciences of communication, linguistics, and digital literature are to be taken into account in the design of a canon for a world in which art does not play a leading role any longer. Aesthetics, urbanism, ideologies, communication, technology, religions, ecology and education are much more important at the time being than artistic ambitions that show no interest in elaborating on the quality of life. After decades of debates upon art for art's sake or ideologized art, the time has come to admit that the canon has to be more comprehensive if we want to preserve a large and informed public for it. Without this public, the canon would end up pushed into a shadowy corner, whereas superficial criteria would be used for the selection of pseudo and ephemeral values.

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# The German Aesthetics: from the Expressionist Context to the Gothic Canon

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## Abstract

*Based on the historical, cultural and artistic context, the German aesthetics created the richest grounds for Expressionism to become a starting point for further artistic productions. The Expressionist ideology, narrative and iconography stood for new artistic genres and styles, representing the German contribution to the development of art. In the case of science-fiction and fantasy, not only as literary but also as cinematographic genres, the German model represented one of the most important legacies. The study intends to explore the influences of the Expressionist context upon the horror and thriller films in order to identify the specific Gothic elements able to function as an aesthetic canon.*

**Keywords:** *aesthetics, Expressionism, early German cinematography, canon.*

## *A Historical Overview upon the German Cinematography*

From the historical point of view, the German cinematography began in 1895 with the first public representation of the short films created by the Skladanowsky brothers in Berlin. For almost twenty years, film was not seriously considered a form of art but of entertainment for the average people. Nevertheless, starting with the period 1910-1919, the German film was continuously under a process of innovation and experiment. Most of the films created during this period, such as *Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari (The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari)*, made use of the Expressionist artistic means and techniques.<sup>1</sup> According to the meaning of the term, the expressionist masterpieces used to put under the spotlight different psychological and emotional states such as fear, passion, dreams and terror, turning the *expression* into a completely subjective means of artistic representation. Thus, the expressionist painting was

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<sup>1</sup> The Expressionist art has its origins in the German painting, sculpture, literature and theatre.

characterized by unnatural and vibrant colours as well as daring perspectives while, in its turn, theatre's prevalent feature was given by the scenes created deliberately artificial, full of rough speeches and an exaggerated manner of acting. Most of these means of artistic expressions were also used in cinematography together with extreme angles of shooting and deep differences between light and dark.

Although, after the First World War, Germany had to face great economic, political and social problems, the German cultural production reached an important climax. In the field of cinematography, films such as *Caligari*, *Nosferatu* (F. W. Murnau, 1922) and *Dr. Mabuse* (Fritz Lang, 1922) proved to be not only real cinematographic masterpieces but also artistic expressions of the Freudian *psychological abnormal* transposed into the impossibility to distinguish between dream and reality, between truth and lie. In fact, this state of facts was based on the general sensation of uncertainty among the German people confronting with the consequences of war. Things changed with the second half of the 1920s. This period brought economic stability by introducing the monetary reform and cutting out the inflation. A more optimistic state animated the whole nation and this fact could also be noticed in the artistic productions of that time. That was the moment when German cinematography experienced a new aesthetic style: *Neue Sachlichkeit* (*The New Objectivity*).

Regarded as a new realistic perspective upon fiction, the new style was used by the German directors for dealing with social and psychological problems in their films. Far from any allegorical or fantastic aspect, the themes and plots of these movies pointed out average stories and characters. Till the talkie movies, the German silent movies could be characterized mainly by a powerful realist aspect. This tendency lasted until 1931 when Fritz Lang's film *M*, an early talkie movie, was launched. Unfortunately, this prolific period of so many important cultural productions from Weimar Republic was interrupted by the Third Reich, when many personalities of German cinematography started to immigrate to the United States. Ernst Lubitsch, Billy Wilder, Fritz Lang, Robert Siodmak, Josef von Sternberg, Peter Lore, Detlev Sieck and Marlene Dietrich started their new careers in Hollywood while those who remained in the country had to work for the Nazi regime<sup>2</sup> or to try an individual career without too many compromises, which proved to be very hard.

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<sup>2</sup> At that time, one of the most controversial film producers was Leni Riefenstahl with her two major films *Triumph des Willens* from 1934 and *Olympiad* from 1938.

After the Second World War, Germany was divided into Western Germany, also known as the Federal Republic of Germany, and Eastern Germany, known as the Democratic Republic of Germany. In a few years, the two ideologies generated two different countries not only from the economic and political point of view but also from social and cultural one.

In Western Germany, the film production decreased. During the 1950s, there were only few important films produced, among which comedies, musicals and *Heimat*<sup>3</sup>, the most specific genre of German cinematography. The artistic standard of these productions lacked its importance as they continued the Third Reich type of films and their purpose was now only for entertainment. As a consequence of this fact, twenty-six young German directors and producers signed an artistic manifesto during the Short Films Festival in Oberhausen 1962. Declaring death to the old cinematography, their approach intended to be totally different in terms of style and narrative. However, the representatives of the Young German Cinematography of the 1960s did not build up a true cinematographic movement as only Alexander Kluge, Volker Schlöndorff and Edgar Reitz remained true to their artistic principles which, during the 1970s, were followed by a new generation, known as *der Neue Deutsche Film*, the New German Film. Among the most important representatives were Werner Herzog, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Wim Wenders and Margarethe von Trotta.

The development of film industry in the Democratic Republic of Germany could be characterized as being antifascist. In this respect, the main company of film production, D.E.F.A.<sup>4</sup> (Deutsche Film Aktiengesellschaft) launched one of the most representative movie *Die Mörder Sind unter uns* (Wolfgang Staudte, 1946). Besides its antifascist aspect, the production of films in the Eastern

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<sup>3</sup> *Heimat* is definitely related to all the attempts that have been made in order to rewrite the history of Germany, mostly to fit the atrocities of the Nazi period into a more tolerable master narrative. This explains the huge number of books and articles, the academic conferences, the exhibitions, the TV programmes that focused on the discontinuities in German history that triggered the lack of national identity. No other country had more academics, politicians, journalists, artists, writers that tried to fill what was perceived as a vacuum and to redefine the identity of their homeland, meaning the *Heimat*. Filmmakers also played an important part in this undertaking since film reached a much larger audience than speeches, books or conference papers. Anton Kaes, *From Hitler to Heimat: The Return of History as Film* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989), x.

<sup>4</sup> Almost completely destroyed during the Second World War, the Babelsberg Studios in Potsdam-Babelsberg, formerly known as U.F.A (Universum Film Aktiengesellschaft), were rebuilt and renamed as D.E.F.A and functioned under the communist regime in the Democratic Republic of Germany. After the German reunification, D.E.F.A. became again Babelsberg Studios and nowadays is one of the most prolific company of film production

Germany was attentively watched by the communist regime.<sup>5</sup> This fact does not mean that the films produced at that time were of poor quality, on the contrary, important directors and producers such as Kurt Maetzig, Heiner Carow, Konrad Wolf and Frank Beyer developed a real tradition of documentaries, antifascist films and movies for children.

The economic and political reunification of Germany was finished, at least the organizational work, in 1990, after the fall of the Berlin wall in November 1989. From the cinematographic point of view this event represented a great opportunity for both Eastern and Western German film directors and producers. Since the psychological effects over the cinematographic culture were not so much different from those at the end of the Nazi regime, the political and social changes needed to be assimilated by the film directors and producers. The films of the 1990s introduced new themes and plots such as the darkness, the night, the frontier, the city of Berlin or the blurred and foggy past.<sup>6</sup> A new revival of the German film production started with *Lola rennt* (Tom Tykwer, 1998), later followed by other successful movies: *Gegen die Wand* (Fatih Akin, 2004), a Turkish-German coproduction, *Der Untergang* (Oliver Hirschbiegel, 2005) and *Das Leben der Anderen* (Florian Henckel-Donnersmarck, 2006).

At present, the German cinematography is well illustrated internationally, with mainstream productions that present the German history from new perspectives such as Bernard Eichinger's *Der Baader-Meinhof-Komplex* or low-budget productions such as the films of the Berlin Cinema School, whose main representatives are Thomas Arslan, Christian Petzold, Valeska Griesebach and others.

### *A General Perspective upon the German Cinematographic Aesthetics*

It is commonly known that the cultural and artistic expressions tend to reflect the social, historical and political situations which makes easier to understand their connections. In the case of German cinematography, the experience of war, including the revolutionary acts as well as the enthusiasm of a

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<sup>5</sup> After the fall of the communist regime, there were discovered plenty of films forbidden by the authorities. Most of them were kept in inaccessible places which caused some technical damages. It is the case of *Spur der Steine* (Frank Beyer, 1966), a film against the regime, forbidden after its premiere.

<sup>6</sup> After 2000, a new tendency of nostalgia for the East, called *Ostalgie*, spread among the German directors as well as the German audience. Besides launching lots of movies, this nostalgia led to the revival of the old traditions only found in the Democratic Republic of Germany.

young democracy together with the technical progress led to a cultural change<sup>7</sup> at the beginning of the Weimar<sup>8</sup> period. Coming after a military defeat and a failed socialist revolution, the emergence of a national cinema in Germany was totally unexpected as it later proved to be exceptional. Unique among film movements, Weimar cinema found itself in the situation of epitomising a country: twentieth-century Germany, already uneasy with itself and troubled by modernity through its artistic movement, the Expressionism.<sup>9</sup> When analysing such an important film movement as Weimar cinema it is needed to describe the Expressionist context but this does not mean that Weimar cinema identifies itself completely with Expressionism nor it developed singularly. There were certain connections between context and film movement.

The very beginnings of the Expressionist art are related to the activities of *Die Brücke* (*The Bridge*), a group of painters settled in Dresden in 1905. The new form of art,<sup>10</sup> different from the Impressionist one, which was considered too illustrative and superficial, expanded from painting to other arts including literature, theatre and cinematography. The Expressionist art is based on visions, in fact nothing exists in itself neither the houses the streets nor the screams and the hunger but the interior vision which was provoked by all these only exists. It is the artist who shows what is behind the facts and objects and reveals their real form, freed from a false reality. The artist seeks, instead of an accidental form, the permanent meaning of these facts and objects.<sup>11</sup> The tendency was to isolate the most expressive expression of an object, a fact, a concept, a feeling or a state and this may stand not only for further abstraction but also for subjectivism. As far as it is already known, abstraction stems from the anxiety that man experienced when scared by the phenomena perceived around, determining him

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<sup>7</sup> At the same time, the German culture was enriched by the American cultural influences.

<sup>8</sup> At the end of the First World War, the new state of Germany, recently unified in 1871, had to face an economic and political collapse due to the war. The monarchy was abolished and a new political system – the republic – was set up in 1919. The Republic of Weimar took its name from the German city where the constitution was written.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Elsaesser, *Weimar Cinema and after: Germany's Historical Imaginary* (London: Routledge, 2000), 3.

<sup>10</sup> The Expressionist painting inhabits the possibility for the artist to project the most profound emotions as well as the extreme mental states into the work of art in the most subjective manner, replacing the conventional shapes and colours with the ones much more abstract. The same tendency was found in the field of Expressionist literature dominated by narratives full of nervous and rebel characters standing for typologies instead of individuals. The most predominant themes of the Expressionist literature were: the revolt against any form of authority as well as the generation gap that led to different sorts of conflicts.

<sup>11</sup> Lotte Eisner, *The Haunted Screen* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 11.

to detached the objects, the facts, the feelings or the states from their natural context and to appropriate all these elements to their absolute form.

Most of the Expressionist elements from paintings, such as light, violent contrasts, shadow, basic geometric figures, linear setting, and literary texts, such as the plot, the types of characters, the development of the conflict, the use of staccato sentences, were easily found on stage and then on film. Related either to form or to content, these elements are meant to reveal, in the most expressionist manner, the extreme, individual, emotional and mental states and situations. Being influenced by theatrical means, the German Expressionist cinematography was mainly based on *mise-en-scene* and not on special shootings or editing. That is why this new cinematography is by far one of the most visual ones.

Characterised by artificial and geometrical settings as well as by strong contrasting lighting, the purpose of this cinematography was to emphasise and sometimes to exaggerate the expression of the most intense states and the extreme situations. In doing so, all the Expressionist elements proved to be useful. The use of light is usually related to the effects that are needed in order to explore different types of emotions and states. In the Expressionist aesthetics, the contrast between the light and shadow is extreme and highlighted by the technique of *chiaroscuro*. The whole scenery was cut down to the most important basic figures and dominant oblique lines. The depth of the scene comes from deliberately distorted perspective and from narrow and slanting streets that cut across each other at an unexpected angle. At the same time, oblique, rectilinear or curving lines converge across an expanse towards the background. The meaning of using such visual elements is to induce anxiety. Having the same aim, the animated objects<sup>12</sup> also seem to haunt the characters by their dynamic force.

Besides the contrast between light and shade, the distorted space and objects, there is also abstraction as a means of representing the complexity of the psyche. The physical element is linked to an optical representation which is revealed in the distorted images of someone's mind. The sets also dictated the stylization of the acting. The actor became part of the setting while the act of performing was reduced to the most essential movements, gestures and exclamations but, at the same time, exaggerating them in order to explore the inner states of the characters. By reducing the gestures, the movements of the actors could become almost linear and brusque as the geometrical plane of the

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<sup>12</sup> The animated objects represent a constant interest not only in the German culture but also in the German language. In the German syntax, objects are spoken of with the same adjectives and verbs used to speak of human beings endowing them with the same qualities as people.

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set. Most of the Expressionist characters are detached from everyday life, deprived of individuality, resembling more and more the abstract creatures.

Making use of the Expressionist context, the German Cinema employs the new aesthetics for further cinematic development, turning the art of cinematography into the perfect art to deal with an unnatural, dangerous world. There was no wonder why cinema became the proper medium for exhibiting the visions nourished by moods of vague and troubled yearning. More than that, in this mysterious world, the German cinema found its true nature.

### *The Gothic Canon of the German Cinematographic Aesthetics*

The most Expressionist German film was *Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari* (Robert Wiene, 1919), followed by *Nosferatu* (F.W. Murnau, 1922), a cinematographic adaptation of Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* from 1879 and by *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1926). In all these examples most of the Expressionist elements represent a basic for the unusual and frightening world transposed into film, but in a specific shaping of fictional reality. The sets are very similar to the theatrical settings but they are meant to reshape all of the film's components in order to create a unique cinematic composition, full of labyrinths in white and black whose function is to imitate the human mind. In *Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari*, the sets are meant to reveal Caligari's nightmare and madness in his desperate attempt to control his world, behaving as the master of all the creatures. The evolution of such a character is an Expressionist narrative technique used here in a specific cinematographic manner not only for doctor Caligari but also for Graf Orlok, the vampire of *Nosferatu*<sup>13</sup> and for the main characters of *Metropolis*, Joh Fredersen who controls the city as well the scholar who, in his turn, controls his scientific creation. Furthermore, the slanting lines and the curves, specific to these examples, also have a metaphysic meaning, offering a terrifying plunge into the character's mind and also into an abyss of bizarre perceptions. In *Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari*, the medieval town is full of twisting back alleys, crumbling houses with wedged-shaped doors and oblique windows almost gnawing into the walls, totally distorting the image.<sup>14</sup>

The tendency to represent images on the slant, viewed from above at an acute angle, closely reveals the images in the mind or *imagined images*.<sup>15</sup> There

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<sup>13</sup> The meaning of the title *Nosferatu* refers literally to the un-dead.

<sup>14</sup> Rudolf Kurtz, *Expressionism and Film*, trans. Brenda Benthien (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), 133.

<sup>15</sup> Eisner, *The Haunted Screen*, 24.

is no continuity among the lines; they are just interrupted by other lines. The same effect is obtained by the contrast between black and white. The most extreme setting could be found in the vision of the prison cell full of verticals that tend to narrow as they rise, extending along the floor, trying to obtain an oppressive effect as they lead to the spot where the prisoner squats, as it may be noticed in Figure 1.



Figure 1 – *Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari*

In the case of Murnau's *Nosferatu*, the images are credited not with the conventional perspective for the picturesque but with a mystical vision of the landscape, architecture and animals as the essential elements of this supernatural approach.<sup>16</sup> Unlike *Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari*, *Nosferatu* contains a number of scenes that were shot in natural exteriors.

The camera is now used for highlighting the essential nature the landscape, stylizing the whole reality for better expressing the wind blow or the old castle the high mountain or the human fear. Many *angle shots* are continued with *reversed angle shots* so that different perspectives may be combined for suggesting a more complex vision. More than that, a rapid succession of very short scenes could contribute to the creation of suspense.<sup>17</sup> Each scene has its precise function with deliberately selected *mise-en-scene* so that the distorted perspectives and angles were no longer needed but, in this case, the editing takes the place of the shooting, suggesting the suspense through a frame cut that transports the character *Nosferatu* from the distant end of a hall directly to Hutter's house door. *Nosferatu*'s movement towards the camera gives also the impression of speed and horror. The supernatural vision over the landscapes<sup>18</sup> is related to the protagonist's state of mind.

The stylization of the sets influences the art of acting. The gestures are reduced in order to attain linear movements which, like the broken angles of the sets, remain brusque in spite of the few curves that slip in. Some actors'

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<sup>16</sup> Kevin Jackson, *Nosferatu – A Symphony of Horror* (London: Palgrave, 2013), 11.

<sup>17</sup> One of the best examples is the scene showing the police chasing Hyde through the streets or the one the same character is trying to hide himself. Lotte Eisner, *Murnau* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 31.

<sup>18</sup> At this point, it may be important to specify the influences that come from the Romantic period, mainly from the painter Caspar David Friedrich on Murnau's cinematic landscapes. The same immensity, containing one or two human figures, can characterize both artistic representations.

movements from one point to another never go beyond the limits of an established geometrical plane. On the other hand, there are actors who prefer a more naturalistic style, determining their outline to achieve an element of fantastic.<sup>19</sup> From the narrative point of view, the actors, through their particular manner of performing, bring to life characters that could be recognized more as anti-heroes. It is definitely the case of all the protagonists whose specific features are more negative than positive and whose evolution reveal their incapability to adapt to the world. In *Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari*, the main character gets mad and Freder, from *Metropolis*, experiencing hallucinations and fever, becomes incapable to control his actions while Hutter, in *Nosferatu*, brings the plague into his native town

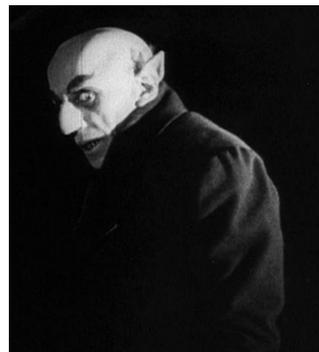


Figure 2 – *Nosferatu*

causing the death of lots of people including his wife. As anti-hero, count Orlok<sup>20</sup> owes the impact of his presence to his unnatural appearance: a bold head, a very white face, huge ears, long teeth, hooked nose, fingers similar to claws. The contrast between the uncommon white face and the *chiaroscuro* from the back is meant to highlight his terrifying status, as it could be observed in Figure 2, where the spot of light focuses on the side of count's head and, then gradually diminishes into the background. The un-dead state of the protagonist is emphasized by his association with night and death through elements such as the coffin, the bites, the blood, the rats and the plague. All these elements intensify the horror aspect of the whole movie.

The same anti-hero is also found in *Metropolis*, but this time, there are two characters with this status. On one hand, it is Freder, Joh Fredersen's son, who is against the social order that his father created and introduced in the city of Metropolis for better controlling the workers; on the other hand, it is Rotwang, the scholar who lives in the dark world of his laboratory, who, in his turn, created another type of monster, a robot.<sup>21</sup> Technology, in fact, seems to dominate the

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<sup>19</sup> Eisner, *The Haunted Screen*, 25.

<sup>20</sup> The character of count Orlok as well as his story inspired many other films of the same type such as *Vampyr* (Carl Theodore Dreyer, 1932) and *Dracula* (Ted Browning, 1931). In 1979, Werner Herzog produced his *Nosferatu*, maintaining a high interest for the Gothic film whose tradition was continued by Tim Burton with his *Edward Scissorhands* from 1990 and *Sweeney Todd* from 2008.

<sup>21</sup> Maria, the robot is created having as model another Maria, the character. The process of transforming the real heroine, Maria, into an evil robot was possible using new editing techniques, such as *dissolve*. Being also named *lap dissolve*, this cinematographic technique represents a

whole city and may lead to destruction unless governed by a wise and humane mind. Although the end of the film is a happy one, somehow a naïve one, the threat of losing direction when the focus is only on the development of technology remains possible. The apocalyptic visions of such a world are sustained by specific elements: the class system which does not hold determining the workers' rebellion to break out, the tyranny of time and regimentation.<sup>22</sup> The vision is also sustained by the tower that is intended to be built in the center of Metropolis, where all the slaves gather, coming from five different directions, as the hand's fingers, intensifying the image. Unfortunately, this tower becomes a machine devised to eat men. The city itself is designed in such a way as to maintain the tension of the whole movie. The architecture is based on the graphic



*Figure 3 – Metropolis*

interaction between the vertical lines of tall, futuristic buildings and the horizontal lines suggested by the movements of the machines' pistons. The image itself is framed by buildings in the shade while the perspective is fading in the distance, as it appears in Figure 3. The same interaction could be identified in the graphic relation between the crowds of workmen that climb and descend behind the gates of a lift and the insertion of the inter-titles that correspond to

their geometrical arrangements. In order to increase the impact of visual effects, Fritz Lang used complex lights arrangements: the spots of light were placed in such a way that the buildings may seem enormous and the pattern of their windows can reflect the light back as pouring on the streets and other buildings. Thus, all the elements seem much more exaggerated. At the same time, the animated sequences were shot frame by frame and then edited with slight discrepancy for obtaining the effect of a continuous movement.<sup>23</sup>

In order to create the effect of hallucination and obscuring visions, the characters, Maria, the robot, and Joh Frederson, Freder's father, were encircled by prismatic montage of hazy and distorted, clock like images rotating around

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transitional editing technique between two sequences, shots or scenes, in which the visible image of one shot or scene is gradually replaced, superimposed or blended (by an overlapping *fade out* or *fade in* and *dissolve*) with the image from another shot or scene, often used to suggest the passage of time and to transform one scene to the next. *Lap dissolve* is shorthand for *over 'lap dissolve*, also known as a *soft transition* or *dissolve to*, contrast to *cross-fade*. (Film Term Glossary – Index, letter D)

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Elsaesser, *Metropolis* (London: BFI Publishing, 2000), 54.

<sup>23</sup> Such a sequence contains almost 1,500 single frames.

them. Observed by Freder, these two characters are pictured staring directly into the camera while Freder is passing his hand before his eyes as if his vision is completely blurred and he is trying to wipe away the coating obscuring what he is watching. As Freder is falling down, losing his consciousness, graphics of explosions and starbursts are superimposed upon his image in the frame that is followed by a subjective shot from Freder's perspective with a rapid editing of multiple successive images depicting Maria, the robot, Freder's father and Rotwang.<sup>24</sup> This type of editing generated indeed the effect of hallucinations but, at the same time, it creates the effect of destabilization that may lead to uncertainty and instability.<sup>25</sup> In fact, this destabilization could be regarded as a result of the radical structural aesthetic drawn from the anti-representational manner developed by German Expressionism and related more generally to the Modernist movement's literary response to modernity.

The imagery proposed by the film *Metropolis* develops an apocalyptic vision over the future, setting the path for a new cinematic genre, the science fiction movie. Moreover, the thrillers and the adventure movies of the 1980s were mainly influenced by the iconography, the message and particular sequences depicted from *Metropolis*. It is the case of *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, 1984) or the *Indiana Jones* series (Steven Spielberg, starting with 1981) or *Star Wars* series (George Lucas, starting with 1977) or even *Brazil* (Terry Gilliam, 1984).

All the three films analysed from the perspective of the Expressionist context represent a starting point for further development of the cinematic canon set on the grounds provided by these artistic works of art. Either it is the story or the characters, or the manner of shooting and the editing, these movies created the basic pattern for the next films *noir*. Generally speaking, the German Expressionist influence may be identified in a lot of films that explore extreme psychological states; but, in this case, it definitely must be made an important difference between expressionism as an artistic tendency and the German Expressionism as a cultural current and context. The German aesthetics was highly influenced by the Expressionist context but, the beginning of the German cinematography and its particular aesthetics mainly developed the expressionist orientation that introduced not only specific themes under literary influences,

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<sup>24</sup> Richard Murphy, "Modernism and the Cinema: *Metropolis* and the Expressionist Aesthetic," in *Comparative Critical Studies*, vol 4 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 105.

<sup>25</sup> In the case of *Metropolis* as well as in other Weimar movies there are scenes depicting dreams, hallucinations and fantastic events supported by discontinuities and graphs in the plot and regular switches of narrator that may create a sense of destabilization and narrative ambiguity. Murphy, "Modernism and the Cinema," 106.

such as death and nightmare, anti-heroic characters, as the un-dead and the scholar, apocalyptic worlds, as *Metropolis*, but also specific manners of cinematic representation in terms of shooting, such as the stylized sets, the distorted space and objects, the *chiaroscuro* effect, the reduced acts of performing, and in terms of editing, such as the distorted images, the rapid succession of short scenes, the frame cuts, the dissolve technique, all generating a possible aesthetic canon. This expressionist cinematic canon<sup>26</sup> was meant to thrillers, horror movies and *noir* movies that were to come. It may also be identified in numerous visual styles and narratives, other than those defined as such by the German Expressionism. In fact, the genuine form and content provided by the German Expressionism could be found in very few movies,<sup>27</sup> such as *Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari*, and in all the cases, only partially. The expressionist style was generated and influenced by the Expressionist context but it could not be entirely identified with the Expressionist artistic current. It developed on a different path, as a particular artistic, mostly cinematographic style. The analysis of style may be sometimes subsumed to the analysis of content but this does not lead to miss the recognition of the historic achievement which the films analyzed had for the development of film styles within the German cinema and later on international scale. None of these films could be labelled as Expressionist, but they experienced and proposed a specific cinematographic style in the early years of Weimar cinema.

### *Conclusion*

It is important to state that the major German contribution to cinema was chosen with a view to achieving effects in film which are based on the specific technology of this artistic medium and is impossible to be obtained through other artistic means; because, in the end, the genuine author of the film has to be the camera and through its use, a film may become an equal to other art form.<sup>28</sup> The technology of film is meant to sustain the status of cinematography as an art form and it also may determine the selection of the content. The attraction that cinema held in its first years, that of making the images be seen, was replaced by the

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<sup>26</sup> The cinematographic style proposed by these films was later developed, mainly by Hollywood productions, and transposed into a canon.

<sup>27</sup> Although in these films it could be found the uncanny and its various embodiments in the form of doubles, vampires and artificial creatures, none of them are motifs of the Expressionist artistic movement. To be more precisely they belong to the Romantic period.

<sup>28</sup> Dietrich Scheunemann, "Activating the Differences: Expressionist Film and Early Weimar Cinema," in *Expressionist Film – New Perspectives*, ed. Dietrich Scheunemann (New York: Camden House, 2003), 12.

attraction of presenting the invisible. The manner in which the directors could realize such a trend together with their individual style differed, but their works of art introduced a particular style that could be identified within the history of cinematography. Furthermore, concerning the specific style of these films, they may be described as a certain attempt to free the Romantic themes from their embrace by Expressionist art design. The photographic and editorial experiments developed in these films may be considered the overture to the exploration of other innovative effects in cinematography that later could generate a new canon. As Béla Balázs stated, the point is that the stylization of nature, whether in impressionist or expressionist manner, is the condition for a film to become a work of art.<sup>29</sup> All the films analysed emphasized the stylization as opposed to the photographic principle of imitation as the basic condition for film to become a form of art.

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<sup>29</sup> Béla Balázs, *Early Film Theory*, trans. Rodney Livingstone, ed. Erica Carter (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2011), 97.

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Figure 3 – Metropolis. Source: *Wikipedia*. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metropolis\\_\(1927\\_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metropolis_(1927_film)).

# The Eurocentric “I” and the White Mask of Colonialism: The African “Other” in Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*

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## Abstract

*Eurocentrism is a philosophy which makes of the European “I” the only reference for any judgement and evaluation. Europeans consider themselves as the embodiment of good culture while the other, the colonized, the non-European, is the incarnation of brutishness and savagery. In other words, Otherness is an image built up by a referent, who is superior, and who decides about the nature of the other. Subsequently, the image-making of otherness is the representation of the person, who projects his mind into it. Eurocentrism legalizes power and legitimizes domination and makes them central for the sake of effectiveness. Moreover, hegemony gives to the colonizer the right and responsibility to civilize the colonized. Colonialist discourse tries to impress and to make the other think of himself as inferior; thus, he needs to be civilized, colonized and guided. To be an “Other” is, then, to be silenced and dependent because there is no open possibility for him to change or to reach the European, the referent. The self-justification of imperialism was an idea of conquest of other people to usurp their riches and lands. Conrad’s background of *Heart of Darkness* stems from the Euro-centric documents that acknowledge the subjective illegal right to dominate Africa and to make its natives an “Other.”*

**Keywords:** Eurocentrism, White Mask, Otherness, Colonialism, Domination.

## *Introduction*

Otherness is a perceived image built up on a priori assumption that any human, whose culture and race and image do not conform to Europe as the only referent, is bound to be an “other.” The European is the superior; he, thus, possesses the right to decide about the nature of the other. The image-making of

otherness, then, is the representation of the person who projects his mind into it. Though ideas seem to be related to facts, they are, nonetheless, primarily a mental construct. Every other, therefore, is a project of apprehension of the outside world through the inside. In other words, the apprehension of truth during the construction of the other is a construction without correspondence to the external reality. It is a reality of language that crystallizes the subject as an object without real correspondence.<sup>1</sup>

The other is the product of the Euro-centred philosophy, which judges the non-white, the non-European, as an “Other” who does not merit to be equal to them and who is in need of civilization, education and civility. The critic Bart Moore-Gilbert, discussing the clash between West and East, North and South maintains that: “West’s hegemony over the East is primarily by producing the East discursively as the West’s inferior «Other», a manoeuvre which strengthens, indeed, even partially constructs, the West’s self-image as a superior civilization.”<sup>2</sup> To be an “Other” is, then, to be silenced and dependent because there is no open possibility for him to change or to reach the European, the reference. The European becomes the masculine, the progressive, the moral, the rational; the other remains the passive, the regressive, the irrational, the sensual, and the despotic.<sup>3</sup>

So, the conception of otherness other is an excuse for the European to have the right to take in charge everything the other possesses. That is, the latter’s right is only dependence, obedience and service. Colonial authority functions as an instrument of power, a power that enables the colonizers to shape the world in their image. Elleke Bolhmer points out that: “European colonizers held the conviction not merely that the rest of the world also could be understood in its terms, but that the rest of the world also could-and indeed should-be encouraged to interpret reality in a European way, according to a European language of reason.”<sup>4</sup> Within the same context, the critic Shelley Walia in her article, “Postmodernism, Discourse and The Colonial Perspective,” states that:

*The imperial epistemology exclusively works through the centrality of Western consciousness; the incestuousness of orientalist testimony results in ambiguous colonial perspectives and disillusionments replete with desires and projections, dogmatism and*

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher Warnes, *Magical Realism and the Postcolonial Novel: Between Faith and Irreverence* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 22.

<sup>2</sup> Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics* (London and New York: Verso, 2000), 39.

<sup>3</sup> Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory*, 39.

<sup>4</sup> Elleke Bolhmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 50.

*racism. Such is the consciousness with which the European confronts the idea of colonization.*<sup>5</sup>

It is, then, the logocentric Western discourse that makes, voluntarily, ignore the voice and the culture of the non-European. The latter is seen as disorganized, distorted with a non-self – or a self that exists and shaped by Euro-imperatives: rationalism, civility, organisation, and the like. Edward Said, conscious of such disparity and fixity in the identification of the non-European, says that: “Every writer on the Orient assumes some Oriental precedent”<sup>6</sup> and “Colonial rule, [that] was justified in advance by Orientalism, had been years, even centuries in making.”<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the critic Malachi McIntosh denounces such fixed Euro-centred mind, which makes of the Orient the regressive opposite other. He writes: “Orientalism discourse is predicted on the notion of European superiority, a notion that cannot exist without a concept of Europe as a cohesive unit.”<sup>8</sup>

So, the colonial discourse is an ideology constructed on euro-background: “who are they?, and who is the other?” The colonialist “thingifies” the other and becomes the only Subject. The dichotomy of Subject/Object – Colonizer/Colonize is very crucial to the creation of the imperialist hegemony. It legalizes power, legitimizes domination and makes the colonizer at the centre of decision and effectiveness. Moreover, hegemony gives to the colonizer the right and responsibility to civilize the colonized.

Colonialist discourse tries to impress and to make the other think of himself as inferior; thus, he needs to be civilized, colonized and guided. This logocentric philosophy makes the colonizer treat the colonized as “not fully human.” The colonizer considers himself as the embodiment of good culture while the colonized is label as the root of evil and savagery. The critics S. N. Balagangadhara and Esther Bloch state that: “Colonialism generated a particular way of looking at the world in both the Metropolis and the colonies.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Shelley Walia, “Postmodernism, Discourse and the Colonial Perspective,” in *Postcolonial Theory and Literature*, eds. P. Mallikayuna Rao, Rajeshwar Mittapalli and K Damodar Rao (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributers, 2003), 23.

<sup>6</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003), 20.

<sup>7</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 39.

<sup>8</sup> Malachi McIntosh, “The Moor in the Text: Modern Colonialism in Medieval Christian Spain,” *Journal of Romance Studies* 6, 3 (2006): 65.

<sup>9</sup> S. N. Balagangadhara and Esther Bloch, “Colonialism, Colonial Consciousness, and Political Theory,” in *Research Centre Vergelijkende Cultuurwetensch* (Gent Belgium, 2003), 3.

*Colonialism and the Contextual Construction of the World*

The emergence of world construction from a text is, undoubtedly, biased. It starts from a Euro-perspective of how to look at it: how to read it and the tools you are supposed to use in order to find out what you are expecting from the text. Thus, as a background, a colonial discourse theory will guide the reader to colonial expectations: the “thingification” of the colonized. Speaking about the Orient construction from a Euro-gaze, both the critics Bill Ashcroft and Pal Ahluwalia write:

*The worldliness which emerges out of the text of his own identity is crucial in his analysis of those Orientalist texts, which constructed the Orient and thereby constructed Europe’s dominance over it. In a nutshell, Orientalism demonstrates how power operates in knowledge: the processes by which the West ‘knows’ the Orient have been a way of exerting power over it.*<sup>10</sup>

The fundamental drive behind such label, thus, is the superiority of the colonizer. His cultural elitism discloses the non-European and makes him inferior. Difference becomes an evil good, instead of richness and diversity. This power of dominance and imposition is an arbitrary recognition of the non-European as an “Other.” So, power begets desire, and desire allows practices and exercises that ensure the superiority of the white over the non-white. The latter has to endure the orchestrated domination: his already private, social systems are thus destroyed and a new system stabled by the European is built up. The critic Abdul R. Janmohamed points out that:

*By thus subjugating the native, the European settler is able to compel the Other’s recognition of him and, in the process, allow his own identity to become deeply dependent on his position as a master. This enforced recognition from the Other in fact amounts to the European’s narcissistic self-recognition since the native, who is considered too degraded and inhuman to be credited with any specific subjectivity, is cast as no more than a recipient of the negative elements of the self that the European projects onto him.*<sup>11</sup>

Becoming the masters in a land which is not theirs, these Europeans accumulate a “surplus morality,” which becomes a means and an end to invest in the denigration of the native.<sup>12</sup> In the same vein, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak claims that:

*Some of the most radical criticism coming out of the West today is the result of an interested desire to conserve the subject of the West, or the West as Subject. It is also*

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<sup>10</sup> Bill Ashcroft and Pal Ahluwalia, *Edward Said* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 8.

<sup>11</sup> Abdul R. Janmohamed, “The Economy of Manichean Allegory,” in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (1995), eds. Bill Ashcroft, et al. (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 20.

<sup>12</sup> Janmohamed, “The Economy of Manichean Allegory,” 23.

### *The Eurocentric “I” and the White Mask of Colonialism*

*that, in the constitution of that Other of Europe, great care was taken to obliterate the textual ingredients with which such a subject could cachet, could occupy (invest?) its itinerary — not only by ideological and scientific production, but also by the institution of the law.*<sup>13</sup>

By transcending the white and by making him the Subject, the non-European turns gradually into “thingification.” A Thing produced by a Subject according to his own shape, model and doctrine. The critic George Yancy states that:

*Through the process of ideological structuring, the colonizer and the colonized are deemed opposites in an ontologically hierarchical structural relationship. The former are deemed naturally superior and the latter are said to be naturally inferior and fit for domination. The reality, however, is that the construction of the inferior / monstrous colonized is contingent upon the construction of the European as superior and non-monstrous. The colonized is fixed, because the colonizer does the fixing, and the “thingification” of the colonized is dialectically linked to the transcendent / master consciousness of the colonizer.*<sup>14</sup>

This colonialist position is a violent usurpation that destroys at the very root a whole life system of a human community, which diverges, but, nonetheless, contributes to the social good of humanity. In the words of Frantz Fanon: “This Manicheism goes to its logical conclusion and dehumanizes the native, or to speak plainly, it turns him into an animal. When the settler seeks to describe the native fully in exact terms he consistently refers to the bestiary.”<sup>15</sup> Fanon extends further claiming that the natives are “declared insensible to ethics: he represents not only the absence of values. He is, let us dare to admit, the enemy of values, and in this sense he is the absolute evil.”<sup>16</sup>

European philosophy of imperialism proclaims that there is no self that exists beyond the European. Any other self that comes to be known is an Other – it is not theirs: it is foreign, and different from them in race, language, and culture. A body and a flesh of a stranger different from theirs.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, eds. Bill Ashroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 24.

<sup>14</sup> George Yancy, “Colonial Gazing: The Product of the Body as «Other»,” *The Western Journal of Black Studies* 32 (2008): 1-2.

<sup>15</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched on the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 42.

<sup>16</sup> Fanon, *The Wretched on the Earth*, 41.

<sup>17</sup> Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (London and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 2.

*African – the Other: An Object of the Subject/European*

Otherness could be seen at two levels, which are, nonetheless, interdependent and biased: the literal that exists in history and the literary that resides in artistic representations.

OUTSIDE THE TEXT: THE LITERAL

*Heart of Darkness* is an artistic record of historical events that took place in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the nineteenth century. Though reality is modelled, entwined and enveloped into artistic canons, it, nonetheless, holds undeniable facts of colonialism and its philosophy of defamiliarising the colonized as an “other”. The overt acts of the Belgians in the Congo River Basin are the emergent clues of the covert ends. The critic Henryk Zins maintains that “The colonial exploitation was an old story of evil, greed and lust perpetrated upon a weaker people.”<sup>18</sup> The writer Joseph Conrad, however, does not look at it in physical context because physical power does not gauge/ measure civility and civilisation. He says: “They were conquerors, and for that you want only brute force – nothing to boast of, when you have it, since your strength is just an accident arising from the weakness of others.”<sup>19</sup>

So, any act of domination is a transgression against other people, who are supposed to live within their own territories and with their own culture: they belong to the land and the land belongs to them. Whatever is the mode of existence, no one has the right to judge, underestimate and submit anyone else to his own culture against his own will. Thus, colonising people is imposing a new culture and disrupting the already existing one. Tony C. Brown points out that:

*In the discourse of colonialism particularly in the late nineteenth century context where the noble savage had all but disappeared-when it was space of terror being spoken of, it was so typically the “daemonic” environments of the far-off colonies which were perceived as the terror’s source. It was, of course, such an abhorrent condition which the civilizing force of European colonization was supposed to set right. In the case of Leopold’s Congo Free State, though, la mission civilisatrice appeared to perform the hideous barbarism it was supposed to eradicate, effecting a degree of confusion as to the cause of those horrors reported as occurring in the colony.*<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Henryk Zins, “Joseph Conrad and British Critics of Colonialism,” *Pula: Botswana Journal of African Studies* 1/2 (1998): 62.

<sup>19</sup> Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, introduction by Paul O’Prey (Harmondsworth and Middlesex: Penguin, 1983), 31.

<sup>20</sup> Tony C. Brown, “Cultural Psychosis on the Frontier: The Work of the Darkness in Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*,” *Studies in the Novel* 32, 1 (Spring 2000): 17.

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The logic in Eurocentrism is that all what not European is savage and, thus, replies domination. Savagery is lawless and threatening. Its presence should not block the imposition of the civilized order.

“Who judges whom?” has become paradoxical. All what is international and universal has become only European. Samuel P. Huntington points out that: “The West in effect is using international institutions, military power and economic resources to run the world in the ways that will maintain Western predominance protect Western interests and promote Western political and economic values.”<sup>21</sup> European rules and laws have become universal and, therefore, legitimated as prerequisite parameters with which we judge the other as uncivilized, and, thus, must be dissociated from his savagery and primitiveness. In the words of Emmanuelle Jouannet, “This paradox stems from the fact that international law, past and present, is the reflection of a particular – Western – culture, whilst at the same time claiming not only to internationalize but also to almost universalize the values that it conveys.”<sup>22</sup>

European imperialism has made of Africa a pure absolute otherness. The white has become the absolute Subject, who further makes the African an absolute Object. Achille Mbembe points out: “It is now widely acknowledged that Africa as an idea, a concept, has historically served, and continues to serve, as a polemical argument for the West’s desperate desire to assert its difference from the rest of the world.”<sup>23</sup> In the same vein, the critic Abdul R. Jan Mohamed maintains that: “The colonial mentality is dominated by a Manichean allegory of white and black, good and evil, salvation and damnation, civilization and savagery, superiority and inferiority, intelligence and emotion, self and other, subject and object.”<sup>24</sup>

In the European mind, it is the nature of savagery and darkness of Africa that was the source of reply and impulse for imperialism to colonize and civilize. Marlow, the witness eye, reports:

*They grabbed what they could get for the sake of what to be got. It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale, and men going at it blind — as is very proper for those who tackle darkness. The conquest of the earth, which mostly*

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<sup>21</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations,” *Foreign Affairs* 72, 3 (Summer, 1993): 40.

<sup>22</sup> Emmanuelle Jouannet, “Universalism and Imperialism: The True False Paradox of International Law,” *The European Journal of International Law* 18, 3 (2007): 379.

<sup>23</sup> Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 2.

<sup>24</sup> Abdul R. Jan Mohamed, *Manichean Aesthetics: The Politics of Literature in colonial Africa* (Ambers: Massachusetts UP, 1983), 4.

*means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much.*<sup>25</sup>

This sinister primitiveness of Africans justifies the mission of imperialism.<sup>26</sup> The self-justification of imperialism was an idea of conquest of other people to usurp their riches and lands. Conrad's background of *Heart of Darkness* stems from the Euro-centric documents that acknowledge the subjective illegal right to dominate Africa and makes it an "Other." In his book *Roger Casement*, B. Inglis reports for us what John B. Murphy, an American missionary, witnessed in 1890. He writes:

*Each town and district is forced to bring in a certain quantity [of rubber] to the headquarters of the Commissionaire every Sunday. It is collected by force; the soldiers drive the people into the bush. If they will not go, they are shot down, and their hands cut off and taken as trophies to the Commissaire. [...] These hands, the hands of men, women and children are placed in rows before the Commissaire who counts them to see that the soldiers have not wasted cartridges.*<sup>27</sup>

On the other hand, the journalist E. D. Morel reported that from 1890 and on, The Congo had been the scene of atrocities and massacre. The Belgian soldiers used the "civilising" power to kill the inhabitants of the Congo Basin.<sup>28</sup> He further laid bare Leopold's practices of enslaving and subjecting the Congo natives to his power and "dehumanized" them. He says:

*Systematic hand cutting and worse forms of mutilation had been practised all over the Congo territories for more than a decade. The mutilation of the dead and of the living must be assigned to the direct instigation of State officials and agents of the Trusts appointed to terrorise the rubber districts. The soldiers let loose through the country have been required to bring back tangible proof that proper punishment was inflicted, and the hands of slain, or partly slain, people were the readiest and most acceptable form of proof.*<sup>29</sup>

Such colonial exploitation, persecution have degraded the natives and shown that these whites did not feel any sympathy or sensitivity for human beings, who are different in colour and culture from them.

The African land had revealed for the traveller, Conrad, the true nature of the whites, who are hypocrites: their civilisation is laid bare in the African land. It shows barbarism and primitiveness. A civilisation lies unveiled before our eyes and goes naked in the colonies.<sup>30</sup> Both explorers Henry Morton Stanley and

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<sup>25</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, 31-32.

<sup>26</sup> Ashcroft, *Edward Said*, 86.

<sup>27</sup> B. Inglis, *Roger Casement* (London: Hodder and Stroughton, 1973), 46.

<sup>28</sup> Edmund D. Morel, *King Leopold's Rule in Africa* (London: Heinemann, 1904), 103.

<sup>29</sup> Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 119.

<sup>30</sup> Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *On Colonialism* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968), 88.

Kitchener were honoured because of their discoveries of the other and his land. T. Brook reported for us what happened when Stanley and Kitchener came back home from Africa. He writes:

*[In April 1890] Brussels was dominated by festivities to his honour. The connection between Stanley and ivory was made more than evident: at his welcoming banquet, King Leopold had the room decorated with the tusks of 400 elephants. An important event in 1898. Kitchener, too, was welcomed by Queen Victoria; just like Stanley he was awarded a honorary doctorate at Cambridge, and he was celebrated for having opened up the Nile Valley "to the civilizing influences of commercial enterprise." The battle of Omdurman, where 11,000 Sudanese soldiers were killed and few of the 16,000 wounded survived (whereas the British lost only 48), [...] showed the humiliating procedures of capitulation, for instance, the king of Ashante and his mother crawling on all fours to kiss the boots of British officers.<sup>31</sup>*

But besides such inhumane capitulation, the African is made to believe that he is a human flesh eater. The historian critic Frederic D. Ellenberger gives the following notes: "Missionaries seem to delight in depicting the cannibals as ogres."<sup>32</sup> Between the years 1890-1905, John H. Weeks stationed in the Congo in the Bangala tribes as a missionary for the Baptist Missionary Society made many observations. It was custom for the Bangala tribe to eat people that had been killed in battle: "That night there was a cannibal feast in town."<sup>33</sup>

Cannibalism is not only one of the most spread myths about other people, but also one of the most widespread metaphors for describing the relationship of the colonialist with the colonized subaltern. African, being considered as inferior, needs a superior to conduct him. Such idea is crystallized into the Belgian King Leopold, who established himself as an absolute sovereign of the Congo. Cannon Schmitt points out:

*In 1885, King Leopold established the Congo Free State and made himself its absolute sovereign. This move granted Belgium a virtual monopoly on the exploitation of the Congo. Rather than cry foul, many other imperialist nations followed suit and established similar charter companies to develop other parts of Africa, granting their countries monopoly rights to the areas. Because Africa was so far away and there had been a general re-emergence of imperialist fervor across Europe, it took a long time*

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<sup>31</sup> Thomas Brook, "Preserving and Keeping Order by Killing Time in *Heart of Darkness*," *Heart of Darkness: A Case Study in Contemporary Criticism*, ed. Ross C. Murfin (New York: St. Martin's, 1989), 240.

<sup>32</sup> Frederic D. Ellenberger, *History of the Basutos, Ancient and Modern (1912)* (London and Morijia: Morijia Archives, 1992), 223.

<sup>33</sup> John H. Weeks, "Anthropological Notes on the Bangala of the Upper Congo River," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 39 (1909): 121.

*before there was any public outcry at the atrocities committed by imperialist agents in Africa in general, and Leopold's agents in the Congo in particular.*<sup>34</sup>

INSIDE THE TEXT: THE LITERARY

But in the text, how is this 'Other' seen? Marlow, the ascetic and Buddha-like character, is sick of these white colonialists, who legitimate their domination with conversion and civilisation:

*This devoted band called itself the Eldorado Exploring Expedition and I believe they were sworn to secrecy. Their talk, however, was the talk of sordid buccaneers: it was reckless without hardihood, greedy without audacity, and cruel without courage [....] To tear treasure out of the bowels of the land was their desire, with no more moral purpose at the back of it.*<sup>35</sup>

The notion of imperialism is set up right at the beginning of the novel. Conrad's narration starts by extolling the glorious imperial past and present for which the Thames figuratively stands as the source. Meanwhile, his discourse is overshadowed with the idea of hunting and consuming: "Hunters for gold or pursuer of fame, they all had gone out on that stream, bearing the sword, and often the torch, messengers of the might within the land, bearers of a spark from the sacred fire."<sup>36</sup> Such idea of glorification of the Knights of the empire, the ambassadors of Light, associates the Templar of colonialism to the glory of the Europe: "The dreams of men, the seed of commonwealths, the germs of empires."<sup>37</sup> The discourse used notifies that the whites are a reference-other, which supports civilization: myth of power, race, classifications and imagery of subordination.<sup>38</sup>

*Heart of Darkness* is a multileveled post-colonial parable. The notion of cannibalism is used by colonial discourse in order to define the nature as savage and hence to justify the idea of European civilization, enlightenment and progress. But where does cannibalism lie? Is it in the Blacks? Is it in the Whites? Who eats whom? What does really define this cannibalistic act? According to the literary critic C. Rawson:

*The discourse of cannibalism tends to work in two opposite directions: on the one hand the literal imputation of cannibalism serves to identify non-western people as bestial and savage; on the other, the metaphorical insinuation of the cannibalism of the*

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<sup>34</sup> Cannon Schmitt, "Tidal Conrad (Literally)," *Victorian Studies* 55, 1 (2012): 32.

<sup>35</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, 61.

<sup>36</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, 29.

<sup>37</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, 29.

<sup>38</sup> T. F. Nogueira Diniz, "Colonial Discourse Revisited: *Heart of Darkness*," *Fragmentos* 23 (2002): 126.

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*tyrant has long served a critical function by suggesting that it is the conquerors who are more savage than the savages, more cannibalistic than the cannibals.*<sup>39</sup>

The Black cannibals do not literally eat the invaders of their lands. But, nonetheless, their cannibalism is established as real by their very own words: "Aha!" I said, just for good fellowship's sake. "Catch'im" he snapped, with a bloodshot widening of his eyes and a flash of sharp teeth – "catch'im. Give'im to us." To you.eh?" I asked; "what would you do with them?" "Eat'im!" he said, curtly, and, leaning his elbow on the rail, looked out into the fog in a dignified and profoundly pensive attitude."<sup>40</sup> But they did not eat any! P. Hulme admits that though there is no literal act of consuming human flesh in the novel, there is, however, a confirmation by explorers and adventurers about the existence of this act.<sup>41</sup>

Marlow describes the Whites as pilgrims: "The pilgrims imagined it crawled to I don't know. To some place where they expected to do something. I bet! For me it crawled towards Kurtz – exclusively."<sup>42</sup> Kurtz is the Saint of Saints; the Inner station, his compound, is the Holy place for pilgrimage. Blacks and Whites come and go to such place like the temple visitors. Marlow, thus, draws a kind of analogy between the Congo pilgrims and the Middle Ages Templar. But, all the essential humanistic values lying at the core of the pilgrimage in Christian terms are questioned and invalidated by the greed, rapacity and violence that characterize the group of people in search for ivory. Money is the only faith. Ivory is the only deity at which the pilgrims pray. The sacrament service of bread and wine is analogically similar to these pilgrims' performances in Africa. The critic Cora Kaplan maintains that:

*The cannibalism Marlow imputes to the natives may be merely a guilty projection of the rapacity of the white colonizers, who have already devoured the native population in less literal ways. Since the European intruders have invaded territorial boundaries, have violated property rights, and have in fact confiscated the natives' most personal property – their bodies – for their own uses, the Europeans are but one step from literally devouring the inhabitants.*<sup>43</sup>

Marlow's approval of the apparent restraint of the natives on board the ship is a proof of their endurance and sustainability. He feels that Europeans in the Congo listen to their incestuous inner voices. He presents Blacks as admirable

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<sup>39</sup> Claude Rawson, "Eating People," *London Review of Books* (24 January 2004): 20.

<sup>40</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, 74.

<sup>41</sup> Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean: 1492-1797* (London: Methuen, 1986), 59.

<sup>42</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, 68.

<sup>43</sup> Cora Kaplan, "Language and Gender" (Unpublished Paper, University of Sussex, 1977), 30.

figures. Marlow wonders why he and his companions have not been eaten by these men. They possess what Europeans do not: restraint:

*I looked at them with a swift quickening of interest how unwholesome the pilgrims looked, and I hoped, yes, I positively hoped, that my aspect was not so – what shall I say? [...] Yes: I looked at them as you would on any human being, with a curiosity of their impulses, motives, capacities, weaknesses, when brought to the test of an inexorable physical necessity. Restraint! What possible restraint? Was it superstition, disgust, patience, fear – or some kind of primitive honour?<sup>44</sup>*

Marlow's ethic, embodying his commitment to the value of restraint, stands in stark contrast to the conduct of Kurtz: "I saw the inconceivable mystery of a soul that knew no restraint, no faith, and no fear."<sup>45</sup> Kurtz degenerated into a savage. But these Blacks, though they are cannibals, they did not eat any White.

Kurtz emerges as the more cannibalistic. Marlow metaphorically represents Kurtz's eloquence as a cannibalistic impulse: "I saw him open his mouth wide – it gave him a weirdly voracious aspect, as though he had wanted to swallow all the air, all the earth, all the men before him."<sup>46</sup> More emphatically, in front of Kurtz's fiancé, he reports how darkness did overwhelm Kurtz and made him a part of the jungle and its cannibalism: "I had a vision of him on the stretcher, opening his mouth voraciously, as if to devour all the earth with all its mankind."<sup>47</sup> His lack of moral equipment and his devotion to his inner voice and to moneytheistic culture of his race are features that show his predisposition to be in league with darkness and the law of its jungle: "But his soul was mad. Being alone in the wilderness, it had looked within itself, and, by heavens I tell you, it had gone mad."<sup>48</sup>

Kurtz's desire to "cannibalize" the world around made him swallowed up by wilderness itself. Even nature in the novel connotes such idea of consumption – cannibalism: Captain Fresleven was swallowed by the soil of the jungle and only his skeleton remains. Marlow found Kurtz lying on the grass, which covers his body. "In the afternoon, I saw him. I saw him lying on his back with closed eyes."<sup>49</sup> The V-shaped river is compared to a snake opening its mouth and trying to catch up birds while flying. Kurtz was buried in a muddy hole. He was transformed to "something" buried in and absorbed by the earth: "The voice was gone. What also had been there? But I am of course aware that the next day the

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<sup>44</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, 76.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, 108.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*, 99.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*, 116.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*, 108.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*, 111.

pilgrims buried something in a muddy hole.”<sup>50</sup> Nature had made the “only one”, the chief of the chiefs, Kurtz, become something, and later nothing.

Kurtz was supposed to bring light to the Blacks, but such idea redeems nothing at all. His duty to bring civilization to the natives turns into chaos. Besides his criminal acts, the tattered postscript of his report to the “International Society of the Suppression of Savage Customs,” Kurtz had scribbled: “Exterminate all the brutes!”<sup>51</sup> So, Kurtz goes native and becomes a cannibal in the jungle. He performs with the natives the ritual of cannibalism. He has symbolically become a flesh-eater and united with who he devours, the savages in the Congo:

*On the hill a big fire burned [...] The monotonous beating of a big drum filled the air with muffled shocks and a lingering vibration. A steady droning sound of many men chanting each to himself some weird incantation came out from the black, flat wall of the woods as the humming of bees comes out of a hive, and had a strange narcotic effect upon my half-awake senses.*<sup>52</sup>

Dialogically speaking, those literal cannibals are not cannibalizing any of the individuals, whether black or white, that is around them. On the contrary, the whites hold all the qualities of a cannibal: they hunt, kill and devour the African land and its riches. Kurtz, the painter, the musician, the poet, the idealistic, the man who has “the gift of expression”, turns into a primitive savage.

Approaching the Inner Station, the compound of Kurtz, the temple of the Saint of pilgrims, Marlow was smitten by a horrible scene. Through a telescope, Marlow views “round knobs” that turn out to be shrunken heads. These heads, in any case, symbolize Kurtz’s lack of restraint and offer evidence that his hunting for ivory was a headhunting ceremony: a ritual performance, which is closely associated to cannibalism. The literary critic Juliet Mclauchan takes these heads as suggestions of a ceremony of the eaten and defeated enemy: “[It] seems most probable that, in the course of Kurtz’s ivory raids, the victory might [have] seal[ed] and celebrate[d] success by not only killing but eating their defeated enemies.”<sup>53</sup> Besides his association with the jungle, Marlow describes how the wilderness swallows up Kurtz within the unknown Congo: “His was an impenetrable darkness. I looked at him as you peer down at a man who is lying at the bottom of a precipice where the sun never shines.”<sup>54</sup> Furthermore: “The wilderness had patted him on the head...; it had caressed him...; it had taken him,

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<sup>50</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, 112.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*, 87.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem*, 104-105.

<sup>53</sup> Juliet Mclauchan, “The «Value» and «Significance» of *Heart of Darkness*,” *Heart of Darkness: A Norton Critical Edition*, ed. Robert Kinbrough (New York: Norton, 1988), 386.

<sup>54</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, 111.

loved him, embraced him, got into his veins, consumed his flesh, and sealed his soul to its own by the inconceivable ceremonies of some devilish initiation.”<sup>55</sup>

The world of the other – the African – is a world that these Europeans have fled because they fail to explain it: it is different in nature, and culture, and tradition; thus, the only escape for them is to impose their own solutions and definitions to what they ignore. They are strangers in a strange world of a strange mode of life. Such strangeness makes them estranged. Subsequently, all the means are good and permissible to survive. “Rejection of the world is combined with an urge to dominate, and urge which is infantile in origin, and which social adaptation has failed to discipline.”<sup>56</sup> A culture that discovers another culture: a European/white that encounters an African/black. Diversity in colour and culture pushes the powerful to make a choice: “which is what, and who is who?” *Heart of Darkness*, thus, comes to represent such crux. In the words of A. Serdar Ozturk:

*Imperialistic expansion's ideology is the belief that progress and enlightenment emerges from the West. Recognition of non-European cultures does not mean the abandonment of a Eurocentric perspective. The imperialist historicism was adept at absorbing all cultures into a Eurocentric history. The historicism of "the Others" is decentred. The decentring historicism of "the Other" made possible the success of the West's imperialism. In Heart of Darkness, Conrad dramatizes the loss of confidence in the Eurocentric view of history.*<sup>57</sup>

Reinhart Kosellek emphasises the notion of logocentrism and the imperial domination of Europeans, who investigate the origin of humanity – their origins through the other (the savage), who seems to be the primitive man of the beginning of humanity. He writes:

*Europeans possessed not only a progressive, Eurocentric vision of world history, but also the temporal sense of the synchronicity of the non synchronic. It seemed to them, in other words, that by studying other, primitive-seeming cultures existing simultaneously (or synchronically) with their own, they could study something chronologically disparate, namely their own deep, prehistoric past.*<sup>58</sup>

To label the culture of the other as prehistoric is a hasty output based on European measurements and parameters, which make of non-European an underdeveloped and even a savage. Such regressive primitive culture gives right to the superiority of the white civilisation – the European. In other words, they judge

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<sup>55</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, 84.

<sup>56</sup> Octave Mannoni, *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization*, trans. Pamela Powesland (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1956), 108.

<sup>57</sup> A. Serdar Ozturk, “A New Historicist Approach to *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad,” *Kastamonu Education Journal* 11, 1 (2003): 2.

<sup>58</sup> Reinhart Kosellek, *Futures Past*, trans. Keith Tribe (Cambridge: MIT P, 1985), 47.

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by themselves and for themselves. In his *Notes on Life and Letters*, Joseph Conrad writes:

*Fiction is history, human history, or it is nothing. But it is also more than that; it stands on firmer ground, being based on the reality of forms and the observation of social phenomena, whereas history is based on documents, and the reading of print and handwriting – on second-hand impression. Thus, fiction is nearer truth.*<sup>59</sup>

Kurtz is the product of the whole Europe: “All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz.”<sup>60</sup> Through him, Conrad denounces, but at the same time describes, how the so-called civilized European behaves. Hunt Hawkins points out that:

*The particular “idea” of civilizing mission not only fails to restrain exploitation but actually prompts it. Kurtz provides a striking illustration. He had gone to Africa as an apostle of civilization, a member of “gang of virtue”, but his morality disappeared when, his trade goods exhausted, he began to use a local tribe to raid the country for ivory.*<sup>61</sup>

Hawkins maintains that the ideology of imperialism is blindly followed by the “pilgrims” in Africa. He writes:

*“Imperialism has displaced both of them from their restraining native societies and forced them to rely on their own uncertain impulses. The European conquerors sundered the tribes to make Africans serve alien material aims. In doing so, Conrad indicates, imperialism destroyed the cultural integrity not only of Africa but of Europe as well.”*<sup>62</sup>

There are some passages in *Heart of Darkness* that are indices of racist and hegemonic behaviour. The English captain compares the black fireman to a dog: “To look at him was as edifying as seeing a dog in a parody of breeches and a feather hat, walking on his hind legs.”<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, Marlow’s visit to the Congo River made him discover another world and the people he knows are other people: they have become what they were not. He witnesses the ill-treatment of the Blacks by the Whites: Africans chained together and sweating. These conquerors are the cause of decline and decay in Africa: “They were called criminals, and the outraged law, like the bursting shells, had come to them, an insoluble mystery from the sea.”<sup>64</sup> Even Kurtz the civilized, the scientific, the idealistic is sent by

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<sup>59</sup> Joseph Conrad, *Notes on Life and Letters* (London: J. M. Dent, 1949), 17.

<sup>60</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, 86.

<sup>61</sup> Hunt Hawkins, “Conrad’s Critique of Imperialism in *Heart of Darkness*,” *PMLA* 94, 2 (March 1979): 295.

<sup>62</sup> Hawkins, “Conrad’s Critique of Imperialism,” 296.

<sup>63</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, 70.

<sup>64</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, 43.

International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs to write a report in order to enable the Administration convert and civilize them.

But how can a cannibal save a civilized? The helmsman lost his life in trying to save that of Kurtz! Cannon Schmitt points out that:

*Although there has been much appropriate debate by critics about whether Conrad was participating in a larger imperialist enterprise with his implicit acceptance of the superiority of the Europeans over the countries they colonized, it is certain that one of the central themes of Heart of Darkness is the evil and hypocrisy at the heart of the Belgian imperial enterprise in the Congo.*<sup>65</sup>

He expends further explaining and defending the paradoxical behaviour of Marlow stating that: “Marlow’s racist sense of superiority does not blur his vision of the evil wrought at the imperialist hands of the Belgians in the Congo. Although we modern readers might take him to task for this racism, most critics have defended his larger purpose of challenging Belgian imperialist practices.”<sup>66</sup> In the words of David Galef: “One common critical assumption is that Marlow would like to tell the truth but cannot for fear of destroying an illusion; attendant to this theory is the notion that Marlow supports civilization with his lie, smoothing over the unbearable.”<sup>67</sup>

The African writer Chinua Achebe blames Joseph Conrad of being impartial and in favour of imperialism. Africa, it seems to Achebe, is made to be an “Other” – an opposite world to Europe. He writes: “*Heart of Darkness* projects the image of Africa as «the other world,» the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization, a place where man’s vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality.”<sup>68</sup> His critical position is essentially based on the portrayal of Conrad, who is so partial – or biased in his description, as this extract shows:

*The prehistoric man was cursing us, praying to us, welcoming us-who could tell? [...] We are accustomed to look upon the shackled form of a conquered monster, but there- there you could look at a thing monstrous and free. It was unearthly, and the men were- No, they were not inhuman. Well, you know, that was the worst of it- this suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one. They howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity-like yours- the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar. Ugly. Yes, it was ugly enough; but if you were man enough you would admit to yourself that there was in you just the faintest trace of a response to the terrible*

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<sup>65</sup> Schmitt, “Tidal Conrad (Literally),” 24.

<sup>66</sup> Schmitt, “Tidal Conrad (Literally),” 25.

<sup>67</sup> David Galef, “On the Margin: The Peripheral Characters in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*,” *Journal of Modern Literature* XVII, 1 (Spring 1990): 134.

<sup>68</sup> Chinua Achebe, “An Image of Africa,” *Research in African Literatures* 9, 1 (Spring 1978): 3.

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*frankness of that noise, a dim suspicion of there being a meaning in it which you-you so remote from the night of first ages-could comprehend.*<sup>69</sup>

Even the grand black lady is described as primitive compared to the Intended, the beloved of Kurtz, who lives in Brussels. In the words of Achebe:

*This Amazon is drawn in considerable detail, albeit of a predictable nature, for two reasons. First, she is in her place and so can win Conrad's special brand of approval, and, second, she fulfils a structural requirement of the story: a savage counterpart to the refined, European woman with whom the story will end. She came forward, all in black with a pale head, floating toward me in the dusk. She was in mourning. She took both my hands in hers and murmured.*<sup>70</sup>

### *Conclusion*

In *Heart of Darkness* two civilisations are in clash with one another: one makes sense only out-there (in Europe), the other makes sense only in-here (in Africa). The trinity "The Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit" has become "the Company, the Central and the Inner Stations". The former is Monotheistic, the latter is Moneytheistic. The former Forgives, but the latter Punishes. Europeans are in the quest of the other – their other – in Africa. The voyage out-lands turns to be a voyage into the self, into the discovery of their other. Europeans have become more inward. The more they penetrate in the inner land, the more they sever from the external reality of facts, and the more they discover evil dormant within them.

*Heart of darkness* has shown that idealism of imperialism is no more than refreshment on parched sand. The idealistic civilizing mission of 'the civilized men' is revealed to be a comforting illusion of modern empire. It is no more than an organized mission of barbarism.

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<sup>69</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, 68-69.

<sup>70</sup> Achebe, "An Image of Africa," 6.

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# Can “Multicultural” Education be a Source of Change in Alleviating Child Poverty?

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## **Abstract**

*The right to education is almost universally recognized as a fundamental right all over the world. However, oftentimes the goal of education, namely to “promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups” (Article 26, United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights), is not completely fulfilled, leading to the creation of an effectively flawed and disintegrating society and community. An effect of this disintegration is child poverty, especially in minority groups. Therefore, to tackle this issue, I suggest a multicultural education be provided to students; this shall not only create responsible, tolerant, and understanding adults in the future, it shall also help their careers, regardless of whether they come from Arts and Humanities or STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) backgrounds. In this paper, I critically analyzed the role of multicultural education and its influence on alleviating child poverty.*

**Keywords:** *Child poverty, Culture, Global values, Multiculturalism, Multicultural education, National policy.*

## *Introduction*

Child poverty is a major concern globally. Children are vulnerable in many parts of the world for several reasons and their rights are undermined very often in developing and middle-income countries. However, children in the industrialized countries are not safe always. Their lives are challenging too. Poverty creates more vulnerability for children. Lack of education, drop-out from school, socio-economic disadvantages, climate change, flood, drought, malnutrition and political violence have seen some common reasons for child poverty. Natural disasters in many countries, including Bangladesh, accelerated the rate of child poverty. The

alleviation of child poverty is therefore a great challenge for countries all over the world.

The basic reasons of child poverty are deep rooted with other factors such as, women's social status, their literacy rate, women's reproductive health, their participation in the development index, guarantee of their safe life and natural death and so forth. The low standard of living because of insufficient income, poor household resources, blurred job prospect, risky health condition and deprived education can prolong child poverty in a country. International organizations, for example, UNICEF and World Bank, are working in numerous sectors to alleviate child poverty. Education is the top among these.

Although worldwide the current education policy focusing that science and technological education along with business and vocational training can contribute positively to alleviate poverty this research argues that "multicultural" education can make these initiative more meaningful and significant. Multicultural education could signify the status of personhood and help to create a "self" identified with local culture but bonded with global values. As a result, children can overcome numerous social and cultural barriers those are seem very difficult to overcome only through a single national policy.

### *The Meaning of Education*

Education plays a crucial role in our life to transform values, skill, knowledge and lifestyles. In modern days, education is closely related with the development of a meaningful life. Education helps us to use our knowledge and skill for the improvement of society. Sometimes, education is seen as a process of socialization. The knowledge and skills society demand can achieve only through education in modern times. Form a just society where there is no poverty or ignorable poverty level exists is the aim of many social and development organizations. So, there is a significant changes is the aim and nature of education throughout the years.

Many people from researchers, policy-makers to common one are directly or indirectly taking part in education. Education plays a very crucial role in the development of a country and nation building. It is hard to imagine a country without an education system. The aims of education are closely related to culture. Alfred North Whitehead in his paper "The Aims of Education" writes,

*Culture is activity of thought, and receptiveness to beauty and humane feeling. Scraps of information have nothing to do with it. A merely well-informed man is the most useless bore on God's earth. What we should aim at producing is men who possess both culture and expert knowledge in some special direction. Their expert knowledge will*

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*give them the ground to start from, and their culture will lead them as deep as philosophy and as high as art. We have to remember that the valuable intellectual development is self-development, and that it mostly takes place between the ages of sixteen and thirty.*<sup>1</sup>

According to this statement, Whitehead thinks that without culture or cultural education the real purpose of education may not be achieved.

### *Multicultural Education*

Culture is an important phenomenon in this globalized world. Education systems must incorporate it for creating global citizen. Many thinkers (e.g. Will Kymlica) suggested for a multicultural education to the citizens. UNESCO emphasizes multicultural education not just to provide a better education but to alleviate poverty and to build up a peaceful society. Multicultural education has been defined from various perspectives. According to the *Glossary of Education Reform* “multicultural education refers to any form of education or teaching that incorporates the histories, texts, values, beliefs, and perspectives of people from different cultural backgrounds.”<sup>2</sup> The *Victoria State Government* notes that “multicultural education gives students opportunities to build understanding and communication skills across cultures.”<sup>3</sup> Among other goals of multicultural education it says that, “an appreciation of the importance of local, national and international interdependence in social, environmental, economic and political arenas and an understanding that mutual support in these areas is vital to local and global harmony.”<sup>4</sup> All nations in the world are devoted to establish and maintain harmony both locally and globally. Multicultural education will help their citizens to achieve a deeper knowledge and understanding of own cultures and other’s cultures. Promoting diversity is the main feature of multicultural education. Hence, like many other Governments, Victoria State Government of Australia sets their vision in line with multicultural education and states,

*The Victorian Government’s vision is for all Victorian learning and development settings to equip children and young people with the knowledge and skills to participate*

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<sup>1</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, “The Aims of Education,” Presidential Address to the Mathematical Association of England, (1916), 1, <http://ayman980.com/class/Readings/The%20Aims%20of%20Education%20Alfred%20Whitehead.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> “Multicultural Education,” *The Glossary of Education Reform for Journalists, Parents, and Education Reform*, <https://www.edglossary.org/multicultural-education/>.

<sup>3</sup> Victoria State Government, Education and Training, <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/multicultural/Pages/default.aspx>.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*.

*in and contribute to our diverse society as active and informed citizens - locally, nationally and internationally.*<sup>5</sup>

Multicultural education is not only seen as a new conceptual paradigm but it is also considered as a “movement” and a “process”. In this context, Yilmaz comments,

*Multicultural education is a movement dating back to the end of 1960s and the beginning of 1970s. It is an intellectual concept, a reformist movement and a process. Its basic idea is that all students have the equality of opportunities in education without being subjected to racial, ethnic, social class, or gender discrimination.*<sup>6</sup>

Some scholars find multicultural education to foster core values essential in our social and professional lives such as, freedom, justice, equality, dignity and human rights.

*Multicultural education is a philosophical concept built on the ideals of freedom, justice, equality, equity, and human dignity as acknowledged in various documents, such as the U.S. Declaration of Independence, constitutions of South Africa and the United States, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations. It affirms our need to prepare student for their responsibilities in an interdependent world. It recognizes the role schools can play in developing the attitudes and values necessary for a democratic society. It values cultural differences and affirms the pluralism that students, their communities, and teachers reflect. It challenges all forms of discrimination in schools and society through the promotion of democratic principles of social justice.*<sup>7</sup>

So, multicultural education is a holistic approach in education system where cultural differences were acknowledged and the value of diversity is promoted to achieve some fundamental goals such as democracy, freedom, rights, justice and equality to build a harmonious society globally.

### *The Goal of Multicultural Education*

The main goal of multicultural education is to ensure that all students can have an opportunity to learn in an equally treated, justified and congenial atmosphere irrespective of their cultural background. Culture therefore may not a barrier but it is an advantage to learn in a diverse cultural environment. Along with teachers’ training and competence in this new philosophy the school environment and teaching methodology must be changed. However, schools are obliged to teach various kinds of subjects including literature, sociology, humanities, arts and

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>6</sup> Fatih Yilmaz “Multiculturalism and Multicultural Education: A Case Study of of Teacher Candidates’ Perceptions,” *Cogent Education* 3 (2016): 1.

<sup>7</sup> The National Association for Multicultural Education [https://www.nameorg.org/definitions\\_of\\_multicultural\\_e.php](https://www.nameorg.org/definitions_of_multicultural_e.php).

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most confined subjects such as, mathematics and science. Now, a question is very much relevant about the goals of multicultural education. Is there anything to do multicultural education with universally designed subjects such as mathematics and science? So, one might be convinced that for arts, humanities and literature multicultural education might be relevant but is it relevant for sciences?

Several educationists have outlined different goals of multicultural education. For example, James A. Banks have identified five basic goals of multicultural education. He suggests to incorporate the five dimensions: “1. content integration 2. the knowledge construction process 3. prejudice reduction 4. an equity pedagogy 5. an empowering school culture and social structure.”<sup>8</sup>

The content integration creates an opportunity for the education provider to use examples and evidences from other cultural traditions. This practice will help the learners to think beyond their own culture and create respective attitude to other cultures. For some subjects such as arts, music and sociology, this integration is much easier and helpful but for other subjects, e.g. math and science it can help to understand the different perceptions even in the case of logic and reasoning.

Knowledge which is constructed in a cultural tradition is much more vivid than when it is constructed in abstract and imaginary ideas. The construction of knowledge is a complex process and culture plays a significant role in it. However, one might argue that knowledge is universal and culture has nothing to do with it. This kind of argument is shallow as we all know that children learn first from their own culture and society. All knowledge whether scientific or social has deep rooted historical identification and without understanding the background construction of any kind of knowledge will be superficial.

It is a very common observation that policy makers have different goals to achieve peace and resolve conflict. Prejudice reduction is a way to reduce negative attitude toward other culture, values and traditions through education. Children attend schools might have some preconceived ideas constructed through family values, print, online and social medias and news channels worldwide. Now, family, relatives or other members might not have enough training, education and time to clarify this. Multicultural education have an advantage to discuss, analyze and reduce the prejudice or negative attitudes toward other cultural values and traditions. According to Banks, the initiative of prejudice reduction may include

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<sup>8</sup> James A. Banks, “Multicultural Education: Characteristics and Goals,” in *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives*, eds. James A. Banks and Cherry A. McGee Banks (NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2010), 20.

“positive images of the ethnic groups in the materials and the use of multiethnic materials in a consistent and sequential way.”<sup>9</sup>

An equity pedagogy helps the students to understand the different solutions of the same problem in various cultural traditions. Students may not be aware that people living other parts of the world might face the same problem and they have their own solution to face this problem. A pedagogical approach would create a mental setup among the students to respect others' knowledge and achievements. Teachers will play an active role to realize the importance of multicultural initiative to face global challenges. Banks notes, “an equity pedagogy exists when teachers modify their teaching in ways that will facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse racial, cultural, gender, and social-class groups.”<sup>10</sup>

Without implementing a multicultural school environment and social structure, the main goal of multicultural education cannot be achieved. When students from diverse cultural traditions find that their cultural values and traditions were well accepted and cherished by the school they can feel equally important. This is a continuous process to empowering students. An empowering school culture and social structure will enable students to be confident, trustful, respectful upon his own as well as others' culture. Among other things, empowering school culture and social structure would include, as Banks mentions,

*Grouping and labeling practices, sports participation, disproportionality in achievement, disproportionality in enrollment in gifted and special education programs, and the interaction of the staff and the students across ethnic and racial lines are important variables that need to be examined in order to create a school culture that empowers students from diverse racial and ethnic groups and from both gender groups.*<sup>11</sup>

### *Child Poverty and Multicultural Education*

Education has a profound influence in our life and policy making. Education helps us to realize and to perceive our lives from diverse insights. There are several problems in our society for example, poverty, scarcity, malnutrition, environmental pollution, global warming, climate change and illiteracy, which require a combined initiative to overcome. Education is the most important and effective initiative among these. Education can change our lives and perceptions from our deep rooted believes. Many people in the world specially children are

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<sup>9</sup> Banks, “Multicultural Education: Characteristics and Goals,” 21.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, 22.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, 22.

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living in poverty worldwide. Child poverty is a serious worry for a nation since children are the future citizens and leaders of the nation. Poverty is a significant barrier for the physical and mental development of a child. Malnutrition decreases children's performance. It can create life-long struggles for children. Education and poverty closely linked as poverty can push young children leaving education at a very early stage. So, we can say that poverty can damage a child's life, a society even a nation.

In recent days, child poverty has been conceived from much broader perspective. According to Polakow and Owiti,

*Child poverty constitutes a global crisis with far-reaching implications for children's psychosocial, cognitive, and physical development, educational achievement, and future citizenship. Child poverty must also be understood in the broader context of children's rights, women's poverty and women's rights and examined in terms of the impact of globalization and neoliberal policies on the lives of children and their families in both poor and wealthy nations.*<sup>12</sup>

Here, the authors claim that child poverty is not just related to the psychological, physical, social and cognitive development of the children rather it is also related to rights, globalization and effective policy-making.

Many organizations, such as UN, UNICEF, WB working on the alleviation of poverty. Multicultural education has much potentialities to alleviate poverty. Lewis notes,

*Meeting the challenges of poverty and understanding how poverty relates to and impacts student academic achievement requires much more from teachers than just teaching but rather an understanding of social awareness as well as a level of empathy and genuine concern for students and their families. What will help us achieve this level of understanding further is to grasp where our achievement gaps are with lower income students as well as how to effectively reach them and provide opportunities for their growth and progress.*<sup>13</sup>

Here author points out that to alleviate poverty we must need to understand the deeper meaning of poverty first and teachers have a great role to play in this context. General curriculum may require understanding of inequalities among different levels in society. However, multicultural education requires understanding of these inequalities with a participation of teachers, parents and children with more empathy and concern. All of our poverty in society is not

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<sup>12</sup> Valerie Polakow and Syprose Owiti, “Child Poverty, Rights, and Well-being,” <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199791231/obo-9780199791231-0134.xml>.

<sup>13</sup> Pam Lewis, “Investigating Critical and Contemporary Issues in Education: Challenges of Poverty,” [https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Investigating\\_Critical\\_%26\\_Contemporary\\_Issues\\_in\\_Education/Challenges\\_of\\_Poverty](https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Investigating_Critical_%26_Contemporary_Issues_in_Education/Challenges_of_Poverty).

momentary. Some poverty are created artificially and establish for social structure and practice. In other words, for our social and cultural values. In a report, Humanium which works on child's rights globally, notes that

*In developing and developed countries alike, children do not have access to basic education because of inequalities that originate in sex, health and cultural identity (ethnic origin, language, religion). These children find themselves on the margins of the education system and do not benefit from learning that is vital to their intellectual and social development.*<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, multicultural education has a very positive effect on child's poverty alleviation both at individual and collective levels.

### *Global Initiatives Taken to Alleviate Child Poverty*

Numerous organizations both governmental and non-governmental are working on alleviating poverty. UNICEF pays keen attention to alleviate poverty globally. One of its mottos regarding child poverty is "A World Free from Child Poverty". They have taken an initiative called "Milestones" program where main focuses are "building an understanding of child poverty amongst key stakeholders, officially and routinely measuring child poverty, and putting the issue on the map through concerted advocacy."<sup>15</sup> According to the UNICEF to alleviate child poverty multi-dimensional approaches should be taken. They suggested that both different kinds of policies and programs are necessary. Although policies are usually taken by the particular government programs are set to achieve a particular long-term initiative goal.

The UN has set forth its eight Millennium Development Goals (MGDs) by 2015 where the first one is "to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger". Although it is an exclusive program and includes all kinds of poverty child poverty is among its priority. The MGDs have later transformed into Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Its first agenda is "No Poverty" or "end poverty in all its from Everywhere"<sup>16</sup>:

UNDP is working closely to achieve Millennium Development Goals (MGDs) set forth by UN. It allocates a huge amount of money for poverty alleviation. In its fact sheet UNDP notes,

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<sup>14</sup> "Right to Education: Situation around the World," Humanium, accessed May 21, 2019, <https://www.humanium.org/en/right-to-education/>.

<sup>15</sup> UNICEF, "Milestone 4: Reducing Child Poverty through Policy and Programme Change," [https://www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/files/Child\\_Poverty\\_SDG\\_Guide-Milestone\\_4-March\\_2017.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/files/Child_Poverty_SDG_Guide-Milestone_4-March_2017.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> UN, "Sustainable Development Goals: 17 Goals to Transform Our World," <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals.html>.

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*As a trusted multilateral partner serving 166 developing countries around the world, UNDP is uniquely positioned to help advocate for change, connect countries to the knowledge and resources they need, and coordinate the efforts of the UN at the country level. UNDP invests nearly \$US1 billion every year in fighting poverty and advancing progress towards the MDGs.<sup>17</sup>*

### *Can “Multicultural” Education be a Source of Change in Alleviating Child Poverty?*

In the previous discussion, we have seen that many initiative has been taken to alleviate child poverty. Some advancements have been achieved in reducing child poverty. However, many children in the world are facing serious poverty and living much below the standard of acceptable living. The world is even much complex and education may not be just limited to science, technology and professional skill development. In today's world student also need to understand the inter-relations between education, democracy, freedom, justice, rights, equality and liberty. Modern educations and education thinkers are therefore emphasizing comprehensive and holistic education method.

The world becoming more and more global and so schools are getting diverse students from different social, cultural, religious, ethnic backgrounds. Traditional education system may not be completely appropriate to face this reality. A multicultural education system where students will get a more opportunity to learn their own and other cultural values, realize the values of diversity and solving the same problems by different traditional wisdom is required.

Child poverty is a global phenomenon. When children need education to prepare themselves for future life, many of them are far behind because of poverty. Multicultural education helps the students to learn various subjects matter in emphasizing culture. Poverty is deep rooted in cultural practice. Multicultural education inspires students to learn and apply knowledge in their own cultural settings.

Child poverty is a direct consequence of socio-cultural background. As such, it is intrinsically related with the “poverty cycle”, where poverty is caused due to inequality in opportunity, wealth, and vulnerability. However, it is a fact universally acknowledged that a child in possession of a good education must be in contention for a good job, a job which will in turn provide opportunity and wealth and thus reduce vulnerability. So, a “good education” can alleviate child poverty.

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<sup>17</sup> UNDP, “Fact Sheets: United Nations Development Programme,” <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Poverty%20Reduction/Fast%20Facts%20Poverty%20Reduction.pdf>.

But what really is a “good education”? To answer that question, we have to look at the inner workings and structure of the classroom. In today's world, classrooms are getting more and more diverse, with students from radically different social and cultural backgrounds attending the same educational institutions at an ever increasing rate.

As a result, to create responsible adults of tomorrow, who have civic sense and have no indication of bias whatsoever against any communities, regardless of their social, cultural, geographical or physical attributes, education must be given to the children in such a way that it gives a voice to all communities, it does not portray any of them as objects fit for discrimination, and it represents all of mankind as equals. Much of this is not found in the traditional education systems of developing countries, where child poverty is found with high rates, but these are at the very core of multicultural education. So, multicultural education is of course a source of change in alleviating child poverty.

Finally, we shall look at multicultural education from an economical or business perspective. We have claimed the moral and intellectual superiority of multicultural education over traditional education systems. In fact, the cost of multicultural education is going to be the same as that of the traditional education system. As most people are already aware of the benefits of choosing the former, the stakeholders of the latter shall decrease, causing a decrease in their profits. In order to return back to their original profit amounts, therefore, they shall have to perform three economic operations: i) highly increase the quality and experience of their faculty, ii) integrate multicultural education into their current education curriculum, and iii) lastly, decrease the fee per student below that of the multicultural education-based school. This effect of competition is going to have three major consequences: i) highly increase the quality of education as a whole, ii) include multicultural ideals and syllabi in the teaching curriculum, and iii) allow more families of lower incomes to afford education for their children, as the cost is now lower. All these points shall be great strides towards alleviating child poverty, as proven by the previous paragraph.

Thus, in conclusion drawn from all the previous points, multicultural education not only has the potential to be a source of change in alleviating child poverty, but rather it seems a must if a nation wishes to alleviate child poverty from the face of its populace.

*Conclusion*

To conclude, in this report, I have highlighted the supreme importance of multicultural education, education based on cultural desegregation, diversity, unity, and values, in this changing world. Multicultural education has one main goal: it wishes to ensure that all students can have an opportunity to learn in an equally treated, justified and congenial atmosphere irrespective of their gender, color, race, religious and cultural background. That is not only a moral obligation of the population towards all its members, rather it is also a prerequisite for a peaceful, poverty-less society. That is because, multicultural education is a “wholesome” education system: it not only creates academically educated generations, but creates morally educated generations as well. This shall cause increased competition in the job market, which shall in turn reduce unemployment and thus poverty.

Furthermore, from a very grassroots level, child poverty is going to be reduced as well by taking several effective initiatives in various levels. That is because, with the implications of a business model based on multicultural education, the cost of education as a whole is going to go down, whereas the quality of the education is going to increase. This shall not only enable more children to go to school, but also to get a better education for a better life. This shall follow a chain connection, which eventually alleviate poverty as a whole from the face of the nation. Of course, the holistic education offered by a multicultural education system is unparalleled, and is an important additional benefit for the well-being of the nation.

All these reasons thus decisively conclude that multicultural education is certainly going to be perhaps the most important source of change in alleviating child poverty in a nation, be it developed, or developing.

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# **Indigenous Medicine and Traditional Healing in Africa: a Systematic Synthesis of the Literature**

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## **Abstract**

*Literature on traditional medicine in Africa is diverse and broad but most are country based, regional based or time based. There is the need for a systematic review that focuses on the nature of traditional medicine and its healers, the impact of the changing society on traditional medicine, and an analysis of same based on scholarly literature. African Traditional medicine, a mixture of herbal (physical), mystical (spiritual) and social elements of society, is quite varied but share similarity in its dependence on the socio-cultural and religious indigenous knowledge systems of the people. Indigenous traditional healing in Africa has always been a highly contentious subject matter due to its nature and a source of disagreement between the different colonists and Africans. What has enabled this practice to survive is the secrecy technique employed by the healers as well as the inability or unwillingness of colonial and post-colonial governments to provide a better or sometimes a more advanced alternative. In order to do this synthesis of literature and analyses of same, diverse books and scholarly articles were consulted. Using a purely qualitative method of research, this study does a retrospect cross examination and an analytical review of pertinent literature on traditional medicine and healing in Africa.*

**Keywords:** *Indigenous medicine, healers, healing, evidence based medicine, western medicine, Africa.*

## *Introduction*

The survival of a group is dependent on its knowledge about the environment and its ability to deal with the different challenges that confront it.

One of the key components of life, which threatens the existence of a group, is health; therefore, each group pays close attention to the preservation and development of its medical systems. In Africa, traditional medicine and its practitioners occupied an important and enviable position in every society due to the importance placed on health. It is important to lay the foundation with an adequate understanding of what traditional medicine is, its various components and the changes it has undergone over time through contact between Africans and Africans and the rest of the world.

P. A. Twumasi defines traditional medicine as “the service performed through the utilization of magico-religious acts and concepts.”<sup>1</sup> Though he adds that traditional medical practitioners have notions of physical cures and treatments, he purports that one cannot talk about traditional medicine without reference to magico-religious therapies.<sup>2</sup> Adu-Gyamfi and others describe it as “diverse health practices, approaches, knowledge and beliefs incorporating plants, animal, and or mineral based medicines, spiritual therapies, manual techniques and exercises applied singularly or in combination with other things to treat, diagnose and prevent diseases.”<sup>3</sup> They note that the health of an individual in the African setting has a link with the metaphysical and the supernatural world, leading to the need for society to address both natural and supernatural forces, therefore African medicine mostly appeals to both natural and supernatural elements.<sup>4</sup> According to Geest, medical practice and knowledge which fall outside the realm of biomedicine can be considered traditional medicine. Though quite diverse, the only thing these medicines have in common is that they are not bio-medicinal.<sup>5</sup>

Ishaq Isola states that traditional medicine “involves the collecting, conserving, utilizing and the application of medicinal plants for cures, prevention and promotion of physical and spiritual well-being of citizens.” He is quick to add that the sociological world and metaphysical forces of the universe are pillars on

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<sup>1</sup> The term magico-religious is made up of two mutually exclusive terms (magic and religion) but used together to refer to unexplainable concept of the unseen or the lack of rationality with an element of faith. Patrick A. Twumasi, *Medical Systems in Ghana, A Study of Medical Sociology* (Accra: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1975), 10-11.

<sup>2</sup> Twumasi, *Medical Systems in Ghana*, 9.

<sup>3</sup> Samuel Adu-Gyamfi, Aminu Dramani, Kwasi Amakye-Boateng and Samson Akomeah, “Public Health: a Socio-Political History of a People (1902-1966),” *Journal of Arts and Humanities* (2017): 20.

<sup>4</sup> Samuel Adu-Gyamfi and Richard Oware, “Wesleyan Mission Medicine in Asante (1901-2000),” *Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences Studies* (2018): 10.

<sup>5</sup> Sjaak van der Geest, “Traditional Medicine in Basic Health Services in Africa,” *Tropical Medicine and International Health* (1997): 904.

which African traditional medicine is based.<sup>6</sup> He further divides traditional medicine into explicable traditional medicine where healing depends on medicinal substances whose actions and potencies can be scientifically probed and proven and inexplicable traditional medicine based on ailments such as chronic illness, ill-luck, motor accidents, miscarriages, somnambulism and sudden death which cannot be cured or given scientific explanation. WHO defines traditional medicine as “the sum total of all the knowledge and practices, whether explicable or not, used in diagnosis, prevention and elimination of physical, mental or social imbalance and relying exclusively on practical experiences and observation handed down from generation to generation, whether verbally or in writing.”<sup>7</sup> In contemporary times, traditional medicine is medicine, which appeals to both natural (herbs, roots, animals, spices, oils, etc.) and supernatural elements accepted by the society.

African medicinal processes are embedded in indigenous knowledge systems, which can be defined as “any understanding rooted in local culture.” It includes all knowledge held more or less collectively by a population that informs interpretations of things. It varies between societies. It comes from a range of sources, is a dynamic mix of past traditions and present innovation with a view for the future.<sup>8</sup> Kwasi Konadu defines it as “the collective body of knowledge of the ways in which people respond to reality.”<sup>9</sup> Relatedly, Dahlberg defines it as “the unique, traditional, local knowledge existing within and developed around the specific conditions of women and men indigenous to a particular area” or any understanding rooted in the local culture and includes all knowledge held more or less by the entire population that informs interpretations of things. It varies from society to society.<sup>10</sup> What these definitions and explanations have in common is the acceptance of the fact that indigenous traditional medicine is medicine produced out of the indigenous knowledge system of Africans using natural products such as parts of plants, animals, spices and spiritual resources such as spirits of the ancestors, deities, beliefs in totems and social codes, mixed with accepted practices of the societies in Africa.

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<sup>6</sup> O. Ishaq Isola, “The Relevance of the African Traditional Medicine (Alternative Medicine) To Health Care Delivery System in Nigeria,” *The Journal of the Developing Areas* (2013): 320.

<sup>7</sup> WHO report, 8.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, 8.

<sup>9</sup> Kwasi Konadu, *Indigenous Medicine and Knowledge in African Society* (New York & London: Routledge Publishing Group, 2007), 124.

<sup>10</sup> Annika C. Dahlberg and Sophie B. Trygger, “Indigenous Medicine and Primary Healthcare: the Importance of Lay Knowledge and the Use of Medicinal Plants in Rural South Africa,” *Human Ecology* 37(1) (2009): 80.

Using the tools of historiography, this paper presents a systematic review concerning the development of traditional healing in Africa. This has become necessary in light of the gap in the macro-history which attempts to define traditional medicine in the broader context of Africa. Therefore, this contribution presents a critical analysis and a re-evaluation of the existing literature concerning the historical account of the development of traditional medicine, emphasizing the central historiography them of continuity and discontinuity.

The review seeks to answer the following questions. What is traditional medicine? What is the African perception of the causation of illness? Is traditional medicine herbal, spiritual, social, psychological or a combination of all? What mainly distinguishes traditional medicine from orthodox or western medicine? How did African indigenous system explain disease causation? With the changing narratives of Africa's past, how has indigenous African medicine coped? This paper discusses who traditional healers were, what constitutes traditional medicine, therapeutic methods used by the healers, social change and traditional medicine and how African traditional medicine has coped with stiff competition with medicine from the outside world.

### *Historical method*

In order to make a cogent presentation or argument in this article, a large archive of information was sampled from various secondary sources such as books, scholarly articles and thesis from well renowned universities. These were supported with archival data. After data was gathered, there was a careful analysis of the information and a corroboration of same in order to present a new synthesis. Marshall and Rossman define data analysis as “the process of bringing order, structure, and interpretation to the mass of collected data.”<sup>11</sup> Sources do not speak for themselves, rather the interpretation and analysis of the data determines the outcome of the research. Once data was acquired from all the sources indicated above, it was taken through a rigorous process of evaluation. In order to ascertain the reliability of data gathered, the secondary and primary sources were used as corroborative tools. Data gathered was analysed thematically and systematically. Based on the social and cultural construct of the health history of Africans, this article contributes to both social, cultural, anthropological, and historical studies.

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<sup>11</sup> C. Marshall and G. B. Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research* (6<sup>th</sup> ed) (Singapore: Sage Publication Inc., 2016).

*African traditional healers and their therapeutic methods*

Here, we seek to answer the question, what is African traditional medicine? Who are African traditional healers and which therapies or strategies do they use to proffer solutions to health challenges? Africa is considered the cradle of mankind with a rich biological and cultural diversity marked by regional differences in healing practice. South African scholarly discussions define traditional medicine as the sum total of knowledge, skills, and practices based on the theories, beliefs, and experiences indigenous to different cultures that are used to maintain health, as well as prevent, diagnose, improve or treat physical and mental illness.<sup>12</sup> In Southern Africa, most people associate traditional medicine with herbs, remedies (*muti*) and the advice of the *sangomas* or *izinyangas*.<sup>13</sup> In the West African context, traditional medicine includes not only herbal medicine for specific diseases, but also folk knowledge, traditions and values, health behaviour rules and patterns, and identified personnel and structures for delivery and restoration therapy.<sup>14</sup> North and East Africans have a similar concept of medicine. Earlier Egyptian medicine relied on experimentation and observation augmented by magic. They made extensive use of herbs and spice such as garlic, onion, frankincense, mandrake and other food such as honey, fresh meat and breast milk for medicinal purposes. They were experts in embalming, the use of aromatics and herds to preserve flesh for thousands of years and also the use of infusions to extract oils from aromatic plants.<sup>15</sup>

Essentially, a traditional healer is a “person who is recognized by the community in which he lives as competent to provide health care by using vegetable, animal and mineral substances and certain methods based on social, cultural and religious background as well as on the knowledge, attitudes and beliefs that are prevalent in the community regarding physical, mental and social well-being and causation of disease and disability.”<sup>16</sup> In pre-colonial Africa, traditional healers occupied an important place in socio-political systems in Africa. Most often, they were attached to the political heads and in rare cases, their power superseded that of the political heads. According to Okello and Musisi, they often

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<sup>12</sup> M. Fawzi Mahomoodally, *Traditional Medicines in Africa: an Appraisal of Ten Potent African Medicinal Plants*, www.hindawi.com/ecam.

<sup>13</sup> Marlise Richter, “Traditional Medicines and Traditional Healers in South Africa,” Conference paper at the Treatment Action Campaign and AIDS Law Project (2003), 7.

<sup>14</sup> M. M. Tabi and D. Hodnicki, “Use of Traditional Healers and Modern Medicine in Ghana,” *International Nursing Review* 53 (2006): 53.

<sup>15</sup> Samuel Adu-Gyamfi, “Ancient Egyptian Medicine: A Systematic Review,” *Philosophy, Social and Human Disciplines* 2 (2015): 11.

<sup>16</sup> WHO report, 9.

dealt with social problems, including family problems related to children, spouses, or other relatives, spiritual or cultural problems; psychosexual problems, including those having to do with relationships, sexual potency, love, and infertility; chronic illnesses, epilepsy and madness.<sup>17</sup> Among the Bono of Ghana, *Bosom Taa* Mensah is said to have more authority than the *Takyimanhene*.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, among the Asante, the *Nsumankwahene*, the chief physician of the *Asantehene*, held a very respectable position within the society and had a say in all spiritual matters.<sup>19</sup>

Okello and Musisi classify traditional healers in Africa into herbalists, diviners, midwives, witch doctors, circumcisers, faith healers and traditional birth attendants.<sup>20</sup> Konadu categorises the members of the Bono society according to their level of knowledge in medicine. Core or basic knowledge shared by all as “majority of the population [still] prepare and use their own herbal mixtures,” and thereby exhibit agency in the process of addressing their health needs.<sup>21</sup> Dahlberg, exploring lay knowledge among the KwaZulu Natal insist that non-forest medicinal products are used by the rural people and that this common initial response to illness is mostly successful in combating natural ailments such as headache, cough etc. Most of the rural folks have the ability of self-diagnosis and self-medication especially women because women took care of the sick within the community. “The woman usually know more species than the husband. Even if the husband knows [certain species], he will send his wife to collect the plants.”<sup>22</sup> Boys and girls also learnt by collecting herbs and were present when it was prepared or administered; this was how the indigenous knowledge system was transferred to subsequent generations. Konadu and Wyllis categorize the second level of specialised and in-depth knowledge healers who seek to solve the medical needs of the society that lay knowledge may not be able to solve. They include the *abosomfoo*, *akomfoo*, and *nnunsinfoo*.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, Anquandah identified three main types of traditional healers in Africa: the herbalists with profound knowledge

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<sup>17</sup> Elialilia Okello and Seggane Musisi, “The Role of Traditional Healers in Mental Healthcare in Africa,” in *The Culture of Mental Illness and Psychiatric Practice in Africa*, eds. Emmanuel Kwasi Akeampong, Allan Hill and Arthur Kleinman (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2015), 252.

<sup>18</sup> Konadu, *Indigenous Medicine, and Knowledge*, 159.

<sup>19</sup> Samuel Adu-Gyamfi, “Spiritual and Indigenous healing Practices among the Asante People of Ghana: a Testimonial from the Twenty First Century Practitioners and Recipients in Kumasi,” *Journal of Basic and Applied Research International* 12(1) (2015): 4.

<sup>20</sup> Okello and Musisi, “The Role of Traditional Healers in Mental Healthcare in Africa,” 250.

<sup>21</sup> Konadu, *Indigenous Medicine and Knowledge*, 159.

<sup>22</sup> Dahlberg and Trygger, “Indigenous Medicine and Primary Healthcare,” 89.

<sup>23</sup> Konadu, *Indigenous Medicine and Knowledge*, 159; Robert W. Wyllis, “Ghanaian Spiritual and Traditional Healers’ Explanations of Illness: A Preliminary Survey,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 14(1) (1983): 47-49.

of plant medicine who produce and dispense products, herbalists willing in addition to pure herbal practice, to engage in supernatural occult practices and shrines or cult priests who have herbal knowledge but operate essentially as media or agents of deities from whom they receive directions regarding disease diagnosis and cure.<sup>24</sup> Konadu refers to a peripheral knowledge where information is acquired through people's existence at varied points and events in their lives. This sphere is "static knowledge" lacks the dynamism or "lived" characteristic of the core-basic, specialised, and in-depth spheres, and archives aspects of the first and second spheres.<sup>25</sup> Adu-Gyamfi also identified the various categories of traditional healers as the Indigenous Priest Healer (IPH), herbalist, Traditional Birth Attendants and other specialised non-herbal medicine practitioners like bone-setters, spiritual healers among others.<sup>26</sup> All of these draw on both the spiritual and natural causation of disease which forms part of the African traditional philosophies and world-views.

The herbalists tackle the physical ailments such as fever, rheumatism, intestinal disorders, parasites, lactation deficiency, earache, toothache, headache, epilepsy, menstrual disorders, using plant leaves, stem, root, and bark of trees, parts of animals, sea shells, coral, soils, spices such as shea butter, pepper, and ginger and other substances of natural origin. Most of the African pharmacopoeia under discussion here may be drunk as herbal concoctions, or may be ingested through inhalation, vaccination (dermal incisions), enemas, vaginal infusions, massage, bathing, or fumigation, in forms that include powders, porridges, soups, ointments, smoke fumes, or eye drops.<sup>27</sup> Comparatively, concerning traditional medicine, Janzen and Green have reported that Mirau, a herbalist from Meru used the *mamiso* plant to cure about two hundred diseases including diarrhea in children which caused a mortality rate of one hundred per one thousand children (10%). Mirau took several flowers and boiled them to obtain one dose, which was given twice daily as oral medicine.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Adu-Gyamfi, "Wesleyan Mission Medicine," 10.

<sup>25</sup> Kwasi Konadu, "Medical Anthropology in Twentieth Century Africa: Akan Medicine and Encounters with (Medical) Anthropology," *African Studies Quarterly* 10(2/3) (2008): 54.

<sup>26</sup> Adu-Gyamfi, "Spiritual and Indigenous Healing," 4.

<sup>27</sup> John M. Janzen and Edward C. Green, "Medicine in Africa," in *Encyclopedia of History of Science, Technology, and Medicine in Non-Western Cultures* (2008), 3.

<sup>28</sup> Janzen and Green, "Medicine in Africa," 4.

Antwi-Baffour identifies the components of traditional medicines as herbalism, therapeutic fasting, and dieting.<sup>29</sup> Herbalism was sometimes intertwined with counseling as some patients require it to set their minds in the right frame to receive healing from the herbs. Immunisation is not a biomedical introduction as it was a common practice for traditional healers to prepare and incise medicine into the flesh of the patient; it was also used to prevent snakebites. According to Ishaq, herbs could be used to prevent HIV because if rubbed a man cannot have sexual intercourse with an infected woman because the male organ will not function. What he fails to investigate is the reverse scenario, where a man attempts to infect a female, what happens to the infected patient?

Some herbalists combine both herbal and spiritual treatment as they have personal or family gods with whom they communicate and use during healing. Prayers were said before leaves were plucked and processed and this meant that though physical, it was backed with the belief from the herbalists. According to Adu-Gyamfi, “these accompaniments in the practice suggest that the focus of their medicaments was and is still not only in herbs or plants but also to ascertain spiritual root causes of diseases and afflictions.”<sup>30</sup> Konadu confirms this that herbalist had their gods on whom they relied for the healing of their patients.<sup>31</sup>

Herbal knowledge was usually the preserve of a kin group, especially among the elderly women and men passed. Mostly, this type of knowledge is passed on to them by the previous generations or ancestors and was jealously guarded within the kin group. Mode of transmission of such knowledge was oral, mostly based on relationship between the young and old, who are the repository of ancient wisdom. Younger members of the family who exhibit signs of healing are put under rigorous apprenticeship sometimes for a period of 3-4 years before they are allowed to practice on their own. According to Twumasi, a novice enters into training school after he has experienced possession by some spiritual influence. He may hear a voice and subsequently fall down in a fit or go into a trance. It takes a trained traditional practitioner to interpret that such a person is being called into the practice of healing. This could somehow be likened to the Christian faith calling where people receive visions indicating their call into ministry. After approval by the person’s kinsmen he/she receives formal medical training in the

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<sup>29</sup> Samuel S. Antwi-Baffour, Ajediran I. Bello, *et al*, “The Place of Traditional Medicine in African Society: the Science, Acceptance and Support,” *American Journal of health Research* 2(2) (2014): 49.

<sup>30</sup> Adu-Gyamfi and Oware, “Wesleyan Mission Medicine,” 9.

<sup>31</sup> Konadu, *Indigenous Medicine and Knowledge in African Society*.

house of the herbalist or in the shrine.<sup>32</sup> Twumasi, Konadu and Adu-Gyamfi agree that the indigenous priest healers' school lasts for three to four years in both physical and spiritual art of healing.<sup>33</sup> The first two years is dedicated to rigorous "classroom" teaching after which a year is devoted to practical training in the field and with the patients of the traditional healer. The last year, the graduating apprentice is sent into the community for internship to ascertain whether he was truly mastered what he has been taught before he or she is allowed to practice on his own. Twumasi discusses certain social codes and taboos to be observed by the apprentice such as: a ban on alcohol, fighting or quarreling, salute or respect elders by bending the right knee, never adjure his god to kill anyone, never attend to the chief of the village or the chief's court on his own accord, and not to mingle with other men and women at night.<sup>34</sup>

Traditional healers were easily accessible because each community has a specific group that specialised in healing. These medical practitioners protect the therapeutic knowledge by keeping it as a secret. The *Inyangas* of Swaziland are said to be experts in herbalism, whilst the South African *Sangomas*, are experts in spiritual healing as diviners.<sup>35</sup> The Bono of Ghana are specialist in forest and savanna medicine. Expert traditional healing knowledge is always the preserve of a kin group and only a few people are exposed to such knowledge, for instance a member of the kin group destines to carry on that knowledge or an apprentice who has paid to be taught the indigenous knowledge. According to Geest, the secrecy medically legitimises the healer and if the secrecy is broken, the treatment loses its efficacy. In addition, the secrecy helps to maintain if not improve the patient-healer relationship as the patient without knowledge of the healing surrenders completely to the healer.<sup>36</sup>

Payment was usually affordable and flexible. Before treatment, patients make down payments, which were not necessarily money but could be chicken, egg and others to facilitate healing process. After treatment, post-treatment fees or *aseda* such as chicken, egg, money and gin among others are received by the healer. This was used as part of the post recovery and preventive care process.<sup>37</sup> *Aседа* could also be considered as a form of preventive health tool. A key component of traditional healing is gifts or rewards. Socially, a successful

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<sup>32</sup> Twumasi, *Medical Systems in Ghana*, 25-26.

<sup>33</sup> Adu-Gyamfi, "Spiritual and Indigenous Healing," 4.

<sup>34</sup> Adu-Gyamfi, "Spiritual and Indigenous Healing," 4.

<sup>35</sup> Antwi Baffour, "The Place of Traditional Medicine in African Society," 49.

<sup>36</sup> Geest, "Traditional Medicine in Basic health," 905.

<sup>37</sup> Konadu, *Indigenous Medicine and Knowledge*.

treatment of an illness requires a reward or appreciation. If a patient fails to pay for treatment or provide the thanksgiving reward, the patient runs the risk of contracting the disease again. This can be compared to the biblical story where Jesus healed ten lepers and one returned to thank Him, he concluded by saying that you have been made whole, thereby indicating that without the thanksgiving, the disease could return at any time but with the thanksgiving a person was holistically restored from the ailment.

Efficacy of traditional medicine depends on the indigenous healers' knowledge of the type of illness, patients' knowledge of illness, whether or not patients' body and blood accepts the medicine, contamination of medicine, supernatural meddling with medicine, taboos associated with medicine, proper use of the medicine, combination of the medicine, mind of the healer, following the rules of payment, and preparation of medicine. In essence, healing does not simply depend on the medicine employed but a totality of healing experience between the healer, patient and supernatural forces. Similarly, healing in Africa is an embodiment of the entire social process and involves not just the healer and his/her medicine but social relationships.<sup>38</sup> Fiereman describes in detail the role social relations play in healing. Patients usually choose healers with whom they share fundamental assumptions regarding healing. The choice of healer is not made just by the patient but relatives who take part in the entire therapeutic process. In Shona, "when a person is taken ill, he does not act on his own. His kinsmen both educated and uneducated jointly take decisions throughout the illness and are responsible for paying the medical fees."<sup>39</sup> Like the KwaZulu Natal of South Africa, the nonprofessionals or therapy management group make the initial diagnosis, prescribe the therapy to be used or decide the course of therapy management.<sup>40</sup> Fiereman comments that "for the people most qualified to make therapeutic decisions have the least technical knowledge about medicine and the greatest personal knowledge of the patients."<sup>41</sup> This is not entirely true because, the existing literature posit that quite often, knowledge about herbs is within the kin group and most family heads have fair knowledge about the social construction of diseases within the traditional society and are very familiar with old cases. This enables them to be able to ascertain the need to invite a particular healer who might have the appropriate remedy to cure their family member who is sick. Geest

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<sup>38</sup> Steven Feierman, "The Struggle for Control: The Social Roots of Health and Healing in Africa," *African Studies Review* 28 (2/3) (June 1985): 78.

<sup>39</sup> Feierman, "The Struggle for Control," 78.

<sup>40</sup> Dahlberg and Trygger, "Indigenous Medicine and Primary Health Care," 80.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*, 80.

adds to the discussion that most African medical theories have a social character. “Disorder in the community leads to disorder in the health of its members, illness of a family member is seen as the illness of the entire family. Finding the solution therefore becomes the responsibility of the group not the individual patient.”<sup>42</sup> Twumasi also notes that “a breach of social relations threaten the very survival of the traditional society because of the mutual interdependence...; health and illness are means of detecting threats to social unity and for re-establishing harmony of social relationships essential to their life.”<sup>43</sup>

Among the different societies, healing takes diverse forms and is usually a combination of both physical and spiritual medicine. The Bântu-Bakôngo notion of medicine is complemented by the concept of “self-healing power” as “the biogenetic package of power that is received at the moment of conception in the mother’s womb. To them, sickness is the abnormal functioning capacity of one’s self-healing power caused not by bacteria or virus, but by the loss of the body’s balance or energy. The cure is perceived in terms of wholeness and the therapist believes that therapy is essentially grounded in both flesh and spirit, a process of restoring self-healing power.”<sup>44</sup> This can be said to be similar to the scientific explanation of immunity to disease, yet such concepts were completely looked down upon by the Europeans. According to Adu-Gyamfi, the Ghana Psychic and Traditional Healers Association termed *bosom* or deity in Asante as consisting medicine concocted of various materials thought to have special powers, such as clay from the sacred River Tano, certain herbs and roots, ancient beads, cowry shells, and neolithic celts. These disparate objects were compounded together, which was then placed in a brass basin. In certain instances, it was only sacred water from such sources as the headwaters of rivers including *Tanoboase* and *Afram*. This medicament was made potent by calling down a measure of the universal power, which was caught by a skilled practitioner in a number of ways and forms.<sup>45</sup> In addition, Swithenbank defined a deity as any material object in which a spirit or spiritual power is present. He added that it was some natural substances, which by their appearance had peculiar properties which appeared unusual including bones, stone or wood crudely carved into the likeness of some creature or brass bowls filled with gold dust, mystic herbs and sealed with wax or some ceremonial object or sacred relics. Again, a deity was sometimes composed of several magical or non-magical elements such as pebbles, feathers, hairs, bones,

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<sup>42</sup> Geest, “Traditional Medicine in Basic Health,” 904-905.

<sup>43</sup> Twumasi, *Medical Systems in Ghana*, 37.

<sup>44</sup> Konadu, “Medical Anthropology in Twentieth Century Africa,” 56.

<sup>45</sup> Adu-Gyamfi, “Spiritual and Indigenous Healing,” 4.

twigs and beads that have a special virtue because of certain rites performed in the assembling of its parts. Sometimes it involved a particular pattern, which was carried on the head, worn on a person, or planted in the house or business premise as a protection against evil forces.<sup>46</sup> All these illustrations prove that African medicine was not totally mystical but a combination of the spiritual and physical.

Art studies in Africa, indicates that art and craft was also used as a form of healing. Among the Yoruba, twins were considered good luck. If one or both twins died young, diviners who communicate with the spirit world advised parents to commission sculptures. The Yoruba believed that the children's souls dwell in the figures, so the mother cared for them as if they were real children. If the surviving twin was a girl, she might care for the figure of her twin once she came of age. The love and care given to the figures pacifies the spirits of the twins so they did not bring harm or evil to the family or the village.<sup>47</sup> This can be classified as both disease prevention and curative methods.

The ecology shapes health and adaptable response by human communities. Mode of living, that is, hunting and gathering, cultivation, herding and urban societies face different health challenges and therefore different approaches. For instance, the Khoisan practiced infanticide (murder of babies and children) as a birth control to space children four year apart and for spiritual healing ceremony. The herding communities, due to the presence of tsetse fly, usually resided in the outskirts of the towns and had little contact with the people of the towns, this created a situation where Africans became lactose intolerant because their digestive system could not absorb dairy products.<sup>48</sup>

Another key area of great importance to African health and healing was public health. Public health can be defined as 'the art and science of preventing diseases, prolonging life, and promoting physical and mental health, sanitation, personal hygiene, control of infections, and organization of health services' or "all organized measures, whether public or private to prevent disease, promote and prolong life among the population as a whole."<sup>49</sup> Pre-colonial public health was attached to religion, as religion is linked with all spheres of life. Disease was usually seen as caused by the wrath of the gods. Through this, they were able to control the morals of the people and gain allegiance. Among the Asante, disease

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>47</sup> Bill Appleton, Ann Burroughs and Louise Cameron, "Art of Africa," *Saint Louis Art Museum* (2005): 4.

<sup>48</sup> Janzen and Green, "Medicine in Africa," 1-2

<sup>49</sup> Samuel Adu-Gyamfi and Amidu Dramani, "Public Health: a Socio-Political History of a People (1902-1966)," *Journal of Arts and Humanities* 6(8) (2017): 12.

was seen as a result of deviant behaviour, which distorts an individual's biological, social function and productivity, as a result, a sick person was relieved of all communal duties. Healers prevent diseases through divinations, animal sacrifices as well as the use of certain herbs and amulets. Pre-colonial health was controlled by traditional rulers through communal labour, taboos, strict sanitation and hygiene laws and other social codes. This ensured cleanliness and prevented diseases. In addition, Asante proverbs, norms, myths and taboos were used to promote public health, perhaps due to the close attachment to religion and the deities. For instance, it was a taboo to bath and sing. This was to prevent a person from disease as a result of swallowing the toxins in the soap.

Preventive public healthcare is defined as “a pattern of nursing and medical care that focuses on disease prevention and health maintenance. It includes early diagnosis of disease, discovery and identification of people at risk of development of specific problems, counseling, and other necessary interventions to avert health problems.”<sup>50</sup> Examples of indigenous preventive health care included health education, immunisation, assessment and monitoring of kin groups, identification of health problems, and formulation of policies to address those problems. For instance, it was the policy of communities to isolate people with infectious diseases such as leprosy. All these are necessary to ensure a healthy people for socio-economic and political development. Different cultural backgrounds have different herbal plants, plant extracts, health promotion and prevention.<sup>51</sup> The religious attachments of the people played a pivotal role in preventive health. Geest seeks to disprove the popular Eurocentric view that Africans did not worry about the future and were not interested in preventive health. He states that “prevention is central to the people's everyday life and follows logically from their preoccupations with religious and social values.”<sup>52</sup> Healers aim at preventing an already occurred illness from reoccurring by searching deeply for the cause and solution. They provide patients with moral and social guidelines to prevent the repetition of the same illness.

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<sup>50</sup> Samuel Adu-Gyamfi, Edward Brenya and Egyir Peter Nana, “Public Health in Colonial and Post-Colonial Ghana: Lesson Drawing for the Twenty First Century,” *Studies in Arts and Humanities* 3(1) (2017): 3.

<sup>51</sup> Adu-Gyamfi, Brenya and Nana, “Public Health in Colonial and Post-Colonial Ghana.”

<sup>52</sup> Geest, “Traditional Medicine in Basic Health Services in Africa,” 905.

*Difference between indigenous African traditional medicine and western medicine*

There are various debates on traditional medicine as distinct from orthodox/western or biomedicine. Western medicine is sometimes referred to as modern medicine, biomedicine, scientific medicine, or allopathic medicine. Opoku-Mensah defined orthodox medicine as any medical system that is based on sound biomedical research and are considered foreign [to African culture].<sup>53</sup> Western medicine is associated with diseases of the physical body only, and is based on the principles of science, technology knowledge and clinical analysis developed in North America and Europe.<sup>54</sup> Addae notes that the difference between traditional and European approach to medical care was an organisational one; European and other cultures founded hospitals, clinics and dispensaries or their equivalents where the sick could be attended to in an organised manner while no such equivalence seemed to be part of the African healing methods.<sup>55</sup>

Modern medicine is based on provision of healthcare in hospitals, clinics, and health posts etc. using bio-medicine and is called Evidence Based Medicine (EBM).<sup>56</sup> With the evolution of medicine, health care professionals are required to base their health care decisions on the best available evidence. Belsey defines Evidence-Based Medicine (EBM) as “the process of systematically reviewing, appraising and using clinical research findings to aid the delivery of optimum clinical care of patients.” Its processes include the production of evidence through research and scientific review, production and dissemination of evidence-based clinical guidelines, implementation of evidence-based, cost-effective practices through education and management of change, evaluation of compliance with agreed practice guidance through clinical audit and outcome focused incentives.<sup>57</sup> This is essential in identifying and improving good health practices and the elimination of bad ones. It requires a lifelong service of dedication to research on what the evidence points to. EBM allows the integration of good quality published evidence with clinical expertise and the opinions and values of patients and their

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<sup>53</sup> Foster Abrampa Opoku-Mensah, “Integrating Traditional and Orthodox Medicine in Healthcare Delivery in Ghana: a Study of Wenchi Municipality” (Thesis, University of Ghana, 2015), 10.

<sup>54</sup> Richter, “Traditional Medicines and Traditional Healers in South Africa,” 7.

<sup>55</sup> Stephen Addae. *The Evolution of Modern Medicine in a Developing Country: Ghana 1880-1960* (Durham: Durham Academic Press, 1997), 1.

<sup>56</sup> Fang Gao Smith, Jeffrey L. Tong and John E. Smith, “Evidence-Based Medicine,” [academia.oup.com/mkl031](http://academia.oup.com/mkl031).

<sup>57</sup> Jonathan Belsey, “What is Evidence based Medicine?,” <http://www.bandolier.org.uk/painres/download/whatis/ebm.pdf>.

families or care givers. In this line, the personal experience, judgment, skills and patient values are of great essence. According to Akobeng, steps to developing an EBM model is to convert information needed into answerable questions, finding the best evidence with which to answer the questions, critically appraising the evidence for its validity and usefulness, applying the results of appraisal into clinical practices, and evaluating performance.<sup>58</sup>

The critical question revolves around the debate whether indigenous traditional African medicine is a form of evidence-based medicine? As indicated, traditional medicine is an important component of healthcare in Africa because about 80% of the population depend on it due to its accessibility, availability and cost. Due to centuries of practice, evolution and experimentation, well established traditional doctors have a unique understanding of physiology, pathogenesis, pharmacology and pharmaceuticals, which are different from western biomedicine. There has been the drive to professionalize traditional medicine.

Efforts have been made by international organizations and post-independence governments to advance traditional medicine scientifically in order to make it a potent alternative medicine to western/biomedicine. At the WHO Forum on Traditional Medicine in Health Systems held in Harare in 2000, the African Regional WHO office expressed keen interest in the mass production of phytomedicines for the treatment of malaria, AIDS, and other diseases identified as priority diseases by member states. It is a strategic objective of the WHO to develop a framework for the integration of traditional medicine into national health systems. The idea is to encourage local industry to invest in the local production of indigenous medicines and make them commercially viable. Governments were urged to create policies related to conservation, safety and toxicity, and regulation in order to assist a local production industry. In 2000, Nigeria was the first to promote a plant medicine for the treatment of HIV/AIDS.<sup>59</sup>

In Ghana, after independence, Nkrumah was determined to ensure that traditional medicine was put on the same level as western medicine. In line with this, he promoted research into traditional medicine. One of such ground breaking experimentation with traditional medicine was conducted by Oku Ampofo. He is known to have collected medicinal plants from herbalists in Mampong and other Akwapem towns with which he embarked on rigorous research in order to establish its efficacy after which he administered to his clients. He is known to

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<sup>58</sup> Anthony K. Akobeng, "Principles of Evidence Based Medicine," *Arch Dis Child* 90 (2005): 837-840, <https://adc.bmj.com/content/90/8/837>.

<sup>59</sup> John Janzen and Edward C. Green, "Medicine in Africa," in *Encyclopedia of History of Science, Technology, and Medicine in Non-Western Cultures* (2008), 13.

have contributed massively to pharmacopoeia, through the study and prescription of African traditional medicine for his patients. His research and dedication culminated into the establishment of the Center for Scientific Research into Plant Medicine Institute for research in herbal medicine in his hometown Akwapem Mampong.<sup>60</sup> Through his research, he came up with the findings that the leaves of *Elaeophorbium drupifera* and *hilleria latifolia* taken in combination with palm oil soup preparation acts as a filaricide in guinea-worm infestation. He also introduced four traditional treatments of herpes zoster, which include application of the flowers of *Hoslundia opposita* and red cola nut, chewed together and sprayed on the lesion twice a day, which often heals by a fortnight. There was also the local application of the guava leaves, grounded into paste with kaolin or white clay and *piper guineense*, twice a day, which heals the infection in ten days.<sup>61</sup> He is also known to have commented in his article “The Traditional Concept of Disease, Health and Healing with which the Christian Church is Confronted” that “it is well known that as you go from village to village in this country [Ghana] you cannot help noticing herbariums at so many backyards or fences made specially from medical plants. In my district there is not a fence without, say *Newbouldia* Levis (*osensrema*, used for dysentery and eyeing the placenta), *spondias Monbin* (*atoaa*, for post-partum hemorrhage) and *Ocinum Veride* (*onunum*, for «belly palavers»)." <sup>62</sup> Likewise, among the Asante, the n(God’s Tree) was planted in front of houses in order to bring good luck to people who come into contact with it after its leaves had gathered the morning dew.<sup>63</sup>

Due to the fact that traditional medicine comes in diverse forms, approaches and nature in terms of duration and intensity of treatment, lack of comparison with other treatments, individualised diagnosis and treatment, insufficient statistical power, it is difficult designing a research study that is comprehensive for all traditional medicines.<sup>64</sup> In addition, aspects of traditional medicine deals with the supernatural and psychic or psychic power and this cannot be explained with empiricism or scientific explanations. This makes it difficult to clearly place

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<sup>60</sup> Emmanuel Asante, “Scientific Medical Practitioners and Traditional Medicine in Contemporary Ghana: a Study of Attitudes and Perceptions” (Thesis, Department of Sociology and Anthropology of the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Cape Coast, 2010), 11

<sup>61</sup> WHO report, 12.

<sup>62</sup> D. Maier, “Nineteenth-Century Asante Medical Practices,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 21(1) (1979): 71

<sup>63</sup> Adu-Gyamfi, “Spiritual and Indigenous healing,” 9.

<sup>64</sup> Shirley Telles, Shivangi Pathak, Nilkamal Singh and Acharya Balkrishna, “Research on Traditional Medicine: What Has Been Done, the Difficulties, and Possible Solutions,” *Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine* (2014), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1155/2014/495635>.

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traditional medicine under evidence-based medicine. However, there are some traditional medical systems, which fit in the criteria of EBM described above. Basically, the difference between traditional and western medicine is their natural and supernatural orientation respectively. The preference of a given health care delivery is usually dependent on the type of service available, the type of disease, availability and affordability of the service and the socio-economic status of the people.

#### *Disease causation in Africa*

Just as there are different type of ailments and healers, so are there different causes of disease. While the westerner attributes disease chiefly to his physiology of the individual and the environment, the African, due to his mystical belief in the spiritual, attributes disease to environment or naturalistic, personalistic, God-cause or human cause, though there can be a combination of two or more of these causes leading to the pluralistic nature of African medicine. Janzen and Green note, “The causal attribute will make all the difference in how sufferers, their therapy managers, diviners, healers and medical practitioners will treat the illness.”<sup>65</sup> There is a correlation between the cause of ailment, the type of healer consulted and the type of medication applied. They further note,

*Usually consultation with a diviner is not undertaken until there is sufficient reason in the kin group of the sufferer to suspect causes other than natural ones. Such a precipitating factor may be the worsening turn of a sick person, a sudden and mysterious death, the coincidence of a sickness with a conflict in the close social environment of the sufferer, or the paradoxical occurrence of a disease on only one side of a family. In such cases the clients are looking for answers to questions not only of “Why did it happen?” but “Why did it happen to us?” and possibly “Who caused it?” and “What should we do about it?”*<sup>66</sup>

Therefore, the job of the diviner is to shed light on why the group was attacked and provide solution.

In Africa, good health is achieved through a balance of all social forces: kinship ties, relations with the ancestral spirits, deities and the environment. African healing ideologies stems from the perspective that man’s nature is not only physical but also mental and spiritual which accounts for man having a body, soul and spirit. Morns and Bossard identify four causes of diseases in Neba: natural cause of disease, equated with acts of God, moral or ritual infringement be it sexual abuse, stealing, killing, etc., witchcraft or sorcery and spirits like the

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<sup>65</sup> Janzen and Green, “Medicine in Africa,” 8.

<sup>66</sup> Janzen and Green, “Medicine in Africa,” 5.

ancestral spirits.<sup>67</sup> It is for the same reason that Africans put much emphasis on spiritual causation that Western anthropologists, concluded that Africans had no proper medical system. Causation of illness has been an important subject of discussion among history, anthropology, and religion. Colonial anthropologist such as Evans-Pritchard, Robert Pool, Peter Ventevogel and Magaret J. Field all downplayed the spiritual causation beliefs of the African. Pritchard and Pool insisted that African societies in Azande and Wimbium respectively were possessed with the concept of witchcraft. Pritchard stated that “witchcraft is ubiquitous for the Azande attribute sickness, whatever its nature, to witchcraft or sorcery”; Pool said, “everything boils down to witchcraft in Wimbium and apparently in African etiology. Witches were the ultimate cause of all (significant) misfortune and death that their etiology is personalistic and that the Wimbium do not have a medical system at all.” Similarly, Ventevogel noted that the Akan medicine was not real because it was highly externalising and diffused in nature. Field observed that “according to African dogma, sickness and health are ultimately of supernatural origin and organic illness is always attributed to witchcraft.”<sup>68</sup> Most of these anthropologist with Eurocentric mindset of a primitive Africa, failed to appreciate or understand African belief systems but generalised some of their observations by insisting that Africans attribute all illness to spiritual causation.

Most of these Eurocentric notions of African medicine have been challenged by Africans and Europeans. Eva Crilles disputed Pritchard on the Azande that Africans do not attribute diseases to witchcraft and sorcery for they make distinction between the different kinds of illness and between levels of etiology and pathogens. Dennis Warren, a student of Fields contradicted her that “religious system had nothing to do with the majority of Bono diseases... and that a vast majority of Bono diseases were defined in terms of natural causation.”<sup>69</sup> This view is shared by Konadu who states that the Bono do not solely dwell on spiritual causation of ailment but that Bono healers had so much confidence in the potency of their forest-savanna herbs. One may dispute the assertion that religious system had nothing to do with the majority of Bono diseases because Africans, which included the Bono, were highly religious and therefore religion was attached to all spheres of life. Among the Bono, witchcraft is a power or energy with the intent used positively or negatively. Using Akator’s explanation of *beyie* (*ebe y3 yie*

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<sup>67</sup> Adu-Gyamfi, “Wesleyan Mission Medicine,” 11.

<sup>68</sup> Konadu, “Medical Anthropology,” 48-50.

<sup>69</sup> Konadu, “Medical Anthropology,” 48-50.

meaning it shall be well) is an optimistic statement made to give hope and direction for one who needs to consult a *bayiefo* or witch. The spirit of witchcraft is inherited so one's power is powerless outside his/her own clan. There is also the negative witchcraft, which seeks to feed on blood. Konadu observes that a person may not know that he/she has this witchcraft spirit as he/she may be born with it, yet the person's mind is what will shape it positively or negatively.<sup>70</sup> Belief in witchcraft is one of the reasons for Africans spiritual or faith healing. According to Adu-Gyamfi, Traditional priests or indigenous priest healers cure diseases through incantation, spells, preparation of portions, exorcism, invocation of deities, which according to the indigenous people was the beginning of formal medicine.<sup>71</sup>

Social causation of disease is of great importance in indigenous traditional medicine. It mainly rests on social code and the power of words. Once a misfortune occurs, African societies try to recollect if an offended person has uttered destructive words against the affected. Janzen and Green note that "victims will often identify a string of misfortunes and try to recall the exact words spoken by others prior to or in association with the events, drawing the logical inference that these utterances had caused, or could have led to, the bad luck. Words of warning or injurious words spoken in anger are especially suspect. Therefore, in divination, these moments are recalled so that the individuals or the relationships may be repaired. Without treating the root cause, the surface signs and symptoms cannot be permanently overcome."<sup>72</sup> Language and faith play a vital role in the potency of African medicine. Just as negative words can cause misfortune, positive words are required to alter the misfortune. Adu-Gyamfi notes that, "Words are considered very effective and powerful... Religious words may be repeated with the explicit aim of going into an altered state of consciousness and communing with a higher power... words used in healing rituals or services makes the healing process effective because they have a psychological impact on the patient, positive sayings of a healer to a patient takes off some stress of thinking worse of his or her situation. Negative words do otherwise and either way, the healing process is affected."<sup>73</sup> Affirmative words are used by both the lay and specialist groups to speed up the recovery process of the patient. Further, each society has its own set of social prohibitions and taboos and there are consequences for violating these.

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>71</sup> Adu-Gyamfi, "Spiritual and Indigenous Healing Practices," 4.

<sup>72</sup> Janzen and Green, "Medicine in Africa," 11.

<sup>73</sup> Samuel Adu-Gyamfi, "Words in Healing: Ethnographic Observations from Hohoe Area of Ghana," *International Journal of Social Science & Education* 8(3) (2018): 79.

Taboos are avoidance rules that forbid members of a group from performing certain actions such as eating certain kinds of food, walking or visiting some sites that are regarded as sacred, cruelty to animals, and using environmental sources in an unsuitable manner.<sup>74</sup> Violation of such codes could bring untold hardship and misfortune to an individual or a people. Among the Karanga, in Zimbabwe, it is a taboo for a person to urinate in water as it could pollute the water source and serve as source of drinking, bathing, cooking, and irrigation. This was also a way of conserving the environment. Another very important prohibition is the killing of family totems. A totem is an animal, plant or natural object (or a representation of an object) that serves as an emblem of a clan or family among a traditional people. It represent the mystical or ritual bond of unity and are symbols of religious and social cohesion.<sup>75</sup> African totems are derived from wild animals such as birds, fishes, snakes and are not to be eaten, as it is believed that if one eats or kills such an animal, he may contract a strange disease, lose his teeth or even die. Essentially, abiding by social codes helps to avoid disease. For example, members of the patrilineal clan of the Shumba are prohibited from eating any animal from the cat family. Among the Shona of Zimbabwe baboons, monkeys, lions, leopard, elephants, wild pigs, pangolins, and some birds like the eagles and owls were considered sacred therefore, it is forbidden to kill them. The python was seen as sacred custodian of the land and consequently should not be killed.<sup>76</sup> Janzen and Green note that the spread of HIV/AIDS in Africa during the post-colonial era is as a result of the breakdown of the social codes and sexual conduct.<sup>77</sup> Twumasi notes that social prohibitions, taboos and the consequence of their violation are important to the study because they helped in the adherence of social code and promoted health. Such an afflicted person requires magico-religious treatment or the application of the supernatural to take away the ailment.<sup>78</sup>

Mental health was an important aspect of traditional healing. Okello and Musisi define mental illness as “a situation in which the victim tends to interpret reality in unusual ways... the patient may be unable to differentiate between reality and fantasy, may not pay attention to impending danger, and may be unable

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<sup>74</sup> Makamure Clemence and Vengesai Chimininge, “Totems, Taboos and Sacred Places: an Analysis of Karanga People’s Environmental Conservation and Management Practices,” *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention* 4(11) (2015): 8.

<sup>75</sup> Clemence and Chimininge, “Totems, Taboos and Sacred Places,” 10.

<sup>76</sup> Nisbert T. Taringa, “The Sacred Duty of Animals in African Traditional Religion and Culture,” [http://www.bayreuth-academy.uni-bayreuth.de/resources/WG-C\\_Taringa\\_Animals-in-African-Traditional-Religion.pdf](http://www.bayreuth-academy.uni-bayreuth.de/resources/WG-C_Taringa_Animals-in-African-Traditional-Religion.pdf).

<sup>77</sup> Janzen and Green, “Medicine in Africa,” 14.

<sup>78</sup> Twumasi, *Medical Systems in Ghana*, 9.

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to recognize people previously known to him or her. Such a person's senses are obviously not functioning properly.”<sup>79</sup> Africans believed that witches, wizards, sorcerers, and demons caused mental health. In African societies, mental illness is associated with punishment of an individual for breaking prohibited laws, wrong doings or as a result of contact with an evil spirit or spiritual force.<sup>80</sup> Treatment rested purely on the use of spiritual healing through psychotherapy. The healer first looked into the socio-cultural and intellectual history of the patient before deciding the type of therapy that will be efficacious.

#### *Changing narratives of African traditional medicine*

Under this theme, the authors hope to answer the question, “With the changing narratives of African past, how has indigenous African medicine coped? Social change can be defined as “the significant alteration of social structure that is of forms of social actions and interactions, including both the manifestations and consequences of such structures embodied in the rules of behaviour.”<sup>81</sup> From the influence from Greek and Roman healing through to Persian and Arabic influence then to Christian faith healing and biomedicine, African traditional medicine has undergone changes to arrive at what it is today. Indeed, one can argue that health care in Africa has improved due to the interplay of diverse forces which have influenced it over the years.

As indicated by Patterson, “the physical, biological, and socio-cultural milieu affects the psychological condition and behaviour of man, his parasites and the animal vectors which transmit many infectious diseases... infectious diseases have accompanied human movement throughout history. Explorers, merchants, pilgrims, refugees, and migrants have carried plagues, measles, small pox, typhus, tuberculosis, syphilis, malaria, yellow fever, cholera and other deadly afflictions around the world.”<sup>82</sup> The introduction of new people with new diseases meant the need to revise healing strategies and therapeutic methods and also a major social change in the ways of indigenous therapeutics. The new diseases which infected the African people coupled with dis-empowered healers, became very problematic. As Akyeampong noted, “Africa could not respond to diseases because Africans who had enough knowledge about their environment and knew how to manage it to keep endemic diseases at a low level were politically disempowered and

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<sup>79</sup> Okello and Musisi, “The Role of Traditional Healers in Mental Healthcare in Africa,” 251.

<sup>80</sup> Janzen and Green, “Medicine in Africa.”

<sup>81</sup> Twumasi, *Medical Systems in Ghana*, 6.

<sup>82</sup> David Patterson, *Health in Colonial Ghana: Disease, medicine, and Socio-Economic Change, 1900-1955* (Massachusetts: Crossroad Press, 1981), 1.

Europeans who had political power lacked knowledge of the African environment.”<sup>83</sup> It can be argued that these changes prevented the rapid advancement of traditional medicine,

Colonial influence on medicine is enormous and cannot be gainsaid. Shaped by the perceptions of biological, intellectual and historic superiority, Europeans set out either purposely or ignorantly to denigrate indigenous African systems including traditional medicine. Colonialism suppressed all forms of indigenous knowledge and prevented its development. Maier refers to Bossman that the use of “unskilled physicians” and “corrupted medicine” that endanger the lives of many. However, European biomedicine experimented in Africa also had the propensity to have caused several casualties as well.<sup>84</sup> Contradictorily, Bossman admitted that African herbs were very effective for the treatment of illnesses. He identified some remedies to the illness, which included: “limon [*Sic*] or lime-juice, Malaget, otherwise called Grains of Paradise, or the Roots, Branches and Bumms of Trees, about thirty several sorts of green Herbs, which are impregnated with extraordinary Sedative Virtue.”<sup>85</sup>

The above shows that colonial perceptions about traditional medicine were due to a lack of proper understanding of the indigenous philosophy which was further aggravated by some level of racial superiority. It was easier for Europeans to accept the potency in African herbs than for them to wholly accept African healing therapies including spiritual healing. This slowed down the progress of African medicine, focusing and tagging most African healing expressions as backward and driven by superstition and belief in witchcraft.<sup>86</sup> With the licensing of traditional healers, and the banishment of witch finding cults, the level of secrecy used by the traditional healers as a survival technique was increased.

Similarly, traditional orthodox Islam was against traditional medicine and its converts were cautioned against its use. However, Islam always blends with the African religion. A Muslim healer in Swahili is known to practice *ngoma* along the reading of the Koran. Purification symbolism of African healing is always mixed with ritual ablution of Islam.<sup>87</sup> Through Islamic influence, the beliefs of the people

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<sup>83</sup> Emmanuel Kwasi Akyeampong, “Diseases in West Africa,” in *Themes in West Africa’s History*, ed. E. K. Akyeampong (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2006), 196.

<sup>84</sup> The antidote found for sleeping sickness at the initial stage caused blindness in a majority of its patients. M. Malowany, “Unfinished Agendas: Writing the History of Medicine of Sub-Saharan Africa,” *African Affairs Journal* 99(395) (2000): 332.

<sup>85</sup> Maier, “Nineteenth-Century Asante Medical Practices,” 36.

<sup>86</sup> Kwasi Konadu, “Medicine and Anthropology in Twentieth Century Africa: Akan Medicine and Encounters with (Medical) Anthropology,” *African Studies Quarterly* 10, 2-3 (2000): 46.

<sup>87</sup> Janzen and Green, “Medicine in Africa,” 11.

were gradually expanded to include the belief in amulet. An amulet is a small figure of gods, goddesses and sacred symbols cut from stones or molded from clay, baked and glazed. These figures were nicely shaped so that they could be hanged about the neck on a cord. The amulets became a charm of protection against various spirits. Any spirit or witch that attacked the wearer was confronted by the likeness and power of a protecting deity. With the introduction of Christianity into the country and specifically Asante, the amulet was equated to the crucifix worn by many Christians.<sup>88</sup>

There was an evolution in spiritual healing caused by socio-economic and religious changes in Africa. Konadu discusses the reduction in value of the national gods' *tete bosom* due to the introduction of the *abosommerafoo* as a result of colonial imposition decline of the Akan religion due to colonial rule and the insurgence of the cocoa industry. The cocoa boom led to the relocation of migrants from northern Ghana and Burkina Faso who introduced the *bosommerafoo* such as Tigare *bosom* from Yipala. This increased social tension within the society.<sup>89</sup> Similarly, Larbi notes that in the case of the rise, Tigare coincided with the decline in influence of the national and traditional *abosom* shrines and with the rapid development of the country on western European lines. Pastors' reports from 1922 to the present day mention the falling-away of Presbyterian Church members to take the medicine of one or other of them. In the 1940s, the number of Christians lapsing to Tigare caused all the Mission Churches deep concern. Nkwantanin in Kwahu, the headquarters of the chief Tigare priest, became a place of pilgrimage attracting devotees, so-called pagans, literates and illiterates, Christians and Moslems, in thousands.<sup>90</sup> This reflects the social tension indicated by Konadu.

In Ghana, another illustration of social tension which erupted as a result of a clash of traditionalists and Christians can be seen in the conflict between the SDA and the members of GPTH. Since traditional healing was seen as a form 'fetishism' by them, they did not recognise the operations of the society. In Kyekyewere, in Ghana, there was serious conflict between the Traditional rulers and leadership of the GPTH on one hand and members of the Seventh Adventist Day (SDA) church on the other hand over the use of Aboabo stream which was considered sacred. The stream was preserved for shrine purposes on Tuesday where the people were forbidden from drawing water or fishing from it. The SDA Christians argued that their doctrine did not recognise such sacred streams and

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<sup>88</sup> Adu-Gyamfi, "Wesleyan Mission," 5.

<sup>89</sup> Konadu, "Medical Anthropology," 53.

<sup>90</sup> Adu-Gyamfi, "Spiritual and Indigenous Healing," 6.

shrines and therefore should be given the liberty to draw water from it at all times. They contended that “the observance of Asaase Yaa day and other customary holidays such as Kwabena should be optional.”<sup>91</sup> In addition, the freedom of worship and religious liberty in Ghana was enshrined in the 1957 constitutional order-in-council. In response, the government concluded that it intended to preserve sacred shrines and other traditional preservations for medicinal purposes so the SDA members should use other alternative sources of water. It stated that “subject to restrictions as may be imposed for the purpose of preserving public order, morality and health, no law shall deprive any person of his freedom of conscience or the right freely to protect, practice or propagate any religion.”<sup>92</sup> This is a reflection of the impact of Christianity on traditional medicine.

The above dovetails the hate-hate and hate-love nature of relationship between different healers. While some had some form of cordiality others did not tolerate each other. One of such hate-hate relationship was essentially between the traditional healers and the Christian / Islam faith healers. Most churches which sprang up in Africa, opposed the idea of traditional medicine because of the belief that they were considerably associated with black magic. Others were generally tolerant, one traditional priest noted that, “For both of us are working for the welfare of the people, by my office I take away bad things and evil spirits from people in order to get good health; and on the other hand you are advising them for good behavior and love to one another, so we work hand in hand”.<sup>93</sup>

There was also the introduction of Christianised traditional healing. Many independent African Churches which sprang up encouraged healing, exorcisms, and various kinds of practices, which incorporate rites of purification, protection, and sanctification. According to Janzen & Green, Prophet-founders play the role of ancestor-mediators, while prominent or talented members assume the diagnostic role of diviners.<sup>94</sup> The Seraphim and Cherubim churches as well as the Twelve Apostles Church or Nakaba churches, Zion Aladura churches, provided alternatives to western, Islamic or traditional healing. These priests and priestesses had the ability to identify and exorcise witches. All of these churches provided solutions to the health needs of the people, in what Adu-Gyamfi terms as faith medicine. Though the ability of the healer mattered in the healing process of the

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<sup>91</sup> PRAAD, Kumasi, ARG/2/10/13, Letter from the District Commissioner to the Regional Commissioner and GPTHA on the 19<sup>th</sup> January, 1963.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibidem*, 6

<sup>94</sup> Janzen and Green, “Medicine in Africa,” 11.

sick, the faith of the individual played a key role in the healing process.<sup>95</sup> In the Bible Hebrews 11:1 defines faith as the “substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” The various orthodox, charismatic, prophetic and Pentecostal churches, which sprang up also offered counseling services, which were therapeutic in themselves.

Historically, in Ghana, the corpus of literature on traditional medicine point to the times when there was the need for traditional healers to refashion their trade to suit the changing conditions of society. During the colonial period, it led to the rise of what Osseo Asare terms as “literate healers”. These traditional healers tried to fashion their trade after that of the European physicians by wearing suits, placing adverts for their medicine, and trying to record their therapeutic methods. Some of these healers such as Joseph Kwesi Aaba published “a compendium of recipes for plant-based therapies in the coastal city of Sekondi ... [and] devote[d] a portion of his photography earnings to what he described as a series of ‘preparations, researches and experiments with regard to ... herbal medicine and its ramifications. He consequently formed the Society of African Healers.<sup>96</sup>

During the twentieth century, healers who learned to read and write used literacy as a vehicle for establishing medical authority. These literate healers lobbied the colonial governments for recognition and sought help to advance their trade. Instead of recognizing them, the colonial government sought to use them to undermine traditional medicine by demanding that members of the association report all contagious diseases to the colonial administration.<sup>97</sup> Though ultimately they were unable to achieve their objective, they introduced a scientific element into traditional healing. This approach was eventually adapted by post-colonial governments all over Africa through the formation of traditional healers associations such as the Ghana Psychic and Traditional Healing Association (GPTHA) in Ghana, the Promotion of Traditional Medicine (PROMETRA) in Uganda among others, who sought to conserve traditional medicinal knowledge and fashion traditional medicine after the well accepted western biomedicine and its physicians. GPTHA under the patronage of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah who was passionate about traditional medicine sought to improve the trade using the

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<sup>95</sup> Adu-Gyamfi, “Spiritual and Indigenous Healing,” 7.

<sup>96</sup> Abena Dove Osseo-Asare, “Writing Medical Authority: The Rise of Literate Healers in Ghana, 1930-1970,” *Journal of African Studies* 57(1) (2016): 69.

<sup>97</sup> Samuel Adu-Gyamfi, “A Historical Study of the Impact of Colonial Rule on Indigenous Medical Practices in Ashante: A Focus on Colonial and Indigenous Disease Combat and Prevention Strategies in Kumase, 1902-1957” (PhD Thesis, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, 2010), 103-104; Patterson, *Healthy in Colonial Ghana*, 28.

scientific method. Membership was based on any person actively engaged or interested in psychic and traditional healing in Ghana including herbalists, priests, priestesses and all others associated with shrines in Ghana. Another area of social change which impacted traditional medicine was the introduction of western education.

With the introduction of western healthcare, there was a growing tension between traditional healers and western orthodox physicians. Some medical professionals were hostile to the usage of traditional medicine while others tolerated it. In the case of the latter, when a patient wanted to use the two, the doctor would advise the interval to drink them to avoid any complications. Most literature on traditional medicine agree that about 80% of Africans still use traditional medicine. Today people apply the same attitude to healing as before. The use of western health facilities depends on the causation theory and the availability of resources such as western healthcare facilities and money. You may find people visiting hospitals, clinics and even herbal homes when they believe the ailment is physically induced. When they believe there is an unexplainable or remote explanation to health, they prefer to visit churches, mosques, shrines and spiritual healing centers.

WHO has advocated for collaborations between national health care and traditional medicine systems to be integrative, inclusive, or tolerant. According to Okello and Musisi, no African nation is categorised as having an integrative system, and only three countries, Ghana, Nigeria, and South Africa, have an inclusive one. The majority of other countries in Africa have tolerant systems. In this category, the national health care system is based entirely on western medicine, and the law tolerates only some traditional practices. These laws are often ignored, and in practice traditional medicine is accepted and tolerated throughout Africa.<sup>98</sup> In Ghana, there are some hospitals undergoing a pilot project of integration of orthodox and traditional medicine. The Kumasi South Hospital (Suntreso Hospital) is an example. Also, the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) is actively playing a role by training of persons in Herbal Medicine to ensure efficient and high standards in the practice. More so, it is engaged in regular training of healers to sharpen their skills and to further

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<sup>98</sup> Okello and Musisi, "The Role of Traditional Healers in Mental Healthcare in Africa," 259.

ensure that their practices are progressive and not injurious to the health and well-being of the people.<sup>99</sup>

Post-colonial African governments have now widely accepted traditional medicine through the establishment of national management or accreditation body for traditional medicine, association of traditional healers, training programs for healers and birth attendants and research introduced into traditional medicine. According to Janzen & Green, this is needed in order to achieve national self-reliance in health by promoting locally accepted herbal medicine, develop an indigenous pharmacology to reduce the national dependence on expensive imported drugs, promote natural health care, and reduce effects of modern medicine. In Uganda, herbal medicine is as effective in the treating of HIV as biomedicine. Similarly, in Nigeria, there is the promotion of traditional medicine for the treatment of HIV. Inaccessibility to biomedicine makes traditional medicine an easier option. An estimated number of about 80% depend on traditional healers for much if not all of their health needs. The way forward is for healers to strategically position themselves to curb diseases and also to ensure higher standards in terms of practice. The theorizing literature points to the argument that Africa's indigenous medicine and socio-cultural spaces have been influenced through colonization and Christian or Islamic philosophies and beliefs.

### *Conclusion*

Traditional medicine is the oldest form of healing system that has stood the test of time. From the earliest times of advanced Egyptian medical expertise through performance of the first surgery on humans,<sup>100</sup> through to colonial interference in traditional medicine as a result of colonial conquest to post independent governments' attempt to balance if not promote western medicine over traditional medicine, traditional medicine has undergone tremendous changes. These changes have informed its character today as it seeks to survive in a competitive globalised world. Traditional healers are essentially complex social beings who try to balance the physical and spiritual forces of nature in a quest to preserve lives. Indigenous traditional medicinal knowledge systems, like all other indigenous systems in Africa, play a major role in the protection of societies. Its importance does not just lie in the ability to heal disease but its intent to

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<sup>99</sup> Samuel Adu-Gyamfi, "From Vital Force To The Scientific or an Admixture: A Historical Discourse On Individuals Value for Indigenous Medical Practices in Ghana," *Journal of Basic and Applied Research International* (2018): 1-23.

<sup>100</sup> Adu-Gyamfi, "Ancient Egyptian Medicine," 11.

holistically preserve the society through its social interactions, religious sacredness and a conservation of the environment. Its absence in African societies could cause an imbalance in a well-ordered healing system among the people.

Religion, custom and tradition continue to serve as essential tools for the preservation of traditional medical knowledge. The ability of traditional healers to improve upon this knowledge system would determine its sustainability and the willingness of African governments to advance and protect it from over exploitation from Europeans and other western oriented practitioners. There is the need for Africans to go back to our roots of indigenous knowledge conservation while advancing the scientific aspects of it. A clan of women called Ngiepan in Uganda has preserved traditional medicinal plants through songs, story-telling and dances.<sup>101</sup> It can be argued that healthcare in Africa has improved due to the sweet interplay of diverse forces. The progress is seen with the decrease in maternal and infant death rates as well as improved general well-being of Africans.

Conclusively, what distinguishes African traditional medicine from orthodox medicine is that it has social and religious character and also emphasizes on prevention and holistic health of the entire society not just the individual. Therefore, African medicine is scientific, social and religious in character.

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<sup>101</sup> M. M. Greger, "Traditional Healers, a Foundational Pillar of Medicinal Plant conservation in Uganda," 2012m, [brage.bibsys.no/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/186774](http://brage.bibsys.no/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/186774).

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ESSAYS

PRESENTATIONS

REVIEWS



# Notes on the volume “The Ethics and Integrity in Education and Research”

## Review

Antonio SANUD & Bogdan POPOVENIUC

*Etică și integritate în educație și cercetare, Tritonic, 2018*

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### Abstract

Lately, ethics has become the ghost that haunts Romanian society, such as communism in the writings of the founders of the International.<sup>1</sup> And just as the above-mentioned ghost, ethics makes its bed in the ideological stand of the anger of the working class, to understand of any person who feels entitled to criticize in general a degenerate society, whose “principles” therefore are no longer! And like his bigger sister, who haunted us with startles such as equality and friendship – concepts that are also ethical in the end – ethics comes with the anti-corruption fight, the antiplagiarism, that is, something similar to class struggle: them against us!

**Keywords:** *ethics; integrity; research & development; codes of ethics.*

### *Introduction. On the “ghosts” of ethics*

Lately, ethics has become the ghost that haunts Romanian society, such as communism in the writings of the founders of the International.<sup>2</sup> And just as the above-mentioned ghost, ethics makes its bed in the ideological stand of the anger of the working class, to understand of any person who feels entitled to criticize in

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<sup>1</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifestul partidului comunist* (Bacău: Vicovia Publishing, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Marx and Engels, *Manifestul partidului comunist*.

general a degenerate society, whose “principles” therefore are no longer! And like his bigger sister, who haunted us with startles such as equality and friendship – concepts that are also ethical in the end – ethics comes with the *anti-corruption fight, the antiplagiarism*, that is, something similar to class struggle: them against us! Transforming ethics into an instrument of purification of the alienated society – in the Marxist sense – by the wanderings in the transition to no one no longer knows what, this branch of philosophy descends from the ivory tower of reflection on moral conscience in the apparent thicket of ethical codes, the deontological ones and those of conduct often made in the hurry to respond to social and normative pressures,<sup>3</sup> and less to a need to clarify what is morally acceptable in one field or another, of social and especially professional practice. The transformation of ethics into a phantom takes place by giving up its original spirit, the search for virtue, including the professional one, and the ways to take the most correct decisions in line with ethical values. Instead of these two legitimate concerns, a number of elements have been introduced in professional ethics, but especially in ideological discourse on ethics, on *combating corruption, eliminating the lack of integrity*, etc. These concerns, which are legitimate and are of particular importance for the functioning of society in ethical parameters, diverted the emphasis from the prescriptive function of ethics to the punitive one. Instead of having an ethical discourse on best practices in various socio-professional fields,<sup>4</sup> and developing them in consensus with ethical values in the society, most ethical codes emphasize sanctions and ways to apply them.

Ethics in education and research has joined the ghostly concert of shadows, often distorted, of the presence of stagiriture in today's society, particularly in education, especially in higher education, and in the production, management and dissemination of knowledge.<sup>5</sup> The ethical discourse in the field of education and research in Romania is almost entirely absorbed in the issue of plagiarism. This problem is not neglected either by the magnitude the phenomenon seems to have,

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<sup>3</sup> Mădălina Albu, “Ethics adviser role in public administration,” *Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty: Social Sciences* 6(1) (2017): 41-50, doi:10.18662/lumenss.2017.0601.04.

<sup>4</sup> Antonio Sandu, “In digital pursuit of happiness. Appreciative ethics and virtual philosophical café,” in *The Socratic Handbook. Methods and Manuals for Applied Ethics and Philosophical Practice*, coord. Michael Weiss (Germany: Lit Publishing, 2015), 349-364.

<sup>5</sup> Luis Iván Sanchez Rodriguez, Dora María Llado Larraga and Adriana Dominguez Saldivar, “Policies and mechanisms to promote the production of knowledge and its effects on university scholars: Comparative analysis among public universities in the northeastern region of Mexico,” *Revista Românească pentru Educație Multidimensională* 10(4) (2018): 315-331, doi: 10.18662/rrem/91.

especially by the impact of politics on science, plagiarized doctoral theses being the product of many politicians, with important functions in the administrative apparatus, in the legislative sphere, but also in the judiciary power. The lack of academic integrity, when appearing in the case of a politician or judge, is publicly perceived as a de facto corruption, casting the presumption that its lack of integrity may also affect its activities related to the exercise of political<sup>6</sup> or judicial power.

The need for ethics,<sup>7</sup> in research at least, far exceeds the simple fulfillment of the need for trust in science, for which the integrity of the researcher is indispensable. Such a *first level*, of obtaining and maintaining public confidence in the results of scientific research, requires clear rules to combat inadequate conduct in research, plagiarism being one of them, to which the production of results, or their distortion, the exclusive presentation of the results supporting research assumptions, faulty publication, in publications that do not provide or ensure at a minimal level scientific peer-review over published articles, falsification of citations, and scientometric indicators to ensure an unqualified trust of a researcher or group of researchers, of an institution, etc.<sup>8</sup> At a second level, however, there is the social responsibility of the researcher and the research institution, the way in which the results of the research are obtained – including the costs with which these results are obtained, and the risks to which the participants in such research may be subjected<sup>9</sup> – consequences of the implementation of results.<sup>10</sup> All these

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<sup>6</sup> Nicolai Gori, “Codes of ethics for political parties and their role in communication (in the time of electoral campaigns),” *Postmodern Openings* 9(1) (2018): 147-164, doi:10.18662/po/10.

<sup>7</sup> Roxana-Ionela Achiricesei and Ioan Cezar Anuței, “Etica profesională,” in *Etică și integritate în educație și cercetare*, eds. Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2018), 103-159.

<sup>8</sup> Alexandra Huidu, “Normativitate etică în cercetare-dezvoltare și inovare,” in *Etică și integritate în educație și cercetare*, eds. Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2018), 147-194; Antonio Sandu, “Proiectul de cercetare. Repere etice și metodologice,” in *Etică și integritate în educație și cercetare*, eds. Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2018), 195-228; Antonio Sandu, “Etica publicării științifice și a comunicării cunoașterii,” in *Etică și integritate în educație și cercetare*, eds. Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2018), 401-436.

<sup>9</sup> Mircea Leabu, “Bioetica: istoric și semnificație,” in *Etică și integritate în educație și cercetare*, eds. Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2018), 125-146; Ana Voichița Tebeanu and George Florian Macarie, “Etica în practica cercetării clinice pe subiecți umani în 6 țări europene din fostul bloc comunist,” in *Etică și integritate în educație și cercetare*, eds. Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2018), 229-257.

<sup>10</sup> Bogdan Popoveniuc, “Inteligența etică și educația pentru guvernarea tehnologiei,” in *Etică și integritate în educație și cercetare*, eds. Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2018), 289-322; Laurențiu Dan Milici and Mariana Rodica Milici, “Considerații privind etica în cercetarea din domeniul științei, tehnologiei și ingineriei,” in *Etică și integritate în educație și cercetare*, eds. Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2018), 323-351; Alexandra Huidu, “Normativitate etică în cercetare-dezvoltare și inovare,” in *Etică și integritate în*

concerns are, or should be, brought together in coherent ethical policies,<sup>11</sup> to provide the framework for the development of knowledge and the implementation of the *knowledge-based society*. All these concerns find a number of responses, of course partially, but important enough to be worth mentioning in the volume coordinated by Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc, entitled *Ethics and Integrity in Education and Research*, published at the end of 2018 by Tritonic Publishing House in Bucharest. The present paper seeks a critical reception of the abovementioned volume, from the perspective of its usefulness in the preparation of PhD students – especially – in the field of research ethics.

### *To learn ethics?*

The volume starts with a perennial question in the history of ethics: *can it be taught and learned?*, addressed this time by the French philosopher Jean Pierre Clero (2018),<sup>12</sup> in the good Philosophical tradition of both Platonic and Aristotelian inspiration. The chapter devoted to the learning of ethics is a philosophical one, a tribute to the history of ethics, without which the volume would not bear the burden of great philosophical and spiritual reflections on the nature of ethics. The fact that the state is, for example, the bearer of the public will, dares to implement the values unanimously accepted by society, even to the individual's detriment? Or is the latter called to assert himself as a single personality and as a moral person entitled to self-affirmation? The ethical grounds of democracy are recalled by the French philosopher when he considers the state to be *a teacher* who is entitled to form young generations in the letter and in the spirit of good. But good is not something given by itself, and the knowledge of good is a difficult attempt both for the philosopher and for the educator. The mere knowledge of moral doctrines is not enough, according to Clero. The teaching of ethics must be accompanied by her exemplary experience by the Master, thus re-opening the discussion of philosophy as a way of life. In the French philosopher's opinion, it is important in learning ethics, to disentangle the student, the learner of ethics, the scholar, from his own self, to pay attention to the *Other* as a philosophical partner of the Self! The analysis of the relationship between

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*educație și cercetare*, eds. Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2018), 147-194.

<sup>11</sup> Laura Bouriaud, Mitică Drăgușin and Vasile Pătrașcu, “Analiza critică a cadrului legal și instituțional de implementare a Legii nr. 206/2004,” in *Etică și integritate în educație și cercetare*, eds. Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2018), 437-451.

<sup>12</sup> Jean-Pierre Clero, “Poate fi etica predată și învățată?,” in *Etică și integritate în educație și cercetare*, eds. Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2018), 15-35.

affections and reason cannot be missed precisely because this chapter firmly stands ethics, at least teaching and learning it, in the philosophical tradition being in itself a manifest against the arbitrary rupture of it, in the opinion of contemporary ethicists, by the great currents and moral doctrines. Without being able to criticize the intention of this epigonic attempt to *re-establish the metaphysics of morals* in the nowadays education on what is the basis of the law of ethics, namely the theoretical moral analysis, whether perennial, social inspiration, or the ephemeral outcome of the social construction of ethics<sup>13</sup> we cannot fail to notice that, in many situations, the resistance of the theoretical ethics and its claim to dogmatically impose on applied ethics,<sup>14</sup> especially when applied ethics are often taught by theoretical philosophy teachers with little experience in the practice of ethics, can lead ethics to derision by appealing to the titans of philosophy of previous centuries, but who are perceived to have limited relevance in the context of today's society, where for the first time the destructive capacity of mankind exceeds the geographical and temporal proximity of the moral actor. At the other end, applied ethics, in this case ethics in education and research, is taught by professionals from different areas, often convinced of the equivalence between professional competence and ethics. If you are a good professional, engineer, lawyer, or sociologist, you certainly know the essential aspects of the ethics of the research area! Nothing less true, since the ethical reflection on a profession does not derive directly from the theoretical corpus of the respective scientific disciplines underlying the professionalization of a field.<sup>15</sup> Teaching ethics in a field requires substantial training on both the main ethical theories that apply, and the ethical issues and dilemmas that may arise in that professional or research area.

The information becomes almost palpable, so Maria and Mircea Leabu<sup>16</sup> almost feel the pressure. Under this *pressure* of knowledge, the authors consider it necessary to *renounce paternalism in education*. The educational ideal of the cognitively *autonomous student* seems as an optimal solution for the elimination of boredom, which the students show against the exhausted exposures, filled with the *wisdom of the teacher*, often translated by banality, obsolete and exposed information without the possibility of a critical reception. School responsibility

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<sup>13</sup> Antonio Sandu, *Etica și practica socială* (Iași: LUMEN, 2015).

<sup>14</sup> Cristina Tripon, “Learning to learn: Critical thinking skills to help students for life,” *Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty: Philosophy & Humanistic Sciences* 6(2) (2018): 1-10, doi:10.18662/lumenphs/06.

<sup>15</sup> Ana Frunză, *Către o nouă expertiză etică. Deconstruind valorile etice* (Iași: LUMEN, 2016).

<sup>16</sup> Mariana Leabu and Mircea Leabu, “Educația în zorii mileniului al III-lea. Încercătura etică,” in *Etică și integritate în educație și cercetare*, eds. Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2018), 37-59.

goes from transmitting knowledge to creating skills to manipulate and reorganize information in such a way that knowledge can be generated, not just assimilated. It is the paradigmatic shift in education which could allow the system to adapt to the demands of the information society and its pressure. However, it is important to underline that the *reform of education* is a classic desideratum, the Romanian educational system, and almost the entire society is in a process of continuous reformation, yet the finalities of many of these educational reforms are still not clear. The introduction of a new ethics in education based on student autonomy and the partnership between teacher and student, although not mentioned effectively in the text, seems to be the central element of this reform proposed by the authors. Given the stated essayistic nature of the chapter, we do not see any developments in educational policies coming in to meet the announced reform, but only the general frameworks in which it could take place.

As if completing the previous essay, the chapter on ethical values in education signed by Daniela Jeder<sup>17</sup> deals with the problem of *student-centered* education efficiency! Normally, education should be student-centered, but the long tradition of *teacher-centered* and almost all-knowing teacher education makes the (re) centering of student education a desideratum of ethical valence. In a market of education, based on supply and demand, the *education provider*, the bidder exhibited his products, the *capital of knowledge*, which he managed for the benefit of society by passing it on to the younger generations. The globalization of the educational market and the free access to education for students who can access competitive education services in a highly competitive market for education providers make universities orient themselves towards the needs of the student and personalize the educational system for their needs. But focusing on the student is an end to the teacher's monopoly in choosing the finality of education and its content. The teacher-student partnership transforms *classical teaching* into sequences of learning situations. This approach is convergent with the one based on competency-based learning, the stated ends being those of not passing on competencies, but of developing skills. Of course, this educational paradigm requires a new ethos to regulate the relationships between teachers and students, whose core value is partnership, mutual respect and readiness for learning. The classical ideal of a *good teacher*, a competent professor with a rich level of knowledge is questioned, the good teacher is rather the one who facilitates learning and is able to learn with the student.

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<sup>17</sup> Daniela Jeder, "Valori etice în discursul educational," in *Etică și integritate în educație și cercetare*, eds. Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2018), 61-102.

Professionalization of ethics is a response to the challenges that contemporary society makes the traditional ethicist face, who is accustomed to discussing moral virtues and conscience, and even moral reasoning, but rather difficult to adapt as an ethical counselor, for moral case law, which the practitioner in the field health, research, or education deals with.

### *Ethics in research-development*

Ethics in research and development is correlated on the one hand with bioethics,<sup>18</sup> on the other hand with the ethical evaluation of technologies<sup>19</sup> and technoethics.<sup>20</sup> Ethics of research itself has as a starting point the understanding that the concrete ways in which research is carried out and the implementation of its results can no longer support the modern ideal of axiological neutrality of scientific research, nor the primacy of the interest in knowing in the face of other moral considerations that make the research undesirable or even unacceptable.

A history of bioethics on its ethics of research on human subjects<sup>21</sup> focuses on the rights of research participants. This *obsessive leaning* towards the continual assertion of respect for the participant's autonomy exposed as a bioethical principle in research on human subjects,<sup>22</sup> along with non-harm, benevolence, and social justice, and manifested at least by the compulsory expression of the informed consent of the participant to the research, ensures the research, especially the one in the biomedical field of a human character, by weighing the benefits of carrying out that research and the risks or inconveniences that it may bring to the participants. The progress of science and technology cannot be axiologically forbidden, as the researcher's subjectivity cannot be totally eliminated from the

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<sup>18</sup> Mircea Leabu, “Bioetica: istoric și semnificație,” in *Etică și integritate în educație și cercetare*, eds. Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2018), 125-146.

<sup>19</sup> Alexandra Huidu, “Evaluarea etică a tehnologiilor în domeniul bio-medical,” in *Etică și integritate în educație și cercetare*, eds. Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2018), 353-398.

<sup>20</sup> Laurențiu Dan Milici and Mariana Rodica Milici, “Considerații privind etica în cercetarea din domeniul științei, tehnologiei și ingineriei,” in *Etică și integritate în educație și cercetare*, eds. Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2018), 323-351; Bogdan Popoveniuc, “Inteligența etică și educația pentru guvernarea tehnologiei,” in *Etică și integritate în educație și cercetare*, eds. Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2018), 289-322.

<sup>21</sup> Leabu, “Bioetica: istoric și semnificație.”

<sup>22</sup> Andreea Popescu, “Informed consent. Ethical perspectives in assessing the quality of medical services. Case study at the Dorohoi Hospital,” *Eastern-European Journal of Medical Humanities and Bioethics* 2(1) (2018): 33-74, doi:10.18662/eejmhb/08.

design of the research project<sup>23</sup> or from the later stages of the actual research or the dissemination of the results. If subjectivity is considered to be higher in scientific areas within the social area, it cannot be totally excluded from research in the natural and life sciences, at least because of *research interests* that privilege at the level of funding and / or publishing one or many more areas of research.

Ethical normativity is dealt with in the paper on three distinct levels: the international normative context,<sup>24</sup> the internal normative framework governing the functioning of the National Commission for Research Ethics,<sup>25</sup> but also at the micro level, the concrete analysis of the content of codes of ethics valid in various higher education institutions in Romania.<sup>26</sup>

An interesting conceptual proposal comes from Bogdan Popoveniuc who speaks of ethical intelligence in the context of “education for technology governance”. The author refers to a possible ethical endorsement of “technology governance ethics” with the better-known ecological humanist education. Basically, Bogdan Popoveniuc tells us, with a direct reference to the ethics of achieving technological singularity, it is particularly difficult or even impossible to foresee the consequences of the emergence of a technological singularity, which is why the ethics of technology development should be less attentive to the instrumentalist aspect of the analysis technological advances in the artificial intelligence industry, for example, as well as the social and cultural significance of technological progress and mutations in human culture through so-called human bio-amelioration.

### *Instead of conclusions*

The volume coordinated by Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc is welcoming through its openings to the various sides, that together constitute ethics in education and research, and which can thus place this branch of ethics in a self-contained scientific register in the process of being formed, being a a transdisciplinary synthesis between the philosophical, theoretical and prescriptive-

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<sup>23</sup> Antonio Sandu, “Proiectul de cercetare. Repere etice și metodologice,” in *Etică și integritate în educație și cercetare*, eds. Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2018), 195-228.

<sup>24</sup> Alexandra Huidu, “Normativitate etică în cercetare-dezvoltare și inovare,” in *Etică și integritate în educație și cercetare*, eds. Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2018), 147-194.

<sup>25</sup> Bouriaud, Drăgușin and Pătrașcu, “Analiza critică a cadrului legal.”

<sup>26</sup> Tomiță Ciulei, “Analiză comparativă a Codurilor de Etică din universitățile de top din România,” in *Etică și integritate în educație și cercetare*, eds. Antonio Sandu and Bogdan Popoveniuc (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2018), 453-463.

normative perspective, with wide legal accents, and the socio-psychological perspective of analyzing the universe of values and beliefs underlying one or another of the ethical decisions.

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