eSharp

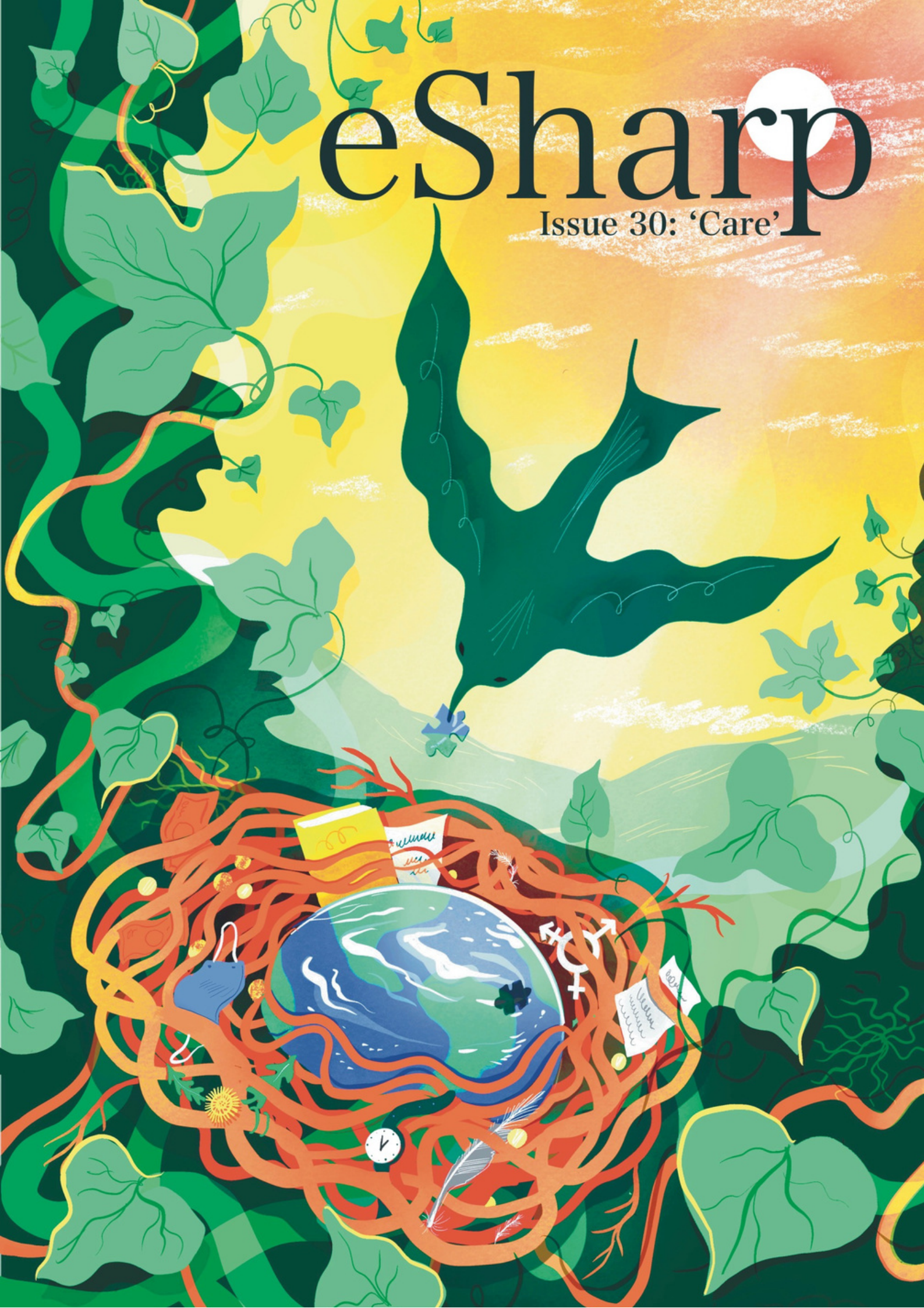## Issue 30: 'Care'

Indre Simkute
'Care' (2022)

This is a digital illustration piece I created on my iPad. It depicts a bird sweeping into her nest with a jigsaw piece in her mouth. Instead of an egg, however, there is a little planet earth tucked in, amongst the branches, and the nest itself is made up of objects which symbolise the themes explored in this issue; coins to symbolise corporations and capitalism, a book to symbolise the caretaking of books, a watch representing time and historical studies of care, a trans inclusivity symbol and so on. I have chosen the scene of the bird tending to her nest as I felt it was an apt metaphor for the way nature takes care of herself and brings everything into balance when we allow her to, and how working with nature as opposed to against it could be the missing puzzle we need to solve the climate crisis. The nest filled with objects can also be read as a comment on our consumerist driven society and the way in which our waste affects our environment.

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'Care'

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Letter from the Editors

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Our current social and political climate seems to be characterised by ever-increasing disconnection and disaffection. The media is now routinely saturated with apocalyptic images of climate chaos: lives and livelihoods ripped apart by catastrophic floods and wildfires. Meanwhile, politicians that large swathes of the population did not vote for determine how we utilise public wealth to tackle climate breakdown, ameliorate poverty, oppose fascism, and support record numbers of individuals fleeing war and persecution. Massively centralised and disenfranchising forms of governance can leave us feeling hopeless and defeated in the face of immense social and existential challenges. The COVID19 pandemic compounded this situation by encouraging further social fragmentation and disengagement as one of its many unfortunate consequences.

Having identified the problem, how are we to respond? The theme of this year's issue of *eSharp* – 'Care' – was selected as a defiant rebuttal to the normalisation of violence, destruction, disenfranchisement, and xenophobia around the world. Increasingly, it feels as if we are encouraged to be passive in the face of any and all extremes. Instead, the editors of this issue invited work that reflects on what it means to care in various contexts, and on the various ways in which care is deprioritised and suppressed. The theme proposes a rejection of the command to ignore and look away.

As always, the journal publishes academic criticism that is written by postgraduate students. However, this year we also decided to feature a range of artworks and creative reflections from various practicing artists. It is our hope that this will be illustrative of an approach that sees art, theory, and criticism as part of a continuum. This approach does not simply value academic analysis taken in isolation, but considers how this work might share a platform with the artistic efforts upon which it often draws.

Across the work featured in this issue, we find explorations of the origins and structure of careless passivity, self-interest, and aggression, alongside attempts to discern new ways of provoking and practicing care. We believe that fostering innovative methods of emotional engagement – with the world and with one another – is one of humanity's most urgent tasks.

Contributor biographies

Harriet Barton (University of Liverpool) is a PhD candidate, whose work is particularly interested in fiction and film that examines the intersection of space and time in the domestic space and dark family inheritances. She has previously published on the haunted family environment in Shirley Jackson's three 'house novels'. Currently Harriet is teaching noir fiction and film at the University of Liverpool.

Barbara Becnel (University of Edinburgh) is a PhD candidate, social justice activist, and author with more than twenty years of experience working for prison reform in the state of California, while writing nine award-winning non-fiction books on street gang culture, as well as over one-hundred journal, magazine, and newspaper articles. Recently, she was appointed to a national Expert Steering Group for tackling racial harassment in Scottish education. Her thesis explores how death row became a symbol of heroism for America's street-gang generation. The work also examines the role four-hundred years of racism in the United States played in the evolution of a black urban killing culture. Integral to this is her collaboration with three former-though-imprisoned South Central Los Angeles gang members who are co-researchers on the project providing validation and reflexivity support.

Ruth Gilmour is a visual artist from Glasgow that is based between Scotland and Denmark. Ruth is interested in how culture is produced and maintained by non/human forces. She unravels the idea of the unified, stable self in order to give form to the multiplicity of our bodily nature and to challenge human ideas around solidity and the mere ephemeral. Ruth's work considers how a personal experience of chronic illness stimulates an understanding of fragility and resilience, and how craft can translate these personal experiences into an intimate knowledge of materials and their vulnerabilities. https://www.rthglmr.com/

Nancy Haslam-Chance is an artist from Bradford, now based in Glasgow. She draws as a way of recording life and keeps sketchbooks in the same way people keep written diaries. Nancy is currently training to be an art psychotherapist, where she is learning about how we can use images to express ourselves, communicate and form human connections. https://www.instagram.com/nancyhaslamchance/

Paul Anthony Knowles (University of Manchester) is a second year PhD student at Manchester University. His research is on 'Haunted Pasts and Possible Futures in Ecogeographical Short Fiction: Crisis and Chronotope' under the supervision of Dr. Anke Bernau and Dr. Robert Spencer. His research focuses on contemporary short story and Ecocriticism. His research critically engages with formulations on the pastoral, especially in relation to the works of Ingold, Williams, Olgwig and Rebanks. Another critical concept of his research is its engagement with

Bakhtin's ideas on the chrontope. The research asks - 'how do we conceptualize different understandings of time from different species and the nonhuman world?' He is a member of the European Network for short fiction, writes reviews on short story collections for the Manchester Review, and is currently waiting for articles to be published in Cultural Practices and the Journal of Short Story in English.

Ana Victoria Mazza (University of Glasgow) is a fourth-year PhD candidate in English Literature at the University of Glasgow. She is coming to the end of her doctoral project, for which she was awarded a College of Arts Scholarship in 2019. Her work examines the representation of socioenvironmental concerns in Anglophone Nigerian urban literature. She holds an MLitt. in English Literature from the University of Glasgow, and a Master's degree in Translation and Interpretation from the Universidad de Buenos Aires, Argentina. She is also an English Language teacher and English-Spanish certified translator. Her research interests include modern and contemporary literature, the environmental humanities, postcolonial, and urban studies. Within these areas, she has both taught as a GTA and participated in conference organisation committees during her PhD.

Indre Simkute is a Lithuanian/ British illustrator based in Glasgow, she works within digital and analogue media and her visuals are largely informed by her study of plants, time spent in nature and her own imagination. She is excited about creating visuals which inspire people to rediscover the wonders of the natural world. Her illustrations are largely bright, joyous and playful.

Katrine Spilling is an artist based in Oslo. She holds an MFA from Ruskin School of Art, University of Oxford and a BFA from Chelsea College of Art, University of the Arts London. Katrine´s practice moves interdisciplinary between art, research, and education, and is grounded in social sustainability and body-politics. Her interest lies in the interconnectedness of invisibility and visibility in culture as an expression of how value is created and distributed through individual and collective perception. She uses her practice as a space to learn about the relational forces that form worlds into being and the relationships cultural narratives exists in and as. www.katrinespilling.com

Orla Stevens is a multidisciplinary Scottish artist, illustrator and visual designer.
Her work looks to connect people to nature: Inspired by the importance of creative play, exploration, improvisation and positivity that both her artistic process and being in the outdoors share. Orla holds a BA with Honours from Edinburgh College of Art in Textiles and Surface Pattern Design. Work is held in public and private collections worldwide, and exhibited in galleries across Scotland. Orla frequently creates bespoke artworks commissioned for private and public spaces and projects. https://www.orlastevens.com/

Balázs Szendrei (University of Edinburgh) obtained his first degree in Environmental Engineering at the University of Debrecen, when his interest turned towards the humanities both

as a way of negotiating environmental issues which otherwise remain within the strictly confined domain of science and as a personal passion. He began his study of English Literature at the University of Luxembourg, which offered him an opportunity to transfer to the University of Aberdeen for his continued studies in English and Scottish Literature. During this time, his interest started to focus on the period of the High and Late Middle Ages, which offers a unique insight into modern issues. Szendrei's diverse research interests lie at the intersection of environmental science, medieval literature, and the question of how ideology and narratives interact in this specific context. He is currently working on the completion of his doctoral thesis on these subjects in the textual environment of various medieval literary works at the University of Edinburgh.

Care as Resistance: Vulnerability and Agency in Ifeoma Okoye's *The Fourth World*[1]

Ana Victoria Mazza (University of Glasgow)

Abstract

According to *The Care Manifesto*, care is our individual and social capacity to provide and receive support from human and nonhuman systems, in order to thrive and foster the advancement of all human and nonhuman nature. Yet, our contemporary world order boasts of an extreme 'carelessness', which makes true caring an act of resistance against neoliberal and neocolonial capitalism (2020). Moreover, the widespread conception of vulnerability and resistance as mutually exclusive terms renders vulnerable communities not only powerless, but also unable to care in any form (Butler 2016). This notion also feeds into and is reinforced by asymmetrical relations embedded in international aid enterprises (Sabsay 2016). The present paper suggests that fictional literature is especially well-suited to offer alternative (re)imaginings of care. It thus proposes to explore the idea of care as resistance in Nigerian Ifeoma Okoye's novel, *The Fourth World* (2013). Extending *The Manifesto*'s claims to a postcolonial country of the Global South, and building on Judith Butler's and Leticia Sabsay's ideas on vulnerability and resistance, as well as on impulses in the field of geography both to emplace and decentre care (Raghuram 2016), the paper analyses carelessness and care practices in the extremely vulnerable community of Kasanga Avenue. The study argues that, while care practices carried out by the novel's author and characters outside the settlement are resistant because they challenge neoliberal and neocolonial individualism and charitable morality, care within Kasanga Avenue is doubly resistant, since the residents' survival can constitute a form of resistance in and of itself. Nonetheless, the paper also demonstrates that, because of the interdependent and relational nature of care, these acts of caring at the levels of kinship and community are not enough. Caring individuals and communities need to be supported by caring states and economies, and by a caring world.

Keywords: interdependency, vulnerability, resistance, Ifeoma Okoye, urban Nigeria.

[1] The present paper is based on research carried out as part of my doctoral project in English Literature at the University of Glasgow. A later version of this work will be integrated into the fourth chapter of my thesis.

According to The Care Manifesto, care constitutes a personal and social capacity, and involves all aspects of both human and nonhuman lives:

> Care is our individual and common ability to provide the political, social, material, and emotional conditions that allow the vast majority of people and living creatures on this planet to thrive – along with the planet itself. (2020, p. 6).

Yet, declares *The Manifesto*'s opening, '[o]ur world is one in which carelessness reigns', as the COVID-19 pandemic has painfully demonstrated (p. 1). This is the result of a long-standing tradition of care devaluation, 'due, in large part, to its association with women' and 'the feminine' (p. 3). A devaluation, moreover, that has been aggravated 'over the last forty years, as governments accepted neoliberal capitalism's near-ubiquitous positioning of profit-making as the organising principle of life' (p. 3). In our contemporary neoliberal capitalist world, then, care practices have been restricted and reduced to the bare minimum, so that the majority of the global population is finding it increasingly hard to give and receive care. For the opposite to happen, for us '[t]o think of care as an organising principle on each and every scale of life', *The Manifesto* argues, 'we must elaborate a feminist, queer, antiracist and eco-socialist perspective, where care and care practices are understood as broadly as possible' (Care Collective 2020, p. 22). In other words, real care in today's world calls for a radically inclusive conceptualization. And it is because of the radical nature of this call that care can and should be understood as a form of resistance.

Being truly and completely caring today means going against neoliberalism, reactionary politics and continuing ecological destruction. That is, care necessarily implies a high and multimodal form of agency that recognises human dependency on both human and nonhuman systems, from an individual through to a global scale. However, this kind of agentic resistance, Judith Butler et al. note, is usually construed in an opposing, mutually exclusive relationship with vulnerability (2016, pp. 1-2). Following the logic of this assumption would thus make vulnerable individuals and communities unable to resist and, consequently, unable to care; a conclusion which, as the authors argue and this paper illustrates, is both false and biased. Indeed, fictional literature, with 'its peculiar form of power over the real' provided by its 'imaginative dimension' (Prieto 2013, p. 2), is a very compelling means of challenging this coupling of vulnerability and powerlessness and of foregrounding care as a form of resistance.

The Manifesto draws on a myriad of historical examples, mostly from the Global North, to show how care can and has been radically put 'front and centre' on different scales and in diverse ways (Care Collective 2020, p. 5). This paper proposes to extend the application of The Manifesto's arguments to fiction and to the Global South, by exploring the idea of care as resistance in Nigerian Ifeoma Okoye's novel, *The Fourth World* (2013).[2] Drawing on Judith Butler's and Leticia Sabsay's examinations of the relationships between vulnerability and

[2] While this paper acknowledges the lack of theoretical exactitude of the concepts 'Global South' and 'Global North', they are utilised here for the sake of practicality, and with full awareness of the risks of generalisation involved in their use.

resistance (2016), as well as on notions of care 'beyond the global North' (Raghuram 2016), the study analyses how Okoye and her characters attempt to challenge the social and environmental violence of abject poverty in the slum of Kasanga Avenue, in Enugu, Nigeria. The paper is divided into three main sections: the first one examines key concepts and the theoretical framework that forms the basis of this discussion; the second one analyses the representation of carelessness in Okoye's novel, the context in which care as resistance actually takes place in the narrative; finally, the third section examines the various care practices that develop in Kasanga Avenue and why they can be considered forms of agentic resistance.

Crucially, the paper argues that both author and characters in *The Fourth World* indeed resist the violence of abject poverty, a consequence of Nigeria's neocolonial capitalist relations, by caring for and about each other. Moreover, Kasanga residents' care practices are, following Butler (2016, p. 26), doubly resistant, through agentic vulnerability: not only do they challenge capitalism and neocolonialism in general, but also resist, by continuing to exist, the specific material conditions that have put them in such a precarious state. However, several community members are lost to poverty and abandonment throughout the novel. While Chira, the main character, seems to succeed in her efforts to find a way out and forwards, thanks to the help of isolated individuals and her community, the novel illustrates *The Manifesto*'s claim that 'our capacities to care are interdependent and cannot be realised in an uncaring world' (Care Collective 2020, p. 6). In other words, *The Fourth World* is simultaneously a testament to the power and agency of kinship and community care in vulnerable groups, and to the utmost importance of acknowledging interdependency and relationality when discussing matters of care. Ultimately, this analysis offers a deeper understanding of a relatively ignored Nigerian novel, whose depiction of Kasanga Avenue and its inhabitants goes against the 'moral appeals' and consequent depoliticization of '[h]umanitarian pleas for aid' (Sabsay 2016, p. 280). The study can thus be framed as answering Parvati Raghuram's call to '[emplace] and [displace] care ethics' in the light of specific 'geohistories' (2016, p. 524), since it allows us to focus on an extremely vulnerable community and explore alternative forms of care in a postcolonial nation of the Global South.

Care, Interdependency, Vulnerability, and Resistance

To start with, I would like to go over some definitions and theoretical connections that frame and justify the present analysis. *The Manifesto* is a call to action, to make care the utmost priority according to which societies, governments and economies are organised and run. Emma Dowling puts forward a similar proposition when she suggests that 'we look at the economy from the perspective of care', which would affect the way we think 'about the problems we face and the solutions to them on a local and global scale' (2022, p. 5). The reason for this call lies precisely in the comprehensive definition of care given at the beginning of this paper. Because it is both a 'capacity' and a 'need' (Nussbaum in Lynch 2009, p. 410) affecting all living things, because it is more than '"hands-on" care' (Care Collective 2020, p. 5), care is a public, social and political issue (Lynch 2009; Tronto 2013; Raghuram 2016; Care Collective 2020; Dowling 2022).

Moreover, care is also, by necessity, an environmental matter. Indeed, another aspect closely linked with this expanded definition of care is that of our interdependency, the fact that

we all depend, to different degrees, on each other and on human and nonhuman nature in order to thrive. In their approach to the notion of care in a postcolonial context, Raghuram et al. emphasise the need to think about 'responsibility and care' taking into account notions of 'interdependence and coexistence and the limits to these' (2009, p. 10). In a later paper, Raghuram again explains that '[c]are is produced inter-subjectively, in relation, and through practice', and not on an individual basis (2016, p. 515). Similarly, for Butler, the human body is 'less an entity than a relation', which is at least partly defined by the body's 'dependency on other bodies and networks of support' (2016, pp. 19 and 16). *The Manifesto* further claims that 'to put care centre stage means recognising and embracing our interdependencies' (Care Collective 2020, p. 5). This means that care and support are thus 'active and necessary across every distinct scale of life', and '[p]ractices more conventionally understood as care [...] cannot be [...] carried out unless both caregivers and care receivers [...] are supported' (p. 6). Nonetheless, interdependency is sometimes 'denied', for the sake of strength and autonomy (p. 22); or, conversely, 'pathologised', to weaken and humiliate 'those who should feel most *entitled* to care' (p. 23, emphasis in the original). Interdependency is thus a key concept that must be acknowledged and grappled with: care is not something simply given by some and received by others.

According to Butler, a failure or altogether lack of support 'exposes a specific vulnerability that we have when we are unsupported', when we do not have access to those human and nonhuman networks 'characterizing our social, political, and economic lives' (2016, p. 19). Care in all its variants can thus be understood as the provision of this support. A lack of care, and a consequent lack of support from the systems we depend on, then evidences our vulnerability, the 'exposure to harm' that this lack produces (p. 13). This exposure to harm is thus for Butler 'a socially induced condition', which explains the unequal distribution of care on different scales (p. 25). Interestingly, Butler also refers to varying attitudes towards this vulnerability: like interdependency, vulnerability can be rejected or wished away, or appropriated 'to shore up [...] privilege' (pp. 22-23). Sabsay goes a step further and introduces the term 'permeability', a useful tool to differentiate between 'two distinctive conceptual uses of vulnerability: (1) vulnerability as the capacity to be affected (which might be acknowledged or disavowed)', termed as 'permeability; and (2) vulnerability as a condition that is differentially distributed' (2016, p. 286). In other words, according to Sabsay, we are all equally permeable and, because of this permeability and its subjection to diverse living conditions, we are, and perceive ourselves as, unequally vulnerable.

All this must now be considered within a capitalist world order, which 'is uncaring by design' (Care Collective 2020, p. 10). This is a point that Dowling makes too, and a premise on which she bases her book, *The Care Crisis* (2022, pp. 9-15). Tellingly, Nancy Fraser also devotes a chapter of her book, *Cannibal Capitalism*, to capitalist devouring of care understood as social reproductive work, which she locates as one expression of capitalism's depletion of the human and nonhuman world (2022). In a neoliberal and neocolonial world order, which has only exacerbated a care crisis whose origins can be partly located in gendered notions of weakness, care and vulnerability, more people are likely to be left without the necessary care and support,

which in turn gives place to an ever-growing inequality in the distribution of socially-induced vulnerability (Care Collective 2020, pp. 7-9; Dowling 2022, pp. 1-5). The ultimate consequence is an 'unjust' overreliance on the traditional nuclear family and a tendency to 'care exclusively for and about "people like us"' (Care Collective 2020, pp. 17-8). In Dowling's words and contrary to what we have established, care is now 'voluntary and informed by an ethics of charity or other forms of moral obligation' (2022, p. 9). Moreover, '[a]usterity measures serve to convince individuals that the only person they can truly rely on is themselves', while they '[imply] a greater reliance on informal support and charity provision' (pp. 11-12). That is, capitalism, and neocolonialism, reinforce the false sense of individualism that both goes against Raghuram's and Butler's conceptions of care and the body as interdependent relations, and justifies a rejection of our permeable condition.

We are then left with the following picture: we all have interdependent and permeable bodies that need the support provided by diverse forms of care in order to thrive. Our degree of vulnerability, enabled by our given permeability, will depend on both our attitude toward this permeability and the level of support we give and receive through care. Interdependency means care needs to be multi-scalar, and needs to be supported as much as it provides support. The ubiquitous need and capacity for care make it not only a social and public, but also a political and ecological matter. However, neoliberal capitalism has reduced care to its minimum expression, as well as pushed it back to the realms of the individual, the private, and the moral. All of this leads to the conclusion that care practices at all levels, from the individual to the global, must go against neoliberal restrictive impulses, false individualism, and the privatisation and moralisation of care. In other words, to care and be cared for and about today means to resist a capitalist and neocolonial world order.[3]

There are two important consequences of this state of things that I would like to address before moving on to the analysis of the novel. Firstly, it has already been established that both Butler (2016) and The Care Collective (2020) identify diverse ways of understanding and reacting to care and vulnerability. One of these reactions is a denial or rejection of our own permeability, to use Sabsay's term (2016), coupled with an understanding of vulnerability and the need for care as weakness and powerlessness (Butler et al. 2016, p. 2). This means that care and vulnerability are associated with passivity –'in need of active protection'–; while denied permeability, which is 'based on a disavowal of the human creature as "affected"', is considered agentic, and thus, 'active' (p. 3). These associations, explains Sabsay, in turn account for the 'construction of "the suffering other" as a mute and helplessly un-nurtured, violated, or deprived body' by 'humanitarian enterprises'. Vulnerable groups, such as slum residents like those of Kasanga Avenue, are thus rendered voiceless and helpless by 'humanitarianism', while these enterprises appeal 'to human

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[3] Interestingly, I recently came across another conception of the relationship between care and resistance in artistic activism, in research-led artist Jade Montserrat's exhibition, Constellations: Care & Resistance, at the Manchester Art Gallery. For further information please see <https://manchesterartgallery.org/event/constellations-care-and-resistance/> and <https://iniva.org/programme/events/constellations-care-and-resistance/>.

sensibilities' and to the charitable morality that constitutes care under neoliberal individualism (2016, p. 280). More importantly, Sabsay argues, 'these moral appeals […] obscure the biopolitical dimension of global governmentality'; that is, they fail to 'address' the fact that 'we are all involved in the production of this vulnerability', thereby contributing to the depoliticization of care and vulnerability explained above (p. 280).

Sabsay's argument is in fact closely related to Raghuram et al.'s reflections on responsibility and care in a postcolonial context. These authors explain that '[p]ostcolonial responsibility means' acknowledging the '(neo)colonialism' that some parts of the world still inflict on others, which is actually a way of producing vulnerability in seemingly 'distant' places (2009, p. 9). Moreover, when thinking about 'decentering' care and responsibility, the authors point out the need to reject 'asymmetry' in the construction of care relations between a weak sufferer and a magnanimous carer (p. 10), which is precisely what humanitarianism does. We see then how the disavowal of permeability and its attendant individualism are closely linked with the commodification and depoliticization of vulnerability, responsibility and care that characterise neocolonial capitalism.

Secondly, because vulnerability is associated with a passive need for care and protection, and is thus construed into a 'mutually oppositional' relationship with resistance (Butler et al. 2016, p. 1), vulnerable groups and individuals are considered incapable of 'act[ing] politically'. A depoliticization of care and vulnerability, then, goes hand in hand with the negation of these vulnerable populations' agency and their capacity for 'collective resistance' (pp. 5-6). If we understand care as a form of resistance in our contemporary neoliberal capitalist world, and if we consider certain groups naturally incapable of offering any resistance, then we are also saying that these groups are incapable of caring and depend, for all their care practices, on the active help, the charity, of seemingly impermeable and thus powerful individuals, organizations and governments. This is not only a false statement but also feeds into the paternalistic discourse of vulnerability as powerlessness (Butler et al. 2016, p. 6). A re-examination of the relationship between vulnerability and resistance is thus key when thinking about care.

Indeed, Butler shows how the relationship between vulnerability and resistance needs to be critiqued and reformulated. Because the human body depends on infrastructures and human and nonhuman networks to thrive, it is both permeable ('acted on'), and performative ('acting'). This means that 'vulnerability can be a way of being exposed and agentic at the same time' (Butler 2016, p. 24). In public demonstrations, for example, vulnerability 'becomes a potentially effective mobilizing force' (p. 14): the exposure of bodies in 'precarious positions', of vulnerability as socially induced, both performs 'the demand to end precarity' and resists the unequal power relations that have put those bodies in precarious positions in the first place (p. 15). Crucially, in extreme conditions, Butler says, 'continuing to exist, to move, and to breathe are forms of resistance' (p. 26). Survival here becomes an expression of agentic vulnerability: the will and power to survive under conditions of extreme vulnerability is then a form of resistance.

Building on this last observation, I would like to suggest that caring done by and within these vulnerable groups becomes then another form of resistance, since, as we shall see, it ensures the communities' continued existence. Thus, on the one hand, Okoye and her characters'

caring practices are inherently resistant, or resistant in a general sense, in so far as they challenge the charitable individualism of neoliberal and neocolonial capitalism. On the other hand, Kasanga residents' shared vulnerability also makes their caring practices a form of specific political resistance, because it ensures the settlement's survival despite almost complete abandonment, and challenges the global, economic and state forces responsible for their appalling precarity. Through this reading of care as double resistance, I argue, it is possible to understand how the novel both underscores the importance of interdependency, and undermines humanitarian enterprises' construction of vulnerable groups as powerless.

Registering Carelessness in Kasanga Avenue

Published in 2013, Ifeoma Okoye's *The Fourth World* follows the struggles of Kasanga resident 18-year-old Chira. She arrives home for the school holidays to find her father in hospital. He soon dies, which means Chira needs to find a job to support both herself and her sick mother. All along, Chira also tries to find a way to finish school and go to university, a dream of hers that her father supported from the start, and for which he seems to have worked himself to death. Chira is resilient and extremely hard-working, but she fights against forces much bigger than herself in order to take care of her mother and succeed in life. Okoye's novel has been the object of a number of studies focusing on the violence of poverty, the novel's gender and environmental concerns, and the author's social and political consciousness, all of which are of course relevant and integral to an examination of the work from a care perspective (Onyemachi 2016; Iwuchukwu 2018; Mayer 2018; Odinye 2018a, 2018b; Okoye & Asika 2020; Ogbazi & Obielosi 2021). Such an analysis, however, does not seem to have been carried out, and this paper thus offers a different lens through which to interpret Okoye's fictional rendering of urban poverty in Nigeria, which attends to one of the novel's central concerns.

I would like to start by briefly acknowledging the novel's registration of carelessness in Kasanga Avenue, especially at the first three levels described by *The Manifesto*: world, economy, and state. This registration of carelessness is no less than a description of Kasanga residents' living conditions, an example of Butler's socially induced vulnerability, as well as an exercise in care ethics emplacement as foregrounded by Raghuram (2016, p. 524-525). This registration is thus not only an acknowledgment of local specificities, but also a restoration of care to its social, public and political spheres, which challenges the prevailing structures responsible for the slum dwellers' vulnerability.

According to *The Manifesto*, a caring world is one that 'rebuild[s] and democratis[es] social infrastructures and shared spaces across all scales', joining forces with international 'progressive movements and institutions' in order to provide all its inhabitants with the support they need. These institutions are not international aid enterprises, but 'transnational networks' which are built on solidarity and 'grassroots resistance', and reject asymmetrical relations of power (Care Collective 2020, p. 90). The so-called Fourth World in which the novel takes place, on the other hand, is the result of opposite practices to the ones just described. As the novel's Foreword, by Ernest N. Emenyonu, explains, Fourth World is a global category, 'whose citizenship is not

defined by race, colour, geographical location, tongue or creed'. It 'is peopled by the true "wretched of the earth", who squat in shanties', and, '[i]n full view of the billionaires [...], they feed off discarded leftovers in garbage containers' (2013).**[4]** This is a universally ignored group of people, whose destitution and vulnerability is in fact produced by neocolonial capitalism. Admittedly, the Foreword characterises the Fourth World as 'voiceless and [...] defenceless' (2013), which supports the idea of this group as passive and powerless. However, Emenyonu is here referring precisely to the global scale, on which this group tends to be either humanitarianism's 'suffering other', or, indeed, invisible (see also Odinye 2018a, p. 174).

Moving down the scale, a 'caring economy' will require 'reimagining the economy as everything that enables us to take care of each other' (Care Collective 2020, p. 71). The main aim of 'all economic activity' would ultimately be the expansion and maintenance of our care capacities, which in turn means understanding the economy as part of society, and society 'as part of the ecology of the living world' (p. 72). The opposite of this leads to 'commoditised care', which means (a) that 'care responsibilities and services' are distributed 'on the basis of purchasing power', and (b) that 'self-interest and instrumentality' are 'foregrounded' to the detriment of good quality care (pp. 75-77). In sum, commoditised care means both unequal access to and poor quality of care provision. Nothing exemplifies the terrible consequences of this commoditisation of care better than the government-managed main hospital in Enugu, where Chira's father is admitted after his condition worsens, as several critics point out (Onyemachi 2016, p. 350; Iwuchukwu 2018, pp. 4-5; Mayer 2018, pp. 339-340; Odinye 2018a, pp. 177-179; Okoye & Asika 2020, pp. 115-116). According to Jude, Kasanga's 'spokesperson', 'hospitals [...] are not for those whose purses are empty', since they 'are more concerned with making money than with saving lives' (Okoye 2013, Chapter 6).

Not only do the nurses treat rich and poor people differently (Chapter 1), but also medical treatment is not administered until it has been paid for, which results in avoidable and cruel deaths (Chapter 4). Even worse, said payment barely guarantees the medical procedure needed, and does nothing to improve the hospital's unsanitary environment (Chapter 4); nor does it include the provision of medicines and other medical supplies or special meals, the laundering of 'bedclothes and hospital gowns', and even 'nurses' duties', all of which Chira characterises as 'unofficial care-giving' and 'free labour' (Chapter 5). Because of all this, 'Kasanga Avenue residents always [try] to ignore their symptoms as long as possible' before going to the hospital (Chapter 1), which of course also leads to untimely deaths. As The Manifesto explains, 'what is left outside markets', i.e., what is not profitable, 'is devalued and delegated [...] mostly to families, but also to communities' (Care Collective 2020, p. 73). Commoditised care in Okoye's novel is indeed the cause of death of many a character, both of Chira's parents among them.

The next level of carelessness portrayed in the novel is that of the state. A caring state 'is one in which the provision for all of our basic needs is assured' in a sustainable and participatory

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[4] Since the book is only available in the UK in e-book format, no page numbers are available and only chapter numbers can be given as a citation reference.

manner (Care Collective 2020, p. 59), and where everyone is provided with 'adequate time' and 'resources [...] to expand their capacity to care' (p. 65). That is, a caring state provides the necessary infrastructure for humans and nonhumans to thrive while fostering the thriving of others. However, Kasanga Settlement cannot be said to belong to either the city of Enugu or the country of Nigeria. Like so many other slum areas, it is a world in and of its own, and thus outside the realm of municipal, regional or national action; a fact acknowledged by the press when reporting on a particularly dramatic incident after heavy rains (Okoye 2013, Chapter 12). Raghuram importantly situates the lack of state care and support in some countries within the global race for 'economic development' (2016, p. 518). In other words, an absent state must be understood, at least in part, as a consequence of neocolonial capitalism and its attendant development narrative, which, directly or indirectly, dictates how and when money is spent.

Without any governmental intervention, Kasanga residents are systematically neglected and left to fend for themselves in every aspect of their lives, and even blamed for their appalling living conditions (Onyemachi 2016, p. 350; Odinye 2018a, p. 176; Okoye & Asika 2020, p. 118):

> She [Chira] had come to see Kasanga Avenue as a cursed place, as a place where people had been deprived of good education, good health, good jobs, and basic amenities; where they were deprived of dignity and honour. A place where people's toils would never bring any improvement to their lives, thereby making them lose faith in themselves. A place where people had begun to accept the prejudiced description of them as slow, stupid, incompetent and criminal (Okoye 2013, Chapter 9).

We can see here what Michael Bennett describes as a vicious circle in which '[t]he deteriorating physical infrastructure contributes to a deteriorating social infrastructure, which is then read by policymakers as a cause rather than an effect of the disproportionate hazards of urban living' (1999, p. 183). Careless worlds produce careless economies that produce careless states, whose lack of support results in unequally distributed exposure to harm.

In Kasanga Avenue, for example, we find no running water or adequate power supply (Okoye 2013, Chapter 10), and no sewage or draining systems. These issues result in extremely poor health, untold suffering and even the death of Kasanga residents. A case in point is 'the Great Floods of Kasanga Avenue', 'the annual deluge' caused by heavy rains and 'erosion'. This time, Mama Bebe's 'only surviving child' drowns (Chapter 12). The child's death leads a group of teenagers from the community to demonstrate against their terrible precarity. Because they care about Kasanga Avenue's neighbours, their vulnerability becomes a 'mobilizing force', as Butler explains (2016, p. 14). However, their resistance is met with violence and four people are killed (Okoye 2013, Chapter 12). The deterioration, or sometimes altogether lack, of physical infrastructure is directly related to Butler's socially induced vulnerability, and constitutes a major socioenvironmental concern in neglected communities.

What is more, such precarious living conditions reduce Kasanga residents' caring capacities to the bare minimum. The high level of unemployment and informal labour that Kasanga

residents, such as Chira's father, face means that their time and resources are rarely enough to care for their own immediate families:

> From Monday to Saturday he left home at six in the morning in the company of the other labourers living on Kasanga Avenue. [...] He and the other labourers waited in a place called Ogbo Manu for construction contractors to come and hire them. Sometimes her father waited there from morning until night for days before he got hired. He usually came home from work after dark and was often so tired he dropped off to sleep before supper was ready (Okoye 2013, Chapter 1).

This lack of time and resources affects both men and women, but it is women who often become widows when their husbands die due to precarious working conditions. Women are then left to raise their children and make a living without 'any adequate education or skills' (Onyemachi 2016, p. 351). Such is the case of Mama Egodi, Chira's neighbour, whose husband died in a construction site when she was pregnant with her third child (Okoye 2013, Chapter 8). Later in the novel, Mama Egodi's two older children are tragically 'killed by a lorry' on their way back from selling bananas on the road (Chapter 18). The devastated woman is blamed for her sons' death by other residents, because hawking is a very dangerous activity for children. Reflecting on this, Chira decides that she cannot blame her neighbour because she knows 'Mama Egodi would not have done that [...] if she was receiving help from someone' (Chapter 20). It is the state's complete desertion that leads Kasanga residents to such desperate measures and less than ideal situations.

Finally, Chira also encounters careless individuals who are products of this careless state. First, there is Chira's Uncle Amos, her father's brother, who refuses both to contribute any money towards his brother's funereal expenses and to fulfil his brother's wishes so that Chira can finish secondary school. She indeed suspects he will 'end up appropriating' her father's land portions in the village (Okoye 2013, Chapter 7). Amos's incalculable greed makes him careless even at the level of kinship, turning his back on his niece and sister-in-law in a time of need, although he is in a position to help.

Second, there is Maks, a stranger who, reminiscent of Chinua Achebe's Chief Nanga with Edna Odo in *A Man of the People* ([1966] 2001), wants to marry Chira and offers in exchange to support both her and her sick mother. However, Maks does not think Chira needs to continue her education once she marries him, since he can make her 'richer than any graduate [she knows] of' (Okoye 2013, Chapter 15). Maks is in fact a perfect example of someone who ignores their own permeability and focuses solely on Chira's socially induced vulnerability, which puts him in a position of power as potential caregiver. Moreover, Maks's carelessness probably operates both at the individual and social level, since there is no clear explanation for his fortune and Chira is led to believe he is a so-called middleman in the machinery of Nigerian corruption (Chapter 25). Maks's carelessness thus contributes to both economic and state carelessness and, ironically, to Kasanga Avenue's abject poverty. Although she does not really trust Maks, Chira is forced to choose between financial security for both her and her mother, or realising her dreams. In the last chapter we find the resolution to three of Chira's predicaments: she finally rejects Maks's

offer, her mother suffers a stroke before Chira can speak to her and later dies, and the girl is offered a job at the university which would allow her to become a student there as well (Okoye 2013, Chapter 27). The fact that it all happens coincidentally at the same time seems to emphasise the impossible situation Chira is put in, for she now feels responsible for her mother's death even though deep down she knows that Maks is not the solution to all her problems.

Care as Resistance in *The Fourth World*

To start with, at the kinship or individual level, the first act of caring resistance, albeit not a double one, is indeed carried out by the author herself, when she decides to write this novel about a place and people most of us would like to pretend does not exist, as evidenced in her dedication: 'To the deprived people who are victims of greed, injustice, corruption, exploitation, discrimination, and bad government' (2013). Okoye cares about –'emotional investment'– Fourth World citizens, and with them –political activism– (Tronto in Care Collective 2020, p. 21). Not only that, but she portrays them as a complex, agentic community, while restoring care and vulnerability to the social, political, and environmental spheres. Her concerns, however, do not seem to be those of mainstream Euro-American publishing. According to Adam Mayer, even with a prolific and successful writing career behind her, Okoye had to resort to Amazon and a local publishing house in Nigeria very close to self-publication, after her manuscript was rejected by 'a number of foreign and Nigerian publishers' (2018, p. 339).

Returning to the novel, it is against this background, or rather, against the forces described in the previous section, that individuals and the community of Kasanga Avenue resist by caring. Both Kasanga residents and outsiders practise 'care beyond the nuclear family' (Care Collective 2020, p. 33). There are examples of caring individuals outside the settlement, who care about Chira and other vulnerable citizens without resorting to neoliberal charity models. Miss K, Chira's Physics teacher, guides and supports the girl and even gifts her books (Okoye 2013, Chapter 8). Mr Uche, a 'nationalist and activist' that Chira meets at the hospital, not only helps her after her father's death but also lends her books (Chapter 12). Dr Ajali gives Chira a job despite her lack of qualifications and later helps her find a way to pay for university. The young Dr Bosa has left a well-paid job to open a small private hospital called The Good Samaritan Clinic, with low charges and the option to pay by instalments, so as to make up in some way for the lack of service at the government hospital (Chapter 27). These people deliberately get involved and fulfil, in the best way they can and by making their own sacrifices, the role of a caring state, both supporting and fostering independence of vulnerable citizens. Their efforts, of course, can only go so far. As demonstrated in the previous section, they would achieve much more if they were themselves supported by the state and the economy.

Within the settlement, the novel explains, Kasanga residents soon realised that no one other than themselves would help them, 'that their survival depended on their solidarity and so they had fused into one indivisible community' (Okoye 2013, Chapter 6). In this sense, Kasanga Avenue is the '*entre-deux*' space par excellence: 'maligned, or simply ignored', like most slum areas, it is usually understood only according to what it lacks. Nonetheless, it is also a site of positive and 'resourceful' action (Prieto 2013, p. 1). Because of their shared vulnerability, the residents

understand and acknowledge their interdependency, and their caring practices are thus doubly resistant. As Chira reflects, '[f]or people in her situation, dependence [is] a lifebelt' (Chapter 3). Far from waiting for external support, they join forces and help each other out, giving and receiving care as needed. There is thus agentic resistance in this solidarity, since residents refuse to just sit and wait for some charitable entity to save them. They know very well that, if they do this, they will all die in the hands of carelessness.

Neighbours, especially women, care for and about each other and each other's children even when they have nothing to spare, either in terms of money or other resources. Mama Bebe, for example, is said to '[work] from dawn until evening and always [have] a pleasant word for residents, young and old, as they [pass] her workplace (Chapter 9). Neighbours practise expanded forms of 'mothering' (Care Collective 2020, 33), such as when Chira takes care of Mama Egodi's children by helping them with their school work or giving them something to eat (Okoye 2013, Chapter 13). They also help each other as best they can when they are going through particularly hard times. They give each other food, clothes, money, and household items (Chapters 10 and 26), and support each other emotionally and materially during a tragic loss, such as after Chira's father's death (Chapter 8). Last but not least, there is Jude Pebble, owner of Jude's Patent Medicines Store, who does his best to compensate for the residents' lack of access to adequate health care by acting as a more accessible 'general practitioner of some sort' (Chapter 17).

According to *The Manifesto*, this 'mutual support' and 'sharing of resources' that happen at the kinship level make Kasanga Avenue a caring community. The settlement lacks the other two 'core features to the creation of caring communities' that are 'public space' and proper 'democratic' processes (Care Collective 2020, p. 46), a logical consequence of their extreme vulnerability. Nonetheless, Jude acts as the community's spokesman and the residents hold informal meetings about their government's neglect (Chapters 6 and 12). These spontaneous meetings in the face of adversity are also a form of resistance mobilised by shared vulnerability. The community's caring practices are thus also doubly resistant: not only do they go against neoliberal and neocolonial carelessness in general, as the author and outsiders' actions do, but also ensure the community's own survival despite the ruthless carelessness that surrounds them. Given the state of neglect by global, economic and national agents, I argue, following Butler (2016, p. 26), that Kasanga residents' survival equals resistance. And this survival would not be possible without caring kinship and a caring community. Not only does vulnerability not preclude agency, but it is in fact what fosters the community's solidarity and mutual care. The multiple losses suffered by the residents, nonetheless, are a painful reminder that this individual and local care only goes so far. Extremely vulnerable individuals will keep dying unless interdependency is recognised and embraced at all levels.

Conclusion

The present paper understands care as the individual and social capacity to provide and receive support to and from human and nonhuman networks, in order to thrive and foster the advancement of all human and nonhuman nature. The paper's main premise is that, in the contemporary world order, to care is to resist. This premise challenges notions of care as

belonging to the individual, private and moral spheres, as well as of vulnerable individuals as helpless and passive, and, consequently, unable to care. These ideas are recognised as products of neoliberal and neocolonial politics and economy. The paper then suggests that fictional literature is especially well-suited to offer the kind of alternative (re)imaginings of care that both Raghuram (2016) and *The Manifesto* (2020) call for, which can also foreground the agency and resistance of vulnerable communities.

     The article thus proposes to explore the idea of care as resistance in Nigerian urban literature, by focusing on Ifeoma Okoye's novel, *The Fourth World*. By extending *The Manifesto*'s claims to a postcolonial country of the Global South, and building on Butler's and Sabsay's ideas on vulnerability and resistance, it then analyses care practices as forms of resistance in the extremely vulnerable community of Kasanga Avenue, Enugu, Nigeria. This analysis is also framed and justified by impulses in the field of geography both to emplace care in a postcolonial context and decentre it from the Global North. The article first focuses on the representation of carelessness in the novel, particularly at the level of world, economy, and state. It then moves on to examine care as resistance, mainly at the levels of kinship and community.

     The study argues that, while care practices carried out by the novel's author and characters outside the settlement are resistant because they challenge neoliberal and neocolonial individualism and charitable morality, care within the settlement is doubly resistant: the residents' survival, ensured by their own solidarity and mutual support in the face of shared vulnerability, can constitute a form of resistance in and of itself. That is, both the acts of caring and their consequences are forms of resistance under such precarious conditions. The present study thus demonstrates Okoye's novel to align with Butler's critique of vulnerability as opposed to resistance, and with Sabsay's examination of humanitarian enterprises, while simultaneously utilising fiction to represent care as a public, social, political and environmental issue.

     However, the paper also suggests that, because of the interdependent and relational nature of care, like Chira recognises, these acts of caring at the levels of kinship and community are not enough. While they may save isolated people like Josephine, another Kasanga resident sent to live in Lagos with her uncle (Okoye 2013, Chapter 8), or Chira herself, they are not the solution to the problem at large. This is something that Bennett also points out when he claims that 'only the most extraordinarily fortunate individuals can triumph over the overwhelming social barriers' encountered by inner-city residents (1999, p. 171). As Okoye's novel demonstrates with its registration of carelessness and its consequences, for Chira to be completely happy and successful, without having to feel guilty for her parents' deaths, permeability and interdependency must be recognised and valued by everyone, at all levels. This is something that the novel does not represent, since it ends with Chira's mother's death.

     Although there are certain aspects touched on by this paper that would benefit from further analysis, such as the concept of resilience, or a deeper exploration of gendered divisions of care among Kasanga residents, the present analysis has introduced a different interpretational framework for Okoye's novel that takes care as a central issue. This article has tried to demonstrate the centrality of questions of care when approaching literature from the Global

South, as well as what these kinds of texts can contribute to discussion on care, interdependency, and agency. As argued by *The Manifesto* and illustrated by *The Fourth World*, caring individuals and communities need to be supported by caring states and economies, and by a caring world. Only then will everyone access the time and resources, social and physical infrastructure, needed to give and receive care, in its multiple forms and expressions. Only then will human and nonhuman nature thrive in its uniqueness.

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Ruth Gilmour
Loose Gatherings, pt. 11 (2022)
75x26 cm
(silk)

The medicalization of my body informs my artistic practice, I imagine the disassembly of my body in a manner that echoes Western medical traditions by examining my appendages and organs independently and investigating gestures performed during medical examinations. Silk holds remarkable qualities, it is delicate and resilient at the same time. Instead of applying textile to my body for optimisation, I use digital processes to synchronise with the biocompatible fibre. I render images of my body in its natural colour and form and transfer them onto silk. Through the soft and safe synthesis of image, material and lived experience, silk becomes a perceptible extension of myself and enables me to experiment with ideas of de/construction; I fray, fold, split and rip to create responsive displays of material that appear simultaneously bodily and decorative, animate and sentient.

Transcending the 'Dys-Care' of Doctoral Students: Assessing How Cultural Similarities Between the United States' Black Gangster Class and Academia's Elite Adversely Influence Student Agency and Relevance in Knowledge Production

Barbara Becnel (University of Edinburgh)

Abstract

This paper critically examines some cultural similarities that I contend exist between two unlikely social classes and contribute to what I am calling the 'dys-care' of doctoral students. One such social class comprises black gang leaders in the United States (US) known as O.G.s — Original Gangsters, the C.E.O. or Chief-Executive-Officer equivalent in urban communities. The other social class is a mostly white scholarly elite primarily situated in academic institutions within the Global North. I define the dys-care of PhD students as the impact of a street-gangster-like culture imposed by the academy on doctoral students that adversely impacts their agency and relevance in the production of knowledge. Further, this paper argues there is a dialectical relationship between black gangster culture and Eurocentric academic culture based on a shared social structure of dominance initially forged when colonial America was a British colony. This paper also explores transformative strategies for mitigating power relations between doctoral students and the academy. Antonio Gramsci's theory of the formation of organic intellectuals across class boundaries serves as a theoretical framework for this paper. Additionally, I draw on insights and theorizing derived from thirty years of ethnographic research with street gang leaders (Crips and Bloods) in California and three years spent as a PhD student at the University of Edinburgh. Plus, my time spent at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology as a doctoral student, and interviews with other graduate students who studied at Harvard University, University of California, Berkeley, Tufts University and other institutions of higher education are relied upon for this critique. The following questions serve as a frame for this analysis: In what ways are black gang leaders the organic intellectuals of the street? Conversely, in what ways are scholar elites the organic O.G.s of the academy? What strategies can students use for self-care, enabling them to transcend dys-care, to reimagine themselves and co-construct a horizontal rather than hierarchical — or vertical — relationship with the academy in seeking agency and relevance in their process of knowledge production?

Keywords: student self-advocacy, knowledge production, academic customs, black gang culture, organic intellectuals.

Introduction: Cultural Dominance, White Scholarship, and the Black Gangster Class

Having spent thirty years researching black youth gangs in California and three years as a doctoral student writing a thesis about what I had learned from that ethnographic experience with the Crips and Bloods, I was also exposed to an unexpected insight: that there are cultural similarities between two unlikely social groups. One such group is comprised of black-street-gang leaders in the United States (US) known as O.G.s — Original Gangsters, the C.E.O. or Chief-Executive-Officer equivalent in urban communities — and the other group is comprised of academic elites, who are mostly white and located within the Global North. I use the word 'elite' here to express the importance of the role the academician plays in white-dominated societies. As theorized by Antonio Gramsci (1999), academic elites hold sway over an 'ideological sector', which he claims is the education sector, that teaches the standards which serve the ruling class. Yet, the special occupational role of academia, as argued by Gramsci, does not allow them to escape what I am arguing here: that the mostly white scholarly elite has cultural similarities to the black gangster class, which contribute to what I am calling the 'dys-care' of doctoral students.

The 'dys' in the label dys-care of doctoral students relates to its Greek meaning as something 'bad', 'ill', 'impaired function', such as how 'dys' is used in the word dysfunctional (Merriam-Webster 2022; Leder 1990, p. 84). In this instance, dys-care or bad care is prompted by a practice of gangster-type hegemony situated in the university's long-held traditions involving knowledge production. These are traditions assumed by PhD students to be helpful but that prove harmful by diminishing their confidence and limiting opportunities for such students to freely engage in the creation of new ideas. These circumstances are discussed at length later in this paper. But it is in that violation of a student's higher expectation for the traditions of the academy that philosopher and medical doctor Drew Leder's phenomenological analysis of 'dys-appearance' informs this dys-care critique (ibid). With regards to what Leder calls the 'principal of dys-appearance' (p. 85) in *The Absent Body* (1990), the body and its normal functions are not routinely seen or noticed until some kind of 'alien presencing' (p. 82) interferes with the 'ordinary mastery' of the body (p. 87). As described by political scientist George Hajjar in his collection of protest essays on student grievances from the 1960s, *The University a Place of Slavery* (2015), that alien presencing is represented by the academy's insistence on a student's reproduction of 'the thoughts, feelings, imagining and concerns' of those who ostensibly know more, that is, academia's elite (p. 163). Leder would describe alien presencing by the academy as 'the hegemony of an occupying force' (p. 82).

Ironically, this paper argues that a dialectical relationship exists between a black gangster hegemonic street culture and a hegemonic Eurocentric academic culture, given an historical entanglement. When colonial America was a British colony, slaves who revolted against the cruelty of enslavement and of the damning identities imposed upon them by a white-master society — criminal, immoral, inhuman — were viewed as outlaws by those white authorities, while labeled rebels by black people and abolitionists of any color (Douglass 1852; Aptheker 1943; Barnes 2017). Being subject to a dominant social structure taught that nation's black populace the ways in which such a structure subjected others to domination. These days, one dialectical

outgrowth of what became a shared social structure of dominance is the parallel mini empires that O.G.s — today's black rebel-outlaw leaders — have constructed as enclaves within urban communities nationwide where *they*, the gangsters themselves, get to rule. My argument is that the street-gangster impulse to rule some aspect of their lives both mirrors their experience under a white-dominant society that still does rule them, given a mass incarceration policy that targets black men in the United States, but at the same time allows them to rebel within the confines of *their* territorial enclaves. The significance of this issue regarding the dys-care of doctoral students is discussed later in this paper. But for now, the irony is that the similarities across the two cultures — black street gangsters and the scholarly elite — are derivative but also originate from a Eurocentric-American colonial past that has been modeled in modern times by the black gangster class.

Though this work is about recognizing and then transcending the prescribed role of doctoral students in the production of knowledge, it begins with what I have learned about the black gangster class in the US. Since 1992, I have been privileged by Los Angeles' O.G.s, reigning over the Crips and Bloods, to be permitted to engage in an immersive ethnographic research project. For me, a middle-class African American, the goal was to understand street-gang culture and what motivated gang members to initiate sometimes very violent experiences. So, the phrase 'prescribed role of doctoral students in the production of knowledge', as mentioned above, refers to what is argued here as the doctoral-student role enforced by academia's elite in service to a long tradition of how knowledge is deemed to be properly created. That function of enforcement and the duty to comply with tradition as commonly practiced in academic institutions are, as contended in this paper, strongly related to a culture of dominance as commonly practiced by black gang leaders on the streets of urban communities in the US. This is where these gangsters have uncooperatively co-constructed their own measure of agency and identity where they get to be the rulers of urban mini empires. They have done so to protect themselves from a more dominant Eurocentric US society that has imposed for centuries derogatory identities upon black rebel-outlaws, or, in today's jargon, black male street gangsters.

What I argue here about the meaning of an uncooperative co-construction of agency and identity is that black gang leaders have reimagined their identity to defiantly define themselves within the boundaries set by a dominant white class that has criminalized them, starting from the days when black males led insurrections against their enslavement. Though a white ruling class did not willfully participate in the reconfigured black identity formation of a black rebel-outlaw and now the black gangster class, the identity boundaries that ruling class had long established remain part of the co-construction of the black gangster class's reimagined identity. Consequently, the white ruling class has played an unwitting and thus uncooperative role in the O.G.s' reimagination of themselves. Sociologists Mustafa Emirbayer and Ann Mische have conceptualized a 'projective' theory of agency that aligns with my idea of uncooperative co-construction of agency and identity for black street gangsters (1998, p. 971). With projective agency, a person's imagination is engaged to creatively reconfigure and thus thwart the harmful impact of an identity that a person anticipates will be projected onto her or him by a more powerful entity (ibid). In the case of the black gangster class, the reimagination of identity is not

about what is anticipated but about what is currently a lived experience. This practice of the black street gangster to uncooperatively reimagine himself relates to the knowledge-production process experienced by doctoral students, who, I argue later in this paper, will need to rely on their agency to reimagine the terms of their engagement with their PhD supervisors and with a hegemonic academy itself.

Thus, black-gangster-class reimagination has led to the shared and dialectical social structure of dominance between the black gangster class and academia's elite that is explored in this paper.

In his classic book, *Silencing the Past* (1995), Michel-Rolph Trouillot brilliantly and tragically provides a critique of the disappearing of history, which could also be viewed, as framed by this paper, as the dys-appearance and the dys-care of history, and that impact on doctoral students in their quest to construct new knowledge on a reliable foundation. To illustrate, Trouillot discusses how the power imposed by academia's ruling class selects the history acknowledged and the historical experience ignored. He explains that this is what happens during the actual production of history:

> This book […] deals with the many ways in which the production of historical narratives involves the uneven contribution of competing groups and individuals who have unequal access to the means for such production. The forces I will expose are less visible than gunfire, class property, or political crusades. I want to argue that they are no less powerful (1995, p. xxiii).

At the University of Edinburgh, I soon learned that Trouillot's analysis did not go far enough. His critique was largely restricted to the mere disappearing of history, though admittedly that is no small thing. However, as a newly minted PhD student, one of my early lessons in the craft of knowledge production was to discover an elaborate hierarchical structure of power relations and professional recognition in the academy to reckon with in the very acknowledgment of knowledge — any type of knowledge, not just history. This hegemonic culture of scholarship served as an arbiter for what was even permitted to be recognized and thus referenced by a PhD student as new knowledge. In other words, it was not just that what was understood to be knowledge could have significant gaps in the narrative or discourse of what constituted that knowledge. There was also the instruction a PhD student faced that a wide swath of already published knowledge was dismissed and thus disappeared by academia's elite with admonishments that such knowledge was not advised for use as a thesis reference.

An example of this practice occurred during what is called the Progression Board at the University of Edinburgh. The Progression Board is when a new doctoral student must meet face-to-face with an examiner within the first year of enrollment and defend what she or he proposes to accomplish with the PhD work. A twenty-page proposal must be submitted to the examiner before the verbal defense. Students who do not survive this encounter are terminated from the doctoral program. I was asked a question about one of the references in my proposal: a scholar

from a university in a southern state in the US, not an Ivy League college. When I answered the question substantively and without fault, my examiner moved on to critique the scholar himself. Ultimately, the put-down was that this examiner had never heard of this scholar, so I should seek other sources of knowledge. It was a dys-appearance of sorts of that cited scholar's knowledge.

This was the beginning of my journey to understand and eventually develop the strategies for resisting, when necessary, how academia determines the standards for knowledge creation — as well as what will not be seen, literally, as having achieved the appropriate academic standard. In other words, for those who have the power to do so, knowledge can be readily dys-appeared, at least as instructed for the doctoral student's use. Another example of the dys-appearance of knowledge provides a case of literal dys-appearance. When I was in a different doctoral program in economics many years ago at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, my statistics professor would write on a blackboard as rapidly as possible his formulas and explanations for solving quantitative problems, and then erase them before it was humanly possible to write them down. This was before the advent of cell phones, which would have at least allowed for a picture to be taken of the chalk-and-blackboard knowledge presented. But it was a befuddling experience: did he or did he not want us to know and learn what he already knew? This, therefore, was another method of a scholar's deliberate dys-appearance of knowledge.

This paper argues knowledge production is both a process *and* an aspect of a revered culture of the academy driven by gangster-like characteristics of dominance, which I recognized given my exposure to the culture of black gangsterism. I observed that black-gangster dominance was in part derived from Eurocentric dominance that had been detrimentally imposed upon them. In essence, what I witnessed was to a large extent black gangsters mimicking a white ruling class structure that had unwittingly trained them in social dominance. Those characteristics of social dominance include hegemony, territoriality, and a hierarchical structure that places a high value on reputation-enhancing achievements, however those achievements may be defined. Differences in what constitutes an achievement in academia versus the streets of urban communities in the US are discussed later in this paper.

In addition to the Introduction, this paper has two sections and a Conclusion. Part One, 'Street Gangsters as Organic Intellectuals, Academia's Elite as Organic O.G.s', applies Antonio Gramsci's work on the formation of organic intellectuals across class boundaries to this paper's theorizing. Using Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical tools of habitus (custom, tradition) (2008) and cultural capital (value, prestige) (1986), this section also establishes several key similarities between a hegemonic culture of scholarship in the academy and a hegemonic culture of black gang leadership. Part Two, 'Knowledge Production, Academic Hegemons, and the Subaltern Student', exposes and examines doctoral student dys-care via the impact on students' agency and relevance of being situated by scholarly tradition onto such a low institutional rung of the academy's hierarchical structure. This section also explores how a scholar-imposed hegemony on students could affect their quality of outputs — that is, the standard of student knowledge production itself. The Conclusion proposes some strategies for transcending doctoral student dys-care by strengthening the agency of students. It is argued here that such agency-strengthening could

help students to re-position themselves in the academy's hierarchy of knowledge production and support an attempt on their part to deconstruct patterns of hegemony long embedded in academic institutions. Finally, this section discusses the possibility of students co-constructing with the academy alternative paradigms of power — such as a horizontal relational structure — to ameliorate O.G.-type manifestations of dominance by scholar elites.

Part One: Street Gangsters as Organic Intellectuals, Academia's Elite as Organic O.G.s

Is comparing the culture of the black gangster class to that of an elite class of intellectuals, while claiming some distinct similarities, an odd conjunction of cultures?

Perhaps. Still, I contend the comparison is valid and that the hegemonic behavior displayed by both classes of leadership — the O.G. and the scholar elite — is quite similar in certain instances. So, this is where I begin my critique, because of that query's relevance to some of the key arguments made in this paper. O.G.s are thought-innovators within their grassroots communities. The academy's leading scholars are also thought-innovators. This work seeks to understand the similarities in the cultures of two disparate groups (though that is a value judgment subject to a separate discussion) and how those similarities impact doctoral students in their quest to create new knowledge. Antonio Gramsci's concept of the organic intellectual informs the unpacking of these issues.

'Are intellectuals an autonomous and independent social group, or does every social group have its own particular specialized category of intellectuals?' Gramsci opens his essay 'The Formulation of the Intellectuals' (1999, p. 134) with this question. He answers it with an interesting critique that claims a category of organic intellectuals versus traditional intellectuals and distinguishes between the two categories with a complex analysis. But the essential difference for the purpose of this paper is that Gramsci identifies intellectuals as being divided into two primary categories. One category of traditional intellectuals is defined by its 'social function' or profession, such as scholar, scientist, or theorist (p. 140). Also, according to Gramsci, intellectuals are connected to a type of historical tradition that has always reflected some measure of power, privilege, and prestige (ibid). An interesting depiction of this latter part of Gramsci's description of traditional intellectuals is that they are often connected to history and tradition through an 'intellectual current' (Olsaretti 2014, p. 366) of other scholarly work that has sustained years, decades, or centuries of scrutiny. This could, for instance, be argued to reflect Pierre Bourdieu's habitus theory of the power and role of custom in the lives of human beings (2008).

Gramsci's other category of intellectual is divorced from occupation, defined instead as those who provide innovative thought leadership in the environment or class from which they, as 'organic' intellectuals, have arisen (ibid). Hence, organic intellectuals emerge from their communities independent of a professional distinction, though in the case of black gang leaders their organic intellectual status is, in fact, a consequence of their special pariah occupation — that of O.G.s who often engage in violence. But there is historical context for the black gangster lifestyle. Again, there is some patterning of criminal brutality that has long been exercised against the black male in colonial America from the era of plantocracy to slave patrols and

lynching to the contemporary police killing of black suspects before they are even arrested and convicted of any crime, as was the case with George Floyd on 25 May 2020.

I have also learned from my ethnographic research that members of the black gangster class are exceptional grassroots innovators. O.G.s represent one category of key storytellers in their communities. But not in the way that is defined by the discipline of narrative criminology, for example. That discipline is mostly about offenders. Thus, it tends to frame gangsters' storytelling as being individually self-serving, a form of harm reduction to escape or minimize the consequences of their criminal behavior (Fleetwood et al., 2019). The black gangster storytelling to which I am referring takes place *before* they become offenders. It is storytelling involved in the reimagining of reality — particularly historical and race-based policies and practices with which they are forced to cope — to benefit the entire class of gangsters, which of course includes them as individuals. But it does not solely benefit them personally. It is in preparation for becoming offenders and not at all in defense of their potential crime. I call what they do inventive agency. With inventive agency, O.G.s are always intellectually innovating, reimagining their lives and environments to somehow embed a factor of upliftment into their perpetual struggle to survive in the US.

Drew Leder's work supports the inventive-agency conceptualization when he argues in favor of the human capacity to be relied upon to 'construct a life-world', a new life-world, that betters the circumstance, at least phenomenologically, that is, from the perspective of that human, particularly when compelled to survive in very constrained spaces, such as in a prison cell (2004, p. 52). An illustration is the black gangsters' response to a US policy of mass incarceration that targets them and other men of color. In this example, the black gangster class has turned their likelihood of being imprisoned into a cultural benefit or, as depicted by Bourdieu, into cultural capital (1986). Bourdieu's cultural capital concept is manifested as a way of exercising inventive agency for black gangsters to elevate themselves. Prisoner status is reimagined to represent reputational glory. To illustrate, prisons are gladiator schools in the black gangster reinvention of such facilities. They are places to go to learn — through violence and daily life-or-death jeopardy — how to become a man. Ending up on death row bestows an even higher status as an O.G. If a typical prison sentence can lead to a gangster proving he is a man, then being sent to death row for committing murder in a most dramatic fashion provides a gangster the opportunity to transform into a superman, a celebrity, at least reputationally in the urban territory he has ruled. Cultural theorist Stuart Hall explains this intellectually inventive thinking on the part of the black gangster class in a most succinct and gifted way: 'The people have always had to make something out of the things the system was trying to make of them' (Hall as cited by Grossberg 1986, p. 163).

Gramsci's analysis about the organic intellectual versus traditional intellectual provides yet another level of critique when hegemony — or what he titled 'social hegemony' (1999, p. 145) — is introduced into the discussion. Social hegemony is when institutions, such as schools, churches, and the media, and an 'elite leadership' (Bates 1975, p. 352) — traditional intellectuals relying on their prestige in society — indirectly promote to the masses the values, norms, and culture that undergird ideologies of dominance. In other words, ideas can serve as powerful tools to achieve domination over the masses, and, I would add, the doctoral student. The aim is to encourage the

masses' (and doctoral student's) consent to be dominated by those same values, norms, and cultures. However, the ideologies of dominance, presented as a benefit to all citizens, do not always serve all people equally — or, in some instances, at all. Meanwhile, Gramsci named traditional intellectuals the 'deputies' (p. 145) of the dominant culture, performing 'subaltern functions of social hegemony' (ibid). Another type of hegemony, as described by Gramsci, involves direct domination of the masses by government command, a coercive power, forcing obedience on those who refuse to consent to the ruling ideology's norms, values, rules, and practices (ibid).

O.G.s are hegemons. Traditional intellectuals are also hegemons. But they are hegemons in different ways, though their respective cultures from which their hegemony organically originates display certain elements of similarity. This paper, then, contests Gramsci's theory of social hegemony in one regard: that traditional intellectuals represent two hegemonic roles. They are, in fact, the deputies for the ruling class charged with imposing a certain cultural dominance on the masses. In that depiction, I agree with Gramsci. However, my contention is that traditional intellectuals have also moved beyond their role as deputies for the ruling class and have additionally conjured an organic role of leadership which serves them, as a sub-ruling class ever concerned with maintaining their own reputational currency and power. That sub-ruling-class role includes imposing power over a socially constructed group of sub-followers — that is, students, including doctoral students.

The concept of territoriality for gangsters, as compared to traditional intellectuals, offers an interesting examination of duality. At its core, territoriality furnishes the same basic value for O.G.s as it does for traditional intellectuals: there is a designated space over which the two categories of leaders are able to dominate other people also situated in that same space. However, the black gangster class and traditional intellectuals are impacted by different historical circumstances that have generated a different way of constructing territorial space.

To understand how territoriality plays out differently among the two types of intellectuals — organic and traditional — I begin with some foundational theorizing on my part to explain the difference in the respective class formations of these two groups. In the case of the black gangster class, their categorization has been informed historically by unwanted and unfavorable racial bias, which mainstream society has projected onto this class of black men. In essence, street gangsters were put in a territorial silo because of historical discrimination and isolation caused by racism. On the other hand, the elite scholar class has also been informed by bias — that is, favorable bias — given the profession's association with the prestige of previous scholars and intellectual movements that have generally received societal approval and admiration. Thus, the black gangster class has been left with far fewer opportunities to lead and dominate anyone. That organic reality has led to the territorialization of urban communities by the black gangster class.

Black street gangs are organized around small territories — sometimes only two or three blocks in size. Each territory has a leader, an O.G. who claims the agency to oversee the activities, criminal and otherwise, of gang members who live there or who desire to belong to that gang. According to a 2014 report from the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), US's premier law

enforcement agency, there are approximately thirty-three thousand street gangs in the United States (FBI 2014).[1] Each of those street gangs provides an opportunity for a gangster to become an O.G. Territories are required for gangsters to become O.G.s, so territories continue to be created. My argument is that the traditional intellectual mimics the territorial reasoning of the black gangster class with a practice of creating what I am calling silo specialties in their academic disciplines. I will discuss the topic in more detail in the next section of this paper. For now, my point is that academia's elite reduces the territory of knowledge into the smallest unit or silo for claiming an understanding of a topic. Even when interdisciplinarity is permitted, there is an expectation that the number of disciplines should be limited. As it was explained to me by a scholar who was attempting to be a mentor: 'A PhD is about knowing a whole lot about a small area of expertise. Limit your research to no more than three disciplines. Pick three'.

This allows traditional intellectuals plenty of opportunities to become the O.G.s of, to some extent, self-engineered areas of expertise. Scholar elites, therefore, get to set the parameters of their territory, their silos of knowledge production. Black gang leaders as organic intellectuals have had to settle for small territories or enclaves within the larger neighborhood. But even in those territorial sites of gangster dominance, a white ruling class has determined the broader discriminatory contours that tend to isolate urban black communities (Rothstein 2018).

Part Two: Knowledge Production. Academic Hegemons, and the Subaltern Student

Doctoral students consent to enter a hegemonic culture of scholarship when they start a PhD program — and they are not the hegemons. In Jerry Farber's 1968 essay about the lowly status of college students he paints a stark picture: 'A student . . . is expected to know his place' (p. 2). Hajjar argues that this place at the bottom of academia's hierarchy occurs through an internalization process where the student acquiesces to what is seen as the 'dominant order', accepting that order as irrefutable reality (2015, p. 164). Hajjar describes such submission as a form of 'unilaterality' (ibid). Hajjar relies on Donald McCulloch to explain the process of unilaterality '[which comes] into being whenever two persons or groups come into sustained contact and potential conflict, perceive differences between themselves, [and] define these differences as inequalities', acceptable inequalities (ibid).

Having waited several decades to return to postgraduate school, first to earn a Master of Science Degree at the University of Edinburgh, and now to attain a PhD, I had long forgotten the vulnerable positioning of students and thus the likelihood of their dys-care. What soon became key questions were: How would I maintain my agency in this environment? Could I achieve alignment with what I would come to understand as the rules of relevance in knowledge production? My critique of those two questions starts with the last one. It does so because student agency is deeply entangled in the challenges associated with the confounding rules of

[1] On a national level, curiously, there is not more recent gang data issued by the FBI. In fact, the FBI suggests that queries of gang estimates should be forwarded to individual state and city jurisdictions.

relevance, as dictated by scholar elites in their representation of the academy's traditions of scholarship.

What is knowledge? This could be viewed as a philosophical question beyond the scope of this paper. But in a practical sense, I can attempt to answer that query through an examination of what I was taught about how to engage a well-worn process of knowledge creation. This traditional process is very much linked to the academy's rules of relevance, that is, what knowledge is recognized and whose knowledge ultimately counts.

Creating new knowledge, for instance, meant you had to build on research that already existed. That practically translated into the following: if your thesis idea did not have a corresponding body of research that already examined some aspect or aspects of your original idea, then your thesis subject was not considered relevant. In that regard, knowledge, at least new knowledge, was defined by how related it was to what was already a part of the discipline. This poses a problem for doctoral students who are genuinely exploring original ideas that a discipline's literature has yet to produce or realize. Another challenge in this approach is that much research associated with my topic of the black gangster class, for example, is so Eurocentric and racially biased as to be nearly useless in the support of my theorizing. So, how is a student to gain knowledge-production relevancy from a Eurocentric academy faced with a dual historical circumstance: a discipline's literature deficits and the inclination of its gatekeepers (the intellectual hegemons) to protect a discipline's theoretical past?

One of the most long-term damaging examples of such scholarly malfeasance occurred in the interpretation of the 1890 US Census, as deconstructed brilliantly by Harvard University historian Khalil Gibran Muhammad. In his book, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (2019), Muhammad explains how white scholars of that time claimed no bias in their methods, but, in fact, registered great bias in the way crime data from the census was interpreted. Criminality committed by white immigrants, who often represented crime syndicates, was not publicly promoted, while black crime statistics were reported throughout the nation. This began an official criminalization of black people. W.E.B. Du Bois, the first black person awarded a PhD from Harvard, lobbied his white colleagues to reconsider their bias and to assess the damage to the nation's black citizenry that was likely to follow. Du Bois was only able to convince one white scholar to join his protest. One academician was not enough.

So, what is knowledge? Here I argue that new knowledge generally means incremental knowledge to the scholar class. What is expected by the tradition of knowledge production is for the doctoral student's research to contribute by finding some small incremental addition to the knowledge base of a discipline. I refer to this approach as an 'incrementalizing' of knowledge. In other words, the student with a big idea confronts a great deal of opposition from intellectual hegemons. Their argument primarily is how can you, a doctoral student, know so much more than the scholars who have dominated this discipline for many years? Big ideas, then, are not relevant ideas in this hegemonic culture of scholarship. Yet, the scholars who have become famous over generations are the scholars who, ironically, put forth complex, groundbreaking theoretical schema, such as Antonio Gramsci, Pierre Bourdieu, Karl Marx, Paulo Freire, and

others. They have proven that big ideas do matter.

Another issue regarding relevance in knowledge production involves the who, where, and when of scholarship. Concerning the *who*, it was made clear to me that the work of well-respected scholars, known by the academy's elite, was what would gain approval as my list of references were perused. This meant that my choices of theoretical support were limited to a relatively small coterie of scholars in any discipline. Further, *where* they were published also determined their relevance. Oxford University Press. Harvard University Press. Cambridge University Press. These and other highly rated publishers were considered worthy and thus met one of the rules of relevance: knowledge production needed to be affiliated with high-quality book publishers and professional journals. Finally, *when* a piece of research was published also mattered. The more recent the better, it was explained to me, because the discipline and its knowledge will likely change with time. I wondered, though, about the core value of most knowledge if in three-or-four-years academia's elite considered such knowledge of so little value it was not recommended for referencing in a PhD. How relevant, then, can any knowledge aspire to be if it could be devalued so quickly? Except, of course, the big knowledge-production ideas that did not follow the rules of relevance and became classic theories. These days, with those of us who have yet to achieve classic status, there is little room for compromise with the hegemons of the intellectual class.

Defining knowledge via the rules of relevance makes it hard to create original knowledge that has significant meaning to more than just a few members of a class of intellectual elites. In summary, those rules include a student being directed by the academy's hegemons to build on existing knowledge that may not adequately apply to a student's research project; to incorporate the concept of 'incrementalizing' knowledge, which reduces the impact of the idea the student seeks to develop; to restrict supporting research to a small number of approved scholar elites, who are recently published in the most respected book publishers or journals. But these are the rules of relevance imposed on doctoral students functioning as a subaltern class, making the culture of academic hegemons very similar to the black gangster class. When O.G.s impose the rules of street relevance — otherwise known as the code of the streets — on low-level gang members, O.G.s are known as shot-callers. A title of shot-caller, then, is simply another way to describe gangster leadership. Shot-callers are the men ruling the community, demanding that others in the urban enclave comply with their rules, with the codes of the street. Those who do not comply typically pay a high price for that noncompliance: death or expulsion from the gang and community. While some community members do not enjoy the role of subservience because of living in street-gang territory, the power of decades of gang tradition anchors such tradition in these communities and thus is largely accepted or at least goes unchallenged from the fear of retribution. Here I argue the cultural similarities between the gangster class and academic hegemons make it fair game to provide the academic elite with another moniker: the shot-callers, the O.G.s of subaltern students. Early on, then, I recognized the class of scholar elites as the organic O.G.s of the academy.

Conclusion

Educational oppression is trickier to fight than racial oppression. If you're a black rebel, they can't exile you; they either have to intimidate you or kill you. But in. . . college, they can just bounce you out of the fold. And they do (Farber 1968, p. 7).

Farber's statement provides a lot to unpack. For this essay, however, I will simply disagree with his assessment of which situation is worse: educational oppression or racial oppression. They are not even the dichotomy Farber represents the two scenarios to be. There can be educational and racial oppression in the same university space. Also, his article was written before the Mass Incarceration Era in the United States began and to this day continues, where black men and other men of color are in fact exiled from society by being imprisoned for long periods at disproportional rates compared to their white male counterparts (Alexander 2012). Further, the way Farber, a college lecturer, has written the passage in question makes it sound as if being kicked out of a university was more troubling than the other punitive associations with race-based oppression: intimidation or murder. My emphasis here, though, is to argue that there are transformative strategies for strengthening the agency of doctoral students, given the willingness of doctoral students to reimagine themselves. Transcending hegemonic oppression, that is, doctoral student dys-care, could also be accomplished by students striving to co-construct a horizontal rather than hierarchical — or vertical — relationship with the academy. By so doing, doctoral students would have a chance to establish their understanding of relevance in the process of knowledge production.

A core strategy for strengthening my resolve to demonstrate agency in the knowledge-production process was to stay strongly connected to my research ideas and to the knowledge derived from my ethnographic practice with the black gangster class from whom I was permitted to learn so much. This positioning allowed me to transcend doctoral student dys-care that could have otherwise led to adverse impacts on my agency as well as my belief in the relevance of my research. My work, therefore, has been my intuitive compass, supporting my judgment and my agency. While I was open to good input and feedback from the scholar elites, I refused to allow my work or my theorizing to be marginalized or incrementalized. I defended it. I politely pushed back when I was being pressed to make it something that was other than my vision. I learned not to allow myself to be confused by too much input that, ironically, was not relevant. I was willing to challenge the racial bias found in certain disciplines, such as how criminology has evolved in the United States. I was even permitted to give a lecture in the School of Law at the University of Edinburgh on what I called the anti-black bias of the criminology discipline as developed in the United States. I would not back down from what I knew I had learned from the gangsters. I empowered myself. I was told doctoral students needed to learn how to manage their PhD Supervisors. I took that instruction to heart and treated them respectfully, but I behaved as if we were all in a horizontal organizational structure, as opposed to a hierarchical regime.

Even this paper is an attempt at a novel form of scholarship that includes critiques and citations common to traditional knowledge production, accompanied by insights and theorizing

comprised of my nearly three decades of ethnographic research with the black gangster class. I also include some storytelling of my own in this paper, utilizing one of the tenets of Critical Race Theory.

In short, I have become a student hegemon of sorts. But a new breed of hegemon. I have labored to achieve dominance over self. Dominance to generate a revivification of my agency. Dominance to at times contest as well as adapt the traditional rules of relevance. Dominance to stay true to my work, what I have learned from the black gangster class, and to push back on theory biased against the subjects of my research.

Many times, during my PhD work I have been informed that earning a PhD is being accepted into a special club, that the thesis itself is unimportant. I should expect it to be forgotten as soon as it is submitted and approved. In some ways, the hegemonic rules of relevance that I have critiqued in this paper could doom a PhD to obscurity. But student hegemon that I now am, I have not given up on producing something which the black gangster class *and* the traditional intellectual class can view as knowledge worth reading, as knowledge from which these two groups of O.G.s can learn something new.

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Nancy Haslam-Chance
Gentle, Gentle (2022)

This painting was based upon drawings from an ongoing series I have called 'Caring Drawings'. They focus on my part time job as a care worker, working with adults with learning difficulties. They are about the relationships I have formed with my clients. I am interested in the practicalities of these relationships, my clients require support and it is my job to support them. Yet within these practicalities there are moments of intimacy, tenderness and companionship. I try to capture these careful and caring moments in my drawings, which I do from memory, when I get home from work in the evenings or when I am back in my studio.

The figures in these drawings are not identifiable, they might have an essence of someone but they do not realistically look like the real people they are based on. They are my memories, from my perspective and there are things I have changed. Care work and these drawings are political. I hope they do not romanticise anything about people's situations, care work or the job of being a carer. It can be hard, lonely and is often very low paid. But it is such important work and often joyful too!

'Thus Syr Gwother coverys is care': The Role and Significance of Canine Care in the *Tale of Sir Gowther*

Balázs Szendrei (University of Edinburgh)

Abstract

In the cryptic Tale of Sir Gowther, the narrative follows a child born out of demonic rape and rejected by his mother out of fear. Refusing to breastfeed him, the child grows up in isolation. After his violent youth, the young knight undertakes a penance, during which he is only allowed to eat the food he receives from the mouths of dogs while remaining silent. In the story, Gowther's education into a proper person, inhabiting the bounds of humanity is only one facet of the tale. His nutrition (denied by the mother, mediated by the dogs) and psychosis, preventing him from his integration into society, are strongly interconnected; his only carers are the dogs, reserving judgement and providing him with sustenance and behavioural imprint alike when humanity rejects him. The dogs not only are able to reveal his inner capacity for goodness, but also care for him in his state of penitent muteness.

The penance and salvation of Gowther draw attention to many motifs, which persist into our day of pandemic and refugee crisis. During the pandemic, the importance of animal companionship, especially the role of dogs as carers, has been emphasised. Dogs have been fulfilling the role of carer in many cases, providing unwavering dedication and invaluable help over the ages. Similarly, networks of care during the period of the Late Middle Ages have been observed, where human and animal actors interact during the time of crisis brought upon them by plague, war, and famine. Their interactions allow one to negotiate the boundaries and challenges lying in the liminal spaces outside the strict bounds of normalcy. The current conflicts bring further avenues of interpretation into question regarding the help provided by animals as people affected by war cling to their pets and stuffed animals for comfort.

Keywords: care, hounds, animal, disability, eating.

'To care for oneself is to know oneself' – sounds Michel Foucault's thesis in a compressed form, formulated in his lectures found in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* (2005) and in his last book, titled *The Care of the Self* (1990). The approach proposed by the seminal French philosopher draws from both modern and classic philosophy. It is based on the ideas of Socrates and classic Hellenistic rhetoric, echoing both within the period of the late Middle Ages and our times as well. One can trace this great tradition in the period's fascination with Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* (c. 524), where the healing power of knowing oneself is prominently depicted. Foucault claims that the two strongly interconnected activities allow one to reflect internally, and in turn allow one's attitudes toward the external world to be properly modulated.

What happens, however, when the subject is capable of neither? How can one reflect internally and modulate externally when both practises are made impossible for some reason? The protagonist of the *Tale of Sir Gowther*, a late fifteenth century knightly romance, is a case in point. In the tale, the protagonist of the romance is born to the hitherto childless ducal couple of Estryke, or Austria. He has been sired by a demon due to the desperate prayer of the duchess and turns out to be a demonic child of monstrous appetites. He suckles wet-nurses to death and bites his mother's nipple. In his young adulthood he continues the rampage of violence, culminating in him raping nuns and burning down their nunnery. After he learns about his demonic parentage, he travels in shame to Rome, where he receives a puzzling penance from the Pope: he is not to speak and is only to eat what he can snatch from the mouths of dogs. The errant youth eventually finds his way to the Emperor's court, where he lives and eats amongst the dogs. He takes to the battlefield disguised in his suit of armour provided to him by God. He fends off the Saracens besieging the castle, decapitating the Sultan demanding the hand of the emperor's mute daughter. As a result, Gowther protects the castle and the maiden, earning his final salvation. During his journey from his demonic origins towards redemption he is to encounter many, differently coloured instances of knowledge gained through the activity of care. Knowledge of his self, and the knowledge of others will come to him, while he in turn will be known through being cared for.

As Samantha Zacher establishes, the tale offers a view on humanity and animality both, anticipating and gesturing towards modern contemporary post-humanist discourse in its conflicted and complicated approach to these discursive frameworks. Such frameworks are perceived to not be monolithic but interacting with one another on a spectrum: categories of humanity and animality becoming fluid, serving as criticism on their boundaries (2017, p. 430). The instances of providing and receiving care within the story are such symbolically rich and contextually poignant explorations. Michael Uebel identifies Gowther as the 'abject other' or 'the foreigner within' (2002, p. 96-117). Such otherness, despite what a modern reader's perception of such categories operating within the Middle Ages may be, has been often utilised in the period's art and literature. The influential Christian philosopher St. Augustine of Hippo associated otherness with insight, which has been interpreted as one of the governing principles of Sir Gowther's narrative (Czarnowus 2009, p. 9-42). Otherness served as a lens through which the period's thinkers found ingress into the realms of pre-Freudian psychoanalysis. The *Tale of Sir Gowther* has been likened by critics to both of the above mentioned works due to the dynamics of

salvation involved in it. Gowther's physicians come in many shapes and sizes and are equipped with a diverse array of abilities to produce meaning.

The tale has deep roots in Arthurian romance, but it also serves as crucible for a vast array of conventions and motifs prevalent in the period. It has seen several iterations on its French source material titled Robert le Diable, and in English it exists in two manuscript versions: British Library Royal MS 17.B.43 and National Library of Scotland MS Advocates 19.3.1 (referred to as Royals and Advocates, respectively, in Hopkins 1990, pp. 157–58). The text's unique richness has offered purchase to these methods and many more aside. This study utilises the version designated as Advocates for several reasons. Firstly, it is considered the more definitive version of the two, for the Royals version has been much sanitised and tamed for the consumption of a courtly audience. Secondly, it features a language much more preoccupied with the dynamics of consumption, which serves as an important semantic locus informing the motifs discussed within the study (Chen 2012, p. 361-2).

Gowther's turbulent psyche, manifesting in his infantile oral violence, has been likened to Thomas Harris's *Hannibal* series, while the hybrid canine knight's unleashed rampage and commentary on the nature of chivalry finds resonance in George R.R. Martin's *Hound of the Song of Ice and Fire* (1996 -). They may be works of art and literature which come to life with half a millennium difference, yet, to paraphrase Walter Benjamin, it is only now, with the benefit of our modern methodologies, that we can truly interpret and understand the works of past ages (2006, p. 27). Even though one must be cautioned against reading and interpreting medieval texts from the perspective of our day and age, connections can be made by utilising specific methods. These comparisons, however useful they may be in the bounds of a comparative analysis, may result, as Samantha Zacher warns, in 'inexact parallels' (2017, p. 428), for the *Tale of Sir Gowther* is even within the context of his own period's literature very much a unique one. According to Hostetter, its 'narrative nourishment' is derived from the different modalities of consumption and the underlying tensions in their representations, which are so prominent in the tale (2017, p. 516). This essay aims to focus only on a narrow slice of the contextually rich, conflicting dynamics of the tale: that of care, which centres around the interconnected motifs of consumption and care.

The connections between consumption and language are inseparable in the narrative; the interactions of the motifs connected with learning, control of the self, and being nursed all centre around one another (Chen 2012, p. 360-83). The tale is a narrative, as Margaret Robson designates it, about disguise and uncovering, internality and externality. In her interpretation it is also a tale of moral regeneration. It is also a story, according to Dana Oswald, where 'bodies of lack', or bodies characterised by something missing, can be found caring for one another (2010, p. 186-92). Emily Huber also interprets Gowther from a similar perspective, emphasising the importance of these lacks within the narrative. In her reading, muteness and the 'desire for articulateness' are the primary movers of the narrative, the crisis arising from the conflicting categories of 'kind' and 'kinship' (human or beast) (2015, p. 288-9).

Within this conversation in the late medieval Europe dogs occupy a particular position, rendering them a versatile vehicle for communicating a wide array of themes. Canines in general

(wolves, dogs, and foxes) are widely deployed symbols across all strati of art and literature, ranging from fables to sermons. Their symbolic significance can be just as varied and colourful within narratives. Dogs can serve as a warning presence, moral exemplars, or find themselves invested with the ability to unconceal the truth hidden behind falsehood. They can connote savagery and greedy consumption but can also display control over these instincts, representing unselfish care and humble obedience simultaneously. Dogs can be greedy consumers of unrestrained appetite, or serve as faithful companions, their tongue a salve to wounds. Thus, they can be called polysemous symbols, which represent all such layers at the same time, allowing complex interactions and contextually sensitive conflicts to be depicted by them. They live close to us and one is to learn from observing them. Both the medieval and the contemporary discourse centred around the dynamics between human and animal symbolism are complex and multifaceted. In the context of Gowther's tale, Zacher's words encapsulate the main dynamics animating such a discourse concisely: 'In Sir Gowther, animality is constructed as one vital and even productive condition of human identity' (2017, p. 430).

Gowther grows rapidly and as a young adult becomes a terrifying menace to the duchy. Indeed, as the poet reminds, he behaves accordingly to his demonic father's will at all times, both in his activities and inert state alike: 'He wold wyrke is fadur wyll, Wher he stod or sete' (176-7). Gowther's depredations are as violent as they are inventive in their symbolic cruelty aimed against both the church and the female body. During his hunting trip he stumbles upon a nunnery, which he burns to the ground and rapes the nuns. He takes maidens and wives against their will, even slaying the husbands of the latter. He makes friars jump from cliffs and hangs parsons from hooks (169-204).

His rampage comes to a halt when an elderly Earl points out that Gowther simply cannot be of Christian stock due to his sadistic acts. Gowther recoils and interrogates his mother about his parentage at the sword-point. After the revelation of his demonic father, he bids farewell to his mother and proclaims his intentions to go to Rome in order 'To lerne anodur lare' (237). The Pope prescribes a unique penance to Gowther to counteract his youthful ravages: to not speak and to only eat what he receives from the mouths of dogs or 'revus of howndus mothe' (snatches from a hound's mouth; 296):

> Wherser thu travellys, be northe or soth,
> Thu eyt no meyt bot that thu revus of howndus mothe
>   Cum thy body within;
> Ne no worde speke for evyll ne gud,
> Or thu reyde tokyn have fro God,
>   That forgyfyn is thi syn. (295-300)

Both parts of the penance, eating and silence, are directed towards the literal and symbolic source of infantile oral violence: Gowther's mouth. His penance has been prescribed to him with the intention of turning it from a site of ungoverned hunger and violence into a locus of symbols constantly kept under surveillance. In the Pope's prescription there is an effort to divorce the

impulse of aggression and the actual actions the young duke performs, in order to properly adjust him to both the aristocratic dining habits and to domesticate him in the context of Christendom. Anna Czarnowus explains, that 'Gowther's choices are very likely instinctive and therefore "naturally" grounded in his physicality' (2009, p. 119). Gowther thus needs to redirect his constantly active aggression and unnaturally disproportioned libidinal energies toward external objects and turn them into an internalised, self-reflective modality. In order to achieve this state, the most straight-forward way is for him to be rendered passive, and vulnerable. This state of being is intended to return him to a non-violent childhood which never existed in Gowther's case, in a reversal of his earlier life.

The penance that Gowther has been prescribed has many puzzling features. Firstly, during the late Middle Ages in Europe sharing food with animals, even dogs, was a taboo that itself would have necessitated penance. It was considered an act that violates the boundaries between humans and beasts, especially in the case of dogs, as Joyce E. Salisbury points out (2012, p. 53). Yet, the penance is most appropriate, for it serves first and foremost as a transformative pedagogical process, as Alison Langdon emphasises (2018, pp. 41-57). Thus, Gowther's penance provides a point of connection, an avenue of ascent from demonic, through animal, to human – from irredeemable to saved (Hudson 2015, p. 116). Furthermore, the penance draws attention not only to the mouth, but to the canine aspect of Gowther as well. In Huber's reading, the Pope unconceals Gowther's lurking canine aspect, with which thus far the violent duke has avoided confrontation (2015, p. 298). According to Margaret Robson, this particularity is the key mechanism of the game of covering and uncovering, the question of disguises and recognition becoming a crucial tension arising in Gowther's narrative (1992, pp. 148-49). The penitent duke has to not only bring his violent behaviour, governed by his monstrously enlarged physicality, under control. He is also to contemplate and learn to decipher God's will in creation through observing both himself and his environment in the process. 'The injunction to eat only food taken from the mouths of dogs not only forces Gowther into a position of humility, but also becomes a means of teaching Gowther to inspect the world for signs of God's will', Angela Florschuetz summarises (2014, p. 56). Gowther, in essence, must domesticate his internal hound, just like the dog-headed saint, Saint Christopher, did. Jamie C. Fumo emphasises the importance of domestication of the internal hound: 'Gowther's challenge is not to exterminate but to internalize, to domesticate, the dog he (figuratively) is in order to become a faithful man of God' (2018, p. 228).

The penance, however, is not entirely what one might expect. The verb 'revus' (296) is a problematic one in this context, meaning 'to snatch'. Gowther is encouraged to now fight for his food on an even footing with actual dogs, to snatch the morsel meant to sustain him from their mouths with his own. The semiotic emphasis relies both on similarity and proximity. The papal decree is contrasted with the Royals variant of the tale, where the same line prescribes passivity for Gowther - 'And gete thi mete owt of houndis mouth' (283). In the Advocates version Gowther is not merely to passively receive the penitent alms of food from the dogs, but he is to fight for it, snatch it from their mouth, following the letter of the penance. Yet there will be only one instance when he does so at the court of the Emperor, when he encounters a spaniel. Gowther otherwise

receives his penitent meals by either the benevolent and divine greyhound, a breed associated with holiness and nobility, or through the mediation of the emperor's daughter, the mute princess. After receiving his instructions, and pilfering a piece of bone he can snatch in Rome from a dog (304-5), Gowther walks off into the wilderness to seek his penance. As he sits down at a base of a hill, something extraordinary happens:

> He went owt of that ceté
> Into anodur far cuntré,
>   Tho testamentys thus thei sey;
> He seyt hym down undur a hyll,
> A greyhownde broght hym meyt untyll
>   Or evon yche a dey.
>
> Thre neythtys ther he ley:
> Tho grwhownd ylke a dey
>   A whyte lofe he hym broghht;
> On tho fort day come hym non,
> Up he start and forthe con gon,
>   And lovyd God in his thoght. (307-318)

As Gowther rests under the hill a greyhound, appearing rather unexpectedly, brings him meat and white loaves of bread for three days. On the fourth day the greyhound disappears from the narrative, its vanishing from the narrative prompting Gowther to continue his journey, which will eventually lead him to the court of the Emperor. The scene of canine care provided by the greyhound is one that, most characteristically to the narrative, moved critics to animated discourse. Both the scene of the silent penitent, rendered vulnerable and exposed in the wilderness, being fed by an animal, and the symbolism of the greyhound are important within the context of the narrative. These elements are both inspired by other popular romances and hagiography and meant to re-contextualise them in turn.

The pastoral episode, drawing inspiration from and gesturing towards the lives of saints, remains a unique addition to the text. Firstly, it is absent in the original source material, Robert le Diable, upon which Gowther's tale is based. Secondly, as Huber points out, 'the episode is never explained nor even mentioned again, and it has no causal connection to the plot in the rest of the poem' (2015, p. 284). The holy greyhound, its mission seemingly done, vanishes from the narrative. This particular breed of dog has been perceived in the context of the period's European Christian discourse as the most holy and noble of breeds. Its significance is reinforced by Dante featuring it as prominent symbol in his Divine Comedy, or the stories Saint Guinefort, healer of children, a greyhound venerated as a saint. The greyhound will appear again when Gowther's penance is progressed, serving as mediator between him and the mute princess. David Salter points out the significance of the greyhound in the context of both the larger hagiographic tradition and the tale of Sir Gowther as well. He emphasises Gowther's connection with the

greyhound, which in turn is a symbolic mirror of the young duke's noble nature and his role as an aristocratic hero within the romance (2001, p. 80). The dogs, therefore, are not only signs to be interpreted by Gowther, but also spiritual and psychological signifiers on their own, introducing a pattern of behaviour both novel and alien to Gowther. The presence of the canines within the narrative allows the young duke to interpret his own internal world through them and their conduct. The greyhound is simultaneously a teacher and a symbol of restraint that is to serve as template for Gowther's ideal behaviour. As Uebel highlights, '[p]assivity, however, may be the real point: Gowther is compelled to base his interactions with this gentle other — beast, oriental — upon restraint and receptivity' (2002, p. 106).

Indeed, in its serenity within the wilderness, the scene is in sharp contrast with both Gowther's violent past and violent future, for he is later to complete his penance through applying himself on the battlefield in defence of Christendom and the Emperor's daughter. Both past and future, the first and the final thirds of the poem, are characterised by violence and activity depicted in graphic, forceful language. Yet this scene is one that renders Gowther the most passive, vulnerable, and calm. In a poem so characterised by action, movement, and forceful language, this moment of silent contemplation stands out. However unique the scene might appear at first, though, it is not without precedent. Similar motifs of canine care can be found in the popular legends of Saints Guinefort, Roch, and Cainnech, all relative contemporaries of Gowther's tale (Zacher, 2017, p. 436). The scene marks the first instance of Gowther gentle interaction with the non-violent canine other, allowing him to be both vulnerable and cared for, without a trace of aggression. It focuses Gowther's attention on the affective piety represented by the behaviour of the canines, their discipline and selfless behaviour, while also allowing space for him to reflect upon the control of his libidinal energies (hunger, sexual desire, violence). Furthermore, it allows him to feel 'enmeshed' into the fabric of beings, acknowledge his place within a conceptual ecosystem, without the aggressive attack on the external other (Steel 2011, p. 242).

The scene can also be analysed from an economic perspective, thus placing the canine care outside the economics of consumption. 'Cut off from human speech and the normal economies of consumption, Gowther is effectively removed from the principal channels of social exchange', Zacher observes (2017, p. 434). Indeed, for Gowther to learn a new lore, he is displaced from the societal exchanges which he has infiltrated and subverted in his sinful youth, perverting categories such as child, noble, knight. Similarly to Zacher, Karl Steel interprets the scene from the perspective of social economics, contending that the strangeness of the exchange lies precisely in its being so disruptive to the economy. Strictly speaking, nothing is exchanged; no blessings or benedictions are offered from either side (2011, p. 240). The care Gowther receives is markedly unselfish, ostensibly circumventing any ascetic suffering a penance would have necessitated. Gowther, in this instance, is not required to suffer for his sins but to be returned to the non-violent state of receptive childhood, which primes him to receiving the Eucharist later throughout the narrative (Uebel 2002, p. 106).

Gowther, seen earlier as a manifestation of the Anti-Christ undergoes a reversal in the scene. He is transformed from the demonic youth to an affective saint tended to in the wilderness

by animals: the sign of divine providence, achieved by the mediation of the hound. The image would have been very much recognisable for the period's reader from different sources, the motif firmly embedded into hagiography, or the lives and deeds of saints. Indeed, the serene pastoral scene is reminiscent of the scriptural Valley of Death (Psalm 23:4, *The New Oxford Annotated Bible With Apochripa: New Revised Standard Edition*), with Gowther seated in the shadow of the hill. (Huber 2015, p. 305). Gowther remains in this unidentified 'far country', lying down and docilely receiving the white loaf the greyhound brings to him. Instead of the problematic and aggressive verb 'revus', or snatching of the morsel, as the penance would literally have him do, Gowther remains static. The scene is surprising from this perspective for a good reason: as Gillian Adler argues, the canine care received by Gowther during the pastoral episode has defused any instinct to approach the dog in an aggressive fashion. The scene serves both as a reversal and an unconcealment of true identities. As Adler puts it, it 'indeed challenges Gowther's original position of domination even countering the expectation that the dogs would share a similar nature to the brutish protagonist' (2017, p. 59). If Gowther has been an overbearingly dominant, uncontrollably destructive, prematurely hyper-masculine figure thus far, while his future holds martial expression and proper chivalric conduct, in this very moment he occupies a space in-between those states. The salvific dynamic of the scene introduces the essential capacity of self-reflection. Within this meditative state Gowther is tended to by the greyhound. He remains prone, 'ley', the greyhound tending to him. His posture is not unlike that of a pup. Huber identifies this as the first expression of authentic love towards Gowther, to whom the experience of the tender emotion must be entirely alien up until the moment. He, however, reciprocates love with love, for he is finally in a state both meditative and silent (2015, p. 305).

In Adler's reading,

> [t]he greyhound at Rome becomes one among a series of dogs that symbolically acquire a divine role in that they effectively perform the maternal task of feeding, like Gowther's mother and wet nurses. The first dog teaches him to receive food properly and with restraint, and thus to contravene his prior indulgent eating habits. (2017, p. 59)

Thus, the greyhound becomes a transfigured mother surrogate to Gowther, a new materialisation upon which he is to map his identity. The imitiatio Christi performed by the divine greyhound invokes a priestly interaction and is the first stage of feeding Gowther the proper Eucharist (as opposed to the one violently perverted or denied by him as an infant), allowing him to be incorporated into the communion through the act of love expressed through authentic and virtuous charity, or caritas. On the fourth day the greyhound vanishes and Gowther, now capable of interpreting God's will through signs, continues his journey. He shows the first instance of internality during the narrative, finally not acting and attacking, but thinking. And he thinks of the love of God.

Gowther, following the moving scene in the shadow of the mountain, sets out. He arrives at the court of the emperor of Almeyn, where he is taken in and fed amongst the dogs. The emperor

proves to be receptive of the penitent duke's situation, suspecting that he is undertaking some sort of penance. Thus, Gowther suffers no mistreatment and eats from the mouths of the hounds, adhering to his penance. While the penitent duke continues his life under the table as Hob the fool, the Saracen sultan attacks the emperor, demands his mute daughter's hand in marriage. Gowther is miraculously provided with arms, suits of armour and horses by God. The armour conceals his identity as he battles the Saracens in defence of Christendom. When it comes to the description of the emperor's daughter, the text establishes a connection between her and Gowther:

> But now this ylke Emperowre
> Had a doghtur whyte as flowre,
>   Was too soo dompe as hee;
> Scho wold have spokyn and myght noght.
> That meydon was worthely wroght,
>   Bothe feyr, curteys and free. (373-8)

The quality unifying Gowther and the princess is their shared quality of muteness. She is placed in a conceptual constellation with Gowther, for their bodies are both governed and characterised by lack, which in turn unites them both in a silent understanding and a new 'trigonometry' with the dogs under the table: 'Her body is the next mediating "partial object" which will pull him closer to a full identity', Jeffrey Jerome Cohen observes (2015, p. 130). She, however, proves to be much more than a mere partial object facilitating the penitential process. She is not even relegated to a supportive role, as she and the care she provides become instrumental in Gowther's penitential pattern. 'The princess is carefully brought into the narrative; her growing love for Gowther is a quiet, private business, conducted away from the noise and bustle of the court', Andrea Hopkins points out (1990, p. 156). The princess is displaced from the realm of humanity due to her muteness, thus sharing the liminal space with Gowther, committed to his canine penance. When the Sultan asks for her hand from the Emperor, he emphasises her beauty but the Emperor corrects him:

> Tho Emperowr seyd, "Y have bot won,
> And that is dompe as any ston,
>   Feyrur thar non be feyd." (388-90)

The Emperor's admission contains several important attributes. He emphasises the muteness of the princess over her beauty. Her father is aware of her vulnerability and her status as an outsider. '[T]he princess's silence renders her abject, dependent on other modes of communication besides speech', observes Huber (2015, p. 313). She may be rendered abject but through her muteness she is rendered insightful as well. Due to her body being characterised by lack much more than her fair beauty, she also does possess the ability to unconceal Gowther's true identity (Robson, p. 150–51). The insight provided to her is in line with Augustinian doctrine, identifying otherness as an attribute that affords insight (Czarnowus, p. 19-27). She is able to see

not only the man under the armour, the knight in the penitent canine act. She can see much more, the canine under the human disguise hitherto concealed. The motif is an iteration on the common trope of the mysterious knight. Unconcealing Gowther, however, is not merely a function of the princess, afforded to her by her status of an outsider. She also unconceals the canine penance's hidden mechanisms relying on the reciprocity of tender care. Thus, the princess herself also serves as a disruptive element within a medieval discourse on otherness. 'Unlike Gowther, her muteness does not signify any specific correlation to either sin or animality: she is "curteys", free, and exceedingly beautiful, all traits that signify her status as a noble and gentle woman', Zacher writes (2017, p. 446). Anna Chen emphasises that the emperor himself measures his daughter through the language of consumption, gesturing towards her transcendently nourishing capacity (2012, p. 362). Here the princess again is described through a language similar to that used by the passers-by to curse Gowther, who lamented that his mother ever fed him (164-5). The princess, however, represents a nourishing counterpoint to Gowther's intertwining physical and spiritual hungers.

Gillian Adler points out a peculiarity of the maiden's description, gesturing towards the fact that, historically, women could leverage the aspects of themselves traditionally deemed inferior into mechanisms of spiritual influence and authority. Both dogs and the mute maiden thus serve as displacing agents of what one might expect to be a very patriarchal religious power. By performing the act of Imitatio Christi, or imitation of Christ, both are capable of re-contextualising what they actually mean (2017, p. 51). The mute princess is no mere supportive character. Zacher points out that 'her muteness, portrayed in the poem as a lack or a disability, registers a far more cynical view of human essentialism: speech, we learn, is not essential to human beings; nor is its lack limited to non-human animals' (2017, p. 447). The princess is characterised by lack, but she is not limited by it. Her capacity to interpret and care are reliant on her silent observation, being positioned on the peripheries of the court, despite her rank. While the emperor suspects the young duke to be undergoing a penance, only the princess possesses sufficient insight into Gowther's character.

After the first such scene takes place, the princess recognises Gowther. 'Non hym knew bot that meyden gent' (419), for she too is characterised by lack, their perspective and insight shared. Therefore it is precisely the princess' insight which allows the following remarkable scene to occur:

> Tho meydon toke too gruhowndus fyn
> And waschyd hor mowthus cleyn with wyn
>   And putte a lofe in tho ton;
> And in tho todur flesch full gud;
> He raft bothe owt with eyggur mode,
>   That doghty of body and bon. (445-50)

The princess washes the mouth of the greyhound with wine and sends it over to Gowther, with fresh meat and a loaf of bread, which he eagerly devours. The scene offers much to uncover, its

symbolism layered and significant from the perspective of the narrative whole. One such instance is a reversal of sinfulness through the act of care. 'The poem locates the hounds' spiritual currency in their capacity to deliver healing through their mouths, inverting the proverbial model of dogs' mouths as sources of sinfulness,' Huber observes (2015, p. 310). If a shift from indiscriminate violence to culturally and socially sanctioned violence indicates the reformation of one facet of Gowther's animal self, his capacity to interact gently with other creatures is also formulated in the context of his animality. The princess, due to her role as something of a social outsider at court, is capable of accurately perceiving that Gowther can only be physically sustained by the meals he wrestles from the mouths of dogs (Oswald 2010, p. 184). She is one uniquely positioned to identify his authentic need as spiritual, instead of purely physical, and can thus provide care for him through her actions.

These actions of care performed by the 'meyden gent' are infused with divine significance. Her image, in the moment, is conflated with other symbols, which overlap upon one another and would have been immediately accessible for a reader of the period. Despite her marginal position the mute princess occupies the place both of a surrogate mother and the Virgin Mary, while also taking up the priestly duty of moderating the ritual of the sacrament. The Eucharist, symbolically depicted here, is one of the most significant Christian motifs. Christ's blood and body are transfigured in the bread and wine. The ceremony of Communion is offered to Gowther through these media. The ceremonial gesture of belonging and acceptance becomes authentic, because it is performed with unusual actors. As Zacher observes,

> [a]lthough this "mock sacrament" happens in obvious breach of the aforementioned penitential laws surrounding the profanation of the Eucharist by animals, the dogs in this scene are, in contrast, portrayed as divine messengers or mediators who step boldly into the scene in the fashion of priests to administer wine and bread/flesh. (2017, p. 448)

Indeed, in the domestic setting the preparation of food expected from the female member of the family becomes a transcended activity of sanctified care, just like the offered wine and bread become transcended symbols. Adler observes that:

> [i]n the Middle Ages, women had a unique relationship to Holy Communion; the eating of the Eucharist facilitated the encounter with Christ's humanity, but the rite presented late medieval women, in particular, with an opportunity to transform a traditional female role in the domestic space—preparing and serving food—into a religious act. [...] The princess sanctifies the feeding process and reinforces the holy functions of the canine intercessors, and, together, the princess and the dogs recall the maternal attempt to nourish Gowther, delivering the physical nourishment and religious nurture Gowther refused in infancy. (2017, p. 67)

Thus, the gestures of tender care provided to Gowther become transcendent: the act transforms both sides. Gowther is transformed into his gentle canine self in interaction with the gentle

female other, while the princess is to a female figure enacting affective piety by nourishing him. The meat offered to Gowther is 'full gud', which mirrors the exact descriptor of the 'full gud knyghttys wyffys' (112), who have been offered to him as wet-nurses in his infancy, drawing equations between the two scenes.

Similar resonances are abundant in the passage. The peculiar verb featured in the exact description of Gowther's penance, 'revus' or 'to snatch', comes back in a transformed incarnation in the scene, signifying the beginning of a new stage in the duke's penance. 'He raft bothe owt with eyggur mode' (449), or Gowther has ripped them both (the bread and the meat) eagerly. Thus far Gowther has been prepared for this particular Eucharistic meal he is to receive, adjusting his physical and mental state to receive the symbolic meal. These preparations prominently featured the acts of care, shown to him by bodies characterised by either lack or otherness. The images of the hound taking care of him in the wilderness and the image of the gentle female recognising the outlines of both his penance and personal needs converge within the scene. The unconcealment of his true nature coincides with the exploration of the proper, nutritive qualities of the Eucharist, to which Gowther has been rendered receptive through the acts of kindness. As Huber summarises the scene, 'Finally, he is voracious for the right kind of nourishment' (2015, p. 310).

In opposition to Cohen, who observes that the motherly dimension 'vanishes from the narrative in its second half' (2015, p. 203), Adler convincingly argues that care is indeed an important attribute in interpreting the scene. He sees it re-emerge in the shape of transcended, transfigured maternal care provided by both the princess and the greyhound, finally sating Gowther's spiritual hunger, nourishing him through the Eucharist and the canine intercessor, both physically and spiritually (2017, p. 67). The motif of care allows one to interpret the scene with surety, seeing the different roles of caregiver superimposed upon one another in the image of the princess. She performs the ritual and literal act of feeding, fulfilling an authentic function that is simultaneously maternal and priestly, allowing Gowther to refocus his attention on this locus of symbols, progressing him further in his penitential process.

After Gowther's return from the battlefield, he immediately heads to his chamber, situating himself amongst the hounds:

> Among tho howndus down he hym seytt,
> Tho meydon forthe tho greyhondus feytt,
> And leytt as noghtt ware. (510-13)

The princess, naturally, says nothing to Gowther but brings forth the greyhounds and behaves as if nothing happened. She facilitates the reflection that Gowther is to undertake, while the lords and ladies celebrate. The princess alone understands that Gowther's penitent self-reflection is facilitated by the hounds, becomes a priestly figure in effect, guiding the communion (Adler 2017, p. 68).

After these touching scenes of strange, transcended domesticity, Gowther's redemption and transformation are now also centred around the mute princess. Her insight and care have provided an avenue of discourse for Gowther to negotiate, resulting in hitherto unexplored

emotional dimensions to be encountered with as the result. Among the new emotional vistas the penitent youth finds a genuine expression of belonging in the following scene.

While protecting the Emperor, Gowther is wounded on his shoulder by a Saracen spear during his fight with the Sultan, whom he kills. The wound is a symbolically significant motif, an imitatio Christi: an act of imitating Christ, who has been similarly wounded by spear (Cohen 2015, p. 137). Witnessing the grievous wound, the maiden feels 'full sorrow', faints and falls from her tower (637). She lies in a coma for two days, although she is believed to be dead (642). The cascading causality of the scene sees Gowther finally confronted with a completely new emotion: compassion, a new aspect of empathy, which in turn induces the tender acts of care that have been so prominently missing:

> To chambur he went, dyd of is geyre,
> This gud knyght Syr Gwothere,
>   Then myssyd he that meydon schene.
>   Emong tho howndus is meyt he wan. (646-49)

After the fight, Gowther goes to his chambers, takes off his suit of armour provided to him by God (to allow him to both fight and conceal his identity) and authentically feels. He misses the 'meydon schene', the fair maiden who understood him and cared for him. The loss of the princess, whom he perceives to be dead, and the genuine emotions he feels in the face of the tragedy completes Gowther's penance. He grieves amongst the hounds, trying to find consolation or at least a measure of comfort in their presence. The scene allows Gowther's internality to come to the fore (similarly to the passage 'And lovyd God in his thoght' (318)), in contrast with his active, external fighting prowess governing the preceding lines. Here, again, his movement through categories, or kinds, through his acts and feelings of kindness can be observed. He cares for the princess, and his grief for the sublimated mother-figure caring for him is genuine and honest. Gowther in this moment is simultaneously mature and child-like. His sense of belonging is explicitly depicted in his time of grief, finding comfort among the hounds. Gowther's emotional maturity is encapsulated in his capacity to establish vulnerable connections, which require care to develop.

The Emperor sends for cardinals and the Pope to Rome. When the Pope arrives, the princess is magically resurrected and speaks the words of God. She does not simply gain the ability to speak miraculously but hers is now a priestly authority, becoming an intercessor between Gowther and God. While it has been the Pope who set the parameters of the penance, it is the princess who thus far has facilitated the canine penance in the social environment (the court), and her transformation makes the following miraculous episode take place (Adler 2017, p. 69):

> Ho seyd, "My lord of heyvon gretys the well,
> And forgyffeus the thi syn yche a dell,
>   And grantys the tho blys;
> And byddus the speyke on hardely,

> Eyte and drynke and make mery;
>   Thu schallt be won of His. (661-66)

The princess proclaims Gowther's penance to be over, conveying God's message. Receiving the divine mandate, the Pope kisses Gowther and designates him as the child of God, incorporating him both into Christendom and emphasising his child-like state to which his penance has returned him.

The transformation undertaken by the princess is both miraculous and corrective. Her body, characterised by lack before, is now made whole. Her words are significant, not only because now she can speak, but her speech also communicates God's intention directly, proclaiming Gowther to be incorporated into the body of Christendom. Finally, Gowther is rendered simultaneously child-like and the properly adjusted image of mature masculinity: a knight and a noble. The transformation would have been impossible without the help of the princess, who facilitated the Eucharistic activities. As Oswald explains, 'This transformation begun by the princess is confirmed and carried out by the words of the Pope: these two are the purest members of the community and are closest to God' (2010, p. 186). It has been the Pope who set the parameters of the penance but it the princess who, with the aid of the dogs, finally relieves Gowther of it (Adler 2017, p. 69). Indeed, as Huber argues, the poem 'tactfully reconfigures the conventionally supportive roles of these primarily silent companions, as nurturers and listeners, into positions of spiritual edification and influence, a reminder of the availability of new religious metaphors in the late medieval period' (2015, p. 70-71).

Gowther, now a changed man ('waryd', as Oswald explains, or 'transformed' (2010, p. 187)), returns to Estryke, marries his mother off to the old earl, and eventually becomes emperor himself. While Gowther's body remains outside of the reproductive and hereditary cycle of the system of nobility, his post-penitential activities become notable, for he aims to give back the care he has received and does so even after his death:

> For he is inspyryd with tho Holy Gost,
>   That was tho cursod knyght;
> For he garus tho blynd to see
> And tho dompe to speyke, pardé,
>   And makus tho crokyd ryght,
> And gyffus to tho mad hor wytte,
> And mony odur meracullus yette,
>   Thoro tho grace of God allmyght. (737-44)

Before the final lines of the poem, we see Gowther as a corrective, healing presence. Gowther has been inspired by the Holy Spirit, a cursed knight turned into a venerated saintly figure. In Oswald's interpretation, 'his transformed body conducts miraculous transformations for other bodies constituted by lack' (2010, p. 192). This means that 'After his death, Gowther acts as a kind

of intercessor for God' (ibid.). This passage is followed by a line which resonates with a pun: 'Thus Syr Gwother coverys is care' (745). Although the line literally translates to 'Thus Sir Gowther has recovered his estate/keep' and may not be an entirely intentional pun, in our modern context it can be interpreted as evocative of the care Gowther has received. It emphasises a charge or a responsibility which Gowther has recovered: a proper sense of caring, in all the meanings of the word. His healing presence is embodied in his regained capacity to care for both others and himself, the site of his previously uncared-for body imbued with a corrective, divine power. The penitential process sees his true nature, his authentic self finally uncovered through acts of care, his intentions 'to lerne anodur lare' necessitated the help of others as well.

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Katrine Spilling
Destabilising (2021)
71 x 92 cm
Photography on paper (Hahnemühle photorag baryta)
(Hosiery, ceramic shards, cut brief, cheese-cloth, silk chiffon, wool)

'Destabilising' is a staged photograph showing blurred materials with an intense backlight. The work plays with photography as a medium, expressing a blurred and unclear subject matter, an effect often avoided or used to enhance clarity in photographic images. The strong backlight reference the harsh lighting used to enhance vision for clarity and accuracy in traditional medical practices, expressing here a displacement as the image is unclear. The atmospheric texture suggests the objects being immersed in water or ice, while also referencing the conditions of a camera – the camera being too close or pulsing on autofocus, as if the image won't let itself capture, yet the blurred effect has nothing to do with external conditions such as water or the conditions of cameras, the aesthetic is received materially. How do we care for the unknown that might destabilise us? How do the unclassified exist in a world where classification assures a place in culture? To exist in blur, to not know, has value. It respects the integrity of difference and sparks the capacity to care. It acknowledges what is alive within us and between us.

"Everything I did, I did for this family": Neoliberal Care in HBO's *Succession*

Harriet Barton (University of Liverpool)

Abstract

This paper considers representations of care and negligence in HBO's *Succession*. Focusing on season three, it argues that *Succession* stages a relationship between an oldguard neoliberalism and the generations that succeeded it; this relationship is complicated in the show by having Logan Roy, the Roy patriarch, also the CEO of global media conglomerate Waystar RoyCo. With the decline of Logan's health introduced in season one, the theme of care is introduced which runs beneath many plotlines in the show. Do the Roy children, who have benefitted from Logan's success, feel obliged to care for their father whilst also vying for his position as CEO? Caring for Logan equals preserving an order that's out of touch with contemporary concerns. The essay looks at the children's care for their father, but also at how Logan represents a particularly neoliberal brand of 'care' that is entirely selfinterested, blurring the boundaries between fatherly care and a CEO's financial concerns. Logan's refrain, "Everything I did, I did for this family" echoes the failed neoliberal promise of generational betterment that's been present since the 1980s. The paper argues that any care Logan extends towards his children only exists in tandem with the best interests of the company: the division between family and company is a dangerously flimsy one wherein the CEO's relationships with his children are based on their fear and desire for acceptance.

Keywords: Succession, neoliberalism, neoliberal care, family, generational betterment.

Jesse Armstrong's television show *Succession* (2018-) centres on the Roy family and their billion-dollar media conglomerate, Waystar RoyCo, following the decision of CEO and father Logan Roy (Brian Cox) to not step down and hand over the reins to his son, Kendall (Jeremy Strong). Over three seasons, it traces the desperate scramble by Kendall and his siblings, Roman (Kieran Culkin) and Shiv (Sarah Snook), to gain their father's respect enough to be deserving of the top job. Succession is a biting family drama wherein the most venomous lines are heard not between businessmen but between parent and child, an exploration of family relations diseased by a neoliberal ideology which idolises the 'competitive man, wholly immersed in global competition [...] guided by self-interest,' (Dardot & Laval, 2017, p. 256, emphasis in original). Neoliberal economist Gary Becker argues that a naturalised 'family altruism' stands outside of free-market selfishness and competition (Becker, 1991, p. 277), but I contend that the show exhibits a unique brand of neoliberal family 'care' that is selfish, money-driven, and bolstered by the structure of the family as a system that sees beneficiaries receive 'care' in the form of inherited wealth and status. In a neoliberal society, any redemptive pretence to 'family values' only faintly shrouds the emotionally empty care practices that nurture a collective of individuals.

Armstrong's decision to locate a family drama within the cut-throat sphere of billion-dollar business allows the show to forefront a cynical look at the institutional apathy borne from neoliberal politics. Previous commentators have explored the relationship between neoliberalism and care through the context of state welfare, but I will turn towards what happens to relations within the family unit when each member is infected with the same desire to compete. The Roys are a neoliberal family – a microcosm of neoliberal society at large, a circuitous breeding programme wherein individuals are reared on the ideology and supply-side economics of the father-leader until they realise his nature enough to fight for his position at the top. Through the logic of inherited wealth, the show raises the question: is financial support a form of care? This paper ultimately decides not. *Succession* is a satire in the most extreme sense, a study of severe emotional negligence in a man who is the neoliberal homoeconomicus, the idealised economic man who has climbed his way to the top. Logan is almost a caricature of the neoliberal subject, so absolutely does he embody neoliberalism's society of 'private, highly individualized enterprises locked in competition with each other [...] out to achieve the American Dream for [them]selves, to best [their] peers' (Wilson, 2017, p. 122). Some argue that the Roys are presented as 'not a family at all, just a conglomerate of unintegrated assets,' but it is precisely because they are a family that Succession can so acutely satirise neoliberal sensibilities like individualism, atavism, and the invasion of market practices into every sphere of existence (Mance, 2021; Brown, 2015).

One of the main contentions in the show is the children's struggle to reconcile care and love in the face of their father's declining health and business declension. The problem for the Roys is that their father is also their CEO: a problem that impacts Logan's version of care towards his children as much as their care towards him. In the Roy world, there is no care without expected return on investment, and there is certainly no unconditional, parental love. It is a type of care that emerges thanks to neoliberal ideology of wealth accumulation, which as Melinda Cooper (2017, p. 246) says, sees parents act as 'private investors in the future capital of their children,' capital that should start showing returns in a specific version of family obligation towards the

parent. By using a family business, Succession explores how the apathy borne from individualist, neoliberal ideology is a pathological disease that no one can overcome. Garrett et al write that:

> [t]o take care of oneself and one's family in the neoliberal sense means to create a realm of invulnerability, a denial of mutual interdependence, a dis-engaged engagement with one's psyche and the world. (2016, p. x-xi)

'Care' here is solely monetary, and latent in these words is a recognition that a neoliberal sensibility is critically at odds with inter-family relationships and emotional care by virtue of its 'dis-engaged engagement,' 'denial of mutual interdependence,' and 'invulnerability'. To the emotional damage of the Roy children, in Logan's reality care is functional and purely loveless. For new generations bred on neoliberalism –an infected progeny– optics of care are captured to attend to the changing rules of the business game. To close this paper, I will examine questions for further study: if neoliberalism's atomised individualism can disregard family bonds and brew rivalry in the bloodline, what does this indicate for any care towards the wider world? And, how is the influential weight of Shiv's position as a woman in business compromised by her politics of care?

It is necessary to briefly summarise the events of the first two seasons to contextualise the theme of care in *Succession*. Two plotlines run parallel from the pilot episode: the decline of Logan's health, and the declining relevance of Waystar RoyCo as it strays out of touch with the rise of Big Tech. The two are overtly and irrevocably linked in the show, with Logan's stroke in the pilot coinciding with son Kendall's plans to acquire rising tech start-up Vaulter. Kendall's acquisition of the tech company would be an action taken in the service of his own growing success as a legitimate rival to his father's power. There is thus a clear antagonism between an old-guard business ideology and a new fleet that seeks to maintain some relevance in a world of social media and online news, with the former being perpetuated so long as Logan is healthy and in power.

The show sees Kendall's failed attempt at a vote of no confidence in his father, his support for a private equity fund to 'bear-hug' Waystar and force a loss of control, and Shiv's failed aspirations to take over. All the while, Big Tech is growing and Waystar need to move to keep their stock value steady and prevent the bank from pursuing a historical debt of $3 billion. We learn that the Roy children's entire inheritance is held up in stock, and that their financial future is directly affected by the success of the company — which they do not see as sustainable with their ageing father at the helm. This is what the Roys care for, in the sense that they have an interest in the outcome: the continued financial success of Waystar. It is a trait inherited from their father, who, when needing a 'blood sacrifice' following a sexual assault scandal in Waystar's cruise division, was willing to send Kendall to jail to protect the company.

The Care Ethics of Logan Roy

It would be remiss to examine the Roy patriarch's brand of care towards his children without first considering what the show reveals of Logan's childhood. The total of his history is as such: he was

born in Dundee to a working-class mother, who sent him and his brother Ewan (James Cromwell) to live in the US on a farm with their Uncle Noah. Between then and the present, Logan has headed the fifth-largest media conglomerate in the world. In a season one episode, 'Austerlitz,' the Roys have joined at eldest Connor's (Alan Ruck) ranch to undertake family therapy, ostensibly set up by Logan as a PR move. It goes in typical Roy fashion: deflections, humour, nothing truly being addressed. The Roys are never together in frame, a cinematographic decision which sees them isolated in claustrophobic close and medium shots, despite being metres from each other. We receive some insight in the last scene of the episode as Logan emerges from a swimming pool where his wife Marcia (Hiam Abbas) has been teaching him how to swim — a weakness that his children poked fun at earlier. We are shown scars across Logan's back, just one fragment of his mostly withheld history that the show's writers scatter amidst the quips and business jargon. Taken with earlier allusions to his Uncle Noah's temper, we make the reasonable assumption that Logan was physically abused as a child. Logan is all too aware of this reality: he was not so much raised with love than reared with fear, and still, he has succeeded. What, then, does this mean for his own relationships with his children?

Logan chooses a particular version of care, which is first and foremost seen through the medium of money followed up with small, transparent encouragements which are ultimately for his own financial gain. Melanie Richards writing on care ethics and power, has argued that:

> caring for one's own offspring is at the forefront of a person's moral concerns. This is because the ethics of care emphasises the responsibility to respond to the needs of those dependent on us. (2022, p. 4)

Logan, who lacked connection with parental figures and did not depend on them for affection or care, and regardless became successful, ostensibly finds no use for an ethics of care when raising his own children. The 'responsibility,' to the 'needs of those dependent' was surely outsourced to nannies and other carers through Logan's access to money: this kind of care was not one of Logan's 'moral concerns,' if he has such things at all. If we view Logan as a caricature of neoliberal individualism, then his lack of historical family interdependence makes perfect sense to his success: he has only ever been responsible for himself. What the ethics of care can say for Logan Roy is that '[his] relations are part of what constitutes [his] identity,' (Richards, 2022, p. 5) thereby confirming that damaged relations, or complete lack thereof, constitutes an identity which he wants to instil in his own children. Yet, Logan does employ some version of care – one that sees his children remain dependent on him for money and power, one that ultimately benefits himself through his children's dedication to their own success, which is the success of the company. It is a version of care that is absent of love or connection. What is most harrowing in Succession is how much of his fathering Logan has taken from the neoliberal handbook, how much the philosophy of 'caring' for his children and the philosophy of building a business are the same things to him.

By the beginning of season three, we know what parental care looks like for Logan: sacrificing Kendall; convincing Shiv she will get the CEO position before revoking the offer; hitting Roman and pitting all three against each other for blood sport. Whether he behaves this

way to harden them in his own self-image and thus destine them for the same success is ambiguous, so inextricable is the children's success in the company from the success of the company itself and therefore the success of Logan's legacy. Care for Logan is, if present at all (through money or the proffering of powerful roles in the company), only a vested interest in his children as shareholders, employees, threats, and players in his game. Basic care is an uncomplicated trickle-down economic policy by virtue of his own success, and the optics of love can be conjured if and when the children need it to be pulled back on track.

The source of Logan's conflicted relationship with his children, which they finally come to realise in season three, is that the wealthy environment in which they grew up means they can never truly be like him. All the division, neglect and competition has been Logan's fruitless attempt to mould the Roys into some ersatz version of himself. What Logan knows, and reminds his children, is that they never had anything that he did not give them whereas he never depended on a parent in this way. Therefore, he emotionally cripples his children and their familial relationship with him in an imitation of his own family relationship which leaves only a business relationship. If he gives them the emotional care they long for, Logan knows this will make them 'soft' and not the 'killers' he wants them to be. In episode three, 'The Disruption,' Logan mocks his most emotionally traumatised child, Roman, for having an interview about family memories and the distance between them. At this point in the season, he is silently grooming Roman to be his successor. The two speak on Logan's turf, the office, and he jibes Roman: 'Ow... I want my Daddy; I never figured you for a f****t'. However, the children cannot forego the emotional weight of him being their father, and the more he beats them down, the more they want to destroy him. They may be hardened to the world, but in season three they direct their spite towards him specifically.

Kendall Roy, who has chased his father for years and exists in the muddy area between wanting to destroy him and wanting to be him, finally appears to resign in a telling scene in 'Chiantishire'. He asks Logan to buy him out of the business and cut all ties. The seven-minute scene, a dinner between father and son, pointedly depicts Kendall's damaged emotional state, Logan's lack of parental morality and just what a lack of care in the pursuit of success has done to their relationship. In a dramatic opening, Logan suspects Kendall has poisoned his meal. If Logan had successfully reared his child in his own ruthless image, it would be feasible for Kendall to go to these lengths to secure his potential succession in the company. And so, in a chilling act, Logan calls out Kendall's son Iverson to try his food, eyes fixed on Kendall. In the ongoing 'game' of savagery between Logan and Kendall, Logan proves that he is irreparably worse: he would happily sacrifice an innocent to show his stripes. Kendall, a touch incredulous but mostly numb, replies, 'You think I want you dead? I'll be broken when you die,' which in this business-talk context an audience cannot entirely believe. For the Roys, every context is a business context, without room for family emotion despite Logan's protestations that everything he did was 'for the family'.

After Kendall admits he could not shape the company how he liked, Logan sharply reminds him there is no family-friendly, 'knights on horseback' narrative to the business of 'this life': it is a 'scramble for a knife in the mud'. The jump, then, from Kendall's aversion to Logan's death to

promising 'I won't even speak at your memorial,' is not so jarring when we realise this is a code-switch the Roy children have navigated their whole lives. It is subconscious: a way to manoeuvre a biological desire for a parent's love and care that is suffocated by the ideology of competition and individualism. So too, is this how the Roys reconcile the merger of CEO and father: they clip their emotion. Kendall wants out, now, admitting 'I don't wanna be you,' and it is obvious he means as both a father and a businessman. Logan, though, sees his moral superiority as false – how can Kendall be a good person when he learned everything from Logan, when Logan has cleaned up his mess? So, when Logan ignores Kendall's request for a buy-out, replying 'fuck off, kiddo,' to his claim that Logan is a bad person, the score rolls back in with stirring, imposing strings and we know that 'kiddo' is nothing more than an infantilising moniker: in the Waystar reality, Kendall is both a bad investment and an opponent that has walked from the game, and there is no family relationship to return to either.

Throughout season three as Logan pursues his own desires and decisions, looping each child in when he sees fit, he overlooks their own interests. If Logan plans to sell the company and his brand of care can no longer be explained away as rearing the Roys to take the top position, the children can turn and are quick to feel the effects of a well-worn emotion: neglect. If Logan truly had an ethics of care, he would accept partiality in moral judgements and consider his children (Richards, 2022). But, because Logan sees his children as players in his game without any emotional connection, he does not have the capacity to make a judgement influenced by their best interests. Logan's self-interest ultimately curates a coalition intent, at the final episode, to stop him.

Conflicts of Interest: The Roy Children

Succession presents the Roy children as struggling with a changing cultural and business landscape and questioning whether they owe their father anything. Matters are further complicated by his declining health and the new capacity they are forced to view him in: a man vulnerable to human decay in his twilight years. The unanswerable question of whether they view Logan as a monolith or as a father governs many of their half-hearted attempts to challenge him, or help him, or destroy him completely. When he is delirious with a UTI at the shareholders' meeting, Shiv is deeply uncomfortable and does not know how to act. More pressingly, she needs him to present as healthy on stage. It seems that generally, however, they still expect some level of care from Logan as a father – to their own detriment. But what duty of care do the Roys have towards Logan?

It is largely implied that the Roys' best childhood memories are with each other, not Logan. Roman refuses to support Shiv's smear campaign against Kendall because 'he taught [him] how to aim [his] pee-pee in the toilet,' not his father. The fishing trip that Roman brought up in the interview was with Connor, not Logan. Logan has (directly or not) given the children a lavish lifestyle and billions in inheritance packets: this is not care, but do the children 'owe' him for the finance he provided? And is this debt obligation financial, or emotional? Two scenes between parent and children in season three depict how this perceived family obligation is stuck in a spider's web of conflicting interests.

In episode four, 'Lion in the Meadow,' swing-vote minority shareholder Josh Aronson (Adrien Brody) invites Logan and Kendall to meet at his house to discuss whether their conflict might affect his investment. It is a revealing sequence that studies the power conflict between Logan and Kendall, a meeting set up 'where father and son will have to be in each other's presence and act like they care,' because conflict is bad for returns (Sepinwall, 2021, np.). Aronson walks the Roys through the sand dunes of his private island, and it quickly becomes apparent that Logan is not physically capable. He wheezes, winces, and slows down. Multiple pantomimes are happening simultaneously on the walk: Kendall and Logan must appear united to prevent Aronson backing a hostile takeover bid; Logan must appear physically and mentally sound enough to be in a position of power; Logan floats the potential of Kendall taking over (which is a foregone conclusion by now), and Kendall finds himself in the strange position of having to care for his father. This is a business meeting with three players, but the chinks in Logan's health remind Kendall that this is his father, and he is not sure which role he should be playing – shrewd businessman, or supportive son? At first he jibes, 'You want me to run back and get you a banana [...]?', undermining Logan's authority within the realms of jest, calling him 'old geezer'. Clearly, though, something is very wrong. Kendall cannot believe that Logan is keeping up the charade, asking 'Can't you even fucking tell him you need a breather? [...] Just catch your breath,' and wanting desperately to drop the act, helplessly feeling empathy for a father who reveals to him 'I'd rather get fucked by a sp*c in a shower bloc than see you have [the job]'. Kendall wants his father to allow him to care, to finally admit some vulnerability, and no longer wants the pantomime to be the reality.

Logan eventually collapses, and we see a shot of Kendall, the son, and Aronson, the shareholder, supporting Logan to a resting spot in a symbolic triad that sees Aronson encouraging Logan amid Kendall's silence. In a reality which is all business and no family life, the care and maintenance of Logan Roy is reliance on shareholders and his uneasy children who cannot place themselves in the role of child, employee, or competitor comfortably. Kendall knows that ultimately this kind of care is not reciprocated. We may too soon forget that Logan pulled Kendall out of rehab after 48 hours in season two to go on television to show his support for his father: any care that Logan may have shown through putting Kendall in rehab was immediately displaced by the needs of the business, and Kendall's (blackmailed) obligations to support his father. Still ever desperate to impress Logan, Kendall soon starts trying to talk shop again with Aronson who reminds him: 'why don't you just think about your Dad now?' For Kendall, an impossible task.

Mary V. Wrenn and William Waller (2017, p. 501) pose the definition of 'care' as an activity that is 'the action [...] that lead[s] to the development, recovery, and maintenance of autonomy'. All three Roy children know whilst Logan has power and autonomy, things will not change in their favour at Waystar. However, the filial relationship confuses this: they do not ostensibly want their father to actually die to achieve their own ascendency. Often their language merges the two spheres anyway: 'Kill the company, kill Dad'. Only when the Roys stop seeing their father as their father can they effectively act, as the expected care ethic that they falsely ascribe to their relationship leaves them feeling obligated to maintain Logan's health and power and keep his

interests met. The audience feels a strange sense of pride for the Roy children as they speed across Tuscany together, finally abandoning their life-long attempts to bridge the father/CEO chasm. They learn that Logan is planning to sell the company without their input, exiting with a settlement and handing over control to tech giant GoJo, thus jeopardising their chances of succession. Their journey is ultimately to remind him that he is dependent on them: in the divorce settlement, Logan's ex-wife Caroline (Harriet Walter) secured the children a majority in the holding company, meaning that they have a vote in any change of company control.

By banding together, they form a supermajority which would block Waystar's sale and protect their own interests. Shiv asks, 'How do we feel about killing Dad?' to which Kendall replies, 'Pass me the fucking shot gun'. They head to the Tuscan villa by abandoning any attempt at care or love that would influence their actions against Logan. This, an exact embodiment of what their father has been reminding them their whole lives; they were dependent on him, but he would never grant them sufficient emotional care to develop a partiality (Richards, 2022). To beat Logan, they must abandon care for Logan, and realise that the self-interest he has raised them on is a mutual interest that could finally see them ascend the ranks.

The last scene of season three sees the Roy children finally come together in a quasi-collective that ultimately aims to continue their breathless fight for succession under the guise of wanting to keep Logan in the business. It is clear at the season's climax, though, that this change of tack is too late and we see a cynical reaffirmation of Logan's self-serving power. Shiv coaxes him: 'With you at the top, we can take over; without you, we're fucked'. This is a desperately transparent pretention to care for his legacy in the business. All is laid bare now, with the children's own interest clashing with Logan's plan to exit with $5 billion and leave them no control. Logan's disappointment in his children is blatant, with Cox's pained expression letting the audience know before he tells his children that he is already one step ahead, they just could not see. Kendall asks what Logan would do with this settlement, 'put it on your pile?', to which Logan confirms, yes. Logan has dropped all pretence to care for the future of his children, telling them to 'make [their] own pile' and experience 'adversity, like me'. His resentment for the life he provided is such that he is intent on removing all assurances for them in his company, and with the phone on speaker he imparts the death blow: he and their mother have revised the terms of the divorce agreement, removing the children's veto power.

Powerless in the company, their futures in limbo, and any loyalty to a parental bond severed, the Roys are floored. This was the final act from Logan, joining with their mother in a reassertion of the legitimacy of financial self-interest over parental care in Succession. Logan lays it out plainly: this was the better plan for him, no-one else mattered. In a crushing exchange, Logan asks Roman, 'What've you got in your fucking hand?' to which Roman, eternally desperate for his father's love, replies, 'I dunno, fucking, love?' The subtext here is clear: 'why should I secure your futures?' 'I don't know, because we're your children?' If their family bond does not matter to Logan, it cannot matter to the children. But Roman has for too long been naïve on this point, failing to see that family obligation to care will never matter to Logan. Logan bellows, 'you come for me…with love?' and the silence rings out for a beat, registering the weight of the word, its persistent irrelevance within the room, within the Roy family. The Roys' world is a cut-throat

scramble to the top alone, where the person beside you making their own pile of billions and killing their competitors may feasibly be your own father.

The crucial takeaway from the final scene, though, is that in acting against their father, the Roys act like their father. And it might have worked, had Shiv's erstwhile-harmless husband Tom Wambsgans (Matthew Macfadyen) not pursued his own interests and betrayed his wife by telling Logan of their planned coup, inciting Logan's decision to revise the agreement. In a scene before the confrontation, we see Tom ask cousin Greg (Nicholas Braun) – source of comedic relief and a comparative tonic to the Roys – if he wants a 'deal with the devil'. Tom previously doted on Shiv, and Greg bumbled around between the cousins, but it is clear now that they are choosing their own path over previous loyalties. The fall of Tom and Greg is *Succession*'s resounding message: this is a poisonous mindset that none in the domain can escape. Moreover, the fact of Tom's betrayal being what re-affirmed Logan's superiority confirms that the homoeconomicus may be an outdated, prehistoric ideology, a neoliberal ghost story (Fleming, 2017) that cannot stand against the human need for connection, but it always wins. It is a ghost story that haunts down the generations, severing family loyalties, and ethics of care and love, to pursue solitary success. In the scope of Succession, at least, which Armstrong works hard to confine to the Roy's upper strata of boardrooms and private jets, economic self-interest perpetuates because it is an inherited, diseased mindset — the only thing that binds the Roy members together.

Corporate Care

Succession uses family relationships as a prism through which to explore the place of care and obligation on the journey to economic success. The resonant message is that even within the confines of family, the neoliberal subject will always act in self-interest: care towards family members is captured as a necessary aspect of rearing a useful asset. With family ties mostly severed in the final episode of season three, we can reflect on the show's relationship to aged neoliberal ideologies. So too can we consider how corporations use care in the twenty-first century. What place is there for love and care in society? At its most misanthropic, *Succession* suggests that, like the optics of the Roy children coming together only to eventually fight it out for the top spot, care is something captured in contemporary neoliberalism for perpetual personal gain.

At the close of season three, it appears that the brand of care one may expect between family members has been abandoned. The fact that Logan 'won' points to the pervasiveness of the self-interested mindset. That the children and other extended family members act on the very same instinct as Logan under the guise of care suggests it is being repackaged. But family care could not continue in *Succession*: it is too messy, it gets in the way of progression, it ties characters too tightly to a myth of human connectedness and family obligation that stands at odds with competition, the lifeblood of the Roy family. Armstrong writes into the background of the show the near impossibility of any redemptive arc to the Roy family's apathy: Roman is suggested to be impotent; Shiv resists having children with Tom, and Kendall's relationship to his children is non-existent. There will be no next generation of Roys to elicit genuine care or to require the Roys to act in parental roles, therefore we can view the Roys as purely economic beings.

The Roys are products of a neoliberal system which their father has headed, and their stories are a marked reflection on the mutation of neoliberal care ethics in the modern age. As Rebecca Mead (2021, np.) notes, 'all the Roys have been poisoned by the toxic nature of the family fortune, and Armstrong refuses to impose on them the kind of artificial personal growth that fosters an easy bond with the audience'. Armstrong writes not an opposition to Logan as the neoliberal kingpin, but a re-assertion of its power, a chilling growing into neoliberalism, exploring its potential to capture even care rhetoric with the goal of self-betterment. What do these subjects do with the ideology that bore them, that set them up with millions? How do they care at all, without self-interest? They cover our eyes, *Succession* suggests, and make the reality of their apathy more palatable.

Commentators note that, in an allegorical turn which reflects US politics more broadly, it is unclear what Waystar stands for in the third season 'beyond its own preservation' (Bastani, 2021, np.). Aaron Bastani writes that 'the passing of power between Logan and his children is a totem for boomers and millennials – and their phoney war at the level of the elite,' a war 'phoney' because, ultimately, the elite interests will always serve the elite, regardless of generational difference. The interests of the Roys are the same, namely preserving the success of oneself. Preservation of an aged neoliberal ideology in *Succession* is tapping into whatever is currently fashionable, politically speaking. And that, in contemporary society, is care-washing: corporations commodifying care and empathy to stay relevant and improve their market capitalisation. Shiv and Kendall, most notably in their turn away from family formulations of care, indulge in what Andreas Chatzidakis and Jo Littler call:

> practices in which companies try to cleanse themselves from the connotations of corporate exploitation, and instead cathect their brand to a mood, an affect, an ethos, an idea of care. (2021, p. 2)

For the self-interested Roys, if corporate care is now *en vogue*, then they will adapt their business practices to reflect the body politic.

This type of care has only been emergent in brief flashes in *Succession*, so focused as it is on the inter-Roy relationships rather than those between the corporation and the wider world. As the children fracture from the company and therefore the family reality as defined by Logan, we see how they re-package care to remain relevant. One of the biggest storylines of season two, the reveal of a broad sexual assault scandal in the cruises division, is largely weaponised by Kendall early in season three as he brands himself a steward of the silenced. He shouts 'fuck the patriarchy' just in time for a paparazzi shot and appropriates the language of the politically engaged to appeal to the disenfranchised. This, however, is short-lived. At Shiv's Waystar town-hall to address the sexual assault allegations, Kendall orchestrates an interruption which sees Nirvana's 'Rape Me' playing out of loudspeakers, revealing his insincerity and poor taste. Like Logan, for Kendall this is all a game: who can care the most? He even admits that he is 'not a suicide bomber' – he would not go so far in his Waystar smear campaign as to impact the shareholder vote, and his place on the board. At his birthday party, he has a breakdown over the

façade of it all, admitting, 'this is pathetic…I wish I was home,' and his crusade to care fades once again into a more general antipathy towards Logan. Further avenues of thought could be dedicated to this kind of surface-level corporate care in the show.

As a final thought, I turn briefly to an aspect of *Succession* with lucrative potential that this paper has not explored due to the scope of my study: the obligation of the successful woman within a male-dominated family business. Shiv is all too aware of her position and potential to exploit the commodification of female bosses in corporate firms. Logan is aware of this too, dangling the CEO position in front of her, but can never seem to commit himself to the optics of care if it also means giving his daughter something that she wants. When Shiv refuses to side with Kendall in episode two, he reveals he wanted her only because '[she's] the girl, girls count double now,' saying that people see her as a 'token woman, wonk, woke snowflake – I don't think that but the market does'. All the Roys are aware of how they can use the optics of social responsibility and inclusivity to boost their market capitalisation, not for any sincere care for the future of the corporate landscape. *Succession* uses Shiv's pre-supposed moral superiority, though, only to paint a bleaker picture of the renewal of capitalist self-interest: the worst of the neoliberal elite will use sympathetic aspects of their identity that speak to a burgeoning social justice movement and market them to further their own prospects. Bastani highlights that:

> like Kendall, Shiv isn't that different to her father; it's simply the done thing for their generation to appeal outwardly to progressive sensibilities. (2021, np.)

Shiv's sympathies with social justice (working as a political advisor in season two for Gill Eavis, a Bernie Sanders stand-in) are an empty vessel without any care. Once she discovers that the company were spying on Kendall's children for sellable gossip, she professes, 'that's disgusting […] there's a line'. Yet, Shiv personally paid one of the cruise victims off to not testify against the company, thus pleasing Logan and saving her own back. Care can only go so far: it is down to the whims of the new breed homoeconomicus and their current business move to dictate its limits.

Succession presents a claustrophobic corporate environment wherein 'winning' is the end that justifies any means. This icy landscape is the Roys' all-consuming reality, crafted by a CEO that has never allowed himself to be seen as a father. The children struggle with their father's apathy before embodying it themselves to advance their own careers. If we do see any care or empathy in *Succession*, like the Roy children we must be quick to remind ourselves that in a larger world crafted by Logan Roy, there is always a bigger picture, a play, a game, to further one's own success. The moment this is forgotten, and one indulges in the myth of family connection, one misses the next move. In a relentless battle to the top, care optics are co-opted by father and children alike. Kendall tells his siblings that at Waystar, 'the milk's going sour,' but the institutional apathy is genetic: they have all drunk the milk.

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Orla Stevens
'Care Blanket' (2022)

'Care Blanket' started as a project collecting patterns seen in nature, and icons from daily walks - things you might see rurally, or in the city. It looks at the joy and headspace felt from the simplicity of walking in the outdoors. I initially got really into walking during university, when I was struggling with feelings of overwhelm, social anxiety and loneliness. This period in my life was the first time I had left home and I was finding the transition to university life difficult, filled with many social expectations that come along with the university experience.

'Care Blanket' builds upon the repetitive nature of walking, forming your own patterns with movement and daily observation, to celebrate the importance of daily adventure and time in nature – whatever that means for you, if that's climbing mountains or sitting in the park.

How can the contemporary ecogeographical short story facilitate reflections on our relationship with the nonhuman world, and move us towards practices of care?

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Abstract

If the literary-focused practice of ecocriticism can be considered a critical pedagogical tool for educating people on the issues of environmental degradation, whilst also promoting sustainable practices for future relationships between the human and the nonhuman world, then it is a practice that promotes care. This paper uses the critical framework of ecogeographical place as a chronotope, developing upon Mikhail M. Bakhtin's conceptualisation to propose that literature and criticism can bring human communities back to ecologically sustainable and nurturing relationships with the local landscape through promoting ideas on co-dependent enmeshment between the human and the nonhuman world. Developing one's knowledge of human relationships with the past, present and possible futures of an ecogeographical landscape fosters stronger ecological awareness, as readers become invested in the landscapes in which they live. This paper regards this movement as the development of readers' environmental consciousness. This ultimately leads to practices of greater environmental care.

Contemporary writers develop readers' environmental consciousness through stories based in ecogeographical locations. The short stories analysed in this paper include Mark Haddon's 'The Weir' set in the London suburbs, and Lucy Wood's 'Countless Stones', set in a coastal village in Cornwall. Both stories explore human relationships with the nonhuman world and highlight ecological concerns raised by conceptualising human and nonhuman relationships through anthropocentric modes of theorisation. Both stories oppose anthropocentric modes of thinking and present ecocentric relationships between the human and nonhuman world. This paper argues that the danger of the anthropocentric modes of theorisation opposed by Haddon and Wood is the engendering of greater alienation between the human and the nonhuman world. The power of the stories selected for this paper lies in their promotion of greater care towards the natural world by enabling readers to reconceptualise the environment from the perspective of the nonhuman, thus allowing them to engage empathetically with the nonhuman world.

Keywords: short story, nonhuman worlds, ecogeographical, entanglement, ecocentrism.

Introduction

This paper considers how the study of contemporary, ecogeographical short stories encourages readers to reflect on the importance of practices of care between the human and the nonhuman world in the early 2020s, a time of mass environmental degradation and crisis. In this paper, I argue that the twenty-first century marks the initiation of mainstream social awareness of ecological issues: western societies show enhanced awareness of endangered species and their extinction, environmental degradation, and the need for greater biodiversity. The American ecocritic, Glen Love, has labelled the twenty-first century the 'century of the environment' (2003, p.15), marking an important, ideological turning point from the denial of climate change ideologies in the 1980s and 1990s to the growing conscience and acceptance in the 2000s of the human impact on Earth's geology and ecosystems, thus leading to the eco-activism of the 2010s. In the year 2000 atmospheric scientists, Paul J. Crutzen and Eugene F. Stormer, proposed the concept of the 'Anthropocene', which has since been adopted by mainstream commentators and used across academic disciplines. In 'The "Anthropocene"' (2006), Crutzen defines the epoch as the catastrophic harm that 'the expansion of mankind' has caused to the planet through the exploitation of earth's resources:

> More than half of all accessible fresh water is used by mankind. Fisheries remove more than 25% of the primary production of the oceans [...]. In a few generations mankind is exhausting the fossil fuels that were generated over several hundred million years (Crutzen, 2006, p.14).

Crutzen argues that the term Anthropocene is important in developing what I identify as the environmental consciousness; it exposes the 'role that humans have played' in environmental degradation and climate change.

It is important to take Kathryn Yusoff's criticism into consideration when discussing the Anthropocene: she highlights the danger of the universal 'we' (2018, p.xxi) of the epoch. The Anthropocene imbues climate change with mainstream significance in the global north, but this is less true in places that have already been bearing the brunt of climate crisis. Yusoff makes readers aware that the universal 'we' (2018, p.xxi) enables the continuation of 'ecological racism' and 'racial-blindness' (2018, p.xii), which privileges Eurocentric and western philosophies and bodies. It simultaneously reproduces old colonial hierarchies resulting in the same black and brown bodies — 'the ghosts of Geology's epistemic and material modes of categorization' — 'tak[ing] up the violence of the earth' (2018, p.xii) by bearing the impact of climate disasters: the blowback of climate change. My criticism of short stories, practices of care and ecology in this paper focuses on climate change and its conversion to a mainstream ideology in the consciousness of the global north. In making reference to the reader, I refer to an Anglocentric reader in the global north.

This paper uses the concept of ecogeography (or the ecogeographical) as relating to both ecological and geographical aspects of the environment and applies it to Mikhail M. Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope. Bakhtin defines a chronotope as 'time space', which allows literary

critics to analyse how the 'intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships' is 'artistically represented in literature' (1981, p.84). Bakhtin goes on to state that in a chronotope, 'time [...] thickens [...and] becomes artistically visible', and space becomes 'charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history' (1981, p.84). By adding ecology and geography to time and space, this paper aims to demonstrate how applying an ecogeographical, ecocritical lens to literary texts can help readers conceptualise and visualise the impact that human behaviour has had on past, present and possible futures of a landscape. My close readings of the ecogeographical short stories 'The Weir' by Mark Haddon and 'Countless Stones' by Lucy Wood propose an ecocriticism that calls for the development of a widespread environmental consciousness here intended as an emotional response to a text that moves individual or larger audiences to re-examine their relationship with the natural world and begin to recognise the need for co-dependence between the human and the nonhuman world — sometimes even at the expense of giving up anthropocentric desires. I suggest that these aforementioned writers achieve this goal in their writing by exploring the dynamic on which such relationships of co-dependence are based.

One of the methods deployed by Haddon in 'The Weir' and Wood in 'Countless Stones' consists in envisaging ecocentrical thought as a conceptualisation of the feelings and emotions of the natural world, thus inciting debate and discussion on how the nonhuman and the human world function as a co-partnership. This idea is epitomised in the following two quotes from 'The Weir', where the protagonist Ian is being challenged by Kelly — the girl he rescued from drowning — to reconnect with and listen to the nonhuman world: 'Everything talks [...] trees, walls [...] this wood' (Haddon, 2016, p.337); 'Stones just repeat themselves [...] I'm a stone ... It's raining, it's raining', (Haddon, 2016, p.337). In confronting Ian on his disconnection from the nonhuman world, Kelly obliges him to rethink and reconceptualise his permeance on the earth; once Ian accepts that human life is ephemeral, he can assimilate the damaging relationship he has with his son and start to move on.

Simon Estok in his article 'Theorizing in a Space of Ambivalent Openness: Ecocriticism and Ecophobia' casually dismisses the complexities of human and nonhuman relationships; he believes these relationships privilege anthropocentric modes of thinking (2009, p.203). However, he fails to present readers with what ecocentric thinking or philosophy would entail. On the contrary, the power of Haddon and Wood's short stories is their ability to allow readers to experience — on an empathetic level — a view of the nonhuman world. This empathetic experience provides readers with a greater understanding of the nonhuman world and can challenge personal, prejudiced modes of thought. This development of the readers' environmental consciousness addresses what Estok proposes as a lack of 'an aesthetics of contact' in ecocriticism (2009, p.203). Both Haddon and Wood perform a movement of entanglement and enmeshment by positioning readers in the consciousness of the nonhuman world.

It is this exposure with the natural world that challenges the reader's anthropocentric modes of thought. I use exposure (to the nonhuman world) as a critical concept in this paper, as it is both a recurrent motif and a central axis to my theorisation of the environmental consciousness. I define the nonhuman world in this essay as the landscape, fauna and flora belonging to the local

environment in which the short stories are set. The development of an environmental consciousness is the 'radical', activist ecocriticism that Estok (2009, p.203) calls for; however, Estok and other like-minded, ecophobic critics consider this to be unrevolutionary and unradical. I would contest that the radical potential of developing an environmental consciousness is that it deters people from always privileging human needs and desires. It is only through founding a philosophy of co-dependence and care, where human needs are balanced against those of the nonhuman world, that we can implement ethics of care, placing social justice at the centre of political and social frameworks of the future.

Co-dependence: Theories of Care

This movement towards co-dependency by Wood and Haddon is important for readers and literary critics so that they can envisage the significance of balancing the needs of the nonhuman world and the human world in future political frameworks of care, expanding their consideration from solely focusing on anthropocentric needs to the incorporation and inclusion of the needs and rights of the nonhuman world as well. Adopting new thoughts on care for the nonhuman world is vital if humans are to begin to tackle the consequences of environmental degradation, contemporary climate apathy, and climate change. This paper argues that it is only through developing this philosophy of co-dependence, which I identify in Wood and Haddon's stories, that humans can begin to implement ethics of care (by putting social justice at the heart of future political, economic, and social agendas). Henceforth, humans can start to address and solve these environmental matters.

My concept of co-dependence — where the needs of humans, animals and natural landscapes are balanced in an entangled, enmeshed equilibrium — is a different movement from that proposed by deep ecology, based on Aldo Leopold's concept of 'land ethics' (2020, p.70) in his book *A Sand Country Almanac* (1949). This "deep ecology" creates dualistic hierarchies, where wild animals are privileged over domestic animals and the community is privileged over the individual. In my conceptualisation of co-dependence, everything exists in a balanced equilibrium — one set of needs is not privileged over another. This paper's theorisation of co-dependence between the human and the nonhuman world stems from Carol J. Adams & Josephine Donovan's theorisation of a feminine ethics for the care of animals in their book *The Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics: A Reader* (2007). Adams & Donovan's theorisation states that 'humans have a moral obligation' to care for animals and that we need to pay 'attention' to the 'individual suffering of animals', whilst also paying equal 'attention' to the 'political' and 'economic systems behind the suffering' (2007, p.2-3).

Adams & Donovan's ethics of care for animals is in turn based upon Carol Gilligan's concept of the feminine 'morality of responsibility' presented in her book *In a Different Voice* (1983). Gilligan's feminine 'morality of responsibility' claims that female ethics is 'concerned with the activity of care' and promoting ideas of taking 'responsibility', whilst developing positive 'relationships' in the world (1989, p.59). These positive relationships are conceptualised by Gilligan as sustaining a 'web of connections' to keep positive 'relationships intact' (1989, p.59). Gilligan's theorisation is the basis for my conceptualisation of the theoretical ideas of

entanglement and enmeshment. I build upon such ideas and suggest that instead of 'sustaining' the 'web' (1989, p.59) that keeps the human and the nonhuman world separate, we should move towards co-dependent entanglement and enmeshment — where the human world becomes a living part of the web and is as responsible for maintaining the nonhuman world as the nonhuman world is for maintaining the human world. It is only then that ethics of care can embody the concept of symbiosis between the human and the nonhuman and highlight the importance of the co-dependency that exists between the human and the nonhuman world. It is worth highlighting once again in the early 2020s — a time of environmental crisis — that the human and nonhuman world cannot exist or survive independently. This paper's theorisation of co-dependent entanglement and enmeshment also extends beyond Adams & Donovan's animal ethics of care by stating that humans have a moral obligation (2007, p.2-3) not only to animals, but to the entirety of the nonhuman world. I develop Adams & Donovan's concept of 'attention' (2007, p.2-3), integrating it with the idea of humans being entangled and enmeshed in the nonhuman world. It is only when humans recognise themselves as a living part of the natural world (with the same equal rights as the nonhuman world) that more people will reflect on the environmental destructiveness of anthropocentric behaviour that has privileged humans over the nonhuman world in political, social, and economic frameworks.

This paper argues that the strength of Haddon and Wood's short stories to bring about political change lies in their capacity to allow readers to empathetically experience the view of the nonhuman world. This empathetic experience elicits a greater understanding amongst its readers and often challenges their own prejudiced modes of anthropocentric thought; in turn, they undergo a change in their environmental consciousness, as they briefly experience the human world through the lived experience of the nonhuman world.

Post-Pastoral Enmeshment and Entanglement

Wood's short story 'Countless Stones' from her 2012 debut collection Diving Belles, and the short story 'The Weir' by Haddon from his 2016 award-winning collection The Pier Falls both construct a protagonist and a narrative voice that encapsulate contemporary alienation. In 'Countless Stones', readers follow the life of the protagonist: a thirty-something Rita who possesses an integral role within a small, Cornish, coastal community. Wood explores the deep, ecogeographical connection with the landscape in this community as the villagers take part in unexplained metamorphosis; they take turns to become the 'countless stones' that guard the village from danger: 'There were people from the town who had been standing up in the circle for years' (Wood, 2012, p.22).

Rita who is here reflecting on her life:

[...] had the vague feeling that if she got up and opened the curtains, she would see that the world had packed up and moved on without her during the night. (Wood, 2012, p.21)

She is slowly going through the metamorphosis of turning into a countless stone:

> The top layer of skin had started to dry out and soon it would harden like the brittle
> layer of sand that bakes and hardens on a beach. (Wood, 2012, p.20)

Wood juxtaposes the contemporary alienation Rita feels in her individual life, characterised by individual goals and relationships — 'Eight years was a long time; too long just to stop seeing somebody completely' (2012, p.23) — with her role in a community that cares and takes responsibility for one and another:

> After a while, somebody would let themselves in and turn off your heating [...] they
> would tidy things up and sort out the post. (2012, p.22)

Wood is critiquing contemporary alienation and the disconnection society feels from both the nonhuman world and from its local communities resulting from capitalist power structures of consumerism. This is exemplified through Rita settling for a home that leaves her dissatisfied:

> It wasn't the house she had expected to buy, it was cold and small and didn't let in
> much light, but it was what had come up. (Wood, 2012, p.25)

Rita purchases the house because she feels the pressure to conform to capitalist, developmental steps of maturity and independence, which are always attached to products (a car; a house; a bigger house when children arrive). Such products essentially increase dependency on capitalist power structures and instead of satisfying people's needs, leaves them dissatisfied. Lauren Berlant labels such capitalist, consumerist ideologies 'cruel optimism', as they attach optimistic 'desire' for a 'cluster of promises' to capitalist-produced and manufactured objects (2011, p.1). The inherent irony in these 'optimistic' desires of capitalism is that they will never be fulfilled (Berlant, 2011, p.1); these products reinforce capitalist power hierarchies that maintain the status quo — the rich and powerful exploiting the poor and the nonhuman world for profitable gain.

This paper contends that through Rita's metamorphosis (the literal personification of my ideas on entanglement and enmeshment of the human and the nonhuman world) into a countless stone, an indispensable part of a circle of stones that ward off evil from the village, Wood presents us with ecocentric modes of existence and counter-capitalist ideas on community. By transitioning from anthropocentric thought and chronology to ecocentric thought and chronology, Rita escapes the entrapment of an anthropocentric, capitalist existence. Her metamorphosis into a countless stone functions as the embodiment of a transition towards ecocentric thought that promotes co-dependency between the human and the nonhuman world: this presents the reader with ecocentric modes of being on the periphery of anthropocentric understanding and conceptualisation. My idea of ecocentric modes of being outside anthropocentric understanding is a post-pastoral movement. Terry Gifford identifies the post-pastoral in his book, *Pastoral: A New Critical Idiom* (1999). He defines the post-pastoral as 'a

mature, environmental aesthetic that recognises that some literature has gone beyond the closed circuit of pastoral and anti-pastoral to achieve a vision of an integrated, natural world that includes the human' (1999, p.148). The post-pastoral is concerned with the 'ecocentric repossession of [the] pastoral' that symbolises a shift from the 'representation of nature as a theatre for human events to representation in the sense of advocacy of nature as a presence for its own sake' (1999, p.148). The post-pastoral 'exemplifies the way this positioning of the self towards nature leads inevitably to a humbling that is a necessary requirement of the shift from the anthropocentric position of the pastoral to the ecocentric view of the post-pastoral' (Gifford, 1999, p.152). In 'Countless Stones', this post-pastoral movement is exemplified in the line: 'Breathing stopped, but there was a different kind of breathing' (Wood, 2012, pp.7). Wood supports Berlant's ideas on cruel optimism, as well as Gifford's ideas on the post-pastoral, by emphasising how Rita's life as a countless stone puts value into unproductive ways of being; thus, it moves away from the capitalist view of nature as something that must be productive and towards an appreciation of nature and humanity as surpassing productivity. Ultimately, Wood presents the reader with a new, post-pastoral ecocentric lens through her use of metamorphosis, the reoccurring motif of the countless stones and the story's ending.

This new, post-pastoral, ecocentric lens achieves two objectives. Firstly, Wood helps to develop her readers' environmental consciousness by promoting co-dependence between the human and the nonhuman world, free from anthropocentric biases. She also anticipates how mutual practices of care between the nonhuman and the human world could operate. The countless stones watch over the village and ward off evil, whilst the villagers oversee the properties and expenses of those villagers who have metamorphosised into the countless stones. This creates a circle of mutual care. Wood envisages this radical principle of mutual care — moving away from Leopold's ideas on 'human stewardship' that places the human as the most important agent in biological hierarchies of sentience (Leopold, 2020, p.71) — as one where the nonhuman world offers the same level of protection and care to the human world as the human world should offer to the nonhuman world. In equilateral principles, the human world would offer high levels of care to the nonhuman world but in reality, the human world often shows indifference to the nonhuman world and stereotypically, in neoliberal ideology, exploits the nonhuman world for commodities and profit.

Similarly, in his short story 'The Weir', Haddon explores contemporary alienation that has led to modern-day isolation and disconnection. The reader follows the life of Ian, a man in his early fifties who is disconnected from his drug addict son, Timothy, '(who) is somewhere nearby, a needle in his arm' (Haddon, 2016, p.325), and has let his marriage of over twenty years to Maria 'slip [...] away' (Haddon, 2016, p.324). Ian, like Rita, experiences alienation from contemporary society and is unable to relate to modern, individualistic, capitalist ideologies:

> The world shifting too fast in ways he doesn't understand, values he'd grown up with become vaguely comic: being a gentleman; respecting authority; privacy; stoicism; reticence. (Haddon, 2016, p.324-25)

Again, we observe the entanglement and enmeshment with the nonhuman world through Ian's exposure to the river as he tries to save an unknown girl from drowning in the weir:

> He realises how big the river is now that he is inside it, how strong, how lost the woman must be and how slim his chances are of finding her. (Haddon, 2016, p.328)

I argue that the river acts as a liminal space for Ian to reconnect with the world and to start to deal with the trauma of losing his son and wife. Ian's relationship with Kelly (the girl he saves from drowning) is the first real connection he has had with anyone in a long time: 'She reaches out [...] it is the first time anyone has touched him with anything approaching tenderness in years' (Haddon, 2016, p.331). It is Ian's friendship with Kelly, gained through his enmeshment with the nonhuman world, that inspires his epiphanic realisation of the importance of co-dependence:

> He's never thought of it this way, that lives are held in common, that we lose a little something of ourselves with every death. (Haddon, 2016, p.336)

I contend through my ecological reading that both Haddon and Wood create protagonists and narrative voices that symbolise contemporary alienation between the human and the nonhuman world to critique the dangers of contemporary apathy, whilst also illustrating how moving away from anthropocentric thought towards post-pastoral ecocentric thought promotes co-dependence and ideas on mutual care between the human and the nonhuman world.

Both Haddon and Wood use sudden, unexpected interjections of recurring, post-pastoral motifs in their stories as exemplified in this example from 'Countless Stones': 'Suddenly she was up on the cliffs [...] watching a buzzard rising and circling on its huge spread of wings' (Wood, 2012, p.22). There is a similar example in 'The Weir': 'Everything is suddenly back to normal, the dandelions, the clouds, the buzzard' (Haddon, 2016, p.327). I argue that these interjected, reoccurring, post-pastoral motifs function in both stories to present us with ecocentric thought in opposition to anthropocentric thought; it is this tense dichotomy that both Haddon and Wood want readers to explore in the development of their environmental consciousness.

Both writers also use the protagonist's exposure to ecogeographical features (the weir and the countless stones) as metaphors for promoting the entanglement of the human world with the nonhuman world. I also propose that Haddon and Wood use the anti-pastoral to present readers with realistic representations of the natural world, and therefore empower them to conceptualise and reconnect with modern landscapes and environmental issues. Gifford defines the anti-pastoral as the aesthetic of the Edenic-pastoral — the Edenic-pastoral being an aesthetic deriving from 16th century classical, literary forms characterised by 'motifs stemming from certain early Greek and Roman poems about country life: the life of the shepherd in particular' (1999, p.1) — that comes under scrutiny from an ecological viewpoint. Gifford gives the example of how an environmental activist might view Edenic-pastoral representations and imbues these representations with anti-pastoral meanings: 'a Greenpeace supporter might use the term as a criticism of the tree poem if it ignored the presence of pollution or the threat to urban trees from

city-developers' (1999, p.3). Gifford develops this idea by suggesting that the 'difference between the literary representation of nature and the material reality would be judged to be intolerable by the criteria of ecological concern' (1999, p.3), leading to the concept of Edenic-pastoral being used in a pejorative sense and the anti-pastoral offering a counter movement through providing realistic descriptions of the nonhuman world. In 'Countless Stones', Wood uses tactile, bodily imagery — 'She didn't want to think about her teeth turning into stones; the awful, dry crumbliness of it' (Wood, 2012, p.20) — as an anti-pastoral movement to ground Rita's metamorphosis in realism instead of magical realism, and also to conceptualise ecocentric co-dependence as a realistic alternative to anthropocentric frameworks. In 'The Weir', Haddon juxtaposes anti-pastoral imagery of birth ('semen') and mortality ('corpses') to challenge anthropocentric ideas on human permanency, reminding readers that they are part of natural cycles that do not privilege the human world over the nonhuman world: 'He can smell the May blossom, the same chemicals in semen and corpses so he read the other day' (Haddon, 2016, p.323).

Wood and Haddon's exploration of the shift from anthropocentric thought to ecocentric thought comes to full fruition in the ambiguous, post-pastoral endings of their short stories, which seek to challenge readers. I claim that this move promotes the enmeshment and entanglement of the nonhuman and human world in an equilibrium of mutual co-dependence of care. I will closely analyse these two endings below. The first passage is from 'Countless Stones':

> She let her thoughts wander and they swooped upwards like birds, so now she thought of a bird flying round a room, now she thought of someone singing, of marbles, of someone laughing in their sleep, of a bird flying round a room, of one lovely eye moving, of the wind, of lichen, a buzzard circling, a single snowflake, thrift, lichen and the wind. (Wood, 2012, p.38.)

Through her use of the zoomorphic simile 'swooped upward like birds', Wood presents the reader with the figurative representation of the shift from anthropocentric thought to ecocentric thought. The verb 'swooped', coupled with the animalistic imagery of the 'birds' (a symbol of the nonhuman world), is arguably Rita escaping the rigid structures of anthropocentric thought, where ideas must be ordered logically. The linearity of anthropocentric thought is shattered both figuratively and structurally as Rita's thoughts are shattered into entangled and enmeshed memories. The fragmented list of memories that constitutes the story's ending escapes anthropocentric logic, as its components cannot be analysed individually; they can only be considered as an enmeshed whole. I propose that this represents a movement towards post-pastoral, ecocentric thought and mutual co-dependence between the human and nonhuman world, as human life is conceptualised as a whole instead of single, linear, developmental portions of biographical time. Wood structurally represents this movement from anthropocentric to ecocentric thought through her use of syntax, which physically captures this movement on the page. The linearity of anthropocentric thought, usually captured in rigid, syntactical structures, is challenged by Wood through her use of the final, long, run-on sentence,

which gradually loses its syntactical sense until all logic is lost. Wood moves away from whole units of anthropocentric thought — 'she thought of a bird flying round a room' — until all that remains at the end of the sentence are single, fragmented words that defy anthropocentric thought: 'thrift', 'lichen', 'wind'. I suggest these single, isolated words are the physical embodiment of the ecocentric thoughts of a countless stone. By tracing Rita's metamorphosis into one of such stones, Wood enables readers to view the world through nonhuman eyes.

Similarly, 'The Weir, Haddon diverts from anthropocentric thought towards post-pastoral, ecocentric thought:

> He still dreams of the river, the thunder of the weir, the currents unfurling downstream. May blossom and cirrus clouds. He is no longer drowning. No one is drowning. Though they will all go down into the dark eventually. Him, Maria, Kelly, Timothy… And the last few minutes will be horrible but that's OK, it really is, because nothing is wasted and the river will keep on flowing and there will be dandelions in spring and the buzzard will still be circling above the wasteland. (Haddon, 2016, p.347)

In my ecological reading, Haddon employs the fatalistic metaphor of the 'dark' followed by the list of personal pronouns and culminating in ellipsis to signify a movement away from anthropocentric thought towards post-pastoral, ecocentric thought, highlighting the symbiosis that exists between the human and nonhuman world. The erasure of all human pronouns after the ellipsis signifies the shortness of the human lifespan compared to ecogeographical time. Through Estok's ecophobic lens, this could be read as an ominous, ecological warning that the natural world will survive after the extinction of humans. However, in my reading of post-pastoral entanglement and enmeshment, I interpreted this erasure as a movement towards idyllic, ecocentric thought, where natural ecosystems function in harmony and, as Haddon states, 'nothing is wasted' (Haddon, 2016, p.347). My reading is reinforced by the triumphant, seasonal imagery of dandelions returning in spring, suggesting that natural ecosystems will function long after our human lives have come to an end. The final animal imagery of the buzzard circling (a symbol of the nonhuman world) is arguably an image of hope, thus suggesting that humans can find redemption in the nonhuman world when willing to exist in harmonious co-dependence. Wood and Haddon, through entangling and enmeshing the human world with the nonhuman world in their short stories, envisage how mutual co-dependence and mutual care between the human and the nonhuman could potentially function in possible future relationships.

Conclusion

Throughout this paper, and in my close readings of the contemporary British short stories 'The Weir' and 'Countless Stones', I trace what I identify as a contemporary literary movement away from anthropocentric thinking (positioning the human world above the nonhuman world) and towards ecocentric thinking (promoting mutual co-dependence between the human and the

nonhuman world) and towards ecocentric thinking (promoting mutual co-dependence between the human and the nonhuman world). I expound this movement by investigating how Haddon in 'The Weir' and Wood in 'Countless Stones' envision post-pastoral ecocentric thought to conceptualise the feelings and emotions of the natural world. The strength of their short stories is their ability to allow readers to empathetically experience the view of the nonhuman world and thus develop feelings of care towards the nonhuman world. This empathetic experience, free from anthropocentric prejudices, develops readers' environmental consciousness by allowing them to conceptualise the challenges that climate change and environmental degradation present not only to their futures, but also to the future of the nonhuman world, reinforcing the concept that symbiosis does exist between the human and the nonhuman world.

I hypothesise that the outcome of this modern, literary movement in contemporary British short story is that more writers, readers and critics will begin to move away from harmful, extreme modes of representation and conceptualisation of the nonhuman world, such as ecophobia and the Edenic-pastoral. These harmful representations arguably lead to contemporary relationships of alienation and apathy between the nonhuman and the human world. Through my close readings of exposure, entanglement and enmeshment, I encourage a move towards literary criticism and representations that envisage how mutual co-dependence and ethics of care between the human and the nonhuman world might work in possible future relationships. The value of literature in tackling some of the challenges of climate crisis and environmental degradation is its ability to allow readers to experience the world through other people's eyes and, with respect to the short stories selected for this paper, through the eyes of the natural world. This ability to revisualize and reconceptualise the natural environment from the perspective of the nonhuman world, allows readers to engage empathetically with environmental issues, free from the biases and prejudices of anthropocentric privileging. Through this empathetic reconnection, readers develop what this paper has termed an environmental consciousness, as they emotionally reinvest in possible, positive futures that oblige them to re-examine their relationship with the nonhuman world and hopefully move towards practices of care.

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