Advances in Literary Study

https://www.scirp.org/journal/als
Editorial Board

Dr. Yousef M. I. Awad University of Jordan, Jordan
Prof. Barbara Bennett North Carolina State University, USA
Prof. Vladimir Biti University of Vienna, Austria
Prof. Albrecht Classen University of Arizona, USA
Prof. Rebecca Crump Louisiana State University, USA
Prof. Nancy C. DeJoy Michigan State University, USA
Prof. Femi Euba Louisiana State University, USA
Prof. William Franke Vanderbilt University, USA
Prof. Carl Freedman Louisiana State University, USA
Prof. P. Kusuma Harinath Sri Venkateswara University, India
Dr. Matthias Hausmann University of Vienna, Austria
Prof. Penelope M. Kelsey University of Colorado, USA
Prof. Mary Jo Muratore University of Missouri-Columbia, USA
Prof. Armin Schwegler University of California, Irvine, USA
Prof. R. Allen Shoaf University of Florida, USA
Dr. Alain Lawo Sukam Texas A & M University, USA
Dr. Esther Gimeno Ugalde University of Vienna, Austria

Academic Editor

Dr. Hongbin Dai Xiamen University, China
# Table of Contents

**Volume 7 Number 4**  
**October 2019**

- **Communication as a Dialectical Engagement with Becoming and the Last Lesson of Don Miguel de Unamuno**  
  R. W. Kenny……………………………………………………………………………………………………………123

- **Maternal Love and Freedom under Slavery—Deconstruction of the Female Subjectivity in *Beloved***  
  S. T. Xiong, Y. H. Fang………………………………………………………………………………………………155

- **Praising a Global Identity in Nadine Gordimer’s *The Pickup***  
  D. N. Tano……………………………………………………………………………………………………………164

- **Writing Slowness in J. M. Coetzee’s *Slow Man***  
  C. Komenan……………………………………………………………………………………………………………176

- **Learning to Improve: Report of a Three-Year Capacity-Building Project Leveraging Professional Development + Coaching to Improve Third-Grade Reading Outcomes**  
  D. D. Paige, G. S. Smith, T. Magpuri-Lavell…………………………………………………………………………193

- **From Literature to Alternate Reality Games: Prerequisites, Criteria, and Limitations of a Young Adult Novel’s Transformational Design for Educational Purposes**  
  E. Moula, K. Malafantis………………………………………………………………………………………………224
Advances in Literary Study (ALS)

Journal Information

SUBSCRIPTIONS


Subscription rates:
Print: $59 per issue.
To subscribe, please contact Journals Subscriptions Department, E-mail: sub@scirp.org

SERVICES

Advertisements
Advertisement Sales Department, E-mail: service@scirp.org

Reprints (minimum quantity 100 copies)
E-mail: sub@scirp.org

COPYRIGHT

Copyright and reuse rights for the front matter of the journal:
Copyright © 2019 by Scientific Research Publishing Inc.
This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY).
http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

Copyright for individual papers of the journal:
Copyright © 2019 by author(s) and Scientific Research Publishing Inc.

Reuse rights for individual papers:
Note: At SCIRP authors can choose between CC BY and CC BY-NC. Please consult each paper for its reuse rights.

Disclaimer of liability
Statements and opinions expressed in the articles and communications are those of the individual contributors and not the statements and opinion of Scientific Research Publishing, Inc. We assume no responsibility or liability for any damage or injury to persons or property arising out of the use of any materials, instructions, methods or ideas contained herein. We expressly disclaim any implied warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose. If expert assistance is required, the services of a competent professional person should be sought.

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

For manuscripts that have been accepted for publication, please contact:
E-mail: als@scirp.org
Communication as a Dialectical Engagement with Becoming and the Last Lesson of Don Miguel de Unamuno

Robert Wade Kenny

Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, Canada
Email: doctorwadekenny@hotmail.com

Abstract

The present essay includes the only extant translation of a famous address given by Don Miguel de Unamuno y Jugo, at the University of Salamanca’s annual, course-launching ritual. Given that the event’s festivities would include his formal resignation from the school’s rectorship on that day, followed by his honorary appointment as Lifetime Rector, Unamuno composed his speech to sum up his soul’s literary journey through this world. In it, the scholar and poet effectively renders his chosen life as a rhetorical vocation—consequently, he makes claims such as “man is the animal that speaks,” (a claim that resonates with Kenneth Burke) and “the spoken word is action” (a claim which is at the heart of a 100-year tradition in speech act theory). This being so, scholars of communication might be stimulated by his ideas and influenced by his relevance to rhetoric and communication. A prefatory essay, “Communication as a Dialectical Engagement with Becoming” is provided by the translator along with a copy-corrected version of the open-source Spanish original of the Unamuno translation in an Appendix.

Keywords

Unamuno, La Palabra, Interior Language, Monolects, Heteroglossia, Yo, Vital Scepticism, Rhetoric of Philosophy

1. Introduction

The following translation of an address given in 1934 by Don Miguel de Unamuno Y Jugo is presented to direct an English-speaking audience to a great master of Spanish letters. On the world stage, Unamuno is best known for The Tragic Sense of Life, which still stands as one of the monumental European es-
says of the twentieth century. He was a novelist, poet, academic, political activist, and intellectual. He read English, French, Italian, Latin, Greek, Norwegian, Danish, German, Portuguese, Basque, and Catalan. His knowledge of philosophy and literature was thorough and exemplary; he had, for example, translated, into Spanish, Hegel’s Logic, at the age of eighteen.

The speech presented here is heavily referenced in one chapter of The Rhetoric of Existence by Allen Lacy (1967), and thus serves as the proper and thorough source from which English speaking scholars might consider Lacy’s claims. Also and more generally, however, the complete translation provides all other readers an opportunity to consider the thought Unamuno’s essay organizes—it is a work that stands in his opus where the “Definition of Man” essay stands in Kenneth Burke (1966). To be blunt, no one has established Unamuno’s rightful position in speech studies, neither within the theoretical literature, nor the historical. This translation is one of several forthcoming contributions made by this author to correct the oversight; and should rhetorical studies, appropriately, turn some attention to Unamuno, this translation will play a foundational role in anything that is discussed.

2. Prefatory Essay: “Communication as a Dialectical Engagement with Becoming”

2.1. The Social Construction of Language and the Crisis of Individuation

Unamuno believed that becoming an individual was the most challenging and important task of human existence; a belief that is inextricably entwined with his understanding of spoken language. If he had to solve Christ’s riddle about the camel passing through the eye of a needle in the Oedipus/sphinx modality, he would surely say, “It means you have to strip off the burden of every wrong-headed idea that is given to you in your life; that you must keep only those that you have with determination refined and embraced as your own, so that you become the concentrated essence of yourself, which is thought, distilled from the speaking you have heard across your lifetime, existing now as nothing other than your perfect soul, which you have transformed, during your existence as the man of flesh and bone, into a filament of purified ideas that can be passed through a needle and used to stitch the garment of the one, eternal God.”

According to Unamuno “thought is interior language” (Unamuno, 1984: p. 29) made possible by virtue of our prior experience of an outward language that is found within both the everyday chatter of the ambient idiom and the formal expressiveness of a national tongue (Unamuno, 1984: p. 29). Of course, this claim also obliges Unamuno to assert that “thought and logic are social.” (Unamuno, 1984: p. 101). We would have then, assuming this was the end of the matter, what later authors (e.g., Mannheim, 1952) have since named the “soci-

Hughes (1978), for example, tries to develop a platform for educational studies by reading Lacy's interpretation without accessing the original speech.

The passage is an imaginary one which is based on Unamuno’s philosophy of language and is provided as an explanatory mechanism to make the philosophical concept under discussion more clear.
ology of knowledge”, a theory that would leave ideas no more than the pragma that arise from within the socio-phenomenological experience of human agents. Transcendence and ideas of truth would collapse under this admission; and we would be compelled to accept that neither our languages, nor the thought that arises within us in the forms given to us by languages, live originally in the mind of God. Human language and human thought would come, then, to be regarded as regional experiences, separated from each other, as people are, across the oceans, and rivers, and mountains that serve as barriers, not only between their bodies but their spiritual nature as well. Therefore, even a great philosopher, being first and ultimately a social agent, would be capable of no more than “unearthing and developing the secular metaphors of his own language.” (Ferrater, 1962: p. 88).

The notion that language and the thoughts it gives are social then, that they migrate from one person to another, from one village to another, from one province to another, and from one nation to another consequently suggests that language is both imperfect and fundamentally in conflict with any other person who engages with it, as my sentence here may not be consonant with the thoughts the present reader already experiences. It is a consideration that problematizes notions such as 1) that one person can ever understand another, 2) that one person can ever agree with another, 3) that one person can ever have one’s own thought, and 4) that societies can ever come to accord.

2.2. Dialectic as the Pathway to Both Individuation and Truth: The Emergence of the Yo

The issue of a multiplicity of monolects is akin to Bakhtin’s notion of heteroglossia, though its resolution is actually a strategy derived from the dialectical thinking of Unamuno’s beloved Hegel. That resolution begins with the postulate that, whereas we all speak our own and several ways, we correspondingly intrude upon the mental life of our social cohort via our distinct ways of speaking, imposing a cacophony of language-styles, references, and values not necessarily held by individual and collective listeners. For the novelist, this imposes the compositional challenge of holding apart, within the mind, these distinct voices, so that they can then be rendered as characters, including narrators, within

To a great extent Unamuno found his theory of self-emergence from considerations of Hegel, but his innovative assembly of that idea can be seen as one that is derived from his specialty in philology in which it is demonstrated that “dialectical diversions, like all language changes, are directly due to innovations.” (Pei, 1965: p. 50). Such regional language “innovations” challenge the social force that normalizes speech patterns, creating original ways of speaking that may move across vast regions of expression until its popular usage pressures “the people who direct the nation’s linguistic policies...to determine whether the innovation shall be considered as forming part of the standard language.” (Pei, 1965: p. 50). Even where that is not the outcome, however, the innovation may preserve its life in the regions that venture to use it, under the heading of dialect, among which there are so many associated with the Spanish language. In the basic concept of dialect, that is to say, we see the idea that those who are given a manner of speaking tend at the same time to shape it to their purposes, against whatever authority the original gift of a language imposes. Unamuno effectively saw within this normative philological observation the potential to extend the idea, conceiving the notion that the ideas implicit in a language could be accepted by a people but also those recipients could innovate upon those “ideas” to their own purposes. In this way, the theory of language as social order is subject to a pressure in the direction of re-ordering from below.
a text (i.e., heteroglossia). For a philosopher, on the other hand, or even a novelist who is not in the middle of writing fiction (or any other sensible person, for that matter), these different voices, now internalized, gather the individual’s mental effort in a direction that seeks order, they impel the mind to engage in the natural process of rendering from this “noise” a sensible symphony of words and ideas, regardless that they came originally from others, just as one composes one’s own song by setting aside any background noise or irrelevant melodies created by others. Given Unamuno was so deeply taken with Hegel, we might put it thus: to the extent any person encounters various ways of speaking, that person will engage those now internal and discordant voices as a sort of internal argument or contestation; and the strain of these differences will perpetuate such cycles of idea-contestation, akin to the notion specific to the Hegelian dialectic (thesis/antithesis), bringing about a compulsion to resolve (synthesis), which ultimately positions the individual as a stance taker, as in the expression this is what I stand for, or I am. This is the essence of what Unamuno refers to when he mentions the Yo in his own writing. While it is commonly no more than the term used for self-referentiality as a subject (much as we would say “I am going to the store.”), the Yo, for Unamuno, is a philosophical achievement—a point in self-development that one reaches by accepting the challenge of making-sense of all the discordant inner-language that one faces. Thus, a teenager can watch highly romanticized television advertisements for military careers and say, “I want to be a soldier.” At this point, the parent may take the young person to a facility for injured veterans, so that the adolescent may be confronted by former soldiers shaping ideas about war in their speech. To be sure, after spending an afternoon with these people, hearing their stories, the young person may still say, “I want to be a soldier.” But Unamuno would not see the two statements as identical, regardless that the same words were used in both cases. His philosophical understanding of the Yo would cause him to suggest that the first of the two statements involved no genuine subject position beyond a mimetic voice parroting what had been spoken within the advertisement, as if identity were nothing more than appropriation and impersonation. On the other hand, after the visit to the veteran’s hospital, the interior language (thought) the boy was given by the advertisement would surely clash with the new interior language.

The demand for consistency in social reason, however, is subverted in advance by the complex daily social environment in which an individual is expected to constantly migrate-and-occupy various moral, conventional, discursive, and behavioral modalities, where failure to do so results in the loss of role and status, as well as its corresponding relational and economic consequences (Kenny, 2010: p. 223). No doubt this is why expressions such as “I don’t know who I am. Everything about me is a lie,” has become a virtual mantra in some psycho-therapeutic offices. Indeed the clinical version of this as a defense mechanism has been identified by Grotstein (1977) and others as “splitting”, but it is also a normative cognitive-emotive performance expectation wherever social orders are micro-assembled or fragmented, a pressure that diminishes the tendency of any interior monologue or subject to encounter another internal monological modality. The strategy is socially efficient because it facilitates the inconstancy that is compulsory in complex social networks, while at the same time it suppresses or obviates the strain of maintaining a morally constant character. Yet this dialectic between being a person and being many persons is a paradox that cannot be resolved by postmodernity. Often championed, the celebration of not-being-a-self (Doyle-McCarthy, 2017) turns bitter where constancy of idea and commitment is required.
(thought) he gained by talking with the soldiers. If the young man listened to both voices, and struggled with those voices, and finally arrived at a resolution of what had been two internal voices, Unamuno would be satisfied that the second utterance had arisen as the consequence of a genuine resolution and commitment to a subject position. To reach that point, to be a Yo, is at the foundation of Unamuno’s work.

It is indeed with this understanding in mind that Unamuno formulated his own presentational methods. Recognizing that the purification of thought involved the clashing of ideas, and not the swallowing of them whole, he says:

*My intent has been, is, and will continue to be, that those who read my works shall think and meditate upon fundamental problems, and has never been to hand them completed thoughts. I have always sought to agitate and, even better, to stimulate, rather than to instruct. Neither do I sell bread, nor is it bread, but yeast or ferment* (Unamuno, 1945: p. 8).

The proposition is a stunning one for it makes clear that Unamuno never sought to give us his ideas as answers, but as provocations to answer for ourselves by exploring deeper answers that are particularly our own. It is, all in all, an idea worth contemplating for some time, in that we have seen the general social failure of this ambition, and the way it has expressed itself in mass culture—something Ortega y Gasset (1929) pointed out even as Unamuno wrote, providing us the notion of a mass man, so comfortable within ideological cacophonies that he glorifies them as the very name of his era (i.e., post-modernity). This new humanity, which Ortega and Unamuno saw (their most determining point of agreement) was a humanity uninterested, incapable, possibly contemptuous, and even opposed to the notion of a determining or defined position in a world that

---

5In this sense, José Ortega y Gasset is decidedly in error when he claims that his fundamental contribution, *yo soy mi y mi circunstancias* (I am me and my circumstances) represents his original contribution to philosophical thinking. It appears that Unamuno was working along the same terms.

6e.g.,

*My subject is this: today people constantly talk of laws and law, the state, the nation and internationalism, public opinion and public power, good policy and bad, pacifism and jingoism, my country and humanity, social justice and social injustice, collectivism and capitalism, socialization and liberalism, individual and the collective, and so on and so on. And they not only talk, in the press, at their clubs, cafés, and tavern, they also argue. And they not only argue, they also fight for the things that these words designate. And once, started fighting, they kill each other—by hundreds, by thousands, by millions. It would be ingenuous to suppose that, in what I have just said, I refer to any specific nation. It would be ingenuous, because the supposition would be equivalent to believing that these ferocious performances are confined to particular parts of our planet; when, on the contrary, they are a universal phenomenon that is progressively spreading and by which very few of European and American peoples will succeed in remaining unaffected. Doubtless the cruel conflict will be more mortal among some than among others and it may be that one or another will possess the inspired serenity necessary to reduce the havoc to a minimum. Because certainly conflict is not inevitable; but no less certainly it is very difficult to avoid. Very difficult indeed, because to avoid it will require the collaboration of many factors that differ, both qualitatively and in importance—splendid virtues, together with humble precautions.

One of these precautions—humble, I repeat but obligatory if a country is to pass unscathed through these terrible times—is somehow to contrive that a sufficient number of persons in it shall be thoroughly aware of the great degree to which these ideas (let us call them ideas)—all these ideas about which there is all this talk and fighting and arguing and slaughter—are grotesquely confused and superlatively vague (Ortega, 1956: pp. 161-162).
celebrates (e.g. “My truth”) non-integrated differences (even within the self)—a
humanity that existed as a form of mental lassitude, of indiscipline, thanks to the
pressure of other internalized voices arising from phenomena such as propa-
ganda and advertising; indeed, even a humanity that could be conceived as a
spontaneously emergent gathering of single-minded drones of capitalism, indus-
dustry, politics, or the state, a mass, easily hypnotized, by one of those pro-
grammed, interior voices, to fall into the robotic self that its language de-
mands. And, of course, this was the humanity that would bring Spain to a
bloody precipice a few years later.

Unamuno believed that the general condition he described could be overcome
by disciplined thought—that a critical listener could chisel the imperfections
from the surrounding, rough-surfaced voices, through dialectical engagement
with them, ultimately carving thereby his or her own Yo, finding thereby a
unique and ownmost self that always stands in the midst of such discrepancies of
utterances and dialects. In the same way, Unamuno believed that people could
do this with each other. To Unamuno, “words… like human beings… live in a
constant state of war, of tension, of conflict;” (Ferrater, 1962: p. 88) and he
believed that this tension, already existing within a person and indeed within a
language (Pei, 1965: p. 50), could necessitate an exercise in reason as the negoti-
ation of already internalized conflicts. Thus, he was committed to the relation-
ship between language and thought, holding that the true individual was a per-
son fluent in various languages and/or dialects; therefore already compelled to
engage in a thinking that occurs as the internal debate that he refers to as vital
scepticism (Unamuno, 1913: p. 131).

No single internal voice can confer that genuine thinking, however. For ex-
ample, with regard to a person’s cosmopolitan and rural idiom the rector says
that, “Both tendencies are like two pairs of glasses modifying correct sight; one
of them shortsighted, the other of them farsighted. And you see just as poorly
through one pair as the other.” (Unamuno, 1945: p. 60) Unamuno, consequent-
ly, could not regard formal speech as a stand-alone solution to either the prob-
lems associated with linguistic diversity or the problems of cultural variance.
And, to be direct, he did not regard these differences as problems; rather, he
championed them as conditions for the refinement of both speech and thought.
For Unamuno then, a grand style that is embellished and culturally
sophisticated finds itself balanced, in his work, against a style of speaking that

---

5This is something akin to the universal speech act specified by Jürgen Habermas—not that they are
identical, but they might have, as Unamuno would joyfully cry out about any two ideas, an interesting
conversation with each other.

6How close this is to Kenneth Burke’s notion of perspective by incongruity and the double vision he
experienced while writing about it in Permanence and Change.

7In this sense, Unamuno’s vital scepticism is cousin to Marshall McLuhan’s concept of the probe,
which he uses to demote the authority of his own utterances by suggesting they are invitations to
wondering rather than facts to be remembered—another version of the idea that language can be
used to introduce genuine thinking rather than shutting it down. On this concept of the probe, so
similar to Unamuno’s vital scepticism, McLuhan says, “I’m not interested in my statements. I don’t
is unsophisticated, yet cultured and deeply rooted in the individual’s spirit. *Formal* grammar, for example, means less to him than the *vital* grammar that people take up through the experience of living; and that is why he says “Grammar does not teach speaking or proper writing.” (Unamuno, 1958: p. 713) Rather, proper speaking can only be for Unamuno the result of being amongst others in one’s community, where he places the home of language, a home that might be described with, but not built upon, formal grammatical principles—a notion that resonates with Gerry Philipsen’s (1997) more-recent speech code theory.

2.3. Unamuno’s Other Ideas Relevant to the Following Translation

1) Unamuno precedes many of our disciplinary markers in his own work. Consider, for example, the words originally presented in his much earlier inaugural address of 1900, over a century ago, and thirty-four years before the day he repeats them in this translated lecture:

> Spoken language, I say. You might superficially grasp how a language can live, but you will never grasp this idea with active and creative comprehension unless you open your ears to the sounds of your own region, unless you direct yourself faithfully and attentively to the idioms of the populace—to what they say and to their sayings; to all that so-called barbarism, that has been customarily kept outside intellectual consideration, thereby making the tongue a product of a literary pact subject to academic prescription (Unamuno, 1958: p. 496).

Of similar relevance, he says, as early as 1913:

> A language, in effect, is a potential philosophy. Platonism is the Greek language which speaks through Plato, developing in him its ancient metaphors. Scholasticism is the philosophy of the dead Latin of the Middle Ages struggling against the various vernacular languages. French discourses through Descartes, German through Kant and Hegel; English through Hume and John Stuart Mill. The logical point of departure for all philosophical speculation is not the “I”, nor is it representation (Vorstellung), that is, the world as it immediately appears to the senses, but rather is it a mediate or historical representation, humanly elaborated and given us principally in the language through which we know the world (Unamuno, 1984: p. 310).

With such commitments, commitments that effectively postulate a rhetoric of philosophy, and consequently a rhetoric of science as well, Unamuno inevitably becomes a provocative thinker for scholars of rhetoric.

2) Because Unamuno extends his communication-thinking model into a communication-thinking-acting model, he is also able to discuss the ultimate effects of ways of speaking upon the motivations, political (in particular) or otherwise, for a people. That is why he announces in this essay “that there is no separation of the spoken word from the deed.” Unamuno believes that clearer language leads to clearer thoughts, hence clearer motives—in other words he effectively pro-

---

10The idea resonates with Richards & Ogden (2007) notion of the proper meaning superstition, as well as their famous mantra: words don’t mean, people do.
vides a platform for a linguistically determined ethical theory. He also recognizes that unclear language leads to unclear thought, which leads to unclear motivation; hence that language becomes increasingly pathological as its terms become vaguer. For Unamuno then, any pathology of language ultimately produces pathological thinking, acting, and community; and, in this sense, language and emotion are also fundamentally intertwined. Unamuno can therefore say that “consciousness is a disease,” (Unamuno, 1984: p. 22) but he believes that a critical relationship with speech, in its various manifestations, relieves the symptoms:

*Reason… is a social product. It owes its origin, perhaps, to language. We think articulately, that is, reflectively, thanks to articulate language, and this language arose from the need to communicate our thoughts to our neighbors. To think is to talk with oneself, and each of us talks to himself because we have had to talk with another.* (Unamuno, 1984: p. 29).

Indeed, Unamuno believes that, “The world, what we call the world, the ‘objective’ world, is a tradition… given… from a complex of ideas, images, notions, perceptions and so on, embodied in the language and transmitted to us by our forebears.” (Unamuno, 1984: p. 161). To make such a statement (originally in 1913) is to be on the cutting edge of intellectual history—more than a decade in advance of Heidegger’s characterization of world, in *Being and Time.*

### 2.4. General Considerations When Reading

1) The following speech, which has become known as *Unamuno’s Last Lesson* was, indeed, his last in a cumulative intellectual sense. He had about two years earlier returned triumphantly from exile, once more a *cause célèbre*, following the ousting of Primo de Rivera. Soon, however, he would stand before a podium and oppose Franco’s cronies; and this would have its own consequences—he simply could not lie down and play dead (Portillo, 1984). On this occasion, however, he is not so political and caustic as he had been, and would be about two years later, on the day that Rudd refers to as “his day of destiny,” (Rudd, 1976: p. 294) when he spoke out against one of Franco’s generals from a stage where Franco’s wife was sitting. By contrast to that day of such momentous significance in Spain (Kenny, 2019), Unamuno treats intellectual matters first, here on the day of this presented-speech—language, in particular. He attempts to sum up critical aspects of his thinking and to fashion a thread which weaves through the fabric of his intellectual life; and, in particular, to guide the audience along the pathway described here, a path that refines the thought of the individual Yo as well as the community, the province, and the nation, to say nothing of the human race. Hence he will say to his audience in this speech:

*Each of us must form, and reform, and transform his proper dialect, individu-

11Yet this is a notion that is broader than the Socratic pyxugogia/elenchus, the Socratic method that engages with the distinctly confounded idea by pointing out its inconsistent relationships with other ideas. Unamuno is less focused on the muddled thought than the muddled self or a muddled people. Moreover, the strategy he describes is part of what he regards as a normal mental life, where Socrates had to introduce these strategies as a “midwife” to people ignorant-of or comfortable-with the cognitive dissonance in their mental lives.
and regional, his proper idiom—an idiom which I want to say is proper to him—inside of the common idiom and enriching it by enriching himself within it (Unamuno, 1958c: p. 1082).

By reason of such grand ambitions, Unamuno makes sweeping claims such as “Man is the animal that speaks,” and “the spoken word is action.” Throughout his talk, he directs his audience to attend to spoken language, and to a written language that bears witness to the power of the spoken. For him, this is both a political and a spiritual commitment. As a philologist, he was well-aware that Antonio de Nebrija had published Arte de la lengua castellana in 1492, the same year Isabella and Ferdinand secured the Spanish nation by driving the Moors out of their last stronghold in Granada. The serendipitous connection between these two events suggested to him the fundamental relationship between common language and common identity, as it did for all of Spain—which, indeed, was the first European nation to establish a national language, right around that time. Yet Spain has always remained, paradoxically, a region of diverse ways of speaking and diverse ways of living; and it has persisted in this fashion for centuries. Unamuno was grateful for this sort of contestation and difference because he maintained that the rootedness of Spanish character and dialect in regionalism appropriately counterbalanced the influence of national language upon the individual mind, so that one ends up neither a provincialist nor a nationalist.

2) Like so many twentieth century authors, Unamuno writes with a distinct and abrupt flair that poses a challenge even for readers who take him up in his language of origin; and this makes translating a unique responsibility, for it forces the translator into a tension between the aesthetic and conceptual significance of the piece—a trap that must necessarily be set by any author who believes that the role of distinct languages is to make thought clash with itself. Wherever he finds an opportunity, Unamuno plays with the words that he uses in terms of associations—this is because he sees all his speech acts as poetic events—as chances to introduce paradoxes that lead to new epiphanies, new ways of seeing. For example, when he describes translating one’s ideas so that they can be understood by another, he plays with the Italian expression traduttore/tradittore (i.e., translator/traitor). Similarly, in this essay he will say, “I have tilled my soul,” suggesting the relationship between the English words soul/soil; and, thereby, poetically suggesting the disciplined labor by which the philosopher cultivates thought. And can we not see how predictable that sort of serious joking would be to an author with the literary commitments described above? At the same time, his unique style edges the reader toward an unusual readerly approach, counseling below the level of conscious awareness that his texts should never be read as a series of interconnected paragraphs leading to a single conclusion. Instead, Unamuno would like us to approach him in the manner we read Pound’s Cantos, for example: each passage a presentation of poetic events that balances its responsibility to lead to the paragraph that follows against its other duty to lead away from the page and into the higher order of reflective medita-

12This is the standard explanation for the language particular to Being and Time, as well.
tion, contestation, and renewal within the mind that, Unamuno believes, properly advances the destiny of both language itself and the soul’s journey. Effectively, then Unamuno is using his own version of McLuhan’s probes, what amounts to a rhetorical device. And whereas our author pays much more attention to provoking thought than he does to resolving it safely and precipitously, the reader is advised to treat individual passages reflectively and expansively, with less attention than usual on how this author “clearly” gathers and synchronizes ideas specific to the essay, and more attention to the ways each separate idea challenges one’s thought on its own. Unamuno is not trying to create clear ideas; he is trying to create challenging ones. It is the difference between the scattered utterances of Emil Cioran and a cookbook recipe. At the same time, there are occasions when Unamuno might be so vague as to leave a reader unable to see either the relevance of the utterance to its immediate context or its association with his work in general. In the worst of these cases, I have chosen to perform translation as clarification rather than translation as specification. In this way, by adding a few words, I have been able to draw out the meaning of both what precedes and follows that axial point. Anyone who knows both languages as well as Unamuno will understand why I have done this in the several places where it occurs.

3) Much good thinking went into Unamuno’s speech, but that original thinking was presented in an original form, as thinking has often been for other twentieth century thinkers, like Martin Heidegger and Kenneth Burke. One naturally wishes for the ideas to be drawn together—linked into a grand system of names and addresses for everything. We forget how few great thinkers of communication actually offered any such thing—neither Burke nor Bateson, for example. Rather, it is we, ourselves, who often pour over the seminal texts, to extract the implications of scattered and scattering genius. I think the best of us can do this with what Unamuno offers. Indeed, there could be a very nice essay written on disorder and synthesis by reflecting on this activity in one or several cases.

4) Further to Unamuno’s proclivity for paradox, let us return for a moment to the soil/soul relation that Unamuno uses in his first sentences, alongside a corresponding claim that he repeats himself to renew himself (like a farmer who replants in every season). The repetition/renewal (i.e., recursivity) notion is one that he will also bring up several times through the speech to remind his listeners that any soul failing to plant the seeds of spoken thought, that they may grow towards the heavens, becomes entombed within the soil—that, under the circumstance of an uncultivated life, the body goes to its grave as flesh and bone and, with it, the man-that-was decays into eternal silence. Correlatively, there will be some suggestion that spoken words are (as Socrates suggests in Phaedrus) seeds that can be cultivated across time and within one’s community in such a way that they, as flowers of that person’s life, bloom eternally. Soil and soul references are, then, something to which a reader should attend, because both the metaphor and the concept that the metaphor represents will be found in other writings by our prolific Spanish author.

5) Some part of what Unamuno writes and feels does not exist for an English
speaking audience, another part has virtually antithetical status in our culture. Unamuno would only cheer the comment and call out, “A chance for you to grow!” Nevertheless, we would say, for example, that Unamuno has a problem with excessive machismo; yet his machismo, in its time and place, was a condition for generating eloquence in the text. Such articulations have a different effect in contemporary English, academic circles than they had in Spanish circles 90 years ago; yet, to obliterate them in translation would repair Unamuno and his culture in a manner that would obliterate its history. For the most part, I have let them stand for that reason, and also because I have no interest in creating a non-problematic intellectual character for an author whose ambition was disruption. Hopefully, readers can grow through this in their reading, by learning to treat a single text as both imminent and historical, by learning to read both along and across it; and finding no failure in that. Similarly, there is a generally Spanish flavor to the text, in terms of sentence structures, interjections, references, attitudes and the like. I could not have adjusted for many of these without recasting the entire document and pressing my own hand into the essay, an impropriety when translating for both conceptual-theoretical and historical purposes. Instead, I have chosen to keep the text as close as possible to a literal translation; and this may be the best choice, for the overlay of Unamuno’s thinking and speaking, as a Basque and a Spaniard, flavors the document as age flavors wine and does not need me to turn it into vinegar. One gets, at the very least, a feeling for Unamuno’s claim that a language is a way of living and experiencing, if only because the idiosyncratically Spanish aspects of the translated text, originally placed there to accentuate the unique character of the Spanish language and therefore the Spanish mind, remain so difficult for a non-Spanish audience to internalize.

6) It is clear that Unamuno’s speech testifies not only to the significance of communication as a theoretical discipline, but also to the role played by speaking as mediator between the individual, the region, and the state. In his text then, we may see a call to seek in our own language and its variants what Unamuno urged his students seek—a generalized conviviality with others, and an ability to see, alongside them, more of human truth by engaging in speech dialectics with those who are different. When he speaks of an “intimate civil war,” for example, Unamuno means that each Spaniard should try to absorb as many ways of Spanish speaking (and consequently thinking) as possible. Then, any conflict that occurred between Spanish peoples would occur instead within every individual, as a wrestling with ideas (as he will have Jacob wrestle with the angel within this very speech—what amounts to a spiritual struggle to discover identity, made clear by the repeated expression, give me your name (i.e., your spoken word—what ideas you stand for), that I may be blessed). Indeed, if his audience had been able to hear him on that day and in that way, Spain might have, in Unamuno’s time, gone forward without bloodshed. Largely and unfortunately, this point, one of the most important contributions that Unamuno made to his people, was overlooked in its time, as the country moved rapidly toward self-destruction. It would do people well in our era of intractable contestation to con-
sider it. In Spain, however, nothing good came of it—and Unamuno himself noted the unlistening. Nevertheless, combative as he seemed, Unamuno would be no champion of the brutality to come. In his genuinely last occasion for speaking (the occasion that finished him politically and otherwise) he stood up against the Nationalists, denouncing their thirst for blood and death—saying, for example, “You will win, because you possess more than enough brute force, but you will not convince. Because to convince means to persuade. And in order to persuade you would need what you lack—reason and right in the struggle.” (Unamuno, 1936, in Portillo, 1984: p. 269).

7) Almost immediately within his lecture, Unamuno will mention his self-exile from Spain for the years during which the country was governed by the dictator Primo de Rivera; and he will say that his self-exile (a more complex historical event) was taken in order to defend speech, translated as la palabra. It should be understood that Unamuno’s use of la palabra here and always is much closer to the Greek and even Biblical use of the Greek word logos, which particularly respects the power of language to call things into existence. Of course, for Unamuno, the thing that is principally called into existence is the Yo. But, more generally, this notion that speech calls forth is one with which we are familiar. It appears in utterances such as abracadabra, but also more seriously in God’s manifestation of the existent world through His logos, His Divine Breath, which calls all things into being on the first pages of Genesis. Unamuno recognizes this power in humanity (although a lesser form), breathed into the Adam by God, in terms of its power to call all ideas into presence through speech. Thus when Unamuno defends the freedom of la palabra, he is at the same time defending not only the freedom to speak but also the spiritual and ultimately social life of the nation, given that the territory of a nation is its soil, and the soul of a nation is its language. This is a critical element in Unamuno, for one reason because it is at the core of his philosophy; but also because he will later be condemned again for his exercise of la palabra—this time by Franco in what will become a central historical event and cultural mythology of the Spanish Civil War. Of relevance to this idea is Unamuno’s claim that the de Rivera exile was his very teaching in absentia. The great lesson of that absence is the price of la palabra—that the authentic speech of an individual or a community is an expression of courage because one commonly anticipates a heavy price for releasing one’s genuine soul into the thoughts of others (who often don’t want to hear those thoughts), through authentic utterances, as he had paid when driven out of Spain by de Rivera and would soon pay again at the hand of Generalissimo Franco. The issue here, then, is rhetorical courage, which Unamuno barely mentions in this text (i.e., when he talks about giving one’s life for the spoken word), but which will be discussed in detail by this author in a soon to be published essay. Its central principle is that great speech is properly derived from the qualities particular to a person (in this case the virtue known as courage), not a mere talent for well-phrased utterances.

8) As the prefacing-essay has shown, Unamuno championed the ultimate res-
olution of tensions between people as tensions that are resolved by thinking about the ideas given in language, and he says in the speech translated here that, “More has been gained by the Spanish word that flowed from the pen of Cervantes in his Quixote, son of the spoken word, than was gained by Juan of Austria with his sword in the battle of LePanto.” This does not mean that, in times of crisis, such as the one within which we now find ourselves, things can be resolved if we just sit down and talk. What it suggests, however, is that the sword is not a sufficient condition to resolve the conflicts between peoples who are radically different, and that a deep internalization of the contrasting linguistic heritages from which they arise will bring about the only proper resolution. Yet, I think he makes clear that this possibility will only be consequent to a moral commitment—that Spaniards must present themselves to others with an overall ability to experience difference, as he mentions in this essay, to challenge the other saying “give me your name (i.e., your word)!”—an invitation to dialectic, at the outset, rather than a refusal of it. And then, a receiving of that name, when it is given—that is, an internalization of the other’s truth and a willingness to engage in the discord that this new truth brings about within the self, for the sake of refining the self. It is, of course, a strategy directly opposed to the more common response: How dare you say, which has surrounded us through history and now appears with striking regularity in our own era of raving unspeakability, in which people are offended by the words, and therefore thoughts, and therefore the very souls of others in their community. It is what happened in Unamuno’s time. What good came of it? Countless dead, impoverished, homeless. The consequences have plagued Spain for nearly a century, the bitterness even now.

Unamuno, of course, offers another path. He suggests that a willingness to receive the spoken thoughts of others, followed by a willingness to struggle internally, as Jacob did, with such thoughts, is the ultimate condition for the development of human relations, living cultural history, and a soul that can eventually evolve the language of God. Again, we see in this the relevance of what Unamuno has to say to our own time.

9) Unamuno will focus on repetition at the opening of this essay, for he believes that vital ideas are renewed when they are repeated. This renewal is not simply a washing away of time, rather it is the giving of newness and new time to ideas by speaking them again, much in the way a poem gives us something new with every reading, because we bring something new to it.” Repetition thus involves a rebirthing of ideas that is rooted in Unamuno’s philological commitments, as well as his soil-renewal metaphors. Clearly, for example, our Spanish author felt that the ancient Greeks come to us renewed with each time we visit them much as the translator here attempts to renew Unamuno’s thoughts of almost a century ago for the sake of the current, cultural stage. Unamuno clearly suggests that he models his own speech on such a re-beginning. By consequence, the subtleties of his first few lines are grounded in that commitment, including his characterization of thinking as farming, an annual cycle that renews crops each year, yet one discussed in such a way that the “cultured” intellectual does not lose sight of his
rootedness in the “agri-cultured” world.

10) There are many references to Christianity in this document, so the fact that Unamuno was charged with heresy by the bishop of Spain fifteen years after his death, his works considered blasphemous, bears mentioning. When reading, one should bear note that Unamuno was trying to think Being through Christianity in an original way, and he was willing to radicalize the concept of the Christian, even treat it as an analogy, in order to mediate the existential dread of tragic human existence (Marias, 1966: pp. 192-211). One must read Unamuno in this spirit, or one mistakenly feels bored, of occasion, by what appear to be the words of a latter-day, excommunicated Church apostle. The idea is absurd, but that would be another essay, and certainly not necessary for anyone who has followed along thus far.

11) The translation presented here was originally accepted by Communication Quarterly, the journal of the Eastern Communication Association. A new chief editor, who was not interested in the subject, took charge during revisions, and the acceptance decision was rescinded. I am therefore grateful to Advances in Literary Study for its acceptance of this important work, as well as the fine job they have done preparing it. In addition, I extend my gratitude to University Distinguished Professor Albrecht Classen, philologist and medieval scholar at the University of Arizona, who, himself, once studied at the University of Salamanca. Professor Classen’s fine review and subsequent support were a great resource in the preparation process. I thank the late Professor Xavier Monasterio from the University of Dayton and acknowledge the late Father Thomas Regis Murphy of Pittsburgh diocese for their help with subtle linguistic and theological details in the text. I also thank my friend, Álvaro Miguel Barrios, for his thoughtful assistance resolving technical errors that problematized the Spanish original. As we proceed to Unamuno’s essay, there is little else I can say if I am to avoid the charge of pedantry Unamuno makes against my kind in the body of this talk. Therefore I now leave the rest to him.

3. Translated Speech: The Last Lesson of Don Miguel de Unamuno


Friends, masters, and disciples—students all:

What memories—some far off, others recent—of coming to this crossroad moment in which I inaugurate your send-off by repeating myself, always one more time, here in our university’s grand ceremonial hall, where so many spoken words from other years, uttered by so many of Spain’s eternal voices, still resonate around us. I come to repeat myself, I repeat, to renew myself. The core of a spiritual life is repetition, saintly fulfillment of the daily tasks, of one’s destiny and one’s vocation. Day by day I have tilled my soul and the souls of others, youths, from my professional office as university teacher and mentor. What I teach is, before all and over all, learning.
I began my first course, Greek Language and Literature, the only course I taught at that time—in 1891, forty-three years ago, coming from my native mountainous Vizcaya, to the high plateaus in order to strengthen this skin and bone that had been forged by Vizcaya’s native mountains. And during forty three years of teaching (I would like to count among them those during which I submitted myself to exile for defending the liberty of the word, an act which I regard as my teaching in absentia) I have been with you here, in this university, to forge the universal and eternal Spain. I, myself, read the inaugural discourse, “Exhortative Allocution,” as I called it, in this very room in 1900; and soon after, in that same year, I was elevated to the first rectorship of this deeply Spanish school.

Today it might be better for me not to mention my extra-university activities, particularly those political. However I doubt that I will be able to do it: after all, does one teach only in the classroom? And in that “Exhortative Allocution,” which was anything but an analytical dissertation, presented thirty-four years ago, and now that moment seems to join us as a stratum of the present, in the manner of what is truly historical—I told you, young students, or rather to your fathers, but it amounts to the same, “God grant you would come full of freshness without the imprint of dejection from fifteen or twenty previous tests, and bringing to this sacred place no greediness for note-taking, but with a thirst for truth and hunger for lifelong knowing, and with the smell of the market-place, of the country, of the village, of the great school of life spontaneous and free!” That is what I told you when I was thirty-six years old; and that is what I am repeating to you today, now seventy, as part of my own examination of myself.13

By teaching, and learning to teach, the eternally young and eternally ancient tongue and letters of Hellenic peoples (antiquity is the birthplace of our people and antiquity is equally the birthplace of one’s spiritual life) I was re-tempering my rebellious spirit by disciplining it. Disciples must be disciplined. And thus the symbolic soul of Socrates, the son of a midwife, came to assist me—Socrates, who called himself a great midwife, who assisted youthful Athenians to give birth to their own spiritual enlightenment; to see the world with proper and clear consciousness, and thus to re-create what has already been re-created in it. And this by way of the spoken word, for Socrates, like Christ, the Verb left

---

13Here, Unamuno implies that the concept of examination (so prominent in the minds of students before him, who might imagine it an odious experience) is not a mere institutional challenge, but is an ongoing responsibility directed at the self, in order to take the measure of one’s life.

14When Unamuno refers to Christ as, el Verbo he is playing with the relationship between words and actions. The idea is deeply connected with his notion of la palabra, so closely connected to the Greek logos and its Biblical representation in Genesis, when God’s divine breath (the breath that is turned into speech) demonstrates its magnificent power to create the universe simply by speaking it. Unamuno held that man carried some of God’s divine breath, as it had been blown into him at creation, so that one man, or woman of course, could create ideas in the mind of another by speaking. It was God’s divine power to create the universe itself by speech (e.g., *Let there be light,* and it was God’s *speech* (the evocation and evacuation of intention from the mind of God into the air) that released Christ into the world. Yet Unamuno also believed that each new Adam, each person, is capable of becoming a Christ, understood as the physical embodiment of God, by perfecting God’s spirit, which is (for Unamuno) the idea-made-manifest-in-speech; and by contributing-to and partaking-of the collected, authentic utterances of the human race in La Palabra, writ-large as the collected and purified ideas of speech as articulated or interior thought (a discourse-driven version of Hegel’s notion of the Absolute).
nothing written; he did not bury himself in the written. Sometimes I have said, to the astonishment of certain pedants, that the true Spanish people’s university has been the cafe and the public place. Pedants believe they have a monopoly on thinking; they make their living from it, and they look down upon the wasting of mental energy in extended periods at casinos and cafes, in get-togethers, in accidental reunion with friends. They consider such time lost. Lost? Why? Coffee shops are filled with genuine and genius Spaniards, Socratic spirits, Spaniards through and through, whose names are not granted a legacy, but who conserve and enrich the oral tradition and current legends. In this dream of life, they have brought their own lives and their own dreams into the dreams of their brothers. And they have made this with the spoken word, not with the written. With personal and familiar oratory, not with literature; with popular lore, the pueblo’s spoken words—folklore as one says in English.

The spoken word! To the four gospels, the one attributed to John reminds us that, “In the beginning was the (spoken) Word,” and that, “the spoken word was of God and God was the spoken word,” and, “all things were made by it and without it no things were made.” God, the Being of beings—Cause of causes—God, “the most excellent thing,” thus we learned as children in the catechism presented to us by Father Astete, later mistakenly corrected—as I hear. The spoken word—that is the marvel even Faust did not see: that there is no separation of the spoken word from the deed. And this is clear, for at the beginning of Genesis it says that God created the sky and the earth saying, “and the firmament will be called sky, and the light will be called day, and the darkness, night; and the dryness, earth, and the congregations of waters, sea.” And later, he presented to Adam, the first man, all the living things of the ground and the birds of the sky that Adam might bequeath a word upon them. And what Adam called each living thing, is its name, its identity.

In the beginning was the Word. And in the end it shall be, for to the Word all shall return. Each new Adam who arises in our world, each child, when he has

---

1) It is also for this reason that Heidegger (Heidegger, 1968: p. 17) says “Socrates did nothing else than to place himself into... this current, and maintain himself in it. This is why he is the purest thinker of the West. This is why he wrote nothing.” 2) Unamuno’s use of a burial metaphor for writing here is probably associated with the tilling metaphor in the first paragraph, for he believes that the soul is grown upon the soil, which represents the existing community of speaking agents. I mention this as a metaphor to seek in other of his writings, when trying to revitalize his project.

10This comment strongly illustrates Unamuno’s resonance with speech act theory, for it makes clear that our reality is a product of our utterances.

11The reader will see intimations of what Unamuno means by this at other locations in the essay. Clearly, he treats the spoken word as a power, indeed a spiritual power—the place where spirit resides. For that reason, to have one’s name spoken by God is to have one’s name spoken into history. All this has to do with Unamuno’s philological commitments, and we can intimate its significance with an illustration: Unamuno would argue that the actions of Hector were a form of speech, articulated by Homer, and set into history in such a manner that, with each time we speak those words again (i.e. repetition) we give rebirth to the spirit of Hector and Homer within us. In this way, to be called into history, and to be recalled by history, is to be called into Being, as part of La Palabra (Unamuno’s notion of the imminent, and emergent, and eternal God); and this is how we are granted immortality. This is an example of a complex idea in this essay that could be elaborated to good effect by rhetorical scholars, once the original text is in their hands.
learned the name of a thing, knows it, for he has made it relate to himself; and he becomes a self by gathering these relationships with the named world. In this way, the child creates the thing through the name. To question, “What is this?” is really asking, “What have we spoken into it?”—a way of relating to both its presence and the purpose our people give it. On the other hand, the child, not being what he is solely because he was caused (a thing, like other things made or even named to be as they are) but because he is also something internally-impelled toward a becoming, an end, what he names as his purpose also determines what he is. Consequently, when he is finished, he will leave to the ground some bones and to the air a name that is part of La Palabra (i.e., a name that has become immortalized in the speakable, historical-truth of a people—RWK), one which, if he is fortunate, will be more durable than bones, more like bronze—Aere perennius (perennial bronze), said Horatio, and we explain this in our class—a name in the memory of the Creator’s spoken word. For as the Creator brought the world into existence by naming it, so do humans increase that world by adding to it their own names, which they have eternalized by performing great and authentic deeds, especially in speech. Indeed it could even be said that history is nothing other than a tapestry woven together from all those bronzed names that legendary people have accomplished in their active lifetimes.

The spoken word and the name. “Holy is Thy name,” we have been taught to recite. And this is because the name of God is God, is divine. “Give me your name,” begged Jacob to the angel with whom he struggled, past the river crossing, until the stroke of dawn. “Give me your name!” came back. And Jacob gave him his name that he might be blessed. “Spirit without name!” sighed our poor poet Becquer. And when our ancient comrade Fray Luis de Leon, a doctor of this very school, and whose bronze statue still exhorts us from the adjoining Patio de Escuelas, though his name will last longer than bronze, wanted to penetrate into the mysteries of the people’s faith, he spoke with his pen Los Nombres de Cristo (The Names of Christ).

The name is the man! We are told in the same fourth Gospel how Christ in Jerusalem on the feast of the Passover didn’t trust those who trusted in his name because of the miracles he performed, for he didn’t need that kind of testimony. The man substantial and essential is the name, is the person. What is defining oneself but giving oneself a name, calling oneself? “I call myself thus,” is as much

18For his dissertation, this author used the analogy of Robinson Crusoe naming island things (rope, spear, thatch) that could be situated within his life project, his world, as a castaway. Deleuze once used the same analogy to explain how coming into being implies coming into relationship with objects as named, that is to say objects made relevant (i.e., in relation) to world-historical actions.

19He plays here with the Spanish word for “thing”, cosa, to imply an etymological connection: causa/cosa.

20The soul that is entombed in death by virtue of the silence that it chose in life. The sigh is for the missed chance when another person passes by in silence, as the angel might have passed by Jacob. When a person passes by, we see the body, but if that body does not speak, we do not hear what is the essence of that body, and our souls remain untouched, except by imagination or phantasy, by the other. Jacob wrestled with the angel, that is to say, to hear in the angel’s voice, and therefore beyond any superficial impression of the angel, the divine language of God.
as saying, “I want to be thus.” I make my name immortal because its spirit will breathe again in the breasts of those others who will utter it (as the spirit of these ideas will be repeated some day in the breasts of others) when I am gone. A man makes his name endure, and thereby makes himself into someone who is recognized, a person. After all, what else is the legal status of a person but the person’s name? The name, the word, is the real action, the stated is the created. The centurion of the gospel, knowing that Christ was capable of bringing forth action simply by speaking, asked Jesus to say but a word from a distance, without entering his house for he knew this was sufficient to heal his paralyzed servant.

From this very place, three years ago, I opened the 1931/1932 academic year in the name of His Majesty, King of Spain—announcing his name and tasting it with fervor as my voice resounded in it. And this is because the spoken word is action. It is spirit, air, it is the articulated sound of breath. The sound makes the Verbo (the Living Word—RWK), la Palabra (authentic speech that manifests the imminent soul—RWK), which thereby makes the vision, the idea. The saintly fathers of the Greek Church called the Holy Spirit, the nominating breath, Saint Sophia of wisdom. And she made the Logos, the Word. Thus philosophy, the love of knowledge, germinates from philology, the love of saying.

And thus, when I had just been named for the first time rector of this school, in October of 1900, days after my other inaugural oration, I was entrusted with the charge of teaching, besides Greek speech and literature, what was initially called, “Comparative Latin and Castilian Philology” and later, “History of the Castilian Tongue.” And this is the only discipline I taught when I returned from exile. Those bureaucratic, ritualistic almost liturgical titles of courses! But the second title fits the subject better. First, philology, the love of the word, of the name; and history can only follow, although ultimately one will see there is no difference. For history is a living tradition which remains and lives in the spoken word, in the moving word, in the name, always present. History is not script: it is not written documents, it is not writings—first it is the lecture, the lesson, the legend. The man exclusively committed to text doesn’t exist historically—the man who exists is the man who also lives in the spoken word, who acts today, the man of the legend. And this is so much the case that those names of fiction,

21Rather than writing us a paper, here, Unamuno is offering flashes of ideas from which, ourselves, to think these papers. Here, in this meditation upon names, Unamuno is oscillating between the Greek notion of Logos and his adventure into his Spanish term of different but related meaning: la palabra, which will be discussed in a forthcoming essay. His interest in Greek makes him aware of the divine relationship between speaking and being, because of the first lines of Genesis, where God’s Logos, God’s “divine breath” (the meaning of the term) is able to create all things from the same breath that draws in life—create the heavens and the earth. Unamuno correspondingly argues that la palabra functions as the divine breath of humans, who make ideas directly from air, who spend their lifetimes transmuting into those ideas, so that they can slough off their skin at their death, now as eternal as the poet Becquer, living as the idea longer than bronze; all this described in these passage as a compulsive yearning to give la palabra and to receive it.

22This seems to be a play on the gospel of the pagan centurion who asked Christ’s intercession on behalf of his dying daughter. While Marias mentions that Unamuno’s work is “crisscrossed by philosophical and religious errors,” (Marias, 1966: p. vi) it is not necessarily the case that Unamuno got the story confused, for he regularly reworked narratives, Christian and otherwise, to achieve literary effects.
those creations of poetic human speech, have a greater historical existence than those who have been buried without name.

My discipline was “History of the Tongue,” not of literature, not of the written words when they don’t respond to the spoken. It has been said that all genuine Castilian writers are orators in their writing. Better to be a speaker in one’s writing than a writer in one’s speaking. Not to speak like a book, but to write a book that speaks, as Saint Theresa spoke with her pen, authentically. Rhetoric? And why not? If you would instead say grammar, then you must recall how boldly it seeks to supervise us with its γράμμα—grama, which refers to its rule-driven and scripted character. Rhetoric, sounding, speaking—as in the moment of creation—brings to life. It is alive, spontaneous, immediate. Whereas the written always comes from a dead past.

Of course the document is inevitable. And, much less damaging, we now have the phonograph, which initiates an archive of the spoken word, or perhaps (ouch!) of the word kept in a can. In my own case, at my second inaugural oration, I would have preferred that it was truly oration, oral I said—not recited, but I was obligated to subject myself to the academic liturgy; and worse, under the danger of deciphering shorthand.

Verba volant, it is said, but I say the word itself is flight, and already even here it flies as a living and a thinking, without allowing itself to be caged or embalmed.

History? I said it to your fathers from this same place thirty-four years ago, and I repeat it today. History is that which takes place around you: yesterday’s riot, today’s crop, tomorrow’s feast. It is only in the here and now that we understand the there and yesterday, and not the inverse; only the present is key to the past, and only that which is immediate and proximate provides a pathway to the remote. That which does not rest, in one manner or another, in the present—either flowering in the present or polished as another precious historical stone in the present’s rock garden—was never anything more than a fugitive apparition. The present is the effort of the past to become future, and that which doesn’t tend toward tomorrow ought to remain in the forgetfulness of yesterday.

And today, to repeat my words from 1900, I have to say that the past brings strength to the lived by making it a future-to-be-lived, as a tradition, by marking

23 Unamuno understood that a spoken language develops freely and flexibly across millennia, only to be much later hobbled by the imposition of rules that typically follow the development of writing. Because he is interested in the interpersonal and interpsychic vitality of spoken language, he privileges the morphologies (the various shapes) of spoken and naturally developed speech in communities, not the artificial speaking that is bound by the straight-jacket of a rigorous and typically national rule system that crushes both spontaneous speech diversity and speech’s vital transformations.

24 Here, Unamuno is channeling the concerns expressed by Socrates, late in the Phaedrus dialog, regarding writing and other imitations of speech, adding the phonograph as a commentary on new technology.

25 Unamuno refers to the Roman saying, Verba volant, scripta mament—“Spoken words fly away, the written lasts.” Unamuno wants to challenge the expression’s common understanding that spoken words are as fleeting as dust in the wind. In his own characterization here, the spoken word is treated as a winged-idea with the power to fly amongst listeners, an analogy which is quite like the story of the Holy Spirit which arrives as a dove, illuminating the spiritual life of the disciples, a point he makes moments earlier in relation to Santa Sophia.
our progress and destiny. And this I applied then to the history which I was beginning to profess, to that of the spoken language. Spoken language, I say. You might superficially grasp how a language can live but you will never grasp this idea with active and creative comprehension unless you open your ears to the sounds of your own region, unless you direct yourself faithfully and attentively to the idioms of the populace—to what they say and to their sayings; to all that so-called barbarism that has been customarily kept outside intellectual consideration, thereby making the tongue a product of a literary pact subject to academic prescription. Thus as I have been saying, I began, through the Castilian language, to search for Spain, as if I were on a voyage of discovery. Discovering Spain. For if it is true, as many people tell us, that the rustic laborer with his traditional plow merely turns the dusty layer that covers-up the true wealth of our Spanish subsoil, then it may also be true that in Spain’s spiritual subsoil, in the disregarded underground of its daily collective life, lies the possibility of a renaissance, while we continue scratching with our critiques and our apologetics only upon the surface of its glorious mounds and historical layers. You must discover our people in their living history, in their work, hope, prayers, suffering, joy.

Indeed, this idea compels me to set aside my earlier notion that the experiences raised to significance by the nation are the essence of the historical. What in one of my essays, En torno al catecismo, I called “intra-history” is history itself, its core. And in relation to this idea that true history is the living history of its people, but in reference to the tongue, Capmany has already said that the greater part of Castilian language is buried in the verbal entrails of the small Spanish towns. Yes, I am proposing that we disinter it, but not in order to disinherit it.

And this is what I have been doing here in my official chair with my spoken word, as I have in my public actions in all of Spain with my written word, during these thirty-four years, and even before that. I have looked for the national historic tradition, the fountain of its progress and destiny and even of its revolutions, in the richness of speaking, of the language; struggling to investigate it to its core, to dig it up. And I did this because all the civilization, all the economy, all the justice, all the art, all the learning, all the religion of Spain is buried in the recesses of its language and beating in the marrow of its bones.

Loving is feeling, feeling is thinking, and thinking is speaking, speaking to oneself and to others, and with God if one can. Co-existing is co-feeling, and co-feeling is understanding, one person comprehending another. And this social, political, and religious co-existence, this understanding which is one’s homeland, one’s nation, is even more precious now in this crisis of national, political rebirth—of rebirth I called it one day. It is an understanding we must share but equally experience within our separate hearts.

Unamuno is playing with a Spanish word here that carries a closer association with “uncover” than it does in English, where uncovering is more closely associated with digging, the analogy around which he grounds this essay.
True community is born of spiritual communion, oral communion, and a shared understanding of heart-felt national community—inter-related and independent at the same time. The tongue which truly lives must be individual, national, and universal. A dialect suggests a dialogue—a conversation, and an agreement. And even a controversy, which is a style of dialect, carries structures of agreement within its discord. Each of us must form, and reform, and transform his proper dialect, individual and regional, his proper idiom—an idiom which I want to say is proper to him—inside of the common idiom and enriching it by enriching himself within it. And this is why, students of Salamanca, I have been these years trying to teach you in the manner of Socrates, the very tongue which you speak; to bring you to clear consciousness of it, to help you to give it birth, so that I could relearn it from you, and all of us together, could penetrate to the core of this Castilian language that makes our souls Spanish. The point is not to dissect the language—though that sort of thing has its uses—but to recreate it. The point is to illuminate its living source, which for the greater part is buried.

And this is living philology, a love for speaking and not exclusively for erudite investigation of seminal technique, which is essentially nothing more than an indispensable preparation for the other. As criticism is preparation for poetry, so understanding is preparation for creation. But what good is understanding if there is nothing created? Criticism itself, when it is living criticism, is recreation and a result of poetry, as if polishing diamonds with their own powder, testing them against the metaphors, making them powder, and classifying and studying them in terms of their powder. With this kind of philology, with this love for the language which is yours and mine, which is national and individual (individual and universal because it comes to the same) with this kind of philology I repeat, we will recover the spiritual patrimony of our historic race, of our culture. The weight of the centuries, enclosed in secular metaphors, strengthened by the spirit, the verbal breath made by the grace of God, the Word Most High, has fashioned us Spaniards of Spain. The beliefs that console us, the hopes that drive us toward future pledges, the dreams that maintain us in the foot march of history, toward the fulfillment of our destiny, even the discords that by dialectical and antithetical paradox, unite us in intimate civil war, are rooted in the common language.

Each language carries implicitly, better incarnates in itself, a conception of the universal life and with it a sentiment—one feels with words—a consensus, a philosophy, a religion. Our language too carries that, and reaching to that philosophical core, is philology, is the history of the language, of the tongue. What is called philosophy in general—what is it but the universal thinking about humanity, incarnate in the word? Not syllogistic definition, but narrative description; not dogmas, but legends, personal stories.

The genuine thinkers are the poets. The great universal religions live in the names of saints and prophets, not in abstract ideas. The fable explains itself by
itself, and exceeds any moral extracted from it. And it is foolish to demand that we not teach our sons the vision, the conception, and the sentiment of the world which surrounds them in the sound of the speech which they learn from the mouth of their mothers with the milk that they suck from her breast. It is our world. No belief, no dream, no legend, no myth, which has really been alive can ever die. And one cannot be Spanish if he does not have a loving acquaintance with all those who created Spain.

The child is born innocent, and its consciousness must thereafter be made in the bosom of its community, which is its spiritual womb. Should one respect the conscience of a newborn? But how, for it doesn’t have one! That will only come after it has been given the maternal speech that is the spiritual blood, with all the vision and all the world view belonging to this deep-language we call culture. Objective (i.e., imposed) teaching? But what is objective? The individual is certainly a social product, but society is a human and an individual product, and man a rational, civil animal—a political animal according to Aristotle. Rational—of reason: ratio and this from reri, speaking, which means verba: man is the animal that speaks. A Spaniard who does not think in the Spanish language—unless he thinks in some other language in which case he may not be Spanish—is not thinking, is not rational. And to think in the Spanish language is to think what this language has thought and to believe what it has believed. Because a language, the soul of a community, thinks and believes. And we can’t say that it doesn’t feel because it feels in thoughts—the feelings are thoughts that run all through us. Others are animal sensations, not rational, not human, not personal. And it is sufficient to notice, given what I have said about a spoken language, the deep cultural tradition of so many who neither read nor write.

And this attempt to dig up the roots of our Castilian language led me to explore how they are bound and joined with the roots of other Romance languages of our Iberia, with other dialects of the common Roman tradition, the Latin language. And thus I saw myself called to attend and represent the diverse speakings of our Iberia and their reciprocal influences. In my university classes, I initiated the study of Catalan and Valencian, of Gallician and Portuguese, and still others. From my courses, students have left more than a little enamored with the speaking and the literature of Catalan-Lemosin and Gallician-Portuguese. From such differences, integration arises.

I hope, and I said it on an occasion particularly solemn for me at another public forum, that the future common language of greater Spain, of our Iberia, will make itself from the recasting, better the uniting, of our languages, so that we won’t have to be translators for others and thereby traitors to ourselves. Such has been my labor, the one from which I take my official departure today, and which obligates me on this occasion to stand before you with this self-reckoning. Such has been my work. I initiated it without a program, without a precise definition. For as Goethe so appropriately said with the appropriateness of a poet, to pre-

\footnote{He is concerned here with the idea of teaching as imposing an ideology—the notion \textit{we tell you what to think and then you think it}, discussed in the prefatory remarks.}
face a work with a definition in any discipline is to miss the point that in order to reach the definition one first has to complete the work. What I say to you today is not a prologue, but an epilogue; not a program, but an epigram or a metagram, if you like. Not what I intend to make, but what I have already made. This is my work. Should this be dismissed as a mere ‘playing with words’? Well, in just this way Quevedo, our great aphorist, our great wordsmith, journeyed to the bowels of the Castilian language, provocatively investigating within it the soul of the Spanish people. As did Calderon, and Gracian, and the mystics, and so many others. This was my work, and also my political work. Political, which is to say civil—for civilization. And I am not speaking of the strictly political discords which agitate our university lives. Will someone say that there is no room for politics within the university? Well, it depends on what one calls politics and what one calls the university. Factions? No! Integrity? Yes! Sad and decaying will the future of Spain be if these civil temples of our cultural heritage are impoverished and obscured by “professional” faculty members who are intent on making a living that will not survive in history.

In each special branch of knowledge, its history is its living essence; and the other, the technical or codifying function that it serves, is quite often a death certificate. There are those who make themselves martyrs, that is, witnesses of their culture. The martyr gives his life for the spoken word, for the freedom of the spoken word. He gives his life, but he does not take the lives of others; he allows himself to be killed, but he doesn’t kill. In recollecting this I hope I have made visible the thread which fashions the continuity of all my work, revealing that this man of so much supposed versatility has followed in his academic profession, as much as in his general life, a clear and definite path.

Today I am honored, yet I believe that your homage is really directed to the work I have described. And, because I know that homage comes from the word hominem “of man” (always I turn to philology) your homage is something that I can also accept when it is directed at me. For indeed, I have tried to complete my mission, my destiny: to become the man that I am within this very work—a university man of the universal Spain whose name I spoke out not only to other nations who shared our linguistic heritage, such as those great portions of America which were conquered and other regions of the world, but also to others that feel and think in different languages. Words give us the power to conquer truly. More has been gained by the Spanish word that flowed from the pen of Cervantes in his Quixote, son of the spoken word, than was gained by Juan of Austria with his sword in the battle of Lepanto. I have tried to come to know myself better in order to know my people better, mainly through the mirror of the language in the hope that this will make it possible for other peoples to know us better, for knowledge leads to love, and above all in the hope of being better known by God: that is, of being acknowledged by Him so that we may live in his memory, which is History—divine thought yoked to this earth by our human flesh.

---

28Here is a cautionary reminder for all of us who exist within an intellectual environment that weighs a scholar’s contribution by counting publications.
And my last words as I take my leave, school fellows, masters and students, students all: have faith in la palabra, the spoken word, which is a living thing; be men of speech, men of God, the Supreme Thing and Spoken Word Most High, and let us hope that God will acknowledge all of us in Spain as his own. And let us go forth, in our studying, working, speaking, creating ourselves and Spain, its history, its tradition, its life-course, its adventure!

Now I will say adios to you, but I will say it to remind you of how this very word has come to us from an earlier way of speaking in which we wished each other farewell, blessing that we might go by, with, and for God. And, therefore: A-Dios!

Don Miguel De Unamuno Y Jugo

4. Conclusion

Unamuno is studied across various disciplines and in many languages. He is also remembered and studied in Spain as a historical figure. Consequently, it is somewhat ironic that this monumental, 20th century intellectual, nominated for a Nobel Prize in literature, suffers the absence of an English translation of this critical document in his ouevre. While it is available in Spanish in his Collected Works (Unamuno, 1958c) and placed at the end of this essay as an Appendix for referencing, the present article will eliminate the absence of an English equivalent—moreover the remarks set out in the prefatory essay will play an instrumental role in the development and understanding of both Unamuno’s philosophy and rhetoric.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

References


Heidegger, M. (1968). What Is Called Thinking (Translated by Glenn Gray, F. and Wieck, 29By writing “A Dios” at the end, Unamuno employs a synecdoche that contains the entire speech he has given. Effectively, it is both a wish and a call-to-adventure to all who hear it—specifically that they might, in keeping with the theme of this, his last lecture, advance themselves along the intellectual’s pathway into the light of God, the eternal and imminent La Palabra. The idea is developed from Socrates notion that all philosophy is preparation for death. Finally, the translation is based upon (Unamuno, 1958c) in the references.
https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-5446.1978.tb00803.x

https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9558.2010.01371.x  
http://www.interscience.wiley.com/journal/soth


https://doi.org/10.4159/harvard.9780674431355


https://doi.org/10.2307/25292713


Appendix

The following Spanish text of Unamuno’s speech is added for reference purposes. While a copy is open-source available (https://docplayer.es/89286218-Universidad-de-salamanca-discurso-leido-en-la-solemne-inauguracion-del-curso-academico-de-1934-a-1935-por-el-doctor.html), that version is haunted by numerous machine errors, which I have corrected. The text has appeared in various forms in Spanish, the most commonly available one being listed in the references for this publication.

Discurso Leído En La Solemne Inauguración del Curso Académico de 1934 a 1935, En la Universidad de Salamanca, El Día 29 Setiembre de 1934, al Ser Jubilado Como Catedrático

Compañeros maestros y discípulos, estudiantes todos:

QUE de recuerdos, lejanos unos y otros recientes, al venir de despedida, a repetirme una vez más aquí, en este paraninfo, caja de resonancia de tantos de ellos! Vengo a repetirme, repito, a renovarme. Una vida espiritual entrañada es repetición, es costumbre, santo cumplimiento del oficio cotidiano, del destino y de la vocación. Día a día he venido labrando mi alma y labrando las de otros, jóvenes, en el oficio profesional de la enseñanza universitaria y del aprendizaje. Que enseñar es, ante todo y sobre todo, aprender.

Comencé mi primer curso—de Lengua y Literatura griegas, no más entonces—en 1891, hace cuarenta y tres años, venido de mi nativa Vizcaya a ro bustecer en la alta meseta, toda ella cima, los huesos y la piel que el aire del mar y de la montaña nativos me habían fraguado. Y durante cuarenta y tres cursos—quiero contar entre ellos los del destierro a que me sometí por defender la libertad de la palabra y en que con mi ausencia creo que enseñé—he venido colaborando aquí, en esta Universidad, a la forja de la España universal y eterna. Leí, aquí mismo, el discurso inaugural—“alocución exhortativa” le llamé—de 1900, y poco después, aquel mismo año, se me elevó a mi primer rectorado de esta escuela de la tradición española.

Debería hoy y aquí callar mi acción extrauniversitaria, sobre todo la política. Dudo que me sea hacedero, porque, ¿es que el magisterio público se ejerce sólo en el aula oficial? En aquella “alocución exhortativa”—que no disertación investigativa—de hace treinta y cuatro años —parece como si el tiempo se remansara haciéndose eternidad histórica—os decía, jóvenes estudiantes—o a vuestros padres, que viene a ser lo mismo: “Ojalá viniésemos todos henchidos de frescura, sin la huella que os han dejado quince o veinte exámenes, y trayendo a estos claustros no ansia de notas sino sed de verdad y anhelo de saber para la vida, y con ellos aire de la plaza, del campo, del pueblo, de la gran escuela de la vida es pontánea y libre.” Os lo decía al cumplir mis treinta y seis años; os lo repito hoy al cumplir mis setenta. Y venir a examinarme a mi vez.

Al ensenar, y aprendiendo a enseñarlas, la lengua y las letras del pueblo heleno, eternamente joven y eternamente anciano—la antigüedad es la niñez de los pueblos y la niñez es la antigüedad del alma—fui reemplando mi espíritu re-
belde a disciplina. Tenía que disciplinar a discípulos. Y así llegó a asistirme el ánimo simbólico de Sócrates, el hijo de la partera, el gran partero que se llamó a sí mismo, el que asistía a la mocedad ateniense a que se diera a luz, a su propia conciencia, la visión del mundo y así la recreara recreándose en ella. Y esto por la palabra. Que Sócrates, como el Cristo, el Verbo, no nos dejó escrito nada; no se enterró en letra.

He dicho alguna vez, con escándalo acaso de ciertos pedantes, que la verdadera universidad popular española han sido el café y la plaza pública. Los usureros de la investigación y avaros de ella suelen quejarse del ingenio que se ha derrochado en España en peñas de casino o de café, en tertulias, en accidentales reuniones de amigos. Lo estiman perdido. ¿Perdido? ¿Por qué? Esos ingénueos e ingenuos espíritus socráticos, tan castizos, no nos han legado sus nombres, pero han conservado y enriquecido la tradición oral y las leyendas corrientes. Han hecho soñar y vivir en el sueño a sus hermanos. Y lo han hecho con la palabra, ya que no con la letra. Con oratoria familiar y privada, no con literatura; con doctrina popular, folklore, que en inglés se dice.

¡La Palabra! Al principio del cuarto Evangelio, el llamado de San Juan, se nos dejó dicho que “en el principio fue el Verbo”, la Palabra, y que “la, y Palabra estaba cabe Dios, y Dios era la Palabra”, y “todo se hizo por ella y sin ella no se hizo nada de lo hecho”. Dios, la Cosa de las cosas y Causa de las causas—Dios, “cosa mas excelente”, así aprendimos de niños en el Catecismo del P. Astete, luego descartadamente corregido, me dicen—la palabra, que es el hecho, pese a Fausto. Que no hay trecho de lo dicho a lo hecho. Y en el principio del Génesis, que Dios creó el cielo y la tierra diciendo, y llamó al firmamento cielo, y a la luz, día, y a las tinieblas, noche, y a la seca, tierra, y a la congregación de las aguas mar. Y luego, que llevó a Adán, al primer hombre, todos los vivientes de la tierra y las aves del cielo, para que les diese nombres, y aquél con que llamó a cada viviente, ése es su nombre.

Y a cada nuevo Adán que llega a nuestro mundo, a cada niño, cuando se le ha enseñado el nombre de una cosa la ha conocido, la ha hecho suya y una, la ha hecho cosa con el nombre. Preguntar: “¿qué es eso?” quiere decir: “¿cómo se le llama?” En el principio fue la palabra. Y en el fin lo será, pues a ella ha de volver todo. Que no es sólo un por qué, una causa, cosa inicial, sino un para qué, un fin. Y es un por que, por ser un para qué. El hombre deja a la tierra unos huesos y al aire un nombre, un nombre en la memoria de la Palabra creadora, en la Historia: tejido de nombres; un nombre—si logra buena Ventura—más duradero que los huesos, más que el bronce. Aere perennius, que dijo Horacio, a quien explicamos en nuestras clases.

¡La palabra y el nombre! “Santificado sea el, tu nombre” se nos ha enseñado a rezar. Y es que el nombre de Dios es Dios, es divino. “¡Dime tu nombre!” suplicaba anheloso Jacob al ángel con quien luchó, pasado el vado de Jacob, hasta el rayar del alba. “¡Dime tu nombre!” Y Jacob le dijo el suyo para que le bendijera. “¡Espíritu sin nombre!”, suspiraba nuestro pobre poeta Bécquer. Y cuando nues-
tro antiguo compañero el Reverendo Padre Maestro Fray Luis de León, doctor de esta Escuela, y cuyo bronce aún nos amonesta en su nombre, más duradero que él, desde el adjunto Patio de Escuelas, cuando quiso zahondar en los misterios de la fe de su pueblo, dijo con su pluma los “Nombres de Cristo”.

El nombre es el hombre. Se nos cuenta en el mismo cuarto Evangelio cómo el Cristo, al estar en Jerusalén en la fiesta de Pascua, no se confió en los que confiaban en su nombre por las señales que hacía, pues no necesitaba que atestiguaran acerca del hombre. Pero el hombre sustancial y esencial es el nombre, es la persona. ¿Qué es definirse—¡lo que se ha pedido esto!—sino darse nombre, llamarse? “Me llamo así” quiere decir: “quiero ser así”. Y lo que se inmortaliza es el nombre, que es la piel espiritual y el pecho por que traspira y aún respira el alma. El hombre hecho nombre queda hecho persona. Y ¿qué es la llamada persona jurídica sino un nombre? El nombre, la palabra es la verdadera acción, el dicho es el hecho. El centurión evangélico, sabiendo que con sola su palabra ordenaba la acción, pedía a Jesús que dijera una sola palabra y a distancia, sin entrar en su casa, para sanar a su criado perlático.

Desde aquí mismo, hace dos años, al abrir el curso 1932 a 1933, lo abrí en nombre de Su Majestad España —en su nombre y paladeándolo con fervor al pronunciarlo—y mi voz resonó en ella. Y es que la palabra es acción. El espíritu, la respiración sonora, el són, hacen el Verbo, la Palabra, y la palabra hace la visión, la idea. Los santos padres de la Iglesia griega llamaron al Espíritu, al Soplo nominador, Santa Sofía, Santa Sabiduría. Y ella hizo el Logos, el Verbo. Que la filosofía, el amor del saber, brota de la filología, del amor del decir.

Y así, apenas nombrado por primera vez rector de esta Escuela, en Octubre de 1900, días después de mi otra oración inaugural, se me encomendó, además de la enseñanza de la lengua y literatura griegas, la de lo que se llamó primero “Filología comparada del latín y castellano” y después “Historia de la lengua castellana”, y es la sola disciplina con que me quedé a la vuelta de mi destierro. ¡Denominaciones burocráticas, rituales, litúrgicas casi! Pero la segunda condice ya mejor con la cosa. Primero, filología, amor de la palabra, del nombre; después, historia. Y en resolución, lo mismo. Porque la historia, la tradición viva, queda y vive en la palabra, en el verbo, en el nombre, siempre presente. Historia no es letra, no es documento escrito, no es escritura, antes bien lectura, lección, leyenda. No existe históricamente el hombre que se queda en la letra, sino el que vive en la palabra, el que obra hoy por hoy, el de leyenda. Y hasta los nombres de ficción, las creaciones de la palabra humana, los de poema, existen históricamente más que los enterrados sin nombre.

Era mi disciplina “Historia de la lengua”, no de la literatura, no de la letra mientras no responda a la palabra. Se ha dicho que todo castizo escritor castellano es un orador por escrito. Mejor que ser un escritor por habla. No hablar como un libro, sino que el libro hable como Santa Teresa hablaba con su pluma, como un hombre. ¿Retórica? ¿Y por qué no? Lo malo de la gramática es lo que tiene de grama, de letra. La letra mata; el espíritu, el son, vivifica. Y aún así es
inevitable el documento. Y menos mal que, gracias al fonógrafo, se empieza a pensar en el archivo de la palabra. Mas, ¡ay!, de la palabra acaso en conserva de lata. Esta misma mi segunda oración inaugural habría yo preferido que fuese verdadera oración, orada, dicha—no recitada—pero me he tenido que rendir a la liturgia académica, y más ante el amago de la taquigráfía.

Verba volant; pero la palabra misma es vuelo, y deja su vuelo al aire el pensamiento vivo sin dejarse enjaular y menos embalsamar.

“¿Historia?—decía a vuestros padres desde aquí mismo, hace treinta y cuatro años, y os lo repito hoy—Historia es lo que en torno vuestro ocurre, el motín de “ayer, la cosecha de hoy, la fiesta de mañana.” Sólo con el hoy aquí entenderéis el ayer allí, y no a la inversa; sólo el presente es clave del pasado y sólo lo inmediatamente próximo lo es de lo remoto. Lo que no descanse de una manera o de otra en el presente, ya a flor de él, ya en su lecho de roca sedimentado, no fué más que fugitiva apariencia. Es el presente el esfuerzo del pasado por hacerse porvenir, y lo que al mañana no tienda, en el olvido del ayer debe quedarse.

Y hoy, al repetir mi lección de antaño, he de deciros que el Viviente es el esfuerzo de lo vivido por hacerse porvivir, de la tradición por hacerse progreso y ventura. Y lo aplicaba entonces a la historia de que empezaba a profesar, a la de la lengua. “¿Lenguas?—decía—. Jamás comprenderéis con comprensión activa y fecunda, no pasiva y estéril, cómo una lengua vive mientras no abráis los oídos a la que en vuestro derredor suena, prestándolos atentos y fieles a los modismos del vulgo, a sus dichos y decires, a todo lo que como a barbarismo indigno de atención han solido desechar los que hacen del lenguaje un producto de pacto literario sujeto a académica prescripción. Así os decía, y empecé en la lengua castellana a buscar a España, a tratar de descubrirla, a descubrirnosla. Descubrirnos a España—digo, os decía—, porque si es cierto, como por muchos se nos asegura, que su mayor riqueza material en su subsuelo se esconde esquiva mientras araña el briego con el tradicional arado la ligera capa que la recubre y vela, en su subsuelo espiritual también, en los no escudriñados soterraños de su cotidiana vida colectiva yace talvez el venero de su renovación futura mientras seguimos arañando con nuestra crítica y apologética en las humosas glorias de su capa histórica. Tenéis que descubrir a nuestro pueblo tal como por debajo de la historia vive, trabaja, espera, ora, sufre y goza.

Sólo tengo que rectificar ahora el mal sentido que entonces daba, erradamente, a lo histórico. Lo que en uno de mis ensayos de “En torno al casticismo” llamé la intrahistoria es la historia misma, su entraña. Y en cuanto a la lengua, ya Campmany decía que lo más del romance castellano está enterrado en la entraña verbal del pueblo. Hay que desenterrarlo, pues, mas no para desterrarlo.

Y es lo que he venido haciendo en mi cátedra oficial aquí, con mi palabra hablada, en mi acción pública en toda España, con mi palabra escrita, durante estos treinta y cuatro años, y aun desde antes. Buscar la tradición histórica nacional, fuente de su progreso y ventura, y hasta de sus revoluciones, en el tesoro
del habla, del lenguaje; bregar en el escudriño de sus entrañas, a desentrañarlas. Toda la civilización, toda la economía, todo el derecho, todo el arte, toda la sabiduría, toda la religión española están ahincados en los entresijos de su lenguaje y hasta laten en el tuétano de sus huesos.

Querer es sentir, sentir es pensar, y pensar es hablar, hablarse uno a sí mismo y hablar a los demás, y con Dios, si lo logra. Convivir es consentirse, y consentirse es entenderse unos a otros, comprenderse. Y esta convivencia social civil y religiosa, esta comprensión, que es la patria, la nacionalidad, nos es más preciosa ahora, en esta crisis de renacimiento—de renación la llamé un día—y que nos entendamos y comprendamos unos a otros y cada cual a sí mismo.

La verdadera comunidad nace de comunión espiritual, verbal, y ésta de entendimiento común, de verdadero sentido común nacional. Común y propio a la vez. La lengua viva, de veras viva, ha de ser individual, nacional y universal. Dialectal, es decir, de diálogo, de conversación y de concordia. Y de dialéctica. Y hasta de polémica, que es, a su modo, una concordia entre discordias. Cada uno ha de formarse y reformarse y trasformarse su propio dialecto, individual y regional, su propio idioma—idioma quiere decir propiedad—dentro del idioma común, y enriquecerse de él y enriquecerlo enriqueciéndose. Y he aquí por qué, estudiantes salmantinos, he venido estos años esforzándome, socráticamente, en enseñarles a aprender la misma lengua que hablabais, a daros conciencia clara de ella, a que la diérais a luz y aprenderla yo así de vosotros, y todos de concurso a desentrañar el romance castellano que nos está haciendo el alma española. No a disecarlo técnicamente—lo que es meritorio—sino a recrearlo. A alumbrar su vivo manadero, en gran parte soterrano.

Y esto es filología viva, amor de habla, y no exclusivamente erudita investigación de seminario técnico, que no es, a lo sumo, sino una indispensable—que no podemos ni debemos dispensarnos de ella—preparación para lo otro. Como es la crítica preparación para la poética, la comprensión camino de creación. ¿Para qué comprender si no se ha de crear? La misma crítica, cuando es viva, es recreación y es desecho de poesía; que así como se pulían diamantes con polvo de ellos, se ensaya a las metáforas, se las pule—y clasifica y estudia—con polvo de ellas. Con esa filología, con ese amor del habla común y propia a la vez, nacional e individual a la par, individual y universal, que es lo mismo, con ella cobramos el heredado patrimonio espiritual de nuestra raza histórica, de nuestra cultura. A presión de siglos, encerrado en metáforas seculares, alienta el ánimo, el espíritu, el soplo verbal que nos ha hecho lo que por la gracia de Dios, la Palabra suma, somos: españoles de España. Las creencias que nos consuelan, las esperanzas que nos empujan al porvivir, los empeños y los ensueños que nos mantienen en pie de marcha histórica a la misión de nuestro destino, hasta las discordias que, por dialéctica y antitética paradoja, nos unen en íntima guerra civil, arraigan en el lenguaje común.

Cada lengua lleva implícita, mejor, encarnada en sí, una concepción de la vida universal, y con ella un sentimiento—se siente con palabras—, un consenti-
miento, una filosofía y una religión. Las lleva la nuestra. Y el enquisar, el desen-
trañar esa filosofía, es obra de la filología, de la historia de la lengua. La llamada
filosofía en general ¿qué es sino la historia del pensamiento universal humano
eccarnado en la palabra? No definición silogística, sino descripción narrativa; no
dogmas, sino leyendas, personas.

Los genuinos pensadores son los poetas. Las grandes religiones universales
viven en nombres de personas, no de ideas abstractas. La fábula se explica por sí
misma, y sobra la moraleja. Y es locura pretender que no se enseñe a nuestros
hijos la visión, la concepción y el sentimiento del mundo que se encierra en el
son del habla que aprenden de la boca de sus madres con la leche que maman de
sus pechos. Es nuestro mundo. Ninguna creencia, ningún ensueño, ninguna
leyenda, ningún mito, si fueron vivos, mueren. Y no será español quien no
conozca, y con amor, los que fraguaron a su España.

El niño nace inconciente, y se hace su conciencia en el seno de su pueblo, que
es como su matriz espiritual. ¿Respetar la conciencia del niño? Pero ¡si no la
tiene! Recibe el habla materna, que es la sangre del espíritu, y con ella toda la vi-
sión y toda la concepción del mundo que ella encierra. ¿Enseñanza objetiva? ¿Y
qué es objeto? El individuo es, ciertamente, un producto social; pero la sociedad
es un producto humano e individual, y el hombre un animal racional—cívil,
político le llamó Aristóteles—. Racional—de razón, ratio, y este de rei, hablar—
quiere decir verbal: el hombre es un animal que habla. El español que no piense
en lengua española, si es que no sabe otra, no es que no sea español, es que no
piensa, no es racional. Y pensar en lengua española es pensar lo que esa lengua
ha pensado, creer lo que ha creído. Porque una lengua, alma de un pueblo, pien-
sa y cree. Y no digamos que no siente, porque se siente en pensamiento—los
sentimientos son pensamientos en conmoción—. Lo otro son sensaciones ani-
males, no racionales, no humanas, no personales. Y basta observar, por otra
parte, la honda cultura tradicional de tantos analfabetos.

Y el desentrañamiento de este nuestro romance castellano me llevó a rebuscar
en su raigambre, que se enlaza y junta y une con las de los otros romances de
nuestra Iberia, con las de los otros dialectos de la común habla románica, latina.
Y así me vi llevado a enquisar y requisar las diversas hablas de nuestra Iberia y su
recíproca influencia. En mis clases universitarias se iniciaba el estudio del catalán
y valenciano, del gallego y el portugués, y aún de otros. De mi cátedra han salido
no pocos enamorados del habla y la literatura catalano-lemosina y galaco-portu-
guesa. De tales diferencias surge la integración.

Yo espero—y lo dije en ocasión para mi solemne y desde otra tribuna pública—que la venidera lengua secular de nuestra España máxima, de nuestra Iberia,
se haga de la refundición—mejor que federación—de nuestros romances. Y que
no tengamos ya en adelante que traducirnos, que es traicionamos. Tal ha sido mi
labor, de que por despedida de cátedra oficial me creo en el deber de venir hoy
aquí a daros cuenta. Tal ha sido mi obra. La inicié sin programa, sin definición
previa. Pues tal como dijo atinadamente Goethe, con el tino de un poeta, el hacer
preceder una definición a una obra, a un tratado de una disciplina cualquiera, es no darse cuenta de que hay que acabar la obra para poder llegar a la definición. Esto que hoy os digo no es un prólogo, sino un epílogo; no un programa, sino un epigrama, o metágrama, si se quiere. No lo que voy a hacer, sino lo que llevo ya hecho. ¡Esta es mi obra! ¿Juegos de palabras? Con ellos Quevedo, nuestro gran conceptista, nuestro gran verbalista, al adentrarse en las entrañas del romance castellano escrudiñó hurgando en el alma de su pueblo. Y lo mismo Calderón, y Gracían, y los místicos, y tantos otros. Esta fuí mi obra, y obra política también. Política, es decir: civil, de civilización. Y paso por alto las discordias estrictamente políticas que en nuestra vida universitaria se produjeron. ¿Que no debe entrar la política en la Universidad? Según a qué se llame política y a qué se llame universidad. ¡De partidos, nó!; ¡de entereza, sí! ¡Triste y menguado el por-vivir de España si estos templos civiles de la cultura patria se achican y oscurecen en oficinas de facultades profesionales para ganarse la vida que pasa y no queda en la historia!

En cada ciencia especial, su historia es su esencia vivificante, y lo otro, la técnica, lo codificado, no pocas veces un certificado de defunción. Hay que hacerse mártires, esto es: testigos de esa cultura; y el mártir dá su vida por la palabra, por la libertad de la palabra. Da su vida, pero no se la quita a los otros; se deja matar, pero no mata. Al recordar todo esto creo mostraros el hilo de propia continuidad de toda mi obra, y que este hombre, a quien se le ha supuesto tan versátil, ha seguido, en su profesión académica como en la popular, una línea seguida.

A esta mi obra responde, creo, vuestro homenaje. Lo acato. Homenaje—¡siempre el filólogo!—deriva de hominem, de hombre, y he procurado cumplir mi misión, mi destino, de hacerme hombre universitario de la España universal. Y llevar su nombre, su palabra, no sólo a las naciones a que se extendió nuestro romance, el que conquistó la mayor parte de América y porciones de las otras partes del mundo, sino a las otras que sienten y piensan en otros idiomas. Se conquista con la palabra. Más ha ganado para España el Verbo castellano por la pluma de Cervantes en su “Quijote”, hijo de palabra, que ganó Don Juan de Austria con su espada en la batalla de Lepanto. Me he esforzado por conocerme mejor para conocer mejor a mi pueblo—en el espejo, sobre todo, de su lengua—para que luego nos conozcan mejor los demás pueblos—y conocerse lleva a quererse—y, sobre todo, para ser por Dios conocidos, esto es: nombrados, y vivir en su memoria, que es la historia, pensamiento divino en nuestra tierra humana.

Y mis últimas palabras de despedida, compañeros de escuela, maestros y estudiantes, estudiosos todos: Tened fe en la palabra, que es la cosa vivida; sed hombres de palabra, hombres de Dios, Suprema Cosa y Palabra Suma, y que El nos reconozca a todos como suyos en España. ¡Y a seguir estudiando, trabajando, hablando, haciéndonos y haciendo a España, su historia, su tradición, su por-vivir, su ventura! Y ¡a Dios!
Maternal Love and Freedom under Slavery—Deconstruction of the Female Subjectivity in *Beloved*

**Songtao Xiong**, **Yuhua Fang**

1School of Languages, Shanghai University of International Business and Economics, Shanghai, China  
2School of Foreign Languages, China University of Geosciences, Wuhan, China

Email: *xiongsongtao666@163.com*

**Abstract**

Toni Morrison (1931-2019) is an inspiring female writer in the American contemporary literary world. In response to the physical and spiritual trauma caused by the slavery system, Toni Morrison shows her concerns about the black female group to females of different races and ethnicities. From the perspective of J. Hillis Miller's techniques of deconstruction, this paper is going to reveal the growth curves of the three heroines and explore the maternal love and freedom of the female subjectivity under slavery.

**Keywords**  
Maternal Love, Freedom, Female Subjectivity, Deconstruction, *Beloved*

**1. Introduction**

*Beloved*, the novel was published by Toni Morrison in 1987, in which many of the characters are born into slavery and experience the imposed objectivity of its commodifying ideology (*Elliott, 2000*). In this novel, Sethe, the protagonist, was sold to the Garners and brought to the Sweet Home in thirteen. After the brutal treatment of Schoolteacher, Sethe tried very hard to flee away. In the process of escaping to Cincinnati, where her mother-in-law Baby Suggs lived, Sethe gave birth to her fourth child Denver. Then aided by a black man, Sethe was able to join with Baby Suggs at the house situated at 124 Bluestone Road and enjoyed twenty-eight days’ freedom. On the last day, however, Schoolteacher came and attempted to recapture her and her children. Rather than surrender her children to a life of dehumanizing slavery, she killed her baby girl with a handsaw. From then on, the house was haunted by the ghost of the dead girl. It was Paul D's ar-
rival which drove the ghost away for one time, while the ghost incarnated as a young girl and appeared in the yard again. She called herself “Beloved” and consumed Sethe’s love and attention greedily. In the end, Sethe’s daughter Denver called for the community’s help to exorcise Beloved, which made Sethe get rid of the ghost and restore her selfhood.

The novel shows that the female subjectivity can change their state and get redemption by the awakening of maternal love and freedom no matter what oppression and trauma of the heart they are suffering under slavery. The novel has been illustrated from different angles. Linda Krumholz explored the historical recovery through analyzing Baby Suggs and rituals of healing, Beloved as the trickster of history, Sethe’s healing ritual, and Denver and the history of slavery (Krumholz, 1992). Jean Wyatt discussed the maternal body in language as a discourse of presence and figured out multiple identities of Beloved (Wyatt, 1993). Mary Jane Suero Elliot thought characters in Beloved are the commodified subjectivity for the postcolonial experience in a domestic context (Elliott, 2000). These interpretations emphasize the effects of the specific historical, contextual and characters’ elements on the female subjectivity under slavery.

In the viewpoint of above, the novel Beloved has been explained from different perspectives. But few explanations are based on the literary techniques. As a novel with everlasting literary and humanistic influence, Beloved still remains the huge space of interpretation because of its acquired new meanings in this era. This paper tries to analyze the growth curves of the three heroines in the novel and detects the maternal love and freedom under slavery from the perspective of J. Hillis Miller’s techniques of deconstruction.

2. Discussion

The research of subjectivity originates from the research of human beings in the Renaissance period. From the perspective of epistemology, “subjectivity refers to human beings’ being conscious of their statuses, abilities and values as the subject in the objective world.” (Feng, 1992). As for the concept of “female subjectivity”, Mary Wollstonecraft mentioned the importance of education and reason in the construction of selfhood of women (Wollstonecraft, 2015). Jean-Jacques Rousseau once pointed out that women were educated to be sensational, and they could make change only if they were provided with equal opportunities as men (Rousseau, 2014). Margaret Fuller called for women’s self-subsistence and internal transformation (Fuller, 2002). John Mill argued that women may attain full rational self-realization once they were allowed education, partnership, as well as a coequal share and ensured with the freedom of individual choice (Mill, 1996). Therefore, female subjectivity refers to women’s being conscious of their status, role and value as a subject in the objective world. And this paper focuses on the analysis of the characters serving as the female subjectivity: Baby Suggs, Sethe and Denver—the women of three generations in one family.

As a prominent American deconstructionist, J. Hillis Miller defines decon-
struction as searching for the thread in the text in question which will unravel it all, and concludes that there are multiple layers to any text, both its clear face and its deep countervailing subtext, “On the one hand, the ‘obvious and univocal reading’ always contains the ‘deconstructive reading’ as a parasite encrypted within itself as part of itself. On the other hand, the ‘deconstructive’ reading can by no means free itself from the metaphysical reading it means to contest.” (Miller, 2000). In Miller’s deconstruction, he centers on readers’ own feelings about the text, and tends to deconstruct a text through the analysis of figures of speech, etymology and imageries, which will also be used to analyze this novel.

In this paper, the growth curves of the three heroines will be discussed first. Then the techniques of deconstruction will be applied into analyzing the female subjectivity featured by the three heroines, Sethe, Baby Suggs and Denver. Next the discussion will emphasize on findings with analysis. Finally the paper will draw a conclusion to all the deductions, which reveals that the protection of the female subjectivity requires reconstructing the identity, seeking for community shelter and challenging the patriarchal society.

3. An Analysis of the Representative Female Subjectivity

3.1. The Female Subjectivity of Sethe

The black female subjectivity in this novel is oppressed not only as the black but also as women. In this novel, Sethe had two kinds of masters, one was the Garners, and another was Schoolteacher. Although they managed the slaves in different ways, their natural instincts were the same. The Garners were gentler when managing slaves for allowing Halle to earn money on the weekends to buy her mother freedom, and Mrs. Garner even gave Sethe earrings as a wedding gift. However, the Garners’ paternalism and condescension are simply watered-down versions of the Schoolteacher’s vicious racism. The facts behind the hypocritical benevolence were that slaves are only objects or animals owned by slave owners, and Sethe cannot hold a wedding ceremony with Halle for not being regarded as a human being in this novel. After Mr Garner’s death, Schoolteacher took charge of the Sweet Home, Sethe’s life as a female slave became worse. The scene that she was raped by the Schoolteacher’s nephews directly made her husband Halle crazy.

For Sethe, the physical abuse is humiliating, but the added emotional pain is devastating. She had no rights to hold a wedding ceremony and was usually examined by the Schoolteacher as an animal, thus making her doubt herself whether she was qualified as a human being. The moment when she was raped, she cared more about her body milk being stolen rather than being raped. Sethe couldn’t set free herself from the experience and she deemed that she couldn’t escape her slave owners. So she lifted a handsaw to kill her baby girl rather than try to drive away the slave catchers. Maybe at that time, it was the best way for her to protect the children from slavery.

To discuss Sethe, her identity as a mother and daughter must be taken into account.
consideration at the same time. On the one hand, as a daughter who knew little of her mother, after all those physical, emotional, sexual and spiritual trauma she endured as a slave at Sweet Home, she had borne all of the child’s vulnerability and sensitiveness. On the other hand, as a mother who spared no efforts to protect her children, she tried to kill all of her children when slave catchers arrived just in case that they may suffer the huge pains more brutal than death if they had been brought back to the Sweet Home.

There is no denying that it is terrifying when a mother wants to kill her children, however; tracing to the source, it is the slavery system which kills Sethe’s baby girl. To say the least, if Sethe took no action as such when Schoolteacher came, she and her four children would all be taken back to the Sweet Home. Then the vicious circle of being abused, raped and sold out would begin again. Sethe would never ever allow her children have the same experience as her out of her traumatic experience as a daughter and mother. Therefore, Sethe’s double identities in the maternal love also contribute to the behavior of infanticide.

3.2. The Female Subjectivity of Baby Suggs and Denver

The female subjectivity of Baby Suggs is rather strong in the cruel environment. After sixty years as a slave, she still retained a little hope about the future life as a free person. Baby Suggs had spent sixty years as a slave in different plantations in the south, and her last service was in the Sweet Home. She had given birth to eight children, while four were taken and four chased. After her son Halle bought her freedom, she resided in Cincinnati and held gatherings at a place called the Clearing, where she taught her followers to love voices, bodies and minds. However, after Sethe’s behavior of infanticide, Baby Suggs broke down physically and emotionally. She stopped preaching and admitted her miserable fate as a slave.

She once praised her son Halle, “A man ain’t nothing but a man. But a son? Well now, that’s somebody.” (Morrison, 1987). Therefore, we can safely conclude that formerly Baby Suggs can recognize her identity as a mother who owns a finial son. It is this identity which gives her confidence and meanings to live in the world. She even has another identity as a preacher in Cincinnati. But her realization as the female subjectivity is too weak to be destroyed, and she has to retreat to a sickbed to die. In Baby Suggs’s life, she always lives in terror, and her hope is easily evaporated by slavery, while her pursuit for self-love and identity has great influence on her descendants.

As the third generation, Denver is the loneliest one, but she still demonstrates her self-awareness of the female subjectivity through her brave performance. Denver is Sethe’s youngest child who had been stunted in her emotional growth by years of relative isolation. Since childhood, she had sought privacy and repose in the “emerald closet”—a bower formed by a ring of boxwood bushes. At the beginning, Denver was still afraid of her mother Sethe in her deep minds. There is a part of Denver’s monologue in this novel, “I love my mother but I know she
killed one of her own daughters, and tender as she is with me, I’m scared of her because of it.” (Morrison, 1987). Therefore, Denver was delighted to have a companion when Beloved came to the house. Nevertheless, with time going by, when Denver saw how Beloved was literally consuming Sethe and witnessed that Sethe became increasingly obsessed with Beloved, Denver realized her initial thought must be wrong and there was a need of rectification. In the end, to save her own mother Sethe and herself, Denver overcame the fear of the outside and sought help from the community.

Denver hadn’t suffered those catastrophic experience like her mother and grandmother, and she can hardly get together well enough with her mother or integrate into the community in the first place. From Denver’s experience, it is obvious that the female subjectivity, especially the black female subjectivity, has a long way to go to strive for the same rights with men. The respectable thing is that self-isolated Denver dared to associate with unfamiliar people and started to form her own opinions on things and people around her, which demonstrates her self-awareness of the female subjectivity.

4. Techniques of Deconstruction Concerned with the Female Subjectivity

This paper has separately discussed the three heroines as the representative female subjectivity in the chapter above, which lays the foundation for this chapter to make a comprehensive survey on the female subjectivity through techniques of deconstruction. Through figures of speech, we can clearly understand the changes of the female subjectivity’s life experiences and intention courses. Through etymology and imageries, we can acknowledge that the patriarchal world and slavery system have broken the balance of men and women, slaves and slave owners, mothers and children.

4.1. Figures of Speech

When appreciating the literature from the perspective of deconstruction, the use of figures of speech is often noticed and analyzed. This paper focuses on the analysis of pun and repetition.

Through the use of pun, Toni Morrison reveals that the female subjectivity are supposed to learn to confront with the past if they want to move forward. “Pun is the clever or humorous use of a word that has more than one meaning, or of words that have different meanings but sound the same.” (Hornby, 2004). In this novel, the most successful use of pun is manifested by the name “Beloved”. Sethe considers Beloved as a name given to her dead baby, but the truth is that at her daughter’s funeral, the minister addressed the living (including Sethe) as “Dearly Beloved”. So Beloved refers to both Sethe and the dead baby (the living and the dead as a whole). Through the use of pun, readers can have an in-depth understanding of the novel. “On a more general level, Beloved also functions as Sethe’s repressed memories, as a personal past.” (Sun, 2012). The novel presents us a
picture that the female subjectivity can draw lessons from the past and embrace a better future.

In this novel, repetition is used to express the female subjectivity's strong feelings. Therefore, it is no wonder that the use of repetition is common in the narrative novel. For example, when Sethe expresses her love to the dead girl, she says “Nobody was going to nurse her like me. Nobody was going to get it to her fast enough…Nobody knew that she couldn’t pass her air if you held her up on your shoulder…Nobody knew that but me and nobody had her mild but me.” (Morrison, 1987). Sethe repeats the word “nobody” to voice that she is the only one to empathize with her baby girl. However, it also shows her constant unsettling sense of the infanticide and the intense denying of her past crime. To recover from the past slavery nightmare, Sethe is bound to be faced with the past and admits her guilt, thus living a better life as the female subjectivity.

4.2. Etymology

“Etymology is the study of the history of words, their origins, and how their form and meaning have changed over time.” (Hornby, 2004). As a result, we can have a better understanding of the female subjectivity through the analysis of etymology in this novel.

Taking Sethe as an example, in the etymological sense, the name Sethe alludes to Adam and Eve’s third son Seth in the Holy Bible, in which Seth is a gift given by God as the substitute of their first son Cain due to that their second son Abel murdered his brother Cain. Morrison endows this name to Sethe to imply she is a substitute of the murdered people during slavery.

Since Sethe is a substitute of the murdered slaves, she is confronted with a dilemma: whether to keep the traumatic memories and unspeakable past or abandon them to yearn for a reassuring future. Just as the arrival of Seth in the Holy Bible manifests God’s benevolence and love, the character Sehte created by Morrison implies an eclectic way for slaves to recover from the past, which is retelling the repressed memories to reestablish the identity. In this novel, the female subjectivity always repress the memories to forget the past, however; this repression and dissociation from the past leads to a fragmentation of the selfhood and a loss of true identity. Baby Suggs, Sethe and Denver all experience the loss of selfhood, which could only be healed by the acceptance of the past.

4.3. Imageries

Imagery is the author’s use of vivid and descriptive language to deepen the meaning of their literary works. In this novel, Morrison forms powerful imageries to appeal to human senses to deepen the readers’ understandings of the female subjectivity. The author tries to analyze the imageries in detail associated with the behaviors of the female subjectivity from the perspective of deconstruction.

Colors symbolize the female subjectivity’s fantasies; sometimes they cannot
take control of their lives, let alone disobey the rules made by the patriarchal world. The entire picture of this novel was dominated by pale, white and red colors, while bright colors can hardly be seen except on Baby Suggs’ quilt. There is a paragraph depicting how lifeless Room 124 is, “The walls of the room were slate colored… curtains white, and the dominating feature, the quilt over an iron cot, was made up of scraps of blue serge, black, brown and gray wool—the full range of the dark and the muted that thrift and modesty allowed. In that sober field, two patches of orange looked wild-like life in the raw.” (Morrison, 1987).

Baby Suggs had been searching for colors in her remaining days. She holds the view that colors wouldn’t hurt people. However, it’s the color that really hurts and destroys people. With the black color, Sethe has to bend her knees and endures inhuman torture to earn a living for her children, Denver has to lock her heart to satisfy her mother and struggle with the days of apparent serenity. Colors symbolize the fantasies of the female subjectivity, while the resolution for them to struggle for freedom with men not depends on the insubstantial quest for colors, but the awakening of the female subjectivity. Thus, Denver finally makes up her mind to walk out of the house for the community’s shelter, and Sethe admits her self-value in the end.

In the world of Beloved, trees serve primarily as sources of healing, comfort and life. The female subjectivity in this novel are always associated with trees, which retrospectively manifests they are under too many sorrows to pursuit natural shelter. Denver’s “emerald closet” of boxwood bushes functions as a place of solitude and repose for her. The beautiful trees of Sweet Home mask the true horror of the plantation in Sethe’s memory for she finds her freedom by escaping through a forest. By imagining the scars on Sethe’s back as a “chokecherry tree”, Amy Denver sublimates a site of trauma and brutality into one of beauty and growth. The female subjectivity can not satisfied with their living conditions, but they still try to find happiness and comfort through the natural condolence.

5. Findings with Analysis

With all the analysis above, this paper finds measures to reestablish the female subjectivity under slavery, which can be generally summarized to three points as challenging the totalitarian society, seeking for community shelter and reconstructing the identity.

Generally speaking, the female subjectivity in Beloved have all lost their identities, because mothers cannot bring up their children, and women doubt their values as human beings. The most dangerous effect of slavery is its negative impact on the slaves’ selfhood. For instance, Sethe acknowledged herself as goods, and gave up her identity as the individual female subjectivity. Therefore, it is necessary to reconstruct the identity of the female subjectivity. Slaves were told they were subhuman and were traded as commodities whose worth could be valued by dollars. Consequently, the female subjectivity in this novel are very in-
secure about whether or not they could possibly be treated as a real “individual”. To ease the female subjectivity’s worries, we must help them figure out who they are and admit their values as human beings.

In addition, *Beloved* demonstrates the extent to which the female subjectivity need the support of their community in order to survive. When Sethe becomes a part of the Cincinnati community, she begins to develop her selfhood during her twenty-eight days of freedom. Similarly, Denver indeed discovers herself and grows up when she leaves Room 124 and becomes a part of society. At the end of the novel, the black community makes up for its past misbehavior by gathering at Room 124 to collectively exorcise Beloved. By driving *Beloved* away, the community secures Sethe’s and its own identity for release from the past. As for the female subjectivity in this novel, it is the community shelter which protects them against the severe environment. As for the Cincinnati’s black community, it is the protecting behavior which consolidates the community.

Last but not least, the female subjectivity spare not efforts to challenge the patriarchal society. Patriarchy is a social system in which males hold primary power and predominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege and property control. Despite the reconstruction of the identity and the community shelter, the female subjectivity can still hardly be reestablished if the society remains as a patriarchal society. Sethe kills her own daughter to protect her children from the destruction wrought by slavery and patriarchy. Denver exiles from the place named Room 124 and searches for independence and self-possession. They struggle to free themselves from patriarchy, some succeed while others fail. Those who fail may be too fragile in their inner hearts and indulge themselves in their own world, thus giving up themselves even when opportunities come. Those who succeed always have a thorough understanding of themselves and tend to unite together, so that they can make a breakthrough even in the patriarchal society.

6. Conclusion

This paper analyzes the female subjectivity from the perspective of J. Hillis Miller’s deconstruction, concretely referring to three aspects—figures of speech, etymology and imageries, which reveals the significance of maternal love and freedom under slavery. Through figures of speech, we can clearly understand the changes of the female subjectivity’s life experiences and intention courses. Through etymology and imageries, we can acknowledge that the patriarchal world and slavery system have broken the balance of men and women, slaves and slave owners, mothers and children. The growing experiences of the heroines in this novel are still very meaningful to the modern women. In consideration of the unequal rights between men and women today, we can draw lessons from *Beloved* that the protection of the female subjectivity requires reconstructing the identity, seeking for community shelter and challenging the patriarchal society.
Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

References


Praising a Global Identity in Nadine Gordimer’s *The Pickup*

Djaha N’de Tano

INP-HB (Institut National Polytechnique Félix-Houphouët Boigny) of Yamoussoukro, Yamoussoukro, Côte d’Ivoire

Email: djandeta@yahoo.fr

Abstract

The article attempts to explore, in Nadine Gordimer’s *The Pickup*, the collision between different identities through the love between Julie, a white South African woman and her husband Abdu also called Ibrahim, a Muslim Arab. With regard to postcolonial theories which envisage flattening the post-colonial legacy, Gordimer promotes a global identity beyond the tribe, by taking into account issues of globalization, cross cultural and transracial identities that have changed the identical structure of the New World. Moreover she demonstrates that the force of identity is pervasive enough to transcend binaries and move freely in and out of spaces. The article supports that the beauty of a culture lies on the changing and the flexible nature of identity rather than a fix one.

Keywords

Global Identity, Cross Cultural Identity, Transracial Identity, Flexible Nature of Identity, New World

1. Introduction

From colonialism to date, the African continent, particularly South Africa, has gone through many events that have impacted the course of its entire history. Apartheid, as a dominant discourse, has developed through the logic of superiority the process of legitimization of oppression of the colonized. In South Africa, the apartheid champions tried to make their subjects confused and hybridized with regard to their cultural and authentic identity. Consequently, the question of identity has always been an important issue for all South African writers, either white or not. Hence, in the works of South African writers such as Brink (1979) and Coetzee (1977) one can witness a cross or a globalizing view of identity. In their texts, the notion of identity is no longer stuck to the tribe or the
origin. They promote a cross cultural and a transracial identity.

The perception of identity can also be evidenced in the writings of the first South African laureate of the Nobel Prize of literature, Nadine Gordimer and precisely in her second post-apartheid novel *The Pickup* published in 2001. In the novel, Gordimer displays a world in which individuals’ identity is beyond their culture of origin and the borders of their homelands. The narrative presents a new way of looking at old questions of identity and origin. Through the love between Julie Summer—a daughter of a prominent white citizen and Abdu also called Ibrahim, an illegal Arabic immigrant earning his bread as a car technician, we notice a relationship only favored by the subliminal power of literature. The class difference and mutual incomprehension between Ibrahim and Julie arouse curiosity in each other.

Accordingly, this article aims at casting a glance, through Homi Bhabha and Stuart Hall’s post-colonial posture and their theories of hybridity, at the new perception of the notion of identity that Gordimer displays in *The Pickup*. According to their theory, a cross-cultural marriage like that of Abdu and Julie is a factor creating in-between or third space identities and cultural diversity in the current era of globalization.

As such, the concern is to show how the notion of identity has to be re-thought. That is to say, how from a fix or authentic identity we are invited towards a flexible identity in this era of globalization.

Literature also provides the deepest possible exploration of identity, and its capacity to federate different cultural identities. The choice of the two main characters of this novel by Gordimer participates in this federation capacity of literature. Through the love between Julie and Abdu, from a total and different social background, origin and culture, Gordimer tackles a difficult subject.

The article will first discuss about fix identity in general and secondly show how Gordimer promotes a global identity beyond the tribe, by taking into account issues of globalization, multiculturalism that have changed the structure and the face of the New World.

2. Fix or Authentic Identity

To begin with, the word “Identity” is a very complex, dynamic and wide notion. It takes into account culture, gender and religion. Therefore, it is not easy to find a single and working definition of the notion of identity, notwithstanding, we tentatively provide conceptual definitions for an understanding of this article. The Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (2003) defines identity as “who a person is, or the qualities of a person or group which make them different from others”. According to the Chambers 21st Century Dictionary (1996: 669) identity is “the state or quality of being a specified person or thing, which embraces who or what a person is” or “individual characteristics by which a person or a thing can be identified”.

For Fortier (2008), identity is what makes a person being himself and not an-
other one. It is what permits to recognize him and distinguish him from others. The features concurring to his/her singularity\(^1\). From the above definitions, it appears that identity varies from an individual to another, depending on the individual’s community, culture and religion.

Seen the above definitions and concerns, the question of identity is crucial in a postcolonial society like that of the South African. South Africa has inherited a diversity of cultural, social and political hierarchies due to apartheid. Since the implementation of the apartheid system in the 1940’s and its falling apart in the 1990’s, South Africa has never remained the same. That change, does not only affect the social, economic and the political levels only, but also the ideology, culture and above all the identity which is said to be a process by many scholars like Dennis Haskell.

In fact, the history of South Africa is associated with a set of facts and realities affecting and changing the course of its intrinsic identity. The question of identity is necessarily complex as it takes into account the totality of a social experience, much of which is inextricably influenced by a shared history and culture of a community. In South Africa, we can notice the existence of at least three communities: the Blacks, the Whites and the Coloreds. This diversity of communities sharing the same living area necessarily leads to many real or supposed identical clashes.

Identity is a noun, and as many nouns, identity gives the appearance of a fixing meaning once and for all. As such we wonder what can be a fix identity. According to the online Webber’s dictionary, fixity has the quality or state of being fixed; steady or permanent. However, in a dynamic social and cultural climate, how can one protect or preserve one’s identity? Is a fix identity possible today in a melting world?

A fix or an authentic identity can be seen as an identity which is preserved form the influence or the exchange between other external identities. That is to say an identity evolving in an environment without interconnexion with the other culture. How can it be possible as we are living more and more in a globalized world? Specifically in South Africa, where more than three communities: the Blacks, the Whites and the Coloreds are sharing the same living area? This concern is echoed by Bangura (1994: p. 48) when talking about some issues like how individuals are socialized during the course of their lives. For him, like Gordimer—as members of different races, families, neighborhoods, villages, professions, social groups are trans-cultural organizations—it should be important to be taken into consideration when one attempts a discussion on search for identity in general.

In the current paper identity is studied and explored at numerous levels and from various approaches. In recent sociological studies, however, the focus has shifted from the analysis of the individual to the collective, some of the re-

\(^1\)Translation mine “L’identité, c’est donc ce qui fait qu’une personne est elle-même et non une autre; ce qui permet de la reconnaître et de la distinguer des autres, l’ensemble des caractères qui concourent à sa singularité.” Vincente Fortier, Les incertitudes juridiques de l’identité religieuse, 2008.
searchers regard identity as a source of mobilization rather than a product of it. Identity is seen as an unstable entity. Moslund (2010: p. 23) confirms this instability by giving a vivid picture of this globalized century through the passage below:

It seems that we are witnessing a massive international and transnational defeat of gravity, an immense uprooting of origin and belonging, an immense displacement of borders, with all the clashes, meetings, […] reshaping the cultural landscapes of the world’s countries and cities.

In consequence, for Giddens (2000), globalization can be defined as the intensification of social relations throughout the world, linking distant localities in such a way that local happenings are formed as a result of events that occur many miles away and vice versa. Beerkens (2004: p. 47) is right when he says:

Globalization is a process in which basic social arrangements like culture, market, politics, values, and ideology become disembedded from their original territory context, mainly the nation-state due to the acceleration and expansion of transnational flows of people, finance and information.

Held et al. (1999: p.5) posit that globalization can be thought as a process or a set of process which embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions assessed in terms of their extensity and flexibility generating transnational flows, interaction and interconnectedness between people. It is an epoch characterized by an increased mobility of people, goods, capitals and ideas. It is a period of history that has induced the building of transnational networks and interconnectedness of peoples. All in all, we can say today that, we are living in the era of globalization characterized by increase flows of migration, transnationalism, interconnectedness and cultural exchange. As Hall (2003: p. 84) said we are at an epoch, defined by:

Those processes operating on a global scale, which cut across national boundaries, integrating and connecting communities and organization in new space-time combinations, making the world in reality and in experience more interconnected.

Indeed, nowadays people are crossing borders than at any past period of the mankind history. International trade, military service abroad, immigration, student exchange programs, employment opportunities, tourism, political asylum, refugees, technology development, internet chatting, and the evolution of transport.. This instability of identity is also recognised by Obama (1995: p. 7) at the preface of his autobiographical novel Dreams From my Father when he acknowledges that: “…the fluid state of identity—the leaps through time, the collision of cultures—mark our modern life. Van der Waal and Wilcox (2004: p. 8) emphasise that “the issue of identity [is] problematic (particularly questioning any idea that identity is stable”.

Consequently, in such a configuration of the world, the notion of identity
grasped during past centuries as singular and uniform construction within the boundaries of a culture and a nation now seems to be untenable. These ways of conceiving identity are interwoven. Thus, they are in crisis in this global age. This is the reason why Papastergiadis quoted in the Journal (Volume 14, 2008: p99) in an article entitled The hybrid self and the ambivalence of boundaries says “As we become enmeshed in the globalizing process it becomes all the more urgent to develop a more subtle understanding of the politics of translation and incommensurability.”

The idea of transnationalism and interconnectedness of peoples that one can draw from the above quotations, leads us to contend that the way the notion of identity is conceptualized so far is affected. It is in that view that Albrow (1996: pp. 93-94) says “globalization involves a […] destabilization of old identities, whether of nation-state, communities or individuals”

The notion of identity has to be reconsidered in the sense of Gordimer for a peaceful modern era and specifically a rainbow nation for all South Africans.

3. Rethinking Global Identities beyond Tribes

The verb “rethink” can be defined as the fact of reconsidering, thinking over again about a given problem or a situation. The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2007) defines the verb “rethink” as “to think about a plan or idea again in order to decide if any changes should be made”. In South Africa, we need a culture of diversity. Because fixing identities can lead dangerously towards clash of identities and problems of cohabitation, Gordimer’s The pickup is a true reflection in a South Africa confronted with identities issues.

Through The Pickup, Gordimer gets onto the delicate topic of identity. By doing so, she demonstrates the power of literature in transforming complex situations into acceptable ones. Literature works with a fluidity that permits flexibility even concerning identity matters. It allows for openness, change, curiosity, and avoids closing of possibilities. In fact, Julie Summers, the female protagonist, is the daughter of rich white middle class parents (meanwhile divorced) in contemporary Johannesburg (2001: p. 234). She has, however, early on distanced herself from this bourgeois background.

The story begins when her car breaks down and she starts a love affair with Abdu also called Ibrahim, the mechanic at her garage. Abdu, whose actual name is Ibrahim, turns out to be an illegal immigrant (with a degree in economics) from an unspecified Arab country, and to foster great admiration for the jet set world of Julie’s father. The love between Abdu and Julie in Gordimer’s novel, “is like the Shanghai rain, a drizzle that forms and unforms in the thin air until everything is soaked” (2007); the above quotation tells us more about love than any definition.

Further, literature can provide a testing ground, it is a discourse for the exploration of possibilities. The Mandarin-speaking Australian novelist Nicholas Jose quoted by Haskell (2007) in The Australian in an article entitled “Identity is
a process, not a fixity” has claimed that in an article “the journey of mind to make intelligible what we perceive at first to be only dimly part of our world is what we are all about”. That is to say, the role of literature and authors in solving the problems human beings are facing is part of the missions of any intellectuals or novelists.

In a postcolonial society, like that depicted by Gordimer, identity crisis is considered as one of the dominant phenomena. It is not only because a postcolonial subject fails to identify himself/herself either with the colonial burden or with the subsequent postcolonial existence, but it is because s/he is in the present context enchained to the dynamics of the New World Order. Nevertheless, postcolonial identities are never static, but rather as a vortex they are ever spinning in a violent motion.

Gordimer prepares the mind of her compatriots to take into account the fact that no one can serenely be self-sufficient in a changing world. The notion of identity needs to be revisited and be conceptualized within a more open-ended and contingent cultural politics. As such, Gordimer’s position is that in a globalized world the best way to have a national identity is to have an international one first; as multiculturalism is an enrichment, but not a threat. Here, one can posit in short that the notion of identity has reached a stage where it has to be represented in surpassing the monolithic national culture. There is a need at this era of globalization to devise an identity that crosses cultural barriers.

It is that idea of identity renewal that is echoed in The Pickup. Indeed, in the narrative, Gordimer brings to the fore an identity that originates from the intermingling of cultures. It is offered to us to see a society where individuals bear identities constructed at the confluence of cultures. And these kinds of identities built at the confluence of different cultures are the ones praised by Gordimer. For her, no reasoning individual can fix him/herself in a culture or environment that does not favor openness and connectedness. From such a point of view one can say that Bhabha’s (1994) intention is to show that connectedness and openness lead individuals to a new kind of cultural hybridization.

In the online Webster Dictionary a hybrid is defined as a “person whose background is a blend of two diverse cultures or traditions.” As it can be noticed, a hybrid person is the product of at least two or diverse cultures. Brian Stross (cited by Tahsildar Abir, 2013: pp. 29-30) in his article on the evolution of the term “hybrid,” asserts: “a cultural hybrid… can be a person who represents the blending of traits from diverse cultures or traditions.” In short, we can say that a cross-cultural identity is the one constructed or resulting from the combination of two or many cultures.

The first element that deserves to be probed in keeping with cross-cultural identity in the narrative is undoubtedly the protagonists Julie Summer and Abdu known also as Ibrahim Ibn Musa. In fact, they both hold an identity that rises beyond their places of origin. Julie, a girl from a western cultural background
living in South Africa, got married with Abdu, an Arab Muslim coming from an unnamed Northern African country. To testify this hybrid relationship we can quote the following passage:

If you must live with me then we must marry. I cannot take a woman to my family, with us like this. (...) Two days before the aircraft took off they went to Magistrate’s Court and before a marriage officer (Gordimer, 2001: p. 107).

What is more is that Julie, after her marriage with Abdu, travelled to her husband’s country and started learning Arabic language and converted herself to Muslim religion. In the novel it is written: “I have to learn the language” (Gordimer, 2001: p. 121). We can also quote this:

Sutras, the footnotes said they were called. She read aloud to herself as if to hear in the natural emphasis of delivery which had been the passages come upon for life in these choices out of much advice and exhortation, inspiration, consolation people find in religious texts (Gordimer, 2001: p. 144).

Here, despite Julie’s western beliefs and cultural identity, she is crossing those borders to set up a new selfhood. Therefore, it is worth saying that in this twentieth century with its increased emphasis on place and globalization, identity has to be thought in terms of hybridity and multiculturalism.

Besides the case of Julie, we have Abdu her husband whose constant attempts to leave his culture and his desire to live in the West places him in an “in-between” state, in which he oscillates between his intrinsic cultural and religious principles and those of the West. Abdu’s cross cultural identity can be illustrated by this passage: “I was in America for a year some other country would have been better idea for me. I go where they’ll let me in” (Gordimer, 2001: p. 12). Without any further delay, one may posit that Abdu holds an identity that results from the mixture of oriental and western cultures.

In analyzing all these cases of cultural hybridity that pervade the novel, I want to say that identity in our today’s life must be seen as the water which spouses the different forms and the different colors of the recipient in which it is poured. Such a conception of identity reminds us these words from the famous actor Bruce Lee:

Empty your mind, you must be shapeless, formless, like water. When you pour water in a cup, it becomes the cup. When you pour water in a bottle, it becomes the bottle. When you pour water in a teapot, it becomes the teapot. Water can drip and it can crash. Become like water my friend.

From such an assertion, one can notice that the question of identity must be renewed and adapted to the new deal. The discourses of the past centuries have to be set off to forge new ones which are freed from nationalist homogeneities. It

---

has to be relocated in what Bhabha (1994: p. 168) terms the “Third space”. Bhabha believes that the postcolonial world should valorise spaces of mixing, because these spaces of hybridity offer the most profound challenge to colonialism. For him, hybridity represents the triumph of the postcolonial or the subaltern over western hegemony. Hybridity subverts the narratives of colonial power and dominant cultures.

Here, we have to perceive hybridity as a means to destabilize dominating powers, eliminate binaries, and provide voice to the subaltern. Bhabha asserts that the formation of hybridity “from the interweaving of elements of the colonizer and colonized, challenging the validity and authenticity of any essentialist cultural identity “(Bhabha, cited in Paul Meredith, 1994: p. 2). He evokes the notion of “third” or “in-between” space that he likens to the metaphor of the stairwell, which represents connection between disparate cultures, and in which interaction takes place.

The stairwell as liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white. The hither and thither of the stairwell, the temporal movement and passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities. This interstitial passage between fixed identities opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy (Bhabha, 1994: p. 4).

Bhabha’s concept of hybridity will be important to cast away the colonial ways of defining identity that was limited to the national boundaries and reconsider the notion of identity taking into account the new cultural configurations imposed by our globalized world. So, we have to extend the use of the concept of hybridity from its colonial context to celebrate cultural blends, identities’ reconstruction, and border crossings in our global era. What I want the reader to grasp here is that the notion of identity should be shaped according to human beings’ needs that progress accordingly to time and spaces. Because, as Bhabha (1994: p. 1). asserts “it is the trope of our times to locate the question of culture in the realm of the beyond” Bhabha perceives the “beyond” as a moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion. (Ibid, p.4)

Furthermore, identity should not be taken as a fixed essence; neither permanent nor enduring, but tends to undergo changes and transformations through time and spaces. Identity is to be shaped and reshaped. A new sense of identity needs to be elaborated to emerge and transcend national, religious, ethnic and racial boundaries. The identity of individuals should not be confined in one nationality, one culture, one religion and one ethnic group. A position dear to Maalouf (1998: p. 110):

I do not dream of a world where religion no longer has room, but of a world where the need for spirituality is dissociated from the need for be-
longing. [...] Separating the Church from the State is no longer enough; just as important would be to separate the religious from the identity

What is more, it should be envisioned a new religious, the one who is eager to lay out moral and ethical actions than obeying to codes and taboos. In addition, the solution would be that belonging to the community appears as the major component of the identity: for the author, it is indispensable and seems to be the most apt to go beyond religious belonging like the others, without erasing them.

In other words, time is up for the whole humanity to reconsider the way it understands and displays identity. We should no longer be fearful of assimilating and espousing the cultural beliefs and practices of the host culture. That is to say, one should stop running away from the notion of hybridity put forth by Bhabha. I should like to say that we have to accommodate the identifiers of the individual to the current world order which is the global, like Bhabha says:

The move away from the singularities of ‘class’ or ‘gender’ as primary conceptual and organizational categories, has resulted in an awareness of the subject positions of race, gender, generation, institutional location, geopolitical locale, sexual orientation -that inhabit any claim to identity in the modern world. (op.cit. p.1)

In leaning on the assertion, I would like to draw the attention of the reader on the stakes of the new expressive ways of identity. Indeed, regarding the representation of identity in crossing culture, one is prompted to assert that it promotes the idea of cultural exchange.

His identity of uncivilized, marginal and dominated by the former colonizer is to be discarded. He should stop being considered as the other, but rather as a brother. Indeed, in our corpus we have the female main protagonist who teaches her English language to the Arab Ladies and in return learns their Arabic one.

To take a case in point, it is worth quoting the following passages:

Julie was teaching English not only to Maryam and the quiet young neighborhood girls and awkward boys who sidled into the lean-to whispering and making place for one another cross-legged on the floor. [...] she agreed—but in exchange for lessons in their language. (2001: pp.142-143)

It is important to notice that in accepting to relocate identities beyond our nativeness, it leads us to earn something new from the other. Gordimer herself underscores the value of the blossoming that cultural exchange promises to the whole humanity. She is herself the fruit of this cultural intermixture. In fact, she was born from a Jewish immigrant watchmaker from Žagaré now Lithuania, and her mother, Hannah “Nan” (Myers) Gordimer was an English woman from London. She suggests “there is no need to fear the various cultural intersections, exchanges and networks; no need to fear mixing with foreign cultures, as “all civilisations—including China and Japan—have been the result of clashes.” (1999: p. 28). This cultural interdependence suggested by Gordimer, has to be considered as
a way to cope with any cultural hegemony, for if each culture is in a position of indebtedness vis-a-vis the other that will set up a state of esteem of culture difference.

What is more is that this ideas of cultural intersection appears in *The Pickup* under a more metaphorical and symbolic image. She lives in a formerly black part of town, drives a second hand car, works for a rock ‘n roll agency and spends her leisure time with a multiracial and liberal circle of friends, the so-called “Table”.

Indeed, “The table” in the *Pickup* (2001: p. 23) is a symbolic place that deserves a particular attention in the narrative. “The Table” is a place where young people from different cultural, racial and social backgrounds meet and enjoy themselves and share ideas. Accordingly, we can quote the following passage:

She still joins the friends as usual at *The Table* to which she belongs—they are, after all, her elective siblings who have distanced themselves from the ways of the past, their families, whether these are black ones still living in the old ghettos or white ones in The Suburbs like one member who has adopted Buddhism as “a faith that is a way of life not a bellicose ethnicity. (p. 23)

“The table”, as a symbol, is to be read as a place teaching interconnectedness and multiculturalism. It is a new “imagined community” (Anderson, 1983) in which identity is not defined in terms of purity and uniformity, but rather on the basis of difference and heterogeneity. It is a society in miniature in which Gordimer promotes “the ethic of mutual enrichment” (Idem, p. 209).

In other words, the symbolism of “The table” in *The Pickup*, is an invitation to create a world in which it should be put forward the rendez-vous of the give and take of cultural, racial and social values. A rendez-vous where there is no minor, nor advanced culture to phagocytose the others, but a convivial place where all type of cultures is accepted and respected with its strengths and weaknesses. Because according to Gordimer’s own words “whatever you do, love, whatever happens, hits you, mate, Bra, that’s all right with me.” (p. 23) Henceforth one has to keep in mind that despite the differences that separate the ones from the others, in terms of culture, ethnicity, race, religion and social origin, the most important thing is the “Dasein” (Heidegger, 1964) for as human beings, we are all brothers.

In this sense, hybrid individuals seem to play a key role: that of hyphens or mediators in the era of globalization, such a new conception of identity is essential for all. Now, “to go resolutely to the other, you must have your arms open and your head high, and you can only have your arms open if you have your head up” (2001: p. 53).

The same idea is evoked by Bhabha while talking about stairwell as liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, [which] becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white (op.cit., p. 4). This view point consolidates that
of Norton when he says: “Every time we speak, we are negotiating and renegotiating our sense of self in relation to the larger social world, and reorganizing that relationship across time and space. Our gender, race, class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, among other characteristics, are all implicated in this negotiation of identity” (Norton 350). To paraphrase Bourdieu, the person who speaks cannot be understood apart from larger networks of social relationships. That is to say identity must be perceived as the sum of all our affiliations, and in which belonging to the human community would take more and more importance, until one day we become the main membership, without erasing our multiple particular belongings. Identity is a process, not a fixity that binds us “to something larger than ourselves”. That space includes the space of national borders and above.

4. Conclusion

In conducting this article according to post-colonial theories and Bhabha’s theory of hybridity, I have decided to contribute first and foremost, to enable the evaluation of the effects of globalization on national or intrinsic identities. Then, to shed light on the idea that identity is not a static and completed entity, but rather in perpetual reconstruction, as such The Pickup is surely one of the post-apartheid novel that satisfies with a high sense of responsibility questions of global identity—cross cultural identity—transracial identity—multiculturalism and the flexible nature of identity. In addition, it is a serious contribution of literature in helping readers and South Africans to come to better understanding, acceptance and tolerance by examining identity as a global issue but not as narrow or national issue.

In this era of globalization like the one depicted by Gordimer, identity should be rethought as a fluctuating issue, rather than a fixed and static essence. Therefore, it should be privileged hybrid and global identities. That is to say, identities are constructed from the combination of different cultures. To paraphrase Bhabha (1994) “those located in the between or the third space”. For Bhabha it is such kind of identity emerging in the cultural interstices that introduces creative invention into existence (Idem, p. 9).

Finally, it may enable to lead humanity to understand and accept the new conceptions of identity induced by globalization. South Africa is particularly invited to make of its specificity a strength. The fact of having different cultures sharing the same area can be seen as a richness, but not a malediction.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

References

https://www.merriam-webster.com/
https://doi.org/10.17118/11143/11585
Writing Slowness in J. M. Coetzee’s *Slow Man*

Casimir Komenan

Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny, Cocody, Abidjan
Email: casimirkomenan@yahoo.fr

**Abstract**

Using literary semiotics and narratology as the only criteria, and starting from the hypothesis according to which J. M. Coetzee writes slowness in *Slow Man*, the article shows how *Slow Man* is made weighty, and why it evolves sluggishly. With an actant character saddled with the epithet “Slow Man”, a designation embodying slowness, *Slow Man* claims to be a slow novel generated by retardation devices like speech acts narrative, polyglotism, fragmentation, epistolarity, and narrative embeddedness. Those roadblocks prevent flashy reading, promote “slow reading”, a leisurely and innovative reading by which the reader is brought to become a textual cooperator in the actualization process of *Slow Man*’s meaning.

**Keywords**

Actantial Schema, Characterization, Coetzee, Fragmentation, Genette, Greimas, Hybridity, Language and Style, Narrative, Narrative Speed, Narratology, Novel, Retardation Devices, Scriptural Slowness, Semiotics, Write, Writable Text

1. Introduction

In *In Praise of Slowness: Challenging the Cult of Speed*, Honoré (2004) inspired the development of “A Manifesto for Slow Writing”, a movement postulating that “the time for haste is over [and that the slow writer should] embrace a more authentic way of writing and of being a writer.” (BOOKFOX, 2018). Answering Honoré’s call, Coetzee (2006) wrote *Slow Man*, a novel in which he claims to be a “slow writer” concerned with “slow writing” and “slow reading”. In *Slow Man*, characterization, technique, language and style are so closely connected that it could be hypothesized that they are used as ploys for writing slowness. This hypothesis leads the reader to wonder about the whys and wherefores of such a scripture. Before reflecting on the issue, it would be useful to define the words “writing” and “slowness”.

**How to cite this paper:** Komenan, C. (2019). Writing Slowness in J. M. Coetzee’s *Slow Man*. *Advances in Literary Study*, 7, 176-192. https://doi.org/10.4236/als.2019.74012

**Received:** July 22, 2019  
**Accepted:** October 11, 2019  
**Published:** October 14, 2019

Copyright © 2019 by author(s) and Scientific Research Publishing Inc. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial International License (CC BY-NC 4.0). http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

Open Access
Whereas “writing” makes reference to “the verbal representation” of the story, the “fictional act of language” (Guillemette & Lévesque, 2016), “slowness” refers to the slow speed at which the main character leads his life, and also to the slow pace at which the printed text evolves. Put differently, “slowness” alludes to the length of the prose. Thanks to literary semiotics theorized as a science of signs meant to make meaning in a given written text, and narratology understood “as a field of study […] look[ing] at the internal mechanisms of narrative, the form taken by a narrated story” (Guillemette & Lévesque, 2016), the extent to which Slow Man is made lengthy, and the reason why it develops slowly will be proved. The study of the fictionalization of slowness in Slow Man falls into two parts. In the first section, while the epithet “Slow Man” depicts Paul Rayment as an actant character embodying slowness, in the second division, Slow Man is described and analyzed as a slow novel composed with retardation devices.

1.1. “Slow Man”, an Actant Character Embodying Slowness

Slow Man, the title of Coetzee’s novel, is suggestive of a designation in which Paul Rayment appears as a “Slow Man”, an actant character embodying slowness. Algirdas Julien Greimas’s actantial schema helps to better understand the actantial functions of Paul Rayment’s characterization as a “Slow Man”. The latter’s appellations, names, surnames, nicknames, and grammatical substitutes, will be zeroed in on in Slow Man, which is considered as a semiotic product encapsulating the main character’s doing. As a person in his sixties, Paul Rayment is an actant subject, a protagonist seeking an actant object, which is living the remaining of his life comfortably in Adelaide. But Paul Rayment’s legitimate quest for a happy old age is suddenly disturbed by a serious road accident which befalls him on Magill Road, and leads to the amputation of his right leg. These two unfortunate events are two major active actant opponents of the pleasant lifestyle, the secure and unworried existence Paul Rayment yearns for in his old age; they hinder the protagonist’s project about living a happy, active and comfortable old age. Those obstacles make him suffer the humiliation of being an amputee, a man who cannot do things for himself “without being given a hand” (p. 16), a “Slow Man”, an individual who is now forced to “get by in the world, more slowly than before” (p. 17). The use of “Slow Man” as a lazy and temporizing signifier by the reference subject observer (the narrator), offers a slowness actantial role to Paul Rayment, a slow “patient” (Bremond, 1993: p. 134), an actant subject undergoing the action in the novel. Belonging to Greimas’s actantial schema composed of the whole of roles (actants), and the relationships whose function is to narrate a story by act, the part (= role/character; place) of Paul Rayment as an actant character embodying retardation in Coetzee’s narrative, just as “Conan Doyle’s Dr. Watson […] exists ’to retard the action’” (Hume, 2005: p. 105), because of Sherlock Holmes’s close friend’s wounded right leg (Doyle, 2017), portrays the main character as a conscious sender and a non-receiver of his quest. Actually, if Paul Rayment is an “agent” (Bremond, 1993: p.
a deliberate actant sender who sends himself on a mission for completing a comforting existence on this earth, he is not an actant receiver, a character who benefits from the search since he fails to reach his goal on account of the cycling accident and the amputation. As a result, right from the initial situation where the disturbing force (the accident caused by Wayne Blight) takes place, Paul Rayment’s vocation in life turns into an unaccomplished duty. His designation as “Slow Man” which could be synonymous with “Decelerated Man”, that is to say, a paper being with a reduced mobility, places him in a failed axis of transmission, which Greimas terms “axis of knowledge”. Being in such a predicament, Paul Rayment the actant sender fully knows that he has not been able to establish a junction between the actant subject (himself) and the actant object; in other words, Paul Rayment fails to ask Paul Rayment to be “on the threshold of a comfortable old age” (novel’s 4th cover); therefore, he will have to survive “more slowly than before”, and that is the reason why he undergoes physiotherapy and hydrotherapy treatments which shed light on his physical slowness. The evidences of a disjunction about the axis of desire are shown in words like “get some rhythm” (p. 61), recapture physical potency, “dance” (p. 60), “balancing exercises” (p. 61), “the swaying-to-music” (p. 61), “hydrotherapy […] waterwork” (p. 61), and “in the narrow pool in the back room he grips the rails and walks in the water” (p. 61).

The aforementioned actants are passive helpers since they do not help Paul Rayment to fully regain his former potency. As a result, Paul Rayment is both an actant sender and a non-beneficiary actant receiver. Here, Paul Rayment holds concurrently two actantial functions since “Sender elements are often receiver elements as well” (Hébert, 2011). The verbal syntagm “walks in the water” shows that the “rhythm” being mentioned is not a steady one, but rather a slow pace revealing Paul Rayment’s “limited mobility” (p. 153), his physical disability making him into a true actant character portrayed as an epitome of slowness. With reduced motor functions, Paul Rayment places himself on a negative axis of power; this is evidenced by such passive actant opponents as the following: He “cannot skate, cannot dance, cannot walk, cannot even stand up straight unaided” (p. 60). Consequently, the physiotherapeutic and hydrotherapeutic exercises which are done with slow, rhythmic movements are positive powers and passive actant helpers. The word “hydrotherapy” associated to Paul Rayment’s physical re-education not only makes the reader to understand that the motion of the unhealthy protagonist in water is naturally slower than the latter’s displacement on the ground, but also reveals that Paul Rayment cannot succeed in the Greimassian theory of “three tests (QDG): “1. Qualifying; 2. Decisive; and 3. Glorifiy” (Taha, 2015: p. 91). Actually, with a reduced and slow mobility, Paul Rayment can be said to have lacked sufficient amount of ability at the physical level; as a result, the Qualifying stage is a fiasco; the same would hold true for the Decisive and Glorifying tests since the action (cycling on Magill Road on an errand) undertaken has not allowed him to reach the desired actant object; and the
outcome of Paul Rayment’s performance is not success but rather failure. The non-fulfilment, the disjunction between the actant subject and the actant object is further described through such passive actant opponents as “tortoise character” (p. 228), “call me a tortoise” (p. 228), “your tortoise character” (p. 228), “tortoise variety of passion” (p. 228), and “you are slow as a tortoise” (p. 235), “Broken Down Man”, a “Tortoise Man”, “half man”, “The man with the missing leg” (p. 95), “the crippled” (p. 68), “the truncated haunch” (p. 109), “the halt” (p. 111), “a man with one leg” (p. 113), “a lesser man” (p. 113), “a lesser being[s]” (p. 113), a “handicapped” (p. 113), a “diminished” (p. 113), a “humbled” man, and “a hobbler” (p. 198). Those “figurative notations” (Greimas, 1973: p. 174), the protagonist is saddled with are phrasal extensions proving that Paul Rayment’s life really is the embodiment of slowness. With such an existence, it could be said that Paul Rayment has gone down into the underworld. This descent into hell is caused by such an active actant opponent as “real bad driving” (p. 20), “a car going at speed” (p. 6), that is to say (Wayne) Blight’s car’s neck-breaking speed which has slowed down and shattered Paul Rayment’s life, thereby making him into a man with “a leg amputated” (p. 38), “a shadow of himself” (p. 139), “an amputee” (p. 38), a “crippled or [an] infirm” (p. 23), “A man not wholly a man […] an after-man” (pp. 33-34). Here, the “discontinuous signifier” (Hamon, 1997: p. 142) “Blight”, the name of the young bad driver who hits Paul Rayment violently, takes its full significance because “Blight”, as a substantive, refers to the phrase “to blight”, a verb meaning “to spoil”, “to damage” something, by creating many troubles. In point of fact, as a non-actant helper and an unconscious actant opponent, Blight has unavoidably and unintentionally destroyed Paul Rayment’s life by making him into a “Slow Man”, a “Circumscribed Man”, a man confined first to hospital, and then to his home, as expressed in the following: “Wayne […] Blight […] roaring up from behind to blight his life and land him first in hospital and then back in this flat with its inconvenient stairs.” (p. 81). Put differently, because of an imprisoned life due to the loss of “the freedom of movement” (p. 25), and because of isolation from his contacts and acquaintances, Paul Rayment has become an “Isolated Man”, a “Robinson Crusoe” (p. 14), an “Island Man” whose plight shows that “man [can be] an island” (Coetzee, 2003: p. 3). Another passive actant opponent of Paul Rayment’s quest appears in onomastic fragmentation, a consequence of physical fragmentariness and slowness.

Paul Rayment’s reduced mobility and existence bring about a fragmented, a restricted denomination, an orthographic “denaturalization/defamiliarization” (Chandler, 1994), a semiotic concept expressing the main character’s nominal destabilization. This change from “natural” being into “unnatural”, “denaturalized”, “defamiliarized” paper being is perceived through such words as “Mr R” (p. 18), and “P R” (p. 122); “R” and “P R” being letters used to refer to Paul Rayment. Whereas “R” stands for “Rayment”, “P R” means “Paul Rayment”. Letters like “a”, “y”, “m”, “e”, “n” and “t” in the protagonist’s family name
("Rayment"), and “a”, “u”, and “l” in his first name (“Paul”), have been left out, thereby creating an alphabetical ellipsis which is synonymous with identity “death”, the nullification of P R’s identification. Like the extremely reduced physical movability marked by a hyper-slowness, a hyper-deceleration on account of a hyper-heaviness of the new body, the particulars, that is, the written information and details about the identity of the protagonist, have been “truncated”, fragmented and voided. As a matter of fact, the main character’s appellation is voided of the letters allowing to recognize and identify him. Both his family and Christian names undergo an “estrangement”, that is, their familiar feature is made strange, a way in which the reader is invited to pay attention to the metamorphosis of this actant subject, actant sender, and non-actant receiver whose amputated body becomes an actant opponent of his social and physical well-being because of its heaviness and slowness. Here, Paul Rayment holds concurrently several semiotic functions which generate an actantial syncretism where the mixture of different actants makes him not into an “agent” who overcomes the trials and tribulations of life, but rather into a “patient” who endures the most terrible humiliations like Michael K, Coetzee’s main character in Life & Times of Michael K (Coetzee, 1983). Like K, P R the slow actant character has lost the dignity, the substance, the importance and the good health he enjoyed before the accident and the amputation; because of a disability that makes him to become a slow protagonist, P R is not in full possession of his faculties; he has become insignificant, “void and without form” (p. 228); he is now a shapeless non-actant character that does not “live like a hero” (p. 229), a principal who is not a “Don Quixote […] to do great deeds.” (pp. 228-229). P R’s construction as a “Slow Man”, a “Fragmented Man”, an anti-hero contradicts Elizabeth Costello’s argument that desire is “what makes the world go round” (p. 228), and also Peter Brooks’s view that passion is “the motor of narrative” (Brooks, 1984: p. 52). By his fragmentation P R does not embody passion that leads to action and proaction. As a helpless, a reactive, and not a proactive actant character, P R’s predicament is similar to K’s plight. Indeed, P R and K are very much alike not only because of their physical and patronymic fragmentations (P R’s bodily and nominal amputations; and K’s hare-lip, his titular truncation), but also because both characters are marked by slowness, a great handicap. All in all, “Slow Man”, P R’s “signifying etiquette” (Hamon, 1997: p. 144), as well as the numerous aforementioned temporizing designations, portrays him as an anthropomorphic actant whose existence is the incarnation of slowness. A “Slow Man” in Slow Man, P R’s leisurely and sluggish characterization takes place in a slow prose text, a novel composed with retardation devices.

1.2. A Slow Novel Composed with Retardation Devices

Like P R the “Slow Man”, Slow Man has become a “Slow Novel”, a prose text retarded and made to evolve in a sluggish manner, as shown in the characters’ recursive monologues, dialogues and conversations. The great number of mono-
logues, dialogues and conversations account for the slowness, the length of Slow Man where monologues, dialogues and conversations are narrated, and where the narration of “events” appears to be insignificant. Unlike P R’s “circumscribed life”, the narrative is not shortened. On the contrary, P R’s multiple monologues, the numerous dialogues and the various conversations he has with characters like Marijana, Elizabeth Costello, Drago, and Marianna, lengthen Slow Man, which is made to unfold in a piecemeal, slow rhythm. Indeed, right from the start of the novel, P R’s words to himself are revealed to the reader in the following: “Relax! he tells himself as he flies through the air (flies through the air with the greatest of ease!)” (p. 1), and also “Like a cat he tells himself: roll, then spring to your feet, ready for what comes next.” (p. 1) Such soliloquies can be seen on pages 4, 12, 105, 107, 112, and 117, to name but a few. Added to them, are the vast and multifarious dialogues and conversations between P R and the other characters, either in his flat or outside his apartment. For example, the dialogues between P R and Dr Hansen (pp. 5, 7, 8), Mrs Doriane Putts and P R (pp. 17, 18), St Paul and P R in the afterlife (p. 34), P R and Drago (pp. 67, 68, 69, 70), P R and Marianna (pp. 104, 105, 106, 109, 110, 111), P R and Marianna (pp. 123-124), P R and Elizabeth Costello (pp. 125-126); PR and Mr Jokic (pp. 143, 145, 147); P R’s conversations with Elizabeth Costello and Marianna (p. 126), with Marijana and Ljuba (p. 127), with Drago and Elizabeth Costello (pp. 134, 135, 137, 139, 141, 142).

The great number of monologues, dialogues and conversations suggests that what Coetzee is dealing with is a “narrative of words” (Guillemette & Lévesque, 2016), a prose of “monologues, dialogues and conversations”, a kind of discourse quoted verbatim by the narrator, and which reveals that what is at stake is not event, action, activeness (P R’s former active life), but rather inaction, inactivity, passiveness and extreme slowness bordering on immobility. That is why, the central theme of Slow Man is considered to be its “lack of movement”, its “lack of urgency”, its “uninterestingness” (Craig, 2014: p. 4). What is being shown is that the main character’s “circumscribed life” and physical slowness are tantamount to “vain paroles” or “unproductive discourses”, since nothing concrete, no meaningful events and actions happen in his “new life”; the words become synonymous with procrastination, that is, delaying doing things that should be done, inaction, immobilization and impotence in the face of the vicissitudes of life. From the beginning of Slow Man, marked by the accident on Magill Road, the admittance to the hospital and the amputation of PR’s right leg, to the closure of the novel, no significant events happen. The countless monologues, dialogues and conversations between P R and the other characters, either about PR’s plight or about subject matters having nothing to do with the protagonist’s bodily decline, are (ir)relevant and digressive utterances which are used to fill out the 263 pages of the narrative. As scriptural fillers, they make the novel into a “lazy machine” (Eco, 1985: p. 29), by fleshing it, by increasing its length, its heaviness and its thickness. As a matter of fact, since the dialogues, monologues
and conversations between PR and the other characters are thoroughly narrated instead of being summarized, Slow Man becomes lengthy. The amount of words used to verbalize the narrative is so much increased that the pages telling PR’s tale multiply and make the text drag on. Representing preponderant loci revealing characters’ emotions, thoughts and deeds, the speech acts retard the fiction, just like the cinematic technique of slow motion shows important actions at a much slower speed than it happened in real life. The verbatim enunciations in Slow Man are all the more important as “[they] contain all of the novel’s interesting and exciting and dramatic material” (Chapman, 2008), by which they are displayed conspicuously in order to bring about textual retardation.

By their frequent occurrence and recurrence, the scenic sections punctuate the prose text, thus preventing it from evolving smoothly. Like a PR who belongs now to the class of the halt and the lame, and who is a “halt” by dint of being slower, the prose text has come to a “halt”, since its progression has become extremely slow due to scores of speeches. So, Slow Man itself becomes a “halting novel”, a narrative stopping and starting often because of characters’ frequent monologued, dialogued and conversed “scenes” composed of characters’ direct discourses or reflexions. According to Genette, the monologues, the dialogues, and the conversations totalize a duration which equals the Story-Time: “Narrative-Time = Story-Time”. Yet, since Slow Man is lacking in events, the Story-Time could be deemed nought, which means that Narrative-Time or yet again Discourse-Temporality is of utmost importance. In other words, the textual length telling PR’s story prevails over the time of the signified, the time of fiction. Words from the narrated discourse could be counted and quantified to prove that Coetzee’s work is a verbose text covering 30 chapters penned in 263 pages. Like the monologic, dialogic and conversational decelerators, multilingualism, fragmentation and letter writing appear as other delaying ploys by which Coetzee’s novel is made to evolve at a snail’s pace.

Slow Man is not a monolingual prose text, that is, a literary work written exclusively in English. It is rather a multilingual novel penned in several languages of which purpose is to retard the pace at which the printed text evolves. In other terms, multilingualism becomes a reducer of narrative speed. As a matter of fact, appearing through such languages as French, Latin, Croatian, Russian, and Spanish in the text printed in English, multilingualism creates linguistic fractures which stop the steady, uninterrupted speed of the narrative. Examples in French are legion, but four groups of illustrations will be listed to allow the reader to measure their omnipresence in Coetzee’s work. First, such terms as “Laissez faire!” (p. 2), “temps” (p. 24), “le jambon” (p. 29), “Aimée or, even better, Amour” (p. 30), “his joie de vivre” (p. 41), “Bon, je m’en occupe” (p. 44), “faute de mieux” (p. 51), “Infidèle Europe” (p. 66), “the pièces de résistance” (p. 86), can be mentioned. Second, other French words like in the following “But chacun ses goûts, I suppose” (p. 152), “For there is a blessure in my heart” (p. 155), “a heart case, un cardiaqué” (p. 165), “Marijuana and I, to have our little contre-
temps” (p. 184), “the tristesse that descends after” (p. 112), “Sale vipère, those are his words” (p. 194), “formation” (p. 196), “métier” (p. 196), “the Kangourous” (p. 196), “the best copains” (p. 196), “my core, mon Coeur” (p. 198), could also be quoted as good instances of the integration of Molière’s language into Shakespeare’s tongue. Third, another series of French words and expressions like in these “a book called Légendes dorées, Golden Legends” (p. 129), “I sing Frères Jacques” (p. 231), “I’ll be your best copine, the copine of your last days” (p. 234), “on home ground, chez elle?” (p. 239), “Allez, les enfants, soyez sages!” (p. 240), “Toujours pressés, pressé” he would say in his grating Dutch voice” (p. 240), “Ils sont fous! Ils gaspillent l’essence, c’est tout!” (p. 240), “to gaspiller his own essence for anybody” (p. 240), “Oh là la, ils gaspillent de l’essence!” (p. 240), “Merde, merde, merde!” (p. 240), and “Renault, l’auto la plus économique, he would enounce […]” (p. 241). Fourth, one last set of French words includes the following: “But they are not called deux chevaux. Deux chevaux is something else” (p. 262), and “We can ask Miroslav to fix a couple of chevaux to it” (p. 26). As far as Russian, Dutch, Latin, Croatian, and Spanish languages are concerned, the following good exemplifications can be enumerated: “Ljuba, Ljubica” (p. 30), “Iyubov means love” (p. 30) (Russian); “Paul Rayment: canis infelix. Marianna Popova: pseudocaeca (migratory)” (p. 117) (Latin), “Felix, felix. Felix lapsus” (p. 187) (Latin), “the motto Malleus maleficorum […] Malleus maleficorum. Excellent […] Malleus maleficorum for me […]” (p. 263) (Latin); “Sto to radis, mama […] Mama is nurse, remember” (pp. 187-188) (Croatian), “the verb to love, ljub or whatever” (p. 251) (Croatian), and “In Croatia we say ovaj glumi” (p. 251) (Croatian).

As shown in the aforementioned enumerations, languages other than English are so recurrent and omnipresent in Slow Man that the reader may wonder how French, Dutch, Russian, Latin, Spanish and Croatian can slow down Coetzee’s fiction. They fulfil the function of narrative retardation by increasing the number of words in which the narrative is written and by creating recursive constructions and linguistic impurity or what Shklovsky terms “repetitive structures” and “defamiliarization”. Actually, the recurrence of these terms and their explicit English translations, like in the examples (“Deux chevaux, two horses” (p. 262), “I repent, I repent me, je me repens, and bitterly too” (p. 34) (French), “Trouw, faith, fidelity” (p. 66) (Dutch), “The dark heart, el oscuro corazon” (p. 157) (Spanish), and finally “Zaboga, Zar opet […] His hair is caught!” (p. 252) (Croatian)), augment the amount of words, lines, and pages in which the whole narrative is penned. For a novel whose plot is constructed around slowness happening in the protagonist’s flat (26 chapters out of 30 chapters are devoted to P R’s reduced mobility and his confinement to his apartment), it is no wonder that Slow Man is composed in 263 pages. If the vocables in French, Russian, Dutch, Latin, Croatian, and Spanish increase the length of the narrative and make it drag slowly, then their cancellations may considerably reduce the number of lines and pages in which Slow Man is narrated, and therefore may speed it
up and bring it to a close in less than 263 pages. As a scriptural specificity of Coetzee’s *Slow Man*, multilingualism is pregnant with meaning when the reader takes into account the fact that *Slow Man* is composed of 263 pages divided into 30 chapters, and that 26 chapters out of 30 are devoted to P R’s indoor life, whereas only 4 chapters reveal P R’s outdoor activities. The dedication of 26 chapters to P R’s “circumscribed life” proves that P R has become a forced homebody, a lame man imprisoned in his own flat. Like a P R made physically handicapped and kept prisoner at home, the English in *Slow Man* is disabled, defamiliarized, made impure since it is diluted with French, Dutch, Spanish, Croatian, Latin and Russian. But, by the same token, it is constrained to coexist with other languages which make it unwieldy and unable to progress smoothly. In fact, English is delayed because it is engulfed by the recurrent multilingual systems and their various terminological and semantic interruptions. At this juncture, Coetzee’s philosophy of “slow reading” and Eco’s science of “textual cooperation” (Eco, 1979: p. 7), which is required from the “Model Reader”, become meaningful. In fact, mixed with English, these odd languages delay the reading of *Slow Man* because they bring the reader who is not a polyglot to stop the reading in order to look up their meanings in bilingual dictionaries. By behaving not like an “Empirical Reader”, but rather like a “Model Reader”, the receiver practices slow reading, a cooperative and participative reading by which he or she contributes to the meaning making process. As can be observed, multilingualism is a decelerator which forces the narratee to read Coetzee’s prose slowly, carefully and attentively in order to avoid misinterpretation, what Eco names “overinterpretation” (Guillemette and Cossette, 2006). Another retardation device, causing narrative slowness, is fragmentation.

Fragmentation is a retarding technique which slows down the speed of the narrative because it makes it ductile, that is, it lengthens it. Scores of examples could be mentioned to illustrate the connection between fragmentation, textual length and scriptural slowness in *Slow Man*. In a good example like “To her he must be even more of a jumble of sense-data: the cold of his hands; the roughness of his skin; the rasp of his voice; and an odour probably unpleasing to her supersensitive nostrils” (pp. 106-107), the semi-colons (;) fulfil fragmentary and temporizing functions by generating an enunciation composed of many broken components, which boost the words in which the excerpt is written. Like P R the fragmented and “Slow Man”, the narrative becomes fragmentary, lengthy and unhurried. The semi-colon is not the unique typographical means used to break the text into many tiny bits. The full stop (.) also plays fragmentary and delaying roles. Instances like “Because Marianna does not want you to see her. She insists. Here, bend down. Keep still. Don’t blink” (p. 102), “Goodbye. Do not worry about me. I’m a tough old bird” (p. 102), and “Big breasts, a big bottom, yet slight for the rest. Marianna. Who is here, says the Costello woman […]” (p. 106), show how the full stop (.), as a punctuation mark, works as a fragmentary tool by revealing the way in which the sentences are broken into many pieces. In
the first example, the second sentence ("She insists."), the fourth sentence ("Keep still.")), and the fifth sentence ("Don’t blink") are made up of two words describing Elizabeth Costello’s actions and orders given to P R. In fact, the segmentation of sentences into many small broken pieces standing either in two words or in one term like in examples two ("Goodbye."), and three ("Marianna."), increases the number of words and makes the prose very long in size. As a result, the narrative drags and fails to draw to a close. Another example can be found in the following: “He waits. He tarries. He delays.” (p. 111) Instead of describing the actions of “waiting”, “tarrying” and “delaying” in only one sentence, three “sentences”, which are made up of two words and punctuated by three full stops, are built up, thereby creating a repetition of the subject pronoun “He”, and causing a terminological multiplication. An instance like “But more likely it is because of our. Our record, yours and mine” (p. 177), in which the full stop stops the first utterance abruptly by making it into a meaningless sentence ("But more likely it is because of our."), what is being shown is not meaning, but rather padding or yet again replenishing, that is, (re)filling the text, or writing for writing’s sake, that is, writing for filling out the pages. John Barth refers to this form of fiction writing as “The Literature of Replenishment” (Barth, 1984: p. 199). For Barth, as well as for Coetzee, “ordinary content” (Barth, 1984: p. 199), common subject matter does not matter; what is important is “form”, which materializes by “language and technique”. By the fragmentary and technical wording, Slow Man is made into a novel which is interested not in the “adventure of a hero”, but rather in “writing adventure” (Ricardou, 1967: p. 111). It is only in the second sentence (“Our record, yours and mine”), that the sense of “our” becomes clearer with the terms “Our [+] record”. If Coetzee were not interested in fragmentary writing which multiplies words in order to lengthen his narrative and make it evolve slowly, he would have joined the two aforementioned sentences into one sentence: “But more likely it is because of Our record, yours and mine”. In that case, the term “our” would have been used once and its meaning would have been more understandable. The abrupt interruption of the first sentence by the use of a full stop causes a multiplication of the possessive pronoun (“…our. Our…”), which means that repetition, fragmentation, lengthiness and slowness are connected. By resorting to a fragmentary, multiplicative and retarding style, Coetzee proves, not only that he is an authentic writer concerned with “genuine” novel writing based on a specific “way of speaking” (Barth, 1984: p. 199), that is, the particular style with which he writes, but also that “… the whole of literature, from Flaubert to the present day, became the problematics of language.” (Barthes, quoted in Barth, 1984: p. 199). Consequently, the “telegraphic style” (Kern, 2003: p. 115), which obtains acclaim in Hemingway’s writing, and which consists in removing useless terms from the text, does not thrill Coetzee. A recourse to an economical approach to fiction writing, could prevent Coetzee from coming up with a novel penned at great length, a prose text of great prolixity. The author’s “respect [for] language [and]—all its possibilities, history, and
connotations”, dissuades him from being a “fast writer who uses language in a utilitarian manner,” for he is supposed to be a slow writer, a novelist who “prizes the texture of language, and all the richness that creates language.” A “Model Reader” reading Slow Man reads it (very) slowly, because he needs to take time in order to pay heed to the functions of the language. The latter makes “the text’s intention” and “the author’s intention” go hand in hand. A novel whose inner-workings (perceived in “the text’s intention”) are contaminated by slowness can but be intended to be read slowly, which is Coetzee’s intention (the significations promoted in the text). Finally, it is only by being a slow reader, a “Model Reader”, that the potential receiver can fully cooperate in the “actualization” (= semiotical assessment) of the signification of Coetzee’s prose text, that is comprehend its meaning. Letter writing is part of Coetzee’s “strings of delaying devices”.

Integrated into the novel, the archetext letter creates a mixture of genres, and defamiliarizes the prose text which becomes heterogeneous, bastardized and handicapped, just like PR is amputated, fragmented and disabled. Terms like “He sits down to write a letter. Dear Marijana, he writes […]” (p. 79), “Dear Miroslav, he writes […]” (pp. 223-224), and “Yours ever, Paul Rayment” (p. 166), attest to the fact that letter writing is at work in Slow Man. If the letter starts with an opening formula like “Dear”, it is with such a closing formula as “Yours ever” that it closes, with the protagonist’s signature “Paul Rayment”. The incorporation of letters into Slow Man makes it into an epistolary novel, a slow fiction. Indeed, the letter can be viewed as a symbol of slowness since its use is synonymous with administrative delays. Posting a letter means that much time will be needed for it to reach the addressee whose reply will also be delaying. Like PR the “Slow Man, the “Slow Protagonist”, Slow Man becomes a “Slow Narrative”. Just as the letters being sent by PR, either to Marijana or to her husband (Miroslav Jokic), will be taking too long to reach the people that they are addressed to, and too much time for the latter to answer back, as expressed in Elizabeth Costello’s words to PR (“A letter! Another letter! […] Two days for your word to reach Marijana, two days for her word to come back: we will all expire of boredom before we have a resolution. This is not the age of the epistolary novel, Paul”) (p. 227), so too Slow Man evolves at a snail’s pace. The postal slowness has contaminated Slow Man, which has become an “epistolary novel” unfolding slowly, and taking plenty of time to come to a close. Elizabeth Costello’s word “boredom” may suggest that the “Fast Reader”, the “Empirical Reader”, who might not appropriately understand the philosophical signification of the text could feel tired and impatient, when faced with the extreme slowness with which the novel evolves. For such a reader, Slow Man is a boring novel, a “narrative [which] is dull.” (Craig, 2014: p. 1) Held in her review of Slow Man, Francine Prose’s terms, “from impatience to a dull rage to a sort of despairing boredom” (Prose, 2005), allude to the dullness felt by the “Fast Reader”. Like a PR put off by “the colourless, odourless, inert, and depressive gas given off by
[the] pages” (p. 120), while reading Elizabeth Costello’s *The Fiery Furnace* at the Adelaide public library, a non-model reader reading *Slow Man* may find it unappealing and may not provide a successful “actualization” of the meaning of Coetzee’s work. It is only a model reading practice, that is, a slow reading implementation that can help the receiver to grasp the profound sense of *Slow Man’s* multilingual, fragmentary and epistolary decelerations. Other slowing down techniques by which the narrative dawdles are indisputably flashbacks and multiplication of stories.

Introduced by terms like “In the old days, the days before the accident, he [P R] […] took out books from the libraries, he went to the cinema; he cooked for himself […] rode a bicycle or walked” (p. 25), “Years ago, after his divorce” (p. 37), “As a child, he remembers, he was told the story of a woman […]” (p. 55), “In the books that his mother used to order from Paris when he was still a child […]” (p. 76), and “His mind goes back to his childhood, to Ballarat […]” (p. 239), the flashbacks used in Coetzee’s work do not have any connection with the main story, that is, P R’s “circumscribed [and slow] life”. If the first flashback on page 25 describes P R’s active life before the accident, the second on page 37 informs the reader about PR’s love affair with Margaret McCord after his divorce with Henriette, his first wife. The third on page 55 is about a woman who accidentally “stuck a tiny sewing-needle into the palm of her hand [which] […] climbed up the woman’s veins and […] pierced her heart and killed her.” (p. 55) The fourth and the fifth are respectively about P R’s childhood in Ballarat, where he remembered the “books that his mother would sigh over in the living-room in Ballarat where the shutters were always closed” (p. 76), and the unannounced visits to Andrea Mittiga, his stepfather’s friend. The five flashbacks mentioning the protagonist’s former active life, his ephemeral love affair with Margaret McCord, the story of the woman killed by a small sewing-needle inadvertently “stuck” into her palm, the sentimental stories his mother read and “sighed over”, and the unannounced visits to his stepfather’s friend, have nothing to do with P R’s current slow life. Consequently, they generate interruptions and digressions, that is, subjects about things that are not connected with the main tale being narrated. The deviation analepses draw the narrative backward whenever they occur; and by doing so, they delay the prose which is made to evolve slowly. In fact, they are delaying tactics deliberately used by Coetzee to defer the smooth evolvement of the novel of which storyline becomes anachronic, disordered, disorganized, and extendable. Flashbacks lead to excursus excerpts which are so innumerable that the end of the prose text is a long time coming. Removing such unrelated passages, could bring *Slow Man* to be written in less than 263 pages, and to unfold and draw to a close quickly. The aforementioned analepses equate with “pause”, Gérard Genette’s dilatory technique including the narrator’s descriptions and commentaries, because they create slow temporality, since the signifier’s time or yet again the time of the narrative discourse, which could be quantified by counting the number of unrelated sentences and paragraphs,
which makes the prose text longer. Here, it should be noted that Genette’s theory “conceives of speed primarily as a ratio between the time span covered in the novel and the number of pages allotted to it […]” (Genette, 1980: p. 92).

Such a conception generates a quantification of narrative speed whereby textuality is mathematized. This stand is corroborated by Genette’s mathematical formula written as follows: \( \text{NT} (\text{Narrative-Time}) > \text{ST} (\text{Story-Time}) \); this simply means that what is prioritized is not the time of fiction, the time of the story being told, but rather the duration of the enunciation, the narrative time expressed in the number of pages written to tell P R’s story. Like the analeptic decelerators making the novel flow slowly, multiplication of stories that do not relate retards Slow Man.

Any reader reading Slow Man could note that this novel is a prose composed of three stories. The main story is about P R’s accident and his new life; the second is about Marijana and her family’s story; the third is related to Elizabeth Costello’s story about P R and Marianna, the blind girl. P R’s tale, as the first story, the hypotext (“A-Text” or First-Text, according to Genette), triggers off Marianna and the protagonist’s story, a second story which can be named hypertext (“B-Text” or Second-Text); both accounts have a “hypertextuality” and “hypotextuality” relationship (Escola, 1982); if the first can be referred to as a “hypostory”, the second can be considered as a “hyperstory”. It should be observed that the ”hypostory” and the “hyperstory” are stories which are being written respectively by Coetzee and Elizabeth Costello, a famous female writer who is paying P R a visit. The narrator’s terms like “the life-story […] of Paul Rayment […] [and] Marianna Popova” (p. 118), and “Marianna […] [an] entry for blindness” (p. 119), attest to the fact that, as two disabled people, Marianna and P R are a topic in Elizabeth Costello’s publication. By using P R as a character in her fiction, Elizabeth Costello’s “notebook” (pp. 121-122), about P R and Marianna transforms Slow Man into a metafiction, a metanarrative creating an interpretative relation with another fiction. Therefore, Slow Man is made weighty, lengthy and slow by the presence of another prose. On that account, while reading Slow Man, the reader reads two novels. P R’s thoughts “Is this what it is like to be translated to what at present he can only call the other side?” (p. 122), “There is a second world that exists side by side with the first, unsuspected” (p. 122), and “one emerges into a second world identical with the first” (p. 122), underline the fact that the protagonist is aware that his “truncated state” and his reduced mobility are being used as a theme in Elizabeth Costello’s “notebook”. Such expressions as the other side?, a second world that exists side by side with the first”, and “a second world identical with the first”, prove that Elizabeth Costello’s “notebook” about P R and Marianna is “the other side” (= “the other” book), the “second world” (= “the second book”), existing next to “the first” book (= Slow Man). With Elizabeth Costello’s “notebook” existing “side by side with [Slow Man as] the first [book]”, Slow Man can only unfold slowly because it contains not only “the first” story, a “hypostory”, but also it
encapsulates “a second” story, a “hyperstory”, which lengthens it by considerably increasing the number of words, sentences and paragraphs in which it is penned. Meaning “more than normal”, “too much/many”, the prefix “hyper-” suggests an excessive number of things; so the term “hyperstory” reveals that Slow Man, which is composed of 30 chapters written in 263 pages, is long and its length makes it “a slow book” (Silvani, 2011: p. 135), that is, a slow narrative, a novel evolving in an abnormal way, like P R, the “Slow Man”, Coetzee’s “Slow Protagonist”, who drags himself along. Except the “hypostory” and the “hyperstory”, other types of stories which can be referred to as “microstories”, “nanostories” (=embedded/tiny stories), also increase the amount of writing in Slow Man, and indirectly the narrative time.

To exemplify P R’s ungratefulness towards Elizabeth Costello, whom the former rejects from his flat, the female writer tells the protagonist “the story of Sinbad and the old man” (pp. 128-129), a tale drawn from “Légendes dorées, Golden Legends.” (p. 129) In the story told by Elizabeth Costello, P R is compared with “the old man”, the ungrateful man, a character playing a bad role, which is dialectically suggested in the term “Sinbad”, “Sin” being “bad” from a religious perspective; and Elizabeth Costello herself bears comparison with “Sinbad”, a character playing a positive role, that is, doing P R a favour. Indeed, she has helped P R to rearm morally after the amputation, and to adapt to his new life, which brought him to declare his impossible love for Marijana. But like in “Mrs Costello’s story of the old man who turned Sinbad into his slave” (p. 164), P R has not been grateful to Elizabeth Costello, whom he has thrown away from his apartment. Other “nanostories” such as the story of PR’s life in France (p. 194), in which his love affairs with French girls are revealed (pp. 194-201), Elizabeth Costello’s story (p. 194), and the story about P R’s marriage (pp. 199-200), show that a multiplication of stories is displayed in Slow Man. For that reason, it develops slowly in the same way as P R walks sluggishly. As “strings of delaying devices”, these multiple stories can be viewed as “handicaps” preventing Slow Man from evolving normally to a close because they increase the reading time, and the signifier’s time by multiplying the number of words in which Slow Man is written.

Put on a drip by such retardation techniques as temporizing characterization, speech acts, fragmentation, epistolariization, retrospection and embedded tales, Slow Man could be compared with “sequoias [which] are slow enough.” (Pound, 1934: p. 596) Thus, the reader witnesses a scriptural perfusion by which Coetzee suggests a fiction promoter of slow writing and tardy reading. Exemplifying slow writing and sluggish reading, a novel like Slow Man should not be read quickly, that is, “Read for the Plot”, a surface-level component, but it should rather be read slowly, that is, “Read for the Form”, for the author’s “Style and Language”, a constituent plumbing the depths of the text. Put differently, unlike “speedy reading”, which “encourages rash decisions and ultimate failure” in the reading process, “slow reading”, which generates watchfulness, “serious consideration” (DeSalvo, 2014), causes efficient reading.


2. Conclusion

Thanks to such critical theories as semiotics and narratology, the concept of slowness has been analyzed in *Slow Man*, where P R has appeared as a “Slow Man”, an actantial character epitomizing slowness. His semiotic functions appear in an actantial syncretism whereby he is shown as an actant subject who has failed to reach the actant object (living his old age comfortably). An actant sender in his own quest for a peaceful and unworried old life, P R proves to be an actant “receiver” who does not benefit from the search; as a result, he is placed on a failed communication axis since the serious cycling accident and the amputation are active actant opponents preventing him from achieving his goal. He also falls into a negative power axis, as exemplified by the slothful and stalling epithet (“Slow Man”) expressing his inactive and negated living. Wayne Blight’s careful and slow driving could have been a passive actant helper in the achievement of the desired actant object.

Delaying and replenishing devices like soliloquies, dialogues, confabulations, multilingualism, fragmentation, letter writing, and multiplicity of stories appear as retardation ploys whereby the novel evolves slowly. Actually, negative actantial roles marked by a pathological slowness, direct discourse, polyglotism, fragmentariness, epistolarity, and “the framing of tales within tales” (Hume, 2005), are narrative slowdowns meant for slowing down the reading of *Slow Man*. In this way, Coetzee promotes “slow reading”, an “adventurous reading” (Defleaux, 1987: p. 152), an innovative reading in which the “readers [launch themselves] into a kind of self-reflective questioning” (Craig, 2014: p. 3). Triggered off by “slow writing”, “slow reading” is a “philosophical reading”, a critical reading in which the reader is invited to “philosophize” (Wilm, 2016), to contemplate the text, and to “actualize” its meaning by relishing Coetzee’s language and writing style, and above all, by avoiding hasty reading which might jeopardize “textual bliss”, the reader’s extreme enjoyment connected with the text’s “technical virtuosity” (Craig, 2014: p. 3). The latter stems from a “writerly”, “writable” textuality causing bliss that challenges the narratee, an active cooperator in the meaning-making process of the literary text (Barthes, 1975). Last but not least, a “Slow Writer” teaching “Slow Reading”, Coetzee attests to the truth of Pound’s terms positing that “Slowness is beauty” (Pound, 1934: p. 596), and shows that writing slowness in *Slow Man* amounts to proclaiming the aesthetic worth of “slow writing” and “slow reading”. Coetzee also invites people from the referential society to live slowly, “to slow down and sense something of the magic moments” (Cathcart, 2015), to soften their passions, as suggested in *The Age of Magic* (Okri, 2014). For example, they should avoid driving fast like Wayne Blight in order to eschew road accidents and their corollaries of mutilations and disabilities.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.
References


https://thejohnfox.com/2018/05/a-manifesto-for-slow-writing


http://visual-memory.co.uk/daniel/Documents/S4B/sem-gloss.html


https://doi.org/10.3406/rfea.1987.1266

http://amazone.fr/Art-Slow-Writing-LOUISE-DESALVO/dp/1250051037


http://www.signosemio.com/genette/narratology.asp


Learning to Improve: Report of a Three-Year Capacity-Building Project Leveraging Professional Development + Coaching to Improve Third-Grade Reading Outcomes

David D. Paige¹, Grant S. Smith¹, Theresa Magpuri-Lavell²

¹Bellarmine University, Louisville, KY, USA
²Sandra Dunagan Deal Center for Early Language and Literacy, Georgia College, Milledgeville, GA, USA

Abstract
This study reports the results of a three-year capacity building effort to improve core reading knowledge and practice in 165 third-grade teachers working in 63 urban schools and its effects on student reading outcomes. Teachers volunteered to participate in one or two years of professional development lasting from 90 to 180 hours. Core reading knowledge among teachers resulted in statically significant growth with generally large effect sizes. Three cohorts of third-grade students taught by participating teachers were assessed on multiple measures of reading at the beginning and end of each school year. Results for within-year improvement showed large effects on all student outcomes. Analysis of the magnitude of student gains between the three years found that for two of the four measures gains in year one were exceeded in years two and three. Implications for professional training to facilitate improved reading outcomes are discussed.

Keywords
Teacher Capacity Building, Foundational Reading Skills, At-Scale Reading Improvement

1. Introduction
Calls for reading improvement have echoed for decades and include those from Flesch (1955), Anderson, Hiebert, Wilkinson, & Scott (1985), Snow, Burns, & Griffin (1998), the National Reading Panel (2000), Foorman et al. (2016), and Seidenberg (2017). Accompanying these calls are reading achievement scores...
from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 2017) that have shown little substantive improvement since 1992. Today, close to two-thirds of students score less than-proficient in reading at the fourth- and eighth-grade levels. Despite the considerable body of research that has advanced the science of reading (Rayner, Pollatsek, Ashby, & Clifton, 2012) evidence suggests that philosophical differences of reading remain tightly ensconced among teacher educators who directly impact the reading praxis taught in teacher preparation programs (Kato & Manning, 2007; Huang, 2014; Taylor & Otinsky, 2007). As Seidenberg (2017) suggests, these disparate philosophies among teacher educators make their way into the classroom and lead to frustration, low job satisfaction, and children who cannot read. Seidenberg observes that teachers are:

Left to discover effective classroom practices [on their own] because they haven’t been taught them. One of their first discoveries is the irrelevance of most of the theory they have learned that is unconnected to practice. Some of the concepts are impractical, or don’t work, or don’t work as well as something else, like instruction. (p. 255)

The Common Core standards (2010) identify foundational skills as the reading sub-skills involved in converting print to speech and the fluent reading skills that are important to comprehension. Extending the link from language to comprehension, a recent study has found that foundational skills are critical to third-grade achievement on end-of-year state accountability assessments (Paige et al., 2019). The authors reported that students with appropriate foundational skills were seven times more likely to score proficient or better on the state reading test. Further, only one-third of the over 1000 students in the study had attained appropriate foundational skills. Using professional development and coaching to build capacity for teaching reading, the present study reports on an initiative to improve third-grade reading outcomes. This study contributes to the knowledge base of educational change through a description of the teacher training process and the measurement of the student outcome measures that detect improvement in fundamental reading processes.

The structure of this article proceeds with a review of the applicable literature including the role of teacher core and pedagogical knowledge, attempts to change and build teacher practice, and the role of coaching. The study continues with a description of the methods including details of the study context and the curriculum used to improve teacher knowledge and practice, as well as the instruments used to measure reading. In the results section, we address each of the three research questions with details of the quantitative analysis and the findings. In the discussion section, we provide our interpretations of the study findings and the contribution this study makes to the literature base.

2. Review of the Literature

2.1. Teacher Knowledge and Practice

The foundational reading knowledge imparted by teacher educators to their
students leaves a significant imprint on how these aspiring teachers view reading education. Teacher educators also equip these students with an initial instructional toolkit that is carried with them into the classroom after graduation. However, for too many of these future teachers this toolkit is woefully inadequate. Binks-Cantrell, Washburn, Joshie, & Hougen (2012) assessed what teacher educators understand about foundational reading knowledge. After grouping teacher educators into higher- and lower-scoring groups the authors reported that those in the more knowledgeable group produced teacher candidates who outscored those taught by teacher educators who knew less. The authors concluded that students cannot learn what their teacher does not know and join others who have proposed this condition as a major contributor to poor reading outcome in the United States (Applegate & Applegate, 2004; Seidenberg, 2017). Unfortunately, changing what is taught by teacher educators in the over 1200 schools of education in the US is more than a challenging task. For example, in a state-wide analysis of teacher data in Florida, Harris & Sass (2007) found no evidence that either undergraduate training or academic achievement had any effect on the academic outcomes of their future students.

2.2. Changing Teacher Practice

What teachers do in the classroom matters because reading is a learned skill that must be taught, and so it follows that teacher quality impacts student outcomes (Blair, Rupley, & Nichols, 2007; Wenglinsky, 2000; Wharton-McDonald, Pressley, & Hampston, 1998). In order to be effective reading instruction must be guided by content knowledge and efficacious instructional practices (Kennedy, 2016; Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1990). As in subject areas such as biology or history, there exists a core body of content knowledge that teachers must know in order to be effective reading teachers (Snow & Griffin, 2007). Reading core content includes deep knowledge of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension, as well as the fundamentals of language and its development (McCardle & Chhabra, 2004; NRP, 2000; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). In order to provide evidence-based reading instruction teachers must not only possess core content knowledge, they must also have the ability to effectively apply that knowledge to classroom practice (Goldhaber & Anthony, 2007; McCardle & Chhabra, 2004; Moats, 2004; NRP, 2000).

An initiative to improve teacher core reading knowledge must be intentional. After identifying what knowledge and which instructional practices best result in improved reading outcomes, the question becomes how to effectively 1) transfer this knowledge to teachers and then 2) convert that knowledge into instructional change that results in improvement (Shulman, 1986, 1987). Knowledge-to-practice transfer is not an inconsequential problem as greater teacher knowledge is not necessarily accompanied by better practice (Reutzel, Dole, Fawson, Jones, Read et al., 2009). A compounding problem is that teachers report that 90% of professional development is not useful as some suggest it too often consists of ineffec-
tive delivery models (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). It has been estimated that about 15 percent of traditional “sit and get” professional development is actually implemented in the classroom, a transfer ratio that provides less than the necessary capacity to affect change (Meyer, 1988). Bush (1984) found that training describing instructional practices could be successfully adopted by just 10% of teachers, in other words 90% gained no benefit at all. This suggests that an effective model must provide considerably more support over time as teachers struggle to implement new instructional practices (Ermeling, 2009; Fullan, 2001). However, an ineffective delivery model may not be the single root cause of the poor return on PD. It may be, as Elmore (2000) points out, that PD may not target the content most likely to result in change to student outcomes. This may be a problem that both precedes and interacts with complaints of ineffective delivery models as improvement experts are clear that capacity training must address the processes that will actually result in change (Bryk, 2014; Elmore, 2002; Demming, 2000).

2.3. Building Teacher Capacity

PD directly addresses the issue of capacity which Cohen, Raudenbush, & Ball (2000) define as the teacher’s knowledge, instructional skill, and material resources that combine to create the interaction among students, the content, and the teacher to result in learning. Desimone (2009) posits that effective professional development (PD) increases teacher knowledge and skill, which then leads to change in instruction that results in greater student learning. While this seems a reasonable theory of action it has seldom been shown to actually evolve. A review of 1343 PD studies (Yoon et al., 2007) found just nine meeting the requirements of What Works Clearinghouse that resulted in significant student gains. This suggests that connecting the links recommended by Desimone is extremely difficult. Looking further into recommendations, Lewis (2009) says that PD must connect what teachers learn directly to their practice. For example, Garet et al. (2001) report that effective PD must focus not only on content knowledge, but also include opportunities for active learning integrated with instruction. Despite these recommendations, researchers have found teacher practice to be surprisingly resilient to change (Cohen, 1990; Peterson & Comeaux, 1990; Spillane & Zeuli, 1999). Unfortunately, inadequate teacher knowledge is not limited to reading as insufficiencies have been noted across other content areas including teachers of science (Dorph et al., 2007; Luft & Hewson, 2014) and mathematics (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 1991).

Gulamhussein (2013) recommends five criteria for effective professional development, three of which overlap with those of Desimone (2009) and two that do not. Duration of professional development is critical and should emphasize distributed practice over time. While programs providing greater duration have been found to be more successful, a question is how much is enough (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andre, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). Corcoran,
McVay, & Riordan (2003) found that programs providing 80 hours of instruction were more likely to be successful than those providing less. French (1997), on the other hand, found that 50 hours of instruction, practice, and coaching was sufficient to transfer learning to instruction. Teachers must be supported during the critical process of applying new learning to the classroom. Truesdale (2003), Cornett & Knight (2009), and Atteberry & Bryk (2011) report that during the confusion and frustration that accompanies the implementation of new teaching strategies and routines, coaching can provide teachers with critical support. Active learning involves teachers in a variety of learning approaches to new concepts (Richardson, 1998; Roy & Chi, 2005). Such activities include implementation videos, role playing, reading, discussion, and modeling. Of these activities **modeling** has been viewed as most effective (Desimone, et al., 2002; Garet et al., 2001; Penuel, Fishman, Gallagher, Korbak, & Lopez-Prado, 2009). The final principle states that professional development should focus on content specific curriculum as it is most effective at improving teacher practice and student achievement (Blank & de las Alas, 2009; Cohen & Hill, 2001; Kennedy, 1998).

In their What Works Clearinghouse review, Yoon et al. (2007) arrived at the following conclusions of what drives effective PD. First, while workshops have garnered a poor reputation for effectiveness, surprisingly, all 9 of the studies found to be effective involved workshops of some kind. Second, within-school expertise is often insufficient to facilitate and lead teachers in capacity-building initiatives aimed at student improvement. Successful professional development is more likely to be successful when involving content experts from outside the building. Third, none of the 9 successful studies employed a train-the-trainer approach to professional development which may hold potential for success, but has no evidence for support. Fourth, professional development must be distributed over time as educators cannot quickly absorb new learning. Effective PD was found to take 30 or more hours while implementations of shorter duration yielded no positive results. The fifth finding suggests that following professional development sustained follow-up is necessary to leverage its potential for effectiveness. Finally, there is no set of best practices for PD, rather, effective PD is constructed from a carefully considered mix of practices customized by content, process, and the context of the particular school building.

### 2.4. Coaching

An element now recognized across education as critical to successful adoption of new skills is teacher coaching. While there has been a considerable amount written on what authors consider to be the important characteristics and responsibilities of coaches, reports on the effectiveness of coaching have been slower to emerge (Bean, Swan, & Knaub, 2003; Dole, 2004; Vanderburg & Stephens, 2010). However, unlike PD, empirical findings are increasingly supporting the notion that coaching has a measurable, positive effect on teacher performance (Gamse, Jacob, Horst, Boulay, & Unlu, 2008; Garet et al., 2008). In a
state-wide middle school study Marsh et al. (2008) found a small, positive effect of coaching on the reading achievement in two of four student cohorts. Newman & Cunningham (2009) as well as Sailors & Price (2010) both found workshop training plus coaching out-performed teachers receiving workshop training only on measures of classroom practice. Matsumura, Gernier, Correnti, Junker, and Bickel (2010) determined that coaching accounted for increases in effective teacher practice that could be attributed to student achievement increases with an effect size equal to 0.51. A four-year study of coaching effects on kindergarten through second-grade learning across 17 schools was conducted by Biancarosa, Bryk, & Dexter (2010). Beginning with a baseline of student reading outcomes, the authors compared growth over four years and found that coaching could be attributable to increases in reading achievement with statistically significant effect sizes of 0.22, 0.37, and 0.43 across the three years following the baseline year. Finally, Davis, McPartland, Pryseski, and Kim (2018) found that the use of literacy coaches to assist ninth-grade teachers in the use and implementation of literacy strategies resulted in improved student reading comprehension with an effect size of 0.19.

2.5. Research Questions

The present study is part of a three-year professional development initiative to improve end-of-third-grade reading outcomes by improving teacher capacity for reading instruction from kindergarten-through third-grade. This study investigates changes in third-grade teacher reading knowledge as a result of PD and the resulting student reading outcomes through a focus on three research questions:

RQ1: To what extent does teacher core reading knowledge change as a result of capacity training delivered within the project?

RQ2: How do third-grade student reading outcomes in the areas of spelling knowledge, pseudo- and sight-word reading, and reading fluency change over the three years of the project?

RQ3: What is the magnitude of student learning across years?

3. Method

3.1. District

Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) is located in Louisville, Kentucky and serves approximately 100,000 students, making it the 27th largest public-school district in the United States. Of the students attending the district 37% are of African-American ethnicity, 49% are European-American, 7% are Hispanic, while the remainder are of other backgrounds. Sixty-two percent of students attending the district receive free- or reduced-price lunch. On the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 2017), 64% of fourth-grade students across JCPS scored at the basic level or below. Achievement on the NAEP by African-American students in the fourth-grade is 32 points (15.8%) lower than for children of European-American descent. A look at the Kentucky
Department of Education (2017) state reading achievement test scores (KPREP) reveals that well over half (53.6%) of JCPS students achieve at less-than-proficient levels. When these scores are broken out by ethnicity nearly 60% of European-American children achieve proficiency compared to 28.9% of African-American children. This disparity is important as the present study is conducted in schools largely attended by African-American children and others from disadvantaged backgrounds.

3.2. Project Background

The Jefferson County Public Schools Literacy Project (Project) was a university-district initiative between JCPS and literacy educators from Bellarmine University with a goal of increasing end-of-third-grade reading outcomes. The theory of action adopted by the Project was that of Desimone (2009) where improving teachers’ core reading knowledge and pedagogical skill with the help of literacy coaches, improves core (tier 1) instruction and results in improved student reading outcomes. The Project adopted the fundamental idea that to substantially improve reading outcomes teachers must be deeply knowledgeable about how printed words are transferred into sound and meaning by the reader. Teachers must also be highly skilled in the pedagogy that facilitates letter-sound correspondence and the transfer of that knowledge into appropriate reading fluency with comprehension. As such, the Project took the approach that everyone involved in reading instruction must learn to improve, and that this learning is not to a criterion, but rather, grows on a continuous improvement continuum.

The district had in place a “Third-Grade Reading Pledge,” an aspirational goal that all end-of-third-grade students would be reading on grade-level, although grade-level was left undefined. In the fall of 2013, the district’s Chief Academic Officer invited area schools of education to propose initiatives to facilitate achievement of the third-grade reading pledge. The proposal from Bellarmine was based on the design of prior reading academies initiated in Dallas and Memphis (Manzo, 2000; Feldman, Schneck, Feighan, Coffey, & Rui, 2011). The Project was reviewed by the District and ultimately approved by the JCPS Board of Education. Project funding came primarily from Title 1 and general funds to pay delivery costs to Bellarmine. Deliverables included the design and delivery of a one-year capacity-building curriculum for kindergarten through third-grade teachers, ESL and Special Education teachers, the training of literacy coaches, designing a student outcome assessment system, collecting and analyzing data, and generally overseeing the Project in conjunction with district administrators. The first-year success of the Project resulted in the annual renewal of the project over the next two years. Total expenditures by the district for the three years amounted to approximately $2.5 million.

3.3. School and Teacher Participation

In the spring of 2014, the now Board-approved Project was presented to prin-
cipals of the 19 lowest performing elementary schools as a major initiative to assist them in increasing the teaching capacity necessary to improve attainment of the third-grade reading pledge. As part of Kentucky’s educational reform act (Kentucky General Assembly, 1990) the state incorporated site-based decision making (SBDM) teams at every public school in the state. SBDMs became public policy with the primary intention of giving parents and school-based personnel a voice in the management of their school. As such, each SBDM team is composed of six members that include the principal, two parents, and three faculty members. Among other duties the SBDM must approve to participate in district-proposed projects. Principals at each of the 19 schools presented the Project to their SBDM for consideration with all schools voting to participate. Once approved, principals began to solicit the voluntary participation of their teachers in the year-long training initiative and identified a school-based literacy coach. Teachers received no monetary compensation for participation in the Project. However, teachers did receive a total of six hours (3 hours per semester) of graduate level credit at no cost to them and were provided the books required for class. Graduate credit was granted by Bellarmine University and could be applied toward a degree at Bellarmine or transferred to another institution. Classes were delivered weekly in elementary schools that were in proximity to participating schools to ease travel for teacher participants. One year of classes resulted in 90 hours of face-to-face training over the two courses.

By the end of Year 1 many teachers were requesting a second year of training to better extend what they had learned. This resulted in the design of a third and fourth course available to teachers who had completed the initial foundational year of training. For participation in the second year of advanced training, teachers received an additional six hours of graduate credit, again at no cost to them, bringing the total of earned graduate credit to 12 hours for those completing two years of training. This second year of face-to-face training provided an additional 90 hours of training. Teachers participating in both years of training received a total of 180 hours of professional development.

Project training was open to teachers from K-3, special education, and ESL classrooms. Across the three project years a total of 162, 224, and 200 teachers enrolled in training in years 1, 2, and 3 respectively for a total enrollment of 586 teachers. Table 1 shows that in the first year of the project 46 third-grade teachers completed foundational training. In project Year 2, 61 third-grade teachers completed foundational training while 23 (50%) teachers from Year 1 completed advanced training, bringing Year 2 enrollment total to 84. Year 3 saw 58 third-grade teachers complete foundational training while 30 (49%) teachers completed advanced training. In total, 88 teachers completed training in Year 3.

At the conclusion of Year 1 district leaders were anxious to make the Project available to additional schools. With a total of 90 elementary schools across the district, the primary criterion used by the district to identify additional schools was success on end-of-year state achievement tests. Schools performing poorly
on this test were viewed as being in need of capacity training to assist their teachers in efforts to better achieve the third-grade reading pledge. Beyond the initial 19 schools, the next group identified as most in need of assistance resulted in twenty-six schools joining the Project in Year 2 for a total of 45 schools. The following year 18 additional schools were identified by the district, bringing to 63 the number of participating schools in Year 3. Schools identified by the district went through the same SBDM procedures as the initial 19 schools.

### 3.4. Course Content

The theory of action (Figure 1) adopted by the Project is one hypothesized by Desimone (2009) where professional development and literacy coaching improves teacher knowledge and skill, which then leads to improved classroom teaching and ultimately, to improved student reading outcomes. This put the primary focus of the Project on the improvement of Tier 1 or core instruction. Training was conducted through traditional face-to-face classes that met 15 times from August through December, and another 15 sessions that met from January to May with instructors hired from the district and trained and monitored by the Project leader. Each session lasted 3 hours resulting in a total of 90 training hours across the school year. Training was conducted during Year 1 (2014-15), Year 2 (2015-16), and Year 3 (2016-17) with Year 2 and 3 training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools (cumulative):</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundational Training (90 hours):</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Training (90 additional hours):</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Total:</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unduplicated Cumulative Teacher Total:</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Training Hours:</td>
<td>4140</td>
<td>7,560</td>
<td>7,920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumulative Teacher Training Hours:</td>
<td>4140</td>
<td>11,700</td>
<td>19,620</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Project theory of action.
consisting of both foundational and advanced training. Course content included the theoretical language processes involved in converting print to speech and the Big 5 reading processes (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000) of phonemic and phonological awareness, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension within the context of the Project’s instructional delivery model. Teachers were taught how these processes work on an interactive basis to produce efficient reading with understanding. Teachers were trained and coached to implement reading instruction using the Project’s instructional delivery model that provided a flexible framework for planning instruction based on student needs. A teaching and learning cycle for each of the Big 5 reading processes was utilized in coursework to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter and implementation with fidelity of the Project’s instructional delivery model. The teaching and learning cycle included building background knowledge on each of the Big 5 reading processes, assessment for diagnosis, strategic instruction, and how to involve families and caregivers in the reading development of their child (Figure 2). As part of their training, teachers implemented classroom action plans (CAPs), assignments intended to assist in bridging coursework to classroom application. Embedded within the Project curriculum for the foundational training year were five CAPs that targeted specific teaching strategies associated with the Big 5 reading processes, one each for phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The advanced year of training included CAPs focused on systematic and differentiated word study and the implementation of guided reading to reinforce the connection to the instructional delivery model for reading instruction. Submission of weekly CAPs detailing the teaching and learning of the Big 5 reading

![Figure 2. Teaching and learning cycle.](image)
processes and grade level Common Core Standards for English Language Arts within the Project’s instructional delivery model was required in the advanced year of training. Also included in this year of training was a strong emphasis on assessment of the critical reading subskills related to efficient reading. These included diagnostic assessments that provided insight into the student’s understanding of phonics, pseudo- and sight-word reading, and reading fluency (van Kuijk, Deunk, Bosker, & Ritzema, 2016). This provided for data-driven instruction based on individual student need. Teachers also received additional training in teaching letter-feature analysis skills as well as oral reading fluency and comprehension instruction. Also emphasized was development of a multi-tier support structure (MTSS) for students who were struggling. Throughout the Project a formative approach to curriculum was maintained that allowed the training curriculum to be adjusted in response to the learning of teacher-participants (Jimenez, 1997; Reinking & Bradley, 2004).

3.5. Literacy Coaches

In conjunction with the district, coaches were selected and then trained in the Project curriculum during a 2-week, 80-hour long summer workshop. During the school year coaches met monthly as a group with Project leaders to share insights, discuss logistics of the Project, how best to assist teachers, refine coaching skills, and continually enhance subject matter knowledge. Coaches were also trained to develop trust and establish rapport with each teacher in order to provide useful suggestions based on best-practice for improved student outcomes. For each CAP, coaches engaged the participating teacher in a coaching cycle to provide support in the implementation of a new teaching strategy and to ensure continued use of the teaching strategy based on student need. As part of the coaching cycle the coaches held a pre-conference, observed an implementation of the strategy, and then held a post-conference with their respective Project teachers. Each pre- and post-conference session lasted up to 30 minutes. Additionally, and on an as-needed basis, coaches modeled strategies in participating classrooms.

Instructional coaching for elementary schools was administered by individuals with the title of Goal Clarity Coach. The scope of responsibilities for a Goal Clarity Coach was to provide support, assistance, and advice to the district-wide service center and/or the school faculty in the content area of need. Subject matter expertise of individual coaches tended to be wide-ranging from math to science to literacy across the elementary, middle, and high school level. During Year 1 of the Project, the responsibilities of literacy coaches were assigned by the district to the Goal Clarity Coach, when this was not possible it was given to a teacher leader. Initially Project literacy coaches were not compensated for these responsibilities. Over the course of the three years, Project literacy coaches were chosen with specific subject matter area expertise in elementary reading and eventually 50 percent of a coach’s job responsibility was compensated by the
district from general funds.

3.6. Student Participants

The unit of analysis for reading outcomes is conducted at the student level. The empirical student sample in the present study are third-grade students instructed by teachers participating in foundational and advanced training across the three years of the study. As the primary concern of district leaders was making the Project available on a wide basis, selection of a control-group was not possible. The number of third-grade teachers participating in the Project varied each year which resulted in a fluctuating number of students available for the analytic sample. After accounting for incomplete data and student mobility, the reported student samples for each Project year reflects an average of 13 to 20 students per Project teacher. While 62% of students attending district schools came from disadvantaged backgrounds, approximately 85.6% of students attending Year 1 and 2 schools are from backgrounds putting them at-risk for reading acquisition. While fewer students attending the Year 3 schools came from disadvantaged backgrounds, the overall percentage of 75% is well above the district average.

3.7. Assessments

3.7.1. Literacy Instruction Knowledge Scale

The Literacy Instruction Knowledge Scale (Reutzel et al., 2009 [LIKS]) is a standardized assessment that assesses a teacher’s literacy content knowledge through a multiple-choice test composed of three subscales, two of which are used in this study. Teachers participating in foundational skill training were administered the LIKS in the beginning of the fall semester and again at the end of the spring semester. The decoding subscale has 32 items while the comprehension subscale contains 43 items. The total knowledge scale is the sum of the two scales reflecting a range of 0 to 75. Internal consistency for each subscale reported by the authors of the LIKS are Cronbach’s alpha of 0.68 for decoding and 0.77 for comprehension. Test-retest reliability for the two subscales reported by the test authors are 0.76 for decoding and 0.83 for comprehension.

3.7.2. Developmental Spelling Assessment Screener

The Developmental Screening Inventory (DSI) (Ganske, 2014) is an untimed, group administered spelling assessment composed of 20 words that increase in spelling knowledge complexity. Results of the test suggest what the student understands about letter-sound correspondences. The 20 words are grouped into four sections of five words each. The sections represent the four stages of spelling development (letter naming, within-word, syllable juncture, and derivational constancy) as described by Henderson & Templeton (1986) and provides a measure of the child’s orthographic knowledge (Ehri, 1993; Ganske, 1994, 2014). The test is administered one word at a time where the teacher pronounces the word, uses it in a sentence, and then pronounces it again. The student writes the word on their answer sheet and then waits for the teacher to say the next word.
The DSI is scored by awarding one point for each correctly spelled word for a total score ranging from 0 to 20. The assessed range in this study is 0 to 20 with 19 students attaining a score of 20. Two forms of the DSI are available with Form A used in the fall and Form B in the spring. Pearson-\(r\) correlations for the five words comprising each of the four spelling stages as reported by the test author range from 0.97 to 0.99 while test-retest correlations range from 0.97 to 0.98.

### 3.7.3. Word Reading

Word reading is assessed using the Test of Word Reading Efficiency-2 (TOWRE) [Torgesen, Wagner, & Rashotte, 2014]. The TOWRE consists of two subtests that determine a students’ ability to efficiently read 1) sight-words (SWE) and 2) phonologically regular pseudo-words (PDE). Sight-word efficiency reflects the extent to which students have automatized regular words while pseudo-word reading is indicative of the student’s ability to quickly apply what they understand about letter-sound correspondence to reading decodable non-words. The TOWRE is available in four forms with Forms A & B used in this study. The test is administered individually to each student. For each subtest, the student has 45 seconds to read aloud increasingly complex words that are aligned in columns on the test page. The test administrator marks words read incorrectly with the raw score equal to the number of words pronounced correctly for each subtest. The maximum possible score is 66 for pseudo-word reading and 108 for sight-word reading. In this study, the range of scores on the pseudo-word test (PDE) was 0 to 64 while the range on the sight-word test (SWE) was 0 to 94. Test-retest reliability coefficients for the assessed age group equals 0.92 for the sight-word test and 0.87 for the pseudo-word test.

### 3.7.4. Reading Fluency

The assessment of reading fluency consisted of students individually reading aloud a curriculum-based measure (CBM). Students read the narrative passage for 3 minutes while being scored for reading miscues (omissions, insertions, mispronounced words, reversals and skipping a line) by the test administrator. If after 3 seconds students were unable to read a word it was counted as an error, and the student was told the word and directed to continue reading. Total time spent reading was recorded for those who finished in less than 3 minutes. Passages were administered in the fall and spring and ranged between 332 and 358 words in length and were measured for Lexile complexity using the Lexile Analyzer [MetaMetrics, 2016]. All passages measured in the 700 L to 800 L range and are within the text complexity grade-bands identified by the Common Core (2010) as appropriate for third-grade readers (420 L to 850 L). Texts were also analyzed using Coh-Metrix [Graesser, McNamara, & Kulikowich, 2011] and were all found to be high in narrativity, syntactic simplicity, word concreteness, referential and deep cohesion. Curriculum-based measures have been shown to be valid measures of reading competency [Fuchs, Fuchs, Hosp, & Jenkins, 2001].
that possess adequate reliability (Deno, 1985; Deno, Mirkin, & Chiang, 1982; McGlinchey & Hixson, 2004). The range of reading fluency scores for this group of students was 0 to 200 words-correct-per-minute. Reliability of the present data was determined using a split-half reliability test resulting in Pearson's $r$ ranging between 0.982 and 0.991 depending on the text.

### 3.7.5. Assessment Administration

All assessments were individually administered to students by their Project teacher. Teachers and coaches were instructed on the administration and scoring of each instrument early in foundational training. Assessments were introduced one at a time followed by in-class administration practice. Teachers were then required to administer the assessments to two students and then bring the completed assessments to class. Assessments were then blindly scored by both the instructor and student and compared for reliability. Students whose grading was not in complete agreement with that of the instructor were immediately remediated to correct the scoring error. Those teachers were then required to bring to class an additional set of assessments from two different students the following week to repeat the scoring procedure under the auspices of the instructor. After 100% agreement with the instructor, a sample of blind scores for both raters were returned to the researchers for another round of reliability checking. After training and reliability checking, teachers then administered all assessments to their remaining students. Because of the temporal distance between the assessment periods the administration training protocol was repeated in April as preparation for the May assessment period.

### 4. Results

This study reports first, the results of a project to improve teacher capacity of core reading content and second, changes in third-grade reading outcomes over a three-year period as measured by developmental spelling knowledge, pseudo- and sight-word reading, and reading fluency. We begin by analyzing growth in teacher knowledge as measured by the LIKS.

#### 4.1. Research Question One

Research question one asks if teachers’ reading knowledge improved after participating in foundational training provided by the Project. Note the LIKS data reflects teachers participating in foundational training classes only and does not include those in advanced training. Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations of the pre- and posttest results for teacher knowledge from the decoding, comprehension, and total knowledge domains of the LIKS by Project year (1, 2, & 3). A visual inspection shows that with the exception of Year 2 comprehension, all posttest means exceeded those of the pretest. The decoding subtest means increased from 14.6 to 18.1 in Year 1, from 15.5 to 19.1 in Year 2, and from 15.7 to 19.3 in Year 3. Comprehension test means changed from 21.9 to 24.8 in Year 1 while virtually no change was seen in Year 2 (23.83 to 23.87), with
increases from 20.9 to 24.0 found in Year 3. Total knowledge means increased from 36.9 to 43.3 in Year 1, Year 2 increased from 39.3 to 42.9, while Year 3 increased from 36.6 to 43.1. We conducted a series of paired-sample t-tests using a Bonferroni correction between pre- and posttest LIKS results to determine the statistical significance of change with effect size measured using Cohen’s $d$ (Cohen, 1988). Results in Table 3 show that Year 1 teachers made significant improvement in decoding knowledge, $t (1, 45) = 7.2$, $p < 0.001$, $d = 0.93$, comprehension, $t (1, 45) = 7.76$, $p < 0.001$, $d = 0.59$, and total knowledge, $t (1, 45) = 9.35$, $p < 0.001$, $d = 0.90$. Year 2 teachers showed statistically significant improvement in decoding

### Table 2. Means, standard deviations, and standard errors for LIKS assessment of pre- and posttest decoding, comprehension, and total knowledge domains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Year 1 ($n = 46$)</th>
<th>Year 2 ($n = 61$)</th>
<th>Year 3 ($n = 58$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean(σd)</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Mean(σd)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decoding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretest:</td>
<td>14.61 (3.82)</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>15.47 (4.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest:</td>
<td>18.14 (3.72)</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>19.09 (4.71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretest:</td>
<td>21.86 (5.32)</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>23.83 (5.37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest:</td>
<td>24.81 (4.96)</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>23.87 (5.34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretest:</td>
<td>36.88 (6.51)</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>39.30 (8.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest:</td>
<td>43.33 (7.92)</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>42.92 (8.71)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Decoding subscale range is 0 to 32; comprehension subscale range is 0 to 43. Total knowledge is a sum of the decoding and comprehension subscales for a range of 0 to 75.

### Table 3. Pre- to posttest change in LIKS scores by year and domain.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year/Domain</th>
<th>$t (df)$</th>
<th>$d$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decoding</td>
<td>7.20 (1, 45)**</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>7.76 (1, 45)**</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Knowledge</td>
<td>9.35 (1, 45)**</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decoding</td>
<td>9.94 (1, 60)**</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>0.109 (1, 60)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Knowledge</td>
<td>6.36 (1, 60)**</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016-17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decoding</td>
<td>8.06 (1, 57)**</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>4.49 (1, 57)**</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Knowledge</td>
<td>5.21 (1, 57)**</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: LIKS = Literacy Instruction Knowledge Scale. **$p$ < 0.001. $d$ = Cohen’s $d$. 

DOI: 10.4236/als.2019.74013
knowledge, $t (1, 60) = 9.94$, $p < 0.001$, $d = 0.81$, and total knowledge, $t (1, 60) = 6.36$, $p < 0.001$, $d = 0.44$, with no significant gains found for comprehension. Year 3 teachers showed improvement in decoding knowledge, $t (1, 57) = 8.06$, $p < 0.001$, $d = 0.94$, comprehension, $t (1, 57) = 4.49$, $p < 0.01$, $d = 0.59$, and total knowledge, $t (1, 57) = 5.21$, $p < 0.001$, $d = 0.86$.

**4.2. Research Question Two**

For each study year we measured spelling development, sight-word reading, pseudo-word reading, and reading fluency with each year representing an independent sample of students. Table 4 shows the means and standard deviations for the measured variables by year while Table 5 shows the bi-variate correlations. A close inspection of the study variables indicates some differences in the levels of fall achievement between years while spring scores appear to increase in years two and three beyond that of year one. Bi-variate correlations reveal moderate to large relationships between variables for each of the three years with relationships in years two and three appearing generally larger than those in year one.

Research question two asks the extent to which student reading outcomes changed over the three years of the Project. The Figure 3 bar graph shows the fall and spring means for each variable across the three study years. A visual inspection of the means shows first, that growth occurred in each of the four variables between fall and spring of each year. Developmental spelling means increased from 3.1 to 5.5 in Year 1 while in Year 2 it increased from 3.2 to 7.6, and in Year 3 means rose from 3.5 to 7.4. Pseudo-word reading means saw Year 1 rise from 13.9 to 18.0, Year 2 increase from 14.1 to 23.0 and Year 3 improve from 14.0 to 23.3. For sight-word reading Year 1 means increased from 40.0 to 48.5 while Year 2 rose from 39.4 to 55.0, and Year 3 increases grew from 40.7 to 55.2. Increase in reading fluency can also be seen as Year 1 rose from 60.7 to 73.3, Year 2 began at 63.2 and then rose to 86.6, and Year 3 improved from 60.3 to 85.7. The second observation from Figure 3 is that the spring means for Years 2 and 3 consistently exceeded those for the spring of Year 1. Spelling development in spring of Year 1 was 5.5 compared to 7.6 and 7.4 in the spring of Years 2 and 3 respectively. The spring mean for Year for pseudo-word reading was 18.0 and increased to 23.0 in Year 2 and 23.4 in Year 3. The same trend can be seen in sight-word reading where the Year 1 spring mean is 48.5, while the Year 2 mean is 55.0 and Year 3 is 55.2. Finally, reading fluency shows a spring of Year 1 mean equal to 73.3 which increased to 86.6 and 85.7 respectively for Years 2 and 3. Our next step is to determine the statistical significance of these observed changes.

To investigate the differences in the outcome measures between the three years, a one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was utilized for each outcome. The ANCOVA featured year as a three-level independent factor (2015, 2016, and 2017) and the fall measure of the outcome (assessments) as the covariate resulting in the following equation:
Table 4. Third-grade means and standard deviations for reading outcome variables by year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Year 1 (n = 392)</th>
<th></th>
<th>Year 2 (n = 410)</th>
<th></th>
<th>Year 3 (n = 460)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental Spelling</td>
<td>3.07 (2.02)</td>
<td>5.51 (2.57)</td>
<td>3.15 (1.38)</td>
<td>7.59 (3.16)</td>
<td>3.48 (1.33)</td>
<td>7.37 (2.82)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo-Word Reading</td>
<td>13.94 (4.43)</td>
<td>17.95 (5.34)</td>
<td>14.09 (6.39)</td>
<td>22.96 (7.57)</td>
<td>13.99 (5.89)</td>
<td>23.40 (8.37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sight-Word Reading</td>
<td>40.01 (8.26)</td>
<td>48.50 (7.98)</td>
<td>39.39 (8.70)</td>
<td>55.00 (10.13)</td>
<td>40.67 (8.18)</td>
<td>55.24 (8.86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Fluency</td>
<td>60.71 (15.79)</td>
<td>73.31 (17.15)</td>
<td>63.16 (22.35)</td>
<td>86.56 (24.04)</td>
<td>60.32 (21.59)</td>
<td>85.72 (27.36)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Differences from fall to spring within year are all statistically significant at p< 0.001.

Table 5. Bivariate correlations for reading outcome variables by year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Spelling Fall</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Spelling Spring</td>
<td>0.764**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Pseudo-word Fall</td>
<td>0.224**</td>
<td>0.191**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Pseudo-word Spring</td>
<td>0.281**</td>
<td>0.303**</td>
<td>0.727**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Sight-word Fall</td>
<td>0.289**</td>
<td>0.334**</td>
<td>0.686**</td>
<td>0.527**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Sight-word Spring</td>
<td>0.350**</td>
<td>0.357**</td>
<td>0.586**</td>
<td>0.707**</td>
<td>0.736**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Fluency Fall</td>
<td>0.407**</td>
<td>0.373**</td>
<td>0.416**</td>
<td>0.412**</td>
<td>0.446**</td>
<td>0.495**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Fluency Spring</td>
<td>0.424**</td>
<td>0.411**</td>
<td>0.497**</td>
<td>0.624**</td>
<td>0.653**</td>
<td>0.653**</td>
<td>0.731**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Year 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Spelling Fall</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Spelling Spring</td>
<td>0.534**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Pseudo-word Fall</td>
<td>0.299**</td>
<td>0.385**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Pseudo-word Spring</td>
<td>0.391**</td>
<td>0.433**</td>
<td>0.583**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Sight-word Fall</td>
<td>0.282**</td>
<td>0.410**</td>
<td>0.377**</td>
<td>0.497**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Sight-word Spring</td>
<td>0.330**</td>
<td>0.440**</td>
<td>0.494**</td>
<td>0.608**</td>
<td>0.579**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Fluency Fall</td>
<td>0.413**</td>
<td>0.509**</td>
<td>0.514**</td>
<td>0.572**</td>
<td>0.651**</td>
<td>0.571**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Fluency Spring</td>
<td>0.436**</td>
<td>0.575**</td>
<td>0.430**</td>
<td>0.595**</td>
<td>0.594**</td>
<td>0.632**</td>
<td>0.749**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Year 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Spelling Fall</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Spelling Spring</td>
<td>0.678**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Pseudo-word Fall</td>
<td>0.472**</td>
<td>0.534**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Pseudo-word Spring</td>
<td>0.504**</td>
<td>0.554**</td>
<td>0.723**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Sight-word Fall</td>
<td>0.445**</td>
<td>0.458**</td>
<td>0.495**</td>
<td>0.576**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Sight-word Spring</td>
<td>0.429**</td>
<td>0.502**</td>
<td>0.520**</td>
<td>0.663**</td>
<td>0.712**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Fluency Fall</td>
<td>0.518**</td>
<td>0.502**</td>
<td>0.523**</td>
<td>0.613**</td>
<td>0.710**</td>
<td>0.667**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Fluency Spring</td>
<td>0.496**</td>
<td>0.460**</td>
<td>0.488**</td>
<td>0.570**</td>
<td>0.593**</td>
<td>0.679**</td>
<td>0.665**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Spelling = Development Spelling Assessment-Screener; Pseudo-word = pseudo-word reading; Sight-word = sight word reading; Fluency = oral reading fluency. **p< 0.01 (2-tailed).
Figure 3. Means of the measured variables by time of year by year.

\[ Y_{ij} = \mu + \tau_i + \beta_jX_i + \epsilon_{ij} \]

\( Y_{ij} = \) Spring Measure; \( \tau_i = \) Year; \( \beta_jX_i = \) Fall Measure

Utilizing the fall measure as a covariate in each of the models controls for any variability between the years resulting from the pretest (Fall measure). The ANCOVA controls for any differences in the outcomes (spring measure) that may be attributable to the fall measure. ANCOVA is an efficient method for isolating a treatment effect and the use of pretest scores is an effective covariate when the purpose of the model is to examine post-test variability (Yang & Tsiatis, 2001). In practical terms, the ANCOVA adjusts the data such that the different starting points (fall measures) do not impact the observed differences in the spring measures. The slopes shown in Table 6 represent the within year comparison (fall to spring). In all years the slopes are statistically significant (\( p < 0.001 \)) indicating a significant increase in the spring scores compared to those from the fall.

4.3. Research Question Three

Research question three asks if the rate of student learning on the measured variables changed by year? In other words, for each of the measured variables did students acquire the same amount of learning each year or were some years more productive than others? It may be inferred that the greater the value of the slope estimate the greater the rate or magnitude of learning. Equality of slopes by year would indicate an equal amount of learning took place while statistically significant differences between the slopes would indicate student learning differed. Figure 4 plots the mean growth by variable while Figure 5 plots the slope coefficient estimates by year for each of the four student outcomes.

To test the hypothesis of equality of slopes by year: \( H_0 : \beta_1 = \beta_2 = \beta_3 \), the procedure suggested by the UCLA Institute for Digital Research and Learning (Introduction to SAS) was followed. First the data were recoded using STATA
software to construct a dummy variable for year. Next, new variables were created to estimate the interaction of the year*fall measure. The new terms were then used in a dummy regression to predict the spring measure (outcome). This resulted in the equation:

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_1 X_2 + e_{ij}$$

(Spring Measure, $\beta_1 X_1$ = Dummy variable for year, $\beta_2 X_2$ = Fall measure, and $\beta_3 X_1 X_2$ = Interaction of Year*Fall measure)

When the results indicated overall model significance ($F$-test), pairwise comparisons were estimated to investigate the simple factor level effects. The pairwise comparisons were estimated in a method similar to the overall model but the dummy term was limited to two years rather than three. When the interaction term comprised of the two years and the fall measure was significant, it is reported as a significant simple effect ($t$-statistic.) Table 6 reports the results of this statistical testing to determine differences between years (rate of magnitude of yearly increase). Figure 5 plots the regression coefficient by variable by year. Results for spelling knowledge show that the slope in 2015 of 0.975 was less than...

**Figure 4.** Mean growth by year by variable.

**Figure 5.** Slope coefficient estimates by year by measure.
Table 6. Unstandardized slope coefficient estimates from analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) by variable by spring of year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Spelling ($R^2$)</th>
<th>Pseudo Word ($R^2$)</th>
<th>Sight Word ($R^2$)</th>
<th>Fluency ($R^2$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>0.975 (0.47)</td>
<td>0.878 (0.47)</td>
<td>0.711 (0.54)</td>
<td>0.795 (0.53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>1.225 (0.56)</td>
<td>0.691 (0.58)</td>
<td>0.674 (0.34)</td>
<td>0.810 (0.56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>1.437 (0.37)</td>
<td>1.027 (0.40)</td>
<td>0.771 (0.51)</td>
<td>0.843 (0.44)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. All $R^2$ values are significant at $p < 0.001$. $^1$Spelling slope coefficient for the three years are statistically different from each other, $F(2, 1257) = 12.6, p \leq 0.001$; $^2$Pseudo-Word slope coefficients for the three years are statistically different from each other, $F(2, 1256) = 16.1, p \leq 0.001$; $^3$Slope coefficients for the three years are not statistically different from each other.

those for both 2016 (slope = 1.225), ($t (3, 799) = 2.55, p = 0.001$) and 2017 (slope = 1.437), ($t (3, 848) = 5.65, p \leq 0.001$) while the 2016 slope was statistically equal to that of 2017 ($t (3, 867) = -0.178, p = 0.075$). In other words, the magnitude of change for spelling knowledge in 2016 was 26% over 2015, while the 2017 magnitude was 47% higher than 2015. For pseudo-word reading the 2015 slope of 0.878 exceeded that of 2016 (slope = 1.225), ($t (3, 798) = 2.65, p = 0.008$) while the 2017 slope of 1.027 exceeded those of 2015 ($t (3, 848) = 2.17, p = 0.029$) and 2016 ($t (3, 866) = 5.09, p \leq 0.001$). For pseudo-word reading the magnitude of growth between 2015 and 2016 dropped by 21.3% while 2017 was 17% greater than 2015. Analysis of the slope coefficients for sight-word reading and reading fluency resulted in no between-year differences meaning the magnitude of learning for each year was similar.

5. Discussion

The Project was guided by a learning to improve framework suggesting intensive professional development combined with effective literacy coaching may facilitate knowledge-to-practice transfer of effective classroom instruction that can improve student outcomes. Our first research question asked to what extent did teachers grow in their declarative reading knowledge as a result of one year of Project training? With the exception of Year 2 comprehension, results showed that teachers in each of the three years of the Project increased their knowledge of decoding and comprehension with moderate to large effects as measured by a standardized instrument of reading knowledge. With the exception of Year 2 comprehension, which yielded a moderate effect size, decoding, comprehension, and total knowledge gains all reflected large to very large effect sizes. The Project curriculum engaged in by teachers consisted of 90 hours of classroom training distributed over the course of a school year, while about half of first-year teachers volunteered for a second year that brought their total training hours to 180. Throughout the Project curriculum designers used a formative approach which allowed for carefully considered adjustments to enhance the learning and utility of the training content. This approach provided curriculum designers the space to learn and improve based on teacher and instructor feedback and to make use of information gained from student outcomes. In Year 2 for example, the curri-
The curriculum was moderated to reflect greater emphasis on phonological awareness and letter-feature analysis. While this may have contributed to the decline in Year 2 comprehension gains seen on the teacher knowledge instrument, it may have also improved developmental spelling scores in the two succeeding years. The curriculum was adjusted in preparation for Year 3 to include additional comprehension material which was reflected in end of Year 3 LIKS increases in comprehension knowledge. Also, in the second year additional emphasis was put on the use of the Developmental Spelling Inventory (DSA) as a diagnostic tool to clearly understand what students understood and needed to learn regarding letter-sound correspondence. In the second and third years of training teachers were taught to use the DSA feature inventories (letter-name, within-word, syllable juncture, and derivational constancy) as a tool to diagnose and group students for differentiated word work instruction.

Our results for research question two are reported in Table 6 and show large regression coefficients for each measured outcome across all three years. A study by Paige et al., (2019) used path analysis to model the contribution of developmental spelling and found it contributed significant, unique variance, beyond even reading fluency, to achievement on the end-of-year state reading assessment. This finding provides evidence that developmental spelling is critical to reading achievement. The results of this study show that end of Year 1 developmental spelling means were equal to 5.51 (2.57) showing that as a group, students were exiting the letter-naming stage and entering the within-word spelling stage. While this level of spelling understanding may reflect appropriate development for end-of-year first-grade students, it is inadequate for third-graders who are likely to receive little phonics instruction in fourth-grade and beyond. In Year 1 we also saw pseudo- and sight-word reading attainment scores of 17.95 (5.34) and 48.50 (7.98) respectively, both of which are commensurate with the 14th percentile. End-of-first-year reading fluency was 73.31 (17.50), a score approximating the 23rd percentile on the Hasbrouck & Tindal (2006) reading norms. In total these measures suggest a group of students with an insufficient understanding of the sound structure of words that resulted in poor word reading and languid reading fluency.

Results for the spring of years two and three saw spelling development increase to 7.59 (3.16) and 7.37 (2.82) respectively, putting the group mean well into the within-word (WW) stage. The WW stage reflects an understanding of letter features that includes long vowels (VCE), r-controlled vowels (e.g., air, birch, spur), other common long- and short-vowel patterns such as long /el/ , /i/ , /ol/ , and /u/ (e.g., sea, high, boat, blew, clue). It also reflects growing understanding of complex consonant patterns such as /scr/ , /spl/ , /squ/ , and /thr/ , and silent consonant patterns like gn/kn (gnarl, knack), mb/wr (limb, wring), as well as abstract vowel understanding as in /oi/ (joint), /ou/ (foul), /au/ (fraud), /a/ /ör/ (swat and warp). Pseudo- and sight-word reading also saw significant increases in years two and three to 22.95 (7.57)/23.40 (8.37) and 55.00 (10.13)/55.24 (8.86) re-
respectively. These results represent attainment at the 25th (pseudo-word) and 32nd percentiles (sight-word) reflecting increases from end-of-year-one percentiles at the 14th and 23rd percentiles respectively. While reading accumaticity (CWPM) at the end of year one was at the 23rd percentile, year two and three results showed scores of 86.56 (24.04) and 85.72 (27.36) respectively, reflecting attainment at approximately the 43rd percentile for both. Although we do not have a direct measure of classroom reading instruction, we take the year 2 and 3 increases across the measured variables as indirect evidence that instruction improved. We think it is unlikely that given the large sample sizes across the three years that students independently improved with no instructional input.

Beyond quantifying the descriptive changes occurring in all four of the reading outcomes, our third research question explored whether the magnitude of learning differed by year. Our analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) results revealed that the regression slopes were significantly different across the three years for two of the reading outcome variables. While the plots in Figure 4 for spelling development and pseudo-word reading show clear differences in the magnitude of growth between years, those for sight-word reading and fluency clearly do not. We interpret the between-year increases in the magnitude of spelling knowledge growth as evidence that students learned at increasingly faster rates. While we cannot make a causal claim, we interpret this as suggesting teachers became increasingly proficient with instructional practices that encourage letter-feature development in students. As pseudo-word reading reflects the ability of students to apply their letter-feature knowledge to decode words, the increases in 2017 over 2015 suggests growth in the magnitude of student learning. The 2014 to 2015 reduction in the regression coefficient for pseudo-word learning is difficult to explain as there could be numerous reasons. The regression coefficients for sight-word reading and fluency also show significant growth for each year, although differences suggesting increasingly faster between-year growth were not found.

Our perspective of learning to improve emerges from a quality improvement paradigm suggesting that a process for improvement of core reading instruction can ultimately lead to enhanced instruction and predictable growth in student outcomes. Quality improvement (Deming, 2000; Shewhart, 1980) is a system that begins with the identification of quality measures, that is, the activities that occur within the instructional process that contribute to its’ ultimate quality. For example, one quality measure is teacher core knowledge of reading that was addressed in the present study. Other quality indicators likely exist which act to produce improved student outcomes. Some of these may include the amount of time teachers are actually engaged in teaching reading, the efficient use of instructional time, word-work quality, the extent to which instruction is differentiated to account for learner differences, and the regular use of formative and diagnostic assessments to measure growth of critical reading sub-skills (Black & William, 1998). Other indicators include the amount of time students spend ac-
tually reading appropriate connected texts, the complexity of text that students are asked to read, the amount and quality of teacher feedback provided to students, the materials teachers use to implement instruction, and the fidelity with which teachers implement a teaching and learning cycle. We suggest it is reasonable to expect that teachers differ in the quality with which they implement these and other instructional indicators and that these differences account for common variation that affects student outcomes. It follows then that determining which indicators account for the greatest variation in student learning, and then bringing them into statistical control may lead to reading achievement gains. We posit that a continuous quality improvement process (which implies it is guided by appropriate measurement) can provide a school with a proven, reliable, and predictable process that puts it in control of instructional improvement and student outcomes.

6. Primary Contribution of the Research

This study contributes to the research base in four ways. First, the study shows that improving in-service teacher knowledge of core reading and pedagogy practices is possible through a focused curriculum. Second, the results show that it takes time for teacher knowledge and practice to change. In other words, changes in student outcomes do not come quickly as teacher must first become comfortable with new understandings about reading and changes to their pedagogy. Third, the study shows that improving decoding knowledge at scale, as indicated by the statistically significant increases in spelling development and pseudo-word reading across 63 schools and 165 teachers, is possible. Fourth, the similar results in Years 2 and 3 effectively represents a replication of the Project that provides evidence suggesting the efficacy of the curricular focus and content taken by Project designers.

7. Conclusion

It remains a question whether or not additional or different Project training content would have improved reading outcomes beyond those found in the present study. Also unknown is the effect of the advanced year of training on teacher practice and student outcomes. From an anecdotal perspective, teachers participating in the second year of the Project reported an increased understanding of the diagnostic assessments and how to leverage those results to improve and differentiate their instruction. From a teacher preparation perspective, the Project results suggest that improvement of reading instruction is intensive, hard work that must have at its foundation the correct curriculum that teachers perceive to be worth learning. Improvement must also involve knowledgeable individuals in the form of training instructors and literacy coaches to support and guide teacher learning and classroom implementation. What is critical is that at some point teachers begin to see improvement in their students that suggests their effort is worth their trouble. It is in these moments when teachers be-
gin to understand, as Deming (1980) suggests, that first knowing what to do and then doing it well is critical to helping their students become better readers.

Given the reviewed research suggesting teachers are poorly prepared to teach reading to students at-risk for reading failure, combined with data showing too many students are underachieving in reading, leads to the consideration that the current reading teacher preparation model is insufficient (Licklider, 1997). Much as a medical student who just received an M.D. degree is not ready to practice without several years of residency training, graduation from a teacher preparation program can provide at best, a start at becoming a skilled reading teacher. It may be that becoming competent in the practice of reading instruction requires much more than preparation programs can provide under the current model. Long-term and consistently poor national and state-level reading results support the notion that post-certification PD is not improving reading outcomes. As Project implementation began we were surprised at the poor level of core reading knowledge across one of the country’s great city school districts. From the central office and senior administrator level down to the building level, deep literacy knowledge was universally absent. Even more problematic was the presence of instructional ideas that were at odds with what we know about how humans read and how best to teach its acquisition. Our efforts suggest to us that teachers of students at-risk for reading failure are in need of long-term, high-level “residency” training under highly knowledgeable coaches employing best practices within a proven quality improvement system. While the question remains of how best to deliver such training we suggest that the model presented in the present study is a beginning.

8. Limitations

Our results are limited by the absence of a randomized control trial to control for possible confounds and alternate explanations to the study results. This leaves open the possibility that other factors could explain both teacher training outcomes and the increases in student outcomes. This study is also limited by an inability to measure the incremental contribution of the second year of teacher training in the Project which we think may contribute to increase seen in student outcomes. The study design involved three independent cross sections of students that prohibited the tracking of within-student results across the three years. The study design was also not able to account for third-grade students in the study sample who had been previously instructed by Project teachers in either the first- or second-grade, or in both grades. It is entirely possible that an enhanced effect of the Project was experienced by students who received prior instruction from one or two Project teachers. Our study design only allowed the gathering of data from teachers enrolled in Project training. This meant we were unable to track individual Project teachers across the three years of the study, which could have provided valuable insight into teacher growth. We were unable to adequately document changes in classroom instruction. Such data would have
allowed the measurement of change in teacher practice and modeling of its effect on student outcomes. In all, our study reflects the challenges of working within school districts where the desire for quickly improved outcomes on state assessments can be intense and the will and discipline to implement well-designed studies that can rigorously answer important questions is often lacking.

9. Future Research

Our results suggest research into the development of a continuous improvement system that can measure, analyze, and improve the indicators found to predict significant variance in reading instruction is needed. Much of the focus of reading research has been on the specification of the cognitive processes involved in reading and instructional strategies that facilitate growth in sub-processes such as phonological awareness, letter-sound learning, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Much less is known about how these strategies work coherently within a system of instruction whose objective is to get every student to at least, minimum levels of reading achievement that can facilitate academic success. This is an ambitious task that has yet to resonate on a general basis across the research community and school districts. If NAEP and state accountability results are accepted as evidence of poor reading, we suggest it is time to move in the direction of the quality of improvement of reading instruction.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

References


Statistics, 89, 134-150. https://doi.org/10.1162/rest.89.1.134


https://www.lexile.com/analyzer/


https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/media.aspx


From Literature to Alternate Reality Games: Prerequisites, Criteria, and Limitations of a Young Adult Novel’s Transformational Design for Educational Purposes

Evangelia Moula¹, Konstantinos Malafantis²

¹Hellenic Open University, Patras, Greece
²National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Athens, Greece
Email: moulaevang@gmail.com, kmalafant@primedu.uoa.gr

Abstract

This study presents the process of the transformational design of a young adult novel into an alternate reality game (ARG) for educational purposes, creating this way, an affinity space for students. Since one of the primary objectives of literature’s curriculum is the cultivation of young people’s reading for pleasure disposition—whose rate is declining—such a project could be a challenge and at the same time could open up a potential prospect of enhancing the positive response of young people towards literature. At the same time, the project supports a multidimensional approach to the literary phenomenon as a means of promoting a wide range of learning goals. The contribution of this venture is that although ARGs have been used in the educational field before, there is no evidence for such a transformational process in the corresponding literature. Design issues, the main characteristics of the ARGs, the criteria and the motivational factors of successful ARGs, as well as the inherent limitations of such a project. The project was applied to the Greek young adult novel: Leros’ Code by Kostas Stoforos (Stoforos, 2016) and the derivative ARG was implemented during the 2018-19 school year in secondary education students in Rhodes, Greece as part of a postdoctoral research (ongoing). The whole project aimed to examine how an ARG could be compatible with the literary curriculum and the teaching mechanics and even more, how it could promote collaborative learning and literacy practices of the 21st century. The data collection and processing will take place within the ensuing months, soon after which, we will be able to announce our final conclusions.

Keywords

Literary Education, ARG, Transformational Design, Affinity Spaces,
1. Introduction: ARG as a Narrative Means and Its Particularities

In the last decades, research about the reading habits of young people and specifically about reading literature for pleasure has been multiplied, in which there seems to exist a negative correlation between literary reading and the emergence—not to say dominance—of the digital environments and the internet as socializing and entertaining landscapes (Twenge et al., 2018). New technologies, however, open up new perspectives on the creation, dissemination, and reception of literary narrative, as this is increasingly being transferred to digital environments. Multimodal and multimedia narrative entities supplant the monomodality of speech as the main expressive means of literary narrative, proposing new digital genres (Askehave & Nielsen, 2005). By examining the four basic properties of the concept of the medium, we find that all, material, sensorial, spatiotemporal and semiotic features (Ellestrom, 2010: p. 15) of literature as a medium, are being revised. Equally, the so far mainly passive, lonely, sophisticated and reflective manner of reading is being undermined. From the classic works of literary art to the printed literary texts imbued with elements of Internet aesthetics (Yiannicopoulou, 2007), to the interactive hypertexts and finally to the transmedia narratives (Moula & Malafantis, 2018) a subversive new philosophy of reading is being established, in which indispensable condition is the recipient’s active engagement and participation in the shaping of the story and to regulate the rate of his/her engagement with the narrative. According to Ryan (2006: p. xvii) narrative, either in the old or in the new media, as an invariant core of meaning, has transcultural, transhistorical, and transmedial identity. The difference lies in the expressing modes the digital narrative is tied to, which are the simulative, the participatory and the emergent mode. Viewing user participation as the most important of the properties of digital media, representatives of this approach conceive interactivity as a compatible potential with narrative immersion, still to be explored. Jenkins (2004) contends that the discussion so far, from the ludologists’ point of view:

“has operated with too narrow a model of narrative, one preoccupied with the rules and conventions of classical linear storytelling at the expense of consideration of other kinds of narratives, [...] which seek to balance between the competing demands of narrative and spectacle”.

ARG is a relatively new category of storytelling—transmedia, pervasive, interactive and playful—developed in online interactive environments but also utilizing real-world communication methods, whose popularity is steadily increasing. ARGs as immersive story-game hybrids favor participatory storytelling,
problem-solving and agency by the reader-player.

Even more as a form of transmedia storytelling, they engage players in missions to collectively uncover, interpret, and reassemble the fragments of a story which is distributed across multiple media, platforms, and locations (Bonsignore et al., 2013). Being transmedia productions, one of their main advantages lies in their ability to “transport the players to a fictional world superimposed on the reality of everyday life” (Dena, 2008).

ARGs have nothing in common with most Internet or video games of the past. One of their main goals is to deny and disguise the fact that they are even games at all, making their main principle what has come to be called the TINAG philosophy, standing for This Is Not A Game (Szulborski, 2005: p. 7). To be more accurate, they deliberately blur the boundaries between in-game and out-of-game experiences and elements of the plotline may be provided to the players in almost any form (Gosney, 2005: p. 2).

Nevertheless, first and foremost, ARGs have primarily been designed as storytelling vehicles (Martin et al., 2006), combining interactivity with immersion. One way to capitalize on a narrative in an ARG is to reveal parts of it gradually as a reward for achieving specific goals from students (Bopp, 2008).

1.1. ARGs in Education: A Literature Review

ARGs occupy five distinct areas as following1: Promotional games, grassroots games, productized or Commercial, singe-player games and training or educational games.

Their potential as educational strategy has only recently been discovered, still scarcely. In the early stages, ARGs’ applications were mainly targeted at higher education, but from 2010 onwards they appear at the other educational levels too.


In primary and secondary education there have been some early initiatives such as HARP (2006), Ecomuve (2009) and Mentira (2009). These ARGs were designed by experts from top universities, like Harvard University, The University of Wisconsin, MIT and The University of New Mexico. In Europe, the EMAPPS (2005), funded by the Sixth Framework Program, was designed to offer enriched learning opportunities to 9 - 12-year-olds in their curriculum and beyond (Davies et al., 2006).

A literature review article, which aimed to catalog applied ARGs in education during the 2009-2016 period, through the search for: “gamification”, “Alternate Reality Game” and “ARG in Education” on the ProQuest platform (Xiao et al., 2016), came up with the following findings: three ARGs that aimed at freshmen’s orientation and induction (Viola quest, Who’s Herring Hale, C’s Day and FYC’s
the Day), two that aimed to strengthen the players’ motivation to learn foreign languages and foster intercultural awareness (Tower of Babel, Global village playground), two about emergency response training (AtomicOrchid, Disaster Experience Game), one about physical education (The Skeleton Chase), one about science education (STEM ARG), and one about sexual education (the Source). Among the nine ARGs that were located, only one was being addressed to secondary education students. This was the Tower of Babel, which focused on secondary school students so as to motivate them to learn a modern foreign language (Connolly et al., 2011).

Again, in other cases students are becoming co-designers of the games, exploiting and enriching their digital literacy (Colvert, 2009) or individual teacher take initiatives—which are rare exceptions-, such as the case of John Fallon who turned the Odyssey into an ARG called: Dolus: Finding the Journal of Odysseus (Darvasi, 2014).

1.2. Setting the Theoretical Background of Our Project

Our project examines how an ARG can be compatible with literary curricular design and the delivery mechanics of the literature lesson. Even more, how an ARG can enable and foster collaborative learning and 21st-century literacy practices.

Key theories, having been considered as the substructure of our project were: affinity spaces, transformational play, multiliteracies and transfictionality (Ryan, 2008).

Our overarching goal had been to create a learning environment for students, resembling an affinity space. Such environments according to the literature may be physical, virtual, or blended spaces, where people interact around a common interest or activity (Gee, 2017). They offer multiple interest-driven trajectories and opportunities to learn with others, becoming an authentic participant (Squire, 2011).

The venture could also be placed within the frame of transformational play, since we designed the ARG for educational purposes. To achieve transformational impact through play one has to weave together particular design threads to form what it is referred to as substantive, immersive, impactive, and reflexive participation (Barab et al., 2010).

The transformation of a literary text into an ARG is also justified by the theory of multiliteracies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2010) and the concept of transfictionality (Ryan, 2008). According to multiliteracies, the available design of a literary text was appropriated and was given a new representational form, in order to examine if this act of designing would affect the persons involved (redesigned). Besides, transfictionality examines and legitimizes changes in an original narrative, as parts of it migrate to other texts of the same medium or of other mediums or even become part of new narratives. According to Ryan’s (2008) categorization, who distinguishes four kinds of transfictional transformations (expansions, modifications, transpositions, and citations), ours has been a trans-
Having taken into account that one of the most effective ways of transmitting information and learning is through narratives, which are valuable support for learning, providing a sense of experience, organizing knowledge, raising problem-solving skills and increasing motivation (Hodhod et al., 2011), we chose to use this kind of hybrid narrative to promote a wide range of learning goals. The ARGs’ major advantage is that they combine narrative with interactivity. Narrative, on the one hand, frames the abstract knowledge and connects it with life (Kapp, 2012) and the interactivity, on the other, allows the player to actively participate in the construction of the story, stimulates curiosity and imagination, and leads to “stealth” learning (Hodhod et al., 2011). Interactive narratives indirectly and subtly channel cognitive content as students are absorbed in story and play (Padilla-Zea et al., 2014).

2. A Concise Description of the Young Adult Novel: Leros’ Code by K. Stoforos and the Reasons Why It was Chosen

The young adult novel Leros’ code (Figure 1) is a mystery-solving, adventure story which takes place on the Greek island, Leros. A group of four kids between 4 and 13 years old travel by boat for summer holidays to Leros island in the Aegean sea. A couple, Odysseus and Marina, accompany their kids Katerina and Zoe and their friends, Antigoni and Dimitris. In Leros, they will meet their grandfather (Odysseus’ father), Lefteris and the grandma Zoi, who are already hosting their other grandchildren Zenovia and Yiannis. On the same boat and with the same destination, two other boys, Jason and Savvas travel also, accompanied by their aunt Kaliopa, who happens to be an old friend and ex-girlfriend of Odysseus. The kids will get to know each other and become one big company. A “suspicious” conversation on the boat which Jason happened to overhear, triggers the story. The kids are entangled in unexpected adventures during their holidays which culminate on the 15th of August, the great Christian holiday of the Assumption.
The “Leros’ Code”, which the kids try to locate and protect, is a manuscript describing the history and the customs of the island of Leros until the 19th century, but they find out that part of it had been cut off by someone who knew the value of it long ago and had disappeared. At the same time the presence of the “Black Swan” in Leros the luxurious yacht of the powerful businessman Kurt Winder, complicates the situation.

As the thread of the story unfolds, significant elements from the geography and the history of the island and of Greece in general, with focus on the period of Italian occupation of the Dodecanese, are assimilated by the narrative. The encyclopedic elements are harmoniously integrated within the flow of the events, so that not only they are not being obtrusive, but they also contribute to the rising of the action.

Even more, through the adventure the readers are faced inadvertently with some key social or historical issues of major importance, which engage them emotionally and involve them mentally, such as the refugee issue, the distortion of truth by mass media, the way power controls and manipulates politicians, the methods used by the totalitarian regimes in modern Greek history in order to exterminate their political opponents, etc.

All the above characteristics of the specific narrative, the mystery-solving, the full of twists and subversions plot, the convincing characters, whom the students could identify with, the familiar settings (South Aegean Sea, Dodecanese) as well as the encyclopedic quality of the story combined with references to social issues that encourage reflection upon, contributed to the choice of the book to be used as the raw material of an ARG, which would be implemented in the context of a semi-formal educational process.

Thus the redesigned literary text into an ARG would at the same time be a source of reflection and a means of introducing students with key social and historical themes, not only at an informative but also at a critical-interpretive level. This would become feasible by intertwining missions and puzzles for students to perform or resolve, during the narrative process.

The implementation took place in the city of Rhodes, namely in two schools of Secondary Education (2nd High School and 1st Upper High School). The 68 students, who participated, were divided into two groups (one per school). It lasted 6.5 months from November to May, outside the school holiday season.

2.1. Goals of the Project

From the general aims of the literature curriculum², the main ones, being served through the proposed approach are: cultural competence, communicative ability, emotional development, enrichment of the personal experience and sensitivity of students, cultivation of a critical position on basic issues of individual and social life, cultivation of responsible attitudes and beliefs, experiential participation, imagination development, language improvement, understanding of cer-

tain historical conditions and sensitization and development of a positive perception and attitude about modern multicultural and multiethnic society.

Moreover, since a major goal of literature curriculum and probably the greatest challenge of the teaching of literature is to foster a positive attitude towards literature, the transformation of a young adult novel into an ARG aspired to create favorable conditions for participation and involvement in the reading process for as many students as possible—and particularly for the reluctant ones—ultimately enhancing their reading for pleasure attitude. As it is pointed out in the curriculum: “The teacher’s care is to avoid the monotony of the way of processing and to prefer a varied methodology through which to attract the student and engender the positive response of as many different readers as possible”.

As the literary text is transformed into a radically different genre and transferred mostly to digital environments, an additional kind of goals, associated with these environments, was set. To be more specific, the project aimed at improving students’ technological literacy (visual, informative, digital, web). This would be pursued through challenges and activities that foster the acquisition or the development of relevant skills in the above fields. e.g. students would be asked to observe images, edit and interpret them, search for information on the internet, compare sources and evaluate them, use applications to decipher messages, create digital artifacts in various web 02 environments or mobile apps, get accustomed to google maps, use Internet services to communicate and collaborate, etc.

In addition, the goals of the unified metaliteracies framework (Bonsignore et al., 2012) would be pursued too, according to which the participants should be able to: gather material and evaluate it, analyze, synthesize and reflect upon it, organize, solve problems and experiment, be creative, respect their partners, and collaborate with each other (according to the axes: gather, make sense, manage, solve, create, respect, collaborate). The UMF supports the notion that well-designed games engage students in “productive literacies” (Squire, 2011: p. 168).

2.2. Resistances, Limitations and Difficulties

One fundamental issue raised out of the particular circumstances of our ARG’s creation. Since this ARG would not rely on an original concept but it would be the transformation of a pre-existing literary material—of the novel: Leros’ Code—redesigning should take not violate the basic narrative principles of the original text, the characters, the space-time settings, and its value system. On the other hand, specific narrative components (extensive descriptions, retrospections, detailed historical data, and even the very exact sequence of events) should undergo modifications, or even be partly sacrificed to achieve a well-knit story to unfold within a reasonable time. However, the result should refer to the original text without any significant alterations or distortions.

Secondly, it is well-known that ARGs are based on the philosophy of This is not a game (TINAG) (McGonigal, 2003b). This means that they require the temporary suspense of disbelief of the players, or—better say—the players’ per-
form of belief (McGonigal, 2003a) in the events as real facts. It is vital that the boundaries between reality and fiction are blurred and that players are not certain if the narrative inhabits the real world or the world of the fictional story. One of the most problematic designing ideals is the desire to create a complete 360° illusion of the game world (Koljonen, 2007; Waern et al., 2009), taken into account the Pinocchio effect (McGonigal, 2003b) which expresses the desire of the players to be absorbed by the game world as if it were real.

However, as this ARG was designed to take place in an educational context—an extracurricular activity program—the above fundamental requirement for its success was by definition abolished. The mere fact that it was addressed to students within a predetermined space and time frame, despite its playfulness and innovative character, undermined the desired illusion and belief performance and it was conceived as a supervised educational activity. This deprived the project of a significant part of the fascination about the unknown and the charm of the real mystery.

ARGs usually start with an element that appears supposedly random in some media and acts as a lure. In the most successful games, the participants had for a long time the impression that they were after a real mystery. In our case, students’ participation necessarily required their recruiting, through a top-down process, (from the teacher to the students) which made the educational dimension of the project even more transparent.

Hence, another fundamental requirement of the ARGs could not be fulfilled, which was the creation of a “rabbit hole”. This terminology refers to the first website, the original way of communication, or the puzzle from which an ARGs originates, and where Alice’s entry from the rabbit hole marks the beginning of the adventure (Tuten, 2008).

Moreover, as students’ recruitment took place in the school environment, a major problem related to the interpretative frame of the educational environment arose. The frames are mental patterns through which the individual approaches social situations (Goffman, 1974). These are commonly accepted, they constitute social constructions and control one’s expectations in specific circumstances.

Framework analysis has been applied to the game research field and it has been shown that established perceptions of games collide along the way with other emerging individual notions (Consalvo, 2009; Glas et al., 2011), but in the case under discussion, we had to face the existing notions of the students concerning a number of things involved.

The format of an ARG is difficult to comprehend by players entering the process with a previous gaming experience in other gaming forms and, concrete perceptions about what a game means and about what a narrative consists of (Kim et al., 2009). Even more strongly biased is the concept of learning itself and its appropriate processes. The previous familiarization of the players with self-contained
experiences within a single medium, like electronic games or conventional narratives through a book or a movie, where information is transmitted top-down is an obstacle to understanding this new form that combines both of the above ingredients and forces them to contradict with their pre-existing views.

Besides, players come to play with different levels of interest (Azevedo, 2013) different skills (Jenkins et al., 2009) and different relationships with the field of games (Calabrese et al., 2013). This becomes tangible in students’ suspicion or even their refusal to participate since the lack of familiarity or their total lack of information about this type of games strengthens their reticence against the unknown. Consequently, they express reluctance to try new things that could prove themselves a slippery ground for their prestige among the school community. The young adults are not comfortable with the “trial and error” principle of the ambiguous play. Fear of failure, lack of confidence in their skills and ignorance are the most serious obstacles to securing participation.

Even more, the given interpretive frame that implies educational activities as boring, games as non-reliable or approved educational activities, and literature as a teaching subject served better by the close reading approach, constitute an almost impermeable wall of denial and distancing, which was the major problem. This proves that literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships, and some literacies become more dominant, visible and influential than others (Barton & Hamilton, 1998: p. 7).

So, not only the community had been shaped under the supervision and guidance of the designer and it was not self-regulated, but also the size of the community could not change decisively during the implementation, meaning that not many new players were attracted into the game, since it was considered as an entrenched members-only activity, although we did our best to establish a strong community (McGonigal, 2007).

Setting the rules of the game and the time limits of submitting the answers to a riddle or the responses to a mission, was an additive crux of the project. Although we defined the rules of the individual and group participation from the beginning, we were obliged to modify them from time to time, according to the difficulty of the mission and the players’ readiness to respond, applying more flexible regulations.

Secondary issues were the monitoring and recording of the players’ progress, as well as observing the time limits of each puzzle.

An additional point was the friction between group collectivity and individual distinction. Since it is expressly mentioned in the relative literature that individual recognition constitutes a strong motivation for participation, we added a competitive dimension in the game, trying not to undermine the collaborative side of it. So, we set badges for both individual and collective successful contributions to the game.

A last but not least issue was the low-level technological literacy of the students, which made it necessary to organize some preliminary meetings to fami-
liarize the players with specific tools and digital environments, a fact that diminished players’ anticipation.

2.3. Our Response to the Transformational Design Prerequisites

To design our ARG we took into account the findings of relative researches and tried to respond to different kinds of prerequisites.

To the key-design questions, regarding narrative, gameplay, learning and assessment, as set by Pellicone et al. (2017), we did not manage to deal with the first, which demands to engender the TINAG attitude, as already said.

- To the question: “How do we help novice ARG players envision gameplay across multiple platforms and modalities”, we tried to answer by organizing preliminary meetings for the students to practice and familiarize with various platforms and tools.

- To the question: “How do we encourage co-creation of narrative, in order to deal with students’ reservedness”, we created various channels of in-play communication and aimed at the gradual deepening of students’ confidence and the strengthening of their relations, which was the decisive factor to release their creativity and become active agents of the storyworld.

- To the question: “How do we sign-post in-game and out-of-game content”, we chose a central person from the story to act as the communication channel, from whose website the orchestration of the story was taking place. He was also given the role of the players’ companion and assistant and provided them with all the necessary help.

- To the question: “How can our narrative invite inquiry and play”, we used the puzzles and the riddles as integrative parts of the narrative, which when solved revealed hidden clues of the story.

- To the question: “How do we design game mechanics in ARGs to provide guidance to a wide variety of learners” as well as to the question: “Where do the sources of direct instruction come from to effectively guide novice players”, we activated a 24/7 open communication with the puppetmaster, in order for the difficulties to be overcome discreetly and personalized.

- To the question: “What other game experiences activate learners’ underlying interest, skill development and sense of identity”, we created narrative cores with a variety of activities so as to be able to address a wide range of interests.

- To the last question: “How can we embed assessment more authentically into the interactive storyline or as an integral part of gameplay”, we embedded as an inherent part of the narrative game-like activities, a scavenger hunt, a google form, a purpose game, a playposit edited video, two polls, a flipgrid and a paddlet.

Even more, having taken into account the 5 key principles which contribute to an enjoyable ARG experience (Macvean & Riedl, 2011), and the motivational elements as mentioned by Whitton (2009) (Completion, Competition, Narrative, Puzzle-solving, Community, Creativity), we did the following:
• we kept the strong narrative structure of the book, with slight modifications,
• we gave the story a modular structure which was spread throughout the world (digital and physical),
• we took good care of creating meaningful story pieces that all played a role in the formation of the game,
• we afforded the players the opportunity to interact with the system, by emphasizing on interactivity and we composed puzzles, riddles and missions so that they could be achievable by the skill level of the participants, providing them a sense of satisfaction and self-fulfillment.
• we tried to shape an effective, collaborative community and
• we gave the players the possibility not only to collaborate but also to compete, by setting an individual as well as a collective award and by keeping a regular shared board with the results and the won badges.

Another theoretical frame we took into account was the prerequisites of the transformational play, since we designed the ARG for educational purposes. So, we had to weave together particular design threads to form what it is referred to as substantive, immersive, impactive, and reflexive participation (Barab et al., 2010).

As far as the cognitive-substantive demand was concerned, given that the learning outcomes are not limited to knowledge of content but are observed in the development of skills, literacy, interest and empowerment, we defined the contents to be assimilated by the students, concerning historical and geographical facts and we incorporated them into missions to be accomplished for the narrative to unfold. Missions were sought to include challenges that exploited a representative range of digital environments and applications with an increasing degree of difficulty to create skill scaffolding.

Concerning the goal of immersive communication, which depends heavily on the persuasiveness of characters and the fictional world, certain data were created and disseminated on the Internet in order to animate the characters and provide them true-to-life identity. Thus, profiles were created on facebook and twitter, personal blogs, or websites which formed the communication channels with the players.

Missions to the real world of the immediate surroundings of the players were also planned and tried to also be realistically feasible. Equally challenging was the activation of members of the local community to participate in the game and enliven it.

At the level of the interaction (impactive communication) of the players with the game, there were created various digital challenges, online quizzes, fill-in or crossword puzzles, multiple-choice tests, encrypted messages in a variety of codes, augmented reality missions, google maps with embedded data, encrypted messages in a variety of codes, video chat threads and polls.

At specific key points, players were allowed the opportunity to influence the flow of the story by choosing between forking paths, in a way that the result
could not overturn the original design, giving the players the illusion of power over the story, while the possibility to maneuver back to the main narrative was predicted.

Regarding the goal of reflective participation, there were opportunities for self-expression, points that allowed and supported the submission of personal views and the development of dialogue through which the possibility of negotiating assumptions and exchange arguments was provided. The players had the chance to discuss and reflect on their decisions and the effects of them in the game and in real life.

To be more specific, the narrative items were delivered in a variety of ways.

In particular, one profile was created on Facebook (Iasonas Daimonios) (Figure 2), two on Twitter (Savvas Kortesis, @KortesisSavvas and Antonis Limenikos, @limenkos), (Figure 3), four blogs: https://blogs.sch.gr/moula/ (for Antigone), https://iasonasdaimonios.wixsite.com/dimitris (for Dimitris), http://odysseuscorner.simplesite.com (for Ulysses) and https://egeomarenostro.wordpress.com (for Ameglio) (Figure 4), as well as a slidewiki https://slidewiki.org/user/katerina (for Katerina).

Figure 2. The protagonist’s Facebook page.

Figure 3. A character’s Twitter.
We also created 2 voki (with spoken avatars), assumed conversation recordings in podcasts, 3 google maps with case-related data, 3 fake newsletters (Figure 5), 2 official documents, 5 qr codes, 2 blippar applications, 1 google form, 1 scavenger hunt, 2 interactive playposit videos, 1 content video, 1 purpose game (Figure 6), 5 encrypted messages with different codes (Mors, binary, Caesar’s and Polybius’s squares, number-letter matching), a mathematical problem, a cooperative wall. For the exchange of views, we created a chat thread on flipgrid and an online poll. We also used a temporary email service (getnada) and real-world communication methods, such as emails from heroes to participants, treasure hunting in the Old Town of Rhodes (Figure 7, Figure 8), internet search to cross-check information contained in storytelling, photo search on the images menu, online automatic translation, etc.

3. Conclusion

ARGs, no matter how complicated they may be on designing level, seem to
Figure 6. A purpose game about Leros island.

Figure 7. Giovanni Ameglio's monument—Old Town.

Figure 8. Its coordinates (treasure hunt).
constitute a promising perspective in the field of education, concerning a wide range of 21st-century skills, of metaliteracies and even enhancing and improving young people’s relation to literature.

Our venture set a multilevel goal frame and was it was implemented on secondary school students in Rhodes, Greece. Key theories, having been considered as the substructure of the project were: affinity spaces, transformational play, multiliteracies and transfictionality. Having followed the relative literature’s findings, we tried to create an ARG for educational purposes, balancing between learning and fun.

Its implementation in an extra-curricular time-zone, as a supervised and coordinated by a teacher activity, deprived it at the beginning of a significant, potential part of the fascination about the unknown and the charm of participating in a real mystery. The main resistances came out of the educational frame, but soon the principal embarrassment and objections were suspended.

As the implementation of the ARG is in progress and we have not reached the point of the evaluation of the activity, through questionnaires, evidence (statistically active participation, community activation, sites’ traffic, online quizzes) and interviews, it still remains to be examined whether the venture has achieved its goals in order to reflect upon the possibilities of further exploiting the concept of transforming literary texts to ARGs and suggesting possible improvements.

**Conflicts of Interest**

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

**References**


Moula, E., & Malafantis, K. (2018). Children’s and Young Adult Literature: From Isolation to Networking: The Internet as a Theme and as a Dynamic in the Young Adult Novel in Greece. *Pedagogiki Epitheorisi, 35*, 92-107. (In Greek)


https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320395673

Advances in Literary Study (ALS) is an open access journal. The goal of this journal is to provide a platform for researchers and practitioners all over the world to promote, share, and discuss various new issues and developments in all areas of Literary Study.

Subject Coverage

All manuscripts must be prepared in English, and are subject to a rigorous peer-review process. Accepted papers will immediately appear online followed by printed in hard copy. The areas covered by Advances in Literary Study (ALS) include but are not limited to the following fields:

- Aesthetics of Literature and Art
- African Literature
- American Literature
- Blog Literature
- Canadian Literature
- Caribbean Literature
- Chinese Literature
- Communication Skills
- Comparative Literature
- Difference between Web and Traitional Literature
- Eastern European Literature
- English Language Teaching
- English Literature
- Film and Literature
- French Literature
- German Literature
- Greek and Roman Literature
- Irish Literature
- Italian Literature
- Jewish Literature
- Latin American Literature
- Literary Criticism
- Literary Theory
- Literary and Gender Studies
- Mythology
- Network Works Research
- Nordic Literature
- Oceania Literature
- Oriental Literature
- Philosophy
- Photography and Literature
- Russian Literature
- Science Fiction Literature
- South Asian Literature
- Spanish Literature
- Theatre
- Theories and Rhetoric of Web Literature
- Third World Literature
- Web Culture and Literature
- World History of Literature

We are also interested in: 1) Short reports—2-5 page papers where an author can either present an idea with theoretical background but has not yet completed the research needed for a complete paper or preliminary data; 2) Book reviews—Comments and critiques.

Website and E-mail

https://www.scirp.org/journal/als     E-mail: als@scirp.org
What is SCIRP?
Scientific Research Publishing (SCIRP) is one of the largest Open Access journal publishers. It is currently publishing more than 200 open access, online, peer-reviewed journals covering a wide range of academic disciplines. SCIRP serves the worldwide academic communities and contributes to the progress and application of science with its publication.

What is Open Access?
All original research papers published by SCIRP are made freely and permanently accessible online immediately upon publication. To be able to provide open access journals, SCIRP defrays operation costs from authors and subscription charges only for its printed version. Open access publishing allows an immediate, worldwide, barrier-free, open access to the full text of research papers, which is in the best interests of the scientific community.

- High visibility for maximum global exposure with open access publishing model
- Rigorous peer review of research papers
- Prompt faster publication with less cost
- Guaranteed targeted, multidisciplinary audience

Website: https://www.scirp.org
Subscription: sub@scirp.org
Advertisement: service@scirp.org