

## ARTS & HUMANITIES

The Oblique in Salma  
Ferraz's *The Walking  
Atheist*

Dao De Jing: Opposition  
and Ecofeminism

Narrator Conduct in Scliar's  
*Manual Da Paixão*

Headcount-Based Aid and  
Population Growth

Discovering Thoughts, Inventing Future

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# PREFACE

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The Global Journal of Human-Social Science (GJHSS) is pleased to present this issue, bringing together a curated collection of high-quality research papers that explore diverse dimensions of human society, culture, and the social world.

This issue features research spanning topics including arts & humanities, sociology, history, anthropology, economics, political science, linguistics, education, and interdisciplinary social inquiry. Each paper has undergone a rigorous double-blind peer-review process to ensure scholarly rigor and originality.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the authors for entrusting their research with us, to the reviewers for their thorough and constructive evaluations, and to our readers for their continued engagement with the academic discourse.

We hope that the research presented herein inspires further inquiry and contributes meaningfully to the advancement of knowledge in the human and social sciences.

**The Chief Editor**  
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## Não Há Saúde Nem Céu Para Os Oblíquos N'O Ateu Ambulante

There is neither health nor heaven for the oblique in The walking atheist

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### Abstract

In the literary trajectory of the writer Salma Ferraz, the short story “O ateu ambulante”, belonging to the book of the same name, emblemizes the talent and some of the intertextual sources that compose the artistic work of the author in her other works. In this sense, this text intends to demonstrate how the ferrazian artistic construction dialogues with texts by José Saramago, Augusto dos Anjos, Raul Seixas and the Bible.

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# Não Há Saúde Nem Céu Para Os Oblíquos N'O Ateu Ambulante

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## Abstract

Na trajetória literária da escritora Salma Ferraz, o conto "O ateu ambulante", pertencente ao livro homônimo, emblematiza o talento e algumas das fontes intertextuais que compõem o fazer artístico da autora em suas demais obras. Nesse sentido, neste texto se pretende demonstrar como a construção artística ferraziana dialoga com textos de José Saramago, de Augusto dos Anjos, de Raul Seixas e da Bíblia.

**Keywords:** *intertextualidade, Salma Ferraz*

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## 1. Introdução

Na trajetória literária da escritora Salma Ferraz, o conto "O ateu ambulante" pertencente ao livro *O Ateu Ambulante* (2011) emblematiza o talento e algumas das fontes intertextuais que compõem o fazer artístico da autora em suas demais obras, como se nota em *A ceia dos mortos* (2007). Argumenta-se que a intertextualidade em *O ateu ambulante* ultrapassa a mera referência cultural, constituindo um mecanismo de construção de uma identidade contracultural que dialoga criticamente com o imaginário cristão, com a tradição literária e com a cultura de massa. De acordo com Tania Carvalhal, em 1966, a fim de caracterizar a produtividade textual a partir do conceito de dialogismo de Mikhail Bakhtin – trouxe novo vigor aos Estudos Comparados, "libertando-os" da rigidez do campo de atuação prescrito pelas noções de fontes e influências. Disso decorre que a propensão para a individualização da obra passa a ser suplantada, uma vez que "a intertextualidade, ao designar os sistemas impessoais de interação textual, coletiviza a obra". A escrita literária passa a ser vista como dotada de uma "sociabilidade": "a individualidade se afirma no cruzamento de escritas anteriores." Ao reverter a compreensão das tradicionais noções de fontes e influências, a intertextualidade tornou-se um conceito indispensável para os estudos de Literatura Comparada, modificando as leituras dos modos de apropriação, das absorções e das transformações textuais e sublinhando "a natureza criativa do processo de produção textual" (CARVALHAL, 1996, p. 13).

Assim, os intertextos analisados convergem para a elaboração de uma figura que funciona como uma espécie de contraponto profano à narrativa cristã tradicional. Cabe esclarecer que a autora é crítica literária com diversos livros publicados. Como analisaremos neste artigo, a autora consegue transitar entre o mundo de suas leituras críticas, utilizando-as para sua composição ficcional.<sup>1</sup> A este respeito, estabelece-se uma importante ressalva metodológica sobre os limites de tal operação interpretativa: o objetivo não é utilizar a produção teórica da escritora como uma chave de leitura definitiva ou uma autoridade intencional para decifrar sua própria obra de ficção. Pelo contrário, mobiliza-se sua produção crítica como um documento de época relevante para compreender os repertórios intelectuais que circulam e nutrem sua escrita ficcional. Desse modo, a análise do conto não se subordina exclusivamente às formulações críticas da autora, sustentando-se de forma autônoma por meio do escrutínio direto do tecido textual. Crítica especialista em José Saramago, a autora em sua obra ficcional, por diversas vezes, dialoga com o Nobel de Literatura.

<sup>1</sup> Como crítica literária, a autora publicou: *Desmistificando a redação (co-autoria)*. Florianópolis: Edufsc, 1997; *Ensaio: Fernando Pessoa, Eça e Saramago*. São Paulo: Cone Sul, 1998; *O jeitinho Brasileiro de Sherlock Holmes*. Blumenau: Edifurb, 1998; *O rei Leão e a Memória do Mundo*. Blumenau: Edifurb, 1998; *A sagrada luxúria de criar*. Porto Alegre: Edipuc, 1999; *O quinto evangelista*. Brasília: UNB, 1999; *Na Terceira Margem da História*. Blumenau: Edifurb, 1999; *Dicionário Machista*. Londrina: Campanário, 2002; *As Faces de Deus na Obra de um Ateu Juiz de Fora*. UFJF, 2004; *No princípio era Deus e Ele se fez Poesia*. Rio Branco: Edufac, 2007; *Deuses em poética*. João Pessoa: UFPB, 2009; *Maria Madalena: A mulher que amor o amor* (Eduem, 2011); *O Polên do Divino* (Edifurb, 2011); *Dicionário de personagens da obra de José Saramago* (Edifurb, 2011).

No referido conto, o qual nomeia a coletânea de narrativas ferrazianas, a intertextualidade com a obra do escritor português José Saramago é latente e concebe à narrativa um efeito ora humorístico ora cinematográfico. Se, ao analisar o conto saramaguiano “Cadeira”, Horácio Costa pontua que o constante uso de expressões latinas enfatiza “o carácter paródico, irônico ou já abertamente humorístico do texto”,<sup>2</sup> na narrativa ferraziana esse efeito também pode ser sentido e apreciado, quando do tenso diálogo entre o presbítero protestante e o ateu ambulante. Ei-lo, num excerto:

\_ Meu filho, arrepende-te dos teus pecados porque tua hora é chegada.  
\_ *Ultram Equinoctialem non peccare.*  
\_ Como não existe pecado? Conheces latim?  
\_ Muito mais que a sua vã filosofia possa prever. [...]  
\_ Blasfêmia. Venha a nós o teu reino. Seja feita a tua vontade...  
\_ Horácio, me socorra: *carpe diem, quam minimum credula postero.* Quando vier a primavera, se eu já estiver morto, as flores florirão da mesma maneira... A realidade não precisa de mim. (FERRAZ, 2011, p. 13, 15, itálico da autora, negrito nosso)

Além de expor parte do conflito que perpassa o conto,<sup>3</sup> o diálogo transposto acima serve de mote para observarmos que o enredo do conto de Saramago se aproxima do conto de Salma Ferraz, no que tange ao fato de que em ambos a situação-problema que desenlaça a trama está relacionada a uma enfermidade da personagem. Considerando-se a queda de Salazar em “Cadeira” e a doença de Ricardo, nota-se que em ambos os casos, a fragilidade física da personagem desencadeia um processo de desestabilização simbólica: em Saramago, a queda de Salazar representa a ruína de uma figura de poder; em Ferraz, a enfermidade de Ricardo desencadeia um confronto entre visões antagônicas de mundo, funcionando como elemento estruturador da narrativa. Embora as duas narrativas operem em registros temáticos distintos – a ruína de um regime ditatorial no caso saramaguiano e um questionamento teológico-existencial no conto ferraziano –, a analogia da fragilidade corporal como vetor de ruptura simbólica revela-se profícua para comparar como ambos os autores mobilizam a decadência física como um motor de desconstrução ideológica. Assim, no conto “Cadeira”, o já octogenário ditador português António de Oliveira Salazar cai de uma cadeira cujo madeirame estava carcomido por um caruncho, vindo a bater a cabeça no chão e ter uma hemorragia cerebral, o que o impossibilitou de continuar no poder. Quanto ao conto ferraziano, a enfermidade do ateu ambulante é apresentada logo no segundo parágrafo e, após essa informação, a narrativa se desenvolve segundo os ditames de uma linguagem de cunho cinematográfico. No segundo parágrafo, lê-se:

31 de março de 1996, 6 horas, Hospital Cajuru, Curitiba, Paraná. Um paciente terminal, de nome Ricardo, 48 anos, na UTI, com quadro de **encefalopatia hepática**, está sendo forçado a dialogar com um presbítero protestante de qualquer igreja, de qualquer nome, que traz a bíblia aberta nas palmas das mãos. (FERRAZ, 2011, p.13, negrito nosso)

No fragmento supracitado, a indicação da doença da personagem principal<sup>4</sup> vem acompanhada da indicação da data, do horário e da localização de onde ocorrem as ações e os diálogos. Esse recurso, perpetuado mais sete vezes ao longo da narrativa, concorre para a caracterização de uma linguagem de cunho cinematográfico, uma vez que os acontecimentos relacionados aos últimos momentos da vida do ateu ambulante até o seu “sepultamento”/despedida nada convencional totalizam vinte horas, as quais abarcam o deslocamento da narradora a uma pensão, a uma igreja protestante, a um bar e a uma praia. Os deslocamentos da narradora são sempre sinalizados por uma multiplicidade de diálogos, pausas para reminiscências e mudanças bruscas de ambientes, verdadeiros “cortes”, *flash-backs* sucessivos, à semelhança do que assinala o estudioso Horácio Costa quanto ao conto saramaguiano:

Em “Cadeira”, a referência ao discurso cinematográfico [...] refere-se mesmo à sua montagem, que algo tem de linguagem fragmentada, multiplicante, e de narração difusa (isto é, de narração constantemente interrompida pelo recurso a elementos heteróclitos), dos *video-clips* actuais.

Se no conto de Saramago há referências explícitas a antigas personagens<sup>5</sup> do cinema, como Tom Mix, Buck Jones e Charles Chaplin, no conto da escritora Salma Ferraz o mesmo recurso é utilizado, sendo que a personagem do cinema citada é El Cid, protagonista do aclamado filme homônimo.<sup>6</sup> Portanto, as referências ao discurso cinematográfico se estendem também a alguns dos filmes clássicos do cinema, o que pode ser notado, por exemplo, na sequência narrativa em que o corpo do ateu – há algum tempo falecido – é roubado da igreja protestante e levado pelos seus amigos motoqueiros para uma homenagem. Nessa homenagem, o morto é conduzido para um bar onde – como se ainda estivesse vivo – celebrasse a vida como sempre fazia: “com músicas de Raul Seixas,

<sup>4</sup>Na sequência do conto, as demais indicações da data, do horário e da localização de onde ocorrem as ações e os diálogos das personagens são as seguintes: “31 de março de 1996, Florianópolis, 10:00 horas. Praia do Campeche” (p. 17), “31 de março de 1996, Curitiba, Aeroporto Afonso Pena, 13: 30 horas” (p. 18), “31 de março de 1996, Curitiba, 14: 30 h, numa pensão qualquer da Boca do Lixo da Mateus Leme, próximo à antiga Rodoviária” (p. 21), “31 de março de 1996, Curitiba, 16: 30 h, igreja protestante, bairro Portão” (p. 27), “31 de março de 1996, 18:00 h, Bar do Trevo, Vila Nossa Senhora da Luz dos Pinhais” (p. 31), “01 de Abril de 1996. Meia-noite e meia, posto policial...” (p. 36), “1º de abril, duas horas da madrugada. Praia de Guaratuba, Morro do Cristo” (p. 36).

<sup>5</sup>COSTA, Horácio. A reconquista da prosa: *Manual de pintura e caligrafia e Objecto quase*, p. 325.

<sup>6</sup>Referimo-nos ao seguinte diálogo do conto ferraziano: “\_ Quem dera, cara, Fernando Pessoa. Tem certeza que ele [o ateu, já defunto] não vai cair da moto? \_ Absoluta... Vi isto num filme. \_ Qual? \_ *El Cid*. \_ Mas *El Cid* estava amarrado a um cavalo. \_ Moto e cavalo, dá tudo na mesma. A barra tá limpa. Você não bebe?” FERRAZ, Salma. *O ateu ambulante*, p. 35, (negrito nosso). “El Cid” é um filme italo-estadunidense de 1961, do gênero drama histórico e épico. O filme apresenta a saga do lendário herói espanhol El Cid (Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar), que se destacou nas lutas contra os mouros no século XI. Dirigido por Anthony Mann, e protagonizado por Charlton Heston e Sophia Loren, nos respectivos papéis de El Cid e Jimena, o referido filme recebeu o prêmio “Mérito Especial” no Globo de Ouro (1962) e foi indicado ao Oscar (1962) nas categorias de melhor direção de arte, melhor trilha sonora e melhor canção. El Cid (filme). Disponível em: <[http://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/El\\_Cid\\_\(filme\)](http://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Cid_(filme))>. Acesso em: 11 set. 2011.

<sup>2</sup>COSTA, Horácio. A reconquista da prosa: *Manual de pintura e caligrafia e Objecto quase*, p. 325. Observamos que o texto “Cadeira” é o primeiro dos seis contos que compõem a coletânea *Objecto quase*, de José Saramago.

<sup>3</sup>Salientamos que, no conto ferraziano, o efeito humorístico surge no embate das ideias completamente opostas entre o ateu e o religioso, pois o ateu rebate os conselhos de arrependimento do presbítero declamando citações em latim. No texto de Saramago o humor e a ironia residem na digressão que acompanha a queda do ditador Salazar de uma cadeira apodrecida, uma vez que essa longa digressão é recheada de expressões latinas, tais como “O perpetuum mobile”, “in limine”, “de gustibus et coloribus non disputandum”. SARAMAGO, José. *Cadeira*, p. 11-29.

muita cerveja, pinga pura, frango com farofa”.<sup>7</sup> Como se ainda pertencesse ao reino dos vivos, Ricardo — o ateu — é trajado com suas “luvas pretas de couro” e com seu casaco de couro e passeia na garupa de uma moto Harley Davidson rumo à descida da Serra do Mar, como ele sempre apreciou. Essa sequência parece dialogar claramente com o filme “Um morto muito louco” (1989), considerado por muitos como um clássico do gênero comédia. Nesse contexto, a incorporação de um modelo narrativo associado à comédia contribui para a carnavalização da morte e para a profanação dos rituais cristãos presentes no conto, aproximando-se de procedimentos que podem ser relacionados ao conceito bakhtiniano de rebaixamento do sagrado.

No filme “Um morto muito louco”, o corpo de um homem de negócios assassinado é manipulado por seus funcionários para fingir que ele continua vivo, dando origem a uma série de situações cômicas e absurdas que dessacralizam o tabu do cadáver. Semelhantemente, no conto de Salma Ferraz, a apropriação do corpo de Ricardo por seus amigos motoqueiros transpõe essa mesma lógica cômica e grotesca para o contexto do velório. Assim, a referência cinematográfica serve como um repertório estético para operar a carnavalização da morte, substituindo o pesar fúnebre tradicional pela celebração da vida em tom de deboche e irreverência. Diante dessa constatação, observamos que no conto ferraziano tanto a remissão a um filme épico-dramático — “El Cid” — como a um filme do gênero comédia — “Um morto muito louco” — contribuem para a narradora elevar seu tio, o ateu ambulante, ao *status* de um ícone na eternidade, como lê-se neste excerto:

Lennon-Seixas não morreu, não morrerá jamais, ocultou-se atrás de seus óculos famosos, ausentou-se um pouquinho. Foi dar uma voltinha de moto por aí, carregando o assustado e alado *Thánatos* na garupa. Volta a qualquer hora... Ou melhor, o Falcão fênix não voltará, apenas chegará ao começo de tudo, já que lá estão os iniciados. (FERRAZ, 2011, p. 38-39)

Nota-se, no fragmento acima, a referência a dois grandes nomes do rock, uma vez que, conforme menciona a narradora, o ateu ambulante “era a cara do [John] Lennon, mas adorava mesmo era o do cavanhaque, Raul Seixas”, razão pela qual numa semana Ricardo usava os óculos “de aro redondo como o inglês” e na outra semana “[usava os óculos] escuros como nosso maluques”. (FERRAZ, 2011, p. 32-33). Ao longo do conto, por diversas vezes, a narradora entremeia partes de letras de músicas nacionais com o enredo propriamente dito. É interessante pontuar que o entremear das letras de canções no conto ferraziano parece dialogar com o texto “Cadeira” de Saramago, no sentido de que o conto saramaguiano é constituído por uma contínua digressão, a qual interrompe a cada momento a queda propriamente dita do ditador Salazar da cadeira; no conto ferraziano, as frases que compõem a oração do Pai Nosso que o presbítero empreende são constantemente interrompidas pelas letras de canções entoadas pelo ateu, constituindo numa espécie de digressão *a la Saramago*. No tocante a esse recurso no conto ferraziano, pensamos que as letras das músicas não podem ser dissociadas do enredo, pois elas representam tanto a ideologia de Ricardo como a de seus amigos motoqueiros quando dialogam entre si ou com a narradora. No início do conto, o ateu rebate as diversas citações bíblicas do presbítero se valendo de fragmentos das letras das canções mais populares de Raul Seixas. Antes mesmo que haja qualquer ato narrativo no conto, o primeiro parágrafo expõe uma transcrição consideravelmente

extensa de uma das letras do roqueiro brasileiro Raul Seixas, se considerarmos o espaço destinado às citações bíblicas:

*Enquanto você se esforça pra ser um sujeito normal e fazer tudo igual, eu do meu lado aprendendo a ser louco, maluco total, na loucura real controlando a minha maluquez, misturada com minha lucidez. Vou ficaraaar, ficar com certeza maluco beleza... Eu vou ficarraaar...* (FERRAZ, 2011, p. 13, itálico da autora)

Além de Raul Seixas, outros músicos brasileiros são mencionados no conto. É o caso dos Novos Baianos, dos artistas da Jovem Guarda e de Roberto Carlos, cuja música “É preciso saber viver” é tocada durante o velório no templo cristão, como forma de homenagem da narradora-sobrinha ao tio ateu. A paixão de Ricardo pela música nacional também pode ser sentida quando, ainda agonizando no hospital, contestou a oração do presbítero com um verso da música do Rei Roberto Carlos, a saber, “Quero que vá tudo pro inferno”, e cantou estes versos da canção de Caetano Veloso: “Debaixo dos caracóis dos meus cabelos uma história pra contar de um mundo tão distante...”. Quanto às referências musicais estrangeiras citadas no conto, estas são: Beatles, Rolling Stones, John Lennon, Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, Elvis Presley, Bill Haley, Bob Dylan e Jim Morrison.<sup>8</sup> De acordo com as pesquisas de Átila Alexandre de Moraes, esses nomes estão inseridos no movimento da contracultura.

Segundo as pesquisas de Átila de Moraes, Carlos Alberto Messeder Pereira, Theodore Rodzak e Edgar Nolasco, a contracultura passa a existir como uma nova forma de contestação social, colocando o jovem como grande força do movimento. Usando um estereótipo totalmente diferente, cabeludos e de roupas coloridas fazendo menção a assuntos como a inserção de drogas alucinógenas e trazendo para a sociedade uma nova religião (o orientalismo religioso), o movimento contracultural, além de trazer um novo estilo de vida, traz também uma nova forma de pensar por parte da juventude. Os desdobramentos desse movimento — que teve seu ápice nos anos 1960 — incluíram vários aliados como a música, a imprensa alternativa, entre outros instrumentos que fizeram com que a sociedade daquela década visse uma nova forma de cultura nascer em meio a uma transição conturbada de geração. O movimento contracultural dos anos de 1960 quebrou uma série de preceitos que até aquele momento eram tidos como quase indiscutíveis por parte da sociedade conservadora da época. Uma dessas discussões foi a inserção de drogas na sociedade, a exemplo dos *hippies* que visavam à liberdade de se usar narcóticos. Para os *hippies*, a inclusão de alucinógenos na sociedade tinha um apelo ideológico, que era a busca pela liberdade individual.<sup>9</sup>

Parece-nos claro que as preferências musicais do ateu ambulante se justificam pelo fato de que Ricardo compartilhava com os músicos a ideologia da contracultura, o que pode ser comprovado nas cenas narrativas na qual a narradora tem acesso ao baú do tio já falecido e neste encontra objetos que remetiam ao movimento *hippie* e à cultura da liberdade apreçada pelos artistas da contracultura:

<sup>8</sup>FERRAZ, Salma. O ateu ambulante, p. 14, 16, 29, 32, 34. Nesse quesito, destacamos também que no conto ferraziano a personagem central se declara um “malandro *a la Buarque*”, referindo-se ao espetáculo musical “Ópera do Malandro”, de autoria de Chico Buarque.

<sup>9</sup>MORAES, Átila Alexandre de. *Viva a sociedade alternativa: Raul Seixas e as agitações político-culturais nos anos de 1970*, p. 25-26. Cf. também: NOLASCO, Edgar Cezar. *Literatura comparada*. Campo Grande, MS: Editora UFMS, 2011. p. 71-73; PEREIRA, Carlos Alberto Messeder. *O que é contracultura*. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1993. p. 11; RODZAK, Theodore. *A contracultura: reflexão sobre a sociedade tradicional e a oposição juvenil*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1972. p. 94-95.

<sup>7</sup>FERRAZ, Salma. *O ateu ambulante*, p. 33, 36.

Abri o baú; na realidade, abria o passado de Lennon-Seixas. [...] Num outro pacote de plástico encontrei uma bata de *hippie*, meio indiana, em cor lilás, com arranjos dourados. Numa caixinha velha de madeira, diversas miçangas, pulseiras, colares, seus óculos arredondados de John Lennon que ele usava quando era jovem — pois tinha uma espantosa semelhança com o cantor — e seus óculos escuros os quais usava quando queria se parecer com seu ídolo maior: Raul Seixas. Também encontrei uma velha jaqueta preta e uma calça preta de couro, surrada, dos tempos de motoqueiro, com seu apelido de guerra nas costas — *Falcão* — e o desenho do enorme pássaro. (FERRAZ, 2011, p. 22-23)

O excerto acima delinea o quanto Ricardo se identifica com as propostas do movimento da contracultura: até mesmo o desenho de sua jaqueta de motoqueiro remete à liberdade, pois o falcão é um pássaro gigante, independente, livre para voar para onde quiser, exatamente como ele, que preferiu “cuspir” em cima da fortuna da família e viver de aluguel num quatinho simples, do que aceitar viver segundo a ideologia cristã dos seus familiares. Até o fim da vida, sofrendo num leito de hospital, não aceitou mudar sua “maneira contracultural” de pensar, que incluía, abertamente, um ateísmo do qual se orgulhava.

Em sua busca pela liberdade, o ateu se aproximou da literatura, se apropriando, na Biblioteca Pública do Estado do Paraná, de livros de Shakespeare, Edgar Allan Poe, Cruz e Souza, Álvares de Azevedo e Augusto dos Anjos. Ricardo também se aproximou da filosofia, lendo obras de Arthur Schopenhauer e se declarando niilista. Além disso, pondera a narradora, o ateu guardava “de maneira especial dentro de uma pasta de plástico azul, alguns poemas de Almada Negreiros, [...] com os quais eu o havia presenteado” e também conservava “uns dez livros de literatura clássica carcomidos pelo tempo”. As personalidades históricas admiradas pelo ateu ambulante eram Átila, Nero, Herodes, Cléopatra e Martin Luther King, ao que parece por todas elas terem um temperamento firme na defesa de suas ideologias, procurando agir com coerência em relação ao que pensavam. A opção de Ricardo pelo estilo de vida pregado pela contracultura fica bastante evidenciada também na fala do ateu, quando, diante do presbítero, se apresenta, declarando abertamente sua opção pelas drogas, pelo sexo e pela liberdade individual de viver segundo suas próprias vontades, em detrimento de sua formação protestante:

Ricardo Flores, nascido em 1º de abril, mais espinhos que flores, vulgo Ricardo Lennon Seixas, [...] doente por motos [...] Ai! criado em colégio interno protestante onde aprendi o grego, um pouco de latim, a Bíblia — do Gênesis ao Apocalipse [...] música preferida — *rock’n’roll*. Comunista desde as entranhas, viciado em álcool, cocaína, *cannabis*, diversos picos em todas as veias e buracos do corpo [...] Tive a vida que quis. Gozei dezenas de mulheres, as drogas, o sexo, gozzzzzzzzeeei a viddddddd. Não me arrependo de nada, ai! ui! (FERRAZ, 2011, p. 14, 17, 22, 23, 32)

No decorrer do conto, verificamos que, devido ao fato da personagem central ser um adepto da contracultura, diversas partes do texto se constituem intertextualmente de passagens que aludem às ideologias do movimento da contracultura, como nos diálogos dos seus amigos motoqueiros, cujas falas são verdadeiras transcrições

dos manifestos contraculturais.<sup>10</sup> Ademais, a tessitura do conto “O ateu ambulante” é permeada de intertextualidade com diversos textos bíblicos, ora nas falas do presbítero, ora nas contra-argumentações do ateu, que justifica suas escolhas valendo-se também dos textos da *Bíblia*. Desse modo, destacamos que, por vezes, os textos sagrados são simplesmente citados, ao passo que em outras vezes os eventos histórico-bíblicos são apenas mencionados. Facilmente são identificados os seguintes textos bíblicos: “Entrega o teu caminho ao Senhor; confia nele, e ele tudo fará” (Salmos 37. 5), “[...] prepara-te, ó Israel, para te encontrares com o teu Deus” (Amós 4. 12), “Que é o homem mortal para que te lembres dele?” (Salmos 8. 4), o ladrão que se converteu a Cristo no momento da crucificação (Lucas 23. 39–48) e a oração do Pai Nosso (Mateus 6. 9–13).<sup>11</sup> De um modo geral, nota-se que nem o presbítero nem o ateu citam os textos sagrados modificando seus sentidos originais. O protestante cita as palavras da *Bíblia* com o objetivo de converter o ateu à salvação, enquanto o ateu seleciona passagens bíblicas para assim se justificar: “Não darei uma de bom ladrão que acreditou que um minuto de arrependimento pudesse suplantar uma vida inteira de erros”. Mais adiante, Ricardo demonstra que, apesar de conhecer os textos da *Bíblia*, pensa que

Jesus Cristo deveria ter deixado o Pai de lado, dado o calote e fugido para morrer em paz, como eu... Na cruz o amor nasceu e foi assassinado. E pior, se Deus fosse realmente bom, não teria criado o mal. O mal não existe. Estou repleto de ocos, de nãos. Não há céu para os obliques. [...] *Eu prefiro ser essa blasfêmia ambulante do que ter aquela velha opinião cristã formada sobre tudo*. Me deixe, pelo amor do nada, apenas morrer em paz, sem Deus e sem o Diabo. Essa dupla cristã é muito complicada [...] Sou a ovelha desgarrada que não quer voltar ao aprisco, não quer ser encontrada, entendeu? Quero morrer no abismo absoluto, sozinho. (FERRAZ, 2011, p. 14, 15)

Revelada nas palavras acima, a maneira de Ricardo defender seu ateísmo termina por constituir-se numa espécie de *minievangelho* nos moldes do que se constata com a obra *O Evangelho segundo Jesus Cristo*, de autoria de José Saramago. Publicado em 1991, no referido romance é narrada a história da vida de Jesus, isto de uma maneira moderna e “antirreligiosa”. O conteúdo dessa obra humaniza a vida de Jesus e sugere uma relação afetiva deste com Maria Madalena. Essa perspectiva humanizadora de Cristo distancia-se da representação tradicional inscrita nos quatro evangelhos bíblicos, pois atribui a Jesus um caráter frágil e vulnerável. Some-se a isso o fato do romance

<sup>10</sup>Referimo-nos à seguinte fala de um diálogo do conto: “ [...] Viva a **sociedade alternativa**. \_ Faça amor, não faça guerra. O nosso destino era viver sem destino algum, pois é assim que caminha a humanidade.” FERRAZ, Salma. *O ateu ambulante*, p. 32, (negrito nosso). De acordo com as pesquisas de Átila de Moraes, a “proposta de Raul Seixas sobre a construção de uma nova sociedade na década de 1970 surgiu de uma ideia vinda das obras inspiradas em Aleister Crowley [o mais famoso ocultista do século XX] e por meio da música *Sociedade Alternativa*. O cantor colocou em discussão uma utopia que trouxe para as discussões da época uma nova forma de política e alternativas para se buscar uma nova sociedade para todos. Segundo ela, cada indivíduo poderia ser livre e elaborar suas próprias leis e viver como quiser. Para a época, isso soou muito bem aos ouvidos de quem queria sair daquele sistema em que se vivia aqui no Brasil. Muitas pessoas entenderam o que essas pessoas como Raul queriam dizer e entraram na causa da oposição à ditadura militar. As comunidades alternativas e as cidades alternativas foram marcas de uma ‘cultura do desbunde’, emergidas na cultura brasileira dos anos 1970. A ideia de se viver em comunidades alternativas era uma espécie de fuga para os brasileiros, não somente pela ditadura na qual viviam, mas também em busca de realização. Mesmo com um discurso utópico, a ideia de se viver em uma sociedade alternativa era um refúgio para todos aqueles que queriam sair do sistema imposto pela sociedade.” MORAES, Átila Alexandre de. *Viva a sociedade alternativa*: Raul Seixas e as agitações político-culturais nos anos de 1970, p. 42-43.

<sup>11</sup>*BÍBLIA SAGRADA*, 1995, p. 572, 586, 894, 936, 1034.

saramaguiano deixar entrever a afeição do narrador pelo Diabo, denominado, no texto literário, de Pastor.

Desse modo, é possível perceber que o conto “O ateu ambulante” tem o seu maior intertexto na obra saramaguiana *O Evangelho segundo Jesus Cristo*, isso porque, à semelhança do narrador do romance de Saramago, Ricardo apresenta um repensar do porquê de consagradas cenas bíblicas, como quando questiona a necessidade da morte de Cristo na cruz, propondo que o Cristianismo é angustiante e que Jesus deveria ter fugido da cruz.

Nessa perspectiva, salientamos que, de acordo com os estudos de Salma Ferraz, a obra *O Evangelho segundo Jesus Cristo* se estabelece como um quinto evangelho, a saber, um evangelho profano que, por ser “escrito em nome dos homens e não mais em nome de Deus”, parodia e carnaliza os Evangelhos canônicos.

Para Ferraz, a profanação é uma característica da carnavalização — categoria proposta por Bakhtin —, e no romance saramaguiano o caráter de Deus é extremamente profano, graças a sua postura impiedosa de não liberar perdão e na obstinação em manter o mal. Nas palavras de Ferraz, “Deus é o Diabo neste evangelho [de Saramago] e o Diabo de estorco das misérias humanas é transformado no salvador do Salvador”. Em prosseguimento, a autora pondera que são três as principais heresias cometidas por Saramago no *O Evangelho segundo Jesus Cristo*: “a ‘demonização’ do personagem divino; a ‘divinização’ e ‘heroização’ do arquipersonagem Diabo e, em especial, a ‘humanização’ radical da figura de Cristo.” (FERRAZ, 2003, p. 188-195). Semelhantemente ao que ocorre no romance de Saramago, no conto ferraziano a profanação está bastante delineada, tendo seu clímax na cena em que os motoqueiros adentram o templo para roubar o corpo do falecido. Nessa cena, não somente a religião cristã é profanada, como também a liturgia do velório cristão, o templo, o presbítero e o corpo do ateu. A narradora-personagem relata os pormenores e se coloca como uma das agentes responsáveis pela sequência dos atos profanadores:

Quando acabaram de tirar a tampa do ataúde, o presbítero ficou lívido, transfigurado, juntamente com seus auxiliares. Parecia ter visto Lúcifer, ou o anjo da morte do Apocalipse [...] [A narradora-personagem] Sabia perfeitamente o que o suposto santo homem havia visto dentro do ataúde: um morto vestido de *hippie*, com uma bata indiana roxa cheia de dourado, [...] os cabelos encaracolados e rebeldes, a face pálida com todas as olheiras possíveis e os famosos óculos de Raul Seixas [...] Quando o coral, com todo entusiasmo, cantava a triste melodia para alguém que só queria descansar em paz, explodiu por todas as caixas de som do templo — aliás, som de primeira — a famosa música de Roberto Carlos [“É preciso saber viver”], interrompendo o coral, cujo som foi abafado [...] A vida era realmente uma grande ópera bufa. Alguém chegou antes do início do culto, conseguiu as chaves da sala de som, preparou tudo [...] o murmúrio era geral, a plateia não sabia o que ocorria na nave do templo. O presbítero e os parentes, parados, suspensos de vergonha e medo. Nesse momento crucial, um grupo de quatro motoqueiros vestidos de macacões pretos de couro invadiram o recinto [...] agarraram com suas mãos potentes as alças do caixão e saíram correndo, deixando todos atônitos. [...] Meu tio era ateu. Eu, ainda não, mas sentia que naquele momento escorregava entre os tênues limites que dividem a fé da apostasia, pois profanava um tabernáculo e uma cerimônia fúnebre. (FERRAZ, 2011, p. 28, 29, 30)

No texto “O ateu ambulante”, podem-se entrever aspectos que tangenciam a intertextualidade com a obra de Augusto dos Anjos, poeta que, segundo Álvaro Cardoso Gomes, cria um simbolismo todo especial, beirando os limites da modernidade. Nesse caso, a intertextualidade não se restringe ao reaproveitamento lexical. Ricardo compartilha com a poesia de Augusto dos Anjos uma visão desencantada da existência, marcada pela materialidade do corpo, pela decomposição da matéria e pela recusa de explicações transcendentais para a condição humana.

Segundo Álvaro Gomes, ao mesclar princípios evolucionistas e deterministas com as tendências espiritualistas da época, Augusto dos Anjos termina por montar uma obra sincrética que, por vezes, chama a atenção “pelo vocabulário esdrúxulo, mais próprio das ciências exatas” (GOMES, 1994, p. 49). Desse modo, no conto ferraziano verifica-se que, muitas vezes, a personagem central constrói sua argumentação ateuista citando fragmentos dos poemas do escritor simbolista cuja matéria poética são — nas explanações de Antonio Candido — o micróbio, o embrião, o escarro, a ferida, a decomposição da carne, que Augusto dos Anjos combina em textos poéticos “pessimistas e agressivos”, posto que o escritor é “fascinado pela cadeia que liga o infinitamente pequeno ao infinitamente grande”, o que resulta na constatação de que “a aparente vulgaridade torna-se grandiosa e a oratória sai da banalidade para gerar uma espécie de mensagem apocalíptica”. (CANDIDO, 2007, p. 82)

Dentro desse contexto vigente, no conto em análise notamos o ateu se referir a si mesmo empregando as expressões “sou o próprio *stercus diaboli*, pêlos, unhas, fezes, barro...”, “Sou apenas um *homo infimus*”, “Profundissimamente hipocondríaco... Minha boca e alma estão cheias de ânsia...”, “O verme, o operário das ruínas... anda a espreitar meus olhos para roê-los”, “A terra fria e inorgânica... Venha, verme; venha, terra; venha, frio, só poupe meus cabelos...”, “[...] e minha carne vai se transformar em adubo de flores, *carpe diem*, nada mais do que isso”. Após a morte do tio, a narradora lembra-se do ente querido prometendo que “não deixaria que eles [os familiares] beijassem e afagassem o corpo daquele sobre o qual sempre escarraram”. A mãe da sobrinha-narradora observa que “não se pode levar em consideração o que foi dito [pelo tio-ateu] em *delirium tremens*.” (FERRAZ, 2011, p. 14-31). Todas essas expressões remetem aos seguintes poemas de Augusto dos Anjos: “Psicologia de um vencido”, “Homo infimus”, “As cismas do destino” e “Versos íntimos”.<sup>12</sup>

Diante das considerações apresentadas, inferimos que o conto “O ateu ambulante” “nasce” da intertextualidade travada com o conto saramaguiano “Cadeira”, com o romance *O Evangelho segundo Jesus Cristo*, de José Saramago, com enredos de filmes clássicos, com trechos dos manifestos ideológicos da contracultura, com alguns textos bíblicos e com determinados poemas do escritor simbolista Augusto dos Anjos. Para explicarmos melhor essa constatação, observamos que, conforme explica Tania Franco Carvalhal, “a intertextualidade como propriedade textual é seletiva, pois a absorção de elementos alheios responde a uma necessidade particular.” (CARVALHAL, 2003, p. 75). Nessa perspectiva, parece-nos claro que a opção pelas fontes intertextuais utilizadas na tessitura do conto ferraziano se justifica pelo fato de que todos esses intertextos são bastante apropriados para mostrar e delinear o enredo e a personagem central: um ateu. Há que se mencionar ainda o caráter biográfico que parece constituir o pano de fundo dessa construção narrativa: na dedicatória da coletânea de contos de Salma Ferraz, lê-se “Para Ricardo Ferraz, o verdadeiro Ateu Ambulante (*in memoriam*)”.

<sup>12</sup> ANJOS, Augusto dos. *Eu e Outras Poesias*, p. 5, 8-16, 42-43, 66. Disponível em: <<http://www.dominiopublico.gov.br/download/texto/bv.00054a.pdf>>. Acesso em: 12 set. 2011.

Se levado em conta, esse detalhe é oportuno para anotarmos que a motivação biográfica comparece na obra literária não como um repasse direto, mas sim como um recorte que denota uma escritura afinada com uma proposta de respeito às escolhas do outro.

Ponderamos também que nos interstícios dessa gama de intertextualidades, o título do conto ferraziano parece sugerir uma leitura contrastiva entre Ricardo — o ateu ambulante — e Jesus Cristo, tal qual é descrito nos Evangelhos bíblicos. Afinal, se de um lado, Jesus formou uma comunidade de discípulos em que Ele era a única alternativa (Jesus Cristo disse: “Eu sou o caminho, e a verdade, e a vida. Ninguém vem ao Pai senão por mim” (João 14. 6),<sup>13</sup> foi considerado herege pelos judeus e era tido como um ambulante, um itinerante na pregação das Boas Novas de salvação, do outro lado, Ricardo foi considerado um herético pelo presbítero, como foi demonstrado no decorrer de nossas explanações. Além disso, apesar de morar num quatinho alugado, Ricardo era um motoqueiro ambulante que, junto com seus amigos, vivia segundo as regras da comunidade alternativa proposta por seu maior ídolo: Raul Seixas, o qual se autoexpressava cantando: “Prefiro ser essa metamorfose ambulante [...] Do que ter aquela velha opinião formada sobre tudo” e apregoava que cada indivíduo deveria ser livre para formular suas próprias e viver como quisesse. Desse modo, o ateu ambulante seria como a profanação do Cristo, ou melhor, um Cristo *às avessas*, conforme se verifica no trecho do conto em que o corpo do ateu foi roubado do templo, já que esse fragmento remete à suposição de que Jesus não havia ressuscitado e que seu corpo poderia ter sido furtado pelos seus discípulos.

O conto constrói Ricardo como uma figura que dialoga parodicamente com determinadas representações de Jesus presentes na tradição cristã. Essa aproximação não estabelece uma identidade entre ambos, mas produz um efeito de inversão simbólica, por meio do qual o ateu ambulante assume, em chave profana e contracultural, alguns traços tradicionalmente associados ao Cristo itinerante. Essa inversão simbólica realiza-se no nível da linguagem e da estrutura narrativa em momentos cruciais do conto. Primeiro, na cena inicial da UTI, o embate verbal entre Ricardo e o presbítero funciona como uma paródia das tentações ou dos interrogatórios bíblicos, onde a palavra dogmática do religioso é contestada pela citação em latim e pela letra de Raul Seixas (FERRAZ, 2011, p. 13-15). Segundo, o sumiço do corpo de Ricardo do templo protestante, levado às pressas por motoqueiros (p. 30), mimetiza e inverte a narrativa evangélica do túmulo vazio e da suposta remoção do corpo de Jesus por seus seguidores, conferindo ao protagonista uma “ressurreição” profana sob o signo do rock e da estrada. Por fim, a imagem de Ricardo defunto descendo a Serra do Mar na garupa de uma Harley Davidson (p. 33) encena uma ascensão paródica e contracultural, consolidando sua condição de errante eterno.

Ademais, no que diz respeito ao estatuto do errante, Jesus é lido como um ateu do ponto de vista dos Judeus da época, e ambulante porque não fixa residência em lugar algum, talvez temendo ser eliminado antes do tempo. Ricardo é um ateu da contracultura e sob a ótica dos parentes protestantes, mantendo-se ambulante e peregrino para não ser capturado pelas garras da família e da religião. O corpo de ambos desaparece envolto em mistérios. A mensagem maior da narrativa, em sintonia com as leituras histórico-críticas sobre o Jesus histórico (como a de John Meier em sua clássica obra *Um Judeu Marginal*), é a de repensar a figura de Jesus como um judeu marginal que vivia à margem do poder e da sociedade de sua época, distanciado de títulos dogmáticos como Messias ou Cristo. Ricardo, um ateu declarado, assume essa mesma condição marginal,

sugerindo que a melhor saída para o Cristianismo teria sido se Jesus tivesse fugido da Cruz, o que impediria o nascimento histórico do próprio movimento institucional. Segundo o ateu deste conto *Na cruz o amor nasceu e foi assassinado*. Para ele *se Deus fosse realmente bom, não teria criado o mal. O mal não existe*. Ele não encontra respostas para suas inquietações, que são as dúvidas da humanidade, por isto proclama: *Estou repleto de ocos, de não*. Questiona os estreitos limites entre o bem e mal, já que no céu não há lugar para o meio termo e o mais ou menos: *Não há céu para os oblíquos*. [...]

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## Predication and Opposition in *Dào Dé Jīng* Thought Experimental Analyses of (e.g.) 道可道 非常道 (II) Maternalism and Ecofeminism

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### Abstract

“  
The Dao that gives birth to all things  
Is empty and eternal like the God of Valley,  
It is called mysterious maternity.  
The birth gate of the mystic mother's fertility  
(DDJ Ch. 6 – trans. Donia Zhang 2022)

In this paper we discuss the many pairs of opposites in *Dào Dé Jīng* (DDJ), such as long vs. short, give vs. take, misfortune vs. good fortune. We propose classical logical analyses, applying predicate logic, completing enthymematic statements, quite often containing a seeming opposition (e.g. Dao or not-Dao), to logically valid arguments as by revealing missing part of argument (cf. explicating of an aspect e.g. Wittgenstein 1953) and modal logical analyses, preferably applying Kripke-style triple models  $\langle W, \models, R \rangle$  on a descriptive semantic view, covering possibly metaphysical and religious interpretations.

*Wúwéi* (無為) and its paradoxes could be analyzed as double negation resulting in only seeming contradictions and univocal tautologies as on translation of “non-action contrary to nature” (Donia Zhang 2022) instead of mystifying adagial advices, that could be understood as an ecological mantra nowadays.

We survey a couple of ecological readings of DDJ and *wúwéi*. Jinghui Wang understands *wúwéi* with help of a water metaphor (from Ch. 8 water “is closest to Dao”), calling for a “harmonious orchestra with nature.” Ellen Zhang discusses “greening” of Daoism, translating *wúwéi* as “acting naturally,” and proposes an interpretative reconstruction of *ziran-wúwéi* ethics as a wakeup call in the face of an ecological crisis.

We discuss ecofeminism—coined by Françoise d'Eaubonne as “an attempt to synthesis of feminism and ecology”—from an account of Qingqi Wei, emphasizing the *yīn* commending feminine androgynous aspect of DDJ, considering holism and intuitive thinking of DDJ antithetic to science and technology and in fitting with broader rationality of ecofeminism as mutualist, reciprocal, intersectionalist (e.g. Stacy Alaimo’s “trans-corporeality”), which, however—at least on our account—may remain in tune with binary logic as far as for the Chinese *yīn* and *yáng* are more than only a basic pair of opposites and don’t exclude reconciliation of opposites, such as, male and female, nature and culture etc. (Wei 2018: 781).

semantics

thought experiment

predication

opposition

paradox

contradiction

tautology

predicate logic

modal logic

modus ponens (instantiation)

(double) negation

ecocriticism

ecofeminism

androgyny

global cross-culturalism

environmental pragmatism

wúwéi (無為)

dào kě dào fēi cháng dào (道可道非常道)

Lǎozǐ (老子)

Dào Dé Jīng (道德經)

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# Predication and Opposition in *Dào Dé Jīng* Thought Experimental Analyses of (e.g.) 道可道 非常道 (II) Maternalism and Ecofeminism

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## Abstract

*The Dao that gives birth to all things  
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In this paper we discuss the many pairs of opposites in *Dào Dé Jīng* (DDJ), such as long vs. short, give vs. take, misfortune vs. good fortune. We propose classical logical analyses, applying predicate logic, completing enthymematic statements, quite often containing a seeming opposition (e.g. Dao or not-Dao), to logically valid arguments as by revealing missing part of argument (cf. explicating of an aspect e.g. Wittgenstein 1953) and modal logical analyses, preferably applying Kripke-style triple models  $\langle W, R, V \rangle$  on a descriptive semantic view, covering possibly metaphysical and religious interpretations.

*Wúwéi* (無為) and its paradoxes could be analyzed as double negation resulting in only seeming contradictions and univocal tautologies as on translation of “non-action contrary to nature” (Donia Zhang 2022) instead of mystifying adagial advices, that could be understood as an ecological mantra nowadays.

We survey a couple of ecological readings of DDJ and *wúwéi*. Jinghui Wang understands *wúwéi* with help of a water metaphor (from Ch. 8 water “is closest to Dao”), calling for a “harmonious orchestra with nature.” Ellen Zhang discusses “greening” of Daoism, translating *wúwéi* as “acting naturally,” and proposes an interpretative reconstruction of *ziran-wúwéi* ethics as a wakeup call in the face of an ecological crisis.

We discuss ecofeminism—coined by Françoise d'Eaubonne as “an attempt to synthesis of feminism and ecology”—from an account of Qingqi Wei, emphasizing the *yīn* commending feminine androgynous aspect of DDJ, considering holism and intuitive thinking of DDJ antithetic to science and technology and in fitting with broader rationality of ecofeminism as mutualist, reciprocal, intersectionalist (e.g. Stacy Alaimo's “trans-corporeality”), which, however—at least on our account—may remain in tune with binary logic as far as for the Chinese *yīn* and *yáng* are more than only a basic pair of opposites and don't exclude reconciliation of opposites, such as, male and female, nature and culture etc. (Wei 2018: 781).

**Keywords:** semantics, thought experiment, predication, opposition, paradox, contradiction, tautology, predicate logic, modal logic, modus ponens (instantiation), (double) negation, ecocriticism, ecofeminism, androgyny, global cross-culturalism, environmental pragmatism, *wúwéi* (無為), *dào kě dào fēi cháng dào* (道可道非常道), *Lǎozǐ* (老子), *Dào Dé Jīng* (道德經), Daoism

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Analyses of *Dào dé Jīng*

We may identify *Dao De Jing* (DDJ—note 1), e.g., first line 道可道 非常道 as (near-spiritual or religious) thought experiments, (S/R)TE, paradigmatic like Descartes' *Cogito*, for originated in time of crisis, starting off a new era and still famous today as initial text of Daoism, to whose interpretation, as an

ancient philosophical or religious text, application of procedure of hermeneutic circle as well as its logical criticisms may be fruitful (see Part I of research into DDJ, Hertogh 2026b). We may shortly show how the enthymematic first line 道可道 非常道 may be completed to valid modus ponens by explicating (e.g.) the core of Ch. 35 as its major.

The analyses we propose don't pretend to be the only possible logical resolutions, more analyses are possible, possibly starting

from different versions and translations of *DDJ*, or from different interpretations of the same chapters and aphorisms (it is congruent with pluralistic philosophical assumptions as Goodman's and Quine's—see Hertogh 2020).

We propose three types of logical formalizations, the first (Section 2), applying to simple oppositions, showing there is no attempt to breach any logical laws in *DDJ*, the second (Section 3) which may apply to complex oppositions, applying predicate logic, deriving major (part of argument) from elsewhere in chapter or *DDJ* text, or more Chinese classics as *Analects*, *I Ching* (*Yi Jing* in Pinyin) and *Zhuangzi*, and the third (Section 4), a modal logical interpretation, applying modal logical box and diamond operators, and Kripke-style model of triple set of possible worlds, accessibility relation and satisfiability function.

Next (Section 5), we discuss logical interpretations of concept of *wuwei* as (double) negation which could clarify traditional translations to a high extent.

Lastly (Sections 6, 7, 8), we add results of literature studies on ecological turn (Jinghui Wang, Ellen Zhang—Section 6), ecocriticism and ecofeminism (e.g. Qingqi Wei referring to Pauli Murray, Stacy Alaimo, Greta Gaard et al.—Section 7), provisionally concluding, e.g., that (sexist, racist etc.) mistakes of western logic, science, technology etc. can't be denied anymore and need to be reversed and revised from a global cross-culturalism and environmental pragmatism perspective, but that we could hold on to binary logic, possibly basically derived from and corresponding to *yīn* and *yáng*, possibly including noncoercive, holistic, mutualist, reciprocal, intersectionalist etc. interrelations.

Feminist ecocriticist literature may lay bare maternalist and ecological nature of *DDJ*, whereby logical analyses as applied by TE Matrix methodology may contribute to transparency of these main aspects of the text, e.g., use of opposites may reveal preference for “abiding by the soft” (e.g. Din Lau 1958); *wúwéi* may be understood as “living in harmony with nature” (Jinghui Wang 2018); and broader *yīn yáng* rationality, exemplified in ecofeminist concepts, such as water (e.g. Joseph Needham 1956, Shannon Lee 2020), *ziran-wúwéi* (e.g. Tim Jenkins 2002, Ellen Zhang 2023), androgyny (e.g. Roger Ames 1981, Pauli Murray 2007), vegetarian ecofeminism (Greta Gaard 2002), which has been visualized in well-known *yīn yáng* diagram, e.g. symbolizing “subcontrariety quantification” (e.g. Jean-Yves Béziau 2012).

## 2. Logical Analyses

Simple oppositions don't violate logical laws.

There are some examples of linguistic opposition in Ch. 2, which may be considered as concerning mainly (reducible to) predicates

beauty vs. ugliness  
kindness vs. unkindness  
difficult vs. easy  
long vs. short  
high vs. low  
front vs. back  
(from Ch. 36, trans. Donia Zhang 2022)

As Lau 1958 observes *yīn* and *shēng* (e.g. sound and speech, or Legge's musical notes and tones) is not like a simple opposition—is “hardly of the same type as ... good and not-good, beautiful and ugly” (Lau 1958, 347n2), who goes on to discuss different types of oppositions as gradual vs. abrupt (see note 2).

Oda and Zheng 2023, 2024 propose a generic predicate logical formula involving conjunction to express contradiction where (inclusive or exclusive) disjunction may do, like this

$$\forall x (\Psi x \vee \neg \Psi x) \quad (0)$$

which describes relations “within an ultimate and universal set of Dao (x)” as on a pluralist view of Dao (e.g. “myriad things” see also e.g. Fox 2023), but not particularly contradiction, rather, e.g., exclusive or inclusive disjunction, possibly depending on type of (semantic) opposition. (cf. Oda and Zheng 2023: 1 – note 2)

There are many more oppositions, or pairs of opposites, semantically speaking antonyms, in *DDJ*— in different grammatical forms, e.g. verbs

to shrink vs. to expand  
to weaken vs. to strengthen  
to abolish vs. to promote  
to take vs. to give  
(from Ch. 3, trans. Donia Zhang 2022)

which are part of what is called “the subtle sign, the weak overcomes the strong” (Zhang 2022), “Hiding the light (of his procedure)/The soft overcomes the hard; and the weak the strong” (Legge 1891), “subtle discernment: The submissive and weak will overcome the hard and strong” (Lau 1963).

And predicates again

Therefore, the ancients wrote:  
The bright Dao looks dark;  
The Dao forward looks backward;  
The smooth Dao looks rugged;  
(Ch. 41, trans. Donia Zhang 2022; “even” and “rough” e.g. Lau 1963 are synonyms of “smooth” and “rugged”)

From different realms of reality, including (social) values, virtues vs. vices, e.g., balancing ups and downs of life

Misfortune is where good fortune rests;  
Good fortune is where misfortune hides  
Who knows whether it will be misfortune or good fortune?  
There are not established standards.  
Good suddenly turns into evil, kind suddenly turns into cruel,  
(Ch. 58, trans. Donia Zhang 2022)

Ethical values that collapse into their opposites when describing the way of the sage or good ruler

So it is that the sage (ruler), wishing to be above men, puts himself by his words below them, and, wishing to be before them, places his person behind them.  
(Ch. 66, trans. James Legge 1891; “lead” and “follow (behind)” e.g. Lau 1963 are synonyms of “be before” and “be behind”)

This interpretation is consistent with logico-linguistic interpretation as offered in *Zhuangzi* paper (Hertogh 2024) where we discussed, e.g., interdependency of opposites as after *Zhuangzi's wuhua* (物化) in *Butterfly Dream*. From perspective of studies of *Zhuangzi* the pairs of opposites may be interpreted as exemplifications of the principle of interdependency of opposites (e.g. *wuhua*) as between many more opposites, e.g., few/many, small/great (Ch. 34), thick/thin, highest/lowest virtue (Ch. 38), bright/dull, forward/backward, even/rough (Ch. 41) etc.; the interdependency is phrased and explained in different ways, e.g., as “subtle discernment” regarding shrink/stretch, weaken/strengthen, lay aside/set up, give/take in Ch. 36 (“This is called subtle discernment”), or “the blending of the generative forces” regarding *yin/yang* (Ch. 42) (trans. Lau 1963).

DC Lau discusses *DDJ* oppositions at length in ‘The Treatment of Opposites in *Lao Tzu*’ (1958) and tries to explain them as slightly different from hexagrams and principle of constant circular change in *I Ching*, as (e.g.) “valuing the soft,” “abiding by the soft.”

### 3. Explicitating of Aspect

Complex oppositions may be analyzed by TE methodology of TE Matrix, which in this case comes down to explicitation of an aspect, or point of view, relevant context of comparison, (thematic) dimension etc. (note 3) It may remind of Jacques Derrida “il n’ya pas de hors-texte” (Derrida 1967, e.g. “there is nothing without context”), or Wittgenstein’s 1953 contextualism (e.g. Vaidya 2023). The Chinese signs of the first two lines of *DDJ* are the same in traditional and modern Chinese, we quote Chinese text and English translation from Zhang 2022, who uses modern Chinese transcript (different from traditional in e.g. *wuwei*); Hanyu Pinyin (including tone marks) is derived from, e.g., *Wikibooks*. The title of the first chapter is omitted (like titles of all *DDJ* chapters in this paper) since translations vary widely, e.g., ‘Embodying the Dao’ (Legge 1891), ‘Reason’s Realization’ (Suzuki and Carus 1913), ‘What is the Dao?’ (Goddard 1919)

道可道，非常道；  
名可名，非常名。

(Chinese characters e.g. Zhang 2022)

dào kě dào fēi cháng dào

míng kě míng fēi cháng míng

(Hanyu Pinyin e.g. *DDJ* 2020 *Wikibooks*)

The dao that can be said is not the true Dao;

The name that can be called is not the real Name.

(trans. e.g. Donia Zhang 2022)

In the literature we find a great variety of translations, e.g. of *chang*, and views on which translations are most appropriate, e.g., Fox 2023 refers to Boodberg 2007

常 *cháng*, ‘constant,’ ‘regular,’ ‘common,’ ‘ordinary,’ ‘persistent,’ ‘conventional,’ ‘enduring,’ never meant ‘eternal’ or ‘absolute’ in our sense, as wrongly used by so many translators of the first couplet of the *Lao Tzu*. (Boodberg 2007: 603)

Apart from these translations we have found “unvarying” (e.g. Waley 1958), “uncharted” and “nature” (e.g. Blakney 1961), “nature” and full expression or representation (e.g. Bahm 1958), “immortal” (e.g. Red Pine 1996), “everlasting” (e.g. Yang 1962), “common” and things instead of names (e.g. Xu 2006), “unchanging” (e.g. Richter 1998), “permanent” (e.g. Duyvendak 1954), “true” and “real” (e.g. Zhang 2022), “perennial” (e.g. Ryden 2008). We will take no side in the debate and propose logical analyses for both, let’s say, secular philosophical and (possibly westernized or Christianized) metaphysical religious positions by use of respectively classical logic and modal logic. (note 4)

Our provisional formalization derived from proposition logic is rather complex, saying Dao under aspect *a*, is not equal, identical (with respect to, say, *Q*<sub>1</sub>) to Dao under aspect *b*

$$\begin{aligned} D_a &\neq D_b \\ D_a &\neq_{Q_1} D_b \end{aligned} \quad (1)$$

A second formalization applies TE methodology and tries to find relevant aspect, explanation in more lines of the chapter or parts of the treatise, and was eventually successful in discerning, let’s say, major of incomplete argument of first line in Ch. 35

When the Dao is spoken out,  
it becomes plain and tasteless,  
One can not see it, nor can hear it,  
but its effects are endless.  
(Ch. 35, trans. Donia Zhang 2022 - note 5)

After exemplifying missing part of the argument, the analysis may be completed with help of predicate logic, where it appears the missing part is the major of the argument, generalizing the individualized statement of the first line

(2)

**Table 1.** Symbols and Explanations

Suppose

| Symbol    | Explanation                                                         |
|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Dx</i> | <i>x</i> is (true) Dao, lit. <i>x</i> Daos                          |
| $\neg Dx$ | <i>x</i> is not (true) Dao                                          |
| <i>Sx</i> | <i>x</i> can be said, Spoken, or have any other perceptual property |

Deriving major (*P*<sub>2</sub>) from context or theory, in fact one (more) passage(s) from same treatise *DDJ*, e.g. Ch. 35 (note 6) as on an individualized reading of the first line *dao ke dao* ... (*P*<sub>1</sub> - Chinese grammar does not distinguish between singular and plural, concrete or abstract here)

$$\begin{array}{ll} P_1 & Sa \wedge \neg Da \quad (\text{Ch. 1}) \\ P_2 & Sx \rightarrow \neg Dx \quad (\text{Ch. 35}) \\ \hline \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{ll} C_1 & Sa \rightarrow \neg Da \quad (\text{Ch. 1}) \\ C_2 & Sx \rightarrow \neg Dx \quad (\text{Ch. 1}) \\ C_3 & \forall x(Sx \rightarrow \neg Dx) \end{array}$$

We may generalize from constant  $a$  to variable  $x$ , i.e., from  $C_1$  to  $C_2$ , as after John Norton 1991 definition of TE, where there is an inductive step from particularity of (TE) premise(s) to generality of conclusion

Thought experiments are arguments which:  
(i) posit hypothetical or counterfactual states of affairs, and  
(ii) invoke particulars irrelevant to the generality of the conclusion.  
(Norton 1991: 129)

The core argument may be clarified by modus ponens instantiation as after Carnap 1966 (see Hertogh 2016, where there are similar TE analyses of Descartes' *Cogito*)

(3)

$$\begin{array}{ll} Sx \rightarrow \neg Dx & (\text{Ch. 35}) \\ Sa & (\text{Ch. 1}) \\ \hline \neg Da & (\text{Ch. 1}) \end{array}$$

on which interpretation *dao ke dao fei chang dao* appears as minor and conclusion to major as derived from Ch. 35 and the original TE may be displayed like a bracketed TE argument (cf. Descartes' *Cogito*).

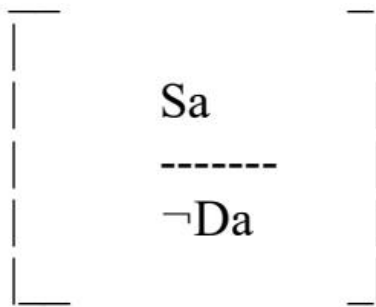


**Figure 1.** Formula (2')/Figure 1. Bracketed TE argument for first line of DDJ, Ch. 1

It is not just about imperceptibility, as some translations may suggest, in the sense of inaccessibility by the five senses, for which there is support in Ch. 35 but also Ch. 14 (note 7), since the strongest formula is “is spoken,” whereby also possible nonsensuous perception and religious interpretations are included as, e.g., Dao as a Godhead may be an abstract entity that is not directly accessible to the five common senses (like metaphysical

entities as substance but also virtue, humility, simplicity etc.) but that can be spoken about. Many religions may contend their Divine entity is accessible by indirect and/or nonsensuous perception, that goes beyond the Humean direct sensuous perception, as in visions, prophecies, miracles, signs etc., possibly mediated by supernatural agencies or the Divinity itself (in secular terminology these phenomena are partly covered by ESP, extra sensory perception, such as telepathy). Next, it may be a mode of perception that goes beyond words, discursive reasoning, logic as in meditation, *Kōans* and *Huātóus*, where the words only point at a next level that is not expressible in words, nor accessible by logic, discursive reasoning and so on (in western religions e.g. emotivism). The latter interpretations may also go beyond the limits of religious TE, RTE, that are derived from phrasings and passages in religious texts.

Nevertheless, as we have argued in analyses and interpretations of spiritual TE, STE as *Vipassanā Meditation* (Hertogh 2018), *Kōans* and *Huātóus* (Hertogh 2021), logic may take us further than often suggested and above logical analyses are to be understood in this vein. Besides, above logical symbolization may capture a manifold of nonmetaphysical and nonreligious interpretations of DDJ.

#### 4. Modal Logic

When considering the second part about essential Dao and Name, “essential” may be logically translated as “necessary,” with help of modal logical box operator or by quantification over all (possible) worlds (e.g. Kripke-style models).

As with help of modal box operator e.g.

$$Da \neq \Box Dx \quad (4)$$

$a$  is Dao is not equal to  $x$  is necessarily Dao.

Additionally suppose:

$Mx$   $x$  is/has a Name

$$Ma \neq \Box Mx \quad (5)$$

$a$  is a name is not equal to  $x$  is necessarily a name.

Or with help of Kripke semantics, supposing model  $\langle W, \models, R \rangle$ , where  $W$  is a nonempty set of (possible) worlds,  $\models$  is a satisfiability relation that assigns subsets of  $W$  to propositions, and  $R$  is a binary accessibility relation ( $w_1 R w_2$ ) saying which worlds are accessible to which worlds, e.g.

$$(w_0 \models Da) \neq (\forall w : w \models Dx) \quad (6)$$

$a$  is Dao in the actual world ( $w_0$ ) is not equal to  $x$  is Dao in all (possible) worlds.

Binary accessibility relation  $R$  is to be understood in a *descriptive semantics view mode* — not as a forcing prescribing relation as related to a prescriptive formal valuation function — that can't be given in advance unless one has already decided on type and content of interpretation, which is however quite cumbersome and is rather to be expected afterwards than beforehand.  $R$  may be described after, as on a set of possible worlds (PW) as a search engine on a DDJ database (or Google, Google Scholar, Baidu etc.), when PW may be defined as (elementary) parts of theories, theoretical constructs, scientific scholarly propositions that may be used as premises or conclusions in logical analyses and arguments. As the PW of parts of (TE) arguments (premises and conclusions) pick out accessible PW (as from axioms to principles) unto an

argument is both formally and informally logically validated (i.e. logical inference is valid, premises and conclusions are true — so, argument is sound), we don't need to prescribe any forcing formal valuation function nor accessibility relation.

Equations (4) and (6) may go against an axiom of modal logic (e.g. Kripke 1959: 1, Axiom 1)

$$\Box A \rightarrow A \quad (7)$$

since = equals  $\leftrightarrow$ .

So, we should change (4) into

$$Da \leftrightarrow \Box Dx \quad (8)$$

which could be a likely candidate for a modal logical interpretation of first line in translation like dao (e.g. that may be said) is not necessary (possibly real, essential etc.) Dao as e.g. distinguishing an actual instantiation of dao from necessity, reality, essence of Dao.

And we should change (6) into

$$(w_0 \models Da) \leftrightarrow (\forall w : w \models Dx)$$

## 5. Wúwéi (Double) Negation

Do things in accordance with nature,  
Then the world will be well governed.  
(Ch. 3, trans. Donia Zhang 2022)

*Wuwei* (or *wu-wei*, trad. Chin. 無為, mod. Chin. 无为, Pinyin *wúwéi*) may be literally translated as “not” (無) “to do,” “to act” (為), e.g. as “non-action” (e.g. Liu 1991, Moon 2015), modified into variants as “effortless action” (e.g. Slingerland 2000, 2003), “actionless action” etc., which latter term is itself contradictory. The concept is considered to have originated in *DDJ*, but it is also used in Confucianism and (Zen) Buddhism, where it may signify, e.g., non-attachment. Many authors consider *wuwei* a core concept of *DDJ* and Daoism. E.g. Loy 1985 considers *wuwei* “the central paradox” of Daoism

*Wei-wu-wei*, ‘the action of non-action,’ is the central paradox of Taoism and as a concept is second in importance to the Tao itself, which incorporates it ... (Loy 1985: 74)

And Hansen 2007 in *SEP* considers *wei* and *wuwei* (無為) one of the important Daoist concepts (among more, like *Dao* 道 Way, Guide, Road, *De* 德 Virtuosity, Virtue, Power, *ming* 名 name, *chang* 常 constant, eternal, *pu* 樸 pre-linguistic purity).

Checking a variety of translations and comments, *wuwei* and its paradoxical statements in *DDJ* (e.g. in Ch. 3, 37, 38, 43, 48, 57, 63, 64 in Legge 1891 Chinese Text Project) may appear a problem of negation and double negation.

Law (or principle) of double negation is one of the basic logical laws (or principles), next to law of identity (LID  $P = P$ ), law of excluded middle (LEM  $P \vee \neg P$ ), law of noncontradiction (LNC  $\neg(P \wedge \neg P)$ ) as acknowledged by, e.g., Russell and Whitehead in *Principia Mathematica*

$$\dots \vdash p \equiv \neg(\neg p) \quad (10)$$

This is the principle of double negation, i.e. a proposition is equivalent of the falsehood of its negation.

(Russell, Whitehead 1910–1913: \*4.13 – negation sign updated)

However, we could expect, analogous to our view on oppositions, that it is not about strict contradiction (formalized with help of conjunction) but about contextualized (exclusive or inclusive) disjunctions, that it is not about theoretical oppositions but practical courses of action (e.g. Slingerland 2000), that it is not a logical but rather a rhetorical device, e.g., not a meaningless semantic formal contradiction, but rather an emphatic pragmatic colloquial linguistic confirmation, like *there ain't nothing*, meaning ‘there is nothing,’ instead of ‘there is not nothing,’ possibly meaning ‘there is something,’ or on a modal view ‘there is possibly something/anything/everything.’

On this interpretation the so-called paradoxes may lose their mystery and change into (emphatic) tautologies rather than contradictions, e.g. Donia Zhang 2022, who translates *wuwei* as non-action contrary to nature (e.g. Ch. 43 twice, 45, 47, 48 twice, 57 no action ..., 63, 64), i.e. action not contrary to nature, action in accordance with nature, natural law, or

non-action contrary to nature  
no action contrary to nature  
all action(s) in accordance with nature/natural law

which view occurs in *DDJ* again and again, with and without contextual mention of *wuwei*, which may be understood as an ecological mantra nowadays.

Interpretation of reference to natural law, nature is confirmed by e.g. Moon 2015

.... Away from its literal meaning of inactivity or taking no action, *wuwei* refers to not taking action that is against Natural Law. That is, letting Natural Law take its own course is important.... (Moon 2015)

We may agree on Zhang's univocal near-tautological translations of, e.g., Ch. 3 and Ch. 64, which some comments may consider paradoxes and some translations (as Legge 1891 and Lau 1963) render incomprehensibly abstract and mysterious

Do things in accordance with nature,  
Then the world will be well governed.  
(Ch. 3, trans. Donia Zhang 2022)

instead of Legge's underdetermined and abstract

When there is this abstinence from action,  
good order is universal.  
(Ch. 3, trans. James Legge 1891)

and Lau's mystifying adagial advice

Do that which consists in taking no action,  
and order will prevail.  
(Ch. 3, trans. DC Lau 1963)

Zhang 2022 translation of Ch. 64 reads like a tautology

And they [the sages] follow the natural laws with non-action  
contrary to nature.  
(Ch. 64, trans. Donia Zhang 2022)

rather than incomprehensible translations like Legge's

This is because the saint has no reason and is undefeated.  
(Ch. 64, trans. James Legge 1891)

and Lau's still using unexplained and possibly inexplicable  
metaphysical terms from the first chapters like "myriad creatures"

In order to help the myriad creatures to be natural and to  
refrain from daring to act.  
(Ch. 64, trans. DC Lau 1963)

The 19th-century "very capable" but "a bit pedantic" translations  
by James Legge et al. are criticized by John Bruno Hare, founder  
of Internet Sacred Text Archive (ISTA) in 2004, recommending  
Dwight Goddard's translation instead, that, however, still is quite  
impenetrable

.... The concepts of Taoism are very lucid, and wrapping  
them in too much verbiage, as Legge et al did, add an  
unneeded layer of obscurity....

The Chinese have developed (formal) logic in Mohism (see e.g.  
*Mozi* 2006–2026, Mei 1929, Liu and Zhang 2010, Liu and Sun 2020,  
Hansen 1983). If, and in as far as, rhetoric and informal use of  
logic in *DDJ* may have affected Mohist logic (and possibly vice  
versa in later editions of *DDJ* as in Neo-Daoism) goes beyond the  
scope of the present research, but may possibly change some of  
the outcomes of TE analyses and interpretations.

We mention only one related example here, *Gongsun Long* (孫  
龍 公 ca. 320–240 BCE) paradox

白馬非馬

*pai ma fei ma*

*white horse is-not horse*

(Gongsun Longzi/White Horse Discourse (320–250 BCE),  
e.g., #1, #4, #14–quoted in Hansen 1983: 140; trans. Donald  
Sturgeon ("a white horse is not a horse"))

which shares negation *fei* (非) with first two lines of *DDJ*. It is  
discussed in, e.g., White Horse Discourse (白馬論 see at *Gongsun  
Longzi* in references), which could be considered sophistry show-  
ing the limits of logic and reason, of which Wittgenstein could  
have said "Now you are only playing with words" (Wittgenstein  
1953, #67 – see also, e.g., Fraser 2024, Harbsmeier 1998, Indraccolo  
2016, with regard to the White Horse Discourse). Slingerland  
2000 shows *wuwei* is unlikely to be understood in a relativistic,  
sophistic way as it has a long history in Chinese philosophy, from  
the (noble warrior in) Book of Poetry (詩經 *Shijing* 11th–7th cent.  
BCE) to (the virtuous sage-ruler in) Confucianism of Xunzi (荀子  
ca. 310–238 BCE), and in the sense of "try not to try," it is, apart  
from political contexts, about how to acquire spiritual ideal of  
self-cultivation, either spontaneously in Daoism ("not to try") or  
by training in Confucianism ("try").

## 6. Ecological Turn

In Hertogh 2024 about *Zhuangzi's Butterfly Dream* and *Happiness  
of Fish* (Zhuangzi 2006–2026, Ch 2 #14, resp., Ch 17 #13) we  
have inferred to presupposition of animal consciousness, and  
found confirmation of this assumption, e.g., in cosmocentrism  
and vegetarian tendencies of Daoism, and we could conclude as  
with Komjathy 2021 that Daoism shows that humans may learn  
emotions from animals, such as flying from birds and butterflies  
and happiness from fish. Jinghui Wang in a 2018 contribution to  
a special issue of *Comparative Literature Studies* on 'Ecocriticism  
in East Asia: Toward a Literary (Re)Construction of Nature and  
Environment' finds a "typical example that shows how *Dao De  
Jing* advocates learning from nature" (Wang 2018: 817) in Ch. 8

Water is good at nourishing everything and not competing  
with anything.

It stays where no one likes to go, so it is closest to the Dao.  
(Ch. 8, trans. Donia Zhang 2022 - note 8, 9)

Wang translates *wuwei* as "being water and nonstriving," where  
nonstriving "actually goes together with the essence of 'being  
water'" (Wang 2018: 818 - note 8) and emphasizes *DDJ* view  
of "living in harmony with nature," to "form a harmonious  
orchestra with nature," going "beyond consumption orientation,  
industrialization, urbanization, or even science and technology"  
(Wang 2018: 822)

...Ecologically speaking, the water metaphor in *Dao De Jing* does reflect the working of Dao, and symbolically speaking, this metaphor represents a very naturalistic and sustainable philosophy which has affected numerous writers, including poets ... Their poems are evidences proving that the Daoist ecological motif has contributed tremendously in ancient Chinese people's forming of the simple Daoist ideal of governance without interference (*wu wei er zhi*) ... and at present, this metaphor still has the potential of functioning as an ideal ecological example to show the invincible power of the noncoercive and reciprocal application of Dao. (Wang 2018: 822)

Needham 1956 in chapter on Daoism discusses the water symbol together with the feminine symbol in one section under the heading of Daoist approach to nature and psychology of scientific observation

The observation of Nature, as opposed to the management of Society, requires a receptive passivity in contrast to a commanding activity, and a freedom from all preconceived theories in contrast to an attachment to a set of social convictions. This is the sense (though doubtless not the only sense) in which we may interpret the symbols of 'water' and 'the feminine' so dear to the early Taoist schools and so perplexing to later commentators. ... (Needham 1956: 57)

Ellen Zhang on "greening" of Daoism adds an interpretative reconstruction of *ziran-wuwei* "that is relevant to environmental or ecological concerns." *Ziran* (自然 — *zi*, 自, meaning nose or self, and *ran*, 然, meaning suchness), appearing five times in *DDJ* as in Ch. 5, 17, 23, 51, 64; translated (by Waley 1958) as, e.g., self-so, natural(ly), spontaneous(ly); (by Donia Zhang 2022) as natural (laws); (by Pinghua Liu 2024) as self-arising nature of things, and Principle of Naturalness (vs. Dao's The Way Beyond Words and Wuwei's The Art of Non-Action).

Next to possible political meanings of *wuwei* ("governing without governing," possibly motivated by "*Laozi*'s disapproval of any aggressive policies such as war, cruel punishment and heavy taxation" Ellen Zhang 2023: 76), *wuwei* is rendered as "acting naturally," reminding Donia Zhang's acting in accordance with nature, and, e.g., Jenkins allowing to take *ziran* and *wuwei* as "guidelines for an environmental ethic" (Jenkins 2002: 42-43), Ellen Zhang eventually opts for a *ziran-wuwei* ethics herself confirming possible green tendencies in Daoism, concluding

...Daoism can be reconstructed as a wake-up call and an ethical framework to accommodate our reflection upon the human relation with the natural world in the face of an environmental crisis caused by an over-emphasis on human achievement and domination over nature. (Ellen Zhang 2023: 90-91)

## 7. Ecofeminism and Androgyny

*Dao De Jing* is well-known for its feminine and maternal nature (see e.g. Chen 1969 "mother principle," Needham 1956 "very

exaltation of the 'Valley Spirit'," Lai 2000 "contemporary feminist thinking," Li 2000 "women's movement and ... status in China") e.g.

Nameless was the beginning of heaven and earth;  
Naming is the mother of all things.  
(Ch. 1, trans. Donia Zhang 2022)

The Dao that gives birth to all things  
Is empty and eternal like the God of Valley,  
It is called mysterious maternity.  
The birth gate of the mystic mother's fertility  
Is called the root of heaven and earth.  
It seems to exist continuously,  
And its effects are endless.  
(Ch. 6, trans. Donia Zhang 2022)

Studies of *ziran*, *wuwei* and *DDJ* as a whole may now add ecological features as harmony between humans and nature of Planet Earth. We'll discuss some ecofeminist research, ecofeminism as coined by French writer Françoise d'Eaubonne in 1974 (d'Eaubonne 1974/2022)

... an attempt at synthesis is possible between two struggles previously thought to be separated, feminism and ecology ... we need urgently to remake the planet around a totally new model. This is not an ambition, this is a necessity; the planet is in danger of dying, and we will die along with it.

In Wei 2018 Qingqi Wei explains ecofeminism with indigenous Chinese characteristics, basing it in "ancient Chinese ecological wisdom particularly found in Daoism," blending it with ecological holism—*Laozi* establishes Daoism from concept of *ziran* (spontaneous being or nature), "ardently commends *yin*'s feminine power," explains "*wu wei* or noninterference has exerted great influence on the way of life and way of thinking of Chinese people from all walks of life," different from western way of life its love of nature is "pantheist and harmonious," "not conceived of as forever struggling against Nature but forming part of it," and ecofeminism as nonbinary and intersectional "trans-corporeality" (Stacy Alaimo), Nancy Tuana's "viscous porosity" and Terry Williams' "porous" quality, "both laying emphasis, much like the Dao's *qi*, on the way the boundaries between subject and object is being abrogated..." (Wei 2018: 775). Ecofeminism emphasizes connection between femininity and nature, equality of morality (Greta Gaard's vegetarian ecofeminism, "surely feminism's third generation")

... [Daoist] intuitive methodology has long been blamed by many for hindering the development of science and technology, including Lin [Yutang], who attributed China's lagging behind in the development of natural science to ancient Chinese philosophies and their focus on elusive terms such as the Dao and benevolent governance. But after the eruption of ecological disasters that are at least

partly due to the overuse of science and technology for the growth of economy and consumerism, environmentalists and ecofeminists have been reflecting upon the limitations of the scientific methodology and revaluing the holistic and intuitive way of thinking.  
(Wei 2018: 779)

We can't agree on this for we hold that *DDJ* like Confucianism, (Zen) Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, Islam etc. is not illogical, irrational etc. and may be comprehended as consistent with classical logic, if not modal logic, like we are about to show in this research. We were assuming that *DDJs* conundrums would breach basic logical laws, such as LNC, LID, LEM, but our research is not confirming these assumptions and shows that the enigmatic statements may initially be looking like incomprehensible paradoxical enthymematic thought experiments, that however may be completed to valid and sound arguments using our TE Matrix methodology (see above examples, first line is modus ponens instantiation exemplifying core of Ch. 35, *wuwei* statements are not apparent paradoxes but seeming paradoxes, e.g., not contradictions but, in fact, tautologies). Different from what Wei and more commentaries may suggest—China was and is in high economic and scientific esteem with, e.g., the Four Great Inventions, that preceded western inventions. West and East now acknowledge China was the first to invent printing press, gunpowder, fireworks, paper, compass, smallpox inoculation, mechanical clocks, suspension bridges, silk, etc. In mathematics the Chinese Gougu Theorem (勾股定理) or Shang Gao Theorem (商高定理 - 11th cent. BCE) may have predated the Greek Pythagorean Theorem (see e.g. Han version *Zhoubi Suanjing* 周髀算經). Postmodern scholarship has criticized, reversed and revised Eurocentric patriarchal views, and updated *global cross-culturalist*, and *environmental pragmaticist* histories of science and logic.

But we do agree that *DDJ* and ecofeminism may come to the rescue from an ecological apocalypse, e.g., may help to replace patriarchy by (ecofeminist) androgyny (see also e.g. Ames 1981 “androgynous ideal”), as Wei quotes from Pauli Murray

It is therefore not serendipitous for Pauli Murray, one of the leading American feminists to imagine and realize that ‘an androgynous society is vastly superior to a patriarchal society,’ ... and that it may ‘well hold the key to many of the complex social issues for which we do not now have answers.’  
(Wei 2018: 782)

West and East, North and South need a more harmonious relation with both human nature and nonhuman environment, which we understand as principle of environmental pragmatism—we may have to adjust and revise some parts of science and technology until they are environmentally friendly and their societal applications won't hurt Mother Nature, won't damage humanity, human health and Planet Earth anymore. (note 10)

## 8. Some Provisional Conclusions

*DDJ* may open a way to a broader rationality involving concepts like holism, mutualism, reciprocity, intersectionality, androgyny, that may fit in with present-day ecocriticism and ecofeminism

(see e.g. Wei 2018), and it is well possible to read the ancient treatise as predating our present-day ecological paradigm, like *Zhuangzi's Butterfly Dream* could contribute to new paradigms featuring concepts of dream and animal consciousness.

Possibly different from some ecofeminisms, we may hold that alternate proposals don't necessarily need to breach—but could instead suspend, extend, supplement—(classical) logic and any more binarisms, such as in gender studies, just like the digital revolution is promising, just like *DDJ* itself may hold on to binary logic

... for the Chinese *yin* and *yang* are more than one of the ingenious pairs in early time. Instead, they constitute an ecofeminist [*yin* commending] androgyny that pinpoints the reconciliation of male and female, culture and nature, and any other form of antitheses. (Wei 2018: 781)

We may agree with ecocriticisms etc. that the many atrocious and deplorable environmental disasters as caused by mistakes of western logic, science, technology etc., e.g., occurring during the first industrial revolutions on to today's and tomorrow's climate crisis, can't be denied and that e.g. western physicochemical technological societal applications need to be reversed and revised from a global cross-culturalist and environmental pragmaticist perspective. (note 11)

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## ■ NOTES

**Table 2.** 1. Abbreviations and logical symbols Unicode

| Abbreviations and logical symbols |                                                                           | Unicode  |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| DDJ                               | <i>Dào Dé Jīng</i>                                                        |          |
| TE                                | thought experiment(s)                                                     |          |
| STE                               | spiritual thought experiment(s)                                           |          |
| RTE                               | religious thought experiment(s)                                           |          |
| □                                 | box operator <i>necessary/ily</i>                                         | (U+25FB) |
| ◇                                 | diamond operator <i>possible/y</i>                                        | (U+25C7) |
| →                                 | implication <i>if ...then ...</i>                                         | (U+2192) |
| ↗                                 | nonimplication <i>if not ...then ...</i>                                  | (U+219B) |
| ¬                                 | negation <i>no(t) ...</i>                                                 | (U+00AC) |
| ∧                                 | conjunction <i>...and ...</i>                                             | (U+2227) |
| ∨                                 | (inclusive) disjunction <i>...or ...</i>                                  | (U+2228) |
| ∃                                 | existential quantifier <i>for some, at least one, x it holds that ...</i> | (U+2203) |
| ∀                                 | universal quantifier <i>for all x it holds that ...</i>                   | (U+2200) |
| =                                 | equality <i>...is/are equal to ...</i>                                    | (U+003D) |
| ≠                                 | nonequality <i>...is/are not equal to ...</i>                             | (U+2260) |
| ↔                                 | equivalence <i>...is/are equivalent to ...</i>                            | (U+2194) |
| ≡                                 | identity <i>...is/are identical to ...</i>                                | (U+2261) |
| ↗                                 | nonequivalence <i>...is/are not equivalent to ...</i>                     | (U+2195) |
| ⟨W, F, R⟩                         | Kripke-style model                                                        |          |
| W                                 | set of (possible) Worlds                                                  |          |
| R                                 | accessibility Relation                                                    |          |
| F                                 | satisfiability function                                                   |          |

There are many different conventions of logical symbolisms, their significations and keyconcepts of logic. Above list is based on a variety of (internet) sources, textbooks, philosophical treatises etc., particularly, as in accordance with guidelines of Bloomsbury, Unicode, <https://home.unicode.org/> (accessed July 24, 2026).

Lack of global cross-cultural standardization and explanation may bring about quite a lot of miscommunication and misunderstanding in logic, that can't be merely reduced to mis- or disinformation.

2- Oda and Zheng 2023 propose  $\forall x(\Psi x \wedge \neg\Psi x)$  and explain on p. 2 n2

The interlocking Ying-Yang opposites, such as non-being/being and occult/manifest, are one and the same ultimate reality that embraces all. In the Daodejing, these opposites can be understood in 'correlative' logic and thinking (both/and), which are neither monist nor dualist (either/or) .... More specifically, we formulate correlative opposites into sentences about contradictions.

And it may depend on type of (semantic) opposition. Although lexical semantics may consider the word pairs of opposites or antonyms binary, the relation between the antonyms may vary as from gradual to abrupt (Lau 1958)—or updated by modern semantics

The term *antonym* (and the related *antonymy*) is commonly taken to be synonymous with *opposite*, but *antonym* also has other more restricted meanings. Graded (or gradable) antonyms are word pairs whose meanings are opposite and which lie on a continuous spectrum (*hot, cold*). Complementary antonyms are word pairs whose meanings are opposite but whose meanings do not lie on a continuous spectrum (*push, pull*). Relational antonyms are word pairs where opposite makes sense only in the context of the relationship between the two meanings (*teacher, pupil*)....

(<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opposite> acces. July 24, 2026 bold antonym, antonymy replaced by italics, underline added)

Part of thought experimental logical analyses of the aphorisms containing oppositions in *DDJ* consists in finding appropriate contexts, dimensions, aspects, points of view or comparison of the opposition in same chapter of elsewhere in *DDJ* text or possibly in related texts as *I Ching*, *Analects*, *Zhuangzi*, as well as appropriate logical operator or connective, which is, generally speaking, rather (inclusive or exclusive) disjunctive than conjunctive.

Béziau describes the famous *yin-yang* diagram as “Tao as the symbol of subcontrariety quantification” (see picture 26 in Béziau 2012, visualization of *yin-yang* in black-white circular diagram as in [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yin\\_and\\_yang](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yin_and_yang) accessed July 24, 2026), additionally explaining

This means that there is some black in the white and some white in the black. This situation describing the subcontrariety phenomenon ... . . . can be illustrated by the Tao symbol ...

3- In analyses of metaphors (e.g. Bartsch 1987, Leezenberg 2001, Hertogh 1997) we may distinguish between standard semantic metaphors and context-dependent or pragmatic metaphors. The latter may be identified, analyzed and formalized with help of thematic dimensions, a semantic term for context; in case of metaphors it is most often about the actual context, that is the sentence in which the metaphor theme appears (e.g. M (Alex is a fox) = Alex is a clever, crafty person (context)).

One may criticize this treatment as contextualism, but we don't think it boils down to relativism, possibly to relativity, saying that different parts of reality (domain, discourse etc.) may be analyzed and interpreted differently as in accordance with possibly different structure, texture, substrate etc. of different parts of reality. E.g. Galileo's gravity theory may hold (by approximation) for Planet Earth, Einstein's relativity theory for micro- and macrocosm. E.g. Voodoo and Hollywood Zombies should be analyzed differently from p- or philosophical Zombies (see Chalmers 2017). E.g. poetical metaphors may be analyzed differently from philosophical metaphors, which latter ones are often a tip of a submerged (theoretical) model.

It would be a kind of word magic to suggest that a word may mean the same in each context. Historical and etymological research may show how word meanings develop by, e.g., metaphorical and metonymical extensions, whereby extensive use of a word in a new context may result in a new (dictionary) sense.

4- Fox 2023 claims there is no eternity in western or Christian sense in *DDJ*, so like Boodberg Fox rejects “eternal” as translation of *chang* 常 etc., e.g.,

Many readers of the *Dao De Jing* have identified an ontology associated with the text. In such an ontological reading, the term *dao* is taken to refer to some type of monolithic (hence the use of the definite article “The *Dao*”), eternal (a troubling yet consistent translation of *chang* 常 in the first chapter), abstract (hence the use of the upper case for “*Dao*”), and uniquely ineffable fundamental reality (fundamental reality posits a reality on which all other realities depend, as opposed to the concept of reality as interdependent and intercausal).

Fox 2023 defends a cyclical (instead of linearly eternal), concrete, interdependent and intercausal concept of *daos* (plural) against appearance to the contrary in the first chapters.

However, we can also conceive of a sound argument in favor of the metaphysical-religious interpretation following translation of Donia Zhang 2022, who translates the last concluding line of Ch. 52, involving *chang*, by “This is called ‘the eternal Dao,’” and *chang* in the first two lines of Ch. 1 as resp. “true” (Dao) and “real” (Name). Since Ch. 52 starts off with a linear cosmogony (“Everything in the world has a beginning, this beginning is the root of everything”) it may confirm a similar interpretation of Ch. 1, assuming that possibly ambiguous parts of the first chapters are to be explained later in the text. At the moment we hold both interpretations are possible (e.g. cyclical vs. linear) until (overwhelmingly) proven otherwise (on first impression the latter coincides with a biased, in sense of westernized, Christianized, monotheistic etc., view).

5- Translation of Ch. 35 by James Legge in Chinese Text Project

But though the Dao as it comes from the mouth, seems insipid and has no flavour, though it seems not worth being looked at or listened to, the use of it is inexhaustible. (Ch. 35, trans. James Legge 1891)

Translation of Ch. 35 by DC Lau

The way in its passage through the mouth is without flavor.  
It cannot be seen,  
It cannot be heard,  
Yet it cannot be exhausted by use.  
(Ch. 35, trans. DC Lau 1963)

6- Similar methodology may be practiced by more scholars of *DDJ*, e.g., Oda and Zheng 2024 after Sōseki Natsume 2004

Argument 1 ...

1. 無名天地之始: Nameless is the beginning of heaven and earth. [Daodejing, ch. 1]
2. 道常無名: Dao (i.e. the ‘way’) is always nameless. [ch. 32]
3. 故道天地之始: Therefore, Dao is the beginning of heaven and earth.

(Oda and Zheng 2023: 2)

In the article published after WoCoLoR 4 presentation Oda and Zheng 2024 add another example, as it appears derived from Japanese novelist Natsume Sōseki (夏目漱石, 1867–1916)

Argument 2 ...

1. 萬物的實體是道: ... The substance of everything is Dao. [chs. 4, 25]
2. 道不可知於五官: Dao cannot be known by the five senses. [chs. 14, 21, 35]
3. 故萬物的實體不可知於五官: Therefore, the substance of everything cannot be known by the five senses.

(Oda and Zheng 2024, from ‘Introduction’)

remarking at first premise of argument 1 that Oda and Zheng use Ryden’s 2008 translation of *DDJ*, and at first premise of argument 2 that Sōseki does not provide the original Chinese quotations for the second argument and that Oda and Zheng have translated Sōseki’s Japanese into (traditional) Chinese and English. Oda and Zheng explain both arguments are derived from Sōseki, who “learnt analytical methods of philosophy whilst studying Western logic and philosophy” at Tokyo Imperial University; both arguments have an Aristotelian syllogistic structure, consisting of two premises and a conclusion, having S(ubject) and P(redicate) in conclusion and a M(iddle term) in each of the premises, (generalizing) resp. Barbara (all M-P, all S-M, all S-P) and Celarent (no M-P, all S-M, no S-P). (See Aristotle Prior Analytics e.g. Aristotle 2014, Copi et al. 2014, e.g. 211-254).

7- There are some more indications of imperceptibility of Dao in Ch. 14

Looking at it, it cannot be seen, this is called ‘colorless’;  
Listening to it, it cannot be heard, this is called ‘soundless’;  
Touching it, it cannot be felt, this is called ‘formless’.

(Ch. 14, trans. Donia Zhang 2022)

We may derive relevant major from notably Ch. 35 (and 14), generalizing Dao has no perceptual properties, Dao is imperceptible, possibly implying criticisms of Humean secular perception recently updated by e.g. Bocheński’s *The Logic of Religion* (1965).

## 8- Wang uses translation of Waley 1958

The highest good is like that of water.  
 The goodness of water is that it benefits the ten thousand  
 creatures;  
 Yet itself does not scramble,  
 But is content with the places that all men disdain.  
 It is this that makes water so near to the Way.  
 (Ch. 8, trans. Arthur Waley 1958)

As quite usual Donia Zhang's translation is more transparent and it has been quoted in the body of the text.

9- According to Wang 2018 the concept "to be like water" left "a tremendous influence" on martial artist and film actor Bruce Lee (Wang 2018: 818). In *Be Water, My Friend: The Teachings of Bruce Lee* Lee's daughter Shannon tries to explain "what my father's 'Be Water' philosophy is" and how she understands it. The book has the full "be water" quote that may remind of *DDJ* in more than just one respect:

Empty your mind. Be formless, shapeless like water. Now  
 you put water into a cup, it becomes the cup. You put water  
 into a bottle, it becomes the bottle. You put water in a teapot,  
 it becomes the teapot. Now water can flow or it can crash.  
 Be water my friend.

The cover of Bruce Lee's 1975 posthumous *The Tao of Jeet Kung Do* has a *yin-yang* diagram on both front and back cover.

10- It is about, e.g., transition to zero-carbon footprints (COP Cooperation of the Parties has set a limit of 1.5°C global warming by 2030 as by reduction of emission of greenhouse gases etc.), transition to renewable and sustainable energy, such as solar, wind, hydro, tidal, geothermal energy, transition from oil-driven combustion engines to biofuel cars (e.g. sugarcane cars in Brazil) and electrical vehicles (many EVs are produced in China), introduction of green cities (like Shenzhen), reversion of ecological disasters (like use of pesticides etc.) to ecological, environmental healthy projects etc.

Discussion on ins and outs of a variety of possibly new energy resources is going on, e.g., biofuels vs. EVs, advantages vs. disadvantages of nuclear power, pros vs. cons of hydrogen  $H_2$  technology. It may depend on natural resources and technical know-how of a particular region which alternate resolution may work best (e.g. geothermal energy in Iceland, ethanol in Brazil).

Stacy Alaimo 2010 discusses some examples of ecological industrial disasters, e.g., poisoning by pesticides, silica dust (e.g. Hawk's Nest tunnel catastrophe of Gauley Bridge, West Virginia, in 1930s), that have caused many victims among farmers, workers, and the general population.

Global perspective could not be missing out e.g. how the developing (say, second world, Eastern Europe, China etc.) and less-developed countries (say, third world, Global South) are victims of pollution of the developed countries, who have much higher pollution indices now than North America and Europe—see e.g. discussions on environmental justice (e.g. Robert D. Bullard 2005, Jingjing Liu 2012), climate justice, climate debt, climate reparations etc., e.g. quoting from Moe-Lobeda 2016

.... Many voices of the Global South recognize this as climate debt or climate colonialism and situate it as a continuation of the colonialism that enabled the Global North to enrich itself for five centuries at the expense of Africa, Latin America, Indigenous North America, and parts of Asia .... (Moe-Lobeda 2016: 28)

11- Environmental pragmaticism (EP) and global cross-culturalism (GCC) are tendencies of 21st-century (post)modern science and society. EP has been defined at the end of Section 7. GCC may be defined as condition that data and results of research, range of societal applications etc. should involve at least two different global cross-cultural, ethnic, linguistic, religious, political etc. heterogeneous groups; it may also entail political correctness, inclusiveness, antisexism, antiracism etc.; e.g. many aphorisms of *DDJ* are global cross-cultural, i.e., they appear in more ancient philosophical and religious texts of different cultures and civilizations, e.g., about having one or more divinities, circular or linear sense of time, certain common virtues, sayings like "Those who know do not talk, Those who talk do not know" (Ch. 56), which we discuss in Part III, Interpretations (Hertogh 2025b).

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We omit most of the diacriticals and tone marks from Chinese, Pinyin and more transliterations, both in text and listing of references (e.g. "Lao Tzu" instead of "Lao Tzǔ"), only in the abstract, in titles of (sub)sections, on first mention and explanation of the main terms Chinese characters and Pinyin including tone marks are used.

## ■ CHINESE AND WESTERN PHILOSOPHY, AND SECONDARY LITERATURE

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## A conduta dos narradores em Manual da paixão solitária (2008), de Moacyr Scliar

The conduct of the narrators in Manual da paixão solitária (2008), by Moacyr Scliar

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The purpose of this paper is to show the role of narrators in Moacyr Scliar's Manual da paixão solitária (2008). This book is characterized by having two narrators: the first part of the novel is narrated by the young Shelá; the second segment is narrated by Tamar, the woman Shelah is in love with. It is intended to compare the two narratives, seeking to find differences and similarities between the views of Shelá and Tamar. Both narrate the same events, but each has some peculiarities, sometimes suppressing or privileging some facts.

Manual da paixão solitária

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# A conduta dos narradores em *Manual da paixão solitária* (2008), de Moacyr Scliar

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## Abstract

O propósito deste trabalho é mostrar a atuação dos narradores na obra *Manual da paixão solitária* (2008), de Moacyr Scliar. Este livro se caracteriza por ter dois narradores: a primeira parte do romance é narrada pelo jovem Shelá; o segundo segmento é narrado por Tamar, a mulher pelo qual Shelá é apaixonado. Pretende-se comparar as duas narrativas, procurando encontrar diferenças e semelhanças entre os pontos de vista de Shelá e Tamar. Ambos narram os mesmos acontecimentos, porém cada um tem algumas peculiaridades, ora suprimindo ora privilegiando alguns fatos.

**Keywords:** *manual da paixão solitária, moacyr scliar, narradores*

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## 1. Quem é o escritor Moacyr Scliar

Moacyr Jaime Scliar nasceu em 23 de março de 1937, no Hospital da Beneficência Portuguesa, em Porto Alegre (RS). Seus pais, José e Sara Scliar, oriundos da Bessarábia (Rússia), chegaram ao Brasil em 1904. Filho mais velho do casal, que teve ainda Wremyr e Marili, desde pequeno demonstrou inclinações literárias. O próprio nome Moacyr já é resultado dessa afinidade. Foi escolhido por sua mãe Sara após a leitura de *Iracema*, de José de Alencar, significando “filho da dor”.

Na produção literária de Scliar (1937-2011) há mais de setenta livros de gêneros diferenciados, tais como romances, ensaios, crônicas, ficções infanto-juvenis e contos. O escritor gaúcho teve suas obras publicadas em mais de vinte nações e foi reconhecido quatro vezes com o “Prêmio Jabuti” (em 1988, 1993, 2000 e 2009). Um desses prêmios ele recebeu pelo romance *A mulher que escreveu a Bíblia*, livro que posteriormente foi adaptado para o teatro em 2007 com a atriz Inez Viana. Além de colaborador em vários órgãos da imprensa no país, como a *Folha de São Paulo* e o *Jornal Zero Hora* (RS), Scliar foi membro da Academia Brasileira de Letras a partir do ano 2003.

Berta Waldman observa que, na condição de brasileiro, nascido em Porto Alegre, no bairro do Bom Fim, e judeu, filho de imigrantes da Europa Oriental, Moacyr Scliar traz para a sua literatura as marcas dessa dupla identidade, sendo que “o que o destaca no contexto da literatura brasileira é o fato de ser ele dos raros escritores a tematizar o fenômeno da imigração judaica no país, particularmente no Rio Grande do Sul” (WALDMAN, 2003, p. 103). Regina Zilberman amplia essa afirmação, assinalando que “competiu a Moacyr Scliar conferir consistência à temática judaica na literatura brasileira” (ZILBERMAN, 2017, p. 10-11). Diante dessas afirmações, acredita-se

que o romance *Manual da paixão solitária* pode ser considerado, ao menos em parte, resultado da experiência judaica do escritor.

Feitas essas considerações iniciais, observa-se que o objetivo deste trabalho é mostrar a atuação dos narradores na obra *Manual da paixão solitária* (2008), de Moacyr Scliar. Este livro se caracteriza por ter dois narradores: a primeira parte do romance é narrada pelo jovem Shelá; o segundo segmento é narrado por Tamar, a mulher pelo qual Shelá é apaixonado. Pretende-se comparar as narrativas de Shelá e de Tamar a partir de conceitos da narratologia, especialmente aqueles relacionados à focalização e à narrativa multiperspectivista. Parte-se da hipótese de que a duplicidade de vozes empregada por Scliar não tem apenas função estrutural, mas também problematiza a ideia de verdade única ao apresentar versões distintas dos mesmos acontecimentos. Dessa forma, o romance evidencia como memória, desejo e posicionamento subjetivo influenciam a construção da narrativa.

## 2. O narrador Shelá

Considerando as explanações de Angélica Soares, o narrador é a voz que relata os acontecimentos do romance, jamais podendo ser confundido com o autor, pois “é já uma criação deste e, portanto, elemento de ficção”. Como tanto Shelá como Tamar são narradores que participam da história narrada sob a forma de um “eu”, devem ser classificados como narradores homodiegéticos (SOARES, 2007, p. 45-46). A condição homodiegética de Shelá e de Tamar é fundamental para compreender a construção narrativa do romance. Como ambos participam diretamente dos acontecimentos que relatam, suas narrativas são atravessadas por afetos, interesses e limitações perceptivas. Assim, seus relatos não devem ser lidos como reproduções objetivas dos fatos, mas como interpretações subjetivas dos eventos vividos. Tal característica contribui para a multiplicação

de perspectivas e para o questionamento de uma verdade narrativa única.

No romance *Manual da paixão solitária* Shelá relata um pouco da sua experiência e das suas sensações vividas ao ver Tamar pela primeira vez. Ele, juntamente com seu pai e seus irmãos, foi à casa de Tamar: o objetivo principal era conhecer a então prometida ao seu irmão mais velho Er. Como era do costume da época, o pai da futura noiva recebia em sua casa os familiares de seu pretendente para que pudessem tratar dos assuntos relacionados ao casamento.

Ele diz que Tamar tinha os “cabelos como cabritinhos”. Em seguida, detalha que a futura noiva tinha “olhos negros, boca sensual e corpo simplesmente alucinante”, além do “corpo perfeito” (SCLIAR, 2008, p. 44, 68). A descrição de Shelá não vai além disso, o que difere do relato de Tamar, que, no segundo segmento do livro, narra muito mais detalhes da sua própria formosura.

Após a visita à casa de Tamar, Shelá volta para casa um pouco perturbado com a beleza da então pretendente de seu irmão, beleza esta que lhe é capaz de tirar o sono e lhe causar muito desejo. Ele se sente precisando desabafar com alguém sobre o que estava sentindo após conhecer a bela Tamar. Porém, Shelá percebe que não havia com quem desabafar e foi aí que lhe ocorreu a ideia de escrever, colocar em um pergaminho aquilo que estava sentindo e ao mesmo tempo o angustiando, e assim o fez.

Mas como colocar estas sensações até então desconhecidas por Shelá no papel? Os pergaminhos, as tintas e os estiletes estavam em poder de seu pai, o patriarca da família, e seu pai jamais iria permitir que Shelá usasse os pergaminhos para escrever sobre os seus dramas interiores.

E foi então que Shelá teve a ideia de roubar os pergaminhos de seu pai, pois precisava dos apetrechos de escrita para poder registrar suas aflições. Já de posse dos apetrechos necessários, Shelá sentou-se em uma pedra e começou a relatar de acordo com o seu ponto de vista os acontecimentos dos últimos dias, como o medo de seu irmão mais velho, a angústia em relação ao casamento com Tamar, além de usar os pergaminhos para relatar suas aflições.

Shelá também anotava em seus pergaminhos as aflições vividas por seu irmão Er após o casamento com Tamar. Com preocupação, Shelá registrava que Er estava sempre em silêncio, triste, amargo pois seu casamento havia fracassado por ele não conseguir gerar um filho. Um dia, ele decide perguntar a Tamar o que estava acontecendo, e ela acaba lhe contando que Er não a procurava e seu pênis era murcho como o sexo de um morto. Shelá tenta conversar com Er. Este o mira “com aquela expressão – a expressão do animal ferido, acuado. E pôs-se a chorar. Chorava compulsivamente, o corpo sacudido pelos soluços”, dizendo: “Salva-me, irmãozinho, salva-me, soluçava ele” (SCLIAR, 2008, p. 57, 60). Shelá não sabia como ajudá-lo. O primogênito pede para ficar sozinho, desaparece e é encontrado morto numa caverna. Aqui é necessário observar que Shelá não chega a descobrir o que Tamar descreve no segundo segmento do romance: Er era um homem que queria ser mulher, sendo esta a razão de ele não conseguir ter ereção junto à esposa.

Depois que Er morreu, ele passa a contar os fatos ocorridos com seu irmão Onan. Este se vê obrigado a casar com Tamar, após a morte de seu irmão Er, seguindo uma tradição familiar. Onan e Tamar se unem, com a simples missão de gerar um filho para assim manter a linhagem de sua família, mas isso não aconteceu. É o próprio Onan quem conta para Shelá que todas as noites ele se deitava com Tamar, a acariciava, beijava e a penetrava, deixava-a louca de desejos, e então ejaculava fora. Onan estava irado pois não queria engravidar Tamar, pois os descendentes receberiam o nome de Er e não o seu. Shelá ouvia tudo aquilo fascinado e ao mesmo tempo aterrorizado, pois não acreditava que seu irmão seria capaz de realizar tal ato.

Shelá também escreve em seus pergaminhos o que aconteceu com seu irmão Onam, a maneira triste como ele morreu, assim como os seus últimos momentos ao lado de seu irmão. Ele também descreve com detalhes algo que havia descoberto logo após a morte de seu irmão: ao contrário do que ele imaginava, Onam não odiava Tamar como o fizera acreditar. Pelo contrário: ele a amava desde o primeiro instante em que a vira na casa de seu pai, amor este que deveria manter em segredo, pois Tamar era a então mulher de seu irmão.

Quanto à Tamar, logo após a morte de seu segundo marido, ela retorna para a casa de seus pais. Ela acreditava ainda ter contas a acertar, pois queria ter um filho, e para que isso fosse realizado, um dia ela manda chamar Shelá para um encontro em uma caverna. Ao escurecer, Shelá, então tomado pela curiosidade e pelo desejo, subiu a montanha e lá estava ela junto à entrada da caverna. Tamar vestia uma túnica e aos olhos de Shelá parecia mais linda do que nunca, entraram os dois na caverna e após alguns minutos de silêncio, Tamar disse a Shelá: quero-te como marido; ela o puxa e lhe dá um beijo apaixonado, e juntamente com este beijo vinha uma mistura intensa de emoções.

Ele, adolescente, nunca havia sequer beijado uma mulher, e de repente vem aquela mulher a qual ele tanto desejava e lhe beija com paixão, Shelá se vê confuso e sua única reação foi de correr para o deserto.

Shelá, apaixonado por Tamar, vê a ideia de se casar com a bela mulher se desfazer, pois seu pai – patriarca movido pelo medo de perder mais um filho – não aceita o casamento de Tamar com Shelá. Ela, juntamente com sua família se muda para outra aldeia. O tempo passou, mas Shelá não se esquecia de Tamar. Refugiado em sua caverna e movido pelo desejo, ele imagina uma Tamar que ele pudesse abraçar e possuir. Foi aí que, movido pelo desejo, Shelá tem a ideia de fazer uma Tamar de barro para com ela descobrir o sexo.

Guiado pelo desejo, o narrador trabalha em sua Tamar de barro com riqueza de detalhes, como um corpo tentador, lábios brilhantes e um cuidado especial com a vagina, que, para ter a sensação de desvirginar a Tamar de barro, ele coloca uma bexiga feita de cabra.

Após construir sua amada em barro, no outro dia ele sobe a montanha para ter relações com sua Tamar, porém, após consumir o ato e se levantar, ele percebe que aquela Tamar havia sido destruída. Enlouquecido pelo desejo e pela frustração de ter perdido sua amada de barro, Shelá começa a imaginar outras formas para satisfazer aquela paixão que tanto o consumia. Depois de muito pensar, ele então se pergunta o porquê de não usar as suas mãos para se satisfazer. E foi aí que, de dentro de sua caverna, Shelá se entrega à masturbação: ele gritava, gemia de prazer, quando, enfim, chegou ao orgasmo. Exausto, deita-se no chão e começa a pensar que havia descoberto uma nova forma de fazer sexo.

O pai de Shelá sai em viagem para se animar após a morte de sua esposa. O patriarca é atraído por mulheres vestidas de roupas vibrantes, e em especial por uma mulher que usava véu e dela só se viam os olhos, olhos estes que exerciam sobre o patriarca um certo fascínio. Foi então que o patriarca disse à mulher: te quero; ela pergunta: o que me dás? Ele indaga sobre o que ela quer, ela responde que um cabrito bastaria como pagamento. Eles foram para uma tenda e, gemendo de desejo, o patriarca se joga em cima da mulher e tem relações com ela. Ela deseja receber o pagamento, ele não tinha o cabrito naquele momento, mas disse que iria mandar assim que voltasse para a sua aldeia.

Ela então pede algo como garantia que a dívida seria paga. O patriarca mesmo estando surpreso pergunta à prostituta qual seria a garantia. Ela diz: seu cajado e o símbolos da dignidade patriarcal; e assim ele o fez, entregando-os a ela.

Dias depois, ele tenta encontrar a mulher que ele acreditava ser uma prostituta, mas que na verdade era Tamar, buscando quitar sua dívida e com isso recuperar o símbolo de sua dignidade. Shelá descobre que a mulher não se tratava de uma prostituta e que a mesma havia sumido momentos depois de se deitar com seu pai. Meses se passaram e Shelá recebe a notícia da gravidez de Tamar, o patriarca se sente traído ao saber da gravidez dela, pois de acordo com a tradição ela havia desonrado a memória de seus filhos e por isso devia ser condenada à morte. O patriarca organiza tudo para que Tamar seja queimada em praça pública, pois na sua função ele deveria preservar a honra a qualquer custo. Casos de adultério na tribo eram considerados crime, punido com a morte por apedrejamento. “Bastaria meu pai ordenar. Já o fizera mais de uma vez, encarregando-se ele próprio de atirar a primeira pedra nas mulheres transgressoras” (SCLiar, 2008, p. 55-56). No dia marcado todos se reuniram em volta de uma pedra para ver o fim dela, mas, momentos antes, ela decide falar a todos ali reunidos quem é o pai de seu filho.

Fez-se um silêncio e antes que o pai de Shelá pudesse dizer algo, Tamar faz um sinal a sua irmã que trazia consigo um manto no qual se encontrava o símbolo da dignidade patriarcal. Tamar tratou de dizer que havia recebido de penhor ao homem com o qual havia ela havia engravidado e que queria ele a julgar, ou seja, revelou que o patriarca era o pai de seu filho. O patriarca então assume a responsabilidade de ser pai do filho de Tamar, ele então ordena para que a soltem e a levem para sua casa onde ela passa a morar.

Finalmente chega o dia do parto. Tamar dá à luz a gêmeos e Shelá, ao ver os bebês, sente por eles uma ternura ou um instinto paternal. Depois disso, Shelá continuava a passar boa parte da sua vida na caverna. Finalizando a sua narração, na caverna, ele escreve:

Penso no que ficou para trás, penso nos meus pais, nos meus irmãos. E escrevo. Já não preciso roubar pergaminhos; tenho-os à vontade. Herdeiro de um patriarca, dono de rebanhos, dinheiro não me falta. Poderia escrever ininterruptamente, se quisesse. Gastar muitos pergaminhos, muitos estiletos, rios de tinta. Mas não, agora escrevo pouco; lembranças e pensamentos cuidadosamente destilados da confusa mistura da existência, as lembranças, as reflexões, as fantasias. Sim, tenho fantasias. Melhor dizendo: o pequeno Shelá dentro de mim tem fantasias, eu as acolho e cuido delas, convivo com elas. (SCLiar, 2008, p. 127).

### 3. A narradora Tamar

Na segunda parte do livro quem narra a história é Tamar. Ela conta fatos ocorridos durante sua infância, a admiração que sentia de por seu pai, o quanto ela era bonita, e o quanto os rapazes da aldeia admiravam a sua beleza. Sendo a narradora, ela se apresenta como linda. Ela mesma afirma que era “uma mulher linda, de corpo perfeito” (SCLiar, 2008, p. 166, 182). Além disso, pondera a narradora:

Eu tinha orgulho de meus cabelos, longos, negros. Todos os dias eu os penteava com um pente de madeira por mim própria fabricado. [...] à medida que o tempo passava [...] eu me tornava mulher. Linda mulher, modéstia à parte. Não era muito de me olhar no espelho, objeto que nem sequer existia em nossa casa: meu pai dizia que era coisa de vaidoso, de gente leviana. Mas Laila tinha, sim, um espelho, e o que eu

via ali fazia meu coração bater mais depressa. Deus, eu era linda. Tudo em mim era lindo. Os cabelos eram lindos, os olhos, escuros, eram lindos, os lábios, túmidos, eram lindos. Tu és linda, dizia Laila, não sem uma ponta de inveja [...]. Tu és linda, diziam minhas irmãs, quando crescermos vamos ser lindas como tu. Até minha mãe, timidamente, uma vez me disse que se sentia orgulhosa de ter uma filha tão linda. Só meu pai não dizia nada, não comentava minha beleza. O que me dava muita raiva. Pára de falar com Deus, eu tinha vontade de lhe dizer, olha para tua filha, ela é linda, no belo rosto dela tu enxergarás a obra do Senhor. Não só minha mãe, ou minhas irmãs, ou Laila, elogiavam minha beleza. Os rapazes da aldeia me olhavam com uma insistência que traduzia sua admiração, seu deslumbramento. (SCLiar, 2008, p. 143, 145-146)

Aparentando narcisismo, Tamar exalta a sua própria beleza, chamando a si mesma de “linda” por dez vezes somente no fragmento acima. A confirmação de sua lindeza se dá primeiramente pelo acesso ao espelho e depois pelos elogios das próprias irmãs e da amiga Laila.

Embora a insistência de Tamar em destacar sua própria beleza possa sugerir um traço narcísico, essa estratégia narrativa também pode ser interpretada como uma forma de agência feminina. Ao conceder voz à personagem bíblica, tradicionalmente apresentada a partir de perspectivas masculinas, Scliar permite que Tamar construa sua própria imagem e reivindique o controle sobre seu corpo e sua identidade. Nesse sentido, a recorrência dos autoelogios ultrapassa a mera vaidade e funciona como mecanismo de afirmação diante de uma estrutura social patriarcal.

Tamar relata que, como era de costume da aldeia os pais escolherem os maridos para suas filhas, o que a deixava muito ansiosa pois o tempo estava a passar e seu pai não se manifestava a respeito deste assunto, pois Tamar desejava para si um homem que a despertasse como mulher.

Um dia o pai dela chega em casa e anuncia a todos que havia encontrado um marido para sua filha, mas a alegria de Tamar dura pouco ao saber que seu futuro marido seria Er. Isso para ela foi um balde de água fria, pois, para Tamar, Er de todos os pretendentes da aldeia era o último com o qual ela desejaria casar-se. Em sua narrativa, ela o apresenta como insignificante, sem graça, magro, encurvado, com uma expressão de quem estava a pedir socorro. Ela sentiu vontade de sair correndo ao ficar sabendo quem seria seu futuro marido.

Uma semana depois Tamar fica frente a frente com seu futuro marido, o que para ela a frustração foi ainda maior, pois o cara que seria em breve seu marido, o cara com quem ela faria sexo e formaria uma família, era uma figura mais lamentável que ainda parecia ser. Nada nada tinha de parecido com o pai dele, um homem imponente, de longa barba e bonito até. Sem poder confrontar seu pai pela escolha ruim, Tamar aceita Er como seu futuro marido, porém ela estava muito infeliz.

Meses se passaram e as visitas de Er à casa de Tamar eram frequentes: primeiro vinha com o pai e os irmãos, mas logo depois passou a ir sozinho; os dois sentavam na sala e conversavam poucas vezes, eles nunca se beijavam, se abraçavam ou se davam as mãos. Tamar não sabia o que pensar, estava triste confusa, sua maior esperança era de que com o casamento as coisas mudassem, que assim como as histórias que ouvia de sua mãe que eles se apaixonem.

O casamento foi realizado com muita festa, a cerimônia foi conduzida pelo pai de Tamar que, durante seu discurso, deixa bem evidente aos noivos a obrigação de lhes gerar um filho. Er, o noivo,

ouvira tudo calado e com uma cara de assustado, era o noivo mais amedrontado que Tamar havia visto. Após a festa, Tamar e Er foram para o início a vida de casados, e vão morar em uma casa ainda inacabada próximo à residência do patriarca, onde eles deveriam passar a primeira noite juntos pois afinal estavam casados, e assim como Tamar todos então esperavam de Er a desvirginasse e logo em seguida a engravidasse, porém isso não foi o que de fato aconteceu. Naquela noite Tamar e Er vão para a casa e vão direto para o quarto que já se encontra todo preparado para os recém-casados, eles então se deitam e completamente nus os dois ficam a olhar para o teto sem esboçar nenhum tipo de reação, Tamar então se põe a pensar em que diabos Er estava a pensar naquele momento.

Tamar fica imóvel esperando de maneira ansiosa que aquele magro franzino, aquele que para ela era a própria negação de masculinidade, pois seu corpo precisava de um macho, sua boca, seus seios, sua vagina precisavam de alguém que matasse aquele desejo que ela sentia desde a adolescência, e ao perceber que isto não iria ocorrer, Tamar então resolve tomar uma atitude não muito normal para aquela época pois acreditava que o casamento devia ser consumado de alguma forma, e ela desejava se tornar mulher, e estava disposta a qualquer coisa para que isso acontecesse de fato. Foi então que ela resolve partir para a ação, “Tamar estende a mão acariciando o rosto e todo o corpo de seu marido e por fim o pênis, para Tamar aquilo era uma audácia pois era a primeira vez que ela agarrava o pênis de um homem, mas mesmo sendo inexperiente no assunto ela se dá conta de que foi um ato inútil pois, apesar de não ser um pênis tão pequeno capaz de cumprir perfeitamente sua função, o mesmo se encontrava murcho, Tamar então compara esta situação como se fosse sexo com um morto, e que ali naquele instante Er estivesse matando o seu desejo e ela também teve a certeza de que seu casamento estava condenado. Tamar então se vira para o lado a chorar e acaba pegando no sono, e assim se dá início a vida de casados dos dois.

Tamar passa os dias a se entreter com os afazeres de casa e com suas esculturas de madeira, o que para ela era seu grande consolo pois trabalhar em esculturas era uma de suas paixões, o que não era fácil pois árvores era algo muito difícil de se encontrar por aquelas regiões. Mercadores que traziam pergaminhos para o patriarca discretamente abasteciam Tamar deste material. À noite regressava seu marido e Tamar já o aguardava com a mesa posta, eles comiam, trocavam algumas palavras e logo em seguida iam para a cama onde nada acontecia, Tamar foi se acostumando com que para ela era uma miserável vida de casada, mas sem perder a esperança de que seu marido um dia despertasse para o sexo; contudo o que ela não esperava é que uma noite ambos já haviam terminado de comer quando uma das irmãs de Tamar vai até sua casa pedindo para que fosse dormir com sua mãe pois a mesma estava passando mal e desejava que a filha fosse passar a noite com ela. Tamar avisa a Er que irá passar a noite de com sua mãe, Tamar então ao chegar lá percebe que sua mãe está bem, então ela resolve regressar para casa, ao chegar em casa ela vai para seu quarto sem fazer barulho e então vê seu marido vestindo a túnica de seu casamento, com os olhos pintados de preto e nos lábios uma tintura vermelho brilhante. Ao ver Tamar, Er ele então solta um grito e se joga na cama cobrindo-se e fica ali choramingando e gemendo.

Passado o susto inicial, Tamar senta-se ao lado de seu marido e o acaricia sem dizer nenhuma palavra, o que poderia ela dizer diante daquela situação um homem vestido de mulher, um homem querendo fazer no sexo o papel de uma mulher, aquilo era muito grave por se tratar do filho mais velho do patriarca, e, se alguém viesse a saber, Er seria condenado à morte, porém ninguém de forma alguma viria a saber pois Tamar não revelaria tal fato, e mais: naquele instante ela

teve a certeza de que seu casamento havia acabado. Disse a Er que manteria o ocorrido em segredo, Tamar então fez com que Er saísse da cama, lavasse o rosto, e os dois foram dormir. Ela se vê frustrada pois seu casamento não havia se consumado, mas o pior ainda estava por vir: os dias foram passando e Tamar começa a perceber que seu marido andava estranho, pois ele era visto pelas montanhas a resmungar coisas estranhas, não comia, até que um dia ele sumiu e foi encontrado morto.

Sob certos aspectos, a morte de Er é contada de modos diferentes. Na narrativa de Shelá, ele relata que quando Tamar lhe relata que o casamento não foi consumado, ele se alegra pelo insucesso do irmão, pois, na verdade, Shelá a desejava. Enfrentando simultaneamente esse sentimento e o remorso, ele procura o irmão, que pede ajuda e depois pede para ficar sozinho. Depois da morte de Er, Shelá se sente culpado: “eu não o ajudara. Porque não sabia o que fazer, porque no fundo tinha raiva dele [...] E pagaria por isso um preço. Daí em diante seu espectro me perseguiria sem descanso” (SCLiar, 2008, p. 60-61). No cenário da morte, Shelá afirma apenas que viu plantas venenosas próximas ao corpo do irmão, o que indicava que ele teria tirado a própria vida, pois “preferira a morte à humilhação”. Sobre essas plantas, ele lembra, “não falei a ninguém, nem mesmo a meu pai e minha mãe” (SCLiar, 2008, p. 61). Na narrativa de Tamar, ela comenta que Er foi encontrado sem vida em uma caverna, o que para ela foi algo devastador pois tudo indicava se tratar de um suicídio. As plantas supostamente utilizadas para se matar eram, “segundo uma lenda local, ali tinham sido colocadas pelo demônio, que assim perversamente estimulava aqueles que queriam dar cabo da vida” (SCLiar, 2008, p. 158).

A divergência entre os relatos de Shelá e Tamar acerca da morte de Er revela um dos procedimentos centrais do romance. Nenhum dos narradores possui acesso integral aos acontecimentos; cada um reconstrói os fatos a partir de sua posição subjetiva. Dessa forma, Scliar enfraquece a noção de verdade absoluta e aproxima sua narrativa de uma lógica multiperspectivista, na qual diferentes versões coexistem sem que uma delas seja definitivamente validada. O resultado é uma releitura do mito bíblico baseada na pluralidade de interpretações.

Shelá não comenta nada acerca do enterro do irmão, mas Tamar o faz, apresentando um importante acontecimento: na condição de suicida, Er não poderia ser enterrado perto de outros mortos da tribo. Porém, o pai dela “decidiu que Er seria sepultado como um morto comum, não como suicida”, o que trouxe muito alívio a todos. “Er, finalmente absolvido, finalmente livre de seu sofrimento, foi enterrado” (SCLiar, 2008, p. 159).

Tamar então se vê jovem e viúva, amargurada, pelo que lhe havia acontecido, pelo olhar das pessoas sobre ela, isso a fez pensar muitas vezes em deixar a aldeia, porém ela não podia fazer isso, por causa da lealdade, por culpa e pela lei da aldeia, pois por ter sido casada com Er e ele não havia deixado uma descendência, mas Tamar havia ficado somente com a herança o que não era normal.

Ela é dada em casamento a Onan, irmão de Er. Conforme a tradição, ele tomaria o lugar do irmão falecido no leito conjugal e a ele caberia a missão de engravidar Tamar. Depois de uma cerimônia simples, após o casamento os dois vão para a casa que já havia pertencido a Tamar e Er. Onan fecha a porta e Tamar toda trêmula imaginar o que ele faria, se ele a tomaria nos braços, a jogaria na cama e a possuísse, mas para sua surpresa Onan diz a ela que precisavam conversar; mas que diabos de conversa ele queria falar bem na hora do sexo; Tamar na esperança que Onan fosse falar de seus sentimentos amorosos, mas muito pelo contrário ele começa a dizer para ela que havia se casado somente porque a lei o obrigava, que não nutria nenhum sentimento por ela e que a odiava por duas razões: uma era por

acreditar que Tamar era a responsável pela morte de seu irmão, e outra por ele acreditar ser somente um fornecedor de esperma. Tamar então aceita o fato de que Onam havia se disposto a fazer sexo com ela, porém sem nenhum tipo de sentimento da parte dele, ela acreditava que poderia conquistar Onam e fazê-lo mudar de ideia com seu instinto de mulher poderia fazer com que Onam se apaixonasse por ela.

Então chega a noite e logo após o jantar seu marido diz para ela que a espera no quarto, ela vai logo em seguida Tamar então relata que deveria ela se deitar em silêncio e deixar que seu marido levantasse sua túnica e a penetrasse, porém, possuída por um desejo incontrolável, ela decide ficar completamente nua e ao entrar no quarto percebe a reação de Onan: ao vê-la daquela maneira, ele teve um sobressalto e o desejo falou mais forte, ele automaticamente teve uma ereção, sentou-se na cama e ajudado por Tamar, despiu-se. Foi aí que Tamar possuída por um desejo incontrolável se joga sobre ele beijando-o, beijo este que foi correspondido; ele logo em seguida ele a penetra. Tamar, na esperança de obter um orgasmo, vê isso não acontecer, pois, no momento exato, seu marido ejacula no chão. Diante disso, Tamar se encontra ali frustrada e cheia de perguntas: por que seu marido havia feito tal ato, por que não foi até o fim? Foi então que ela se dá conta de que ele havia feito aquilo por vontade própria, percebendo, em seguida, que Onan não desejava que ela engravidasse, que não era ele apenas um fornecedor de esperma para suscitar um descendente que levaria o nome de Er.

Até que em uma noite após eles terem relação Tamar então desesperada se joga no chão tentando esfregar a vagina no resto de esperma que ali se encontrava na esperança de que algo pudesse vir a acontecer, porém não passou de mais uma tentativa frustrada. Enquanto isso, Onan ria e dizia para ela: vai rápido antes que seque. O tempo foi passando e Tamar continuava sofrendo em silêncio, ela também percebe que algo estava acontecendo com Onan, pois ele já não era mais tão triunfante, não se excitava tão facilmente.

Poucos dias depois, ele adoeceu e morreu de uma doença misteriosa, e Tamar entra em desespero, pois apesar de tudo ela o amava e não conseguiu dizer a ele tudo que sentia. Depois do enterro, Tamar volta para a casa de seus pais, pois a família de Onam não a aceitara de volta pois acreditavam que ela tinha culpa na morte de seu filho.

Mas Tamar acreditava ainda ter contas a ajustar com patriarca da família e nada a faria mudar de ideia, ela queria engravidar, ela ansiava por um filho, por amamentar, e assim o faria e como a lei do levirato continuava valendo, o filho mais novo do patriarca teria que engravidá-la. Ela volta os olhares a Shelá, um menino ainda saindo da adolescência, um garoto bonito, Tamar gostava de Shelá como qualquer mulher gostava do cunhado, porém o que ela agora desejava era obter um homem ao qual ela acreditava ter direito, e para isso faria o uso de táticas como se aproximar de Shelá para garantir seu apoio, então ela marca um encontro com Shelá em uma caverna ao anoitecer.

Ao cair da noite no pé da montanha ela se põs à espera de Shelá e no momento certo ele apareceu. Aparentava estar meio perturbado com o convite, os dois entram na caverna, e faz-se silêncio por alguns instantes, e Tamar pensa por um momento em desistir, em dizer que queria somente vê-lo e saber notícias da família, porém não agiu assim. Muito pelo contrário, ela foi bem direta ao dizer para Shelá que o queria para marido e num impulso o puxa para si e lhe dá um beijo apaixonado, violento, uma mistura de frustração com desejo; e Shelá, como nunca havia beijado uma mulher, saiu correndo, e Tamar ficou a se perguntar o que havia feito, mas de uma coisa ela tinha certeza: que a fêmea que estava adormecida dentro de si havia ressurgido e, mais, que o adolescente Shelá havia despertado nela um desejo e almejou que seu casamento com o garoto fosse aceito

por todos principalmente pelo patriarca da família, pois essa era a sua vontade.

Ela vai conversar com o patriarca para dizer a ele que gostaria de se casar com seu filho mais novo. Foi aí que para a sua decepção o patriarca lhe diz que não iria permitir aquela união apesar de saber que Tamar tinha direitos pois assim dizia os mandamentos da aldeia; ela volta para casa humilhada. O tempo passou e já não se falava sobre o ocorrido e tudo parecia distante, não para Tamar, ela ainda desejava obter uma semente que acreditava ter direito, fosse ela de Shelá ou até mesmo de Judá – o pai dele. Ela sabia que, além de patriarca, ele ainda era um homem viril e ela acreditava ter todas as condições de atender suas necessidades ao qual estava disposta a tudo para conseguir.

Então Tamar teve a ideia de se disfarçar de prostituta para tentar atrair Judá ideia essa que lhe parecia meio maluca, porém havia um fundamento já que Judá havia ficado viúvo há muito tempo, porém ainda era ele um homem viril, vigoroso, e os patriarcas não estavam livres de ter desejos, e portanto acreditava ela que ele seria capaz de engravidá-la. Mas Tamar sabia que fingir ser uma prostituta não seria nada fácil para isso ela teria que deixar de lado alguns costumes e ensinamentos, teria ela que vencer sua repugnância natural de oferecer seu corpo em público; e movida pela vontade de arriscar ela decide por seguir em frente.

O disfarce de Tamar constitui um ato performativo decisivo na narrativa. Ao assumir a identidade de prostituta, a personagem passa a manipular conscientemente os códigos sociais que normalmente a oprimem. O episódio evidencia sua capacidade de agir estrategicamente dentro de uma estrutura patriarcal. Além disso, as diferenças entre os relatos de Shelá e Tamar revelam distintas formas de interpretar o acontecimento: enquanto a perspectiva masculina tende a enfatizar o impacto do fato sobre a honra familiar, a narrativa de Tamar destaca sua luta por autonomia e pelo direito à maternidade.

A narradora vai em busca das prostitutas para que elas a ensinassem como seduzir o patriarca, o que elas concordam após Tamar lhes oferecer um dinheiro. Elas decidem ajudá-la em tudo, dando-lhe algumas roupas, mostrando onde ela deveria ficar, Tamar então pede para que nenhuma das prostitutas se ofereça a Judá, e mais: que se ele viesse a sentir algum interesse por elas, elas deveriam dizer que já tinham compromisso com outros homens.

As prostitutas sugerem a Tamar que procure uma velha prostituta, senhora que agora selecionava mulheres para iniciar na prostituição – ela poderia auxiliar Tamar a como se portar. Cheia de receios, Tamar procura a velha prostituta para que lhe ensinasse a como deveria ela se comportar, e ao chegar no local Tamar é recebida muito bem pela senhora que logo começa a lhe contar como havia se tornado uma prostituta, e finalmente a senhora pergunta a Tamar o real motivo que lhe trouxera aquele lugar, e Tamar sem querer entrar muito em detalhes diz a senhora o que queria, e de quanto tempo seria necessário; após ouvir tudo a mulher então diz que tudo bem que iria lhe ensinar tudo que fosse necessário.

A velha meretriz então começa a ensinar a Tamar a usar seu poder de sedução e o primeiro passo seria ela estar vestida e maquiada de maneira que ninguém a reconhecesse, deveria falar o mínimo. Tamar indaga à marafona como deveria fazer para seduzi-lo. Em uma resposta bem simples, ela disse para a surpresa de Tamar: com um simples olhar; sim um olhar era o começo do sexo, pois um olhar atraente, experiente magnetiza um homem, sendo que o olhar é uma linguagem.

A narradora aprende técnicas de como olhar de forma fixa e hipnótica, a piscar de modo significativo, a desviar o olhar, uma manobra destinada a dizer que a conquista não seria algo fácil, e logo em seguida e não menos importante veio a maneira correta de

se maquiar, e para auxiliar Tamar neste momento a velha manda chamar uma das mulheres que maquiou Tamar de maneira pesada com tintura para realçar os olhos. Ela fica impressionada com o resultado, pois antes ela tinha belos olhos mas eram olhos de uma mulher jovem ingênua e triste; porém, após se maquiar, neste olhar predominava um ar de mistério capaz de atrair qualquer homem até mesmo o mais arrogante de todos, e para complementar ainda mais o ar de mistério Tamar ainda vestia um véu e uma túnica que lhe escondia as formas do corpo.

Tudo pronto e quando finalmente Judá chega com a caravana, Tamar o esperava no templo, ela então o avista mas não o chama, não faz nenhum gesto para chamar sua atenção, não se oferece, muito pelo contrário, ela apenas o olha com aquele olhar fixo e hipnótico que a velha prostituta havia lhe ensinado. Ela desejava que ele tomasse a iniciativa, que pedisse para fazer sexo de maneira que somente ele pudesse se responsabilizar por aquilo que ela esperava que fosse o desfecho do encontro. E foi então que movido pelo desejo o patriarca cede aos encantos da bela, e com uma voz que traduzia um grande desejo ele diz a ela te quero; Tamar no primeiro instante não dá muita atenção ele então insiste a dizer te quero; Tamar pergunta a Judá o que lhe daria em troca do sexo. Esta pergunta o pegou de surpresa pois ele não sabia o quanto era pago para as prostitutas, mas uma coisa era certa ele não tinha dinheiro, daquela região mas tinha ovelhas, mas Tamar não queria ovelhas queria algo que ele não tinha no momento, ela desejava um cabrito, e Judá apesar de no momento não ter o cabrito mas cheio de desejo ele então aceita.

Tamar o leva até uma tenda mal iluminada na qual ela se deita sem se despir, apenas levanta túnica e possuído pelo desejo Judá se joga em cima de Tamar e rapidamente a penetra; e naquele momento alguma coisa passou pela cabeça de Tamar que de certa forma a assustou, era a primeira vez que ela havia tido uma relação sexual digna; mais que ele sabia fazer sexo dignamente; e apesar de Tamar tentar por alguns segundos fingir tem uma hora que ela não dá mais conta de fingir ela então chega ao ápice do prazer e goza.

Quando terminaram, ele então se levanta todo revigorado pois acreditava ter recuperado sua virilidade, elogia a então prostituta e se despede, mas Tamar ao recuperar a lucidez o puxa pelo braço e pergunta sobre o cabrito; o patriarca então diz a ela que naquele momento não possuía o animal mas que assim que retornasse enviaria o animal o mais rápido possível; Tamar então pede uma garantia, isso deixa o patriarca muito irritado, o que para ele era um atrevimento uma prostituta exigir uma garantia de um homem honrado como ele, mas mesmo irritado e ciente que não deveria provocar um escândalo, ele concorda com a prostituta; Tamar ao ser perguntada o que queria como garantia ela imediatamente respondeu: quero seu sinete, seu cajado e seu cordão.

Apesar de estar surpreso com o que Tamar havia lhe exigido como garantia o patriarca entrega o símbolo da dignidade patriarcal a ela e ao se despedir de Tamar o patriarca diz desejar encontrá-la novamente quem sabe no próximo ano, ela então diz ele que eles irão se encontrar o mais cedo que ele pudesse imaginar. Semanas se passaram e Tamar estava nervosa e ansiosa para saber se havia conseguido engravidar, até que veio a certeza: sim ela estava grávida, e com isso mudava tudo ela já não era mais uma mulher que mendigava um esperma, muito pelo contrário ela agora era uma mulher que carregava em seu corpo um novo ser, era uma mulher vivendo a plenitude da condição feminina. Passada a euforia de saber que estava grávida, Tamar começa a pensar como iria comunicar a todos a sua gravidez, e tudo que teria que enfrentar, foi então que resolver começar por sua mãe que ao saber da notícia da gravidez e a primeira coisa que a mãe pergunta a Tamar quem seria o pai daquela criança, mas Tamar se recusa a dizer, não por teimosia mas

o seu silêncio foi devidamente pensado, pois ela sabia que ao revelar a sua mãe o nome do pai de seu filho, ela não guardaria segredo e logo todos estariam sabendo que era o pai de seu filho, a revelação seria feita no momento certo; Tamar agiu com astúcia.

O pai de Tamar ao saber que a filha estava grávida diz a ela que o melhor a fazer era fugir antes que a notícia da gravidez chegasse aos ouvidos de Judá, pois para ele, Tamar seria considerada uma adúltera já que ela ainda era viúva de seus filhos, mas Tamar se manteve firme em sua decisão de enfrentar a tudo e a todos. Os dias vão passando até que a notícia da gravidez de Tamar chega aos ouvidos de Judá que de imediato manda que busquem Tamar para levá-la até a aldeia, Tamar não resistiu e foi ao encontro do patriarca.

Chegando à aldeia, Judá a aguardava junto com uma pequena multidão que era hostil com Tamar, que logo fica sabendo que já havia sido julgada pelo patriarca e que havia sido condenada a morrer queimada viva, eles acreditavam que só o fogo era capaz de purificar o seu pecado de ser uma mulher adúltera.

Tamar então é amarrada em uma árvore onde passa a noite, e para a surpresa de Tamar quem aparece para soltá-la foi o garoto Shelá. Ao ver a atitude dele, ela fica comovida pois tinha diante dela um garoto que a amava a qualquer custo mesmo que fosse expulso da aldeia estava disposto a ajudá-la a fugir, ela o agradece e diz que não iria fugir e mais que estava disposta a enfrentar seu destino; e como ele não se conformava com tal atitude, Tamar teve que ser ríspida com o garoto para que ele fosse embora.

O dia mal amanheceu e todos já estavam em volta da pedra a esperar a condenação de Tamar que se mantém fria e sorridente diante de todos, sorriso este visto por todos como desafiador e que deixava a todos enfurecidos, e sobre os gritos de “queimem-na”, Judá então faz um discurso do motivo pelo qual ela seria queimada viva, ele a condena à morte; porém antes que este fato ocorra Tamar levanta o braço desejando ter a última palavra antes da morte, o que lhe foi concedido pelo patriarca.

Tamar então se dirige a Judá perguntando a ele: não queres saber quem é o pai de meu filho? Fez-se um silêncio e antes mesmo que Judá viesse a lhe responder, Tamar faz um sinal a sua irmã, que aproximou-se. Tamar pede a ela que mostre, e mesmo assustada a menina assim o faz, um pano com o sinete, o cajado e o cordão patriarcais.

Num tom triunfal, Tamar afirmou que aqueles objetos ela havia recebido do homem com quem havia se deitado e que ele estava ali a julgá-la. Naquele exato momento ela aponta para Judá e diz: aquele homem o patriarca, homem que havia lhe negado seu filho mais novo, era ele o pai do filho que Tamar carregava em seu ventre. E naquele momento o patriarca se dá conta de que havia sido enganado por Tamar, que ela havia se passado por uma prostituta somente para engravidar dele; e o patriarca manda que a soltem e passa a lhe dar a devida proteção necessária, Tamar, após ser solta, decide procurar Shelá, que naquele momento se encontrava ao pé da montanha com um olhar perdido e imóvel. Ao se encontrarem o silêncio se fez presente, ele de costas para Tamar que coloca as mãos sobre seus ombros tentando uma aproximação e naquele momento Tamar conta tudo a Shelá, que ela também se sentia traída pois havia se casado com um homem que não gostava de mulher, e outro que jogava seu sêmen na terra para não engravidá-la, e ela ali sempre aflita sofrendo pois queria cumprir os designios patriarcais.

Tamar ainda conta a Shelá tudo o que havia ocorrido, falou sobre sua conversa com a velha prostituta, narrou como havia se aproximado de Judá, e como havia conseguido o símbolo da dignidade patriarcal. Ela afirma não sentir raiva de Judá, pois agora ele era pai de seu filho.

E quanto a Shelá, Tamar se recorda das palavras da velha prostituta que lhe diz: deverias te aproximar de Shelá de uma maneira mais acolhedora, e foi então que movida por um sentimento de afeto Tamar diz a Shelá que se ele assim desejasse ela seria sua esposa fiel, dedicada, que estaria sempre a seu lado, que seu corpo seria de Shelá não por obrigação mas sim por carinho. Ela estende a mão sobre seu rosto, e naquele momento Tamar estremeceu era seu corpo que estava falando e seguindo seu impulso, ela deveria se jogar nos braços de Shelá e fazer com que ele a possuísse ali mesmo naquele chão cheio de pedras; mas ela resistiu como e porque ela não soube, talvez por estar grávida, e o filho ser de seu pai, ou por talvez não amar Shelá, e naquele momento Tamar ficou ali parada sem dizer nada e Shelá ali parado sem sequer olhar para Tamar. Ela decide tirar a mão de seu rosto e vai embora.

Passaram os dias e Tamar voltou a morar na aldeia perto de Judá que apesar de ir pouco lhe ver, dava a ela casa, roupas, comida, entre outras coisas; e Tamar lhe era grata por isso; Tamar retorna ao templo para agradecer as prostitutas e a velha, que lhe faz uma pergunta que a deixa muito curiosa, não quer saber sobre as crianças que carregava em seu ventre, qual seria o sexo da criança e qual seria seu futuro? Ela então sugere que Tamar vá até sua irmã que era uma adivinha; a marafona anciã ainda diz que José, aquele que interpretava sonhos, não chegava nem perto do talento da irmã dela.

Movida pela curiosidade, a narradora vai ao encontro da velha vidente, chegando lá a velha pede para que Tamar se deite no chão, a velha ajoelhou a seu lado, fechou os olhos e colocou a mão em sua barriga, logo em seguida ela abre os olhos e diz a Tamar que seriam dois meninos, e que um deles seria um rei poderoso chamado Davi, e um profeta que viria ao mundo para dizer que é preciso amar e perdoar até mesmo as prostitutas e os pecadores, Tamar volta para casa sem dizer nada a ninguém sobre o ocorrido.

Meses depois, Tamar dá à luz aos gêmeos que se chamariam Perez e Zerá. O parto foi muito difícil, pois parecia que os bebês estavam brigando, ela gritava de dor e alegria por ver que seus filhos já nasciam lutando. A partir daquele momento Tamar viveria para cuidar de seus filhos que cresciam lindos e saudáveis; e, quanto à Judá, Tamar recebia todo o apoio que prometera, porém ele se recusou a ver seus filhos. E à medida que as crianças foram se desenvolvendo Tamar decide lhes contar que aquele velho esquisito o qual eles viam de longe era seu pai, esta revelação deixou as crianças confusas: enquanto Zerá fica triste, Perez sentia raiva.

Shelá era agora um homem feito que passava os dias a cuidar de seu pai e os encontros com Tamar eram frequentes, o que acabou por despertar nela um certo desejo por Shelá, afinal, ele não era mais um adolescente franzino e sim um homem forte e robusto e o que mais a impressionava era a semelhança com Onan.

Tamar sentia muita falta de um homem, e o sexo para ela era tratado como sua expressão mais autêntica, ela relata em que houve momentos que pensou em procurar Judá para ter encontros escondidos durante a noite para satisfazer os desejos; porém ela não sabia se ele ainda se encontrava lúcido; e a falta de um homem estava deixando Tamar doente e, sem ter a quem recorrer para matar seu desejo, ela então vai até a velha prostituta que lhe aconselha a fazer sexo consigo mesma e que isto lhe daria prazer sem lhe dar problemas maiores.

Apesar de ficar irritada com o conselho da velha, Tamar resolve experimentar, pois era melhor ter algum tipo de sexo do que nenhum, é aí que ela então durante as noites se rende à masturbação, ela relata que no começo era meio desajeitada, mas com a prática ela então descobre o clitóris e aí os orgasmos são frequentes, e com isso sua ansiedade diminui de maneira considerável.

Tamar então decide retornar com o antigo hábito de esculpir em madeira e no alto de caverna ela então começa a esculpir camelinhos, jumentinhos, ovelhas e jumentinhos; as primeiras eram meio imperfeitas mas, à medida que o tempo foi passando, Tamar foi se aperfeiçoando cada vez mais; porém o grande objetivo de Tamar era reconstruir a sua trajetória pessoal por meio das esculturas dos homens que marcaram sua vida; primeiro ela faz o busto de Er em tamanho natural com suas expressões melancólicas; depois surgiu Onan – o desejo agressivo estampado em um sorriso, e por último estava Judá resignado. Tamar os olhava e os beijava – para sua surpresa ela havia descoberto que os amava, em seus sonhos Er a tomou pelos braços e a beijava, Onan em seus sonhos a tratava com carinho, Judá em seus sonhos a olhava com admiração ela também amava Shelá um amor que ela sabia que era correspondido, que não se traduzia em palavras ou em contato físico era algo muito além disso era como se cada um em sua caverna se usando a imaginação pudessem se amar de uma forma surpreendente e pode-se dizer que solitária pois os dois se encontravam em suas cavernas sonhando um com o outro.

#### 4. Algumas conclusões

Ao recriar parodicamente a narrativa bíblica de Gênesis 38, Scliar faz uso de dois narradores: a primeira parte é relatada por um personagem masculino chamado Shelá, a segunda parte do livro é Tamar quem narra. Uma coisa que eles têm em comum é o amor pela escrita: Shelá ia para a caverna escrever, procurando estar só nestes momentos (SCLiar, 2008, p. 59). O relato de Tamar rememora a infância em seus mais diversos aspectos: a aprendizagem da leitura e da escrita para ajudar seu pai nas funções de sacerdote (anotar pedidos dos fiéis) (SCLiar, 2008, p. 142). Ambos amavam o narrar. Ela chegou a ponderar que “era um grande narrador, papai, desses que sabem encantar as pessoas. Era bom ouvi-lo [...] Ele falava, eu escutava-o, [...] a imaginação voando livre, livre” (SCLiar, 2008, p. 142).

Shelá tinha dificuldades para obter os materiais necessários para escrever. Ele precisava roubar de seu próprio pai: “os apetrechos de escrita – pergaminhos, estiletes, frascos de tintas estavam no quarto de seu pai. Era eu quem usava, mas só fazia com a autorização dele a mando dele” (SCLiar, 2008, p. 47). Shelá precisava de pergaminhos, estiletes e frascos de tinta para registrar suas aflições. Ele aprendeu a ler com o escriba da tribo, isso com o apoio de seu pai, para quem “a palavra escrita é poder”, sendo “conveniente ter um filho letrado: algum dia aquilo lhe poderia ser de alguma valia” (SCLiar 2008, p. 39). Assim como o pai de Shelá é “interesseiro” no sentido de fazer o filho aprender a ler como uma forma de manutenção do poder patriarcal, o pai de Tamar a insere na escrita com o objetivo de ela vir a ajudá-lo no seu trabalho sacerdotal, anotando os pedidos dos fiéis.

Narrando a segunda parte do livro, Tamar relata que quando adolescente fez para si uma boneca de madeira e a mantinha escondida de todos: “não [a] mostrava a ninguém: mantinha-a escondida no oco de uma árvore perto de casa e às vezes, no meio da noite, levantava-me e ia em silêncio até lá, brincar” (SCLiar, 2008, p. 143). No final da narrativa, ela relata que passou a confeccionar esculturas: camelinhos, jumentinhos, ovelhinhas, cabritinhos, demoninhos (uns com chifre e rabo, outros com cara de bode) (SCLiar, 2008, p. 207). Shelá também esculpia estas mesmas esculturas (p. 126), “mas a principal escultura feita por Shelá foi uma Tamar de barro”. Quando pensou neste projeto, Shelá já tinha esculpido animais e demônios, portanto dizia para si mesmo “que tinha adquirido prática. Aliás, não se tratava só de prática tratava-se

de arte, com A maiúsculo. Em matéria de modelagem eu era um artista”. Shelá chegou a mostrar-se extremamente confiante quanto à sua perícia, tanto que afirmou: “como escultor, eu modéstia à parte não ficava muito atrás de Deus”. Shelá tentou fazer uma Tamar de barro o mais real possível, a ponto de manter sua vagina artificial por meio de uma bexiga de carneiro com água quente e colocar ali um equivalente hímen, feito de uma bexiga de uma cabra para que o pênis pudesse ter a glória de desvirginar Tamar se não a verdadeira, então a de barro (SCLIAR, 2008, p. 84-87). Em Tamar e em Shelá se notam os aspectos sagrado e profano, pois com sua habilidade de fazer esculturas constroem tanto inocentes ovelhinhas como demoninhos com chifre e rabo (SCLIAR, 2008, p. 207).

O relato de Tamar apresenta mais detalhes que o de Shelá, até mesmo por que foi ela quem se casou com Er e Onan, enfrentando situações dramáticas na convivência com cada um deles. Em alguns momentos essa diferença também se evidencia. Por exemplo: Shelá não chega a descobrir o que Tamar descreve no segundo segmento do romance: que Er era um homem que queria ser mulher, sendo esta a razão de ele não conseguir ter ereção junto à esposa. Outro exemplo: a beleza de Tamar é descrita sucintamente por Shelá, mas a narradora se estende em autoelogiar sua própria formosura.

Tamar, a narradora do segundo segmento do livro, mesmo vivendo em uma sociedade patriarcal e machista, consegue criar estratégias para tentar sobreviver alcançando o seu objetivo de ser mãe. Em sua parte, ela narra isso com mais ênfase do que faz Shelá em seu segmento. Tamar era uma mulher que estava muito além de seu tempo, pois ela foi capaz de ir atrás de seu objetivo maior que era se tornar mãe nem que para isso tivesse que se passar por uma prostituta e ter relações sexuais com seu então sogro; ela também em alguns momentos da narrativa toma a atitude de ir pedir ao seu sogro a mão de seu filho mais novo em casamento o que infringiu as leis daquela época, em outros momentos ela toma a atitude de ir falar com Shelá sobre sua vontade de se tornar sua mulher e, ainda mais, ela estava decidida a seduzir o garoto, e com isso ela o beija de uma forma inesperada. E vale ressaltar que Tamar Também se entrega à prática da masturbação, o que era vedado às mulheres fazer naquela época. Shelá também se entregava à essa prática e narra esse costume em muitos momentos. Essa prática aproxima os narradores de cada parte do livro fazendo transparecer que as histórias de vidas deles são tão idênticas quanto eles mesmos.

Infelizmente, tanto na primeira como na segunda parte do *Manual*, Shelá e Tamar não conseguem ficar juntos, embora eles anseiem por isso. Em sua pesquisa, o professor Lemuel Diniz observou que é provável que a capa do romance de Scliar antecipe “a impossibilidade da união dos jovens, pois o que se vê é o quadro apresentando Atalanta de um lado e Hipomenes do outro – em direções opostas” (DINIZ, 2015, p. 146). Intitulado “Atalanta e Hipomenes”, a tela pintada por Guido Reni (1575-1642), artista do Barroco italiano, representa um famoso mito da cultura grega, relembrando um caso de amor que não se concretizou.

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## Aid Allocation by Household Headcount; Population Growth and Resource Pressure in Nakivale Refugee Settlement, Uganda

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### Abstract

This study examines the relationship between aid allocation by household headcount, population growth, and resource pressure in Nakivale Refugee Settlement, Uganda. Using qualitative methods, the research explores how humanitarian assistance structures shape household formation, reproductive decision-making, and livelihood strategies in a protracted displacement context. The findings reveal that population growth in Nakivale is not primarily driven by new refugee arrivals but by internal dynamics linked to hunger, insecurity, gendered survival strategies, and aid policies that tie assistance to household size. Drawing on Malthusian population theory, dependency theory, and the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, the study demonstrates that headcount-based aid allocation unintentionally incentivizes household expansion as a survival strategy. Women are disproportionately affected, with limited livelihood opportunities, exposure to sexual violence, and inadequate reproductive health services contributing to unplanned pregnancies and population growth. Refugees exhibit agency through informal trade, agriculture, and integration with host communities, yet these strategies remain constrained by structural dependency and resource scarcity. The study contributes to refugee scholarship by highlighting how humanitarian governance systems shape demographic behaviour and resource pressure. It recommends rethinking aid allocation models to incorporate livelihood capacity, gendered vulnerability, and long-term sustainability in protracted refugee settlements.

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Due to the sensitivity of the research, respondents above the age of eighteen were interviewed, and the study complied with ethical research guidelines. Second, in order to gather information for the focus group discussions and the individual interviews, each respondent's consent was first obtained.

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# Aid Allocation by Household Headcount; Population Growth and Resource Pressure in Nakivale Refugee Settlement, Uganda

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## Abstract

This study examines the relationship between aid allocation by household headcount, population growth, and resource pressure in Nakivale Refugee Settlement, Uganda. Using qualitative methods, the research explores how humanitarian assistance structures shape household formation, reproductive decision-making, and livelihood strategies in a protracted displacement context. The findings reveal that population growth in Nakivale is not primarily driven by new refugee arrivals but by internal dynamics linked to hunger, insecurity, gendered survival strategies, and aid policies that tie assistance to household size. Drawing on Malthusian population theory, dependency theory, and the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, the study demonstrates that headcount-based aid allocation unintentionally incentivizes household expansion as a survival strategy. Women are disproportionately affected, with limited livelihood opportunities, exposure to sexual violence, and inadequate reproductive health services contributing to unplanned pregnancies and population growth. Refugees exhibit agency through informal trade, agriculture, and integration with host communities, yet these strategies remain constrained by structural dependency and resource scarcity. The study contributes to refugee scholarship by highlighting how humanitarian governance systems shape demographic behaviour and resource pressure. It recommends rethinking aid allocation models to incorporate livelihood capacity, gendered vulnerability, and long-term sustainability in protracted refugee settlements.

**Keywords:** *Aid Allocation, Dependency Theory, Gendered Vulnerability, Household Headcount, Nakivale, population growth, Refugee settlement, Resource Pressure*

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## 1. Introduction

Due to a number of factors, including but not limited to host country insecurity and rising discontent in both developing and established nations, the discussions surrounding refugees and their interactions with host populations are continuing to garner more attention. According to Sultani et al. (2024), 100 million individuals have been forced to leave their homes due to persecution, war, natural disasters, or other threats on a global scale. A large number of them are confined in settlement camps, where they have the option of staying to receive aid from humanitarian organizations or leaving to integrate into host communities and look for opportunities within the framework of Uganda's refugee policy, which permits free movement both inside and outside the settlement. Worthy to note is that by 2009, 3.6 million refugees, or 25% of the world's total, received asylum from least developed nations (Hopgood, 2010). These migrations frequently have numerous drawbacks, but they can also have positive effects on both the hosts and the refugees, either by enhancing their standard of living or impairing their means of subsistence. Nevertheless, despite the fact that many communities, particularly in developing nations, aim to slow down the rate of population development, the situation with regard to refugees appears to be the opposite, with many seeing large numbers of household members as a means of subsistence. According to Kouni

(2018), the international community provides developing nations that accept refugees with financial and technical support. Kouni noted that this assistance usually takes care of the refugees' basic needs and could also pay for other expenses incurred by the host nation as a result of their presence (Kouni, 2018). When you visit the Nakivale refugee settlement, the first thing you hear is the UNHCR's help and the concerns of people who receive far more than others. However, there are also those who rejoice new births because they see them as extra sources of cash as every new member comes with potential aid reception after registration. Although the UN's 2016 Global Compact on Refugees provided a framework to address refugee protection in situations of prolonged displacement as well as for those who host them, it has not packaged itself well in addressing population increase among refugees (Bjørkhaug, 2020). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to evaluate the variables that affect the number of refugees in the Nakivale refugee settlement as well as any potential pressure or complementing variables on resources.

### 1.1. Background of the study

One of the 11 refugee settlements in Uganda, Nakivale is spread across 185 km<sup>2</sup> and is situated in Isingiro district of Southwestern Uganda (Bjørkhaug, 2020). The settlement was founded in 1958, and officially recognised as a refugee settlement in 1960 through

the Uganda Gazette General Notice No. 19. As of 2020, over 132,000 refugees from various African nations were accommodated in the Nakivale refugee settlement, more than twice as many as in 2014 (58,000) and it is believed that the number has risen to over 171,387 refugees. Bjørkhaug (2020) states that in addition to providing labor capital, the growing population has put strain on the available resources in Nakivale, which has resulted in conflict both within and between host communities and refugee populations. Bagenda et al. (2003) connected social tensions to conflicts with the host population living on land reserved for refugees. To further address these concerns about resource constraints, the Ugandan government has implemented an open-door policy and self-sufficiency approach since 1999. However, the economic independence shown by the reports was for a refugee camp of relatively small group in Nakivale; Most people still live in poverty (Kigozi, 2017) and therefore, their results have been criticized for portraying "refugees in Uganda as better than they really are" (Bagenda et al., 2003).

A number of organizations are providing humanitarian assistance to refugees in Nakivale, including the frontline United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR), which is working with the Government of Uganda through the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), other agencies of the United Nations, NGOs and civil society to provide protection and support to those affected. It is important to note that little attention has been paid to the increase in the number of refugees, especially those who have stayed much longer, despite the periodic data on population changes carried out by the UNHCR. Currently, Nakivale refugee settlement is home to refugees from a number of countries including; Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Somalia, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Eritrea and a small size of refugees from South Sudan. The refugee population in Nakivale, especially those in a protracted refugee situation, has continued to grow, if only deliberately, to obtain higher benefits from UNHCR and other organizations. Given the limited research done in this particular case, this research aims to discover the causes of the increase in fertility in the Base camp zone of Nakivale refugee settlement and the possible impact on resources.

## 2. Review of Literature

### 2.1. Refugee Demographics and Population Growth

Understanding aid allocation in refugee settlements requires careful attention to demographic composition, household headcount, and population growth trends. Existing literature highlights that refugee populations are not homogeneous and that age structure, fertility patterns, and household size significantly shape vulnerability and resource needs. According to UNHCR data cited by Amara and Aljunid (2014), between two and four percent of urban refugees in Africa are elderly persons aged 60 years and above. Although this figure appears modest, it hides important variations between urban and rural refugee settings. Rural settlements, such as Nakivale in southwestern Uganda, often exhibit higher dependency ratios due to the concentration of children and elderly refugees, while economically active youth frequently migrate to urban centres (Crisp, 2003; Tulibaleka et al., 2021). The literature further suggests that population growth in refugee-hosting regions exacerbates pressure on already limited resources. Myers (2002) argues that population pressure on land and natural resources leads to environmental degradation, which in turn pushes displaced populations to adopt coping strategies such as relocation, encroachment on host community land, or

integration into surrounding rural economies. In Sub-Saharan Africa, refugee numbers increased by approximately 28% between 1960 and 2006, with a population growth rate of around 2.2% alongside deforestation rates of 0.5–0.7% annually (Roncoli et al., 2002). These figures illustrate the interlinkages between demographic expansion, environmental stress, and resource scarcity. However, much of the literature remains descriptive rather than analytical when it comes to household headcount as a determinant of aid allocation. While population growth is frequently discussed at the macro level, fewer studies critically examine how rising household sizes often driven by high fertility rates, unintended pregnancies, and extended family arrangements translate into greater demand for humanitarian assistance at the micro level. This gap is particularly significant in protracted refugee settlements such as Nakivale, where aid distribution is often based on household size without sufficient consideration of intra-household dependency, resource access, or livelihood capacity.

### 2.2. Physical and Economic Resources among Refugees

Access to physical and economic resources is a central theme in refugee studies, especially in rural settlements where livelihood opportunities are constrained. Uganda's refugee settlements are predominantly located in rural areas, which Crisp (2003) notes are often unattractive to young and economically active refugees. This spatial arrangement interacts with broader development trends in Sub-Saharan Africa, where rural urban migration is increasingly common among youth seeking employment, education, and social mobility (Kaiser, 2006). As a result, refugee settlements such as Nakivale are frequently characterized by populations that are disproportionately composed of children, women, and elderly persons, groups with limited income-generating capacity. The literature suggests that this demographic imbalance reinforces dependency on humanitarian aid. Kaiser (2006) argues that limited livelihood options within settlements leave refugees with few alternatives beyond reliance on food assistance and basic services. Although some refugees engage in subsistence agriculture, petty trade, or casual labor, these activities are often insufficient to meet household needs, particularly in large households with high dependency ratios. Browne (2006) notes that in Nakivale, some refugee groups have achieved a degree of self-reliance through farming, yet such success is uneven and highly dependent on land availability, soil quality, and household labor capacity among other factors.

The concept of "protracted refugee situations" is particularly relevant in this context. UNHCR defines such situations as those where refugees have lived in exile for more than five years without immediate prospects for durable solutions (Crisp, 2003). Uganda hosts a significant number of refugees in protracted situations, and the literature suggests that prolonged displacement increases vulnerability rather than resilience over time. Browne (2006) contends that the longer refugees remain displaced, the less likely they are to repatriate, while Kaiser (2006) observes that extended exile often results in deteriorating livelihood options and deepening poverty. Critically, some scholars argue that prolonged reliance on aid fosters what is commonly referred to as a "dependency syndrome." While this concept has been contested for oversimplifying refugee behaviour, it remains relevant in discussions of aid allocation by household headcount. As birth rates increase within settlements, household sizes expand, leading to higher aid entitlements under distribution systems that prioritize numerical household composition. This dynamic risk creates perverse incentives, whereby larger households receive more assistance without corresponding

increases in productive capacity, thereby intensifying pressure on limited resources.

### 2.3. Refugee Self-Reliance Strategy in Uganda

Uganda's refugee policy framework is widely regarded as progressive, particularly its emphasis on self-reliance and freedom of movement. The Self-Reliance Strategy (SRS) aims to enable refugees to utilize their skills and knowledge to meet their own needs and reduce dependency on humanitarian assistance. According to Svedberg (2014), refugee settlements under the SRS differ from traditional camps in that they emphasize semi-permanent infrastructure, including schools, clinics, boreholes, and brick housing. These features are intended to create an enabling environment for sustainable livelihoods (Bagenda et al., 2003). Despite these intentions, the literature presents mixed assessments of the effectiveness of the SRS. Hovil (2007) critically argues that the settlement system itself contributes to the protracted nature of refugee situations by spatially and economically isolating refugees. While refugees in Uganda have the legal right to work and move freely, structural barriers often prevent meaningful economic integration. Browne (2006) highlights that refugees must compete with Ugandan nationals for low-paying jobs, frequently under conditions of discrimination and labor exploitation. Kaiser (2006) further notes that employment opportunities are often unstable, poorly paid, and insufficient to support large households.

From a critical perspective, the SRS appears to inadequately address the demographic realities of refugee households. The literature rarely interrogates how household headcount, fertility rates, and dependency ratios intersect with self-reliance objectives. Dijk (2022) identifies several obstacles to refugee self-reliance, including lack of social networks, language barriers, prejudice, and limited formal education. These constraints disproportionately affect women, elderly refugees, and large households, undermining the assumption that access to land and basic services alone can foster economic independence. Moreover, the freedom of movement granted to refugees has unintended demographic consequences. Tulibaleka et al. (2021) observe that many young refugees migrate to urban areas in search of work, leaving behind settlements populated largely by dependents. This phenomenon reduces the productive labor force within settlements while maintaining or increasing household sizes, thereby amplifying reliance on aid. The example of Somali refugees establishing economic enclaves in Kampala's Kisenyi parish (Bagenda et al., 2003) underscores the uneven outcomes of Uganda's refugee policy and highlights spatial inequalities in access to economic opportunities.

### 2.4. Gender Dynamics, Population Growth, and Resource Mobilization

Gender dynamics play a critical role in shaping population growth, household composition, and resource pressure in refugee settlements. Larsson (2019) documents widespread sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in Nakivale, including rape and sexual exploitation, coupled with limited access to justice for survivors. These experiences have profound demographic implications, as SGBV is linked to unintended pregnancies that increase household sizes and overall settlement population. Liebling et al. (2020) emphasize that SGBV occurs at multiple stages of displacement during conflict, flight, and settlement and that refugee camps and settlements can become sites of continued vulnerability rather than protection. Horn et al. (2014) further establish a connection between resource scarcity, particularly food and water shortages, and increased risks of SGBV. In Nakivale, young girls are reported

to face heightened vulnerability near water sources, where sexual abuse has resulted in unintended pregnancies and expanded household headcounts. Comparative evidence from post-conflict and disaster-affected contexts such as Haiti, Colombia, and Sierra Leone demonstrates that poverty and economic insecurity are strongly correlated with higher rates of SGBV (Horn et al., 2014). This literature suggests that gender-based violence is not only a protection issue but also a driver of demographic change and resource pressure. Yet, existing studies often fail to integrate gendered analyses into discussions of aid allocation mechanisms. Aid distribution based on household size may inadvertently obscure the ways in which violence, coercion, and unequal power relations shape household formation and growth. Critically, the literature reveals a gap in linking gender dynamics directly to aid allocation frameworks. While population growth is frequently acknowledged as a challenge, there is limited examination of how structural gender inequalities contribute to increasing household headcounts and, by extension, rising aid demands. Addressing this gap is essential for developing more equitable and sustainable humanitarian interventions in Nakivale and similar settlements.

### 2.5. Synthesis and Identified Gaps

Overall, the literature demonstrates that population growth, household headcount, and resource pressure are deeply interconnected in refugee settlements. However, several gaps remain. First, while demographic trends are well documented, there is insufficient critical analysis of how aid allocation systems based on household size interact with fertility patterns, dependency ratios, and livelihood constraints. Second, the effectiveness of Uganda's Self-Reliance Strategy is contested, particularly in relation to large and vulnerable households that face structural barriers to economic participation. Third, gender dynamics and SGBV are often treated as separate protection concerns rather than integral components of population growth and resource allocation debates. This study seeks to address these gaps by critically examining aid allocation by household headcount in Nakivale Refugee Settlement, with particular attention to population growth and resulting resource pressure. By integrating demographic, economic, and gendered perspectives, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how humanitarian assistance frameworks can both alleviate and inadvertently exacerbate vulnerability in protracted refugee settings.

## 3. Conceptual approach

This study is guided by an integrated theoretical framework drawing on Malthusian population theory, dependency theory, and the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF). Together, these perspectives provide a comprehensive lens for understanding how population growth, household headcount-based aid allocation, and resource pressure interact within the protracted refugee context of Nakivale Refugee Settlement in Uganda. While each framework has limitations when applied independently, their combined use allows for a nuanced analysis of demographic dynamics, structural dependency, and livelihood constraints in humanitarian settings.

### 3.1. Malthusian Population Theory and Resource Pressure

Malthusian population theory, originally articulated by Thomas Malthus in *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798), posits that population growth tends to increase geometrically while food

production grows arithmetically, leading inevitably to resource scarcity unless checked by “preventive” or “positive” controls such as delayed fertility, famine, disease, or conflict (Malthus, 1798). Although widely critiqued for its deterministic assumptions, Malthusian theory remains influential in contemporary debates on population pressure, environmental degradation, and resource scarcity, particularly in low-income and crisis-affected contexts. In refugee settlements such as Nakivale, the relevance of Malthusian insights lies in the observable tension between rapid population growth and finite natural and humanitarian resources. Empirical studies indicate that refugee-hosting areas in Sub-Saharan Africa experience increased pressure on land, forests, water, and soil fertility as populations expand (Myers, 2002; Roncoli et al., 2002). In Nakivale, population growth is driven not only by new refugee arrivals but also by high fertility rates, unintended pregnancies linked to sexual and gender-based violence, and prolonged displacement that normalizes family formation within the settlement context (Larsson, 2019; Liebling et al., 2020).

Aid allocation systems based on household headcount may unintentionally reinforce Malthusian pressures by scaling assistance in proportion to household size without adequately accounting for resource sustainability or productive capacity. As household sizes grow, demand for food rations, land, water, and social services increases, intensifying competition both within the settlement and with host communities. From a neo-Malthusian perspective, this dynamic risk creating a cycle in which population growth continually outpaces the capacity of humanitarian and environmental systems to respond, thereby exacerbating scarcity and vulnerability (Myers, 2002). However, critics of Malthusian theory argue that scarcity is not merely a function of population size but of political, economic, and institutional arrangements that shape access to resources (Sen, 1982). This critique is particularly relevant in refugee contexts, where legal restrictions, market exclusion, and aid dependency limit refugees’ ability to convert resources into sustainable livelihoods. Consequently, while Malthusian theory helps explain resource pressure, it must be complemented by frameworks that account for structural inequalities and power relations.

### 3.2. Dependency Theory and Aid-Based Livelihoods

Dependency theory offers a critical lens for examining the structural conditions that perpetuate reliance on external assistance in refugee settlements. Originating in development economics and political economy, dependency theory argues that peripheral populations become economically dependent on external actors due to unequal power relations and historical patterns of exploitation (Dos Santos, 2019; Gunder Frank, 1966). In humanitarian contexts, this framework has been adapted to analyse how prolonged aid provision can entrench dependency rather than foster self-sufficiency (Harrell-Bond, 1986). In Nakivale, dependency theory is particularly useful for interrogating the long-term effects of aid allocation by household headcount. While humanitarian assistance is essential for survival, prolonged reliance on food aid and basic services may reduce incentives or opportunities for refugees to pursue autonomous livelihood strategies, especially when access to land, capital, and labor markets is constrained (Browne, 2006; Crisp, 2003; Kaiser, 2006). Browne (2006) notes that the longer refugees remain in exile, the less likely they are to repatriate and the more entrenched their dependence on aid becomes. Aid systems that reward household expansion with increased assistance can unintentionally reinforce dependency dynamics. Larger households receive more rations, yet these ra-

tions often remain insufficient to meet all needs, particularly in contexts of inflation, ration cuts, or resource scarcity. This creates a paradox in which households remain dependent on aid while lacking viable pathways toward economic independence. From a dependency theory perspective, refugees are positioned as passive recipients within a system that limits their agency and reinforces structural vulnerability (Harrell-Bond, 1986). Nevertheless, dependency theory has been criticized for portraying beneficiaries as lacking initiative and for underestimating their adaptive strategies (Bakewell, 2008). In Nakivale, evidence of subsistence farming, petty trade, and urban migration among refugees suggests that dependency is not absolute but rather shaped by opportunity structures. This critique underscores the need for a framework that captures both constraints and agency, which is addressed by the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework.

### 3.3. Sustainable Livelihoods Framework and Refugee Agency

The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF), developed by Chambers and Conway (1992) and later refined by the UK Department for International Development (DfID, 1999), provides a people-centered approach to understanding how individuals and households construct livelihoods under conditions of vulnerability. The framework conceptualizes livelihoods as a function of access to five forms of capital: human, social, natural, physical, and financial, mediated by institutional structures and vulnerability contexts. Applying the SLF to Nakivale highlights how household headcount intersects with livelihood outcomes. Large households may possess greater labor potential, yet this advantage is often undermined by high dependency ratios, limited education, health challenges, and restricted access to markets (Dijk, 2022). Natural capital, particularly land, is a critical asset in Nakivale, where refugees engage in subsistence agriculture; however, increasing population density reduces plot sizes and soil productivity, limiting returns (Browne, 2006). The SLF also draws attention to institutional processes, including aid allocation mechanisms, refugee policies, and gender norms. Uganda’s Self-Reliance Strategy aims to enhance refugees’ livelihood assets, but structural barriers such as discrimination, language constraints, and limited employment opportunities restrict its effectiveness (Hovil, 2007; Kaiser, 2006). Gender-based violence further erodes human and social capital, contributing to unintended population growth and undermining women’s livelihood prospects (Horn et al., 2014; Larsson, 2019). Unlike Malthusian or dependency perspectives alone, the SLF recognizes refugees as active agents who negotiate constraints and pursue diverse strategies, including urban migration, informal employment, and social networking. However, the framework has been critiqued for insufficiently addressing power relations and macro-level political dynamics (Scoones, 2013). In this study, the SLF is therefore used in conjunction with dependency theory to balance agency with structural analysis.

### 3.4. Conceptual Integration

Conceptually, this study views household headcount-based aid allocation as a mediating mechanism between population growth and resource pressure. Population growth increases household sizes, which in turn shape aid entitlements, livelihood strategies, and dependency patterns. These processes unfold within a context of limited natural resources, gendered vulnerabilities, and constrained economic opportunities. By integrating Malthusian theory, dependency theory, and the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, the study captures the complex interplay between demographic

dynamics, structural constraints, and refugee agency in Nakivale Refugee Settlement.

## 4. Methodology

This study was conducted at the Base camp zone of the Nakivale Refugee Settlement in the District of Isingiro, in the southwest of Uganda. The study area was chosen because it was one of the first refugee settlements to be established in Uganda and because it seemed to fit the goals of the research for the generation of reliable data. Refugees from a variety of nations, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Somalia, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and a small number from South Sudan, made up the community. These engaged in trading, small-scale farming, and several other small-scale enterprises, while others carried out fishing at the Nakivale Lake. This research employed a qualitative, ethnographic methodology to explore population growth and resource pressures at Nakivale's Base Camp zone. Purposive sampling, using a snowball technique, identified 30 adult refugees including 10 men and 20 women each with households containing more than two children. Data collection comprised in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation, enabling detailed insight into household dynamics, reproductive behaviours, livelihood strategies, and resource acquisition practices. Qualitative data were transcribed and analysed thematically, following Rice and Ezzy's coding procedures to identify recurring patterns related to population expansion and resource constraints Rice and Ezzy (1999). This approach facilitated contextualized interpretations of refugees' lived experiences, including aid dependence, social interactions, and reproductive health challenges. The analysis emphasized participants' subjective meanings and social structures influencing demographic choices and resource access. By prioritizing narrative depth over numerical quantification, the methodology captured complex socio-cultural determinants of population phenomena and how they translate into resource pressures within the settlement environment.

## 5. Findings

This chapter presents and analyses the empirical findings of the study on aid allocation by household headcount, population growth, and resource pressure in the Base Camp Zone of Nakivale Refugee Settlement, Uganda. The findings are drawn from in-depth interviews and field observations conducted among refugees residing in the settlement, with particular attention to how access to resources, humanitarian assistance, gender relations, and survival strategies shape household size and population dynamics. The chapter is organized thematically to reflect the lived realities of refugees rather than abstract categories of aid or policy. It focuses on how refugees mobilize resources, negotiate scarcity, and respond to humanitarian systems that allocate assistance largely on the basis of household size. Throughout the chapter, emphasis is placed on the voices of respondents, whose narratives illuminate the complex and often unintended consequences of aid systems within a context of protracted displacement. It is important to note that this chapter is descriptive and analytical, not interpretive in a theoretical sense. While the findings reveal patterns that speak to broader debates on dependency, population growth, and sustainability, explicit engagement with theory and literature is reserved for the discussion chapter. The purpose here is to present what the data show, how refugees understand their own situations, and how population growth and resource pressure manifest in everyday life within the Base Camp Zone of Nakivale.

## 5.1. Household Resources and Livelihoods in the Base Camp Zone of Nakivale

### 5.1.1. Availability and Use of Natural Resources

The findings indicate that natural resources, particularly land, play a central role in the livelihoods of refugees in the Base Camp Zone of Nakivale. Access to land was repeatedly described by respondents as both a symbol of stability and a practical necessity for survival. Many refugees reported that upon arrival in the settlement, acquiring land was one of their primary aspirations, as it offered the possibility of food production, income generation, and reduced dependence on humanitarian assistance. However, access to land was neither uniform nor secure. While some households had been allocated plots for cultivation, others had lost access to land over time due to poverty-related pressures. Several respondents explained that land was frequently exchanged for food during periods of acute hunger or sold to raise capital for small businesses. In these cases, land ceased to function as a productive asset and instead became a consumable resource, liquidated in response to immediate survival needs. Those who retained land primarily used it for subsistence farming, with bananas emerging as the most commonly cultivated crop. Bananas were grown both for household consumption and, in some cases, for sale within the settlement or to nearby host communities. Respondents emphasized that banana cultivation aligned with local agricultural practices in Mbarara and Isingiro districts, making it easier to integrate into local markets, albeit at a very small scale. A small number of long-term residents reported owning livestock, particularly cattle, although herd sizes were generally limited. These households described milk production as an important supplementary source of income, allowing them to generate cash for basic needs such as salt, soap, school materials, and medical expenses. Nevertheless, livestock ownership remained the exception rather than the norm, constrained by limited grazing land, lack of capital, and insecurity. Overall, while natural resources were present in the Base Camp Zone, their productive potential was significantly constrained by poverty, population pressure, and the precarious nature of refugee livelihoods. Land and livestock functioned less as pathways to accumulation and more as fragile buffers against starvation.

### 5.1.2. Financial Resources and Informal Income Sources

In addition to natural resources, refugees relied on a range of financial resources, both formal and informal, to meet daily needs. These included humanitarian remittances, income from petty trade, casual labor, and remittances from relatives living abroad or in countries of origin. One of the most significant non-humanitarian financial resources identified in the findings was family remittances. Some respondents reported receiving money from relatives who had migrated to Europe, North America, or other African countries. Others maintained contact with family members who had remained in their countries of origin and occasionally sent financial assistance when security conditions allowed. However, respondents were clear that remittances were unevenly distributed and highly unreliable. Not all refugees had relatives abroad, and even among those who did, support was often irregular. Conflict, displacement, and poverty in countries of origin frequently limited the ability of relatives to send money. In some cases, family members who had stayed behind were themselves attempting to flee and join refugee settlements in Uganda, reversing the expected direction of support. One respondent articulated this reality as follows:

“We have no brothers or sisters here, and even if you call any members of the host community for help, they won’t come because they think we have money since we are foreigners. They also know that some of us have people abroad who can send money, but in reality, many of our people are still suffering. I am from Congo, and there are many rebel groups there. Even if one is defeated, another comes. Some people can get money from relatives whose areas are stable, but not everyone.”

This account highlights a recurring theme in the data: the perception of refugee wealth among host communities contrasts sharply with refugees’ lived experiences of deprivation. Refugees were often assumed to have access to external financial support, which reduced sympathy and willingness to assist, even when refugees were facing extreme hardship. Petty trade and informal businesses constituted another source of income, though opportunities were limited. Some refugees operated small salons, sold dried fish, vegetables, or second-hand clothing, or engaged in informal services. These activities were highly vulnerable to shocks, including market fluctuations, illness, theft, and destruction of business premises. Several respondents reported losing their businesses due to fire, eviction, or lack of capital to restock, forcing them to revert entirely to aid dependence.

## 5.2. Humanitarian Assistance and Remittances from unhcr and wfp

### 5.2.1. Structure of Humanitarian Remittances

Humanitarian assistance from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme (WFP) constituted a central pillar of survival for many households in the Base Camp Zone. The findings reveal a structured classification system through which refugees were categorized and assigned varying levels of assistance, combining cash transfers and food rations. According to respondents and corroborated by information from humanitarian officials, refugees were grouped into several categories: Highly vulnerable individuals, including the elderly, persons with chronic illnesses, physical disabilities, and severe impairments, received a monthly cash allowance of 24,000 Ugandan Shillings (approximately USD 6.5). Partially dependent households, considered not yet self-reliant, received 12,000 Ugandan Shillings (approximately USD 3.2) per month. Self-reliant refugees received no regular food or cash assistance. New arrivals, typically within their first one to two months in the settlement, received 36,000 Ugandan Shillings (approximately USD 10), along with food items including maize flour, beans, and cooking oil. While this system was designed to target assistance based on vulnerability and self-reliance, the findings reveal widespread confusion, dissatisfaction, and mistrust regarding how classifications were determined.

### 5.2.2. Perceived Opacity and Contestation of Classification

Many respondents expressed frustration at being removed from assistance categories without clear explanation. Several refugees reported that they were classified as self-reliant despite lacking stable income, productive assets, or functional businesses. This perceived arbitrariness undermined trust in humanitarian institutions and heightened anxiety among households already facing food insecurity. One respondent stated:

“I don’t know what they used to decide to remove me from the remittance list. Even the salon I used to earn from was destroyed. All I have now is the money my children receive. How do they know I have seven children from different men because of this? Someone may do that to continue getting money, because when you register a new born, you get support.”

This account reveals two critical findings. First, refugees often did not understand the criteria used to assess self-reliance, leading to perceptions of injustice. Second, the respondent explicitly linked child registration and household size to continued access to assistance, suggesting that fertility and household expansion were understood as survival strategies within the aid system. The findings indicate that humanitarian assistance, while essential, was experienced not merely as support but as a site of negotiation, contestation, and strategic adaptation. Refugees actively interpreted and responded to aid structures in ways that shaped household decisions, including those related to family size.

### 5.2.3. Interim Summary of Part 1 Findings

The findings presented in this section demonstrate that refugees in the Base Camp Zone of Nakivale navigate a complex and fragile resource environment. Natural resources such as land and livestock offer limited and insecure livelihood opportunities, while financial resources from remittances and informal trade are unevenly distributed and unreliable. Humanitarian assistance from UNHCR and WFP remains a critical lifeline but is structured through classification systems that are poorly understood and widely contested. Crucially, access to aid is closely associated with household composition, particularly the presence of children, shaping how refugees perceive survival strategies in conditions of chronic scarcity. These dynamics set the foundation for subsequent findings on gender relations, sexual violence, hunger-driven fertility, and population growth, which are explored in the next sections of the chapter.

## 5.3. Sexual Violence, Rape, and Insecurity in the Base Camp Zone

The findings indicate that rape and sexual violence are pervasive yet underreported realities in the Base Camp Zone of Nakivale. Respondents linked rape to multiple, intersecting factors including hunger, resource scarcity, marital breakdown, weak security structures, and informal dispute resolution mechanisms within the settlement. Young girls were identified as particularly vulnerable, especially those experiencing hunger. Several respondents described situations in which girls sought assistance from men who promised food or support but later coerced or forced them into sexual acts. These encounters often resulted in pregnancy and, in many cases, informal marriages arranged between families to avoid legal intervention. Where perpetrators were identified and belonged to the same ethnic group as the victim, families frequently resolved cases internally, deliberately avoiding the police. In cases involving perpetrators from different ethnic groups, respondents reported that offenders often fled the settlement, leaving victims pregnant and unsupported. These outcomes contributed directly to unplanned household formation and population increase. Some male respondents claimed that false accusations occurred, arguing that a small number of women used allegations of rape to force marriage or extract compensation. Importantly, these claims are

presented here as respondents' perceptions, not verified occurrences. Their presence in the data reflects a broader climate of mistrust, gender tension, and contested narratives around sexual violence in the settlement. Security weaknesses were repeatedly highlighted. Respondents emphasized that the number of police and security personnel was insufficient relative to the settlement's population size, limiting effective protection and deterrence. This insecurity normalized sexual violence and reduced confidence in formal justice mechanisms.

## 5.4. Factors Influencing population growth in the Base Camp Zone

### 5.4.1. Hunger as a Driver of Household Expansion

Hunger emerged as the most consistently cited driver of population growth. Nearly all respondents reported eating fewer than two meals per day, with many experiencing days without food. Households not receiving UNHCR or WFP assistance were particularly vulnerable. In this context, having children was widely perceived as a survival strategy. Respondents explained that registering a new-born increased a household's likelihood of receiving food or cash assistance. As a result, fertility was directly linked to aid access, even though additional children intensified long-term resource pressure. Hunger also affected agricultural productivity. Even households with land lacked the financial capacity to hire labor, forcing them to wait for humanitarian rations before cultivating. This cyclical dependency reinforced food insecurity and incentivized reliance on aid-linked household expansion.

### 5.4.2. Prostitution and Transactional Sex

The findings reveal that transactional sex was common in the Base Camp Zone, though rarely acknowledged openly. Women described exchanging sex for food or cash to support their households, including husbands and children. These practices were framed not as commercial sex work but as survival strategies driven by desperation. Pregnancies resulting from transactional sex contributed to population growth and frequently triggered disputes over paternity and responsibility. Respondents reported that such disputes sometimes escalated into violence, including fatal incidents, highlighting the severe social consequences of resource scarcity.

### 5.4.3. Integration with Host Communities

Population growth was also influenced by integration with host communities. Members of the host population had increasingly settled in or around the Base Camp Zone to conduct business, including retail trade and mobile money services. Inter-marriage between refugees and host community members contributed to population expansion and blurred distinctions between refugee and non-refugee populations. While integration brought economic opportunities, it also intensified competition over resources such as land, fishing rights, and water. Negotiations between refugees and host communities temporarily alleviated tensions but ultimately increased demand on limited resources.

### 5.4.4. Limited Reproductive Health Services

Inadequate access to reproductive health services further contributed to unplanned pregnancies. Respondents reported infrequent outreach by NGOs and limited availability of contraception. Even when contraceptives were available, cultural beliefs and the perceived benefits of having children within the settlement discouraged their use.

### 5.4.5. Summary of Key Findings

The findings demonstrate that population growth in the Base Camp Zone of Nakivale is not primarily driven by new arrivals, but by internal dynamics shaped by hunger, aid structures, gendered survival strategies, sexual violence, and limited reproductive health services. Aid allocation based on household headcount plays a central role in shaping these dynamics, simultaneously alleviating short-term deprivation and intensifying long-term resource pressure.

## 6. Discussion of Findings

This chapter critically discusses the findings of the study on Aid Allocation by Household Headcount; Population Growth and Resource Pressure in Nakivale Refugee Settlement, Uganda. The discussion situates the empirical evidence within broader theoretical and empirical debates on population growth, humanitarian aid, dependency, gendered livelihoods, and resource scarcity in protracted refugee settings. Drawing on Malthusian population theory, dependency theory, and the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF), the chapter demonstrates that population growth in Nakivale is not a passive demographic outcome but an adaptive, survival-oriented response to structural constraints embedded within humanitarian governance systems. The discussion proceeds by examining population growth and resource pressure, the role of aid allocation mechanisms, gendered survival strategies, sexual violence and insecurity, refugee–host relations, and institutional limitations. The chapter concludes by outlining the theoretical, empirical, and policy implications of the study.

### 6.1. Population Growth and Resource Pressure: Revisiting Malthus in a Humanitarian Context

Classical Malthusian theory posits that population growth tends to outstrip food production, leading to inevitable scarcity unless checked by moral restraint or natural calamities (Malthus, 1798). At face value, the findings from Nakivale appear to support this perspective: increasing household sizes intensify pressure on land, food supplies, water sources, and humanitarian infrastructure. Respondents consistently described declining access to cultivable land, reduced food rations, and heightened competition for basic services. However, the study complicates a simplistic Malthusian interpretation by revealing that population growth in Nakivale is not driven by natural fertility trends alone, but by institutional incentives linked to aid allocation. Refugees do not reproduce in ignorance of scarcity; rather, they make constrained, strategic decisions in response to hunger, uncertainty, and aid policies that tie survival to household size. This aligns with neo-Malthusian critiques that emphasize the role of political and institutional factors in shaping demographic outcomes (Myers, 2002). The study's findings resonate strongly with Sen's (1981) entitlement theory, which argues that famine and hunger result from failures in access rather than absolute shortages. In Nakivale, hunger persists despite the presence of humanitarian assistance, revealing a mismatch between population needs and resource distribution mechanisms. Thus, while population growth contributes to resource pressure, it is more accurately understood as a symptom of structural scarcity, not its root cause. The findings suggest that focusing solely on fertility reduction without addressing aid governance risks misdiagnosing the problem.

## 6.2. Aid Allocation by Household Headcount and the Production of Dependency

Dependency theory offers a powerful lens for understanding how humanitarian assistance structures shape refugee behaviour and long-term outcomes. Harrell-Bond (1986) argues that prolonged aid regimes often undermine self-reliance by positioning refugees as passive recipients rather than economic agents. The findings from Nakivale strongly support this critique. Aid allocation based on household headcount creates a perverse incentive structure in which larger households are perceived as more deserving of support. Refugees adapt rationally to this system by expanding household size through childbirth, polygamous unions, or informal household fragmentation. These strategies are not expressions of dependency culture but rational responses to an environment in which survival is contingent upon remaining visible and eligible within humanitarian databases. The study further reveals that opaque classification processes such as labelling households as “self-reliant” without meaningful income reinforce insecurity and mistrust. When assistance is removed unpredictably, households resort to survival strategies that deepen dependency in the long term, including transactional sex and early marriage. However, the findings also challenge deterministic interpretations of dependency theory. Evidence of informal trade, host-community integration, and agricultural adaptation demonstrates refugee agency and innovation. This supports Bakewell’s (2008) argument that refugees are active navigators of aid systems rather than passive victims. Dependency, in this context, emerges as a structural condition, not an inherent characteristic of refugees.

## 6.3. Gendered Livelihoods and the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework

The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (Chambers & Conway, 1992; DFID, 1999) provides a comprehensive tool for analyzing how refugees mobilize assets under conditions of vulnerability. The findings demonstrate that access to livelihood capitals in Nakivale is profoundly gendered. Women, particularly those heading households, face severe constraints in accessing financial, physical, and social capital. Limited mobility, caregiving responsibilities, and exposure to violence restrict their participation in formal and informal markets. As a result, women rely heavily on human capital (labor, reproductive capacity) and social capital (relationships), often at significant personal risk. Transactional sex and survival-based relationships represent extreme manifestations of livelihood vulnerability, where women convert bodily autonomy into economic survival. These practices erode long-term livelihood sustainability by increasing exposure to violence, stigma, and health risks, thereby depleting human and social capital. The SLF also highlights the role of transforming structures and processes. In Nakivale, humanitarian agencies, security institutions, and health services systematically shape livelihood outcomes. Weak reproductive health services and inadequate security exacerbate vulnerability, while aid policies fail to account for intra-household gender dynamics. This institutional context explains why livelihood strategies often reproduce rather than resolve vulnerability.

## 6.4. Sexual Violence, Insecurity, and Demographic Outcomes

The study’s findings on sexual violence reveal a disturbing linkage between insecurity, hunger, and population growth. Sexual violence contributes directly to unplanned pregnancies and household formation, while also reinforcing gendered power imbalances.

These findings align with existing literature documenting the normalization of gender-based violence in protracted displacement settings (Horn et al., 2014; Freedman, 2016). The underreporting of rape, reliance on informal justice mechanisms, and flight of perpetrators reflect weak institutional protection. In this context, pregnancy resulting from rape often leads to forced or informal marriage, embedding violence-induced fertility into household structures. Population growth thus becomes an unintended demographic consequence of insecurity. Importantly, male respondents’ claims of false accusations whether accurate or not signal deep mistrust and contested gender relations. These narratives further discourage reporting and reinforce silence, perpetuating cycles of violence and vulnerability.

## 6.5. Hunger, Fertility, and Reproductive Decision-Making

One of the study’s most significant contributions lies in demonstrating how hunger directly shapes reproductive decision-making. Contrary to assumptions that food insecurity suppresses fertility, the findings show that hunger incentivizes childbirth when aid is linked to household size. This paradox challenges conventional demographic models and underscores the need for context-sensitive analysis. Limited access to reproductive health services further constrains choice. Even when contraceptives are available, the perceived benefits of having children access to aid, social recognition, relationship stability often outweigh concerns about long-term sustainability. This reinforces Caldwell’s (1982) wealth-flow theory, which suggests that children may be perceived as economic assets in contexts of insecurity.

## 6.6. Refugee–Host Relations and Resource Competition

Integration with host communities introduces both opportunity and pressure. The findings show that intermarriage and economic exchange contribute to population growth while intensifying competition over land, water, and fishing resources. These dynamics echo studies highlighting the dual nature of refugee–host interactions (Jacobsen, 2002). While integration enhances resilience for some households, it also shifts resource pressure beyond the settlement, raising questions about sustainability and equity. Without coordinated planning, such interactions risk generating tensions that undermine social cohesion.

## 6.7. Theoretical and Empirical Contributions

The study makes three key contributions to knowledge. First, it empirically demonstrates how aid allocation mechanisms shape demographic behaviour, an underexplored dimension of refugee governance. Second, it integrates population theory with livelihood and dependency frameworks, offering a multidimensional explanation of population growth in refugee settlements. Third, it foregrounds gender as a central analytical lens, revealing how women’s bodies become sites of survival under humanitarian scarcity.

## 6.8. Policy Implications

The findings suggest that humanitarian assistance should move beyond household headcount as a primary allocation criterion. Incorporating livelihood capacity, dependency ratios, and gendered vulnerability could reduce incentives for survival-driven fertility. Strengthening reproductive health services, improving security, and increasing transparency in aid classification are critical steps toward sustainable outcomes.

Therefore, population growth and resource pressure in Nakivale Refugee Settlement are deeply intertwined with humanitarian governance structures. Aid allocation systems, while lifesaving, inadvertently shape demographic behaviour and livelihood strategies. Addressing these challenges requires rethinking how assistance is designed, delivered, and evaluated in protracted displacement contexts.

## 7. Conclusion

This study set out to examine the relationship between aid allocation by household headcount, population growth, and resource pressure in Nakivale Refugee Settlement, Uganda. The findings demonstrate that population growth in the settlement cannot be understood as a purely demographic phenomenon, nor as a consequence of cultural preference or individual irresponsibility. Rather, it is a structurally produced outcome shaped by humanitarian governance, chronic scarcity, and constrained livelihood opportunities within a protracted displacement context. The study reveals that aid allocation mechanisms based on household size play a central role in shaping reproductive and household formation decisions. While intended to target vulnerability, headcount-based assistance inadvertently incentivizes household expansion as a survival strategy. Refugees respond rationally to these incentives in an environment marked by hunger, uncertainty, and limited economic opportunity. As a result, population growth emerges as an adaptive response to scarcity rather than its primary cause, challenging neo-Malthusian interpretations that attribute resource pressure to unchecked fertility alone. By engaging dependency theory, the study demonstrates how prolonged humanitarian assistance, when poorly aligned with livelihood realities, can entrench structural dependency without eliminating agency. Refugees in Nakivale actively navigate aid systems through informal economies, agricultural adaptation, and integration with host communities. However, these strategies remain fragile and uneven, particularly for women, whose livelihoods are shaped by gendered constraints and exposure to sexual violence. The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework highlights how deficits in financial, physical, and social capital exacerbated by weak institutional protection force women into high-risk survival strategies that further contribute to unplanned population growth. The findings also underscore the critical role of insecurity and inadequate reproductive health services in shaping demographic outcomes. Sexual violence, transactional sex, and limited access to contraception link resource scarcity directly to household expansion, embedding demographic change within cycles of vulnerability and gender inequality. These dynamics are further intensified by refugee–host interactions that, while offering economic opportunity, increase competition over land and natural resources. The study contributes to refugee and development scholarship by empirically demonstrating how humanitarian aid structures influence demographic behavior in protracted settlements. It calls for a rethinking of aid allocation models that rely heavily on household headcount, advocating instead for more nuanced, transparent, and gender-sensitive approaches that prioritize sustainable livelihoods and protection. Without such reforms, humanitarian assistance risks perpetuating the very vulnerabilities it seeks to alleviate, reinforcing cycles of dependency, insecurity, and resource pressure in refugee settlements like Nakivale.

## Ethical statement

Due to the sensitivity of the research, respondents above the age of eighteen were interviewed, and the study complied with ethical

research guidelines. Second, in order to gather information for the focus group discussions and the individual interviews, each respondent's consent was first obtained.

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## Examining Student Conflicts at School from a Psychosocial Perspective: The Case of Elementary and Secondary Students at Mont-Amba School, Kinshasa: DRC

### Article Record

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### Abstract

At the 1960s, 1970s, or even 1980s, fighting among students at school was unusual, particularly in Catholic institutions. Peer conflicts have become more common in schools today, including the best ones in Kinshasa and the entire DR Congo. Fighting violence in schools is a growing worry as the study questions the root causes of this crime's emergence, which is disrupting school public order and obstructing academic instruction. This research attempts to further elucidate this topic based on the findings of a survey done among 38 students from the first to fourth year of secondary levels of Mont-Amba school inside the University of Kinshasa who were involved in student conflicts between 2016 and 2020. The statistics provided demonstrate how the Congolese school system has deteriorated and is no longer entirely capable of assisting the individual in restraining any violent tendencies that may push him or her to commit barbaric and awful crimes. Providing protection for children attending schools is the goal of this project.

fight

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# Examining Student Conflicts at School from a Psychosocial Perspective: The Case of Elementary and Secondary Students at Mont-Amba School, Kinshasa: DRC

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## Abstract

At the 1960s, 1970s, or even 1980s, fighting among students at school was unusual, particularly in Catholic institutions. Peer conflicts have become more common in schools today, including the best ones in Kinshasa and the entire DR Congo. Fighting violence in schools is a growing worry as the study questions the root causes of this crime's emergence, which is disrupting school public order and obstructing academic instruction. This research attempts to further elucidate this topic based on the findings of a survey done among 38 students from the first to fourth year of secondary levels of Mont-Amba school inside the University of Kinshasa who were involved in student conflicts between 2016 and 2020. The statistics provided demonstrate how the Congolese school system has deteriorated and is no longer entirely capable of assisting the individual in restraining any violent tendencies that may push him or her to commit barbaric and awful crimes. Providing protection for children attending schools is the goal of this project.

**Keywords:** *fight, Protection, school, Security, student*

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## 1. Introduction

Today, violence in schools is less frequently reported than violence against women, which is exactly as worrying as we think. Children and teenagers are unable to escape this reality.

However, there is frequently a tendency to minimise this dangerous and deadly crime, which puts school operations in danger since it undermines public order, adds to the school's atmosphere, interferes with studying, etc.

Even though there has always been violence in schools, it is critical to acknowledge that it has recently escalated in both frequency and danger.

However, fighting between pupils at school were incredibly rare in the 1960s and 1970s. The Congolese educational system was regarded as effective when the fat cows were in full swing.

It was a huge and magnificent structure that was essentially the outcome of the reform movement of the 1960s, according to Ekwa Bis Isal, M. (1992).

But now, he says, we are no longer taught the meaning of respect for others, property, and silence; these rules from these schools are no longer educational. Indiscipline has taken over even the nation's most elite schools.

In fact, when passing by a school, one frequently witnesses egregious and upsetting acts of violence.

Even the older students yell and, at best, threaten one another. If not, they begin to fight.

Intense fighting among students can lead to serious consequences like damage, breakage, swelling, destruction, or loss of

property. The behaviour that students participate in most commonly is teasing someone in an effort to annoy them.

Fighting and hitting are more dangerous and serious physical acts of violence that may seem little but can harm one or both people. This is less serious than those.

There may be fights between students from two close schools, two members of the same class, two student groups from the same class, or even two students from other courses.

There have been known disputes between students from surrounding schools affiliated with various institutions. Students from the Technical Industrial Institute of Gombe and Saint Esprit of the village of Lemba are two instances, respectively, of Mont Amba School students.

For instance, on November 26, 2020, a violent incident between two schools in Binza Ma-Campagne, Kinshasa, was covered by Radio Okapi, much to the annoyance of the parents of these two schools.

Sometimes after a fight, one or both students choose to skip class the next day out of concern for further assault or attack. Parents are concerned that threats or abuse may be repeated against their child.

According to Bellamy, C. (1999), school is a place of safety and protection for students, thus students shouldn't normally be afraid to attend, and parents shouldn't worry about something occurring to their child at school either.

In addition, Olweus, D. (1994), claims that among children's fundamental rights are the right to a secure learning environment and the right to be free from ongoing discrimination and humiliation.

The worst thing is that in our country, fighting at schools are becoming more frequent, which undermines the institution's holiness and causes it to lose not only its aura but, more crucially, its legitimacy. It is incomprehensible to watch children return home unyielding, ignorant, and, worst of all, involved in violent crime when parents send their kids to school so they might learn.

In addition to taking into account the child's inalienable rights, some decisions are taken to safeguard their security and safety.

The law n° 09/001/ of January 10, 2009 on the protection of children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which forbids child torture and other cruel, brutal, or humiliating treatment or punishment in accordance with its fundamental principles, can be brought up in this case.

In order to nurture, protect, and stabilise the child, it is advised that the school play a key role. According to Bellamy, C. (1999), schools must be real safe places where teachers are expected to protect kids' rights, particularly the right to a violent-free environment.

Fighting is destructive and is prohibited in schools since it is a serious disciplinary crime that carries severe punishments. This physical act of violence is sanctioned and punished in Congolese primary and secondary education by an immediate and permanent exclusion from school, without calling the school's Disciplinary Council, in accordance with Ministerial Order N° MINEPSP / CABMIN / 00100940 / 90 of 01/09/1990 on the internal regulations for students in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Every school has internal rules that specify that students who fight with one another will be permanently expelled from the institution.

The school rules are often included in the student's communication book.

All students do not consciously violate the rules against engaging in violent behaviour, such as fighting in public areas, despite the fact that these preventive measures are intended to discourage it.

Therefore, even in the most renowned institutions, fights between students have become more common over the past several decades, despite the fact that it is believed that students are of the highest calibre, well-behaved, and respectful of all societal values and customs.

People in positions of power are frequently shocked by how often arguments can escalate into violence or even death. For instance, on March 6, 2021, a student was killed during a fight at the Mayanga Institute of Kalemie in the Province of Katanga.

Due to these frequent acts of violence, we have started to study the psychosocial causes and consequences of confrontations between students from Institutes I and III of the Mont-Amba School at the University of Kinshasa.

The main thesis of our study is that the behaviour of violent fights between students can be attributed to the Congolese educational system's partial failure to fulfil its responsibility of aiding the individual in avoiding all aggressive tendencies that could lead him to commit acts of barbarism and inhumanity.

## 2. Methods

The protracted procedure that resulted in the writing of this paper required the following steps.

- a survey of students at the Mont-Amba School of the University of Kinshasa who were involved in conflicts between 2016 and

- 2020; - study population and sample; - consultation with resource personnel at the selected schools; - analysis of documents from various sources linked to our study's issue; The majority of the data for our study was acquired through a survey that was given to Humanities students in their first through fourth years at primary and secondary levels of Mont-Amba School of the University of Kinshasa.

These children were chosen because they participated in at least one peer fight between 2016 and 2020. The questionnaire was distributed directly and one-on-one, taking into account the respondents' educational background and language comprehension abilities. Some people received the questionnaire, completed it freely at home, and returned it the next day.

Throughout the session, we invited anyone else who had some free time to come fill out the forms. The forms contained a wide range of information regarding the concept, reasons why student fighting occurs in schools, as well as its impacts.

## 3. Population and sample under study.

Using penalty records and disciplinary council minutes from two schools, we identified 86 incidents of student-on-student fighting overall, year by year, from 2016 to 2020.

45 of the 86 combatants that were officially acknowledged left school for a variety of reasons, such as getting kicked out for fighting, failing a class, or finishing high school.

During the 2019–2020 academic year, we looked specifically at the remaining 41 students who were spotted in class.

However, due to the Covid 19 pandemic, three more students did not return to class after containment. Since all of the aggressive pupils are included in our study, there are a total of 38 students, both boys and girls, aged 15 to 18.

The use of people participating in the daily disciplinary administration in the school proved to be equally important in putting together the necessary pieces for completing this task.

Researchers were able to acquire more interesting data regarding the prevalence of fighting, its origins and effects, as well as the sanctions enforced for it, through contacts with school officials such as administrators, disciplinary officers, and pedagogical advisers.

We were able to better comprehend the problem of striking a balance between instruction and punishment in the school through our discussions with the school administration, which were very beneficial.

Documents relating to physical violence in general and fights between students at school underwent a detailed investigation. We were able to complete and improve the data we had already gathered from the survey of the pertinent pupils and resource personnel thanks to this research.

Books, journals (printed or electronic), discipline registers, disciplinary council minutes, etc. are a few examples of these documents.

The major objective of employing documentary approaches was to locate some of the few currently available documentation on fighting on the Internet.

Because the literature on fighting among Africans has not advanced enough, the Western conceptions of warfare served as our starting point as well.

## 4. Analysis of data

In the tables below, we first show the results about how the subjects surveyed conceptualised fighting. The second part of our analysis

looks at the psychosocial elements that affect student fighting and the consequences of this crime.

**Table 1.** Details the perceptions of social representations of student fights among the survey's respondents

| Responses of the respondents   | F  | %   |
|--------------------------------|----|-----|
| Inadequate education           | 21 | 55  |
| Barbarity                      | 9  | 24  |
| Psychiatric disorders(madness) | 7  | 18  |
| Extreme violence               | 1  | 3   |
| Total                          | 38 | 100 |

More over half of those polled (55%), believed that fighting among students was a sign of either a lack of education or a poor education. Others, however, believe it to be proof of barbarism (24%), mental illness or insanity (18%), or even both.

Lack of civilization is equated with barbarism and illiteracy. Less educated individuals frequently behave bizarrely or are thought to be insane.

**Table 2.** Violence Factors among Students in School

| Participants' responses         | F  | %   |
|---------------------------------|----|-----|
| Friends' influence              | 20 | 53  |
| Lack of education               | 7  | 18  |
| Violation of school regulations | 5  | 13  |
| Practice of martial arts        | 4  | 11  |
| Living environment impact       | 2  | 5   |
| Total                           | 38 | 100 |

More over half of the subjects polled (53%) believed that fighting among students was a common occurrence. This aspect is related to the impact of friends.

Second on the list (21%) is a lack of knowledge, followed by breaking rules at school (21%), martial arts training (18%), and the influence of the home environment (13%).

However, a causal relationship between these responses can be shown. In addition to the influence of peers, the environment, and disregard for school expectations, a bad education predisposes the young person to a range of uncontrollable influences that lead him to violate social norms.

In addition to practising martial arts, the other reactions go hand in hand.

As a result, it would appear that student conflicts at school are primarily caused by a lack of education.

#### 4.1. Consequences of schoolyard violence among students

Student fighting at school has an impact on the participant as well as the social groupings embodied by the family, the school, and the state.

Fighting among classmates increases the likelihood of physical (injury, breakage, swelling - 66%), psychological (trauma, insecurity, fear, isolation - 26%), educational (school failure, dropping out, delinquency - 16%), and social (interpersonal conflicts, family issues with parents - 18% - 13%) consequences.

Let's shift our attention from evaluating the consequences at the individual level to the impacts at the community level.

At the community level, conflicts among schoolmates first harm interpersonal connections (39%), which subsequently disrupt educational activities (29%) and affect the emotional climate (24%);

**Table 3.** Individual consequences of classroom fighting among students

| Participants' responses         | Indication of statistics |    |    |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|----|----|
|                                 | N                        | F  | %  |
| Damage to the body              | 38                       | 25 | 66 |
| Uncertainty,loneliness and fear | 38                       | 10 | 26 |
| Conflicts between people        | 38                       | 7  | 18 |
| Delinquency –dropping out       | 38                       | 6  | 16 |
| Issues in the family            | 38                       | 5  | 13 |

**Table 4.** The overall effects of student fighting in the classroom

| Participants' responses                         | Indicators of statistics |    |    |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|----|----|
|                                                 | N                        | F  | %  |
| Interpersonal connection disorder               | 38                       | 15 | 39 |
| Activities related to education being disrupted | 38                       | 11 | 29 |
| Emotional climate deterioration                 | 38                       | 9  | 24 |
| Conflict within families                        | 38                       | 8  | 21 |
| Impairment of development                       | 38                       | 4  | 11 |

second, they lead to issues within families (21%) and obstruct progress (11%).

## 5. Discussion

Remember that the purpose of this study was to undertake a psycho-social analysis of the phenomenon of student fights in order to determine the reasons behind and consequences of this crime. To do this, we carried out research that originally helped us recognise that fighting among students at school is a result of insufficient education and a lack of civilization.

It is a brutal, heartless act motivated by insanity.

In fact, more than half of the investigated topics indicate that a lack of education is the primary cause of conflicts between students at school.

This statement of the interviewed subjects supports our main hypothesis, which states that the behaviour of violent fights between students at school would be caused by the deterioration of our educational system. Our educational system has lost the ability to play its role fully by assisting the individual to take precautions against the aggressive impulses that can cause him to pose wild and inhuman acts.

These results are even more significant because they corroborate the results of other studies: Poor family education, according to L. Mbadu Khonde (2018), prevented the child from learning to control his aggression and led him to act irritably or allow himself to be led outside of social norms to the point of committing crimes; according to Joussemme and Louessard (2019), everyone has an innate tendency toward aggression and violence. Everyone is prone to acting violently if these tendencies are not reined in and directed.

The lack of self-control, impatience, ignorance, and prejudice are what can motivate anyone to perpetrate this high-risk crime if education hasn't been able to entirely stop it.

In order to protect oneself against any violent tendencies that would tempt him to act cruelly and inhumanely, the person must use force.

In fact, a lack of parental participation or pathogenic parental presence results in a diffuse education that leaves children susceptible to the influence of the media, the street, and their surrounding

social environment, all of which impose a variety of uncontrollable detrimental effects on them.

Following this main element of student conflicts and the failure of education are the secondary causes that are intrinsic to the student (endogenous factors), as well as his family, school, and social environment (exogenous factors).

Our study shed light on underlying psychological problems of the individual, bringing to the surface attitudes of ignorance, immaturity, intolerance, and impatience that the subjects surveyed believed to be the real causes of fights between students at school. This is what we refer to as endogenous secondary factors.

Lack of comprehension was chosen as the attitude that was most common, receiving 53% of the votes.

Instead, the psychological problem that is unique to each person—which is a result of a variety of factors—might be said to be dominant. In reality, a child who struggles with psycho-emotional issues, such as aggression, may exhibit poor comprehension, intolerance, lack of patience, or other actions.

These findings are in line with those of Portelance, C. (1992), who claimed, for instance, that complexed individuals always have significant reactions to items that appear harmless to others.

Their uncontrolled and unrestrained emotional reactions frequently lead to others misinterpreting and rejecting them. According to psychological theories, a young child's anger, for example, frequently reflects an uncomfortableness that the infant is unable to express in any other way.

The majority of the time, children's aggressive behaviour at school is a sign of a condition that keeps it from showing up as conflict at home, such as conflicts, pathologic situations like jealousy, etc.

Yzerbyt, V. & Klein, O. (2019) assert that an aggressive young child finds it difficult to adopt realistic attitudes due to constraints that are perceived as being restrictive or not being made explicit enough (of understanding). The study also found that violent acts emulated in the media and by criminal gangs are a significant contributor to this issue in terms of endogenous secondary factors that contribute to fighting among students. This was the opinion of 11% of study participants.

The research of Dewey, J. (1983), which shows that children and teenagers always have a propensity to repeat what they see and hear since at that age, they are seeking sensationalism, is entirely congruent with our findings. A child is actually rejected from his group if he doesn't perform in accordance with how his group expects him to. He must behave similarly to them if he is to communicate with them personally and on an equal footing. Bandura (1973) asserts that social learning theories are strictly applied to violent behaviour. That is to say, violent behaviours are picked up through imitation of positive role models.

And in his writings, Bayombo Mbokoliabwe (2002) shows how children who witness or experience violent crimes or negative behaviour often imitate similar behaviours on their classmates.

The media does indeed have a very powerful capacity for implication. Images of criminality, banditry, brutality, cruelty, bestiality, vampirism, and supermen are frequently seen.

Young toddlers tend to imitate what they see or hear of the uncommon, fantastic, and fabulous because they are still actively seeking information.

The risk that kids will end up as either aggressors or victims is increased by all of these unpleasant interactions. The child's home and social environment came first in our study because these are external secondary factors, followed by the school environment.

Peer pressure and a lack of family education in some of the subjects assessed both contribute to fights amongst students at school.

In the Congolese context, when child supervision is a challenge, many kids are actually led, directed, guided, and oriented more by their peers than by their parents or other leaders.

Writings by Bayombo Mbokoliabwe from 2002, who claims that the mutation afflicting modern Congolese society is uprooting countless households across all social strata, lend confirmation to these conclusions.

The vital, natural, and indispensable role of teaching being played by these houses is worse or nonexistent. Because of this, sometimes the emotional presence of the companions of the same difficult situations marked by bullying and deprivation, source of frustration, and aggression, can make up for the irresponsibility, presence, or destructive absence of the parents.

Although the influence of friends or the neighbourhood tends to be more harmful because it pushes children to adopt a specific code of bad behaviour and act in ways that aren't always appropriate.

They frequently act disrespectfully or rudely and are more easily influenced by others, who can also encourage them to engage in aggressive conduct such as using drugs, being hostile toward others, or other violent activities. Some respondents believed that confrontations between students were caused by the school environment. Numerous students (on average 27%) mentioned a poorly run school with large class sizes, subpar discipline emphasised by impunity, and academic failure.

Research by Defrance (2016) and Wilson, J.Q. & Ketting, G. concur with these findings (1982).

According to Defrance, when a student fails, they become angry and occasionally have a propensity to lash out violently at people who make fun of them.

In fact, it has been found that the practise of school systems making academic results public has contributed to an increase in school violence.

Students who are perceived as failing in front of others will rebel against the school's values and look for fulfilment in confrontation. The third outcome is that, in contrast to schools with modest class sizes and enrollment, those with big class sizes and students have a high rate of disturbance that fosters hatred and violence. While Wilson et al. show that a lack of discipline is frequently the root of conflict and violence in schools.

For instance, letting minor everyday violations to go unpunished usually encourages offenders to conduct progressively serious offences that disrupt the learning environment, particularly through violent acts.

Additionally, in a climate of injustice and impunity, people with violent tendencies frequently give free licence to their aggressive impulses, which has a number of harmful consequences.

The following are some findings from our survey addressing the consequences of student fights at school:

Students who are directly involved, their families, the school, and society at large are all victims of student fights. Therefore, everyone who cares for the child is affected by student fights at school.

Thus, it was determined that conflicts amongst students at school had a harmful impact on society, education, the intellect, and the body.

The first secondary hypothesis, which asserts that fighting among kids at school has negative effects on both the individual and the group, is supported by the data from our study. Interpersonal connections, public order, and the learning environment are all negatively impacted by student fights.

These results are in line with those of studies by Blaya (2006) and De Saint Martin (2012), which show that even minor fights at school can have significant personal and social repercussions, including feelings of insecurity, abandonment, helplessness, and withdrawal for the victims, as well as deterioration of the school climate.

Briefly said, fighting against violence at school has detrimental psychological repercussions that make the impact much more severe. These outcomes include suffering, fear, absenteeism, dropout rates, lowered academic performance, and deterioration of partner relationships in the classroom. It is necessary to consider solutions for this.

## 6. Conclusion

This article looks at student fights as one type of school violence.

This study's goal was to perform a psychological investigation into this phenomenon, which has started to recur even in prestigious academic institutions. The aim is to comprehend what leads to classroom fights and how they affect children's lives and education.

According to a survey of 38 first, second, third, and fourth year humanities students who were involved in fights, fighting among students is a crazy act that denotes a lack of education or a failing education.

As a result, the majority of individuals surveyed thought that students fighting at school was caused by a lack of or bad education.

This result supports our main hypothesis, according to which school fights are brought on by the deterioration of the educational system in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its failure to help kids defend themselves against violent tendencies that could cause them to act in a cruel and inhumane manner.

In fact, the term "lack of education" refers to a dispersed education that leaves kids open to the influence of the outside world, such as the media, the street, and other environmental factors.

Lack of education can be linked to secondary endogenous and exogenous causes of conflicts between pupils. The study's conclusions about endogenous secondary causes included: 1) underlying psychological issues that surface attitudes of ignorance, intolerance, immaturity, lack of patience, and lack of self-control that motivate people to 1) to commit violent acts; 2) to imitate violent acts seen in the media; and 3) to act violently themselves, including through delinquent gangs' interactions with and assaults on peaceful civilians.

In addition to the school setting, the study focused on the family and social environments as secondary external factors that influence student fighting.

In fact, every socioeconomic class is being displaced by the crisis affecting modern Congolese society.

Because of this, parents either neglect or poorly fulfil their roles as instructors.

This negligence of the parents, their presence or their absence, are periodically offset by the affective presence of friends in the same trying conditions marked by bullying and deprivation, a cause of frustration and aggression.

Children are influenced by their friends to behave in certain ways and in ways that aren't always acceptable. They frequently act inappropriately or rudely and are further led by friends, who sporadically push them to act aggressively, stammer, use alcohol and drugs, and engage in other violent situations. The probe

brought to light the school's lacklustre organisational system, which was characterised by declared academic failure, shoddy discipline marked by impunity, and crammed classes.

First of all, when a student fails, they become tense and may have a propensity to attack people who tease them. Higher rates of school violence are correlated with schools that regularly celebrate students' academic achievements in front of the class.

In an effort to find fulfilment, students who are perceived as failing in public will rebel against authority figures and reject the school's ideologies. Second, weak or nonexistent discipline is likely to contribute to a culture of violence inside the school environment. Leaving little everyday infractions unpunished usually encourages offenders to commit increasingly significant violations that disturb the learning environment through aggressive behaviours. When there is injustice and impunity, aggressive people soon give in to their tendencies.

Finally, schools with a significant number of interruptions that encourage animosity and violence are more frequent than those with fewer courses and students.

Even minor altercations between students can have detrimental effects on the individual and the community. They are more harmful since they alter the fighter's personality and create misery, fear, insecurity, absenteeism, dropping out of school, subpar academic performance, and deteriorating relationships between classmates. Solutions need to be considered for this.

Our study is expected to help efforts being undertaken by educators to reduce violence that jeopardises student safety.

Fighting is a natural tendency, but it can also be restrained, avoided, and discouraged via education. We don't have any ready-made solutions, but we hope that this article has given you some food for thought.

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## The Fragile, Vibrant Earth: Ecological Posthumanism in Samantha Harvey's Orbital

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### Abstract

Ecological posthumanism is a way of thinking that asks us to stop treating humans as the center of everything and start seeing ourselves as one participant among many in a deeply interconnected ecological world. In Samantha Harvey's *Orbital* (2023), ecological posthumanism is not just a theme—it's the structuring consciousness of the novel. The book imagines life from the vantage point of astronauts circling Earth, and that allows Harvey to radically decenter the human and foreground a planetary, more-than human perspective. From orbit, Earth is not divided by nations, borders, or identities. It appears as a single, fragile, breathing entity. Human concerns—politics, conflicts, personal histories—shrink in scale. The astronauts themselves become almost posthuman figures—bodies sustained by machines, oxygen systems, gravity-defying technology—blurred boundaries between human, machine, and environment. Harvey repeatedly describes the earth as not static but active and dynamic, making the novel a reflection of examples of ecological posthumanism.

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# The Fragile, Vibrant Earth: Ecological Posthumanism in Samantha Harvey's *Orbital*

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## Abstract

Ecological posthumanism is a way of thinking that asks us to stop treating humans as the center of everything and start seeing ourselves as one participant among many in a deeply interconnected ecological world. In Samantha Harvey's *Orbital* (2023), ecological posthumanism is not just a theme—it's the structuring consciousness of the novel. The book imagines life from the vantage point of astronauts circling Earth, and that allows Harvey to radically decenter the human and foreground a planetary, more-than human perspective. From orbit, Earth is not divided by nations, borders, or identities. It appears as a single, fragile, breathing entity. Human concerns—politics, conflicts, personal histories—shrink in scale. The astronauts themselves become almost posthuman figures—bodies sustained by machines, oxygen systems, gravity-defying technology—blurred boundaries between human, machine, and environment. Harvey repeatedly describes the earth as not static but active and dynamic, making the novel a reflection of examples of ecological posthumanism.

**Keywords:** *anthropocentrism, ecological, environment, Interconnectedness, Posthumanism*

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## 1. Introduction

**E**cological posthumanism is a way of thinking that asks us to stop treating humans as the center of everything and start seeing ourselves as one participant among many in a deeply interconnected ecological world. Ecological posthumanism challenges human-centered worldviews by emphasizing the interconnected agency of humans, non-humans, technology and ecosystems, advocating ethical responsibility within a shared planetary ecology. The term first occurred in the article "Prometheus as Performer: Towards a Posthumanist Culture" by Ihab Hassan. It combines two thoughts:

- A) Posthumanism: critiques anthropocentrism (the belief or worldview that human beings are the central and most important entities in the world.)
- B) Ecological thought: focuses on environmental interdependence, sustainability and planetary survival.

Together, they argue that humans, animals, plants, technologies, microbes, and ecosystems all co-constitute life on Earth. Core ideas of ecological posthumanism are as follows:

1. **Decentering humans:** Humans are not masters of nature but entangled and networked with non-human life forms (soil, water, bacteria, climate, or machines). Traditional humanism presents humans as rational and superior beings, separate from nature. They are masters of technology and environment. Posthumanism questions this assumption by showing that humans are deeply dependent on other forms of

life, technology, and ecological systems. Posthumanism shows that humans depend on ecosystems for survival; technological systems shape everyday life; human bodies are interconnected with microbes and biological processes. Thus, humans cannot be considered autonomous or superior beings. Posthumanism emphasizes that humans exist within networks of relationships that include animals, plants, microorganisms, technologies, and environments. According to Donna Haraway, humans are "companion species", meaning they evolve and exist in constant interaction with other life forms. This perspective shifts the focus from human individuality to relational existence.

2. **Relational Ontology:** Beings don't exist in isolation. Identity and agency emerge through relationships—human/non-human, organic/technological, local/global. Relational ontology posits that entities are not pre-existing, separate substances, but emerge through their dynamic, mutual interactions or intra-actions. It challenges anthropocentrism and Cartesian dualism, arguing that relations are more fundamental than the individual things themselves, promoting a view of interconnected becoming.
3. **More than Human Ethics:** Moral concern should extend beyond humans to animals, ecosystems, future generations, and even non-living entities (rivers, mountains, climate systems).
4. **Critique of Anthropocentrism & the Anthropocene:** The critique of Anthropocentrism and the Anthropocene is a key

component of posthumanist thought. Anthropocentrism is the worldview that places humans at the center of existence. It considers human interests superior to all other life forms, treats nature primarily as a resource for human use. This perspective became dominant during the Enlightenment and modern humanism, where humans were viewed as rational subjects capable of mastering nature. Posthumanism argues that anthropocentrism is problematic because it separates humans from nature by creating a strict division between human culture and nonhuman nature. Posthumanism rejects this dualism and emphasizes that humans are biologically and ecologically interconnected with other species and ecosystems. Besides, Anthropocentrism produces environmental exploitation. When humans consider themselves superior, nature is treated as raw material, property, and an object of control. This mindset contributes to deforestation, climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. Ecological Posthumanism therefore calls for a more ethical relationship with the environment. Anthropocentrism assumes that only humans possess agency and intelligence. Ecological Posthumanism challenges this assumption by recognizing that animals possess complex behaviors; ecosystems regulate environmental processes and technologies influence human actions. Agency is therefore distributed across humans and nonhumans. Although the Anthropocene highlights human environmental impact, posthuman scholars raise several critiques. Interestingly, the term “Anthropocene” universalizes responsibility. The concept suggests that all humans are equally responsible for ecological damage. However, critics argue that industrialized nations, colonial histories and capitalist economies have contributed unevenly to environmental destruction. Therefore, some scholars prefer alternative terms such as Capitalocene (focus on capitalism) or Plantationocene (focus on colonial plantation systems). These alternatives emphasize the historical and political causes of ecological crises. Ironically, the term Anthropocene continues to place humans at the center of planetary history. Ecological Posthumanists argue that this reinforces anthropocentrism instead of fully recognizing the agency of Earth systems and nonhuman life. Posthuman thinkers emphasize the importance of multi-species coexistence. According to Donna Haraway, humans must learn to “make kin” with other species, recognizing shared survival on a fragile planet. This approach promotes ecological responsibility, interspecies ethics and collaborative survival. Ecological Posthumanism proposes several alternatives to anthropocentric thinking. The posthuman critique of anthropocentrism and the Anthropocene reveals that human-centered thinking has contributed significantly to ecological crises. By decentering the human and recognizing the interconnectedness of life, posthumanism encourages a planetary ethical perspective in which humans coexist responsibly with other species, technologies, and ecological systems.

5. **Material Agency:** Jane Bennett in her book *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (2010) is of the view that agency is not exclusively human. Non-human forces actively shape reality. Ecological posthumanism believes that matter itself has agency—oceans rise; viruses mutate; plastics circulate. Nature is not passive.
6. **Critique of Humanist Individualism:** The rational human individual is a myth. Ecological posthumanism sees

subjectivity as collective, selfhood as ecological and survival as shared.

7. **Rosi Braidotti’s ‘Zoe-Centered Egalitarianism’:** Described in the book *The Posthuman*, this is a key post-anthropocentric concept that extends moral consideration beyond human life (*bios*) to all living matter (*zoe*) including animals, bacteria and geological or environmental structures. It posits that all life forms are equal in essence and intelligent, aiming at challenging the human-centric, capitalist commodification of nature.
8. **Planetary Perspective:** A planetary perspective means viewing Earth as a single interconnected ecological system rather than a collection of separate nations, cultures, or species. From this perspective, humans are one species among many. Life exists within complex ecological networks. Planetary systems such as oceans, climate, and atmosphere sustain all life. This approach shifts attention from human-centered thinking to Earth-centered thinking.
9. **Geological time, Deep ecological history:** The concept of Deep Time refers to the understanding that the history of the Earth and the universe extends over vast temporal scales—millions or billions of years—far beyond the span of human history. This concept is important in fields like Geology, Evolutionary Biology, and ecological philosophy, and it also plays a significant role in posthuman and environmental thought. The idea of deep time was first developed scientifically by the geologist James Hutton in the eighteenth century, who argued that Earth’s geological processes operate over immense timescales.

Donna Jeanne Haraway in her book *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (2016) says, “Human beings are with and of the earth, and planet.” (Haraway, 2) This emphasizes humans as part of the earth, not above them. In another book *When Species Meet* (2008) Haraway uses the phrase “Becoming-with, not becoming”, meaning that existence is relational. We do not evolve alone; we evolve *with* other species.

### 1.1. Samantha Harvey and *Orbital*

Samantha Harvey is an English novelist who won the 2024 Booker prize for her novel *Orbital* (2023). Besides drawing conventions from multiple genres and fields including literary fiction, science fiction and philosophy, this novel ardently reflects ecological posthumanism. The novel focuses on six astronauts aboard the International Space Station who orbit the Earth during a single day. Each character comes from a different cultural background and contributes to the novel’s exploration of planetary perspective, identity, and human vulnerability. Main Characters in *Orbital* include Roman, a Russian cosmonaut who often reflects on time, routine, and the rhythms of orbit. Shaun is an American astronaut who thinks deeply about Earth’s beauty and fragility. Pietro is an Italian astronaut who often reflects on art, culture, and human creativity. Anton is another Russian cosmonaut who embodies technical expertise and professionalism. Nell is a British astronaut who frequently thinks about her family and life on Earth. Chie is a Japanese astronaut who is particularly sensitive to nature and the environment. Although the novel includes individual characters, it does not focus heavily on dramatic personal conflict. Instead, the astronauts function as a collective human presence observing

Earth from space. Together they represent different nations and cultures, shared human vulnerability and the interconnectedness of humanity with planetary systems. Their experiences create a global and planetary perspective that transcends national boundaries.

### 1.2. Aim and Objectives

The aim of the present research article is to analyze the novel *Orbital* as a reflection of ecological posthumanism. To fulfill the aim, the objectives of the present research article are:

- i) To explore how the novelist systematically uses ecological posthumanism (as developed by theorists like Donna Haraway, Rosi Braidotti, Jane Bennett) as a framework to interpret *Orbital*'s depiction of human/non-human entanglements, distributed agency, or relational subjectivity.
- ii) To show how *Orbital* represents interactions among species, matter, and technology, moving beyond human emotional reflection to networked agency.
- iii) To investigate how *Orbital* conceptualizes planetary time, orbit cycles, and deep time in relation to posthuman thinking.
- iv) To examine how gender, nationality, or "self" are reshaped in these non-Earth environments as presented in the novel.

## 2. Analysis of *Orbital* as a Reflection of Ecological Posthumanism

In Samantha Harvey's *Orbital* (2023), ecological posthumanism is not just a theme—it's the framework and the *structuring consciousness* of the novel. The book imagines life from the vantage point of astronauts circling Earth, and that distance allows Harvey to radically decenter the human and foreground a planetary, more-than-human perspective. From orbit, Earth is not divided by nations, borders, or identities. It appears as a single, fragile, breathing entity. Human concerns—politics, conflicts, personal histories—shrink in scale. This aligns directly with ecological posthumanism: Humans are not masters of Earth, but temporary inhabitants. The planet precedes and will outlast human presence. Human life is only one strand in a vast ecological mesh. The astronauts themselves become almost posthuman figures—bodies sustained by machines, oxygen systems, gravity-defying technology—blurred boundaries between human, machine, and environment.

Harvey repeatedly describes Earth as dynamic and active: clouds move like thought; oceans pulse and shift; weather systems evolve independently of human will. This reflects Jane Bennett's "vibrant matter" and Rosi Braidotti's zoe-centric ethics, where agency is distributed across human and non-human forces and nature is not passive scenery but an active participant.

### 2.1. Relational Existence and Shared Vulnerability

In *Orbital* by Samantha Harvey, relational existence and shared vulnerability are central ideas that emerge from the astronauts' experience aboard the International Space Station. The novel shifts attention away from individual human dominance and instead portrays life as part of a complex web of relations among humans, technology, Earth, and other forms of matter. These themes strongly connect with ideas from ecological posthumanism. Relational existence in the novel refers to the idea that beings do not exist independently; rather, they exist through connections with others—humans, non-humans, environments, and technologies. The astronauts on the station come from different nations

and cultures, yet their survival depends on constant cooperation and trust. In orbit, national boundaries disappear, and they form a small, interdependent community. Their lives depend on shared routines, communication, and mutual care. Life in orbit shows that humans are deeply dependent on technological systems—oxygen generators, spacecraft modules, communication networks, and monitoring devices. These systems are not merely tools but co-actors in sustaining life. The astronauts' existence becomes relational not only with each other but also with machines. From space, astronauts observe Earth as a single fragile organism. Political borders vanish, and the planet appears as a shared home. Their perception emphasizes that human life is inseparable from the planet's ecosystems and atmospheric systems. The novel also highlights relationships among oceans, weather patterns, animals, and human societies. The astronauts witness storms, day–night cycles, and climate phenomena from orbit, reminding readers that human life is embedded within larger planetary processes.

The novel also emphasizes shared vulnerability, meaning that humans, technologies, and the Earth itself are fragile and interdependent. In orbit, astronauts experience extreme vulnerability. A small malfunction—loss of oxygen, radiation exposure, or technical failure—could be fatal. This vulnerability challenges the traditional idea of human control over nature. Looking down at Earth, the astronauts recognize how thin the atmosphere is and how delicate the planet appears. Environmental crises such as climate change become more visible from space, suggesting that all life on Earth shares ecological vulnerability. The astronauts reflect their families, memories, and the distance from Earth. Their emotional experiences reveal the shared human condition of uncertainty, longing, and dependence on relationships. By observing the planet as a whole system, the narrative implies that humans, animals, and ecosystems face interconnected risks—from environmental destruction to climate instability. These themes resonate with the ideas of Donna Haraway and Rosi Braidotti, who argue that humans are not autonomous beings but part of entangled networks of life, matter, and technology.

In the novel human identity becomes collective rather than individual. Agency is distributed across humans, machines, and planetary systems and survival depends on cooperation and ecological awareness.

### 2.2. Time in the Novel

The novel's treatment of time resonates with posthumanist thought, especially ideas about de-centering human perspectives. Thinkers such as Donna Haraway and Rosi Braidotti argue that humans must understand themselves within larger ecological and temporal networks. The concept of time in the novel is also central to the novel's philosophical and narrative structure. Time in the novel is not presented as a simple linear progression but as cyclical, planetary, and multi-layered, reflecting the astronauts' experience aboard the International Space Station and their view of Earth from orbit.

In *Orbital*, time is experienced simultaneously at multiple levels:

1. **Human Time or Cyclical and Repetitive Time:** The repetitive orbit of the station creates a sense of cyclical time. The astronauts perform the same routines repeatedly. The Earth constantly rotates beneath them, reinforcing the idea of endless cycles rather than linear progress. This cyclical structure mirrors natural processes such as planetary rotation and ecological rhythms.

2. **Personal and Emotional Time:** Despite the orbital cycles, the astronauts experience subjective time through memories, reflections, and thoughts about loved ones on Earth. Personal memories collapse past and present. Distance from Earth intensifies feelings of nostalgia and longing. Thus, the novel contrasts mechanical time (clocks and schedules) with psychological time (memory and emotion).
3. **Orbital Time (Accelerated Cycles):** One of the most striking aspects of time in the novel is the orbital rhythm of the space station. The astronauts circle the Earth roughly every 90 minutes, experiencing about sixteen sunrises and sunsets in a single day. “In this new day they’ll circle the earth sixteen times. They’ll see sixteen sunrises and sixteen sunsets, sixteen days and sixteen nights” (Harvey, 4). This rapid cycle disrupts the ordinary 24-hour human perception of time. Day and night lose their usual meaning, making time feel fragmented and repetitive. Instead of following a natural day, astronauts rely on artificial schedules and clocks. This shows how human experiences of time are constructed and dependent on the environment and technology. This layered temporality destabilizes the human body as the measure of time. Circadian rhythms (term coined by Franz Halberg) lose authority. Instead, time is shaped by machines, orbital physics and planetary rotation.
4. **Planetary Time:** From orbit, the astronauts observe Earth’s planetary rhythms—weather systems, oceans, storms, and seasonal shifts. Time appears as a large-scale planetary process rather than a human-centered timeline. The astronauts witness phenomena such as hurricanes forming or continents slowly passing beneath them. Planetary time reminds readers that Earth operates on vast natural cycles beyond human control. This framing resonates with the “Gaia-like view of Earth” as a system (concept developed by James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis), where the planet is considered a single, self-regulating, living superorganism indifferent to human divisions. National borders disappear; political events shrink.
5. **Deep Time:** The novel also evokes deep time, the geological and evolutionary time scale that stretches millions or billions of years. The concept “deep time” (coined by John McPhee, concept given by James Hutton) is an immense temporal scale associated with geology and cosmology rather than human narrative. Looking at Earth from space makes human history appear extremely brief and fragile. The astronauts realize that civilizations, borders, and political conflicts are temporary within Earth’s long history. This perspective challenges anthropocentric thinking by situating humans within much longer planetary and cosmic histories. “If the cosmic calendar is all of time, then humanity occupies only the smallest fraction of it... most of it has not yet occurred” (Harvey, 174). The universe moves on with “its usual nihilism” (Harvey, 173-174).

### 2.3. Zoe-Centered Egalitarianism in *Orbital*

Rosi Braidotti brilliantly developed the philosophical framework of “Zoe-Centered Egalitarianism”. In posthuman theory, *zoe* refers to the vital force of life shared by all living beings, not just human life (*bios*). Egalitarianism means the rejection of human superiority over other forms of life. Zoe-centered egalitarianism therefore emphasizes the equal value of all forms of life—human, animal, ecological, and even planetary systems. This concept

emphasizes ecological interconnectedness, equality among species and recognition of the agency of nonhuman life.

The narrative of *Orbital* reflects this idea in several ways. In *Orbital*, the astronauts observe Earth from space. This perspective fundamentally changes how they perceive life. From orbit national borders disappear; human infrastructures appear to be tiny and natural systems such as oceans, forests, and clouds dominate the view. This perspective encourages readers to see the planet as a living ecological whole, rather than a human-controlled world. The astronauts’ vantage point therefore decenters human importance and aligns with zoe-centered thinking. Besides, the novel repeatedly describes Earth as a dynamic system of interacting with life forms and natural processes. The astronauts witness swirling hurricanes over oceans, forests stretching across continents, migrating atmospheric systems over oceans and polar ice sheets. These observations reveal that life on Earth operates through complex ecological relationships that include humans but are not dominated by them. In this sense, the novel presents Earth as a planetary network of life, where humans are only one participant among many.

Zoe-centered egalitarianism rejects the hierarchical model that places humans above animals, plants, and ecosystems. In *Orbital*, the astronauts often reflect on animals, oceans, forests, and microbial life as part of the same planetary system. Life appears collective rather than hierarchical, and the survival of humans depends on the health of ecosystems. This representation suggests that human life cannot exist independently from other forms of life, reinforcing ecological equality. The novel’s representation of Earth encourages a posthuman ethical perspective. Instead of viewing humans as rulers of nature, *Orbital* suggests that humans must recognize the interdependence of species, the shared vitality of life forms and the fragility of planetary ecosystems. This ethical shift reflects Braidotti’s argument that humanity should develop a planetary sense of responsibility toward all forms of life.

The narrative structure of *Orbital* also reinforces this philosophy. The novel focuses less on dramatic human action and more on observation of Earth, planetary cycles and environmental phenomena. By shifting attention away from human-centered storytelling, the narrative allows nonhuman life and planetary processes to become central elements of the story. Ultimately, the novel encourages readers to recognize that humans are biological participants in Earth’s ecosystems, life exists through interdependent ecological networks, and the future of humanity depends on respect for all forms of life.

### 2.4. Distributed Agency in the Novel

In traditional humanist thinking, humans are seen as independent agents controlling nature and technology. Distributed agency refers to the idea that action, influence, and power are not controlled only by humans but shared among humans, technologies, natural forces, and planetary systems. In the novel, agency is distributed across multiple actors, showing that human beings are part of a larger network rather than the sole agents of action. The astronauts aboard the International Space Station carry out scientific research, maintenance tasks, and observations of Earth. At first glance, they appear to be the primary agents of action. However, their agency is limited and dependent on other factors: they must follow strict schedules and protocols; their survival depends on life-support systems, and their movements are constrained by microgravity and spacecraft design. Thus, human agency exists but within a network of dependencies.

Technology plays a crucial role in sustaining life in orbit. The space station, spacecraft systems, and monitoring devices regulate oxygen and temperature, control communication with Earth, manage navigation and orbital movement. These systems actively shape the astronauts' lives. Without them, human existence in space would be impossible. "You're bound to Coordinated Universal Time" (Harvey, 6). This line shows how astronauts' lives are regulated by technological systems and global time protocols, indicating that machines and systems structure human action. Technology therefore functions not merely as a passive tool but as an active participant in the astronauts' survival, sharing agency with humans.

Earth itself emerges as a powerful agent in the novel. From orbit, astronauts observe hurricanes and storms, ocean currents, atmospheric movements, and changing weather systems. These natural processes operate independently of human control. They influence the astronauts' understanding of the planet and remind them that Earth's ecological systems possess their own forms of agency. The astronauts' lives are also shaped by cosmic forces and physical laws like gravity and microgravity, orbital mechanics, solar radiation, and the rotation of Earth. These forces determine the movement of the station and the rhythm of life in orbit. Human beings must adapt to these forces rather than control them. The astronauts come from different countries and backgrounds, but their survival depends on collective cooperation. No individual astronaut can function independently. Tasks such as repairs, experiments, and daily routines require teamwork. This shows that the agency in the novel is also collective rather than individual. "It's not so much that the earth is one thing and the weather is another, but that they're the same. The earth is its air currents..." (Harvey, 83). The narrative structure itself distributes agency. Instead of focusing on one heroic character, the novel shifts between different astronauts' thoughts and observations. It also gives attention to Earth's landscapes, atmospheric phenomena, and technological systems. This narrative strategy reinforces the idea that humans are not the sole center of action. In *Orbital*, the traditional idea of agency is thus challenged as humans depend on machines, machines depend on human maintenance and ultimately both depend on planetary and cosmic systems. Agency therefore emerges from interconnected networks rather than individual control.

## 2.5. Identity in *Orbital*

The construction of identity in *Orbital* is shaped by the astronauts' unique spatial position in orbit, their collective existence aboard the space station, and their planetary perspective on Earth. The novel challenges traditional ideas of identity based on nationality, individuality, and human centrality, and instead presents identity as relational, fluid, and posthuman. The astronauts aboard the International Space Station come from different countries, cultures, and linguistic backgrounds. On Earth, identity is often shaped by nationality and political boundaries. However, from orbit national borders are invisible, the Earth appears as a single planet and geopolitical divisions lose significance. This experience encourages the astronauts to rethink their identities not as representatives of separate nations but as members of a shared human community. Thus, identity becomes planetary rather than national. Life in the confined environment of the space station requires cooperation and interdependence. The astronauts must work together to perform experiments, maintain equipment, and ensure survival. Because of this individual autonomy decreases, teamwork becomes essential and survival depends on collective

responsibility. Identity therefore shifts from individual identity to collective identity. Instead of focusing on personal achievements, the astronauts experience themselves as part of a cooperative network of people and systems.

The novel also constructs identity through relationships rather than isolated individuality. The astronauts' identities are shaped by their connections with other astronauts, technological systems that sustain life and the Earth they observe from space and memories of family and home. This relational framework suggests that identity emerges through interactions and interdependence. From space, astronauts witness Earth as a fragile, interconnected ecosystem. They observe oceans and continents, atmospheric systems, storms and environmental processes. This planetary perspective encourages them to see themselves as inhabitants of Earth rather than citizens of specific countries. The novel therefore constructs identity at a planetary scale, emphasizing humanity's shared existence on a single fragile planet. The astronauts' lives depend heavily on technological systems: because human survival in space requires technological mediation, the novel suggests that identity is not purely human but technologically entangled. This reflects ideas in posthuman philosophy associated with thinkers like Donna Haraway and Rosi Braidotti, who argue that human identity is formed through interactions with technology, environment, and other species. The astronauts' distance from Earth transforms their understanding of themselves. Seeing the planet from space diminishes human arrogance, highlights the fragility of civilization, and reveals the interconnectedness of life. This shift in perspective encourages a humble and ecological understanding of identity.

## 3. Conclusion

In Samantha Harvey's *Orbital*, a powerful literary exploration of ecological posthumanism is constructed by shifting the narrative away from human-centered perspectives toward a planetary and relational understanding of existence. Through the experiences of astronauts orbiting Earth, the novel invites readers to reconsider humanity's position within the broader ecological and cosmic systems that sustain life.

First, the novel decenters the human subject, a key principle in posthumanist thought. When the astronauts observe Earth from space, human-made divisions such as national borders, political conflicts, and cultural identities disappear. What remains visible are oceans, continents, clouds, and atmospheric systems, emphasizing the dominance of planetary processes rather than human activity. This perspective challenges the anthropocentric belief that humans control or dominate the natural world and instead situates them as one species among many within a complex ecological network.

Second, *Orbital* highlights the interdependence between humans, technology, and the environment. The astronauts' survival in space depends entirely on technological systems—life-support mechanisms, oxygen generators, and communication networks. At the same time, these technologies ultimately rely on Earth's ecological stability. The novel therefore demonstrates that human existence is embedded within interconnected systems of machines, environments, and biological processes, reinforcing the posthuman idea that agency and survival are distributed across multiple actors.

Third, the narrative emphasizes the shared vulnerability of life on Earth. From orbit, the astronauts observe the planet's thin atmosphere, shifting weather systems, and environmental changes.

These observations reveal the fragility of Earth's ecosystems and the precarious conditions that sustain life. The realization that the entire biosphere depends on a delicate balance encourages a sense of planetary responsibility, where humans must recognize their dependence on ecological systems rather than exploiting them.

Additionally, the novel incorporates planetary and deep temporal perspectives, placing human history within the immense timeline of Earth and the universe. By presenting the rapid cycles of orbit alongside reflections on cosmic time, *Orbital* reminds readers that human civilization represents only a brief moment in the planet's long history. This awareness reinforces the posthuman argument that humanity must move beyond short-term, human-centered thinking and develop a broader understanding of planetary continuity and ecological sustainability.

Ultimately, *Orbital* portrays Earth as a living, interconnected system where humans, animals, ecosystems, technologies, and atmospheric processes coexist in dynamic relationships. By dissolving traditional hierarchies between humans and the natural world, the novel promotes a vision of zoe-centered egalitarianism, where all forms of life share intrinsic value. In doing so, Harvey's narrative encourages readers to adopt a planetary consciousness, recognizing that humanity's future depends on cultivating ethical relationships with the environment and other life forms.

Thus, *Orbital* not only narrates the experiences of astronauts in space but also serves as a philosophical meditation on humanity's ecological position in the universe. Through its emphasis on interconnectedness, shared vulnerability, and planetary awareness, the novel exemplifies the principles of ecological posthumanism and invites readers to imagine a more responsible and sustainable relationship between humans and the Earth.

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