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Virág Dvorácskó

Spirituality on the mat | Exploring contemporary yoga practices

Abstract

This paper attempted to explore Western yoga practices and their connection to spirituality. The goal was a deeper understanding of the modern interpretation of yoga through exploring physical practices, mental and spiritual rituals, and the attached value systems. I focused on individual motivations and experiences. Through these factors, the paper attempted to understand personal values associated with spiritual and mental consumption. I joined an online yoga group and analyzed the community members' posts about their personal journeys. This approach expanded modern yoga practices to the yoga industry and to the attached spiritual and personal values. The online space provided an inside view of personal motivations, and lead to an understanding of group mechanisms among contemporary yoga practitioners in the West.

Introduction

With the progress of time, yoga has transformed from its original roots. It has developed into a mind-body unifier “exercise and meditation” in the modern interpretation. It integrates physical, mental, and spiritual components by combining yoga poses and meditation. The postures provide physical movement while meditation creates mental concentration, inner attention, and emotional awareness. The practice's roots lie in a spiritual tradition and extensive history with far-reaching development paths. Yoga stems from the philosophical roots of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, which emphasize the development of one's soul toward enlightenment. Many types of yoga exist, with varying ratios of bodily or spiritually focused interpretation. My interest was based on the popularity of yoga, especially its Western interpretation. As a religiously rooted cultural heritage, contemporary yoga raised many issues with its presentation as an industry. Cultural appropriation, inequality in availability, inappropriate interpretation, and exploitation are some examples of critics of modern times yoga practices. I aimed to

discover these social and economic forces behind yoga, through the yoga group's point of view. I used Ronald Purser's and Andrea Jain's works, as these scholars have explored and examined modern times' yoga practices and mindfulness trends extensively,¹ and provide a critical examination of the placement of modern yoga and spirituality in the capitalist system. These considerations argue that today's spiritual interpretations are inseparable from consumerism and the market.

To understand the individuals' choices and the working mechanisms of a yoga group, I analyzed an online yoga community. It is a subscription-based yoga community, that provides classes online for its members. The site offers different types of yoga classes through videos on the channel's video library. It also provides guided meditations, live classes, online, and monthly personal life-update titled as "lifestyle vlogs" from the yoga teachers. I found these additional video types useful, as these incorporate more focus on meditations and explore spirituality through personal lifestyle advice. The members and subscribers engaged in conversations in the comment section and created a private group for themselves. This group proved to be a great opportunity to explore personal choices in the yoga industry. The community was a cohesive, online yoga group that shares personal, spiritual, and physical journeys in their online group.

I registered to the platform and joined the live classes daily for the following 4 months. With the permission of the closed group's mediator, I joined the closed Facebook group of the community members and analyzed their personal experiences and daily thoughts through their posts.

I argue that yoga practitioners, - whether consciously or unintentionally - engage in spiritual and mindfulness-promoting consumerism. Methods of yoga have been adopted in the West and reformed to the desire of the market and consumption. By buying products, consumers also enable the spread of a globally promoted lifestyle of an "ancient practice"².

¹ Jain, A. (2014). *Selling Yoga: From Counterculture to Pop Culture* (Illustrated ed.). Oxford University Press
 Jain, A. R. (2020). *Peace Love Yoga: The Politics of Global Spirituality* [E-book]. Oxford University Press
 Purser, R. (2019). *McMindfulness: How Mindfulness Became the New Capitalist Spirituality*. Repeater

² The term of an "ancient practice" is more complicated and complex than a pure, cultural practice of the ancient times. Since culture and practice cannot be treated and found in isolation from other social influences, I will elaborate on this term in the following chapters of the thesis.

First, I will introduce the roots of Yoga, and explore its spread to the West through history, to later be able to understand the changes and reforms that have made, and led to the present state of yoga, its representation in the West, and the industry around spirituality.

What is yoga?

Textual evidence for the first occurrence of the word "yoga" dates back to the 3rd century BCE. The word is derived from the verb "yoke", with the meaning of unity. It refers to the connection between one's spirituality, soul, and to a "higher way" of living (Feuerstein, 1998).

Hindu scriptures³ and Sanskrit⁴ texts founded the oldest occurrence of philosophy and meditation as the ancient form of yoga practice. The texts dealt with rituals and ontological knowledge, serving as one of the most important pieces of literature on Indian culture and history (Flood, 1996). The ancient remainders summarized Hindu teachings.

The *Upanishads* are massive compilations of texts, including over 200 scriptures. These consist of cultural documents of ancient belief systems and activities attached to them. The *Upanishads* described yoga as a six-step system, naming the limbs of *breath control, withdrawal of the senses, meditation, placing of concentrated mind, philosophical inquiry, and absorption* (Müller, 2010). Yoga's extensive history may be split into four distinct sections for a better understanding of its periods of development. (Newcombe, 2009)

The (1) Pre-Classical period of yoga origin can be traced back over 5000 years. The word "yoga" initially appeared in ancient religious texts. Yoga has evolved and developed over time. The ancient remains of *Upanishads* summarized Hindu teachings and philosophy, maintained healing methods throughout history, and explored teachings of love, death, joy, and pain. Later the *Upanishads* described yoga's six-step system.⁵ The

³ Manuscripts and extensive historical literature relating to any of Hinduism's various traditions are known as Hindu texts.

⁴ Hinduism's sacred language is Sanskrit.

⁵ Naming the limbs of breath control, withdrawal of the senses, meditation, placing of concentrated mind, philosophical inquiry, absorption

teachings of ego⁶ sacrifice through self-knowledge, action, and wisdom were one of the first examples of diversified varieties of yoga.

During the (2) Classical yoga period, many ideas, beliefs, and techniques clashed and contradicted one another frequently. Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* define the classical period as the earliest systematic presentation of yoga. Patanjali was an ancient sage in India, thought to be the writer of early texts on yoga. *Yoga Sutra* is a collection of *aphorisms* in Sanskrit. Aphorisms summarize a brief expression of "universal truth". (Feuerstein, 1975)

During the classical period, yoga was divided into an "eight-limbed path" that included steps and stages. The term "eight limbs" is derived from the Sanskrit term *Ashtanga*, and refers to the eight limbs of yoga: *Yama* (attitudes toward the environment), *Niyama* (attitudes toward ourselves), *Asana* (physical postures), *Pranayama* (restraint or expansion of the breath), *Pratyahara* (withdrawal of the senses), *Dharana* (concentration), *Dhyana* (meditation) and *Samadhi* (complete integration). (Ram, 2010)

During the (3) Post-Classical period, yoga masters created a system of practices designed to rejuvenate the body and prolong life. They embraced the physical body, as the means to achieve enlightenment. Their techniques were intended to cleanse the body and mind, with a more physically focused practice. These physical-spiritual connections and body-centered practices led to the creation of what we call yoga in the West: Hatha Yoga.⁷

During the (4) Modern Era, yoga gurus⁸ began to travel to the West in the late 1800s and early 1900s, gaining attention and disciples. Hatha yoga was heavily promoted in India during the 1920s and 1930s, thanks to yoga practitioners. Through the modern era, yoga was performed and became known all across the world, due to the East India Company and the rise of globalization.

⁶ The individual's perception of who they are — their thoughts, desires, and personality, as shaped by the mind. It is referred to as ego. Because it is shaped by one's perspective of the world, it is frequently referred to as the "false self."

⁷ Hatha yoga, according to yogapedia.com, was a comprehensive life philosophy that included how we relate to external and internal experience as a way to inner calm. Hatha yoga has come to be linked primarily with a physical practice in modern times. It's a slow, static pose-holding exercise.

⁸ 'Teacher' is the literal translation. A yogi is a yoga teacher who practices yoga and dedicated towards the practice. Yogini stands for the female practitioners.

Yoga is developed further today by its industry, treating it as a product, labeled as “exotic”. The representation of the East can create an image of a stereotypically spiritual and rich culture, but a “socially and systemically backward” world. (Jain, 2020) The “distant exotic”, romanticized culture simultaneously emphasizes the view that the “advanced” Western culture uses what the East can provide, but at the level of a higher-positioned society. This phenomenon reinforces a problematic, stereotypical view of the East, and commodifies the culture through the industrialization of yoga. The modern interpretation of yoga creates a nostalgia for the practice labeled as “ancient”. It simultaneously brings the self-development narrative for practicing it along with the material goods of the market. This phenomenon emerges the inquiry of yoga today. The personal motivations for practicing and consuming products of yoga and mindfulness promised to be a field of exploration for the aspect of yoga in the 21st century.

Spiritual and physical motivations behind the practice

I will focus on the spiritual limb of yoga, and the communal experience. Spirituality and religious practices are connected to institutionalized traditions. These institutions provide a system of beliefs and group values that can have power over the individual. Thus, personal motivations can be connected to the institutionalized forces of connection. For a better understanding of the systematic forces and motivations behind these actions, I will explore the theory of religion, as a foundation of spirituality, through the online yoga classes.

Modern yoga can be embodied as an exercise. Physical exercise also has underlying symbolic meanings with the spiritual and philosophical limbs. As a result of this symbolic aspect of yoga, the adopted value system unites those who share common values through practice.

Karma, mindfulness, committing to “*watch our thoughts*” and “*rejuvenate by accepting them as they come and go*” are some examples of these values from the online classes. The often-mentioned unity occurs during the sessions: “*Mind, body, and spirit are all one and cannot be clearly separated*”.

This statement not only shows, how present the spiritual aspect in a practice, which also mentions calorie burning and focuses on weight loss many times, but brings up a question: if these can not be separated, then what exactly is that spiritual element in yoga, and more importantly, how it is embodied during practicing it?

The community which enables the individual to connect and practice together, in the online space, has an effect of belonging. Regular practicing, in a certain group, with structured movement can be considered a ritual. It also creates a unifying aspect through the different asanas, symbols, and values of the practice. For that reason, I highlight the religious and spiritual role in society through Durkheim's work on religion, in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (2018).

Religion, according to Durkheim, is a unified system of beliefs and behaviors related to sacred things. Beliefs and practices bind all individuals who adhere to them in a single moral community. Religion has three basic elements: belief in the transcendent, religious organizations or cults, and ritual (2018).

Based on this theory, the ritual aspect is one of the main connecting points of the individuals. Collective practicing and values according to Durkheim are one of the pillars of religious grouping. Through the practice, they embody the symbols and values of traditional yoga, even if this is unintentional. The practitioners can be divided into two groups according to their intentions: the ones whose aim is based on physical motivator factors, and the other group who chose yoga because of the need or interest to bring spirituality into their life.

Inquiry about spirituality was represented among the posts of the online community. The posts and comments were including questions about the correct interpretation of poses, spiritual interests, yoga philosophy, mindfulness practices, and self-help tools. The members shared their daily thoughts and answered each other's questions about personal preferences. The practitioners were presented with different attitudes towards spirituality and religion. "Spiritual but not religious", "religious but practicing yoga" or seeing yoga as "training but not interested in spirituality". These terms were used as statements for one's personal view and self-described position towards religion and spirituality, without further explanations. The comments highlighted the narrow barriers between one's religion and spiritual belief system. It raised the question about the lines between certain practices.

The fluidity between neoliberal practices and spirituality

This section explores the spiritual aspect of yoga, through neoliberal spirituality. The aim is to understand the practitioners' motivations while using contemporary theories on new age religions, spirituality, and religious practices in consumer society. I argue, that

spiritual habits provide not only a wide range of choices in the market, but also create permeability by mixing spiritual elements with different religious practices. The blurred categories have created a new, intertwined religiosity. I will examine the fluidity of modern society first, to be able to understand spirituality afterward.

Liquid modernity

According to Ronald Purser, neoliberal individualism emerged mindfulness and spirituality. (Purser 2019) Mindfulness assists people in coping with the conditions that give them stress without addressing the root cause of their anxiety (2019). To understand and explore this phenomenon, I will explore modernity first, in the context of contemporary spirituality. The term “Liquid modernity” according to Zygmund Baumann (2000) refers to modern life’s constantly changing quality. The metaphor symbolizes the fluid characteristic of social boundaries, global economics, and identity formation. These aspects of modern life developed a constantly changing behavior and fast-paced mobility. Baumann argues that modernity exists among blurred lines of boundaries. He claims that spheres and categories of life are not separable. The barriers between personal relations and boundaries became fluid, and the focus on individual self-creation is highlighted. Individualism among these fluid relations causes pressure, as the focus is on personal achievement. Liquid modernity suggests that personal mobility depends on the individual’s actions, which puts social pressure on the individuals, to maintain achievements and create their own success. Thus, the need to find tools that can help to deal with this individualistic pressure has grown. The emergence of this pressure can not be simplified to only one component. Modern reality has created needs and desires for spiritual and mindfulness products and practices, which the market serves and thus created a profitable industry.

While achievement became such an important value, it has caused not only motivation towards entrepreneurship but a new form of weight on individuals. Anxiety over personal responsibility for one’s self-creation extends to every dimension of life. (Jain 2020) Productivity became an important aspect, and self-optimization plays an important role in achieving the desired maximization of oneself. One of the pressures of contemporary times is the freedom of one’s self-creation. It suggests that they are in control over life and overemphasizes personal responsibility for one’s chances.

These components create the urge towards a structured solution. In order to reconstruct, heal or search for one's identity, individuals took action and attempt to reach their highest potential. The desire for religious practices and spiritual solutions can emerge from the effect of modern liquidity. According to Baumann, insecurity and uncertainty are the most common features of contemporary life situations. The individual might discover the required instruments to try to re-establish a sense of stability and therefore prevent insecurity and uncertainty (Baumann 2000, 161). This uncertain position is the product of a neoliberal society. It creates a void with the above-mentioned pressure and offers spirituality and alternative religious practices as a filler for that. I will focus on these alternative practices in the following.

Liquid spirituality

From the 1970s onwards, a progressive transition from religion in the direction of "alternative spirituality" or "new spirituality" could be observed in the United States and Western Europe (Rivadossi, 2020). This dynamic peaked in the 1990s when new spirituality movements lost their "alternative" status and merged with the mainstream. The individuals and their search for a new definition of self was the foundation of new spirituality.

Yoga participants expressed their connection towards spirituality in the online group. Their comments and reflections show, how healing and the pursuit of self-maximizing activities appear in their daily lives. Sharing experiences in the common space creates a community attachment and connection. During the written posts, they comment on each other's experiences, reflect on each other's thoughts and fall into conversation about specific experiences and spiritual struggles about emotional waves. *"Growth makes me happy... spiritual, mental, physical.."* is written under 3 shared pictures of yoga postures, showing development in the interpretation of those asanas. The comments reply as: *"Well done"*, *"Keep going, nice job"* and *"Thank you for sharing, we all are developing here, our souls are healing and extending towards a higher self and higher way of existing"*.

The reflections not only motivate each other to continue exercising but refer to a deeper and more spiritual journey. Using expressions like "soul healing" and aiming for a "higher self" demonstrated that the post, which was reflecting on the physical postures, also attached with the spiritual aspects to the practitioners. A different post written by

the community members articulated personal experiences on meditation. *"I realized, that yoga is a way to cope with stress, and with life with all of its craziness, all of its uncertainty, all of its rat race, and all of its tears. Meditation gives me peace and fuels me, to have enough energy, when life happens. These times are especially hard for me, I feel lonely and uncertain about my future, my job, and my health. But I trust the process of yoga. The healing comes through peace and magic happens inside. I trust the universe and manifest every day. This gives me strength from the inside out. Thank you for this lovely community, Namaste!"*

This post summarized the struggle and stress of modern life with the author of the post. For meditation and calming provided by yoga, it is a tool that provides security and does not just strengthen you physically. The post writer clings to this method against a sense of insecurity. The term "trust the process" occurred as a daily motivational quote, and emphasized personal determination. It is a great example of how confident they are in the power of practice and that the practitioners consider it more than just practice.

A deeper meaning is attributed to yoga, which contributes to its healing. The term "healing" was also common in posts. Both in case of physical injuries and referring to mental healing or spiritual search. Anxiety, depression, grief, or stress are some examples of the emotional battles they come across. The posts often have spiritual guidance sentences in a form of *affirmations*. As the post below mentioned the trust in "universe" and "manifestation". Others also emphasized the personal belief in one's ability to attract and create circumstances. *"Nothing holds me back, I'm free and I know always be guided. I have the power to create the world I want to see around me."*

The desire to be able to manage one's desires and to have enough power over one's life is connected with self-creation and achievement-oriented modernity. It is articulated, that the practitioners not only try to reach a certain position or goal but also believe in a power, which will show "*guidance*" for them. Inner strength plays an important role in an individual's value system. They find support by relying on spiritual leadership. *"I'm letting my inner voice talk to me. Listen to my emotions. Accept the past and create the future."* Individual entrepreneurship is highlighted in the form of "*future creation*". Reaching goals and aims tied together with their belief in yoga. The phenomenon of trusting in spiritual guidance resembles traditional religious systems. Belief in a certain element of a higher power, trusting in it, and showing communal interests are all manifested in these posts.

"I trust, I believe, and I am able to create the highest good. The universe leads me, holds my hand, and will show me the way. If there is a wish, there is a way." "I am guided, I am loved, I am grounded. Everything happens for a reason." "We are all one. We are love. I am love. Namaste". The word "Namaste" reoccurs at most of the end of the posts, to say goodbye to each other. Every yoga practice on the online platform ends with a meditation (differing length) and saying "Namaste" to each other. This connects the practitioners, providing them with a language that unifies the group. The comments express their belonging and gratitude towards the members. They feel understood and powerful.

"This community is my second family. Hard times come and go, but this place is my place to recover and to feel loved. Thank you!" "I feel supported. The energy is so powerful here!" "So many lovely souls in one place. So much love, so much positive energy." The community was described by them as "family". As they articulated, the emotional support and shared experiences in yoga create an intimate, supportive space for them online. It affects their sense of belonging and occurred as an opportunity to share personal thoughts, and emotions and to connect. The members often refer to each other as "souls". The personal posts include deep and emotional thoughts while referring to personal thought as the "truth of one's soul". Thus the community shares each other's trust, bonded, and respected each other's "soul". The spiritual community expresses their way of "*feeling positive vibes*" and "*energies*" even through an online space. The yoga exercise videos have titles referring to bodily goals⁹, and the teacher also refers to instructions as "*calorie burning*" or "*weight loss exercises*". This duality shows the way yoga unifies physical practice with a modern focus on the body and the spiritual aspects. Highlighting goals in physical appearances and recovering from injuries comes along with the "rejuvenation after a stressful day" – as the yoga teacher often summarized at the end of the classes.

The online community expressed the spiritual limb of yoga. It represented their desire to heal and to have support. The classes end with a short meditation, focusing on breathing, and expressing "*gratitude for showing up to ourselves on the mat*". Yoga practitioners believed in yoga's ability to provide a solution to almost everything which causes undesired effects on the individual and blurs the lines between physical healing and mental, spiritual guidance. Yoga as a spiritual practice and bodily exercise stand in a

⁹ Titles include "20 min yoga workout, better than the gym", "Full body yoga for result" "Yoga for weightloss", "Detox yoga for better digestion"

middle ground between physical and spiritual healing practices. The common desire for “healing” was reoccurring among the class takers’. “Healing” was used in different contexts and referred to all of the class takers’ motives: the physically driven and the spiritually motivated ones.

“Yoga gives me a pause, helps me to wind down the stressful everyday life. I literally reborn after the class from week to week.” “No other sport could heal my anxiety this efficiently. It really heals the body, the soul, and the mind. It just works.” The expression of healing refers to recovering. The summarized rejuvenation from “the stressful *everyday life*” is emerged and generated the need for the practice. Social constructions achievements, being productive, maintaining active life in the professional area and also in personal relationships cause fatigue and exhaustion. These were motives to find spiritual healing, rejuvenation, and peace on the mat. The post-writers articulated that their motivations for healing are caused by stress or work-life. These components of modern life exhausted them, so they wanted to find a solution in order to be able to continue working, and being productive. The harmful experiences usually came from the system’s characteristics and the individuals were the seekers of possible solutions.

This phenomenon contributes to the peculiarity of liquid modernity. Problems caused by social order articulated the negative effects on individuals, who sought to resolve them. In this sense, individuals are not only burdened with the search for and creation of their own identity, but they also believe that it is up to the individual to solve the damage. Those problems are imposed on them by the system.

Healing was also connected to different spiritual methods besides meditation and affirmations. The online community exchanges experience with Ayurvedic foods and natural herbs. Since ancient times, Ayurveda has been a traditional Indian treatment system. To regain a balance between the body, mind, spirit, and environment, Ayurveda promotes various lifestyle modifications and natural remedies. Internal cleansing is followed by a particular diet and herbal treatments. It not only connects to yoga practice because of the ancient cultural roots of India. Yoga and meditation belong to the Ayurvedic treatment regimens. (Mukherjee et al. 2017) Self-help books, massage techniques, oil-cleansing, and body brushing are some further examples of the tools and practices they share with each other besides yoga-related topics.

The sphere of medicine and physical healing has become a part of spiritual methods. Ayurvedic medicine became popular among spiritual and wellness trends. The

view on certain foods, herbs, and practices is claimed as “exotic” and “ancient” remedies to almost every illness. Just as the name suggests, they offer a solution to stress, anxiety, and depression, while healing joint pain, and headaches, a boost of the immune system, etc. In addition to the popularity of “ancient” products and cures, there are further practices and routines among the group members. Journaling and manifestations, sound bowls, and incense are used. Acupuncture and vegan diet are also popular, and they also share detoxification methods. The diversity and mixing of methods of ancient Indian and modern Western techniques of spiritual therapies and spiritual self-help books also blend into the pattern of liquidity. Crossing boundaries between different tools and methods manifests itself not only in the field of self-help but also in religious diversity. Some community members shared pictures of themselves, while they do yoga with Buddha statues in the background. In many posts, they expressed spiritual thoughts about “energies” and about a “*higher level of existence*”, that can be achieved through meditation. A community member shared her tradition of celebrating Christmas and Hanukkah both in her family. She explained, that she enjoys both traditions and doesn’t want to reject any of the religions, as “*there are many components that seem pleasant to practice*”.

This attitude of selecting from religions, traditions, or beliefs that are favorable or sympathetic to them, and collectively internalizing them was present in the online community. The members also engaged in debating religions, as they saw many forms are compatible with their personal preferences and inquiries. Incorporating and mixing of religion and spirituality can also be an inherent feature of modern liquidity. The lines are blurred, consumerism can be extended not only to market goods but spiritual and religious consumption as well. Personal doubts about religious and spiritual practices, their compatibility, or exclusivity also occurred in the online group. In the following, I will demonstrate these thoughts.

“Melted” practices and consumerism

The lines between religious practices and spirituality have become fluid. Spirituality can offer alternative approaches or renewed methods to religion, but choosing one practice is not exclude another. In addition, the mindfulness industry also provides a place for combining all of the personal interpretations of spiritual, religious, and physical desires. The yoga community members summarized their experiences towards mixing and trying

alternative self-help methods, holistic medicine, and experiencing different aspects of religions. Their standpoint was open to any form of practice that suited their values.

Liberation and individual freedom were important aspects to them, which enabled fluidity and personal preferences in choosing different spiritual and religious practices at the same time. Individual choice was considered as the main importance. It provides personalized forms and self-created practice combinations.

Traditional religions connect to a community. According to Rivadossi, they are unable to participate in the new process of identity creation (Rivadossi 2020). Neoliberal spirituality stands in between individual identity creation, and the traditional connection to a community. The online form of communal experience does not require such a strong commitment to a group. Individuals create and choose their practice, while the extent of their commitment is determined by them. The function of neoliberal spirituality assists between individual freedom and commitment to a value system that creates a sense of belonging. The popularity of mindfulness and spirituality does not replace existing religions and practices but rather places them in a liberated context. It is up to the individual to create their own belief system and practice. The individual can be both a spiritual and a religious practitioner.

The interpretations of religious practices are also existing in liquid modern reality, which causes the blurred lines between spiritual practices next to religious ones. Religion has a new function, as it serves a modern purpose: provides a moral structure and solution to the modern identity re-creation. Rivadossi (2020, 36) calls it a “melted form of religion” which serves the market’s needs and thus feeds the individual to reach towards an already existing framework.

Combinations between Buddhism, and Christianity while using healing crystals and manifestations were present in the community. Most of the time, the crystals returned with photos, to which the group members were given “healing energy”. However, they did not detail their personal experiences, only indicating that it was a “healing method” for them. Several religions were considered sympathetic, and it was even emphasized that they believed that all religions had a common ground that offered the possibility of a “*higher existence*” and internal security. Thus, many members felt the benefits of spirituality, and yoga, while praying or meditating with crystals. Religious holidays were held by several members, and they enjoyed the festive character of those events.

The structure of religion is still playing an important aspect to many yoga community members. A question arose from one of the group members about the compatibility of religion and yoga: *"I'm always told by my Christian friends that Yoga is not for Christians. I always respond that yoga is my passion and my purpose. It's my ministry. May I know your thoughts about this?"* The interest of the post-writer group member raised the question about the relationship between yoga, spirituality, and religion. The post followed many comments about personal opinions: *"I'm also a Christian but I don't think yoga is somehow against any religion or belief system. Yoga is not a religion, it's a personal journey! It teaches us the same good morals and I personally think it can go hand in hand with any religion."*

"I find it ridiculous that a lot of Christians convincingly believe that yoga is somehow channeling an evil spirit or the devil. Yoga is looking after our body by stretching, quietening the mind, and focusing on relaxing into a pose. It is so beneficial to our health to move our body, I believe our body is our temple, and yoga is one of the ways to look after it. I'm a Christian, and some of my friends from the past asked me how I lived with myself professing to be a Christian and doing yoga openly. You do what you enjoy, and what you believe!"

"Yoga is not a religion, it's a personal journey! It teaches us the same good morals and I personally think it can go hand in hand with any religion." *"Jesus meditated, a lot! What about yoga wouldn't work for someone who wants to follow Jesus?"*

The respondents were religious to varying degrees, but they all believed that yoga and spirituality could be a complement to religion, regardless of trend, which caused a different vision and deepening in one's belief system. Jain (2020) argues that spirituality is not an alternative to religion, but rather a reformed way to experience the sphere of a systematic belief construction. The urge towards existing symbols and solutions is thus created by the individualistic way of living. Some comments on the religions and alternative approaches summarized the member's approach to the subject. *"I love all religions! Many of them have something to offer. I often switch between religions, believe in Karma, and go to Buddhist temples while being a practicing Christian, who meditates and does yoga. I adore Judaism and enjoy exploring new approaches to God. I believe all religion is about one God, in different ways of seeing it. So I want all of it!"*

"Nature is my own religion. I believe in love and that what you are experiencing is just one little part of the whole. Body-mind and spirit such a unity, what we can not even imagine."

“Life after death and before we were born is real in my opinion, but so distant and can not be experienced through the present moment. Mindfulness is the present and I believe that all of the answers what religions seek will be answered. But now is the most important.”

The comments support Jain’s observation of an alternative approach to spirituality. The practitioners observe and embrace different religions from a perspective that does not exclude any religion from this new form of spirituality. Rather, it emphasizes its diversity and openness. They create personalized belief systems, which have the components of belonging, and individual freedom. Thus they can experience communal belonging while keep remaining in the self-creation aspect. The communal experience provides a moral framework and foundation, while the personalized form enables them to be focused on themselves.

The fluidity between religious practices and spiritual ones highlights that spirituality is rather a collector of practices, not an alternative to already existing religions. It incorporates methods from traditional and modern interpretations. The combination of many practices targets individuals, with different motivations. Spiritual belonging and value-seeking are important pillars to many yoga class takers. It provides norms and a foundational lifestyle framework to the practitioner, who wishes to work on him or herself.

On the other hand, the physical aspect of these spiritual practices is hardly separatable. As the teacher referred to the movement, as a *“moving meditation¹⁰”*, which *has benefits without actually realizing that the meditation is happening*. It shows, how strongly connected these limbs of yoga are, and that the market serves both mental and spiritual lines at the same time. The modern idea of health is not restricted to only physical well-being. It consists of both of the components: a healthy physical body, - often desirably muscular and slim as the commercials presented it, - and emotional health. Meditation, journaling, self-help books, and breathwork are supposed to reach that healthy mental state, without actually defining the term “health” clearly.

¹⁰ The yoga teacher referred to „moving meditation” as a state of calmness, concentration on one’s breathing while engaging in yoga postures and movement. This methods cause a meditative state, which creates easier meditation without “actually noticing this state”. The teacher also highlighted, while many students have difficulty in reaching meditative state, without having “distracting thoughts”, the focus on movement and breath cause the same deep focus and has “healing effect on the mind” – causing calmness.

The motivation to keep oneself healthy is not only an individual decision but social motivation as well. Society needs healthy individuals, and as Jain and Purser argued, it needs to keep individuals busy. Just like religion, neoliberal spirituality has the strength to the individual to promise a solution while keeping the members accompanied. Modern life, as they described it as “crazy” or “rat race”, referring to its fast-changing characteristic. Spirituality provides freedom in self-creation, and more importantly: deals with the pressure through the identity-creating process. This pressure is the object of healing, which the individuals intended to manage. As Purser argued, this phenomenon of keeping one’s busy has a significant social effect. The individuals will keep concentrating on themselves, working on themselves, and creating solutions for themselves. Through these processes, social problems, like inequality, racism, pollution, and many social factors will remain in the social sphere. The identity creation serves the individual focus, while the systematic solutions remain untouched.

Yoga and spiritual practices are popular worldwide. The popularity of this benefitting industry has emerged movements, concerning the cultural appropriation of the practice. Yoga has separated into different, often conquering types of practices, and has several versions of the “ancient” methods. Consuming these practices, purchasing products, and using healing methods contribute to identity creation in modernity. Spirituality does not always mean neoliberal values. Moreover, conservative morals in the practitioners’ posts, intentions for working on oneself, being a “good person”, “spiritually engaged” or aiming for “purity from the ego” are often spotted. These terms refer to reaching stillness, doing yoga, and meditating after a stressful day. These intentions aim for personal change but also reflect social circumstances, through the individualistic aspect of modern liquidity.

Conclusion

This paper explored an online community of yoga. The practitioners are presented with different attitudes toward spirituality and religion. The lines between religious practices and spirituality have become fluid. Spiritual and religious practices were adopted and mixed by the practitioners, thus creating their own interpretations. In addition, the mindfulness industry also provides a place for combining all of the personal interpretations of spiritual, religious, and physical desires. The yoga community members summarized their experiences towards mixing and trying alternative self-help methods,

holistic medicine, and experiencing different aspects of religions. Their standpoint was open to any form of practice that suited their values.

The Western interpretation of yoga, which often omits the spiritual limb, has been considered by them as void, and they pointed out that the practice "*is working together with the spiritual pillar*". But these statements did not cause deeper debate or more reflection. Yoga has entered into many spheres of our life. It is present at fitness centers as an exercise, commercialized and used as a self-help method, a tool for stress management through meditation, and as a choice of healthy living through practicing and using ayurvedic products. The reachable characteristic of a product contributes to the bigger the chance that one will consume a product. Yoga mats, the spiritual self-help books can be found in many local stores, and we register for a yoga class at the gym or join a mindfulness program easily online. The yoga industry became huge and spread globally.

Neoliberal attitudes towards mindfulness support capitalism and even further it. Purser explained "capitalist spiritualities" as the colonization of mindfulness, creating individualistic spiritualities. A privatized practice, which is working at the individualistic level of stress management. But the effects from a societal perspective also contribute to the acceptance of negative social forces affecting the individual rather than supporting change.

The practitioners focus on the individualistic, personal sphere of life, by accommodating mindfulness. Thus, they do not pay attention to the social, economic, and political aspects of the world, which may also conflict with the possibilities of individual life. A social-level examination of spiritual practices presents an aspect of modern capitalism that demonstrates the implications of modern entrepreneurial attitudes and individualism. Yoga communities were carrying the individualistic characteristic of practicing yoga. Their intentions to "heal", in the spiritual and physical sense, focused on personal spheres. The aspect of belonging to a group occurred in both places, as a connection between the practitioners, but it also remained at the individual level. They were able to decide whether they commit to the group or remain in their individual sphere. This phenomenon is an alternative to traditional spiritual and religious practices, which required more commitment than individuality. Yoga has numerous types and personal motivations differing in practicing it.

Just as the practice of yoga has never appeared in a coherent and exclusive form throughout history. Similarly to its modern interpretation, it also provides at least as

many branches in neoliberal society. Yoga can be the subject of a study through which these social processes can be excellently explored whether we are talking about an increase in individual focus, consumer habits, and the values associated with them, or even discovering methods of physical and mental regulation.

There are many areas of the topic, which hold the possible expansion of research. that Exploring spiritual communities online and the contrast of personal participant classes, group identity in-depth, or the possible change in the world of yoga after social movements all promises to be an interesting process in the future. Yoga, mindfulness movements, and spirituality in the market and in the yoga industry can highlight personal reflection on social phenomena, that promise to be an exciting field of further exploration.

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Eszter Nagy

Sex in the conception of the Catholic Church from a cultural anthropological perspective

Introduction

Present paper is based on the research work I have been conducting since 2020. I have noticed that the topic of sexuality in the Catholic Church has a relatively little research background itself, and, it has even less results according to the narrative of the Catholic Church, as it is, in a sense, a tabooer topic within the walls of the Church, as it turned out. I intended to examine the topic of premarital sex and sin based on the interviews of alumni in a particular Catholic school.

I am going to leave the mentioned high school's name in anonymity, because my interlocutors asked me not to name it, since for them, these are intimate topics about which they wish to talk about anonymously, and they do not intend to affect the reputation of the particular school.

Nevertheless, to better delineate the topic, I am going to share a little information that I was allowed to. It is one of the high schools located in the II district of Budapest. I interviewed 18 women and 15 men who were no longer adolescent high school students but shared their stories with me as young adults¹¹ on the research topic.

It is also important to mention that most of them knew each other due to the fact that I asked interviewees from the same school. With this, I also tried to specify the research as much as possible. The conversations were conducted anonymously, in an environment of trust and comfort for the interviewee. The interviews pointed out that the topic needs further elaboration, moreover, specific terms emerged during the research that I would like to further interpret in my study.

It is important to mention that my research basically started from a "closed community" as I conducted the conversations from the same school, class and age group, but as the research deepened and expanded, there were conversations that I had not

¹¹ According to Erik Erikson's stages of self-development, a young adult is a person between the ages of 18 and 40, whereas an adolescent is a person between the ages of 12 and 18. Jeremy Sutton, 2021

planned before, but some of my interlocutors lead me to others, who also wanted to take part in the research as they heard there is an opportunity to *“finally talk about sex openly, without wondering if it is alright to even mention it or not.”* I became aware of the fact, that discussion about sex is something a lot of Catholic “believers” seek, they just cannot find the right platform to it. That is why some unexpected people showed up in the research – they wanted to share.

Sex is a defining element of our physical and psychological reality, as well as our history and culture. It can be said that sex is an ‘evergreen’ topic that can be examined from a different point of view as we can always find newer variables from a sociological and anthropological interpretation.

The Catholic Church as a variable is very interesting in this subject because it represents a very definite teaching and, “system of rules” about sex that is inconsistent with the ideas of the “outside” world regarding sex. I received very serious explanations for all of this in my research, as almost everyone reported that Catholic education about sex was a difficult topic both at school and at home. Whereas the teaching of the Catholic Church prohibits premarital sex and almost anything that can be linked to or reinforces sexual desire, it puts a great deal of pressure, especially on teenagers and young adults.

I would like to mention that ‘prohibition’ as such, especially for certain age groups but in general, can have just the opposite effect on a person, meaning that ‘forbidden fruit’ will be much more exciting for them than if it was not forbidden.

In a study (FitzGibbon, Ogulmus, Fastrich, Lau, Aslan, Lepore, Murayama, 2020:2) about understanding people’s desire on what is forbidden we can read that a ban increases curiosity, which is – in short – the desire for information. This is actually the ‘forbidden fruit effect’, about which we can also read in the study mentioned. The myth of prohibition also appears in our history and literature (e.g., Adam&Eve).

Certain things that are forbidden will be more interesting just because they are forbidden. In fact, the complete opposite can be achieved by this teaching in many situations, even in the case of those Catholic interviewees I asked, the answer was often that they wanted to do something defiantly - in our case sex - because of it being a sort of taboo, a prohibition, and so the lack of information aroused an irresistible desire.

It is very important to point out here that the young adults I interviewed who eventually decided to ‘break’ the rule and live their lives the way they wanted to – in our case they lost their virginity before marriage – mostly still felt under tension, for the

reason of them questioning their decision over the upbringing that they got and *“the way of living their Catholic lives the right way”*, through the teaching of the Church. *“Did I do a sinful thing?”*¹² - The question arose.

Here we run into the field of psychological anthropology, but I find the effect of upbringing on human identity very interesting for further research. It was shocking how decisive the family background, home education in childhood even in adulthood can be, despite the fact that the person might no longer agrees with that specific teaching. The question arises if that fact is only true for people brought up by the teachings of the Catholic Church, any other religion, or everyone?

Towards the end of the introduction, I would like to mention two key elements of the present study, one of which is the word that came up several times during the interviews, *“purity”* – which I found fascinating for further investigation. The other element is the body itself, love and acceptance of our physique, and the difficulties involved in a relationship that did not include sexuality, sexual proximity. In the following, I will analyse these and the previously mentioned topics and issues on the basis of the discussions.

Research methodology

In the following, I would like to explain the anthropological methodology used in my research to describe. The methodology I applied was based on in-depth interviews and community-based, participatory research. Because I myself grew up according to the teachings of the Catholic Church, I attended Catholic schools, I had the basic knowledge and network of contacts that I needed for the research to succeed. Based on all this, I already had a fundamental advantage. By applying the elements and possibilities of community-based, participatory research¹³, I tried to get as close as possible to understand the given community, and also the individual within the community.

We can read in the Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology that like action research work plans supported by anthropologists, CBPR projects use community concepts as a research unit. In addition, CBPR supports, builds and nurtures cooperative

¹² In my study everything that is the narrative of the Catholic Church, I am presenting in quotation marks, and the words spoken during the interviews, which are the respondents' own narratives or specific interview details, are shown in quotation marks and italics.

After some of the longer and meaningful interview details I am going to present the fictitious initials of the conversation partners, whose gender, age and marital status is presented in the Appendix

¹³ CBPR in the following

partnerships with organizations and individuals in that community during the project. Once these relationships are established, the researcher should ensure that the interests of that specific community are raised and represented in the research questions (Bernard and Gravlee, 2015:190)

In addition, CBPR is also intended to be repetitive and reflexive during the research operation. During the collection of information, both the researcher and the members of the community develop research methodologies, on the basis of which they jointly build the future development of the research. For this, of course, it is very important that the results of the research are understandable and accessible to everyone who has participated in some way (Bernard and Gravlee, 2015:190).

However, in order to be able to analyse the community using my own research plan and chosen methodology, I must first define the community itself as such. In Michele F. Fontefrancesco's study, we can read that community is actually a set of individuals who mutually participate in the development of community practices and share the same ideas (Fontefrancesco, 2010:51). One could also say that the community is made up of members of the same territorial group who participate in a common culture - we can read in a study by Max Gluckman (Gluckman, 1947:107) .

Common culture is an important term in the present research, as several of my interlocutors have expressed themselves, mentioning that the Catholic Church is a community, a system with deep roots to which millions of people from different cultures worldwide belong as part of the same subculture. What is more, the group of young adults I examined can be interpreted as part of this own small group and community within this culture, as they attended the same school and received the same teaching about both the general moral views of the Catholic faith and sexual education by the rules of that particular church.

I was able to apply the CBPR methodology in my research, as I went to the same school with most of my interlocutors and got to know each other, I also gained insight into these particular teachings and views in the same way. During my research, I visited church several times, tried getting 'involved' in the teachings and customs of the Catholic Church as much as possible.

Regarding the structure of the interviews, I set up semi-structured interview questions and a guideline, according to which I left some space for the respondents. This way, the conversation shaped itself, new questions and concepts emerged. Basically, I

didn't ask much, I let the respondent direct the conversation themselves, and I only spoke or asked a question if it was necessary. I would like to underline that these were not very frequent situations, my interlocutors were open and talkative, they mentioned some times when I had to ask, they only had a brief confusion or wandering so I tried to lead them back to the matter.

The Catholic Church and sex

According to the official teaching of the Catholic Church, all forms of practicing sexuality before marriage are morally incorrect. In the Catechism of the Catholic Church (Catechism of the Catholic Church: 2350) we can read that "an engaged couple is meant to live purity in self-restraint".

It was on this basis that the word "purity" mentioned earlier first emerged, which I will analyse later. Respectively, in the Catechism we can read more in the sense of purity, namely, the "sins against purity". "Impurity (lat. luxuria) is the messy desire or unbridled enjoyment of sexual pleasure. Sexual pleasure is morally messy when it is sought out of order for itself, for the transmission of life, and for love" (Catechism of the Catholic Church: 2351).

Based on these, we can see that according to the Catholic faith and teaching, premarital sex, sexual act, or even complacency is wrong, as they are fundamentally not based on passing on life and in many cases not on unconditional love, but on their "own good" and "own desire", appeasing self-desire.

Additionally, in the Catechism we can read about the "sin" of "self-infection," which means the following: "self-infection (lat. masturbatio) is the intentional stimulation of the genitals for sexual pleasure. Both the ecclesiastical Teaching Office — in the constant process of tradition — and the moral sense of "believers" say without uncertainty that self-contamination is in itself and a severely a wrong act" (Catechism of the Catholic Church: 2352).

In my research, I found it important to find out from the respondents whether these precepts described in the catechism were taught to them clearly and understandably at home and at school, or whether these "rules" in some sense always remained semi-obscure.

Most of the responses revealed that although the topic was not entirely taboo, they did not talk clearly or often about sexuality and the specific rules mentioned. What turned

out however, was that most people only knew that *"they shouldn't have sex before marriage"*. Of course, this does not yet include everything that is sexual in nature like *"petting, or occasional masturbation"* – just that sex itself is not allowed. To my surprise, this was mentioned by many of my interlocutors, that the described specific “rules” in the matter were a sort of novelty to them.

My interpretation is that most Catholic youth either do not know how specifically the Catechism articulates it, or they do not even want to know and are simply trying to refrain from premarital sex. Regardless of this, of course, belonging to a certain community also means that the given “rules” and expectations are accepted and shared by the member of the community. And here the question arises on the one hand, who do we call a Catholic? One who obeys all the laws of that specific religion or, one who goes to church, prays, believes in God? And why does one who cannot or does not want to meet certain expectations call themselves a Catholic? The question of why there is still stress about these sexual matters (whether it is/was alright or not) on someone who does not even agree with certain doctrines of the Church is very interesting. Why does someone cling to the Catholic identity who deeply condemns or considers the present teaching to be wrong, for example.

I consider the anthropology of religion to be very important, as our culture, social and self-awareness are both shaped by religion. Religion is part of our history, art, politics. To understand and examine certain-minded people, the symbols and narratives they explain through religion, I need to understand what it means to be religious.

In the study of Clifford Geertz “Religion as a Cultural System” we can read that “For an anthropologist, the importance of religion lies in its capacity to serve, for an individual or for a group, as a source of general, yet distinctive, conceptions of the world, the self, and the relations between them, on the one hand--its model of aspect--and of rooted, no less distinctive "mental" dispositions--its model for aspect--on the other. From these cultural functions flow, in turn, its social and psychological ones.” (Geertz, 1966:44)

From this we can understand that for a religious person the world is not the same place as for a non-religious one. A “believer”¹⁴ who belongs to or wants to belong to this culture must adhere to certain “rules”, expectations, moral norms. We can read in the study of Lawrence Cunningham, which he wrote in Britannica that “two subjects are key

¹⁴ Believer is a word used by the Catholic Church to its followers, and this is also something that the respondents used to describe themselves

to understanding Catholic faith: the preambles of faith and the motivation of faith. The preambles of faith include those rational steps through which the “believer” reaches the conclusion that belief in God is reasonable”. (Cunningham, 2023) Therefore, I understand that the Catholic Church and its “believers” are calling themselves as such, because their truth, their reality is that God exists – in a very real sense.

Religion can thus be said to be a kind of motivation that encourages us to stick to certain things, to meet certain expectations. I would also like to give the example of Geertz, who set out all this in his study, and mentioned that being religious and religion itself is a way to ritual:

“Which brings us, at length, to ritual. For it is in ritual - that is, consecrated behaviour - that this conviction that religious conceptions are veridical and that religious directives are sound is somehow generated. It is in some sort of ceremonial form--even if that form be hardly more than the recitation of a myth, the consultation of an oracle, or the decoration of a grave--that the moods and motivations which sacred symbols induce in men and the general conceptions of the order of existence which they formulate for men meet and reinforce one another.” (Geertz, 1966)

Naturally, all these affirmations are not only about the positive things but also about the fact that for example, “*the enemy*” is common, the image of “*sin*” and “*wrongdoing*” is common. Accordingly, this particular culture also defines certain frameworks within which one is allowed to move, but actions outside these specific borders are defined as “*sin*,” “*sinful*”.

As the Catechism explains these “rules” and “sins” in relation to “purity”, calling them “*sins against purity*,” “purity” itself has obviously been included in the research, and the respondents have either raised it themselves or I have mentioned it so they explained to me what the term meant to them. Based on all this, I would like to continue the paper by explaining and interpreting purity according to the view of the Catholic Church.

Purity or impurity? - interpretations of the meaning of purity

Before delving into my own study and the results of the interviews, I find it particularly important to mention Mary Douglas, who also dealt in depth with purity. In her book “Purity and Danger” we read that when examining the concept of purity, it is not necessary to explain the meaning of the basic concept, but to go deep into the specific symbolic system that gives the concept of “purity itself” to different cultures and subcultures.

In fact, it is not what is pure and what is impure that matters, but what we have learned about certain things. If a child has been taught to always take a bath before going to bed in the evenings to wash away the daily dirt from themselves, going to bed at times without bathing will make them feel 'dirty'. If we learn that we can put our feet on the table and there is nothing wrong with that, we will not find this to be dirty or unclean while others who have not been raised this way will be disgusted by the fact that we eat with our feet on the table.

Douglas follows the same line of thought in her book, in which she captures the notion of 'dirt' and, in contrast to its religious meaning, she underlines its social meaning. In practice, she describes that if we are able to abstract the meaning of "dirt" from pathogenicity, and the concept of hygiene, then its original concept 'loses its meaning' – so we can see that the meaning of "dirt" itself depends on "where it is" (Douglas, 2001:46).

"Purity", or "dirt" in this sense, according to Douglas, is mainly a social concept. Accordingly, in the system in which we grow up, we learn what a given society considers 'good', 'bad', 'clean', 'dirty' and so forth. These things of course, mean different things in different cultures – as I mentioned before.

In the light of all of this, Douglas calls "dirt" something that is not in its intended place – "a matter out of place" (Douglas, 2001:36). Dirt is therefore a thing that does not fit into a given system or situation, is not in its intended place, in a word it is "in the wrong place". Thus, according to the author purity and pollution are matters that fit into a given culture's symbolic system, which defines its interpretations and morale.

Of course, the Catholic Church's conception of purity and impurity also belongs to this line of thought. If we look deep into the teaching of the present religion, we can see that in fact, it is only a matter of understanding its system that is historically long and deep. Sex, according to the Church's interpretation can be "pure" and can be "unclean" – in our case – it can be "in place" and can be "outside of place". According to the system of interpretation of the Catholic Church, marriage is the place of sexuality, and outside of marriage it is incorrect literally "*sinful*", "*a matter out of place*".

The interviews I conducted revealed that many people felt some form of sexuality or sex itself as a "*sinful*" act. Here, of course, another (although also mentioned earlier) variable of the research emerged. Upbringing and family background play an important role in adult consciousness. If the teaching of the Catholic Church is what is considered "*right*" and taught at home as well, these particular norms are going to be part of thinking

as adults, even if the particular person already thinks differently about these specific matters.

I became attentive to it, and also found it very interesting how decisive upbringing is, even for those who ultimately disagreed with the church in a sense, or simply ignored things they could not or did not want to keep. More specifically in our case, they lived a sex life outside of marriage, moved in with their partners, so they went against what their parents' and the Church found right. Many of them however, arose that they still had some degree of "concern" and "pressure," so they could not completely let go of the norms they had "brought from home or the Church."

All of this suggests to me that the issue of purity in question, the "displaced" thing was still not in a "good place". I found it interesting that they said there was "no flawless place for sex" anywhere. It is "outdated" or "unbearable" to maintain virginity before marriage, but many felt tense living a sexual life outside of marriage too. The question arises, what is right then? Where does it belong to? Why did the feeling of "something is wrong" remain? I would like to present a part of an interview to try and explain this, from a subjective point of view, from one of my respondents' words:

"I don't think I can fully explain it because I don't really understand myself either. On the one hand, of course, I am aware of the reason of my decision and am not ashamed about it, but I have always had a question in me that I might best describe with the "what if" effect. I do not know if I would be more or less of a good person if I would have kept my virginity but I am also sure I will not get an answer to that question here in this life anymore. If I want to be really honest, I have to admit that I have a little fear that it might have been a mistake... But of course, I handle this very well 360 days a year, I mostly do not even think about it. But those other five days...Frankly, it sometimes causes me bitter tension." (N.K.)

It is very interesting how she also refers to it as something that she herself "cannot even explain" a complete way. The mentioned "what if" effect though is something that I heard several times during the talks. I became aware of something that I would explain as the fear of the unknown – at least it is what I interpreted from all those things they mentioned as a pressure. A person, who has been brought up and taught according to the Church's norms, may never let go of the thought that the Church in the end, might be right – and in that case, they are not sure where their place will be.

The deepest question that arose regarding all that was "will I go to Heaven? How can one be sure, if sex is such an important matter?" (L.M.) – the woman I had this talk with

has lost her virginity already and is living in a relationship in which they live a sexual life. She mentioned fears of the very end, which in my interpretation is deeply meaningful in light of all the above.

It is very interesting how much importance and "power" Catholic believers give to sexuality. Almost something that goes beyond this world, since a phrase was also said during the interviews that "sex in the correct way brings you to Heaven" – not only because of orgasming, but because sex experienced "with a pure body and soul" is the most real form of "experiencing God here on earth". Accordingly, sex can be sort of a transcendent phenomenon, which I found to be so interesting in light of my research, that I would like to present the related results below, in a new chapter.

Sex as a transcendent

Since in the following I am going to discuss sex in the light of religiosity, I would first like to explain religiosity itself, the meaning of the transcendent. For this, I used the dissertation of Papp Richárd, in which he writes about the present matter.

Papp describes how religion maintains a connection with the reality of transcendence. The reality of transcendence is manifested in our everyday environment. In this sense, in the daily life of most cultures, one can experience the presence of "holy space," "holy time," or people "owning" holiness. The mentioned sacrament and its universal and social manifestations and importance are represented by the religious institutional systems. In this sense, the worldviews of each religion apply to the whole of a given society, or even to the whole of humanity. Based on this, religion is a cultural system that inherently shapes society. In addition, it explains the changes, possible difficulties and crises that arise in human and community life. Religion creates a kind of harmony, a so called "cognitive harmony" between man and the saint, and between man and man, man and community (Papp, 2020:46).

I consider it important to further explain the transcendent as such, as it has often been argued during the conversations of the research that the Catholic faith associates sexual union with the possibility of a transcendent. We can read about this in the Bible, as Papp mentions: "the Biblical teachings are no exception, since the Bible sees in the unification of the two bodies (male and female) the possibility transubstantiation to the likeness of God (1 Mos 27:2–24)" (Papp, 2020:72).

During the interviews, it became clear to me that if a Catholic “believer” actually believes that one of the inherent of sexual intercourse is an icon of transcendent, divine experience, and in a sense divine love, then this act truly has to be “pure”, “sinless”.

This was reported by a male interlocutor who formulated it this way: *“it is very easy to get lost in the realm of human instincts, desire and self-will. As a man, I think it is especially difficult, but of course it is not easy for my wife either. Nevertheless, we both see and find that our sexual togetherness is really pleasant, both physically and mentally satisfying, when we are fully attuned to each other, we both want and wish each other the same way. Sometimes when we get to pray before sex, it makes it all even more beautiful.”* (O.O.)

To the question of whether the “presence of God”, “God’s love” in sex can really be experienced, most of my Catholic interviewee’s answer was a clear “yes”:

“It is a feeling that elevates the already perfect sexual gratification to an even greater level. Unspeakable. There and then, we don't need anything more, and I'm no longer me, just as he is neither, we are one. One in God.” (N.N.) – Said one married woman during our talk, and explained to me that this state is not as easy sometimes to achieve and that they still are working on it with her husband, even after 6 years of marriage. *“There is no problem with sometimes failing or, in a sense, spoiling this perfect state. The point is to be able to talk about it, to recognize that we made a mistake. Once we discuss it, we both feel much better, and thus we try better to get as close to this divine state as possible next time.”* (N.N.)

What I found really interesting, and important to highlight, was that one of my interlocutors, who had problems with her body and had difficulty entering sexuality with her husband because of this (since she lived a “pure life” before marriage and no man ever touched her before her husband), also reported a similar transcendent state: *“it took me a relatively long time to completely surrender myself to sex, and we still struggle today with some difficulty because of it, but when I finally manage to completely let go of my frustrations, I really experience a sort of divine encounter and acceptance in sex. In fact, that is the best thing about it: nothing bothers me, my problems disappear, finally for a while, I manage to accept myself, in fact, I want to be who I am. I think it is mainly because I am not alone anymore, but we are one with my partner, and I get to see myself through his eyes.”* (H.A.)

It is very interesting how even this woman with her serious lack of self-confidence and body issues is able to experience the mentioned “perfection”, seeing herself through

"the eyes of her partner". This all shows to me how seriously this *"transcendent feeling"* can form one's feelings and thinking. It is something completely and noticeably real for Catholic "believers".

There are four words worth to mention, which came up during the conversations that two of my interlocutors mentioned about *"pure love"*, living *"pure sexuality"*, the kind of union in which *"God can be present"*.

These four words were *"free," "complete," "faithful,"* and *"fruitful."*¹⁵ My understanding is that sex can only be free for them if the woman and man are already married, so sexual union is possible for them, not something that is "out of place," since sex's place is in marriage and so it is *"free."*

It is *"complete"* when a woman and a man experience sexual union not only by petting, but by concrete intrusion - this is said to be an essential point, since, according to the Church's teaching, petting alone is not a "pure" act.

It is *"faithful"*, since the spouses have already uttered an infinite "yes" to each other in the "sacrament of marriage", so that sexuality itself has been promised to one another for a lifetime.

Last but not least, it is *"fruitful"* because pure sex also means that the couple does not contracept themselves, or if they do (for serious reasons such as illness, financial problems, etc.), they do it with the method of *"natural family planning" (N.N)*, which does not completely rule out fertilization, since no external means are used for this purpose, only nature, the knowledge of the woman's body and biology. The next detail from one particular interview regarding all this is to show and make us understand what all that means to one of my practicing Catholic woman interlocutors:

"Truth be told, my husband and I examine these four points almost every time. Since we both follow the teaching of Pope John Paul II on The Theology of the Body, we strive to conform to this as much as possible and to truly make our sexual intercourse free, complete, faithful, and fruitful. We try to pray before sex and sometimes even after it. There is an unspeakably big difference between two intercourses, when in one we were both physically and spiritually there and so we were able to "involve" God through prayer. We are attuned to each other quite differently at that time, the dynamics of the whole sexual experience is completely different. Those times we can provide this complete union, we actually become

¹⁵ These exact four words were mentioned by five of my interlocutors, all of them living in purity. Some others also mentioned them, but did not remember the whole concept of it all.

one, not only physically but also spiritually. And while I have to admit that sometimes I wonder how good it would be if we could have full control over the blessing of children, yet I always remind myself that it's actually a miracle that a child can conceive of the physical love of the two of us at any time. It gives a sort of wholeness beyond this world. It's a miracle." (N.N)

From this excerpt of this interview, we can see that there are real and fully understandable examples, explanations that sex itself can be a sort of "*transcendent experience*", and that the four components of "*pure sex*" listed are things that some take seriously, moreover, experience its good effects and benefits.

It was very interesting to hear how much the said couple wanted "*God to be part of their own sexual union*". All this was explained to me in the most natural way possible, because like everything else, they want to live their sexual life with God as well, and they even explained in detail, what seriously good effects it has on their relationship, their sexual life.

It has also been mentioned that such "*pure*" sexual associations are an "*icon of the Holy Trinity*", both because they pray to God before and after sex and because they do not use contraceptive methods – meaning that a "third" person can any time be "involved", since they could be gifted with child any time this way.

Based on all this, we can understand that for Catholic couples who follow this specific teaching and system of norms within the Church, it is an absolutely living lifestyle that they seek to use in a "*right*" and "*pure*" way.

The teaching mentioned in the interview, which is associated with the name of Pope John Paul II, is called *The Theology of the Body* (Paul II, 2006) This teaching has come to light in several interviews, so it has become clear to me that this teaching is known to most of my interlocutors so probably for many Catholics – both because it has been heard/read about, and because it has already been mentioned by others, so they know more or less about it.

The Theology of the Body is a book written by the Pope himself, which specifically seeks to explain the teaching of the church about sex, why it has certain "rules," a framework for Catholic "believers" (and everyone). I understand that he is talking about sex being one of the few earthly acts by which we can know and "*experience God's presence*" (O.O.) and "infinite love". The next part of an interview is to best describe that "*presence of God*" in sex:

"I learned by teaching of The Theology of The Body that I am not guilty of my sexual thoughts and interests. It's all perfectly normal, it just needs to be used well. I finally understood that God does not want to make our lives be miserable for wanting us to see the limits and borders to keep our sexuality pure, but because He wants to elevate it, wants to bring us this bodily experience to levels we would never otherwise be able to understand or live on earth. Sex is much more than only satisfying bodily desires, and even more than simple love. It is something divine, something beyond earth, it is a type of love and belonging that we people are not enough to provide to each other. We need God in it." (H.E.)

Now we can see how it is not only a myth or a gossip, but their reality. Many of my interlocutors presented their thoughts regarding *"God's presence in pure sex"* the same way. It is more to them than only loving each other. They are indeed able to feel God, to meet God through sexual union. Many times, it was mentioned *that "orgasm is best described by God's unearthly love" (L.L.)*. It is a perfect feeling that cannot be *"something that does not come from the Divine" (L.L.)*

It turned out to me that not only they can read this teaching from a book, but there is also a community who pass on the teaching to those interested through presentations and conversations during a weekend, which they consider a sort of retreat. In fact, I have completely interpreted all of this as a platform for both "believers" and potential "outsiders" to talk about sex in the Catholic Church without taboos, asking and answering every question possible.

Needless to say, the Pope's teaching is the foundation, but sex in general, and other forms of it, are the topic during the whole weekend. There is talk of petting, complacency, contraception, abortion, and everything else in light of the Church's teaching. It was mentioned in an interview that these weekends are so well structured and presented by so many honest couples and singles that the current partner of my interlocutor who was completely an outsider of the Church, enjoyed the weekend and understood the teaching that, incredibly, he in the end agreed and convinced himself, followed *"purity,"* premarital sexual abstinence. She mentioned the following:

"Unfortunately, we have parted ways since, but as far as I know, to this day he follows the teaching and continues to live in purity. Maybe I was the way for him to get to know this way of life. God finds a way to reach those who have an open heart." (P.E.)

All this shows to me that not only she feels proud of her ex-partner to find the teaching true and changing his mind about *"purity,"* but she also believes that her role in

his life was to introduce him to that. Her part in his life was to make him change his mind and *“walk on the right way, on God’s way” (P.E.)*.

All of these topics have led to further elaboration on how Catholic “believers” are preparing for sexual intercourse. Is there any unusual way they prepare for sex? As it has already been mentioned above that some couples pray together before and/or after sexual intercourse, this was already a result of this question, but I thought it needed further explanation and for that reason I am going to present this further in the upcoming chapter of my research.

Preparing for sexual union

It is important to mention that I have examined two types of answers to this question. I did not necessarily mention this to the respondents, as it was interesting for the research to know which answer they started with, or whether they think of both possible answers at all.

I primarily examined whether preparation is interpreted by the respondents in a physical sense based on the question, or in a mental sense. It was fascinating to me, when someone gave an answer to only one aspect, or when they took either the physical or the spiritual interpretation forward – showing a picture to me on which of the mentioned aspects are in a way “prior” to the other.

What was surprising to me, however, is that while I was more likely to expect men’s answers in a physical sense regarding that, a lot of the women I asked answered first in a physical sense. A lot of things were mentioned such as hair removal, having a shower before, scenting, wearing “sexy lingerie.”

Many of them first mentioned these preparations in the physical sense. It also came up that *“it is important for a woman to feel good in her body, feel sexy, feel that the man desires her.” (O.L.)* - The question arose in me, why? Does the man have physical preparation in the same way, or does it not apply to them? If not, why not?

To answer these questions, I would like to present a special case in which my female interlocutor reported to me, that this physical preparation is something she does but her partner does not, and *“honestly it never even came up.” (O.L.)*

The woman in question has been married for several years and along with her husband, they live both their married and sexual lives in accordance with the values of the

Catholic Church. She told me that all of this preparation is a sort of “*compulsion*” because this is what makes her feel ready and prepared for sexual intercourse:

"It never occurred to me that a man should be preparing physically in any sense before sex. It is probably because men don't have to depilate, they don't have to pay attention to certain things, which is common and evident for us women. I love feeling beautiful and desirable, I like wearing a nice underwear or lingerie, and I also like to be clean before and after sex. I think it is a woman's job to always be feminine. Obviously, my husband doesn't go to bed dirty either, but men are much more natural in that sense. I cannot imagine how they should be physically prepared for sex, obviously outside of being clean." (O.L.)

I found it very inspiring how she talked about men being “*more natural*” as they don’t depilate, don’t use makeup, and there is no piece of clothing for men that would necessarily be meant to arouse a woman’s desire.

I find it especially interesting how it all correlates with what we see around us every day in magazines, advertisements and posters. The question arises as to whether a woman should be perfect and desirable in bed as well, because that is what bounces back from all the commercials? Perfect and desirable women in all walks of life - this makes it really hard to keep up, it can really be a compulsion to “*beautify*”. All this, however, proves, of course, that these social expectations and advertisements affect Catholic women and couples in the same way as everyone else:

"Of course I do hair removal and makeup. I have no idea what the church thinks about it, but if we were to regulate this as well, it would be a great and ridiculous issue. I am aware of the fact that using makeup, fake eyelashes and such things are only showing issues like lack of self-confidence, but these are the usual things we are used to...I like to do my make up in the morning, I like to feel pretty before leaving the house. I like to look good even before sex, in fact, sometimes when I feel like I look a bit messy or a little sick and have a cold or my hair is greasy so I really don't feel desirable, I don't have much of a desire for sex." (U.A.)

Needless to say, it all points out that physical preparation for sex is just as important to the members of the group I studied as for anyone. I would still like to emphasize that I find it particularly exciting how all of this has been mentioned in a physical sense only by my female interlocutors, in a very specific and detailed way. The feeling of desirability increases sexual desire, the willingness to have sex. Here I would like to show and underline a detail from an interview of a woman I had a conversation with:

"The truth is, I think my husband always considers himself desirable, there's nothing wrong with his self-confidence. I hardly consider myself desirable, but when sometimes I do, it adds a lot to the success of our sexual intercourse. I think as a woman, we need to work on that. It is important, that we feel desirable and beautiful, or else it is much harder to let go of some of our inhibitions unfortunately, even when it comes to sex." (N.N.)

The latter excerpt from the presented interviews was also given during a conversation with a woman who pointed out that these self-confidence issues are need to be addressed. I found this important to mention because during other conversations, it has been suggested that certain things need to be worked on personally and spiritually when it comes to sex. The following was said in an interview with another woman:

"Sex simply cannot be perfect as long as we have any kind of anxiety about either our own body or the other's. These anxieties must be worked on, they need to be resolved, or we may never be able to experience the perfection that would otherwise be the outcome of the sexual union of a man and woman. For me, prayer helped the most. When we both turned to God everything has changed. I am not ashamed of God, I know that he knows everything about me, all of my beauty and my flaws, so I have nothing to hide. I have learned to accept myself, because both my fiancé and God love me the way I am." (L.X.)

This interview correlates very well with the before mentioned acceptance of the body and one's own reality through "God's love". It is something that gives strength and peace to Catholic "believers" I found it. Also at this point, we have returned to the type of sexual preparation which may start with prayer and proximity to God. For many, it seemed to be unanimously real help, real peace:

"It is also important to mention that we are not always in such a highly elevated mood before or after sex, we do not always pray and always involve God in this way, but we always try to emphasize the infinite and pure love we feel for each other. And even if sometimes this harmony is not something that we can start our sexual intercourse with, after sex we still discuss that it did not work out the way it should have this time. I think when it comes to any kind of preparation or derivation, communication is the key." (H.E.)

I could see, that sex for many of them cannot be a standard activity, it is indeed something very important for their "flawless union". Even if it does not happen the "perfect" way, they need to discuss it, to understand why it was not that "pure". All in all, I can say that although the preferred response regarding sexual preparation for many respondents was in a physical sense, also for many of them, mental fitness, or both, was

just as important. All of this strongly correlates with the sex as a transcendent feeling explained in the previous chapter.

In addition, it has been revealed that beauty, desirability, and hairlessness are especially important for Catholic women - in other words, to meet the norms set by society, despite the fact that the Catholic Church teaches that acceptance of naturalness, our own bodies and the harmony of the two is essential.

I did not mention any of the men's interviews on this question yet because there was no explicitly interesting answer in a physical sense, only in a psychological sense. Among men who agreed with the teaching of the Church, several mentioned the *"importance of prayer"*.

I have had the good fortune to talk to several men who live their relationship/marriage according to the teaching mentioned earlier, according to *"purity."* They also mentioned the Pope, for many of them this topic was not new at all, in fact, I was talking to someone who had read the book before. He talked about *"purity"* and preparing for sex in the following way:

"Naturally, this is not the easiest way. But our Lord Jesus Christ never said that it was easy to follow him. Nevertheless, I know and believe that everything we are experiencing now has a deep meaning we will once reach to understand. For example, for the reason that we have waited until marriage with sexual intercourse, we brought something new into our marriage, something exciting, a real gift to each other that we can explore together and it was wonderful for us to discover and experience this together. We try to say a brief prayer at least occasionally after our intercourses. It means a lot to know that it is all God's will and that we do not want to exclude him from our bedroom either." (E.K.)

These words gripped me a lot, not only because it is not something one would often hear anyone talk this way, that *"they do not want to exclude God from their bedroom,"* but also because although I slipped past a thing mentioned in an interview earlier, at this point I was reminded something that I found very interesting. In that mentioned interview it was said that the place of the crucifix is in the bedroom, above the couple's bed - here I became aware that the reason was the same reason as in the latter interview. For this reason, to understand, I asked my female conversation partner I had that specific interview with before, and said:

"Yes, of course there is a crucifix over our bed so we will never forget that God is in the bedroom too, He is part of every area of our lives, part of our sexuality. After all, we got sex from Him, so that we may love one another in earth, as God loves us." (N.N.)

I think after the many conversations I had, it has become absolutely clear to me here that sex is a particularly important topic in the Catholic Church, for Catholic people, as it is not only for childbearing, pleasure, or even love, but also for unification with God Himself, as they can *"experience the perfect love of God on earth."*

This is the reason why the topic of "frustration and tension" regarding sex and sexual activities in the first chapters of the dissertation were mentioned to be difficult for Catholic women and men. From their upbringing, despite all taboo and unpleasant sexual conversations, they have all learned and interpreted deeply since childhood - even latently - that sex is much more than a physical reality, more than pleasure, more than reproduction. In my interpretation, according to many Catholic "believers", you can either do sex very well, "divinely," so that it is already *"extraterrestrial"* and even *"leads to Heaven,"* or you can do it very badly, *"sinfully"* - they do not seem to find a way between the two. Either they choose one path or the other. An interview excerpt illustrates this interpretation well:

"Although I did not see it that way when I was young, but it is amazing how stressful it is for a Catholic teenager or young adult to have to decide on sexual issues. I think it is a big step for even secular people when they start having sex, losing their virginities. But for a Catholic young person, not only they have to deal with sexual tension, whether or not they should lose their virginity, but also by taking the wrong path with this decision according to their religion and religious background may lead them to spoil their lives. There is no going back. Who is to tell who is right about that?" (L.M.)

We can see that even my adult interlocutor is particularly sharply supporting the possibility of serious and existing frustrations about all of this, as we are talking about the sexual perception of people with a globally sensitive topic, in a sensitive age and sensitive religious background.

Summary, conclusions

In my paper, I have tried to analyse the attitude of the Catholic Church to sex, based on the stories of young religious adults who have been raised Catholic and attended Catholic school.

I was curious about, what the teaching of the Church exactly is about experiencing premarital sex. Why is it a "sin", if the interviewed Catholic interviewees know about it, what feelings it all evoked in them.

The study covered the teaching and rules of the church on sexuality, the question of "purity", physical and mental health, and how decisively the body is part of the teaching of the church. It was revealed, that it all caused frustrations, insecurities and physical difficulties - dissatisfaction with self-image and the extent to which it can affect married life as well.

Questions have been raised as to whether maintaining virginity can still be a good and a credible thing, or is it outdated and, in a sense, unhealthy and even dangerous to the human psyche - in light of the fact that it has been found to cause guilt and anxiety.

It also turned out that different gender roles are very deeply rooted in the Catholic Church, also in marriage: men have "too much", women have "too little" self-confidence, which can cause new marriages problems in intimacy, in living a sex life. Women are more likely to remain insecure about sexual touch and nudity. Couples experience this as a kind of struggle, which already appears in marriage, so physical contact, withholding sexuality, inexperience leads couples to difficulties - despite the fact that sexuality is also an immensely important element of marriage, according to the Catholic faith, since it can manifest a "transcendent experience" moreover, it has been called the "icon of the Holy Trinity."

I am very much grateful for all the conversations I had, for the openness of these Catholic people I had the interviews with. They showed me something very interesting and deeply rooted, something that is very much alive in our society, something that is the manifestation of the unnatural, the "real presence of God" for them. The research showed to me, that specific notions most of the world interprets as something "unreal" or as a myth, for them, it is reality that they are trying to follow, live their lives according to.

It raises further research questions and chapters, such as virginity, and I also find it very interesting to further explore the topic of nudity. Why is nudity such a difficult topic for religious but often non-religious people as well? Can nudity be interpreted as a vulnerability? Is our body more determined by our confidence than our intelligence, our aptitude? On the issue of "purity", a term, "*second purity*," has been raised. What does it mean? Can a person be "*pure*" more than once? I would like to explain all these issues and topics in further research.

Appendix

N.K.: 28 years old, woman, in a relationship, employee

L.M.: 26 years old, woman, in a relationship, student

H.A.: 26 years old, woman, engaged, student

N.N.: 38 years old, woman, married, housewife

H.E.: 31 years old, man, married, freelance

L.L.: 30 years old, woman, married, employed

P.E.: 28 years old, woman, single, student

E.K.: 33 years old, man, married, employee

O.O.: 35 years old, man, married, employee

U.A.: 32 years old, woman, married, housewife

I.X.: 28 years old, woman, engaged, student

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Szandra Zsuzsanna Szabó

Modernity embedded in “*rural*” | An anthropological study of identity representation of the “*peasant world*” among *young* Hungarian folk dancers living in Budapest

Abstract

The paper aims to interpret examples of identity representation of the “*rural*” in reflection to the Hungarian folk dancers living in Budapest. The examined Hungarian folk dancers identify themselves as those who reconstruct the “*peasant traditions*”. They reconstruct the attitudes of the “*old peasant world*”, redefine and represent them in their modern urban life. These attitudes are represented by the identifications of the body, which is evident in their interpretation of gender roles. By exploring the experiences of observations and interpretations of interviews - established from cultural anthropological research amongst the members of the Hungarian dance house movement - the papers’ goal is to present identity constructions in question.

Keywords: folk dance, identity, peasant traditions, urban life, symbols

Introduction

Stuart Hall in his study, *Questions of Cultural identity* (1992), claims that modern societies are keeping up a unique continuity with previous forms. By this, Hall means those traditions that are organized according to different principles and refilled with personal narratives (Hall, 1992, p.277–278). Taking influence from Hall’s statement, this text aims to interpret examples of identity representation of the “*rural*” in reflection of the *young*¹⁶ Hungarian folk dancers’ identity.

¹⁶ During the research, the *young* Hungarian folk dancers were examined. The term of *young* was defined as those men and women who have a regular paying job, either as a “*civilian*” or as a dancer. Besides this, one section of the group is undertaking college studies too. Moreover, they do not have a family life, which means none of them have children during the research. Therefore, the research only focused on the above mentioned age group among the Hungarian folk dancers living in Budapest.

The members of the researched “*folk dance community*”¹⁷ identify themselves as those who “*conserve*” the “*old peasant traditions*”. They reconstruct the attitudes of the “*old peasant world*”, redefine and represent them in their modern urban life. During the process of “*tradition conservation*” – which means adopting the “*traditional*” “*peasant*” attitudes – the “*peasant world’s*” customs, norms and gender roles become part of their identity. These attitudes are represented in the identifications of the body, such as their style, ideals of body image and other symbolic representations of their identity such as tattoos; furthermore, this is evident in their interpretation of gender roles.

Based on the previously mentioned, the following questions emerge: How do the members of the “*community*” define the past and the present? How do they define “*peasant*” attitudes? In which identity constructions are the “*peasant*” attitudes represented? The following study aims to present possible answers to these questions.

Methods of research

The represented empirical data is based on cultural anthropological fieldwork research, which has been conducted since 2014. The researched *young* Hungarian folk dancers are members of a more extended “*community*”, so-called the Hungarian dance house movement. By reason of qualitative anthropological research methodology, examining the more extended Hungarian dance house movement was not possible. The research focused on a select group of individuals within the “*community*” to be able to “study in the village” and not study “the village” (Geertz, 1983, p.22). The selected, previously explicated *young*¹⁸ individuals live in Budapest, and they define themselves as Hungarian folk dancers, moreover the members of the Hungarian dance house movement.

During the research, one of the key methods has been *observation and participation*. Observation in this research is understood “as a way of knowing about the world of others, it provides a particular and unique way of generating novel understandings of the participants in our research” (Musante, 2015, p.251). Moreover, the

¹⁷ Further on in this paper, quote marks and italics are used to visualize interviewees’ terms. According to Geertz, the experiences of the researched people should be analyzed in the reflection of their own conception (Geertz, 1983, p.59). Thomas H. Eriksen (2001) had similar views of this question, in connection with the “emic and etic” perspective. The terms are related to Kenneth Pike, linguistic who introduced the emic and etic dichotomy as the opposite pairs of “phonetics and phonemics”, writes Eriksen (Eriksen, 2001, p.36). On an emic level, the community members describe their lives themselves (Eriksen, 2001, p.36) and using this theoretical background the research material is analysed from “inside”, using the terms and words of the community members.

¹⁸ See: Footnote 1.

researcher who observes, “explicitly incorporates the collection and recording of information gained from participating in a social setting and observing what is happening in the setting explicitly into the analysis” (Musante, 2015, p.252). The studied Hungarian folk dancers can be observed periodically on a weekly basis at events, such as dance houses, which provide the folk dancers a recurring possibility for meetings. During these “collective” events, the researched individuals’ “interactions and practices” are led by a collectively owned pattern (Feischmidt & Szuhay, 2007, p.243). Therefore, the observation of such events is a chance for the researcher “to enter into the social and cultural field one researches” (Eriksen, 2001, p.26) and to “feel the point of view of the other” (Musante, 2015, p.260). Furthermore, I participated in other important events, such as festivals, competitions, and yearly meetings. Due to the casual environment, I had the opportunity to initiate informal conversations with members of the “*community*” and organise formal interviews with them.

Until 2019, and alongside the observations, twenty-five semi-structured in-depth interviews were made, to understand personal connotations of the *young* Hungarian folk dancers’ narratives. The interviewees were chosen by utilising the snowball sampling technique. The first interviewee was chosen based on their knowledge of the subject, and at the end of each interview they were asked to recommend another. From the listed folk dancers, a candidate was chosen, who had been recommended by all the previous interviewees. After each interview, the next interviewee was chosen by the help of the same method. As a consequence of this method, they outlined the members of their “*community*” themselves. During the in-depth interviews, the opportunity arose to get closer, not only to the examined phenomena, but also to gain a deeper understanding of personal connotations of the Hungarian folk dancers’ narratives. The research paper contains anthropological interpretations, which aim to “take us into the heart of which it is the interpretation” (Geertz, 1983, p.18). These interpretations are based on quotes from the interviews, the analysis of the informal conversations in which I took part, and the observations from the “collective” events.

In the further section of the paper, the narratives of the “*community*” are going to be firstly understood in relation to “cultural memory” (Assmann, 2011). Secondly, the members’ identity constructions will be examined as an example of the “*peasant world*” representation in their modern urban life. The analysis of identity contents will be discussed by the presentation of identity constructions, more precisely, from general

communal levels towards the individual, such as folk dancer clothing, folk tattoos and expected gender roles. In the following section, the paper presents segments of the folk dancer identity, which are connected to the narratives of past and present.

Narratives of the past and present

Jan Assmann, in *Collective Memory and Early Civilization* (2011), writes about the merging of “cultural memory” and identity. Assmann’s analysis exposes connection between “memory”, “identity”, and “cultural continuity” (Assmann, 2011, p.2). He writes, “every culture formulates something that might be called a connective structure” (Assmann, 2011, p.2). “Connective structure” of a culture continuously binds people together by the creation of “common knowledge and characteristics”, “common area of experience, expectation, and action whose connecting force provides them with trust and with orientation” through “laws and values”, and through “the memory of a shared past” (Assmann, 2011, p.2-3). Hereby “a basis of belonging, of identity”, the ‘we’ will be created and sustained, which is indispensable for cultural continuity (Assmann, 2011, p.3). The examined young Hungarian folk dancers define themselves as “*the followers of the old peasant culture*”, “*conservers of Hungarian traditions*” and “*speakers of one, common language*”. “*Conserving*” certain elements of the past and remembering them, have a crucial role in the life of the “*community*”. During the process of identifying with the “*traditional*”, “*country*”, “*peasant*”, and the related gender roles, these attitudes become part of their identity. The question arises, what is the exact process of “*tradition conservation*”?

The folk dancers “*traditions conservation*” can be interpreted as a memory related pursuit. With the help of remembering, they “*conserve*” the “*traditions*”, which create their identity. The memory works in a reconstructive way, and not as something that conserves the past. Only those parts remain in memory, which can be reconstructed within the reference frame of the group (Bartlett, 1995; Halbwachs, 1992). Memory reconstructs the past, and perception is an essential part of the reconstruction as the past is only created if the individual makes contacts with it. The contact is only made if there is “documentation” about the past that “denote some kind of characteristic difference” from the present (Assmann, 2011, p.17-18). In the case of folk dancers, “*archive films*”, “*field trips*” and “*folklore*” can serve, as “documentation”. The “*archive films*” are important elements of the process of dance learning. Those people who can be seen in the “*archive*

films” represent the “*informants*”¹⁹ attitudes and the “*traditional*”, “*rural*”, and “*peasant*” surroundings. Therefore, the different customs, decencies, and gender roles become part of their identity. During “*field trips*”, the dancers visit places where they have an opportunity to meet the above-mentioned “*informants*”. The members of the “*community*” have also talked about these meetings. One of the interviewees expressed the following: “*dance brings the other values, too, those things which we learn from the informants help us learn what is respect, and how to behave in human relationships*” (Amateur male folk dancer).²⁰ They can learn personally from the “*informants*” how to “*behave*”. The inherited knowledge is interpreted as a value in the folk dancers’ narratives. And, last but not least, knowing the “*folklore*”, namely, the customs, clothing, folk songs, and folk music are basic conditions of belonging to the community.

In the study by Stuart Hall, *Questions of Cultural identity* (1992), the author claims that modern societies are keeping up a unique continuity with previous forms. By this, Hall means those traditions, which are organized according to different principles (Hall, 1992, p.277–278), as previously mentioned²¹. In modernity, the traditional patterns are refilled with personal narratives. By conserving the “*old*” patterns, the folk dancers create their own identity. The members of the folk dance “*community*” “*conserve*” a past state that did not exist, reconstructing some elements of “*country life*” with the help of “*archive films*” and “*folklore*”, interpreting them in a unique way within their everyday urban life. The folk dancers are part of a circulation; they first meet the “*folklore*”, and the “*archive films*”, then they define their identity based on these materials, thenceforth they return to the starting point keeping the “*folklore*” alive continuously.

Identity built upon the body

The body is an integrated part of folk-dance culture and can be seen as a communication platform and complex interface that channels information between the ‘self’ and ‘others’, the individual and society. In the case of the body, two examples are presented which are

¹⁹ In the researched group, the members consider the word “*informant*” as a professional category which is connected to the profession of a folk dancer. According to them the “*informant*” is “*someone who knows the regional customs, traditions in a way that it was experienced in their authentic form*” (Amature female folk dancer).

²⁰ The study aims to indicate the gender and the nature of relation between folk dancer and folk dance of the interviewees for the purpose of highlighting the male and female, the amateur and professional narratives’ diversity or similarity.

²¹ See: Introduction.

related to the topic of identity built upon the body: the folk dancers clothing and the folk tattoos.

The clothing plays an integral role in the group by allowing the expression and formation of identity, as well as symbolizing togetherness and is often characterized by signs of “*masculinity*” and “*femininity*”. Their style identifies with “*traditional*” elements. The skirt often appears in everyday wear of the women in the “*community*”, according to them it is one of the symbols of “*femininity*”: “*for me femininity started with the skirts, and most of the female dancers wear them often*” (Amateur female folk dancer). Another preferred symbol of “*femininity*” is the flower pattern, because “*it attracts attention, but it’s not vulgar*” (Amateur female folk dancer). According to another interviewee: “*I like the Bulgarian style of clothing, and that’s why I like multiple flowers, and the big jewellery*” (Professional female folk dancer). As the above-mentioned quote refers, the different “*traditional costumes*” have an impact on the clothing of the folk dancers, and they try to imitate certain elements in their personal style. Whilst in the process of dance learning, the dancers are in connection with “*documentation*” (Assmann, 2011, p.18) of previous forms; they try to imitate the “*peasant*” attitudes, wearing their costumes, which initially were only necessary on the stage. But later, it became part of their identity as everyday wear. In men’s clothing, the hat is determinative, as they believe it expresses “*masculinity*”. During the interviews, the dancers often mentioned that “*in the old peasant world*”, the hat was typical wear for men. On the stage, during the performances, the male folk dancers often wear a hat, which becomes their habit, and over time their everyday wear. One of the interviewees remembered the following way in connection with the custom of wearing a hat: “*I couldn’t put my hat into the bag, firstly it was terrible, they looked at me like I was an alien, but then I didn’t care anymore, I was wearing it anyway*” (Professional male folk dancer). Initially, only intended for the purpose of performances, it subsequently represents the male “*peasant*” attitudes, becoming appropriated for everyday wear. The effect of “*traditional costumes*” can be observed in the informal wear of both genders. These elements are the symbols of the past and the symbols of “*femininity*” and “*masculinity*”. They choose specific items of “*traditional costumes*”, which can be easily adopted with their modern style such as jackets, hats, trousers and jewellery.

Recent clothing research²² examines its subject as a dynamic process upon its symbolic meaning. The approaches focus on the clothing's "agency" and "practice". Some studies view dress as a "set of competing discourses, linked to the operation of power, that construct the body and its presentation", furthermore it becomes a surface of "transnational, global, urban, and local forces" (Hansen, 2004, p.370-373). Hansen writes in her study, titled *The world in dress: Anthropological Perspectives on Clothing, Fashion, and Culture* (2004), because "dress has a dual quality" (Hansen, 2004, p.372), as it represents both individual and collective identities (Turner, 1993)²³, it may become "a flash point of conflicting values, [...] in interactions across class, between genders and generations, and in recent global cultural and economic exchanges" (Hansen, 2004, p.372).

The researched Hungarian folk dancers choose clothing items, which fit to the modern urban youth style. However, they add those items of the "traditional" costumes, which are adoptable to their urban lifestyle, moreover this can represent their individual and collective identity. Hereby the "old", "peasant" and the present-day "urban" identity constructions are presented simultaneously. The dress becomes a surface of both "global and local interactions" (Hansen 2004: 370). While those clothing items, which are purchasable worldwide, interact with the "Carpathian Basin's" local "traditional" garments. By this means, the conflicted values of the urban sphere – which characterise as "global" by interviewees – and of the "old" "rural" "peasant" sphere interact on the surface of the body. One of the interviewees described the phenomenon in the following way: "Now there are these modern things. It is all more blurred; at the end everyone will look the same. This is not good. There are ideals, and there are fashion magazines, and people judge themselves based on what the West dictate. These do not represent anything, (these are) only trash of the West" – later, the interviewee's phone rings, which was muted for the interview, however on his iWatch the interviewee was able to see that someone calls him. He realised that I can see it too, so he continues – "yes, I also identify myself with this world. Obviously, I live in it, I can not avoid it" (Professional male folk dancer). During the interview the expression "trash of the West" appears, which without doubt, presents a negative connotation. The "trash of the West", which represents nothing – according to the

²² See: Joanne Eicher's summarising article about the last 125 years of clothing anthropological research (Eicher, 2000)

²³ See: Turner T. 1993 [1980]. The social skin. In Reading the Social Body. C. B. Burroughs & J. Ehrenreich (Ed.). Iowa City: Univ. Iowa Press. 15-39.

interviewee – stands against the “old” “peasant” sphere, which represents something. In this context the “trash of the West” expression can serve as the depiction of the urban sphere. The present-day urban world has a negative connotation in personal narratives, while the “old” “rural” is positive, and accordingly, it gains meaning in the personal narratives of members of the dance house movement. The conflicting values, such as “urban” and “rural”, or “global” and “local”, interact simultaneously and are represented in the clothing of members of the dance house movement.

To summarize, the tools of being a folk dancer are the clothing, and the related accessories, which were initially used only on stage and during rehearsals and performances. However, later they became integrated elements of the dancers’ identity and eventually part of their everyday style. The dancers transform “traditional” elements from the past and use them in their everyday life in a way that would not have been common in “peasant” culture. They refill these elements with their own narratives in combination with the form of fast fashion and represent it in urban life. The folk body becomes a surface of conflicting values, such as “urban” and “rural”, “global” and “local”, which are simultaneously represented in the clothing of members of the dance house movement.

During the process of analysing the relationship between the body and identity, I recognized that several of the interview partners had tattoos on their body. During the research the interviewees were invited for further discussion of these tattoos and their significance.

In the Hungarian study by Anna Kende, *Body identity and personal identity: The role of the different body concepts in the process of self-acceptance* (2002), we can read the following: “the body is not only the tool of expressing our identity, but also of creating it”²⁴ (Kende, 2002, p.72). Accordingly, every society has its own version for decorating the body, the way the body is presented, or perhaps hidden. These “immovable arts” transform the biological body into a “cultural body”, and tattoos are not only tools of expressing identity, but also creating it within the frame of the community (Bodrogi, 1987, p.112). The folk tattoos can also serve as examples for the previously mentioned.

First of all, the folk tattoos cannot be just anywhere on their body. The patterns should be placed where it can be hidden easily, because of the “old peasant attitude”,

²⁴ As the quoted study has not been translated into English yet, the presented sentence is the translation of this paper’s author.

which is the desired behaviour, does not include the existence of the tattoos. The tattoos are part of an urban lifestyle according to their interpretation because of the attendance and popularity of the tattoos nowadays. Moreover, the colour of the tattoos should represent the past state too, that is why they choose a colour, which can be defined as “*authentic*” in appearance.

Folk tattoos do not form a homogeneous group. Based on the observations, they can be divided into two groups. In the first group, there are those tattoos that symbolise the identity of the individual, and are therefore communicating with the outside world, and can also be understood by those who are not folk dancers. In the case of these tattoos, the motif has to be understood clearly, and therefore there is a need for collective interpretation. What sort of motifs appear in the folk tattoos then?

Folk tattoos are greatly inspired by folk art. The regional motifs often appear when they do not have to be understood collectively, so in the case of an inner message. When the folk dancers choose a tattoo to wear on their body for a lifetime, they prefer “*clean*” and “*authentic*” motifs. The “*clean*” motif can also be collectively understood, such as the motif from the *Hungarian Folk Tales* (1977) series, directed by Marcell Jankovics. This notion is also supported by one of the interviewees who claimed that she chose the above-mentioned motif because: “*it is well-known, so for example, If I had a regional folk tattoo, then lots of people wouldn't know what is that, but I would like it to be recognisable, because it's important to me*” (Amateur female folk dancer). During the research, a duality became apparent in terms of the “*old*” “*traditional*” and modern urban attitudes, which are represented in a reflection to their identity. The folk dancer’s goal is to “*conserve*” the “*traditional values*”. They consciously aim to represent a past state in every area of their life, or sometimes subconsciously they take on “*peasant-like*” behavioural patterns. Choosing the pattern of the tattoo, the motif of the *Hungarian Folk Tales* is “*more faithful to style*”, and able to represent the “*traditional state*”. According to their interpretation, the motif of the *Hungarian Folk Tales* is solid and looks authentic. Additionally, it can also communicate with the outside world, as it is “*well-known by everybody*”.

Certain folk-art motifs, besides being decorative elements, functioned as symbols, and these symbols were well known by everyone according to Mihály Hoppál.²⁵ The tulip is a fertility symbol in folk art, and it also represents the gender relations as it portrays

²⁵ Mihály Hoppál is a Hungarian ethnographer, who examined folk art motifs as erotic references and symbols.

the open legs of a woman, and therefore “it is the symbol of fertility” (Hoppál, 2002, p.295). One of the interviewees has a *Kalotaszeg* pattern, which ends in a series of tulips situated under the belly and around her ovary. About the placement and the choice of motif, she said that: *“it is the symbol of fertility, that’s why it’s there, because I have a polycystic ovary syndrome, which makes much more difficult to get pregnant”* (Amateur female folk dancer). To summarize, the interview partner had a fertility symbol as a tattoo in order to provide the fertility. The surface of the body becomes the subject of the most intimate topic, female fertility. The visual messages of flower patterns are known by the community members, as knowledge of the *“folklore”* is one of the conditions of belonging to the group. Besides this, it is part of their identity, and they use them as symbols.

The tattoos cannot be linked to *“old peasant”* attitudes, but they still have tattoos on their skin and use them as communication platforms. The folk tattoos are representations of the *“old”* and *“traditional”*, but in modern forms at the same time.

Gender roles

“It should work like this in the real life as well”

The folk dancers’ narratives do not only affect the different representations of their identity. During the following, the folk dancers’ gender roles will be discussed.

The dancers, during the folk dance, learn gender roles that are defined in the *“old peasant culture”* by the words *“masculine”* and *“feminine”*, and they also call them *“traditional.”* According to their interpretation, the folk dancers’ identity is characterized by *“male dominance”* and *“female subordination”*, and these gender roles appear during the dance. They learn the gender roles, and by the act of dance they start *“wearing”* them. These gender roles only appear initially during dancing, as time goes by it becomes an integrated part of their identity construction and narratives. One of the female interviewees explained the following about gender roles: *“you learn and you play those movements from the old times, the man is determined, knows what he wants, takes care of the woman, and takes her into account, however, the man is the one who is dominant and the woman accepts that, today’s modern women have to hold themselves back, they cannot say when to stop, when to turn, and so on”* (Professional female folk dancer). Based on this quote, we can examine that the gender roles appearing during the dance have a situated character. The phrase *“today’s modern women”* refers to themselves as one who lives in a *“traditional”* way in the age of modernity. One of the male interviewees mentioned the

following: “*the woman serves the man, the man represents a leading role, but cannot achieve anything without the woman. The man is the head, the woman is the neck, the Hungarian language recognizes the marriage as the unity of one half which is expressed in the word of ‘wife’²⁶, and two parties are one whole. The man is only a man if there is a woman by his side, and the folk dance is an excellent indicator of this. I am trying to represent this point of view in my own relationship as well*” (Professional male folk dancer). The mentioned quote signifies that, although the majority of the groups’ members do not have any personal experience in connection with the “*peasant life*”, they are aiming to live according to these “*peasant values*”. This notion is well symbolized by those words which describe the ideal gender roles according to them: “*the man is the dominant one, but the woman can evolve next to him, it should work like this in the real life as well, this is the healthy approach, the absolute good, it should be like this*” (Professional female folk dancer). The gender roles, which are initially only “*played*” and learned during the dance with the help of mimicry, successively become an integral part of the individual, affecting the dancers’ narratives and forming communal values.

Conclusion

In this study, examples have been presented that demonstrate representations of the “*rural*” in urban life through the topics of style, tattoos and gender roles. As a conclusion, it can be stated that the identity of the folk dancers can be defined both as “*old rural*” and “*modern and urban*”. Folk dance itself is a present representation of a past state. This past state is defined as “*traditional*”, and their goal is to “*conserve*” these “*traditional*” values. They consciously aim to represent this past state in every area of their life. Although not discussed in this study, it is also evident in ideal body image, during the process of choosing a partner, in their interpretation of sexuality.

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²⁶ In the Hungarian language, wife is called “*feleség*”, which can be translated as “*half of something*”.

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Kha M. Tran

Korean Pop Music | An Emerging Subculture to Transform Masculinity Among Young Jordanians

Abstract

Korean Pop Music (K-Pop) and its hybrid trans-nationalistic appeal, including soft masculinity, have enjoyed worldwide influence in recent years even in unexpected regions such as the Middle East, which was out of South Korean government's initial plans. While there are myriads of attempts to explore the concept of masculinity in the Middle East as a result of globalization and cultural influences of the West, attempts that delve into East Asian influences are relatively scarce. By analyzing existing literature about Hallyu and K-Pop in the Middle East and by infiltrating the burgeoning K-pop communities in Amman, this research project aims to explore the shift from the deep-rooted hegemonic masculinity to a more East Asia-influenced among fans.

Given the transcultural and transnational aspects of the phenomenon, this research project will employ a set of anthropological techniques such as participant observation, structured and semi-structured interviews to gather insightful data. The entailing results may shed light on whether or not K-pop has manifested itself as one of the influences that facilitates the emergence of transnational masculinity among K-pop communities in the Middle East, or more particularly, in Jordan.

Keywords: transnationalism, globalization, masculinity, Middle East, Korean Pop Music, Hallyu, subculture.

Introduction

On November 19, 2017, as V — the *visual*²⁷ of South Korean idol group BTS — smiled and gently blinked to his fans during a makeshift *ending focus*²⁸, the crowd erupted in jubilation. His fervent supporters, mostly young female, from all over America had come

²⁷ *Visual* is an official position in a K-Pop group, usually assigned to the member who is considered the most beautiful of the group.

²⁸ At the end of every performance, the camera will focus on the face of each member of a K-Pop group, this close-up is termed the *ending focus*.

together at the Microsoft Theater, Los Angeles to witness a historical moment of K-Pop: BTS as the very first Korean idol group to perform at a major music event in the West, namely the 45th American Music Awards. Dubbed “a dream come true”, K-Pop fans had waited for this moment for so long that tears could not help falling down their cheeks. The ARMY²⁹ then began to chant the full names of seven BTS members, loud and clear, all in an incredible harmony and synchronization that one could almost think that it came from a single, amplified voice. The cheering and chanting did not seem to abate even after the group had returned to the backstage, leaving their fans still in happy tears and overwhelming satisfaction. What is left is colorful banners and signs that showered the group with compliments about their talents and looks.

While still in Vietnam and undoubtedly not a part of this event in person, I could only follow the performance online by means of a streaming channel on YouTube. That very ending focus on V, however, was enough to provoke an intense feeling that I had never noticed before: amazement and more specifically, pride. Young ladies in America going crazy for a boyband? Very common. Well established names such as the Backstreet Boys, Westlife, or N*SYNC had already enjoyed that privilege two decades ago. But the same young ladies running amok for a group from Asia that performed songs not even in their language? Now that is uncommon.

In 2009, more than one hundred replies to Japan Today’s poll “Why do Asian pop stars have a hard time succeeding in the U.S. market?” suggest that Asian artists “are not attractive,” “lack of talents,” “look too childlike.” One decade later, the triumphant success of BTS has rendered such narratives unreliable. The South Korean boy group has rejoiced in the same reception that world-famous giants such as the Backstreet Boys once had during the peak of their careers in the late 1990s. International reception to Asian musicians has changed dramatically in the past years. In the next chapters, I would like to argue that K-Pop has shown itself as a real game-changer to influence such a paradigm shift. To call it a “game- changer” (Glasby 2019) is to have accepted that K-Pop has taken part in a crucial and revolutionary job in reshaping global perspectives about East Asians in general and East Asian males in particular, under a globalized context. Previously Western film and television are rife with stereotypes including unfair representations of East Asian males (Paner 2018).

²⁹ ARMY or A.R.M.Y. (아미) is BTS's official fandom name. It was officially established on July 9, 2013, after the first recruitment closed.

Not until recently have East Asians started to receive a relatively fairer depiction in Western TV and film industry as *Crazy Rich Asians*, the first Hollywood movie with all Asian leads, performed unexpectedly well in the market (Abad-Santos 2018). Before that, Asians in general and Asian males in particular have been largely invisible in film and television (LaForce, 2018.) If anything, they were usually assigned roles that are either foolish, unattractive, and comical as a stark contrast to the non-Asian main characters (Shaw 2018). This kind of portrayal is evident in *Two Broke Girls* (2011-2017) where Han — the main character of South Korean descent — was constantly subjected to jokes regarding his look and his racial background. Actor Peter Shinkoda says, concisely, “when it comes to casting Asian American males, Hollywood doesn’t make many opportunities for us.” It is important not to ignore the blatant “Yellow Face” that has been done in Hollywood for decades. In the twentieth century, it was common for ‘white actors’ to play non-white characters in the American film industry. These characters typically poked fun at stereotypes of Asian men and further added to their repression, for instance: *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* (1961), *Remo Williams* (1985), and *I Now Pronounce You Chuck and Larry* (2007). As a consequence, Asian men are usually viewed as unattractive, submissive, and weird by the general public outside Asia. Asian males’ identity in the international contexts, if anything, has been fraught with misconceptions and stereotypes (Brown 2018). Hollywood still rarely cast male actors of Asian descent to play major roles in their movies; Asian characters on the most popular TV shows as of 2020 are still stereotypical, and the idea of fair presentation for Asian men is still all but quixotic. The unsettling reality is that these unfair portrayals did not only influence the general public in the United States but also to that of other regions in the world. Nevertheless, I would argue that such perceptions of Asian have been undergoing a change in a globalized context, among which Hallyu³⁰ and K-Pop is part and parcel.

By the year 2020, K-Pop is no longer an unfamiliar term to almost anyone with an internet connection, given its immense accessibility on the virtual world. In fact, it is the sixth-largest recorded music market in the world³¹, and the export of K-pop has propelled South Korea to an estimated \$5 billion music industry, according to a report published in

³⁰ Hallyu, or the Korean Wave: is a term regarding the conscious effort of South Korean government to export Korean culture to other regions in the world.

³¹ IAJ Yearbook 2018: IFPI Global Music Report 2018 (Page 4)". Recording Industry Association of Japan. Archived from the original on 2018-06-18. Retrieved 2017-06-18 <https://www.riaj.or.jp/riaj/open/open-record!file?fid=1638>

the Korea Creative Content Agency in 2017. K-Pop is still growing and has spread to almost every corner of the world, even in unexpected regions such as the Middle East and Africa.

On Twitter, hashtags such as #BTSinRiyadh and #RiyadhWelcomesBTS invaded the micro-blogging platform as soon as the seven-member band arrived in Saudi Arabia on a Thursday morning. The city of Riyadh also lit up in purple in honor of the band's arrival. Criticism of the decision to play in Saudi Arabia erupted almost at the same moment the concert was announced in July, dividing BTS's fans, with many citing the 2018 murder of Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi Arabian consulate in Turkey and the kingdom's human rights record (Hollingsworth 2019). It also seems at odds with the group's involvement in UNICEF's End Violence campaign and their own "Speak Yourself" speech to the United Nations, given Saudi Arabia's history of censorship, its restriction of women's rights and that same-sex sexual activity is illegal. On October 11, 2019, the seven-piece played to an audience of about 30,000 in a venue with a capacity of almost 70,000. The group was greeted by about 100 fans at the airport as they arrived in the country. Many more flew in from other Middle Eastern countries such as Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates to attend the concert.

The fact that BTS were so welcomed in Saudi Arabia despite their vocal advocacy for human rights, including LGBTQ+ and women's rights, and at the same time backlashed by the criticism from their international fans, triggered my curiosity. Furthermore, BTS was not the first K-Pop act to have received such welcomeness in the Middle East. Prior to the mega-success of the seven-member worldwide sensation, other K-Pop groups such as EXO and INFINITE had received similar acceptance, and their fans are still growing every day, with merchandise and posters hung up on their walls at home. I am intrigued by such a reception. How did K-Pop make it to a region so strict about their traditional values? What is it like to be a Middle Eastern K-Pop fan? How do Middle Eastern fans think about the values and messages carried by K-Pop? How did South Korean boy groups manage to be dominant in the Middle Eastern demographics over girl groups? What is so appealing about K-Pop masculinity that attracts millions of young Middle Eastern girls including Muslims? Are there any cultural conflicts between South Korean and Middle Eastern values and beliefs? Are there similarities?

This ethnographic study of K-Pop in the Middle East traces the development of the Hallyu and K-Pop in the Middle East, examines what it means to be "masculine" in the

Middle East and the K-Pop world, and culminates in the collision of the two worlds regarding the perception of masculinity. I argue that K-Pop, as a part of globalization, has influenced the way Middle Eastern fans perceive masculinity, particularly from hegemonic masculinity to emergent masculinity that is softer in approach.

Through participant observation, structured and semi-structured interviews as the most suitable means of data gathering for this research, I hoped to shed light on K-Pop as a real game-changer that helps undermine stereotypical notions of East Asian male, yet to contribute to the lacking body of studies and analyses of masculinities in the Middle East.

Literature Review

For my analyses on the transcultural and transnational appeals of K-Pop boy groups, I consulted the work of Manieta (2010) which focused on the distributivity of gender in Korean boy bands. By analyzing the interaction that takes place in “Aegyo³² Contests,” Manieta noticed the transition in K-Pop boy bands’ image from pretty-boy, soft-masculine to a more “tough, manly, and beast-like” in a very flexible way. He then argued that by combining their hyper-masculine image with “soft masculinity” performances, some boy bands adopt a strategy by which their group’s collective hybrid masculine image is constructed cooperatively through discourse, distributing the gender-work across its members. Manieta called this “distributed masculinity,” depends on the discursive work done by all participants involved, including band members and TV hosts.

Manieta’s analysis goes along with Karl Marx’s work “The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof” when it comes to commodification. Oxford dictionary defines “fetish” as “something that a person spends too much time doing or thinking about”. It is indeed that the K-Pop world is a place where fetishization of human bodies, personal characters, and materialism exists. Another definition of “fetish” that echoes Marx’s concept of fetishization is “an object that some people worship because they believe that it has magic powers.” Marx comments that under capitalism, commodities become a fetish because of the social values that we have assigned to them unconsciously. For example, tickets to a BTS concert are more expensive than tickets to a

³² Aegyo (Korean: 애교) in Korean refers to a cute display of affection often expressed through a cute voice, changes to speech, facial expressions.

VICTON concert because there are too many BTS fans but limited seats, yet fans still attribute a 'magical' power to BTS and consider that BTS are more 'valuable' than VICTON. Commodity becomes "magical" in the sense that they seem to be independent from the people who produced them. In Marx's words: "A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, [...] because the relation of the producers and the sum total of their own labor is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labor".

Although Marx's theory was based on the analysis of factory labor, the concept can be applied to K-Pop as well. Marx contends that commodities (understood as an object with a value and in this case, cultural products) are now related to each other through the social relation and sum of the labor they put in, not the use-value. As discussed above, K-Pop is a type of cultural or ethnic commodity. It echoes how Marx describes commodities. For instance, Manieta's work shows that the masculinities in K-Pop boy bands are "distributed" dependent on contexts and requests from fans. By looking at the interaction that takes place in "Aegyo Contests," a common segment on Korean variety TV, he shows how each group member's masculinity is negotiated and defined through requested performances of aegyo. Aegyo is a concept that is shaped by culturally shared ideas of cuteness in South Korea. One aspect of aegyo is a speech style that is strongly associated with women and femininity (cf. Moon under review, Abelman 2003). This collective expression of hybrid gender shows that gender's performative nature allows for creative expressions of femininity and masculinity beyond that of just an individual. The process suggests how groups can express collective gender identity and how that identity is molded interactionally. A member's masculinity expression does not stay unchanged but rather undergoes a change dependently on their fans' requests. Given the fact that fans are willing to pay, and the longevity of a K-Pop idol group depends almost entirely on fan supports, the concept that the group has to follow is also dependent. Therefore, the relationship between fans and the celebrities and the process through which fans labor to obtain their idols' labor is worth exploring.

Why are K-Pop idols so appealing to fan? Jacques Lacan's theory on "mirror phase" can help us understand the reasons why K-Pop idols are so desirable to their fans. Lacan's theory is a reading of Sigmund Freud's work on ego. When looking at themselves in the mirror, infants do not immediately recognize their own reflections but rather, they believe that the image in the mirror is an idealized version of themselves. Given that babies are

physiologically incapable of controlling many of their body parts, the image in the mirror looks so complete and in-control compared to the fragmented and powerless perception of their body. As Elizabeth Grosz (1990) summarizes, “the mirror stage is a compensation for the child’s acceptance of lack” since it gratifies them by providing a “promise or anticipation of (self)mastery and control the subject lacks”. Lacan argues that this begins the process of generating an “internalized psychic sensory image of the self” where the things in one’s mind are more perfect, and the relations established are more “fantasied”. Moreover, the child builds his/her ego based on that idealized image one sees in the mirror. As the mirror phase will eventually pass and the child is now conscious of the reflection of himself, he has to confront the gap between the idealized version of himself in the mirror and the actual imperfect self that he is in reality.

However, the journey to fulfill such a gap is rather an arduous and almost impossible one, as Lacan points out that “lack, gap, splitting will be [a human’s] mode of being”. We will always struggle to fulfill that gap, sometimes through fantasizing and sometimes through seeking for an identificatory image. The attractive and capable celebrities become a mirror image for many; they become the subjects of fantasy and the standard that others constantly attempt to achieve by filling their lacks and weaknesses (Chan 2014). This concept is crucial to analyzing the K-Pop products and also fans.

Laura Mulvey’s analysis of Hollywood films through psychoanalysis is also helpful to comprehend how audiences consume media. In “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (2009), Mulvey argues that cinema offers two major types of pleasures. First is scopophilia, “in which looking itself is a source of pleasure”. She references Freud’s notion of scopophilia, which he associates with “taking other people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze” (Mulvey 2009:17). Thus, the audiences derive pleasure and a sense of power by viewing others as objects. The second is narcissism, “pleasure in being looked at”; the audience identifies with the actors in the movie as surrogates of themselves. Mulvey also suggests that films are not merely made to be watched, but they are there to create “an illusion of looking into a private world” (Mulvey 2009:17). As the audience watch a movie, they become the guests into the private world built from the materials and the concepts of the movie itself. Even though Mulvey’s theory is based on cinematography, I would argue that K-Pop employs similar narrative devices, given its heavy emphasis on visual components like music video and choreography. In a K-Pop performance, most groups employ a “concept,” which is visible through the costumes, the

choreography, the music video, or the stage background. All elements contribute to a larger story that the artists want their audience to be engaged in, alongside with their music and lyrics. Thus, watching a K-Pop performance is “looking into a private world” – the private world that the artists are trying to convey through a complex set of images and sounds.

The concept of “gaze” (Mulvey 2009) is crucial in Mulvey’s argument; it acts as an instrument through which the audience can assert control, bring pleasure, and uncover vulnerabilities. Human beings are indeed gazing at one another in everyday activities. Mulvey also introduces the term “to-be-looked-at-ness”. She argues that there is always an imbalanced gender binary in cinema, in which males are active and females are passive. Women’s role is to be “looked at” by the characters within the narrative and the spectators in the cinema. Besides, women serve as a constant reminder of castration threat (since women lack the phallus, the symbol of power). In Mulvey’s words, women are the “bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning” (Mulvey 2009:15). Women help the storyline along (and sometimes slow down the narratives), not to make decisions and move the story plot along. On the other hand, male leads push the narrative forward by taking actions that lead to changes and significances. Thus, the viewers automatically identify with the main male protagonist instead of the female. This can be seen in K-Pop performances, music videos, and varieties show that K-Pop idol groups take part in. In almost every BTS, EXO, or SEVENTEEN music videos, there are no main female characters, and even if there were their roles would be insignificant. K-Pop fan girls identify themselves with the boy groups themselves though their journey to multiple topics such as family, love, and friendship. Any appearance of a female character in these boy groups’ activity only serves as a narrative tool to push the groups’ main concepts forwards.

All things above beg the questions: is the same commodification functioning among fans in the Middle East? Has this commodification created a similar “distributed masculinity” and if it has, how are Middle Eastern fans influenced by this flexible masculinity? Literature regarding K-Pop in the Middle East is much needed for any attempt to answer these questions.

While there is a plethora of academic papers that attempted to dissect the influences of Hallyu in the world, attempts that pointed to the Middle East are scarce. The most notable and especially useful one that I could find during my research for precursor works is the work of Mohamed Elaskary (2018), Nissim Otmazgin and Irina Lyan (2013).

I consider these works pivotal and would like to contribute to filling the gap between the narratives that these works offered.

In their paper, Otmazgin and Lyan seek to understand the role played by fans of K-pop in the Middle East in a globalized context. The authors emphasize that fans act as global mediators and facilitators of culture, and they attempt to understand how Israelis and Arabs perceive and assimilate the Korean Wave and culture. In this regard, they argue that Korean culture did not come to Israel/Palestine directly but rather through other cultural avenues. The authors argue that fans are cultural ambassadors who spread K-pop among their friends and relatives. When questioned about the popularity of K-drama and K-pop in Palestine and Israel, interviewed fans mentioned the uniqueness of the storyline and finesse in scene production concerning the former while fun and appealing dance routines that could be mimicked were mentioned regarding the latter. In her paper, Kim (2014) traces the history of the development of Hallyu in the Middle East, arguing that Hallyu has been well received in the Arab world due to the similarities between Korean and Arabic/Muslim cultures. The most important point clarified by Kim is that Hallyu has become part of the “Creative Economy”—an initiative fostered by the Korean government during the last few years. Kim concludes that Hallyu has had tremendous positive effects on Korean exports to the Middle East and on the number of tourists who come to visit Korea.

Methodology

The goal of my research is to trace the development of Hallyu and K-Pop in the Middle East to find out which role K-pop played and what it offered in the changing perception of East Asian males among middle-class Jordanian female K-pop fans. To achieve this, the need to grasp the fundamental concepts and theories related to the topics and to review previous attempts at understanding such topics was of cardinal importance. For the course of one month ranging from November 2019 to early January 2020, I spent a great deal of time searching on the internet and the library for literature related to Arab masculinity, transculturalism, globalization, and K-pop to make sure that my research design would not be too broad, or off-topic regarding the erratic nature of qualitative data collected for such research. With the knowledge learned during my Anthropology MA at ELTE, I later on attempted to devise a research plan using anthropological theories and methods which facilitated the fieldwork.

Due to my large circle of Jordanian friends in the dormitory and my immense interest in both K-pop and Levant countries, I found Amman, the capital city of Jordan, the ideal location for my field site to take place. Furthermore, after several attempts to research on the internet regarding my sample of the study, I have got in contact with the founder of Jordan K-pop Lovers (JKL), a massive K-pop community of fifteen thousand active members, and this person had agreed to meet as well as to introduce me to possible participants. Due to the characteristics of what it means to be an enthusiastic K-pop fan, the majority of these participants are middle-class young adults with access to the internet and the financial stabilities that allow them to catch up with the latest K-pop products.

Given the characteristics of the research, the main methodology employed for this research was participant observation (1) to explore the JKF and to grasp a sense of what it is like to be a K-pop enthusiast in Amman; semi-structured interviews (2) to gather thick descriptions from the participants, which includes their social backgrounds, personal life, and their perspectives about the constitution of masculinity as a K-pop fan. During my three weeks in Jordan, I lived in the same household with a Jordanian friend whose sister and friends are K-pop enthusiasts, and together with them, I participated in a lot of casual meetings in a bar called Dali. Through these meetings I had the chance to engage in their banter to grasp a sense of their life as young adults living in a city heavily influenced by globalization yet see things in their perspectives regarding various topics such as politics, entertainment, and social issues such as gender and women's rights. Just after a few days as I found myself in good rapport with two participants, I asked them if I could arrange an in-depth interview to delve deeper into their stories and their thoughts. For other participants, especially the members of the JKL, I had the founder of this community to find participants for me, which resulted in seven other females, including the founder herself. Through dialogues, semi-structured and open-end interviews in coffee shops chosen by them, I have obtained data that virtually reflexes their lives and their perspectives regarding various topics as K-pop enthusiasts. These data have rendered themselves helpful and extremely valuable for my further analyses on the topic.

Given the flexible nature of my research on K-pop and the changing perception of K-pop enthusiasts in Amman, I have employed a qualitative approach to both the research designs, methodologies, and analyses of the research. This is the rationale for why semi-structured and open-end interviews were chosen, given these methods offer a wide range

of choices, if not total freedom, for my participants to give out information. Yet the chosen types of interviews had also facilitated probes and questions that generated contexts for the interpretation and analyses. My aim was to understand how my participants became interested in K-pop and K-pop masculinity, given that the society they grew up and have lived in has manifested a type of masculinity in stark contrast with K-pop masculinity.

Regarding the analyses, I chose to employ cultural materialism to facilitate my interpretation of the data gathered. Cultural materialism, coined by Marvin Harris in his 1968 text, *The Rise of Anthropological Theory*, promotes the idea that infrastructure, consisting of “material realities” such as technological, economic, and reproductive factors mold and influence structure and superstructure. Given that K-pop, a cultural product made with underlying socio-economic motives, falls into the category of “infrastructure” and “masculinity” as well as “perception of masculinity” belong to the category of “superstructure”, cultural materialism perfectly fits in as the most appropriate theoretical framework that supports my hypothesis that K-pop cultural products took a part into the changing perception of masculinity among middle-class Jordanian female enthusiasts.

It is important to note that I do not speak Arabic, therefore the communication with some of my participants was troubled at some points. For example, during an interview in Dali without my Jordanian friend, my participant was very excited and about the gender topic but had a hard time trying to explain what she really meant in the English language. This is to say that I may have encountered ethnocentrism when attempting to interpret the dialogues with her because some of her speeches were obscure in the English translation and I had to interpret them using my own knowledge and experience. Plus the limitation of time in the field, given that I had to fund my own trip to Jordan, I could only afford to stay there for three weeks and thus the number of participants was insufficient and for the members of the JKL, I could only meet them once. Also I had to leave Jordan on February 12, whereas the JKL had a large event on the 14. I believe that if I had more time there I could have attended this event to grasp the atmosphere of the JKL community and to spend more time with my participants. Fortunately, the founder of JKL had handed me a catalog of her community, in which virtually everything about the JKF was described in detail.

I also interviewed several Middle Eastern students who do not identify themselves as K-Pop fans during my time in Kerekes Dormitory, Budapest to grasp their stance on

masculinity. The data gathered were then compared to that of K-Pop fans to see whether there were other sources of influences that generated such change in their perception.

Findings and Discussions

With data gathered from the fieldwork and interviews, my findings on K-pop culture and its influence on Middle Eastern fans can be divided into three categories: cultural influence, identity, and sense of belonging, and emergent perspectives.

Cultural influences

Regarding cultural influence, Middle Eastern fans, particularly the members of the JKL, confirmed to have been exposed to an array of cultural influences from South Korea such as language, social behaviors, and self-expression. For example, age. In South Korea, age is an important factor in communication, and that one must show respect depending on age. The majority of the attendants tend to care more about age when it comes to communication. Even when they did not take it seriously, some of the attendants casually made jokes about age so that their younger friends had to do them some favor. This can be seen in these attendants' language; they tend to be more formal and call those who older than them "oppa" and "unnie." Furthermore, the age system in South Korea is quite different to that of the world: South Koreans count pregnancy time! They also automatically added one extra year to their actual age. Self-expression also manifests a change, particularly body language, many of the attendants start using the heart sign to show love and affection, or to act cute. They explain that to look cute and to be cute is very important in K-pop.

"I don't know what is happening to me but recently I found myself acting cute a lot. When I want something from my brothers, I just put a cry baby expression on my face, and I keep nagging like those Korean drama girls until he gives me what I want." (Haya, 24, Jordan.)

"I just can't stop pushing my heart sign to everybody's face when I agree and when I want to express that I like what they say or something. At first it was not that often but later on I literally use the heart sign for anything." (Riizmazz, 25, Jordan.)

Does adopting K-Pop slangs and style of speech affect the everyday life of the fans? Muna (27) shares her story about being emotionally invested in K-Pop and the reaction of her husband:

“My husband initially was uncomfortable with my room full of BTS posters, you know he can get jealous sometimes. He sometimes finds my spontaneous aegyo weird and cringy but it’s just a part of me and I can’t change that.”

The story behind Muna is a long and incredible one. When I first talked to Muna on Facebook, I assumed that she was just another teenage girl who fell for the androgynous beauty of K-Pop idols. Not until when I came to Jordan did I learn that Muna is, in fact, a 27-year-old Muslim woman. She was married at the age of 20 through a traditional arranged marriage, and she also the mother of two beautiful children. Muna had a long history with K-Pop. It is in her words that she “grew up” with K-Pop ever since the second-generation idols tugged her heartstrings. Being the founder of “Jordan K-Pop Lovers”, an online community of more than fifteen thousand active members, Muna turned her love for K-pop into a business that feeds her entire family by organizing offline events and selling K-Pop merchandise. Muna has appeared several times on national TV channels of multiple countries. In 2017, South Korean TV channel MBC invited her to the country of kimchi for a talk show. Despite her adulthood taking away the time and dedication she once had for K-Pop, Muna still manages to integrate herself being a K-Pop enthusiast to the life of a wife and a mother. When asked if she has experienced any difficulty regarding life, Muna shared that she has, for so many times, experienced conflicts and obstacles that she almost quits. For instance, her husband was not happy with her behaviors and beliefs that she has adopted from South Korean drama and music.

“Me acting cute like a baby is considered immature and does not go along with my husband’s way of living. He did not react much to my life as a K-Pop girl, but deep down I knew he hated it with a passion [laughs].”

The Jordanian government also paid Muna a few visits to investigate what she was doing with her community. The authority asserted that Muna had to make a report for each of her activities because being the founder of such a large community could create “unwanted consequences” if she stayed undocumented. However, most of Muna’s offline meetings went well with no troubles.

When my friend Bara introduced me to Jumana (28) during a meeting at Dali Cafe, I experienced an overwhelming feeling of shyness because Jumana evinced an aggressive expression that I was not trained sufficiently to deal with. I later learned that that first impression was rather misleading, Jumana is, in fact, the sweetest person I had ever met.

During the whole conversation with me, Jumana could not stop showing her heart sign as to agree with everything I said.

“Wallah I cannot stop doing this, I think it has become a part of me already!”

How about male fans who have adopted aegyo and this style of speech of K-Pop? Haya (24) shares that her male K-Pop friends were constantly subject to discrimination and unwanted reaction because in Jordan or virtually any other Middle Eastern countries, the Korean cute style of speech and aegyo expression are considered gay.

“When you act cute as a boy, people will think that you are gay, and you know being gay here is a taboo.”

Identity and sense of belonging

K-Pop also offers a sense of belonging, given the identity it has granted on its follows. We are living in a world filled with upsetting news such as the threats of global warming, arms race, terrorist attacks, and most recently, the coronavirus that has taken the lives of more than 243,000 people, to feel frustrated is all but understandable. At the same time, we have popular cultures that create and impose impossible standards on young adults, for example, what their bodies should look like or whether they should own the latest iPhone or not, the need to catch up with everyone else is urgent. Those who fail to catch up with the world may feel lost and unhappy, thus explains their essential needs to find something to hold on to as comfort. K-pop idols and fandoms appear to be the perfect contender for this very need, for it offers a sense of having a community behind, and no matter what happens, this very community will always be with them.

A fandom, for example, BTS's ARMY, TWICE's ONCEs, BLACKPINK's BLINKs, gives its member a sense of belonging to a community where they do not have to try so hard to fit in as in real life. Just similar to how one Manchester United fan would feel when their favorite team won a match, K-pop fandoms exulted in their idols' success. During my conversations with the participants, I have heard several times phrases such as “my idol's success is my success.” In other words, they enjoy the success of their idols as of their own, and whatever they do with their own life does not matter that much. This echoes Jacques Lacan's theory on “mirror phase” where K-Pop fans idealize their favorite musicians, and the success of these musicians will somehow compensate for the lack of success and happiness that they may have experienced in real life.

Back to Jumana, despite her sweet and seemingly happy personality, she suffers depression, abusive family as well as her toxic relationship. Jumana shares that she found comfort in the K-Pop community because it offers her a haven filled with support and positivity, which is in stark contrast with her life in Jordan.

“There were so many times I wanted to kill myself, but I could not. I cannot stand living here in the [sic] Jordan! My mother is very controlling, and she would not even let me out if she knew that I am here with you guys. She’s always screaming and complaining. Whenever she is not happy, she puts everything on me. Look at this tattoo, she would literally kill me if she knew [...] My [sic] boyfriend is also the worst! He takes advantage of me. He is unemployed and lives on my money. I know it’s stupid, but I just cannot quit him. I really want to escape this place to go to Budapest with you guys.”

“The new generation of K-Pop is crap, but I like the fandoms, they are cool. I have made so many friends online, and they always have my back. The very thing that my family can never do for me.”

Emergent perspectives on masculinity

Jumana also shared an opinion that matched with almost every other participant’s replies to my questions regarding masculinity. She believes that it is because the men around her life are so aggressive, arrogant, and controlling that she finds comfort in the type of men portrayed by K-Pop idols: a humble, understanding, and softer type of men. Sarah concludes:

“It is not that I don’t like Arab men, it’s just that so many of them make me feel like I’m not being listened. And yeah, I do think that it’s because of the aggressive men here that I fall in love with South Korean men more and more every day.”

Muna also revealed quite a personal story regarding her love life. Because of the arranged marriage, she was never in love with her husband during the first four years of marriage:

“Even after four years and I had become a mother of two, I was still not in love with him. I don’t know why. Every day I dreamed of going to South Korea, I had never been there but I’m sure it would feel like home. I know every single street in Seoul because of the dramas I have watched and of course, Google Earth. I just wanted to escape.”

Muna's seemingly unhappy marriage took a turn when she made Jordan K-Pop Lovers her business. She made a living out of it. Muna's husband then joined her in the business, and he was somehow "converted" to a Hallyu fan.

"It's money so of course, he helped me with that. The funniest thing is that as he interacts with Hallyu he has become more and more understanding, and cute [laughs]. He is still not a fan of K-Pop though because the music is too much for him, but he sure is digging Korean dramas and the variety shows that my K-Pop idols attend."

Regarding the Middle Eastern participants that identify themselves as non-fans, both Mahmood (24) and Zeina (22) agreed that Middle Eastern men can be aggressive, but that is not by nature but rather by the culture that they grew up in. Zeina shares that she grew up in a society where men were taught to be aggressive and controlling towards their sisters, and any man who fails to accomplish this will be made fun of or considered to be "less manly" or a "coward."

"You know my brother, right? He looks so nice and soft, doesn't he? Everyone in my family makes fun of him just because he did not try to control me. How stupid is that?"

"I think girls here like big and loud guys, not because of anything but they were taught like that. Those guys call themselves masculine but jokes on them, to be masculine it requires a lot more than that and not just how you look and the way you talk."

To some extent, the view of Arab men as aggressive and East Asian men as gentle is still a generalization that needs more studies and research attempts to explore further. However, the pattern that shows from my pool of data is almost a unanimous one: Middle Eastern fan girls love South Korean celebrities so much because of the way they are portrayed: humble, beautiful, soft and understanding. Whether or not these attributes were manufactured by South Korean producers themselves, these qualities in a man do show that hegemonic masculinity is not the only type of masculinity, and that one can still be "handsome" and "manly" even with softer attributes as seen in K-Pop idols.

"You know what? I think Asian men are super attractive. Just look at their skin, it's so beautiful and it looks like they know how to take care of themselves. Who needs a beard to show that you are 'manly'?"

As the objective of this research is to understand the influence of K-Pop on Middle Eastern fans and their perception of masculinity, the following section is my attempt to discuss and position my findings into two major aspects: (1) the role of K-Pop in the aforementioned paradigm shift in the perception of masculinity among Middle Eastern K-

Pop fans, particularly the participants of my research and (2) unexpected results and limitations that suggest further attempts at researching.

As K-Pop relies on the immense accessibility of the internet and the strength of its fandom, I would assume that the majority of K-Pop fans are from middle-class families. To receive and to react to K-Pop, one has to possess the necessary devices to go online such as computers, smartphones, an internet connection; yet to buy K-Pop merchandise such as light sticks and CDs, as well as posters and card members from abroad, one has to also possess the financial means to afford such necessity. This shows in Marx's work on fetish and commodity. It is evident that K-Pop products are a type of commodity sold to a certain social class who can afford it, and in return, this social class also influence the manufacture of K-Pop products themselves. At the end of the day, K-Pop is produced by demands and trends. These middle-class young adults interact with K-Pop as a part of globalization and experienced either a conflict or a joint in perspectives. The perspective that I would like to emphasize in this section is the perception of masculinity among Middle Eastern K-Pop fans.

The concept of "gaze" by Mulvey is extremely important for me to understand why K-Pop male idols appear so appealing to the majority of my participants. She believes that in cinema narratives where female roles are treated no more than a passive object, women spectators have two possible options: she either identifies with the female object of desire and feel defeated, or she can temporarily take on a "trans-sex identification" through which she identifies with the male gaze. Given that my female participants were brought up in a country where Islam plays a crucial role in its culture, I would argue that Jordan, as well as other Islamic countries, is a private world similar to Mulvey's cinema where women are passive, and men are active. Thus, by identifying with the male boy groups, fangirls will feel more active and full of control, which compensates for what they might have lacked in real life. This echoes deeply my application of Jacques Lacan's theory on "mirror phase" on K- Pop.

I would argue that idols are similar to the idealized version of ourselves in Lacan's theory on the "mirror phase." They function as the perfect example that we strive to follow to fill up the gap between the idealization and the reality. As Haya shared that her favorite K-Pop group EXO winning on music shows makes her "extremely happy" as if it were her own, and this reaction from Haya is not unique. Other participants confirmed the existence of this reaction in their K-Pop life as well. When I analyzed the records and the

fieldwork notes that I made, I noticed a pattern in my participants that the more enthusiastic someone feels about their idols' achievements, the more difficult and challenging that her real life is. For example, Muna being the most enthusiastic about BTS out of all the participants, yet she experienced an unhappy marriage with her husband during the first four years. Jumana is also a K-Pop fanatic and is crazy for South Korean men, yet she lives in an abusive family and a toxic relationship. From here, I would argue that K-Pop, a genre of music filled with upbeat melodies and uplifting lyrics, offers a safe haven for its followers. Especially when it comes to female fans from countries rife with conservative values regarding gender, they tend to “escape the reality” by idealizing their favorite boy groups because it gives them the power to feel free and active.

Another pattern that I notice from my pool of data is the similarity in the stories of my participants. Eight out of ten female participants mentioned their trouble with local men who they deemed to be “aggressive” and “arrogant” and that they all look for a new type of men who are humble and understanding, yet soft but reliable. K-Pop males fulfilled this exact wish. In the world of K-Pop and where K-Pop has started to have an influence, I believe that there exists an “emergent masculinity” that promotes a type of masculinity that is in stark contrast with the ubiquitous toxic masculinity. This softer and fluid type of masculinity can be seen in Manieta’s work on the distributive performativity of gender in Korean boy bands. He argues that gender in K-Pop boy bands is not fixed but rather fluid and can be performed in several degrees of speech styles dependent on the demand of their fans. Jung (2011) showed that over time K-pop idol groups have shifted from projecting only a “soft” masculine image to constructing a culturally transformable hybrid masculine image. In this shift it has become necessary for all band members to express multi-faceted, “manufactured versatile masculinity”.

On a different note, given the scarcity of literature about K-Pop in the Middle East and the lack of diverse demographics in my pool of participants, I am aware of the limitation of my research. For instance, almost all of my participants are Jordanians, given that I could only afford to go to Jordan with a humble Vietnamese passport. If I could afford to do more exploration and interviews in other Middle Eastern countries, more results and interpretations could have emerged.

However, I believe that my research can contribute greatly to the dearth of literature about K-Pop and Hallyu in the Middle East as well as analyses of masculinity in

the regions. With that in mind, I hope that my works will serve as a helpful source for later attempts to delve into such topics.

Conclusion

This paper has raised many questions about the gender appeals of South Korean boy groups, and whether it functions the same way in countries outside of East and Southeast Asia, where K-Pop has dominated for decades. With my analyses on the data gathered from fieldwork and interviews, I have answered a large part of those questions as well as provided a glimpse into the K-Pop world in the Middle East.

While K-Pop introduces idealized images of soft masculinity to the lives of Middle K-Pop fans, I would say that it is not the driving factor that directly create such a change in the perception of masculinity. Rather, it was circumstantial backgrounds of the fans (e.g., family conflicts, gender repression, sexism, etc.) that pushed these fans to the journey of finding something uncertain but "better" than their current situations. Thus is the influence of soft masculinity of K-Pop of these fans. To assume that K-Pop solely created the transformation is to neglect other social factors and to overestimate the influence of K-Pop as a music genre. However, this thesis has offered a lot of insights into the lives of Middle Eastern individuals as a K-Pop enthusiast as well as the way they perceive masculinity in the region. For me, this is important. Given the lack of literature about similar topics that focuses solely on the Middle East, I believe that this thesis can be one of the steppingstones for future attempts at researching masculinities as well as East Asian influences in the Arab world.

Finally, to conclude the findings of this thesis, I would like to quote Muna when asked about her view on K-Pop influencing a change in her husband's "masculine" behaviors:

"I don't know how to say this but obviously after having learned about K-Pop as a part of my business, he became more understanding, humbler, and more loving. For the first time ever after four years being married: I finally fell in love with my husband."

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Ingrid Ríos-Rivera

Sovereign plebeians: analysis of *plebs* and *people* in XVIII Latin America

“To what extent can we use these terms of recent appearance, whose antiquity does not go back beyond the eighteenth century, to designate realities before them? Can we use them in the same way that we say that men of the past breathed - without knowing it - a mixture of oxygen and nitrogen?” (Guerra 1998: 8).

Introduction

The modern era established a Western worldview that permeated all edges of how ontologically we understand and act in society. This in relation to the colonial experience in America opens a duality. The conquest not only colonized the imaginary of that time but also colonized the way in which we theoretically and methodologically approach certain phenomena such as politics. Studying the organization and colonial political relations is done in most cases from assumptions that are Western, and do not respond to the "reality" of that time. The proliferation of studies on this subject indicates that there is an awareness of everything we ignore in this period, but there must also be a reflection on the way in which we approximate its understanding.

It seemed that the ontological reflections that were made around politics were far from the Latin American experience and thus the colonial one, and were outside the research topics, taking for granted the use of fixed political theoretical terms. However, the construction of the political, the nation, the citizens, the notion of representation, should be central objects of contemporary reflection and it is necessary to see them in a contextual way and in territories with particular histories and experiences were and are different. Hence it becomes essential to rethink the notion of people since the conquest in the Latin American region.

There is an evident contrast in the protagonist actors and practices of one era to another. The modern political idea places *the people* as the main actor in the socio-political organization of the state. Contemporary studies have approached the people - but also as

a fixed signifier - to the extent that it works to explain other theoretical elaborations such as representation, political regimes and populism. The *people* is one of the central actors and terms that creates and examines the populist phenomenon. To study the people by itself is to go back to the creation of one of the main actors of social and political life. These generalizations that are made of the term do not escape the Latin American historiography, for which it is necessary to approach these theoretical constructs from the colonial experience. Are the faces of the people the plebeians of the colonial period? This is one of the questions of this research paper, which aims to conduct a conceptual reflection and a tracking of the notion of *people* and *plebs* in the XVIII century, as a way to reflect first on the political structure of the Old Regime and the nation states; and second on the way of how concepts belonging to modern political theory are used to explain experiences in distant contexts and places.

The analysis of the terms will be located in the transition from the colonial period to the creation of the nation states in Latin America, focusing on the political organization of the state. The goal is to be able to trace back the concept of the *people* (in its political definition from modernity temporarily located in the independences) to the concept of the *plebs* (in its social definition in the colonial experience). In order to explore if the imaginaries that make up the second concept are transferred and converted into the modern people, or created in parallel keeping shared particular meanings.

The study is presented as a conceptual review, where I will historically analyze how these concepts have been approached from certain selected authors and cases. Being a first approximation, a generalization of the phenomenon in Latin America could not be made, so it was decided to address it from two case studies in the countries of Ecuador and Peru. These countries were selected for both being from the Andean part, former territories of the Inca empire, and for having access to jobs that discuss the *people*. The work was raised in three axes. First, an approach was made to the notion of people from various authors. Rather than achieving a conceptualization, it was sought to land the different historiographic denominations that are given to it, and to problematize who it is spoken of when talking about the plebs. On this side, the work is based on the texts of Alberto Flores Galindo *Los Rostros de la Plebe* (2001) y *La ciudad sumergida* (1991) in the case of Peru; and for Ecuador –even though the bibliography on this theme is scarce- the work was done with the book of Martin Minchom *El Pueblo de Quito 1690-1810* (2007); the article of Rosemarie Terán Najas *La plebe de Quito a mediados del siglo XVIII: una*

mirada de la periferia de la sociedad barroca (2009); an the article of Roland Anrup and María Eugenia Chaves *La "plebe" en una sociedad de "todos los colores". La construcción de un imaginario social y político en la colonia tardía en Cartagena y Guayaquil* (2005).

Second, and in the same line the concept of people is approached. Thinking about the people from certain authors is only achieved since the construction of the nation-state, when *the people* is built as the detentor of the general will and sovereignty. It is here that a rupture is seen in the ways in which the word people is used, separated from other concepts that previously seemed synonymous as crowd, plebeians, mob, etc. As one of the objectives of the essay is to reflect and critique the use of modern political theoretical concepts to refer to the era of the colony, contemporary conceptualizations will be used for the analysis of the people concept. This section is based on the work of Francois-Xavier Guerra *Modernidad e Independencia* (1992) and *Los espacios públicos en Iberoamérica. Ambigüedades y problemas. Siglos XVIII-XIX* (1998); also Paolo Virno's *Gramática de la Multitud. Para un análisis de las formas de vida contemporáneas* (2003); and Alan Badiou's *What is a people* (2016)?

Once these notions were defined independently - but not exclusively -, to crystallize the "transition" a crossing was made in three edges, looking at the plebs and people from (1) their relationship with the authority; (2) from the representation and (3) from its antagonistic construction. Examining them in this sense allowed us to account for or not the mobility of the senses in the construction of these discourses from one era to the next. The acts of independence of both countries were used not as sources of analysis, but as an input that is temporarily placed in the middle, and as the discursive space where both senses can be captured and intertwined. In this sense, the analysis will be carried out by triangulating the information of the bibliographic review and the minutes.

The faces of the plebs or the plebs without face?

Prior to entering into a characterization of the plebs in the territory of what we now know as Ecuador and Peru, general definitions will be drawn for these subjects in colonial experience. It must be thought that when talking about plebs, we are referring to collective entities, groups and possible social classes that after the conquest entered a new process of classification and creation of imaginaries that placed them in a certain position in relation to the other actors and subjects in the colonial experience. In general, Latin American historiography has understood the plebs as the social actors located on the

periphery of colonial society. If we refer to its etymology, the plebs, from the Latin plēbs and the Indo-European root ple, it refers to magnitude. San Isidoro de Sevilla (560-636 AD) in its Etymologies, Book 9, "Dē Cīvibus", says: [...] the people are all civilization, the common people (vulgus) are really plebes. The plebes are named for their plurality, since the minors are more numerous than the elders" (Valentine). So the plebs are understood as common, by the crowd, but also by common in the sense of vulgar. (Araya 2011: 311)

According to the Royal Spanish Academy³³ (2014), the plebs are defined as "the common and low people of the town", the "populace", "plain state", and as "in the past, the common social class, outside the noble, ecclesiastical and military". The Dictionary of Covarrubias of the seventeenth century does not record the term plebs, but it does for plebeians defining it as "the low man in the Republic, who is neither a knight nor a gentleman nor a citizen" (826, cd. Araya 2011: 311). Already these first definitions denote the use of the people concept to define the plebs³⁴, to see it as the lowest social class of colonial society, which is antagonistic to the nobles; the plebs are the humblest and simplest portion of society. The denomination also referred to castes in society, certain castes were seen as part of the plebs; like certain jobs, such as artisans and farmers. Although plebs may be the term that prevailed, it is remarkable the conjugation of this with others as a crowd, multitude, lower people; in certain occasions they are used as synonyms, and in others as mutations of the term and referring to other classifications such as servants, vagrants and idlers.

Lima and its plebs

The terms referred to in this work are definitely not fixed, nor can they be conceptualized through non-mutable meanings. Nevertheless they define a particular reality in a

³³ This definition was found on the website of the Royal Spanish Academy in the search engine where it gives the definitions of several dictionaries over time. Recovered from <http://web.frl.es/ntllet/SrvltGUILoginNtlletPub>.

³⁴ There is a tension between the concepts of plebs and people from their first definitions where we can see the cross between their meanings. For the references that are made in this sense, that is to say the "plebs as the lowest of the people" we will understand the people by the Dictionary of Authorities in 1737, which defines it as "the place or city that is populated with people" (RAE 2014). This definition is not the one that will be problematized throughout the work, rather it is an argument argued as territorial to refer to the people as a habitable space for various subjects.

particular time. The subjects of the plebs live in a rigidly static society, where social mobility was blocked (Flores Galindo 2001: 28). Flores Galindo (2001) states that when talking about the faces of the plebs, the profile of the popular classes of a colonial society is drawn in their daily lives, that "colonial society is seen from below: from those desperate who, paradoxically, are ultimately who sustain it "(61). The people is materialize in relation to their offices, the negative characteristics that are registered to them, and their needs.

The plebs in Lima seen from the castes, is the largest number of the population, and they are "people who are completely immoral, without education, or principles of honor that contain them in the just limits of their duty" (Flores Galindo 2001: 72), they are excluded and belittled subjects, who live between legality and illegality. They could not be given a particular face, and although they are sometimes easily identified, other subjects are grouped together in the same common sign; the deserters, sailors, stowaways, lazy, idle, tramps, people without fortune. They are also associated with ethnic terms, certain mestizos - depending on certain characteristics - can be from the plebs, as well as zambos and mulattos. The fact that they are positioned between legality and illegality, or formality and informality, refers for example to free slaves or blacks who were considered plebe. Likewise, it is related to their trades, street traders, sellers, who work in a kind of parallel economy were also considered.

The faces of the people were exemplified in their shortcomings and in the pejorative aspect of their denominations. From the abstract to their daily lives they were always seen as men *without*, without political culture, without values or virtues, without religion, without trade. The use of negative adjectives made it easier to crystallize the understanding that was made of the plebs, the denominations made references to the disaggregated mass that was the town's people. The heterogeneity of this term is one of its main features, however many times it was lost in its name given the large population that made "enter" in this category.

The term had an obvious derogatory connotation, which was sometimes not enough, so it was accompanied by some adjective, such as vile, tiny, "abundant and always harmful sheaf", "low sphere." [...] Synonym of populace and people. The commoners defined themselves because, in a society that sought to comply with a strict social stratification, its members lacked permanent occupations and offices. But, apart from a fragile economic condition, they opposed the aristocracy by living outside the "culture":

there was no school, no teachers for them; they were - as Pablo Macera pointed out - illiterate because education proved to be one of the most precious class privileges "(Macera 1977; Flores Galindo 2001: 75-76).

The negativity attributed to this concept built them not only as a part of society, isolated and negative, but a threat as they related to the rest of the social groups. During the eighteenth century a deterioration in the economy led to plebeians increasing in number in Lima and building their lifestyle next to the popular classes. There was a new mix, an insertion of more people to the plebs, making it a "heterogeneous conglomerate composed of mestizos, mulattos and blacks who differed from the racial homogeneity preserved by the aristocrats" (Flores Galindo 2001: 80). The mixture achieved two effects: on the one hand that the popular class and the dangerous class were seen as synonyms - attributing them a violence that was not necessarily real-; and on the other that as the plebs permeated more spaces in the city, the aristocracy felt that it had to be fervently differentiated from it.

The separate worlds that were built since the beginning of the conquest were strengthened. The same plebs term, which refers to commoners, is the antithesis of the noble and aristocratic. Although not only the Spaniards were part of the nobility, and the indigenous and peasants of the plebs, sometimes these generalizations were made in these territories. Not only were they abstract differences given by certain imaginaries, but in practice and in everyday life they were visualized in their physical space, in their interactions, trades, education and even leisure.

The plebs of the Ecuadorian territories

It is important to stop at the particularities of these collective entities as the territorial spaces that would later form the Latin American nation states were formed; since although the imaginaries treated in this work are generalizable through the colonial experience; for the eighteenth century it is not necessarily the same to speak of a Peruvian commoner than an Ecuadorian. In this sense, we rescue Minchom's research on the people of Quito in the 17th and 18th centuries. The plebs are understood, again as "the populace", the inhabitants of the popular neighborhoods, but in a city different from Lima, with a strong local identity, mainly due to its isolation (Minchom 1994). Likewise, this author makes a difference when studying the plebs, since it ensures that in Quito it is not possible

to see it from a caste society because of the fluidity of ethnic categories, but rather that it is necessary to rely on a model from social classes (Minchom 1994).

The Quito nobility, first referred to a small elite of Spaniards was increasing with the formation of the artisanal urban sector and the broadening of social barriers, the categories of mestizo to indigenous were growing, but their mixture gave way to a Creole elite; and from there the nobility was built. The author emphasizes this sense, since unlike Flores Galindo, he establishes that both the indigenous and mestizos were within the plebs, and that by moving away from the unique categories of Spanish and indigenous; the nobility integrated indigenous elites and the plebs also integrated poor Spaniards. Flexibility in class categories means that the author does not put particular faces on the people, but rather builds them in relation to their social position and economic relations. You can talk about informal networks, and trades more aligned with the idea of people like the silversmiths, weavers, barbers, and a certain type of peasantry.

By focusing on a socio racial dynamic, Minchom uses the *Declaraciones de Mestizo* to refer to the plebs³⁵. Although the author does not do a systematization exercise when describing the particular cases, the following can be elucidated on who would integrate the Quito plebs: men and women - unlike the Peruvian texts, women's faces appear on several occasions-, crafts: silversmith, shipper, teachers, barbers and servants; mestizos and Indians; descendants of chiefs; poor (Minchom 1994). Although the author makes reference throughout the text about the plebs, at no time defines it per se.

Rosemarie Terán Najas analyzes the Quito plebs from the periphery of Baroque society, placing social actors on the edge, in a condition of marginality, but with the ability to change the ideals of the colonial "order." Attributes to the Quito plebs an overflowing presence in the daily life of the city, which gives importance and a position in the historiographic study of the colonial experience, but at the same time defines it for its "indecipherable nature of its social composition (resistant to social classifications and categorizations)" (Terán Najas 2009: 101). The author states that the subjects that make up the plebs were not always marginal. It was a group of society difficult to define but that had a co-optation mechanism through its economic clientele relations, patron-client

³⁵ The author refers to the voices of the plebs and focuses on describing appeals not to pay taxes, taken from testimonies at the Audience of Quito from 1686 to 1800. He catalogs these testimonies as the plebeian counterpart to the Spanish concern to "blood cleansing" (Minchom 1994: 192). However, it fails to make a more narrow definition or approach at the end of the plebs.

relationship, and that in the years before the 1765 rebellion, there was “a transition of people from the plebs, from the sphere of corporate and clientele society, to the sphere of marginality and illegality” (Terán Najas 2009: 103).

Her points follow the line of the aforementioned authors, however, when working the plebs with an emphasis on otherness, that is, how it is constructed in relation to the nobility, it makes an interesting approach about the cohesion of the plebs in its marginal position. Marginality, seen as a space of social undifferentiation, is filled with people whose demands for survival are pushed to the limit but which in turn “foster links that go beyond conventional family ties, compassionate or clientelist ties, and at the same time, they overcome ethnic barriers”(Terán Najas 2009: 107). The networks of complicity are then related to this idea of a marginality that leads to the creation of a cohesive group. Marginality leads to a space of indifference, much more open. The people who integrate then, we can say that they experience particular marginalities, as for example in the case of women, the women of the plebs are single, divorced, concubines, people who could not be integrated.

When referring to the people of Guayaquil, we will do so from the writing of Roland Anrup and María Eugenia Cháves. The differences that could be pointed out in relation to Guayaquil, would be that the authors do see the Guayaquilean plebs from the "caste people", thus defining it as "a heterogeneous population and "of all colors", which was intended to be grouped into a whole that was homogeneous and therefore controllable” (Anrup and Chavez 2005: 94). Rather than defining the plebs, they problematize this category in relation to the factors that allowed it to emerge as a social and political imaginary in the 18th century Spanish colonial, since they claim that it does not have “a stable, definable sociological reality, but emerges as a social force in coyuntural or fortuitous circumstances and that its corporeality as a social entity is ephemeral and difficult to grasp” (Anrup and Chavez 2005: 115).

The rebirth of the people

Two terms, two different moments in the same century, one in transition to the other. The revised approaches around the plebs are through the colony with an emphasis on the end of the 18th century but also address the mobilization of the plebs in the time of independence. It is in this temporary space where we settle to approach the people. The Dictionary of Authorities (1737) establishes 3 definitions: (1) “the place or city that is

populated with people"; (2) "set of people who inhabit the place"; (3) "it is also called the ordinary and ordinary people of some City or population, as distinguished from the Nobles. Latin. Plebs Vulgus". The people of Latin *populus*, in the imaginary of the eighteenth century, was either used to refer to a place where people live - and in this sense you can talk about several towns, spaces- or to refer to the common and ordinary people of the city, not nobles. In this sense, plebs and people can be seen as synonyms. It is with the Enlightenment, the crystallization of modernity and the French Revolution that modern concepts of politics³⁶ arise, changing the role assigned to the individual and the people acquires a new significance.

Paolo Virno's theorizations about the people and the multitude serve as theoretical crossings - in this work - between the concepts of people and people. While Virno does not refer to the term plebe per se, he does so of multitude³⁷. The concept of people, despite its multiplicity and ambiguity, is completely codified from a political-philosophical reflection since the 17th century, where the notion of people prevails over that of the multitude (Virno 2003: 44). The multitude vs. people debate falls back on the fact of the organization, returning to Hobbes, the multitude being a plurality, is negative and coincides with the dangers of returning to the natural state and impeding the construction of the State. On the contrary, the people is a reflection of the state, there cannot be one without the other (Virno 2003: 13-14). The crowd lives privately, while the people converge on state unity. The private seen as "private"³⁸, dispossessed or lacking, which is devoid of voice, the many have no face and are far from the public sphere. While the people do not shy away from political unity but create it, it echoes individuality to integrate individuals into a sovereign political body.

Now we will delve into the conceptualization of people from modernity. Paolo Virno did not propose a necessary transition from multitude to people, but rather an

³⁶ Politics will be defined as "the relations between the men who constitute society and their cultural codes, whether those of a group or a group of social groups at any given time, since every social relationship has a fundamental cultural content" (Guerra 1992: 352).

³⁷ There is no use of the concept of Virno's multitude as the colonial plebs, but rather a parallel in the ideas of the crowd in relation to the people according to the author to introduce the second concept.

³⁸ It should be emphasized that there are different conceptions - also - to understand the public and the private in relation to the people. Although Virno uses the private to speak of deficiencies, if we refer to Annick Lempérière, she defines the public as the people. Term that relates only to the Old Regime, the public was not the abstract and "sovereign" people but "the set of inhabitants of a city or town; It was also what was done in view of all and not in private (Virno 2003: 55). Virno, attributing the private to the crowd, attributes the public to the people, but in senses that are not equal.

antagonism -which could be a way of approaching the people and the people-. We will move away from this discussion but we will argue about the need that the author posed to move from a faceless crowd to a people capable of creating a political unity; arguing a superficial crystallization of this assumption in independence processes.

This period is characterized by its revolutionary character, given that the revolutions - begun by the French - are seen as a “radical transformation of social and economic structures, or as access to the power of a new social class” (Guerra 1992: 12) . The change in the epistemological framework, from where man was seen in society and therefore the political organization was given by the ideas of the Enlightenment and materialized by the French Revolution, which were then mobilized to the cases of Spain and America³⁹. The social pact established in the Old Regime, which raised a political and social relationship, king-subjects, changed when it passed from a collectivist society to an individualist. Modernity creates a new man who is individual, “detached from the links of the former state and corporate society; the new company, a contractual company, arising from a new social pact; the new policy, the expression of a new sovereign, the people, through the competition of those who seek to embody or represent it (Guerra 1992: 13).

New actors emerge in the sphere of the public and political, actors that were already in this space, but new in the sense of their significance. The legitimacy of the political structure is broken when the authority⁴⁰ of the king vanishes and gives way to look for new forms of legitimacy established in the new vision of the nation that includes the sovereign people. Guerra states that it is the first time that one can speak of political actors, since they are created within the framework of the new politics (Guerra 1992: 14). The Old Regime, with the victory of absolutism, establishes a relationship of the state with

³⁹ It is pointed out that the “ <<French ideas>> are far from being the only ideas of Independence, and many historians have revealed the role played by classical Spanish political thought in these events” (Guerra 1992: 19).

⁴⁰ We will understand the authority from the concept of Hannah Arendt (Rivera García 2002), where the authority demands obedience and implies the establishment of a hierarchical relationship between the author and the people who obey, the importance of hierarchies is recognized, since they provide permanence and stability to political life, and it is linked to a tradition that unites the past and moves society away from the insecurity generated by the incessant change. Relations in politics cannot exist without authority or legitimacy.

society, which is binary, where they are sovereign-subjects. Representation⁴¹ institutions emanating from the State are created, and this whole system is the one that breaks with the revolutions. These being a materialization of the new ideology installed with modernity, make a projection of the whole society of the structure and operation of the new sociabilities. The image of a social pact -existing- is changed by a social contract that arises from individuals –and not from the king-, which is egalitarian, from a homogeneous nation, formed by freely associated individuals, with a power out of itself and subject at all times to the opinion or will of the associates (Guerra 1992: 24).

The classic political theories are born from the Aristotelian idea that the human being is naturally social and therefore will belong to a group. This group that has a pact with the king also has rights and duties -which are reciprocal- so it is understood that it limits in some sense the power of the king. However, this people is still inscribed in a stately and monarchical organization, imaginary that was not completely extinguished at the stage of the transition, but the abstract idea of modern and sovereign people had to work in practice with “the very concrete and complex people of traditional society: the multiple social groups that do not belong to the world of the privileged ”(Guerra 1992: 87). Traditional actors are combined with modern actors, preventing a direct relationship between the imaginaries that are made of certain concepts as people and the values of a human group, its internal structure and functioning. The modern people are organized based on the idea of modern politics, a social contract and a newly won sovereignty that will guarantee the common good of their society. However, before the links were not of personal choice, but (1) birth to a specific group, kinship ties, (2) belonging to a town, manor or estate - understood in the notion of territory and belonging; (3) ethnic group; (4) personal decision, but “the individual who voluntarily joins a group or body of the Old Regime, is not free to set the rules or modalities of belonging” (Guerra 1992: 88).

Although the term people is a central concept or word in the political vocabulary of the 19th century, it does not have an equal meaning for all those who would have to integrate it, and its definition “is one of the main objects of political struggles” (Guerra 1992: 353). According to the author, the people have different meanings, they can refer to

⁴¹ Guerra throughout its text elucidates the concept of representation, but we will also refer to it as a subject that acts on behalf of others, regardless of their interests, must pursue the interest of their constituents, in a combination between negotiation and commitment , where the conflict should only be justifiable in terms of that interest (Pitkin 1985).

the whole of a society, the population within a territory, or it can also refer to the real part of that population, "whose borders are difficult to define: the whole of people or social groups that do not belong to the world of the powerful; the "people" as opposed to "those above", to "patricians" to privileged groups" (Guerra 1992: 353). This concept is mobilized and the people is associated with the commoner, vulgar, populace. "It is therefore a social definition -the lowest classes of society, fundamentally urban- but above all cultural" (Guerra 1992: 353). This concept could be taken to the concept of the eighteenth-century plebs, an actor potentially present in political life but who opposes the "good men", when the discourse of civilization/barbarism is already being established. The plebs are typical in the cities of the Old Regime, however it is difficult to think in terms of modern politics, nonexistent at the time.

This work transits between two epochs, the colonial experience and the modern experience, and reflects on how one looks at the other around the political. In this sense, to finish the theoretical section, a brief reference will be made to certain contemporary notions of people. Alain Badiou (2016) states that the substantive people born with the French Revolution is currently a neutral term and should be viewed contextually, as well as its adjectival to the "popular" that responds to the emancipation crusades. To talk about the "people's people" refers to the part of the "non-existent" population that although they are part of the people are not entirely constituted within the sovereign people. These people, seen as the mass, were the poor commoners, as opposed to the aristocracy and the nobility, who were the society itself seen by the state (Badiou *et al.* 2016: 28). The people are an imminently political category, which has two positive points of view, one that will promote the creation of a desired state denied by the existence of some other power -refers to the colony-; and another that, in an existing state, will seek to emerge as a new town (Badiou *et al.* 2016: 31). It is definitely created in relation to the state and it is in transition stages, like the wars of national liberation where it takes its form.

Following the line of Badiou, Giorgio Agamben (1998, ctd. Sanín Restrepo 2012: 12) states that the people in modernity means two things; or else the entire political body, the sovereign, the "all" who own the general will; or "the marginalized and condemned, the "no life", the "homo priest", those who are de facto and de jure excluded from the exercise of politics and law". There seems to be a contradiction in the definitions, however it is not, this responds to what the author calls the anatomy of modern politics. There is a construction in relation to the difference, which needs to be able to exist to create a border

that excludes "something", the exclusion of passage to cohesion. The creation, again, dichotomous of the people responds to a matrix, that of modernity/coloniality. The "totality of the people" would become a fallacy, since for the people to be complete, they must feed on the outside that is abandoned.

This small theoretical review of the terms put into question in this research paper allows us to establish what are the assumptions from which we place ourselves to make sense of them. Although both categories have an extensive conceptual reflection, in this first approach to semantically rethink the people, specific authors have been selected to guide the discussion.

Independence in paper

On what material support could the transition from the Old Regime to the nation-states be embodied? It was decided to work with the acts of independence, arguing that they are the first formal declaration of independence. In terms of content, the minutes themselves are short instruments -at least those examined for Ecuador and Peru- which first appeal to the new sovereign people, establish specific guidelines that would exemplify the first changes or breakdowns of a regime to the other, and they are full of names of the characters that are proclaimed as authorities in the independence and that in turn seek that new legitimacy for their sake to hold the representation of the power of the people. These corpus will serve as inputs for our analysis, both to the extent permitted by the text but more in relation to the context where the speech was produced, its enunciators and recipients. For this reason, before entering them, it is necessary to contextualize them.

The invasion of Napoleon to Spain in 1807-8 leads to the abdication of Carlos IV in favor of his son Ferdinand VII and the creation of a General Meeting that acted in the name of Bourbon continuity. "This series of events raised, in an acute and tangible way, the question of where the legitimate authority fell at a time of serious imperial crisis" (Minchom 1994: 261). The Quito revolt was the mirror of the society that produced it, it was an event planned and executed by the aristocracy to which the popular classes later joined. The first Autonomous Board of Spanish America was founded, and a call began by means of manifestos or public declarations against the officers, certain peninsulars, but still affirming loyalty to the king. The group of patriots of August 10, 1809 was headed by Juan Pío Montúfar and rebelled by writing to the act of installation of the sovereign government board. However, the rebellion did not last, they were arrested and in 1812

the Spanish authorities were restored. "The rebellion of 1765 had its origins in the popular neighborhoods and not in the parishes controlled by the elite. The revolt of 1809-10 was instigated by the aristocracy, but there was also a deep popular opposition to peninsular authority, and to what was perceived as an army of occupation. However, the Creole leadership made little effort to take advantage of this feeling of the people "(Minchom 1994: 272-273). It could be argued that although the first attempts of independence -1809- did not integrate the Quito people, before and after this we see an uprising and immersion of it in the riots, but this denotes not an appeal of the patriots/elite to the people or a joint work of both subjects, but an action led by the interests of each group⁴².

The act of independence of August 10, 1809 is considered the "first independence of Spanish America" (Minchom 1994, Pérez Ramírez 2010), was created by the patriots and a scribe in the Royal Palace. From the original copies were made that began to circulate, a means by which the patriots sought support for their cause (Pérez Ramírez 2010: 220).

Although independence came from the hands of Creole elites, the insertion of the plebs of Lima in the wars of independence was more noticeable from the beginning. Rumors of what was happening in Spain alerted both the elites and the commoner that was rising in various popular riots (Flores Galindo 1991: 171). From the neighborhoods, groups organized to begin looting bakeries and shops, a feeling of fear towards the crowd was created; but at the same time an anti-Spanish sentiment that momentarily united the popular groups of the city, the same "derives, in reality, from an anti-colonial sentiment that tends to identify Spain with slavery" (Flores Galindo 1991: 173). Although Peru remained faithful to the Spanish monarchy, pre-independent movements were formed that inflamed the Lima people and were co-opted by San Martín and Monteagudo. In July 1821, with the immediate presence of the Liberating Army, the independence of Peru, Spain and any other nation was declared (Biblioteca Ayacucho 2005: 45).

The act as a founding act expresses the desire and decision of the people of Peru to be free. San Martín brings together the Open Cabildo, announces its proposal that is

⁴² The definition that was made of plebs integrated both Quito and Guayaquil notions, when we moved to the Act of Independence, although the protagonists are mostly from Quito, both in the riots and with the writing includes the population of Guayaquil, it is important to make this clarification, to understand why it is generalized speaking of Ecuador.

accepted and the document is written by Manuel Pérez de Tudela (a lawyer, notable and political agent of San Martín) (Bákula 2018: 38). The first proclamation was in Huara and then on July 28 in Lima. It was an open event, it was proclaimed before the Lima society and a “response and commitment from the population of the guilds and the fundamental institutions” was requested to swear “to sustain and defend the independence of Peru, the Spanish Government and any other foreign domination” (Bákula 2018: 39-40).

Crossing senses around the people

The conceptual reflection of the plebs and people terms is done by triangulating the information analyzed throughout the study. The theoretical notions of the authors based on both denominations will cross by themselves and through the analysis of the acts of independence, in relation to three categories: (1) authority; (2) representation; and (3) antagonism. These aspects - which will be treated as categories of analysis - emerged from the conceptual revision as keys in understanding the plebs and the people from the political sphere in the colony and the republic.

From the monarch to the people

How do you go from being the lowest social class in society to becoming the sovereign, owner of the general will? The transition to the republic raised a transfer - from the theoretical - of the royal authority to the popular authority-. The social pact of the Old Regime is transmuted into the modern social contract, and the king-subject relationship is changed to the people through their general will. The people are thought of as homogeneous, despite their notorious heterogeneity - visualized in the plebs; and it is believed that there will be a magical transition from the sovereignty of the king to the nation, when the actors and institutions of the Old Regime still kept a traditional imaginary. The colonial experience did not stop creating institutions and intermediary personnel, who now feeling part of the people were seeking to adopt the empty chair of lost authority. There is no doubt that the mob was inscribed in the structural networks of the political organization, however it was always kept on the sidelines, away from charges that were only intended for “citizens who considered themselves worthy -(based on) social status, reputation, moral, virtue, and good manners- (Lempérière 1998: 58).

The people can organize themselves to implement their sovereignty, or they begin to draw new characters that quickly appropriate the new rules of the game,

understanding that to be leaders they will have to call the people. Going back to the moment of independence embodied in the minutes, the crystallization of this idea is denoted. The logic would be that in proclaiming independence it would be the plebe-people who did it. The antecedents prior to the installation of the autonomous boards account for a mobilization of the population and support for liberating ideas but mobilized for other objectives. The plebs were not fighting for independence in themselves, but trying to enter the political game from which they were always excluded. Although their performance is crucial and necessary in these historical events, in the cases of Ecuador and Peru, it is clearly visible that they are not the main actors. The independence is realized, and seen from the historiography, achieved by the new Creole elites -that although at first they are still loyal to the king- then they separate realizing that the new ideology allows them to be the sovereign.

The plebs remain invisible, but now it becomes useful, both in the particular moment of independence, and in the installation of the new modern imaginary of politics. The planning, execution and proclamation of independence is carried out by specific actors who keep a kind of parallelism in the action, it seems that they work on two sides, on the one hand the elite and on the other hand the plebs mobilizing; in a moment they cross -it would appear spontaneously- and independence is achieved, but one cannot speak of a joint and popular feeling.

The patriots of liberation call the people, "publicizing" and socializing the acts. In Ecuador, the plebeian sectors of the population entered the independence process after 1809, but in Peru they did so from the beginning. However, the scope of the call cannot be assured. Looking only at the discourse created from this support, the word people is not used on many occasions, in the act of Peru it is not visualized, in that of Ecuador once, but reference is made to the general will. The enunciators are constructed in an us that is inclusive: we, we choose, we name, are used repeatedly in the Ecuador act; and in this it differs from the Peru act where although there is an us it is in the limit. Linguistically it does not refer to an us, but it gives voice to the people by means of naming it indirectly; "que la voluntad general está decidida...", "personas que habitan en este capital", "que expresen" ... all this different from saying that "we express", "that we inhabit".

But who are the ones we choose or those who express? It is here that the modern idea of the people is lost. The people are all, plebeians, elite, and that all must voluntarily choose an authority. The elite collects this idea but symbolically self-name themselves as

the new authority. It is necessary to build a homogeneous town that is apt to assume the political responsibilities that correspond to it as the legitimate holder of sovereignty (Guerra 1992: 19), and those responsible for this construction are the enlightened that emerged from the Old Regime, they would become a peaceful and "correct" notion of the people (Hebrard 1999; Virno 2003; Guerra 1992) who must take authority until the true sovereign can do so. Seen from the acts, it makes sense that these documents are mostly the exposition of names that, through their presence and signature in this official document, legitimize independence. Part of the nobility and the state institutions, the *cabildo*, the clergy. The position in which they are appointed represents the order of their hierarchy that, when taken to paper, does not break -as one would think- they are legitimized as the new actors in modern politics.

Although, perhaps, the population of the subaltern classes called *plebs*, changes a few degrees in society, it is based on a pragmatism that establishes new power relations based on the traditional regime. In this particular moment of independence, in the case of the selected Latin American countries, one cannot even speak of a sovereign people, but only of a change of authority, and a change of terms and meanings attributed to denominate this relationship.

Representatives and represented

The notion of authority is directly related to that of representation. It is understood as the action of creating a symbolic and material subject that is the representative of the new sovereignty and the general will. The representative of the Old Regime was obviously the king, and in turn he was represented in the new territories. Modern politics also inaugurates the idea of the citizen, it is understood that the people are made up of citizens, a person who is recognized by the State through their duties and rights with society. The representation is executed by vote, the people elect their representatives through the establishment of suffrage. However, not all people are citizens, and this is clearly seen when at the beginning, the application of the vote is limited to only a part of the population⁴³.

⁴³ Although we will not enter into a discussion on the forms of representation and therefore voting, it is important to emphasize that the suffrage said as universal was not embodied in this way from the beginning. It was mutating throughout the conformation of nation-states, first including only men who can read and write and gradually broadening its spectrum.

The principle of representation, anchored in the social contract, assumes that society delegates its sovereignty to the representatives. An active citizen emerges, which in theory emanates from the "ignorant plebs" and the "enlightened elite", and creates a problematic: what part of the people-population was called to exercise sovereignty? Although the citizen "refers, not so much to the elementary component of the nation, but rather to the independence of the individual and his dignity" (Guerra 1992: 356), not all are citizens or have the same rights. Citizenship didn't include the minors, the servants, the women, the slaves, those who suffer condemnation, but that citizenship is the most glorious and respectable attribute in the new republic, therefore, it is attributed only to the illustrated part of this illustrious society. So, the plebs became the citizen people? Yes and no, in theory the notion of people is established, everyone should be able to vote, logically plebs are included; but in practice if the citizens are not the servants, women, slaves, etc., then the plebs remain excluded, only now based on a modern rational political logic⁴⁴.

This restricted conception of the political people, has a modern character that positions the "owners and literate men" as the only ones who can conceive the general interest of the country (Guerra 1992: 357-358), and allows them a progressive selection of the elected thanks to their social influence. In other words, the traditional structure is still in force despite the fact that societies took a political leap to modernity. This is explained "in the articulation between the world of modern politics, that is, that of the elites grouped into different forms of modern sociabilities, and a society governed by values and links of an old, corporate or community type. (...) The intellectual mutation of the elites does not prevent society from continuing to see their traditional authorities in them and ensure their modern election through a collective vote governed by ancient ties" (Guerra 1992: 359). The idea of universal suffrage, in practice, is restricted to the elite, not only in the act of voting but in elections, in fraud and therefore in representation. How to explain them? On the one hand, because there is a contradiction between the

⁴⁴ When the practice of suffrage is just beginning, it is very volatile and responds to the interests of those who want to be voted on. Although most of the time the suffrage was reduced, there were sometimes where the need to appeal to the people was more necessary and therefore the suffrage was extended. "Despite the limitations that reflect the distinction between nobles and commoners, so typical of the Old Regime, or that of the people and elites, so marked in the mental universe of the Enlightenment, the curious thing is that constitutional provisions lead to a definition of the extremely wide political people (Guerra 1992: 357).

autonomous vote of the modern individual -independent of the others- and a society composed of collective actors of the old type. Therefore, the only citizens, in the sense of modern politics, "are the members of the elites who have internalized their status as citizens, that is, the modern democratic culture" (Guerra 1992: 361). On the other hand, because the -partial- traditional character of these elites shows that power is still thought of as concentrated and unified.

In the discursive network of the transition, the words plebs or mob are still used to refer to the barbarians who rebel, but at the same time they use the people when they speak of representation and sovereignty -"the deputies of the people, following the present criticisms of the nation (...) (Ecuador 1809 independence act)- then the attribution of the quality of "people" to the real actors varies, but the system of symbolic transfer of the will of the people to one or more men is the same, the People's deputies (Ecuador independence act) are characters of the Creole elite, but not the faces of the people. The objective of the liberals was to transform traditional society into a modern town. A remodeling of traditional society was necessary, which prevented the logic of the people from endangering the social order. Practical and theoretical limits to the sovereignty of a differentiated people were thought and set.

Is the representation "false" to the extent that the plebs remain marginalized? Or do modern ideas begin to develop and use or deepen the differences, in order to maintain it in the theoretical and practical change of power? The people is built at a conceptual level by the elites, as a means to create a transformation that will end the traditional system but that will not take away their privileges. For this reason the plebs remained the people, because they had to see it as a group of the population that was inferior, so that even if the sovereigns gave their representation to someone who "could" think of the common good of society, they would not be them.

The plebs vs. the people, or the nobility vs. the elite

Why talk about antagonism? Referring to authority and representation allowed us to focus on one of the essential features of politics, how power transits in a society and in whose hands. Despite the creation of these categories, plebs and people have both political and social overlaps, and in responding not only to abstract assumptions but to real subjects, they are loaded with important identitary notions to rescue. The encounter of the Western culture with the aboriginal cultures of the territories now known as Latin

America, created throughout its history subjects built in a dichotomous relationship present from the beginning. The categorizations of plebeians and nobles mobilized from the Western imaginary to the conquered and were filled with the subjects addressed by both Flores Galindo and Minchom. There is a parallelism in the construction of these social classes that is then established in the political imaginary, giving way to rigid and immobile structures.

The nobility needed an opponent to create itself as a mirror, and for this reason the plebs were in many cases built in negative terms. There was also a need to create antagonistic borders, which were then taken to the republic. The sense of order -in force in the nation-states but different- was established from the colony, with concepts such as 'the police', the 'good government', which legitimize the apparatus of domination in order to civilize the barbarian classes of the population⁴⁵. This dichotomy transmutes at the stage of transition to the republic, seen from the political point of view and as established by Hébrard (1998: 198), a triad of the ignorant people, the illustrated elites and the corrupters of opinion. We will not go into the subject of opinion but we will stop in the first two categories. The civilization/barbarism debate started in the colony and crystallized in the modern era -with its scientific aspect- it mobilizes to politics in the sense that the need for an authority also stems from the recognition that there is a class of the population that is superior to the other. The superior class is illustrated, and the way to reach the common good, is to voluntarily accept this assumption and delegate sovereignty to these people who will best represent them. Semantically and in practice the nobility became the elite and the aristocracy on the one hand; and on the other the pleb -which was always mixed with the people- became the people.

It is interesting in this sense to integrate the idea of the private, seen from the conception of Virno that is to say of the needs. Virno (2003) relates the multitude to the deprived people, not only of material needs but of rational imaginaries that doesn't allow them to integrate into the political sphere. Flores Galindo (1991, 2001) and Minchom (1994) return to this idea when talking about the faces of the people, in relation to people who had critical situations because of the amount and depth of the deficiencies they have, being one of them education. The construction of people in modernity also integrates this sense, although the people being sovereign should not be lacking, they are the whole; the

⁴⁵ Civilization/barbarism debate.

existence of needs is used by the elite who wants to come to power in two ways, on the one hand to reinforce the idea that they are necessary –necessities equal to ignorance- and on the other in a kind of appeal and use of these shortcomings to call the people in their favor.

Let us return to the acts of independence. Although discursively they do not talk about needs, the battles for liberation integrate the lack of freedom, and this was taken as the banner of independence speech - directly related to the modern notions of the individual. When San Martín asks those present at the Royal Palace to take an oath, it is the performance of the appeal to fight for something that they did not have. Returning to the antagonism, it is also represented in these documents to the extent that there is no "formal" face of the plebs in them.

In this sense we return to the ideas of Agamben and the debate of heterogeneity-homogeneity enters into discussion. To be built, borders must be created, since the totality will only be total in relation to what is left out. What is within the discourse personified in the minutes are the traditional elites of the Old Regime, in their attempt to become the new actors of the new space. Although allusion to the people is made with the use of words as a nation (Ecuador Act) and the general will (Peru Act), the appointment of representatives is made by them and the representatives are them. It could be said that the status of invisibility that was given to the plebs is also "formalized" but it is mobilized to the people, if there is any kind of claim from the abstract and symbolic, it is not reflected in the minutes nor in the independence as historical fact. The plebs postulate a certain heterogeneity, it is difficult to define it because it is not a caste, a social group, or a specific group, they are diverse people crossed by the same colonial experience and by attributed characteristics that unite them. The people is not homogeneous, but it is considered to be so that it can be unified in its will, and a form of unification is the sharing of deficiencies and similar characteristics -in this sense the plebs are converted into a people as heterogeneity mutates in a sort of chain of equivalences. However, it remains heterogeneous, as it expands, the people are not the people, the people are integrated into the people, because theoretically the people are "all."

Conclusions

The objective of this research work was to carry out a conceptual tracking of the term plebs in the colonial period and the term people in the period of Latin American

independence, both moments in transition with the other at the end of the 18th century. The rationale for analyzing plebs/people was based first on being able to rethink the term people from their bases, since it is generally used as a secondary term in political theory, that is, it is important in relation to being treated epistemologically with politics, regimes, representation, etc., and not because of its ability to be an individual imaginary. And second to reflect on the theoretical look that is given to politics in the Latin American colonial experience. It was based on the assumptions of Francois-Xavier Guerra that already discusses how Western political terms are used to understand and account for phenomena that happened in distant territories and worldviews.

As one worked on the one hand with modern concepts of the people, and on the other with historiographic visions on the people, it was impossible only to approach it conceptually since the actors and practices studied began to speak on paper. In this way the final reflections will go that way, about the transition process itself, and the way in which it is theoretically addressed.

Is it correct to say that it goes from plebs to people? Yes and no. The plebs and the people are one in seeing them as physical and symbolic subjects, and they are different in thinking them theoretically. Both concepts constructed in relation to an antagonistic nobility and elite, seen as empty signifiers, are filled by people located in the lowest position of society. Not so many distinctions are made in this regard, when thinking whether the plebs have social or racial distinctions, but rather their heterogeneity is given by the ability to bring together various subjects in the colonial experience on the basis more than anything to what they lack. In this sense we realize that the plebs passed to the people, it is not exactly the people -because ideally we are all- but the marginalized actors continued to be accepting the denomination of people in modernity. From the conceptual point of view they are not the same, the people -only seen from modern politics- is the new sovereign, it is a homogeneous mass with the power and will to determine the political organization of society. However, we realize that this was not really the case. Only the plebs concept became obsolete as the era of the nobility passed, therefore other terms such as crowd and mass became relevant.

Recurring through the study it seems that more reference is made to the elite than to the people, although this was not the objective. This can be seen as contradictory but in the end it makes a lot of sense, since it portrays the impossibility and failure to establish in practice the modern political notions in both the colonial and independentist

experience of the Latin American region. The people as an epistemological actor plays a key role in political theory, but seeing the facts of independence we realize that these were mostly executed from the new elite, and that the romantic idea that Latin American peoples -or Ecuadorians and Peruvians- got rid of the Spanish regime is not entirely real. The foundations created in the colonial experience that established an unequal society that subalternized particular collectives, did not change with independence or nineteenth-century ideas about the will of the people.

A contemporary approach was necessary to reflect on it. While contemporary theories can be made to fit pre modern actors and practices, much is lost in the exercise. The colonization brought a colonization of thought, which materialized in the structure of society and its hierarchy, there is no doubt that traditional ideas make a direct relationship with colonial events. It can be argued that the same thing happened in the transition to independence, the ideas of the French and later American revolutions were mobilized both in Spain and in Spanish America. No longer from the colonizers, but from a Creole elite –already own- it was continued with the practice of adapting models outside our realities. It could be an explanation as to why the plebs did become the people, but the people never became sovereign. Could this mean that the theories on which modern politics are based fail? If, for example, the concept of citizen, born in Europe but led to the colonial experience -in transition- could not crystallize, can lead us to rethink it in its entirety.

To think that the transition from a collectivist to an individual society was going to be immediate realizes the abstract and practical problems of understanding a society “westernized by dominance” of a one western in essence. For this reason it was important to approach the plebs, because the people is a modern imaginary, an abstraction of the illustration, but the plebs are the faces of colonial subjects, of those who are not given a voice, only talked about. Approaching the *other* bases of certain concepts may allow a conceptualization that helps to account for current problems whose beginnings seem to be at the ontological foundations of the state.

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Tokai Zsófia

A „személyes egyben politikai”, a feminista nézőpont episztemológia és a feminista autoetnográfia közös metszési pontjai

Absztrakt

A következő dolgozatban ismeretelméleti kérdéseket fogok körbejárni. Először röviden bemutatom a hagyományos nyugati ismeretelmélet kritikáját, azután áttérek a feminista episztemológiákra, majd a feminista nézőpontelméletre. Ezt követően összekötöm a feminista nézőpontelméletet az úgynevezett tudatébresztő női csoportok hatására létrejött, „a személyes egyben politikai” jelmondat lényegével és üzenetével, végül felvázolom azt, hogy mi pontosan a feminista autoetnográfia és miként jelenik meg ebben a kvalitatív módszertanban a feminista nézőpontelmélet és a „személyes egyben politikai” ismeretelmélete.

Kulcsszavak: feminista autoetnográfia, feminista ismeretelmélet, feminista nézőpontelmélet, második hullámos feminista mozgalom, tudatébresztő női csoportok

A paradigma megkérdőjeleződik

Miként szerzünk ismereteket a világ dolgairól és önmagunkról? Kik és milyen módszerek alapján állítják elő az adottnak vett tudásformáinkat? Ki határozhatja meg, hogy mi számíthat tudásnak? Valóban az érték-, érzelem- és érdektelen kutatói attitűd és a hagyományos tudományos mérőeszközök eredményeznek objektív empirikus ismereteket? Ha a kutató beszámol a szubjektív tapasztalatairól, érzéseiről és motivációjáról a kutatási folyamat során, akkor az kevésbé objektív tudományos eredményeket fog produkálni?

A hatvanas-hetvenes években a társadalomtudományokban az úgynevezett narratív fordulat során a posztmodern és a második hullámos feminista gondolkodók (Harding 1991, 1993; Hartsock 1987; Smith 1992; MacKinnon 1996; Jaggar 1989) a fentebb említett episztemológiai kérdéseket tették fel. A tudományos ismeretszerzésről alkotott

addigi hagyományos ismeretelméletek arra a paradigmára épültek, miszerint a kutatónak eredendően érték-, érzelem- és érdegmentesnek, azaz objektívnek kell lennie ahhoz, hogy adatokat gyűjthessen a világból, és megfelelően elemezhesse azokat. A nyugati tudománynak ez az empirikus megközelítése azon a 17. századi karteziánus alapvetésen nyugszik, amely élesen és hierarchikusan elválasztja a testet és a tudatot, a megismerőt és a megismerhetőt, ugyanis a descartes-i dualizmus szerint a racionális gondolkodásunkra kell támaszkodni, ha objektív ismereteket akarunk szerezni, nem pedig a testünkre, és a testi valóságunkra. A karteziánus ismeretelmélet szerint az objektív tudás kint vár minket „készen” a világban, nekünk csak a megfelelő mérőeszközöket kell kialakítani ahhoz, hogy rábukkanhassunk azokra. Ez a karteziánus hasítás leválasztja a megismerés tárgyát a megismerő szubjektumról, ugyanis a pozitivista⁴⁶ megközelítéssel egyetemben a szubjektumot akadályként értelmezi a megismerés folyamatában (mert az nem tekinthető semlegesnek), ezért csak az objektív tudást tekinti valós tudásnak, és minden más megismerési formát diszkreditál. Ezen a karteziánus és pozitivista paradigmán nyugszik tulajdonképpen az összes akadémiai diszciplína hagyományos metodológiai és episztemológiai megközelítése (Naples és Gurr 2014: 15–16).

Ez az uralkodó ismeretelméleti paradigma először a posztmodern fordulat és a feminista kritikák⁴⁷ hatására kérdőjeleződött meg. Ezen kritikák hatására a nagy narratívákról áttevődött a fókusz a partikuláris és marginalizált narratívák igazságára, a feminista kritikusok pedig elkezdtek rámutatni a tudományos világot is meghatározó és objektívnek láttatott hegemon maszkulin értékekre. A kritikus feminista hangok arra világítottak rá, hogy a hagyományos kutatások a hegemon férfias értékeket és attitűdöt privilegizálják a kutatási folyamatok során, amelynek a következményeként az objektivitás, az „ellenőrzés”, a szigor, és a kiszámíthatóság vált a standard kutatói attitűddé. Más attribútumokat, mint például a szubjektivitást, a bizonytalanságot és az érzelmeket, gyakran nőiesnek, következésképpen nem megfelelőnek, szakmaiatlannak és irracionálisnak tekintik az akadémián (Adams, Holman és Ellis 2013: 35).

⁴⁶ A pozitívizmus atyja, és a szociológia alapítója, Auguste Comte szerint az emberi megismerésnek (és az emberiség fejlődésének) a tudományos megismerés a csúcsa (ellenben a vallási megismeréssel, amely így alacsonyabbrendű a tudományos megismeréshez képest), amely a szigorú mérőeszközeinek és vizsgálatainak köszönhetően igaz, azaz objektív tudást tud termelni.

⁴⁷ A posztmodern és a feminista kritikai megközelítések – az utóbbin belül a feminista ismeretelméletek is –, több ponton eltérhetnek. Ennek bővebb kifejtését lásd majd a következő fejezetekben.

Ugyanebben az időszakban a tudományfilozófiában pedig az ún. kuhn-ni fordulatról kezdtek el beszélni. Ugyanis Thomas Kuhn (1962/2000), aki fizikából doktorált és később fordult a tudományfilozófia és a tudománytörténet felé, szintén megkérdőjelezte a pozitivizmus mítoszát, és a nyugati tudomány episztemikus privilégiumát azzal, hogy rámutatott, hogy tudomány fejlődése nem kumulatív és lineáris, hanem szakaszos, forradalmi, valamint nem lehet elválasztani a tudományt az emberi közösségek (tudósközösségek) társadalmi beágyazottságától. Ezzel Kuhn arra mutatott rá, hogy a tudományos ismeretszerzést nem lehet függetleníteni az embertől, következésképpen a tudományos tudás is emberi konstrukció, azaz merőben meghatározott bizonyos csoportdinamikák, csoportérdekek, és az aktuális status quo által.

Kuhn alapján vegyük példának a kopernikuszi fordulatot. Úgy szokás tekinteni erre a fordulatra, mint a tudomány meghatározó fejlődési pontjára. Ámde a kopernikuszi fordulat előtt már Arisztarkhosz (ie. 3. század) körvonalazta a heliocentrikus világrend képét, mégis miért váratott magára több mint ezer évet, mire a tudósközösség elfogadta a tézist? A válasz nem a tudomány egyenes vonalú és absztrakt fejlődésében keresendő, hanem a társadalmi változásokban, ugyanis Kopernikusz korában kezdett el megváltozni az a paradigma, amellyel a ptolemaioszi geocentrikus világkép addig összhangban volt, nevezetesen azzal az uralkodó társadalmi nézettel, hogy a Föld áll az univerzum középpontjában. A kopernikuszi világképnek az asztrológiai mérőeszközei nem voltak kirívóan jobbak, mint a ptolemaioszié, ez utóbbi is majdhogynem kitűnő pontossággal jósolta meg a bolygók mozgását. A változás a társadalomban jelent meg, egy sokkal demokratikusabb, szekularizált struktúra volt kialakulófélben, amelyet aztán a kopernikuszi világkép is elkezdett tükrözni (Harding 1991: 135). A heliocentrikus világkép felfedezése tehát már jóval megelőzte a kopernikuszi fordulatot, csak arra kellett várnia, hogy a társadalmi status quo-val egybecsengjen, és így elismerhesse a tudósközösség mint igaz tudományos felfedezést. Hasonlóképpen a feminista ismeretelmélet (lásd következő fejezet) sem új igazságokat kezdett kitermelni, hanem csak legitim tudásként kezdte el kezelni a történelmileg marginalizált, és ignorált női tapasztalatokat, valamint rámutatott a női tapasztalatok feminista elemzésén keresztül azokra a politikai, társadalmi és történelmi mechanizmusokra, amelyek újratermelik a nők csoportjának az elnyomását.

A feminista ismeretelmélet

A második hullámos feminista mozgalomnak köszönhetően jött létre az a feminista ismeretelmélet, amely kritikával illette a már említett pozitivist, karteziánus ismeretelméleti paradigmát. A második hullámos feminista gondolkodók olyan kérdéseket tettek fel, hogy mégis kik határozhatják meg azt, hogy mi számít objektív tudásnak, és egyáltalán kik és milyen pozícióból legitimálták azokat az értéksemlegesnek beállított módszereket és mérőeszközöket, amelyekkel a kutatók előállítják az objektívnek jelölt ismereteinket, amelyek aztán lényegében ontológiai igazságokként konstituálódnak a világban. Érthetően következett ebből a következő kérdés, hogy a megismerő neme vajon szignifikáns episztemológiai szempontból? A feministák azt állították, igen, és így azt is, hogy a nyugati tudomány voltaképpen nem objektív igazságokat ismer el, és tár fel, hanem a férfiak nézőpontját és tapasztalatait validálja univerzális igazságokként. Az érdek- és értéksemleges megismerői pozícióról pedig úgy vélekedtek a feminista kritikusok, hogy az valójában értékterhelt és androcentrikus⁴⁸, vagyis a tudományosság objektív ideája egy merőben férfiközpontú nézőpontot takar. A feminista episztemológia szerint a hagyományos kutatási módszerek, a metodológiai és episztemológiai megközelítések kizárták a nőt mint megismerőt és megismerhetőt a tudástermelés történelmi folyamatából. A feministák e probléma felismerése után egy új feladat előtt álltak: ha eddig a tudás előállítása és így mibenléte is androcentrikus és szexista⁴⁹ előítéleteken, illetve „patriarchális előjogokon” (Mackinnon 1996) alapult, akkor hogyan állítsanak elő úgy tudást a feminista kutatók, hogy ne essenek abba csapdába, hogy partikuláris nézőpontjukat objektív igazságként láttassák? Vagy egyáltalán szüksége-e teljesen kizárni annak a lehetőségét, hogy mégis létezhet olyan vizsgálódás, vagyis megismerési folyamat, amely hozhat objektív eredményeket⁵⁰? De ha a tradicionális tudományos módszerek az objektivitást követelik meg, akkor mit tegyenek

⁴⁸ Amikor a maszkulin(ként konstruált) értékekre és a férfiak társadalmi-kulturális szerepére, érdeklődésére és tevékenységére aránytalan hangsúly tevődik, azt nevezik a feminista kritikai megközelítések androcentrizmusnak.

⁴⁹ A szexizmus egy olyan rendszerigazoló nézetrendszer, attitűd és társadalmi gyakorlat, amelyben magát a nőt vagy a nőiesként konstruált értékeket, minőségeket, tulajdonságokat ellenséges, jóindulatú vagy paternalista módon alacsonyabbrendűként kezelik a férfihoz és/vagy a férfiasként konstruált értékekhez, minőségekhez, tulajdonságokhoz képest, illetve esszencialista módon kezelik az előbb felsoroltakat, azaz a természet törvényeivel, a biológiával vagy a vallások esetében transzcendens eredettel magyarázzák a maszkulin és feminin konstrukciókat.

⁵⁰ Erre a kérdésre a következő fejezetben még visszatérek.

a feminista kutatók? Hozzanak létre teljesen új módszereket, vagy lehetséges-e a már meglévő kutatási módszerek megreformálása, úgy, hogy megtisztítják azokat az androcentrizmustól?

A válasz a fenti kérdésekre a feminista ismeretelmélet volt, ám ezek a megközelítések nem voltak egységes episztemológiák. Alapvetően három fő feminista episztemológiai irányzatról lehetett beszélni a kezdetekben: a (1) feminista empiricizmusról; a (2) feminista nézőpontelméletről, és a (3) posztmodern episztemológiákról (Harding 1991: 106). A hagyományos empiricizmus szerint a kutatás során lényegtelen a kutató neme, osztályhelyzete vagy etnikai hovatartozása. A feminista empiricizmus szerint viszont ez korántsem mindegy, sőt, azt állítja a megközelítés, hogy a feminista kutató, azzal, hogy a nők csoportjához tartozik, valószínűleg androcentrikus elfogultságtól mentes megállapításokra juthat. Például a női test és biológia vizsgálatának esetében a menstruációs ciklus fázisait egy női tudós nagyobb valószínűséggel androcentrikus előítéletektől mentesen tudja vizsgálni és értelmezni, ugyanis a menstruációs ciklus akképpen interpretációja, miszerint a nők örült módon viselkednek a ciklusuk miatt, nem a nők nézőpontjából és tapasztalatából deklarálódott, hanem férfitudósok (félre)értelmezései voltak, és a nők alacsonyabbrendű társadalmi státuszának biológiai igazolására szolgáltak (Laqueur 2002: 208–210). Ám a feminista empiricizmus alapvetően nem veti el a tradicionális tudományos módszereket, és mérőeszközöket, hanem a kutatótól azt követeli, hogy még szigorúbban kell betartania azokat, hogy elkerülje az elfogultság csapdáját. Sandra Harding (1993: 157) szerint ugyanakkor felmerül itt a kérdés, hogy a kutatási standardok szigorúbb betartásával nem ugyanoda lyukadunk-e így ki, hiszen ezeket a kutatási normákat férfitudósok hozták létre olyan dolgok mérésére alkalmazva, amelyek a férfinézőpont szerint voltak méltóak a vizsgálódásra. Harding ezzel nem azt állítja, hogy a feminista empiricizmusnak nincs létjogosultsága, a feminista episztemológiák remekül kiegészíthetik egymást, inkább azt hangsúlyozza, hogy a nők világáról és a nemek közötti társadalmi viszonyokról úgy hozhatunk létre holisztikusabb ismereteket, ha alternatív kutatási megközelítéseket is alkalmazunk.

A feminista nézőpontelmélet

Ez egyik ilyen alternatív megközelítés a *feminista nézőpont episztemológia* (*feminist standpoint epistemology*), melynek kiemelkedő teoretikusai a fentebb említett Sandra

Harding (1991, 1993), vagy a marxista episztemológiára alapozó Nancy Hartsock (1987). A feminista nézőpontelméleteken belül is vannak eltérések⁵¹, de az első teoretikusok egyöntetűen abból marxista osztályelemzésből indultak ki, amely a hegeli úr-szolga viszonyhoz hasonlítva elemzi a proletariátus nézőpontját, akiknek a tudatát és a világról való tudását a mindennapi tevékenysége, az anyagi létbe való belevetettsége strukturálja, amely nagyban különbözik az uralkodó osztály mindennapi, privilegizált tevékenységeitől (Harding 1993: 158; Hartsock 1987: 169). A feminista nézőpont teoretikusok szerint a nők és férfiak csoportja között is egy úr-szolga reláció áll fent, mely a domináns csoport, azaz a férfiak csoportjának privilegizált nézőpontjából meghatározza azt, hogy mit tehetnek a nők a társadalomban és mit nem. Vagy, ha az androcentrizmus által meghatározott normáktól eltérnek a nők megélései (például nem röhögnek a szexista vicceken, hanem dühösek lesznek azoktól), akkor ezek az érzelmi reakciók abnormalitásként kereteződnek, és alacsonyabbrendűként a racionális gondolkodáshoz képest (Jaggar 1989). Hartsock szerint (1987: 162–163) ebben az alá-fölérendelt viszonyban a nők csoportja fogja elvégezni a társadalomban azokat a tevékenységeket, amelyek értéktelenebbnek (és nőiesnek) számítanak, annak érdekében, hogy a férfiak lehessenek elsődleges haszonélvezői a kulturális javaknak. A férfidominancián alapuló társadalmi berendezkedésben az elnyomottak csoportja, vagyis a nők, alulról szemlélik a hatalomgyakorlók tevékenységeit, amely másképp is formálja „tudásuk horizontját” (Harding 1993: 159). A feminista nézőpontelmélet tehát akképpen érvel, hogy a női tapasztalatok egyszerűen másfajta ismereteket generálnak, mivel teljesen más az a társadalmi pozíció, ahol a nők élik a mindennapi életüket és ahonnan megismerik a világot. Nem véletlenül használ Harding vagy Hartsock többes számot, ugyanis attól függetlenül, hogy a nők mint csoport a férfiak csoportjához viszonyítva kerül egy *Másik* (Beauvoir 1969) pozícióba a patriarchális struktúrában, a női tapasztalatok diverzek, eltérőek lehetnek bőrszíntől, szexuális orientációtól, osztályhelyzettől és etnikumtól függően. A női tapasztalatok és nézőpontok részlegessége vagy „szituációba ágyazottsága” (Haraway 1994) megteremti annak a *lehetőségét* a feminista nézőpont teoretikusok szerint, hogy olyan ismereteket generáljanak a nők, amelyek mentesek attól a hatalmi

⁵¹ A feminista nézőpontelméleteken belül is megjelentek a posztmodern megközelítések, például Haraway (1994) „szituációba ágyazottság” koncepciója, amely azon a posztmodern megközelítésen alapszik, hogy nem lehet *a* tudásról beszélni, hanem *a* tudás csak részleges lehet, mert az az adott megismerő pozíciójából konstituálódik (Hawkesworth 1989: 536), vagy az úgynevezett queer nézőpont episztemológia, amely az identitás fluiditására helyez nagyobb hangsúlyt (Naples és Gurr 2014: 30).

vakságtól, amelytől viszont a férfiak csoportja tudatosan vagy tudattalanul nem veszi észre a nők csoportjának szenvedéseit.

Viszont nem minden nő lesz társadalmi státuszából kiindulva magától értetődően feminista, és nem minden férfi lesz magától értetődően elnyomó. Ezzel csupán arra akarok rámutatni, hogy a feminista nézőpontból fakadó tudás nem *a priori*, a feminista nézőponthoz nem elégséges önmagában a női tapasztalat kihangosítása. Ha ekképpen tennénk, azt is feminista nézőpontnak nevezhetnénk, ha egy magát konzervatívnak valló nő abból a nézőpontjából deklarálná azt az általa objektív igazságnak tartott nőiesség ideát, hogy a gondoskodási munka, vagy a gyerekvállalás eleve elrendeltetett női sors (és így szerep is), hiszen az ő narratívájában nem kérdés, hogy erre ne vágyna egy nő esszenciálisan. Ezért több feminista nézőpont teoretikus szerint a női nézőpontot feminista tudással kell átítatni, amely egy olyan nézőpontot fog eredményezni, amelyben a személyes strukturális dimenziója is megjelenik. Például az előbb említett „konzervatív nő” példából kiindulva, miszerint minden nő természetéből, biológiai elrendeltetéséből fakadóan arra lenne teremtve, hogy jobban elvégezze a gondoskodási munkákat, mint a férfiak, a feminista nézőpont episztemológia szerint egy belsővé vált patriarchális norma a női tudatban. A feminista nézőponthoz tehát egy olyan önreflektív folyamat szükséges, melyben az adott aktorok (feminista elméletalkotók és kutatók) és adott csoportokhoz tartozó nők (fekete nők, roma nők, szegény nők, leszbikus nők, fehér nők, középosztálybeli nők) elemzően rátekintenek a „nézőpontjukra”, melyben kifejezett figyelem helyeződik a patriarchális struktúra mellett a faj, az osztály, a szexuális orientáció és a társadalmi nem dinamikus összefonódására (Naples és Gurr 2014: 28). A következő fejezetben erről bővebben lesz szó, ugyanis az ún. tudatébresztő női csoportok pontosan ezt az episztemológiát alkalmazták a gyakorlatban.

A fejezet zárásaként visszatérek a fentebb felvetett egyik kérdéshez: a feminista episztemológiának el kell határolódnia attól, hogy objektív igazságköveteléseket fogalmazzon meg? Harding szerint nem. Ugyanis a posztmodern feminista episztemológiákhoz képest Harding nem veti el az objektivitás szükségszerűséget, valamint az objektivitás fogalmát, hanem csak újradefiniálja azt, akképpen, hogy a nyugati tudomány objektivitás fogalmát „gyengének” nevezi, és egy „erős objektivitás” fogalom mellett érvel, amely magába foglalja az eddig marginalizált és elnémított női csoportok ismeretét és tapasztalatát a világról, amely pedig egy átpolitizált kutatási gyakorlathoz vezet (Harding 1991: 138). A nyugati tudomány „gyenge objektivitását” pont az a

reflektálatlanság eredményezi, amely nem ismeri el a tudástermelés folyamatában a hatalom szerepét, valamint a társadalmi helyzetét a kutatónak és a kutatott csoportnak (Naples és Gurr 2014: 20). Ezenkívül Harding a posztmodern megközelítésekkel ellenben kifejezetten a relativizmus ellen érvel. Harding szerint el kell ismernie a feminista nézőpont ismeretelméletnek a történelmi, társadalmi és kulturális relativizmust, tekintve a különböző csoportok partikuláris érdeklődését, hiedelmeit és értékeit, de kritizálnia kell azt az episztemológiai és értékítéletes relativizmust, amely tagadja bármiféle ésszerű standardnak a létrehozását arra nézve, hogy objektív döntést hozhassunk a versengő igazságkövetelések között (1991: 139, 142).

A következőkben az úgynevezett tudatébresztő feminista csoportokból létrejött „*a személyes egyben politikai*” jelmondat kialakulását és lényegét fogom kifejteni. Majd rámutatok arra, hogy a feminista nézőpontelmélet episztemológiai szempontból hogyan függ össze a tudatébresztő csoportok céljával, valamint „*a személyes egyben politika*” jelmondat üzenetével.

Ami személyes az egyben politikai is

A második hullámos feminista mozgalmak során egyre nagyobb számban kezdtek el először az Egyesült Államokban, majd Angliában megjelenni az úgynevezett női tudatébresztő csoportok (*consciousness-raising groups*, továbbiakban c-r csoportok) (Rogers 2010: 9). „*A személyes egyben politikai*” jelmondat a tudatébresztő csoportok diszkurzív hatásából jött létre. Mert mi is történt pontosan ezekben a c-r csoportokban? A nők nem terápiás céllal ültek össze, bár kétségtelen, hogy a csoportoknak volt ilyesfajta hatása is⁵². Azért gyűltek össze ezek a nők, hogy elkezdjenek beszélni olyan dolgokról, amelyeknek addig nem volt tere, és így nem is lehettek artikulálva ezek a női tapasztalatok. A nők ugyan tudatában voltak a személyes problémáiknak (a gyerekgondozás, az idősgondozás, a láthatatlan házimunka, az utcai zaklatás, a párkapcsolati és családon belüli erőszak, a nemi erőszak jelenségei) hiszen tapasztalták azokat, csak ezekkel a specifikusan női élményekkel egyedül voltak az otthon falai között, a problémáik a privát szférába voltak száműzve. De amint elkezdték verbalizálni egymás

⁵² Később a fejezetben említeni fogom, hogy miért utasították vissza a c-r csoportok azt, hogy terápiás csoportok lennének, de e visszautasítás ellenére megjelentek olyan pszichológiai nevezhető következmények, hogy a c-r csoportok tagjai több szempontból is jobban lettek attól, amiatt, hogy egy kizárólag női közösség tagjaivá váltak, ahol könnyebben tudtak beszélni a speciálisan női problémáikról, mint egy férfikkal közös, heterogén csoportban (Rogers 2010: 18–22).

előtt a sajátosan női tapasztalataikat, ráébredtek, hogy ezekkel a specifikus tapasztalatokkal nincsenek egyedül. Ezek a személyes tapasztalatok nem „egyéni szociális problémák” voltak, hanem a patriarchátus merev és hierarchikus struktúrájába, azaz rendszerszintű elnyomásba ágyazódtak (Hanisch 2006; Sarachild 1975). Ahogyan említettem a c-r csoportokat nem terápiás célra, hanem kifejezetten azzal a szándékkal hozták létre, hogy a személyeset átpolitizálják (Rogers 2010: 31). Ezért a csoportok alatt nemcsak elbeszéltek az individuális problémáikat a c-r csoportok tagjai, hanem, egyrésztől feminista szerzők műveit is olvasták a tagok (ennek a gyakorlatnak is tudatébresztő hatása volt), másrésztől a személyes történetek megosztása politikai-társadalmi cselekvésbe fordult át, vagyis ebből jött létre a maga a mozgalmi cselekvés, a feminista aktivizmus. Harmadrésztől – és ez az egyik leglényegesebb aspektusa a c-r csoportoknak –, nem az egyént tették felelőssé a társadalmi helyzetéből fakadó negatív tapasztalataik miatt, hanem nők elnyomásának materiális elemzésével a patriarchátust, és a férfiak és nők között fennálló „gendered” hatalmi viszonyokat okolták a nők egyéni szenvedéseikért (Hanisch 2006, Sarachild 1975).

Denise Thompson radikális feminista szerint (2001: 18) ezért a feminista nézőpont episztemológiának mindenekelőtt abból kell kiindulnia, hogy felismeri a férfiuralom létezését, mert csak ezáltal lehet hatékonyan megkérdőjelezni és szembeállítani a nőket kizsákmányoló és elnyomó rendszerrel. Nancy Naples és Barbara Gurr (2014: 29) pedig abban állapítja meg a nézőpont episztemológia és a c-r csoportok közös metszési pontját, hogy mindkettő a női tapasztalat fontosságát hangsúlyozta a tudás- és az elméletalkotás folyamatában. Az elméletnek nem a maszkulin absztrakción⁵³ kell alapulnia, hanem a mindennapi élet gyakorlatain, a nemek hatalmi viszonyának valóságát kell a feminista

⁵³ Nancy Hartsock a pszichoanalízisből kiindulva alkotta meg az absztrakt maszkulinitás fogalmát. Hartsock szerint a fiú gyerekeknek egy olyan oppozícióba kell megkonstruálni a szelfjét, melyben a nőiesség és minden, ami a nővel (és így az anyával) hozható összefüggésbe egy duális hierarchiában jelenik meg a társadalomban amiatt, ahogyan a férfi és női tevékenységek is egy hierarchikus viszonyban szerveződnek. Ebből következően az anyagi realitás, a természet, a privát szféra, a kapcsolati/érzelmi dolgok mind a nőiesség konnotációi, az absztrakció, a filozófia, az idea, a kultúra és a racionalitás pedig a maszkulinitással és egyben a magasabbrendű státusszal asszociálódik. A maszkulinitást eképpen úgy érheti el a fiúgyermek, hogy az alacsonyabbrendűnek számító nőiesség konstrukciókkal szemben határozza meg magát és a világot. Hartsock a felsorolt dichotómiákat a társadalmi intézményekre és a „falocentrikus” társadalomra is vonatkoztatja, a polisz kialakulását is erre vezeti vissza. Továbbá Hartsock szerint a férfi és női tevékenységek közötti hierarchikus különbségtétel egyik oldalról a feminista nézőponthoz vezet, a másik oldalról pedig az absztrakt maszkulinitáshoz. A részleges férfinézőpont így az absztrakcióval, az objektívvel szövődik össze, és strukturálja a nyugati társadalmat, a gondolkodásunk módját is, lényegében azt, hogy mit nevezhetünk értékesnek, igaz tudásnak és valóságnak (Hartsock 1987: 168–171).

ismeretelméletnek megragadnia, állítja Hartsock (1987: 171). Aki emellett arra is rámutat, hogy a c-r csoportok központi szervező elemei voltak – az elmélet és a gyakorlat tekintetében is – a második hullámos feminista mozgalomnak. A szociológus Dorothy Smith (1992), aki a feminista nézőpontelmélet korai képviselői közé tartozott, és maga is tagja volt tudatébresztő csoportoknak, pedig a következőket írta a c-r csoportok transzformatív hatásáról: „A tudatébresztő csoportokban más nők írásaiból (én sokat támaszkodtam a gazdag és csodálatos költészetre, amit akkoriban írtak a feministák), a beszélgetésekből, és egy olyan belső munkán keresztül tanultunk, amely átalakította külső és belső kapcsolatainkat. Nőként szerzett tapasztalatainkat más nőkkal együtt fedeztük fel – nem mintha feltétlenül egyetértettünk volna mindenben vagy osztottuk volna ugyanazokat a tapasztalatokat (1992: 89).”

Mintahogyan Harding (1991) és Hartsock (1987) is többes számban beszél női tapasztalatokról, úgy Smith is erre a diverzitásra mutat rá az előbbi idézetében, pontosabban arra, hogy a nézőpont episztemológia nem azt állítja, hogy minden nőnek ugyanaz a nézőpontja és a tapasztalata, hanem azt, hogy minden női test és tudat a patriarchális társadalomba van belevetve, és ez a férfiuralmi rendszer formálja a nők csoportjának valóságát, ezt a valóságot pedig a nők csoportján belül az osztály, az etnikum, az adott kulturális tér vagy a szexuális orientáció differenciálja. Erről a patriarchátusbeli közös női sorsról Smith így fogalmaz: „De ami közös tapasztalás volt, az a női testünkben megélt tapasztalatokból következett (1992: 90).” A nők személyes élete abban a tekintetben volt tehát politikai, hogy amit individuális szinten tapasztaltak, és amire elkezdtek rálátni a nők a c-r csoportok alatti narratív megosztásokon keresztül, az egy strukturális, nemi alapú elnyomást tükrözött.

A női tapasztalatok, a gender mint struktúra és a bourdieu-i ismeretelmélet kapcsolata

Az a gender struktúra⁵⁴, amely a patriarchátus terméke, és amelyet a c-r csoportokba járó nők is észleltek a mindennapi létezésük során, nemcsak a nemi szerepeket jelöli ki a férfiak és a nők számára, hanem strukturálja az egész társadalmi létezést: a társadalmi

⁵⁴ Barbara Risman (2004) strukturalista megközelítést alkalmaz a gender, azaz a társadalmi nem konceptualizálása során, ebből következően úgy tekint a genderre, mint egy társadalmilag konstruált ún. rétegződő rendszerre, amely egyszerre hat az individuális, a társas, és az intézményi szinten, másfelől pedig egy rekurzív viszonyt tart fenn az individuumok és a társadalmi struktúra között.

intézményeket – mint például a családot vagy az egyházat –, a nemek viszonyát, valamint az ún. férfi-női habitust. Erre mutat rá Pierre Bourdieu (2000: 109–115) is, amikor azt állítja, hogy a nőiesség és a férfiasság konstrukciói, azaz a gender rend⁵⁵ attól függetlenül, hogy térben és időben változik (változhatnak a nőies-férfias szerepek és eszményképek, mint ahogyan más volt a nő „dolga” az ipari forradalom előtt, mint után), alapvető funkciójában nem módosul: a gender „struktúráló struktúrája” termeli és újratermeli azt a férfiuralmi rendszert, amely állandóan alkalmazkodik a változó társadalmi status quo-hoz. Bourdieu tehát, összhangban a c-r csoportok ismeretelméletével, azaz „*a személyes mint politikai*” elvével, és a feminista nézőpont episztemológia fent említett képviselőivel arra mutat rá, hogy a férfiuralmi rend mint androcentrikus referenciapont határozza meg a nemek szerinti munkamegosztást, a nemi habitust, vagy az intézményi struktúrákat: „Ez a számtalan egyéni uralmi/alávetettségi viszony végső soron mind a férfiuralom struktúrájára vezethető vissza (Bourdieu 2000: 115).”

Hardinghoz hasonlóan Bourdieu is kritikusan áll a posztmodern látásmódhoz, mely szerinte túlságosan relativista, és kiemeli a szubjektumot a struktúrából, emiatt pedig a posztmodern episztemológia egy szabadon lebegő, lokalizálhatatlan szubjektumot hoz létre (Reed-Danahay 2005: 20). Bourdieu a tudományos pályafutása során nemcsak a posztmodern filozófiáját kritizálta, hanem arra tett kísérletet, hogy a túlzott relativizmus és szubjektivizmus, valamint a „gyenge objektivizmus” egyetemessége között feszülő ellentmondást kiegyenlítse (Reed-Danahay 2005: 2). Bourdieu ezért voltaképpen konstruktivista strukturalista álláspontot képviselt, és úgy kapcsolta össze a két elméleti alapot, hogy rávilágított a mikro- és makroszintek egymásra hatására. Így Bourdieu a habitus fogalmával is arra mutat rá, hogy a struktúra – a nemi habitus esetében a férfiuralmi rend – hogyan vésődik be az egyénbe, hogyan inkorporálódik, hogyan válik természetessé, szokássá, ösztönös viselkedéssé mindaz, ami társadalmi, valamint arra, hogy a habituális gyakorlatok hogyan termelik újra a struktúrát (Bourdieu 2000).

A második hullámos feministák női felszabadítási mozgalomként hivatkoztak magukat (Women’s Liberation Movement, Sarachild 1975; Hanisch 2006), amit ezért ettek, mert a

⁵⁵ Gender rend alatt azt a térben és időben változó, de alapvetően a patriarchátus által meghatározott hierarchikus rendszert értem, amely magába foglalja egyszerre a nemi szerepeket, a gender normákat (hogy milyen módon viselkedhet, vagy, hogy hogyan jelenítheti meg magát egy nő és egy férfi a társadalom mikro- és makroszociális szféráiban), a nemi tulajdonságokat és értékeket, és a nemi szimbólumokat (hogy használja fel az adott kulturális tér a gendert mint jelölőt olyan dolgok kategorizálásánál is mint a színek vagy a hétköznapi tárgyak).

céljuk azt volt, hogy felszabadítsák a nőket a férfiuralmi elnyomás alól. Azért utasították vissza azt, hogy terápiás csoportok lennének, mert a c-r csoportok alatt a nők arra mutattak rá a tapasztalataikon keresztül – miközben a férfiuralmi rendszert vették elemzés alá, és amelyekből így később elméletek (lásd: feminista nézőpontelmélet [Harding 1991]; feminista jogelmélet (MacKinnon 1996), valamint politikai cselekvések⁵⁶ is születtek –, hogy addig a női problémák a metafizikai, spirituális és pszichológiai dimenzióba voltak száműzve, emiatt az episztemológiai megközelítés miatt volt láthatatlan a nők strukturális elnyomása (Hanisch 2006: 2).

A c-r csoportok egy ismeretelméleti paradigmaváltást hoztak létre, de ugyanígy bourdieui elmélet és a feminista nézőpontelmélet is egy olyan ismeretelmélet mellett köteleződött el, amely nem választotta szét többet a szubjektumot az objektumtól, a privát szférát a nyilvános szférától, és a politikait a személyestől: Bourdieu visszatérően a fizikai és a társadalmi tér fontosságát hangsúlyozta a szociológiai elemzésben (Reed-Danahay 2005: 20), mintahogyan Harding (1993, 1991) és Hartsock (1987) is a szubjektum társadalmi térben való elhelyezkedésére, és ebből következően a hatalom kérdésére fókuszált a tudásgyártás folyamatában, és végül a c-r csoportok egy olyan ismeretelméleti módszert adtak a feministák kezébe, amellyel rá tudtak mutatni arra, hogy a nők és a férfiak társadalmi pozíciója és státusza eltérő, és ebből a társadalmi különbözőségekből, strukturális egyenlőtlenségekből következően a nemek tapasztalatai is másfajta tudást (és valóságot) eredményeznek.

A következő fejezetben arról fogok írni, hogy a feminista autoetnográfia, de alapvetően az autoetnográfia mint radikális társadalomtudományi módszer hogyan alapoz arra az ismeretelméleti megközelítésre, hogy a tudásgyártásnak nem absztrakción, főként nem „maszkulin absztrakción” (Hartsock 1987) vagy a hagyományos társadalomtudomány „gyenge objektivitásán” (Harding 1991) kell alapulnia. A tudásalkotásnak, a vizsgálódás módjának e helyett azon az elven kell alapulnia, hogy lokalizálja a társadalmi struktúrába a megismerőt, és azon, hogy felismerjék azt a tudományos világ aktorait, hogy eddig mely

⁵⁶ Carol Hanisch (2006) szerint, aki először használta „*a személyes egyben politikai*” szlogenjét, már önmagában az politikai cselekvés volt, hogy analitikusan beszéltek a nőkről a személyes problémáikról a c-r csoportokban. Ezenkívül politikai cselekvésnek számított az is, hogy megkérdőjelezték és átírtak olyan mélyen gyökerező objektív tényeket, amelyek addig (és még napjainkban is a különböző backlashes hatására [lásd: Faludi 1991]) keményen betonozták be a nők helyét a patriarchális társadalomban.

csoport ismerete számított objektív tudásnak, míg más tudásformák hogyan voltak elnyomva és ignorálva a tudásalkotás történelmi folyamatában.

Mi az az autoetnográfia és mitől lesz feminista egy autoetnográfiai szöveg?

Ahogy a feminista nézőpont teoretikusok, vagy a tudatébresztő női csoportok tagjai, úgy az autoetnográfusok is egy olyan ismeretelméleti megközelítés mellett kezdtek elköteleződni a nyolcvanas évek környékén, amely megkérdőjelezte azt a deklarált objektív tudományosságot, amely a már említett pozitivista és karteziánus ismeretelméleti paradigmán alapult. Ezt követően a társadalomtudományokban megjelent az az ún. tripla krízis, amely a tudásalkotás folyamatában a *reprezentáció*, a *legitimáció* és a *gyakorlat* kérdéseit érintette (Holman-Jones 2005: 766). Ahogy a dolgozat elején kihangsúlyoztam, eddig a fordulópontig a szubjektivitás, az érzelmek, és a testi valóság lehasítása az objektív tudományos vizsgálódásról jelentette és jelenti még ma is a legtöbb tudományos diszciplína szerint a megfelelő kutatói álláspontot. Tehát azt megjeleníteni, hogy egy kutató hogyan viszonyul a kutatásához, milyen személyes előzmények előzik meg a kutatását, milyen viszony fűzi a kutatót a kutatott tárgyához, hogyan befolyásolja a kutatót a *másik*, azaz a kutatott csoport reprezentációjában az, hogy milyen társadalmi térben szocializálódott maga a kutató, vagy, hogy milyen érzések jelennek meg a kutatóban a kutatás közben, és hogyan legitim, hogy az érzelmek részesei lehetnek a tudásalkotásnak, a mainstream álláspont szerint szakmaiatlan kifejezni és a tudásalkotási gyakorlat részévé tenni. A személyes privát szférába űzése, a szubjektív-objektív dichotómiája, a kutatói szubjektum depolitizálása jellemzi az akadémia intézményeit, és így magát a kutatói gyakorlatot is.

Az autoetnográfia egy olyan, a társadalomtudományi diskurzusokban a mai napig marginalizált és újnak ható ismeretelméleti hagyományba ágyazódik, amely a kutatói szubjektumra is ugyanolyan hangsúlyt helyez, mint a kutatás tárgyára. Az autoetnográfiai módszertan fő képviselőinek a szavaival összefoglalva: „Az autoetnográfia egy olyan kvalitatív kutatási módszer, amely a személyes tapasztalatokat ("auto") használja fel a kulturális szövegek, tapasztalatok, hiedelmek és gyakorlatok ("etno") leírására és értelmezésére ("gráfia") (Adams, Holmes és Ellis 2017: 1).”

Mintahogy az említett feminista episztémológiák, úgy a feminista autoetnográfikák között is vannak eltérések azt illetően, hogy melyik feminista vagy társadalomtudományi

irányzat szellemében írják azokat. Vannak olyan feminista autoetnográfiaiak, amelyek a posztmodern megközelítésekhez sorolhatóak (Swafford 2019; Mackinlay 2022; Tamas 2008), és vannak olyan feminista autoetnográfiaiak (Stern 2015; Ettore 2016), amelyek meglátásom szerint jobban kihangsúlyozzák és összekötik a személyeset a nők strukturális, férfiuralmi elnyomásával, mint a deklaráltan posztmodern (pl. queer vagy posztstrukturalista) írások. Ugyanakkor mindegyik sajátos női hangokat és egyedi női tapasztalatokat hangosít ki: abortusz (Swafford 2019), anyaság, valamint anya-lánya kapcsolat (Stern 2015) családon belüli erőszak (Metta 2013), párkapcsolaton belüli erőszak (Tamas 2008), és ezért az összes feminista autoetnográfia az eltérések ellenére kiegészítheti egymást, de csak abból az aspektusból, hogy mindegyik kifejezetten női tapasztalatokat jelenít meg (Mackinlay 2022).

Már szó esett fentebb arról, hogy a posztmodern irányzatok hajlamosabbak a partikularitásra, az identitások fragmentációjára helyezni a fókuszot a struktúra ellenében, és ebből következően nem is akarnak úgy állást foglalni az objektivitás kérdésében, mint ahogyan azt a c-r csoportok tették, vagy ahogyan Sandra Harding teszi az „erős objektivitás” fogalmával. Én ugyan az utóbb említett Harding féle nézőpont feminizmus, valamint c-r csoportok eredeti célja és módszere felé vagyok elkötelezett, és emellett radikális feministaként⁵⁷ hivatkozok magamra, viszont most nem térnék ki ennél jobban az irányzatok közötti eltérések fejtegetésére, hanem a következőkben inkább a közös pontokra fókuszálok annak érdekében, hogy egy általános képet adhassak arról, hogy mi is pontosan a feminista autoetnográfia.

A közös jellemzői a feminista autoetnográfiaiaknak elsősorban abban ragadhatóak meg, hogy mindegyik kritikával illeti az úgynevezett hegemon maszkulin értékeket (racionalitás, versengés, érzelem-mentesség), amelyek az érzelmekhez és azoknak a

⁵⁷ A radikális feminizmus a második hullámos feminizmus egyik legmeghatározóbb irányzata, a liberális és a szocialista feminizmus kicsivel később alakult ki, de hatott a harmadik hullámú feminizmusra is, amelyre viszont már leginkább a kilencvenes években megjelenő neoliberalizmus individualista emberképe volt hatással. Catharine MacKinnon feminista jogtudós, aki szintén a második hullám egyik nagy teoretikusa volt, a radikális feminizmust módosítás nélküli feminizmusnak definiálja (*Feminism Unmodified*, MacKinnon 1987: 16). A radikális jelző extrémistának hangozhat, főként a magyar kontextusban, de a szó eredeti céljánál fogva arra utal, hogy a feminizmusnak az az elsődleges és radikális politikai célja, hogy a nőket mint történelmileg elnyomott csoportot felszabadítsa. Ennek a felszabadítási gyakorlatnak pedig ott kell kezdődnie, hogy a nők elnyomását a probléma gyökerénél fogja meg a feminista mozgalom: amely a patriarchális rendszer mélyreható elemzésénél kezdődik. Denise Thompson (2001: 1) MacKinnonra hivatkozva azt állítja, hogy minden más feminizmus, amely ettől a központi céltól és elemzési módszertől eltér, az már egy olyan módosításokon átesett feminizmus, amely valamennyire kooptálódott a patriarchális status quo által.

kifejezéséhez, például a „sérülékenység” (Behar 1996) megmutatásához képest intézményi és társadalmi szinten sokkal nagyobb megbecsülést kapnak. Alapvetően az autoetnográfiai gyakorlatnak – legyen az feminista autoetnográfia, vagy más metodológiai irányzat és diszciplína szellemében íródott autoetnográfia –, pedig az egyik központi célja, hogy a sérülékenységet, az érzelmek kifejezését normalizálja, és az ortodox társadalomtudomány konvencionális és rideg írásstílusát, amelyből teljesen hiányzik a kutatói self reprezentálása, „felrúgja” (Ellis és Bochner 2016: 77–82). Közös pont továbbá az is, hogy egyik autoetnográfia sem pusztán autobiográfiai leírást ad, hanem társadalmi, kulturális, lokális kontextusba emeli a személyes történetet, valamint sosem csak a magáról és magának ír az autoetnográfus, hanem megjeleníti az adott társadalmi gyakorlatot, struktúrát vagy hiedelmet a személyes narratívájában, és egyszerre megszólítja az olvasót is, azaz dialógust kezdeményez (Ellis és Bochner 2000: 739). „Az autoetnográfia mindannyiunkat – szerzőket, olvasókat és közönséget – arra kér, hogy figyeljünk, gondolkodjunk és reagáljunk; ez egy olyan műfaj, amely formáját és tartalmát tekintve megkérdőjelezi a kutatási gyakorlat és a reprezentáció normáit (Adams, Holmes és Ellis 2022: 13).”

Elizabeth Mackinlay (2022: 334) szerint lényegében mindegyik autoetnográfia vallja a második hullámos feminista mozgalom „*ami személyes egyben politikai*” jelmondatát, mivel az autoetnográfusok a személyes történeteik megosztásán keresztül hidat képeznek a többi ember között, és rámutatnak arra, hogy az adott problémáikkal (evészavar [Tillman 2009]), vagy családon belüli erőszak [Metta 2013]), nemcsak, hogy nincsenek egyedül, de a szenvedésük túlnyomórészt társadalmi eredetű. Stacy Holman Jones a következőképpen mutat rá arra, hogy hogyan köti össze az autoetnográfiai szöveg a személyes tapasztalatot a kulturálissal, a társadalmival: „Az autoetnográfia a self és a kultúra összekapcsolásán dolgozik (...). Az autoetnográfiai szöveg egy olyan világot ír meg, amely a változás és a mozgás állapotában van – a történet és a kontextus, az író és az olvasó, a krízis és a lezárás között (Holman-Jones 2005: 764).”

De mégis mitől lesz egy autoetnográfia feminista? Mackinlay (2022: 331-334) szerint egy autoetnográfiai szöveg attól lesz feminista, hogyha a szerző feminista elméletekre, feminista nők írásaira, magára a feminista etikára alapoz, valamint elkötelezett a feminista mozgalom politikai célja felé: hogy felszabadítsa a nőket a patriarchális elnyomás minden formája alól. Itt megint érdemes azt kiemelni, hogy a feminizmuson belül több irányzat létezik, ezért például különböző feminista elméletek másként

konceptualizálhatják a gender fogalmát⁵⁸. Ellenben jelenleg nem célom értékítéletet hozni a feminista autoetnográfia között, Mackinlay-jel részben egyetértve úgy gondolom, hogy a sokszínű feminista hangok egy interszekcionális képet adhatnak a női tapasztalatokról a feminista autoetnográfiaikon belül. Ugyanakkor fontosnak tartom megjegyezni, hogy elengedhetetlen egy feminista autoetnográfiaánál (de egyéb autoetnográfiaánál is) hogy tisztázza azt a szerző, hogy milyen nézőpontból beszél, azaz egy feminista autoetnográfia esetében azt, hogy melyik feminista irányzat felé elkötelezett. Marilyn Metta (2013) továbbá azt emeli ki, hogy a feminista autoetnográfiaik összességében egy olyan kritikus teret biztosíthatnak a nőknek, ahol az elnémított és ignorált női hangok megjelenhetnek. Amit eddig a patriarchátus objektív igazságként reprezentált arról, hogy mit jelent nőnek lenni, vagy mi számít nőiesnek, leválthatja egy olyan „erős objektív” tudás a női létről, nőiségről, amelyet már nem az androcentrizmus, hanem a női tapasztalatok, és a kritikus női hangok alakítanak.

Elizabeth Ettore (2016) az autoetnográfiaát kifejezetten feminista módszerként keretezi, és a következő négy pontban vázolja fel ennek okait. Ettore szerint *„(1) az autoetnográfia átmeneti, köztes tereket hoz létre a testet öltött érzelmek kereszteződésében, vagy ezek határmezsgyéjén maradván (2) az autoetnográfia aktív demonstrációja annak, miszerint „a személyes egyben politikai is”, (3) az autoetnográfia feminista kritikai írás, amely performatív és elkötelezett a nők jövője iránt, (4) az autoetnográfia azzal, hogy megmutatja sérülékenységet és a bizonytalanságot, növeli az erre való tudatosságot (2016: 4).* Most nem térek ki mind a négy pontra, hanem a feminista ismeretelméleti szempont miatt második pontra fókuszálok, mely szerint *az autoetnográfia aktív demonstrációja annak, miszerint „a személyes egyben politikai is”.*

Ettore azért keretezi az autoetnográfiaát feminista módszerként, ugyanis a tudatébresztő női csoportokból kialakult feminista ismeretelméleti módszerhez hasonlóan az autoetnográfus nem egy társadalmi kontextus nélküli önéletrajzi leírást hoz létre, hanem a személyes történetét kritikus elméleti keretbe foglalja. Ettore maga is tagja volt a c-r csoportoknak, elbeszélése szerint a tudatébresztés azt jelentette, hogy a női

⁵⁸ Nancy Fraser (2019) progresszív neoliberalizmusnak nevezi azt az individualizációra és kapitalista értékekre berendezkedett modellt, amely „szolgálólányává” tette a feminizmust, valamint kihatott a gender értelmezésére is. A harmadik hullámú feminizmus megközelítése Fraser szerint – ellenben a rendszerkritikusabb, második hullámos megközelítésekkel – a gendert már nem hatalmi kérdésként keretezi, hanem egyfajta individualista, belső érzésre alapozó, szabad identifikálódási lehetőségként tekint arra.

csoporthtagok egymást segítették abban, hogy politikailag tudatosak legyenek. Ettore szerint azért volt minden egyes személyes történet politikai töltetű, mert olyan érzékeny témákról beszéltek kizárólag egymás előtt ezek a nők, hogy hogyan erőszakolták meg őket gyerekkorukban, vagy milyen erőszaktípusok (szóbeli, érzelmi, gazdasági, szexuális, fizikai) érték őket a bántalmazó kapcsolataikban, hogy sokszor hatalmas teher és szenvedésteli munka a gyereknevelés, hogy a munkahelyükön zaklatják őket, vagy, hogy egyáltalán nem tudnak azonosulni azzal az egyszerre szűzies és ördögien csábító nőiességgel, amit gyerekkoruk óta kényszerít rájuk a patriarchátus.

A nyilvános és a privát szféra ideológiai szétválasztása, elbeszélhetetlenné tette a nők mindennapi valóságát. „*A személyes egyben politikai*” jelmondat ezt a szétválasztást oldotta fel, ezzel utat nyitva azoknak a női tapasztalatoknak, amelyek eddig elbeszélhetetlenek voltak. Maga az autoetnográfiai gyakorlat is a nyilvános és a privát szféra dichotómiáját eliminálja, ahogyan a kutatói gyakorlat során normalizálja azt, hogy a kutató maga is egy emberi lény, emberi tapasztalatokkal és érzésekkel, amelyek végig kísérik az adott kutatást. Így megtörik az az ideológiai kettéhasítás, amely az akadémiai gyakorlatból és a tudásalkotási folyamatból is kiűzi és lehasítja mindazt, ami személyes.

Ettore (2016: 101) a saját feminista autoetnográfijára egyfajta összekötő hídként tekint a második és az újabb hullámos feminista mozgalom között, mivel ő maga a második hullámos feminista generációhoz tartozik, és feminista autoetnográfijában részben azt beszéli el, hogyan lett közte és az újabb generációs feminista kutató társai között egy olyan konfliktus, amely többek között a két irányzat elméleti különbözőségében gyökerezett (az előbbi sokkal inkább strukturális problémákból – a patriarchális társadalmi berendezkedésből – vezeti le a nők jelenlegi helyzetét, míg az utóbb említett, harmadik hullámú feminizmusból kinövő irányzatok nem helyeznek erre olyan szintű fókuszot, hanem inkább a posztmodern filozófiáját és a neoliberalizmus emberképét követik). Ettore ettől függetlenül a dialógust szorgalmazza az eltérő feminista irányzatokat képviselő nők között az autoetnográfiai gyakorlata során. Ettoreval egyetértve a feminista autoetnográfiaiak közötti irányzatbeli eltérések ellenére lehetségesnek és fontos szempontnak tartom azt a párbeszédességet, amelyben nemcsak feltétlen konszenzus születhet meg, hanem vitatott kérdésekről, például a már említett posztmodern kritikákról, vagy a második és a harmadik hullámos feminizmus(ok) közötti elméleti vitákról is szó eshet.

Összegzés

Zárásként Elizabeth Ettore (2016) után „*a személyes egyben politikai*” elvére alapozó feminista autoetnográfiaát a nők helyzetét leíró módszertanként határozom meg. Ugyanakkor fontos hangsúlyoznom, hogy ennek a módszernek a használata nem vezet automatikusan ontológiai igazság konstituáláshoz. A női tapasztalatok nem önmagukban érvényes bizonyítékok, ahogyan ezt Sandra Harding is hangsúlyozza. A női tudatébresztő csoportokból létrejött feminista nézőpont episztemológia arra hívja fel a figyelmet, hogy a feminista nézőpontot el kell érni, akképpen, hogy az egyénnek el kell köteleződnie egy intellektuális és egy politikai munka mellett, amelyben a női tapasztalatok megosztása és kihangsúlyozása során párhuzamosan elemzés alá kerül a nők társadalmi helyzete, valamint az a gender rend, amely a patriarchális rendszer igazoló eszközeként funkcionál. Az én feminista álláspontom szerint egy feminista autoetnográfiai szöveg megkonstruálásához, ebből az ismeretelméleti paradigmából kell kiindulni.

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Szabó Miklós

Halálban nyert jelentőség | Héroszok és elmúlás

„Vajon mi lett az ifjából és aggokból?

És vajon mi az asszonyokból és gyermekekből?

Valahol élnek és jól vannak,

A legkisebb sarjú is azt mutatja, hogy valójában nincs halál,

És ha valaha volt, előbbre viszi az életet és nem arra vár, hogy végre lenyűgözze,

És az élet jöttére nyomban megszűnnék.

Minden előbbre és kifelé halad, semmi sem hull ki,

És meghalni más, mint bárki hinné, és örvedetesebb.”

Az antropológia problémás kapcsolatot ápol a halállal, hiszen érdeklődésének középpontjában az ember, tágabb értelemben az emberi test áll. Amennyiben ez a test halott is, csak abban az esetben válik értelmezhetővé, ha élők veszik körbe, akikkel valamilyen kölcsönhatásba kerülhet. A halál evolucionista megközelítése bár érthetővé teszi elkerülhetetlenségét, az alkalmatlan példányok elhullása, még ha tragikus is az egyed szintjén, hosszú távon a faj érdekét szolgálja, de ez a megállapítás minden szükségszerű kegyetlenségével sem visz közelebb minket az ember és halál viszonyának feltárásához. (Wulf 2007:279) Az emberi faj fejlődése, mely sikerességével egyedülálló az állatvilágban, némi önteltséggel tekinthető az intelligencia történetének. Abban az értelemben mindenképpen, hogy elménk nem csak rácsodálkozik a minket körülvevő világra, de értelmezi, és reflektál is rá, valamint megosztja, és dokumentálja is azt, a barlangrajzok és csontfaragványok tanúsága szerint már egészen a faj kialakulásának hajnalától kezdve. Ha ilyen módon az emberiség történetén keresztül a tudat fejlődéséről beszélünk, az talán éppen a halállal kezdődik, és nem a születéssel. Ebben a fogalmi keretben pedig akaratlanul is elválik az ember biológiai létezése a tudatától. Valamilyen módon, rendszertani besorolástól függetlenül, minden állat biztosítja utódai életben maradását legalább életük legelső szakaszában. Ösztönös cselekedetük akár tudattalan is lehet, ezért a miénkhez mérhető intelligencia jelének azt tekintjük, mikor a tudatos gyászt véljük felfedezni. Az elhullott társaikat ágakkal betakaró, vagy táplálni próbáló elefántokat, a

haldokló társaikat kétségbeesetten felszínen tartani igyekvő ceteket megörökítő képsorok azok, melyek leginkább kivívják együttérzésünket, és megerősítenek minket abban az érzésben, hogy osztozunk másokkal a létezés tudatában, a halandóság élményében.

Az ember, mint önálló létező története, metafizikai szinten sem a teremtéssel, a születéssel kezdődik, hanem az ősbűnnel, az első határátlépéssel, a kiűzetéssel, a halandósággal. A tudatos létezés, az önrendelkezés együtt jár halandóságunk, nyomorúságunk, az egyedüllét tudatával. Amennyiben elfogadjuk az elméletet, hogy a szüléssel járó fájdalom a felegyenesedés, a halál tudata, pedig a homloklebenyek fejlődésének, (mely lehetővé tette a jövőről alkotott elképzelés kialakulását,) következménye, akkor az Édenből való kiűzetés mítosza is újabb értelmezési keretet kap. Az emberi intelligencia első traumatikus felismerése, hogy léte fájdalmas, nehézségekkel teli, és elkerülhetetlenül véges, talán éppen egy halott társuk teteme fölött fogalmazódott meg. Amennyiben feltételezzük, hogy létezett a relevációnak ez az első pillanata, úgy kétségtelenül nevezhetnénk az Édenből való kiűzetésnek, és az emberi kultúra első lépésének. A vég teljes sötét rögválóságával nehezedhetett a pillanatra, melyben a halál, mint a kilépés pontja fogalmazódott meg, melyen keresztül a személy a szó minden értelmében átlépte az általa ismert világ határait. A felismerés megválaszolatlan kérdések egész sorát indította el, melyek szükségszerűen rugaszkodtak el a pillanatnyi létezés szükségleteitől. Ettől a régmúltban szimbolikusan kitűzött ponttól kezdve az emberi élet időbelisége, és múlandósága a gondolkodás középpontjává vált. Pascal szavaival „a nem létet a nincs, nem pedig a lét felől gondoljuk el... a gondolkodás nem tud nem gondolni a nincstre” Wulf értelmezésében a gondolkodásnak meg kell ragadnia valamit, a halál viszont nem valami, amit meg tudna ragadni. Vagyis miközben az emberi gondolat megbukik a halálon és a nincs nem létén, feltörhetetlen örök problémaként folytonosan jelen van, és folytonos mozgásban tartja azt. „A Halál nem dolga sem élőknak, sem holtaknak” tartja Epikurosz. Vigasza csupán az egyén szintjére kínál megoldást, aki teljes elkülönülésben nem gondolva a jövőbeli halálra megnyugodhat, és a néha rá törő félelmet elnyomhatja, csak az elkerülhetetlen vég pillanatában szembesülve vele. Csakhogy az emberek közösségekben élnek, nem egy időben lépnek ki a létezésből, így folytonosan tanúi mások halálának, melyen keresztül szembesülünk saját halandóságunkkal. Aki állt már halott felett, ismeri az érzést, melyből hiányzik a béke, a látványt kitöltő nem létet nyugtalan vibrálás lengi be, és nem enyhíti semmilyen

magyarázat. „A Halál nem szükségszerű, semmilyen történetnek se a beteljesülése, szó szerint a semmi.”

A halállal kialakított viszonyban újabb korlátot képez, hogy lehetetlen bármiféle megfigyelés, mely túllép a hozzá kapcsolódó fiziológiai folyamatok leírásán. Bármely ezeken túlmutató következtetés a metafizika területére téved. A halál utáni élet, az újjászületés, még a biológiai véggel járó teljes megsemmisülés is egyaránt bizonyíthatatlan fantazmagóriák. Ami tudományosan bizonyosnak tűnik, hogy a Homo Sapiens már korai fejlődési szakaszaiban is gondoskodott halottairól. A temetkezési rítusok nyomai már háromszázezer évvel ezelőtt, az alsó paleolit korszakban is megjelentek. Neandervölgyi ember temetkezési helyeinek feltárásakor pollenréteget találtak a test fölött, ami arra enged következtetni, hogy nem csak elhantolták a teste, de virágágyra is fektették. Ha el is kerüljük a korai vallásosságra irányuló messzemenő következtetéseket, akkor is bizonyos, hogy többről van szó, mint a tetemtől való egyszerű megszabadulásról. A halottakkal, és rajta keresztül a halállal való hosszútávú törődés viszont teljesen egyedi módon emberi. Ez a viszonyulás szükségszerűen része minden jelenleg létező, és valaha létezett emberi kultúrának. Hiszen minden emberi társulásnak alapvető feladata, hogy önmaga fenntartása érdekében, folyamatosságot teremtsen egyének és nemzedékek között. Minden kultúra lehetőséget teremt egyén és a közösség számára, hogy szabályozott keretek között kialakítson egy viszonyrendszert a halállal, gondolkozzék róla, és rítusokon keresztül foglalkozzon vele.

Ennek kutatói oldalra fordításával, egy rituálisan megélt viszonyrendszer elemzésének segítségével tekinthetünk a halálra. Ahogy Szindbád mondja Huszárik Zoltán filmjében „A halálnak nincs fénye, sem árnyéka, de van valami rozsmaring szaga.” Az ember létezés végének vizsgálata tehát szinte lehetetlen, lévén, hogy megragadhatatlan, teljesen láthatatlan, de ebben a képlékenységében is megérezhető valami, ami folytonosan kíséri. Az ember halandóságával folytatott párbeszéde az, ami megfigyelésünk tárgyát képezheti. Ez az a „rozsmaring illat”, amin keresztül megkísérelhetjük megtapasztani azt, ami a szó legszorosabb értelmében nincs.

„Örvendetesnek hitte bárki a születést?

Sietek közölni vele, hogy a halál éppoly örvendetes és én tudom, miért.”

A mítoszok, a szó hétköznapi értelmében, nem „kitalációk”, a kultúra, melyben elmesélik őket, tudja, hogy annak a viszonyrendszernek a teljes ábrázolására szolgálnak, mely életük minden területére kihat. Az egyén megtudhatja, milyen a világ, melyben él, miért vált olyanná, és milyen benne az ember, miként kell viselkednie, és miként jár el morálisan kritikus pillanatokban. Kerényi igen bölcsen utasítja el azt a téves felvetést, hogy a hőosztörténetek, régi mesék fejlesztett, aktualizált verziói lennének, ami a történeti háttér ismerete nélkül is nyilvánvaló. A mese a közösségben tudatosan nem valóságos, morális mondanivalójú történet, melynek tanúságai fontosak, de nem festenek totális képet létezésükről. Ebben az értelemben, vagyis a mítoszt az ember felől közelítve, válik igazán értelmezhetővé Kerényi azon állítása, hogy a hőoszokkal nem járunk el igazságosan, ha bizonyítjuk történelmi mivoltukat. (1977:187) Hiszen a történetet újra és újra megjelenítő rítusokon keresztül az istenek és hőoszok, a jogos elválasztás ellenére is egy azon teret népesítik be. A történet belső kronológiájának kezelése szempontjából igaza van Kerényinek abban, hogy a hőosztörténetek elválnak az isteni történetek első korszakától, melyek az idő előtti időben játszódnak, és tetteik „történeti időben” vagy szoros közelében kapnak helyet. Ugyanakkor a mítosz belső, totális logikájában ez az elválasztás szükségtelen. Tekintve, hogy mindkettő egy és ugyan azon totális valóság megformálására, és magyarázatára szolgál. Az antropológiai megközelítésben nem tekinthetünk el attól a Malinowski által is lefektetett alapelvtől, hogy a mítosz olyan integráns része a társadalmi életnek, mely szakrális alátámasztását adja egy közösség gondolatvilágának. Vagyis a mítoszok olyan meghatározó részét képezik egy embercsoport tanult hagyományainak és életmódjának, hogy maguk sem érthetőek meg az eredeti társadalmi környezet nélkül. A mítosz tehát nem egy része a kultúrának, alapvetően átszövi azt, állandóan jelen van, és szabályozza az élet minden mozzanatát. Ez termékeny értelmezési keretet biztosít a téma vizsgálatára. Ragaszkodni kell ugyanakkor, ahhoz a megköthetéshez, hogy a mítoszok értelmezése eredet kultúrájukból kitépve, vagy annak nem megfelelő mélységű ismeretben sokkal inkább reflektál a kutató élő kultúrájára, mint esetünkben az antik görög világ eredeti értelmezésére. Kerényi is ráérezett erre, és ennek megfelelően szögezi le, mint az fentebb már említettem, hogy a hőosz szükségszerű velejárója a mitikus homály. Kutatása szempontjából nem is érdemes azon elmélkedni, hogy valóban élő személyről beszélünk-e, hiszen a mítosz olvasatában ez nem kérdés, hanem evidencia. Mindössze valódisága nem egyezik a történészek elvárásaival. Mitikus teljessége pedig csak és kizárólag a vele együtt

szimbiózisban létező kultúra ismeretével válhatna teljessé, mely az idő problematikája folytán lehetetlen számunkra. Mindez természetesen nem jelenti azt, hogy parttalan okoskodásra lenne kárhóztatva a téma. A mítosz a vele élő kultúrát átszövő teljessége révén, akár még jobb híján is, kiinduló pontja lehet egy máshogy meg nem értethető gondolati rendszerbe való bepillantásnak. Emellett, vagy sokkal inkább, a mítoszok fennmaradása, és velünk élése okán, különösen, hogy a mai nyugati társadalmak kultúrájában előkelő fontossággal bír az antikvitásra történő hivatkozás, átfogó képet kaphatunk az emberi létezés alapvető problémáiról, és a válaszokról, melyek elkísérnek minket. Ezek a mítoszok már a mieink, és tudatlanul is átszövik, és meghatározzák létezésünket. Az ember a maga szötte hálójában vergődő állat, és ez a háló a kultúra. Geertz megállapítása ebben az esetben is helytálló. Miközben azt gondolhatnánk, hogy a mítoszok értelmezésekor meghatározott keretek korlátozzák megismerésünket, valójában ez a vergődés lehetővé teszi, hogy a jelenre érvényes következtetéseket vonjunk le, és ezáltal jobb képet kapjunk arról, hogy milyen az ember, milyen kapcsolatban áll saját legbelsőbb mozgatóival, köztük a halandósággal, és minként lesz úrrá a folyvást követő halálfélelmen. Összegezve: „Aki uralja a múltat, uralja a jövőt is. Aki uralja a jelent, uralja a múltat is.” A klasszikus Orwell idézet kultúrtörténeti kiforgatásával beláthatjuk, hogy a velünk élő mítosz, bár eredeti formájában talán nem a mi kultúránké volt, hatott jelenlegi formájának kialakulására, és most már elidegeníthetetlen részét képezi. Benne kap értelmet, meghatározza világunkról alkotott képünket, ezáltal saját modernitásunkon keresztül fogalmazódik újra a múlt, melyből származtatjuk. Így példázva, miként jelenik meg általa a totális valóság, és benne az ember létezésének mozdíthatatlan magja.

„Hogy egyszerűen azt mondhassuk, mint ahogy most: Jókedvű vagyok. Van történetem... és lesz ezután is.”

A héroszra isteni fény ragyog. Sorsa a halandóság, mely árnyékként keveredik az örök fénnel. Ez a kevert pislákolás adja, hogy legalább egy történet közvetlenül hozzá tartozik, lényegének tükörképe. Az ember az isteneket saját képmására teremtette. Frazer értelmezésében ebből a megállapításból egyenesen következik halandóságuk. Dionüszoszt Delphoiban temették el, sírfeliratán ez állt: „Itt nyugszik Szemelé fia, a halott Dionüszosz.” Ez a szükségszerű halandóság az, ami a világot mozgásban tartja. Ha még a

teremtő elhullása is elkerülhetetlen, az emberé, de az istenemberé is egyenesen szükségszerű. Mikor egy személy sorsa kimagasló fontosságú egy közösség számára, nem megengedhető, hogy élete hanyatlásba kezdjen. Sorsa kitöltetett, és ezzel véget is ér. Jutalma a halál és az emlékezés. A halál mellyel megóvta a rajta keresztül létező közösséget a hanyatlástól, és az emlékezés, mely biztosítja közösség kulturális fennmaradását. A hőszé nem más, mint a halálának kultusza. Ellentétben a halhatatlanokkal, akik bár Frazer értelmezésében maguk is halandók, mégis más szabályok érvényesek rájuk, a hősz helyét éppen halandósága adja meg a mitikus térben és időben. Kerényi kifinomult ráérzéssel kiemeli a hősz quasi-létezését, mely több és egyszersmind kevesebb, mint az átlagos emberi sors. Életét röviden két pont teszi kimagaslóvá, a veleszületett többlet energia, és a bizonyosság, hogy halálában sorsa kiteljesedik. Ezzel az átalakulással válik igazán érdekessé karaktere, mert az ő esetében nem talány, hanem bizonyosság, hogy léte értelemmel volt feltöltve. Ezzel válik példamutatóvá, és többé, mint a létezésben ténfergő halandó társai. Kevesebb, mert eltökéltségét a tragédia árnyéka követi. Kiinduló létállapota biztosítja azt a teret, melyben éppen ezt a halandóságot meghaladó cselekményeket hajthat végre. A születés és halál közti korlátozott idő az, ami fontossággal bír, ami lehetővé teszi számára, hogy átlépje azt legalább metafizikailag, és halálában örökké emlékezzenek rá. Történeteikben megjelenő tetteik kiemelik őket a történelemből. Kerényi arra is rámutat, hogy nem kizárólag harci hősiesség lehet a kitűnés pontja, ezért a hősz kifejezés, szemben a hőssel, mely a magyar nyelvben harci diadalt feltételez. Sokkal fontosabb a konzisztencia, mely jellemzi őket, egy mozdíthatatlanság, mely rokona az isteni lényeknek. Ez az a létezési plusz, a potenciál, mely a humanizmus középpontja, és a nyugati modernitás alapköve is. Az ígéret, hogy beteljesíthetjük sorsunkat. A boldogság keresése, mely mindannyiunk joga, és egyben annak elérése kevesek kiváltsága. Ez jelenik meg a hőszok történeteiben is, ők azok a kiválasztottak, akik beteljesítették sorsukat, értelmet kölcsönöztek halandóságuknak, ezáltal legyőzték a halált. A mitológiai hőszáiban legbelül létező mag az, ami lényegük, ami összetéveszthetetlen egyediségük. „A hős, aki legbelül mozdíthatatlan.” Idézi Kerényi. És milyen igaz. A mozdíthatatlanság megkerülhetetlen kritériuma a hősznak. Vezessen bár tragédiába, nem téríthető le útvjáról. Ez a mozdíthatatlanság, az ideiglenesség mellett a másik mitikus minta, mely valóságunk leírása szolgál. Az élet ideiglenes, de sorsunk betöltésével értelmet nyer. Ehhez azonban ragaszkodni kell, és meg lehet az ára kitartásunknak. Mert a végkifejlet csak egy lehet, és az mindig tragikus. Minden

hérosztörténet kapcsolatban áll a héroszkultusszal. Minden héroszhoz hozzá tartozott a kultusza. Mely megemlékezés volt, mindössze fenntartotta, és nem felmagasztalta. A hérosznak erre már nem volt szüksége. A hérosz halott, mely halál létének teljességéért tartozik. Kultuszában a rítus a résztvevőknek a halandósággal történő párbeszédet teszi lehetővé. A héroszt halálában is beragyogja különleges fénye, ami láthatóvá teszi a túlvilágot. Kerényi kicsit értetlenül áll azelőtt, hogy az ilyen rituálékban is örömet lelték a görögök, de ez nem is olyan furcsa. Az ilyen párbeszéd a halállal nem ritka, és jó példa rá a modern mexikói halottak napja. Ilyenkor a temetőben tartott étkezés fontos részét képezik a sütemények, és édességek, amik mind koponyákat, vagy csontokat ábrázolnak. A barátok és családtagok cukor koponyákat, vagy más, a halálhoz kapcsolódó díszítéssel ellátott tárgyat ajándékoznak egymásnak. Az ajándékokat nagyobb értéknek tekintik, ha az ajándékozott neve megjelenik rajta, például a koponya homlokán. Az ilyen édességek fogyasztása közben, illetve a pan de muerto-ba rejtett csontvázba harapáskor a személy szimbolikusan „beleharap a halálba”, ezáltal beoltja magát halálfélelem ellen. Illetve az ünnepség keretei között épített oltár az élet és halál körforgásának elismerését reprezentálja, ami természetes része az emberi létezésnek. A témát mélyebben ismerő antropológusok véleménye szerint a rítuson keresztül a mexikóiak nem is annyira elhunyt rokonaikkal való kapcsolatukat elevenítik fel, ezáltal a közösség gyökereit ápolják - bár ennek is fontos szerepe van -, sokkal inkább közeli kapcsolatot alakítanak ki egy absztrakt entitással, a Halállal. (Brandes 181.) Mikor egy rítus ennyire közeli kapcsolatban áll a halandósággal, nem lehet túlbecsülni, hogy ez mennyire mélyre hatol az ünnepség szívébe. Kerényi említést tesz az i.e.15. századból megmaradt kupolasírokról, és azok elődeiről, melyek jellegzetessége, a létező írott nyelv mellett is, a feliratok hiánya. Értelmezése szerint ez bizonyíték arra a halott kultuszra, mely teljes bizalmat szavazott az emlékezésnek, mintegy fölöslegessé téve a sírfeliratot. A halottnak Mnemosyné istennőre kellett bízni magát, hogy a személy a róla való emlékezésben élhessen tovább. Nem bizonyítható, hogy Mykénai királyok istenekké akartak e válni, mint ahogy az sem, hogy Frazer által felvetett istenkirályok meggyilkolása, vagyis az életpálya csúcson történő megtörésével létrehozott állandóság állt e háttérükben. De Kerényi gondolatai nyomán biztosra vehető, hogy a halotti kultusz alapja az ember. Pontosabban az emberi természetben meglévő törekvés beteljesülése a halálban.

Az emberi lényeg adja a hérosztörténet alapját. Az ember, mely tisztában van egyediségével, ami nem olvad fel a közösségben. A megismételhetetlen lényeg, mely

minden születést egyedivé tesz. Ez Kerényi tolmácsolásában az isteni szikra, mikor az emberfeletti behatol az emberibe, és megtermékenyíti azt. A halál és az emlékezés és a születés teremtésének együttese, egyszerismind végtelenül emberi. A görög héroztörténetek reálisak, nem idealizáltak és moralizálóak. A héroszok emberi tulajdonságairól szólnak. A történetek középpontját nem a kulturális vívmányok, a városalapítások adják, hanem az emberi lét. Ami emberi Felfokozódik a szenvedés nehézsége által. Benne foglaltatik a tragikus vég, mely elkerülhetetlen. Minden történet lényegében egyetlen drámát villant fel, az istenember sorsát mutatja be, mely számtalan változatban is egy és azonos. Az ember anya sorsa, aki istentől esik teherbe, a halandó apa, aki az istent helyettesíti, Sorsa bár adott, annak végkifejlettje nem, ezeket a variációkat jelenítik meg a történetek. Halottkultusz, tehát a sors beteljesítésének ünnepe. A hérosz sorsszerű feladatait megváltoztathatatlan lényege által tölti be, ez az, ami előtt a kultusz tiszteleg. A lehetőség, hogy a résztvevő kapcsolatba kerüljön saját sorsával, szembenézzen lehetőségeivel, és változtasson rajta a mitikus példát követve.

*„A haldoklóval halok én és a most fürdetett újszülöttel születek, nem vagyok én kalapom és cipőm közé zárva,
És sokféle dolgot megnézegetek, melyek mind-mind különböznek és mind jók,
Jó a föld és a csillagok és minden járuléku jó.
Én nem vagyok föld, sem valamely föld járuléka,
Pajtása és társa vagyok velem egyformán halhatatlan és mérhetetlen embereknek,
(Ők nem ismerik halhatatlanságukat, én ismerem).”*

Kerényi a héroztörténetek elmondásán keresztül történő átélését összeköti a Dionüszosz-kultuszban, elmondott tragédiákkal. A Héroszok szenvedéseit elbeszélő történetek egyrészt az ő tiszteletére szólnak, másrészt róla, hiszen Dionüszosz a hérosz az istenek között. Aki bár isteni lényegű, mégis Istenember. Szoros kapcsolatban áll a holtak birodalmával. Egyes értelmezésekben Hadész is egy személyben. Születése alvilági születés, vagy halálban születés, szorosabban a tűzben születés, egy olyan isten létrejötte, akit megérintett a halál, és abból érkezik. Ezáltal igazi archetípusa az istenembernek, mert mindkét lényegét magában hordozza. Perseus, aki Mykénai alapító hérosz volt, és maga is egy érckamrában, vagyis tulajdonképpen egy sírba zárva született meg, ölte meg Dionüszoszt. Tehát meghalt, még ha ehhez egy másik istenember is kellett. Más

történetekben a Titánok tépték szét, és fogyasztották el testét, hogy egyedül a szíve maradjon meg. Halandósága, mely emberi lényege volt, nem kerülhette el sorsát. Dionüszosz ünnepeken az alvilágból hívják fel őt, mert bár meghalt, isteni lényege alvilági létezését biztosítja. Otthonából, a halálból, ismét megjelenjen az élők hívására. Ő az Isten, aki osztozik velünk a halában. A kettős létezés nem egyedi a görög mitológiában. A japánban ismert eredettörténet egyik verziója szerint az égben lakó istenek adtak parancsot a teremtésre. Elszakadtak a földi létezésről, és rejtőzködő istenné váltak. Szerepük arra korlátozódott, hogy megparancsolták Izanaginak és Izanaminak, vagyis a férfi és női aspektusra szétvált Égnek és Földnek, hogy fejezzék be a teremtést. Utolsónk a tűz istene születik meg, aki megégeti a méhet, mely megöli az anyát. Izanagi lemegy a föld alá, és keresi feleségét, de végül az oszladozó testtel találkozik, melyet hátrahagy, és visszaszáll az égbe, miközben az anya a föld alá zárva marad. Ez megfelel annak, hogy Izanami egy időben istensége a termékenységnek és a halálnak, a születésnek, és az anyaölbe való visszatérésnek (Eliade 273). A hérosz, ha nem is a halálban születik, akkor is a halálra. Mert ez pályája elkerülhetetlen végpontja, mint minden létezőnek ezen a földön. Sorsa a sírba vezet, hogy onnan tovább hasson, és tisztelet övezze. Dionüszosz halála isteni létezésének is fontos aspektusa. A növényzet más isteneihez hasonlóan erőszakos halált hal, de feltámad. Ünnepegen felelevenítették szenvedését, halálát és feltámadását. (Frazer 261) A határok átléphetővé tétele, az egyszerre létezés két világban fontos eleme a hérosznak. Campbell megfogalmazásában a hős az a férfi, vagy nő, aki képes leküzdeni saját és társadalma kulturális, történelmi és morális korlátait. Tágabb értelemben, aki le tudja küzdeni létezésének született formáit, és átalakulásában többé változik. A hérosz ura önmagának, modern ember, de halála elkerülhetetlen. A teszt éppen ez, az enyészetben kell újjászületnie, mint tökéletes, makulátlan létező, és ebben a formában kell visszatérnie, és átformálódásával felvértezve segíteni az embereket. (JC15) A visszatérés, és a társadalomba való visszarendeződés a halál beállta után nehézkes feladat lehet. Szükséges hozzá az ünnep, mely lehetőséget teremt számára, a két világ közti határ átlépésére, hogy a társadalom cselekvőivel, azok akaratának megfelelően, kölcsönhatásba lépjen. Már csak az a kérdés, milyen hatást fejt ki, ha egyszer ez a kapcsolat megtörténik. A hérosz, bár nem központi jellegzetessége, a változás mitológiai alakja is. Kerényi értelmezésében fő jellemzője az emberi jellegéből adódó tragédiája, és kulturális hatásai mellékesei. A változáshoz való kötődés azonban elidegeníthetetlen egy olyan mitikus létezőtől, aki ilyen közeli kapcsolatban áll a halállal. Mely végső soron maga

a születés, hiszen éppen elkerülhetetlensége teszi lehetővé a változást. A régi meghal, az új átveszi a helyét. Ebben az értelemben ezek a történetek éppen a halandóság félelme fölött aratott győzelemről szólnak, és a változásokról, melyeket halálukkal indítottak be. A hérosz az a személy, aki korlátozott idejében teljesíteni képes sorsát. A jelentőségteljes élet és ez a kiteljesedés, ami az eljövendő korokban is rezonál, és melyhez végül is minden félelmünk ellenére is halál vezet el bennünket. Melyben, ha meg is szűnünk embernek lenni, hőrozként örökké létezhethünk.

"A világ bealkonyulni látszik, de én mesélek, mint rég, kicsit éneklős hangon. Ez tart fent, ez kímél meg a jelen zűrzavarától és őriz meg a jövőnek... Vége a játéknak az idővel, a cikázásnak az évszázadok között, mint azelőtt. Már csak egyik napról a másikra tudok gondolkodni. Hőseim ma már nem a katonák, királyok, hanem a béke dolgai. Még senkinek sem sikerült eposzt énekelni a békéről. Mi van a békében, hogy nem vágyik maradandóságra, és hogy alig-alig hagy mesélni magáról...? Ha az emberiség elveszti mesélőjét, azzal elveszítette gyermekségét is."

A megszületés és a halandóság eredeti felcserélhetőségének, és körforgásának rendje, ahol a temető és az otthon dinamikus viszonyban állt egymással Heidegger, halálos renddé szilárdította. A halált a szokás, mint aktus felől értelmezi, mely lehetőséget teremt a temetőben való megnyugvásra, a magzati állapotban való elpihenésre, mely sohasem ér véget (Macho 92.) Ezzel nem csak megszűnik a halál kapcsolata az élettel, hanem bekövetkezik a halottak kizárása az élők közül, a hőrozkok szenvedéssel megváltott emlékezte megszakad, és emléküik csupán leírássá silányul. Az első lépés talán az volt, mikor a polgári társadalmaknak megadatott, hogy megszabaduljanak a haldokló látványától. Nincs hely, idő, se tér a haldokló számára. A halottal nem lehetséges kapcsolatot tartani, mert aki meghal, megszűnik létezni is. A testeket porrá tesszük, és elszórjuk. Aki viszont felfüggeszti kapcsolatát a halottaival, aki felborítja az élők és holtak világának ellentmondásos kapcsolatát, nem kerülheti el annak következményeit. Egykor halottainkat átvittük a folyón, lehetőséget teremtettünk számukra, hogy kilépjenek a mi világunkból, majd kapcsolatot tartottunk velük, megértettük, és megértették, hogy sorsuk beteljesedett. Ma azonban a modern városban nincs helye temetőknek, és így maguk válnak temetővé. Nem véletlen, hogy a hőrozkok, és istenek megsemmisülésével együtt jelentkeztek az első kísértetek, a modernitás hajnalán Amerikában, Hydesvillben, az első modern kopogó szellem. Nem hőrosz, csupán egy a ház alá korábban eltemetett házalóügynök nyughatatlan lelke. Sorsa aligha teljesedett be, és életét nem világította be

az isteni fény. Csak halálát ismerjük, történetét vele temették ismeretlen gyilkosai. A ház helyén ma tábla áll: „Ezen a helyen született a modern spiritualizmus. Itt állt a Fox nővérek otthona: ők voltak a médiumok, amikor először létesült kapcsolat a szellemek világával 1848. március 31-én. Itt nincsen halál, itt nincsenek halottak.” Pozitivistá üzenete hátborzongató, mert ahol nincsen halál, és nincsenek halottak, ott értelem szerűen élők se lehetnek. A lelkek rendezetlen kiáramlása, és hontalansága megszünteti a kommunikációt. Kopognak, kaparnak, zörögnek, soha többé nem érthetjük meg őket, és aki meghal elveszett. Halottak házaiban lakunk, halottak bútorain hajtuk álomra fejünket, és halottak könyveiből olvassunk. Körbe vesszük magunkat az elhunyt fényképeivel, tárgyaival. Végrendeletünket is mozgófilmre rögzítjük, nem gondolva bele, milyen hátborzongató, síron túli üzenetet adunk szeretteink kezébe. Most már valóban velünk vannak halottaink, benépesítik életünket, de ugyanakkor osztoznak a meg nem értettség, és a céltalanság átkában. Többé már nem érthetjük meg őket, és nem emlékezhetünk rájuk. Ez pedig mindannyiunk tragédiája, mert az út végén a biztos feledés vár, és nincsen alvilág, melyben elfoglalhatnánk megérdemelt helyünket. De talán van remény. A héroszok végül elbuktak, de emléküket őrzik a poros könyvek, történeteiket újraértelmezik a filmek és képregények, talán a modern halottnak modern kultusz jár.

Terepnaplómba a következőt írtam november 2-án, a Halottak Napján: Sötétedés körül értem el a Mission kerület szívének tekinthető 24. Street és Mission Street sarkot, ami minden évben a Halottak Napi felvonulás kiindulópontja. Ahogy kiszálltam a taxiból, a legvalószínűtlenebb tömegbe csöppentem. Sok ezer feketébe, esetleg fehérbe öltözött ember, többségük arcfestéssel, néhányan csak fehér arccal, fekete rúzzsal, mások művészi koponya sminkben. Csipkék, bársonyok, gótikus ruhák. Mindenkinél körömvirág, és tömjén, melynek erős illata mindenhol keveredik a marihuána szagával. Unott rendőrök, sok fehér és ázsiai, kevés spanyol. Égő gyertyákat, körömvirágot, bekeretezett fotókat tartanak. Magányos öregember egy nagyméretű keretes fotót támaszt a falnak, majd óvatosan egy kopott trombitát vesz elő, és játszani kezd. A melódia összekeveredik a szemközti bárból kiszűrődő spanyol énekléssel, az utca túloldalán gitározó fiatal zajával, a közeledő felvonulás elképesztő robajával. A táncosok, és a hozzájuk csatlakozó bátrabb nézők csörgőkkel, dobokkal ütik a menet ritmusát, miközben egy táncos csoport óriási fehér lampionokat táncoltat, mintegy jelképezve az elhunytak közöttük lebegő lelkét. Mögöttük óriási fáklyákat hoznak, és tovább hömpölyög a tömeg, táncosok, és tűzfújók, zsonglőrök. Mögöttük, előttük, mellettük a járdákon a táncoló, toporgó, lökdösődő nézők.

Mindenki vidám, a zaj és a fény, a rengeteg tömjén füstjétől ködösnek látszik az utca. Mindenki nyíltan, és bőségesen fogyaszt alkoholt, és füvet...

Egy pillanat műve és eltűnik az egész sokadalom. Valahol rossz irányba fordultam, már csak távoli hangokat hallok, igyekszem megkeresni a helyes irányt. Az máskülönben üres utcákon kis csoportokban emberek ülnek. Mindenhol saját kis oltár áll, gyermekek fotói és az oltárra helyezett új, még ki nem csomagolt játékok. Az oltárok körül ülők nem sírnak, de csendesek. Halkan dúdolnak. Kérdésekre elárulják, hogy nem is tudják ki építette az oltárt, nem tudják, ki a gyermek. Idős férfi ül a járda szélén, mellette idős kutya, ölében körömvirág, gyertya, és egy fiatal nő fényképe az 50-es, 60-as évekből. „Ne félj a haláltól!” Kiabálja, egy fiatal nő, kezében egy atomrobbanás gombafelhőjét ábrázoló festménnyel. Egy kapualjban fiatal pár szerelmeskedik. Mire rátalálok a menetre, már elérte végcélját, és a táncosok szétszéledtek. Ez már a Garfield Park. A „hivatalosan” felállított művészi oltárok, és az azokat körbevevő kisebb konstellációk töltik be a zöld részeket. A nagy oltárok koncepciója kivehetetlen a rengeteg embertől. Sóval rajzolt csontvázak, étel, gyümölcsök, régi festmények, fotók. Mindenhol állnak, ülnek, fekszenek, zenélnek és isznak. A tér közepén kis papír fecniket kötnek egy fára. „Ez a Halál Fája, ezen keresztül üzenhetünk halott szeretteinknek.” Előttem turisták próbálják lefotózni az egyik papírdarabot. Fiatal lány lép mellém, és a kezembe nyom egy pár szál körömvirágot. „Biztos te is szeretnél valakiről megemlékezni.” A szomszéd réten egy hatalmas fényképekkel teli fal előtt komplett zenekar játszik halkán, félig a földön fekvé, ülve. Monoton, lassú, és az énekesnő hangjától feláll a szőr a karomon. Körülöttük az egész rétet beterítik a földön gubbasztó gótikus ruhás fiatalok. mind arcfestésben, mind a földre borulva, néha felemelkedve, karjaikat széttárva az ég felé. A sötétben olyan, mint egy selyempárnákkal teleszórt rét. Visszafelé tartok a halál fája felé. Egy alacsony drótkerítésen rengeteg fénykép, és melléjük tűzve rengeteg virág. Az egyik jó barátom apja múlt héten halt meg, egy percig becsukom a szemem aztán a kerítésbe tűzöm a virágokat. Ahogy ellépek a kerítéstől egy szembe jövő középkorú férfi barátságosan megszorítja a kezem, a vele tartó nő pedig megölel. „Éljél boldogan.” mondják. Aztán eltűnnek a tömegben. Nem sokkal múlt éjfél... San Francisco 2011.

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