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EDITORIAL: 21st ICA MEETS POPULAR INQUIRY

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The Organization of the 21st International Congress of Aesthetics by the Faculty of Architecture, University of Belgrade and the Society for Aesthetics of Architecture and Visual Arts of Serbia (DEAVUS) under the auspices of International Association for Aesthetics on "Possible Worlds of Contemporary Aesthetics: Aesthetics Between History, Geography and Media", had the basic intention to show, interpret and map the unity and diverseness in aesthetic thought, expression, research, and philosophies on our planet.

This special issue of *Popular Inquiry* consists of six of the papers presented at the ICA 21st Congress that are thematically within the scope of the journal. Dušan Milenković's text "Understated Significance of Form in Gracyk's Aesthetics of Popular Music" discusses the significance of form which causes specific problems in Theodore Gracyk's aesthetic theory. Fuminori Akiba's "Aesthetics of Japanese Convenience Stores: From the Point of 'Eating Alone'" reconsiders the lack of shadow/darkness and food culture from convenience stores in contemporary Japan. Maxim Demchuk's article on "Deconstruction of Melody and Rhythm as Aesthetic Elements of Contemporary Popular Music (The Case of Kanye West's Album «Yeezus»)" emphasizes the phenomenon of the consumption of contemporary musical products available for listening on the various social networks. Aleš Čakalič's article "Tragedy and Farce in Dušan Kovačević's Post-Yugoslav Screenplays" interprets how specific Serbian film scripts can be read in relation to Marx's assertion. Yumi Kim Takenaka's paper on "*The Family of Man* in Japan: A Photographic Exhibition for World Peace and Atomic Culture in the 1950s" stress the ethical dimension of the exhibition *The Family of Man*, a large-scale photographic record of the human development and cycles of life in the context of contemporary global antagonisms.

Texts collected in this issue discuss complex relations between political, philosophical, cultural, aesthetic modalities of contemporary art and culture.

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UNDERSTATED SIGNIFICANCE OF FORM IN GRACYK'S AESTHETICS OF POPULAR MUSIC

Dušan Milenković

Abstract

In his book *Listening to Popular Music: Or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Led Zeppelin*, American aesthetician of popular music Theodore Gracyk does not specifically examine the problems of the aesthetic form of popular music. Moreover, the role and importance of the listener's aesthetic experience of musical form is not clearly emphasized in his thoughts on the aesthetic evaluation of popular music compositions. However, some of the most important Gracyk's thoughts on the experience and evaluation of popular music – including his critique of „active listening" thesis and his analysis of the competencies needed for the adequate evaluation of popular music – are inevitably bound to the problems of musical form. In this paper, I am primarily interested in the reasons why the significance of musical form is understated in his aesthetic theory. In the first chapter of the paper, I try to show that Gracyk didn't actually downplay the importance of musical form in his criticism of the notion that „active listening" to the structural aspects of a musical composition is the only genuine way to aesthetically experience music (a notion he primarily attributes to Hanslick). I argue that Gracyk's arguments against the „active listening" thesis and his thoughts on the consequences it has on the experience and evaluation of popular music cannot be rightfully applied to Hanslick's theory, in which musical form is the basis for the appreciation of a classical music piece. Following this, in the second part of the paper, I analyze the way in which Gracyk's thoughts on the aesthetic evaluation of popular music, expressed in his understanding of Robert Hatten's views on stylistic and strategic competencies, are directly linked to the listener's ability to experience the musical form of a popular music composition. I conclude by suggesting that although this is not explicitly stated in Gracyk's aesthetics, the musical form in his book *Listening to Popular Music* is of greater importance than it has been explicitly stated. In addition, I explore certain similarities in Gracyk's and Hanslick's aesthetic conceptions that are easily disregarded if the thoughts of American aesthetician are interpreted through his critique of the „active listening" thesis.

Keywords

Theodore Gracyk, Eduard Hanslick, aesthetics of popular music, musical form, listening to popular music, aesthetic evaluation of music

1. Introduction

Theodore Gracyk is certainly one of the leading figures of the aesthetics of popular music today. Having published three books on this matter (with rock music as his main interest) – *Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock* (1996), *I Wanna Be Me: Rock Music and the Politics of Identity* (2001), and *Listening to Popular Music: Or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Led Zeppelin* (2007), he has already covered various aspects of this field of study, from analyzing the aesthetic experience and evaluation of popular music to examining the social role of popular music. However, although his book *Listening to Popular Music* is primarily focused on experience and evaluation of rock music, the problems of the aesthetic form of this type of music have not been thematized as issues of special importance. This author does not devote a chapter in his book to aesthetic problems related to the musical form. Moreover, Gracyk does

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not particularly emphasize formal aspects of the compositions of popular music in chapters dealing with other theoretical issues related to popular music, such as the question of evaluating popular music compositions. In this paper, I am primarily concerned with the reasons why understating the significance of form causes some problems in his aesthetic theory.

The lack of an explicit theoretical approach to the musical form of popular music can be viewed as the result of Gracyk's criticism of traditional aesthetic conceptions such as the formalist aesthetics of Eduard Hanslick. Since Hanslick developed his views on the aesthetic experience of music focusing on the examples of classical music and its formal characteristics (while ignoring popular music in his aesthetics), Gracyk asserts that Hanslick's theory would most likely "dismiss much of what is interesting about a lot of popular music".[1] Despite Gracyk's attitude towards Hanslick's theory, I will compare Gracyk's own thoughts on the role of form in popular music with Hanslick's theoretical conception in his famous book mostly known as "On the Musically Beautiful", or, according to the translation I am referring to in this paper, „The Beautiful in Music". With this comparison, my aim is to show that Gracyk's and Hanslick's thoughts have more in common than Gracyk is willing to admit in his critique of the notion of „active listening", which he attributes to Hanslick.[2] Moreover, I will try to develop this connection even further by presenting Gracyk's ideas on stylistic and strategic competencies needed for the evaluation of popular music as his own way to indirectly promote the importance of musical form in aesthetic experience and evaluation of popular music.

Approaching the role of musical form in popular music this way – by introducing it primarily in the context of criticizing traditional aesthetics' thoughts on popular music – is not uncommon in the aesthetics of popular music. Besides Gracyk, Richard Shusterman's examination of the musical form of popular music is directly linked to his „defense" of popular music as a genuine art form.[3] However, the issue of this kind of theoretical approach to the role of musical form lies in the fact that it unquestionably links thoughts on aesthetic form either to the theoretical position of traditional aesthetic formalism (in which the popular music is ignored, such is the case in Hanslick's theory) or to the traditional theories of art (such is the case in Shusterman defense of popular music). Shusterman argues that the traditional aesthetics' dismissal of popular music's art status is partially the result of its critique of allegedly inferior formal characteristics of the cultural products counted as „popular art".[4] Proving its art status, Shusterman talks about „formal devices" of rap as a genre of popular music.[5] Gracyk does not follow him in this, arguing that popular music should be „defended" without insisting on its art status.[6] In addition to that, although this is not often the case, formalism sometimes becomes connected with elitism in Gracyk's book on listening to popular music.[7] It is hard to expect that this aesthetician of popular music will insist on promoting the analysis of formal aspects of a popular music composition when

the analysis of form is closely connected with the theoretical procedures of formalism, and even elitism. Criticizing both the formalism and Shusterman's thoughts on popular music as an art form, Gracyk is on the theoretical standpoint that by itself recommends avoiding the question of the role of form in popular music.

On the other hand, as Gracyk suggests in the second chapter of his book, the importance of aesthetic experience and evaluation of popular music is often neglected in the theoretical works on popular music in favor of emphasizing sociopolitical values that popular music compositions promote.[8] Thus, Gracyk's attempt in his book *Listening to Popular Music* is to reaffirm the aesthetic discourse on popular music as the interdisciplinary approach which will not conform to the traditional aesthetics' solutions such as the (Hanslick's) notion of "active listening".[9] However, Gracyk does not examine the role and importance of musical form in his aesthetics of popular music even though he often directly refers to formal aspects of popular music compositions. I will try to show that American aesthetician inevitably comes across the problems related to the musical form when he formulates his own aesthetic theory in this book, in particular, his ideas on the stylistic and strategic competencies required for the adequate evaluation of a popular music piece.

2. "Active listening" thesis and its consequences for listening to rock music

In *Listening to Popular Music*, Gracyk approaches the problem of the aesthetic form of popular music indirectly. He is doing this by analyzing the theoretical conceptions in which the experience of music is genuine only if listening is an activity that concentrates on the formal structure of a musical piece. According to these conceptions, the aesthetic experience of music is achieved if a listener is approaching a composition actively and consciously, which means he is exclusively focused on formal aspects of a composition.[10] If a listener didn't manage to devote his whole attention to the structural base of a composition, then he hasn't been "listening" to music the right way, but solely "hearing" the aural characteristics of a musical work. Although this understanding of listening to music is attributed to several aestheticians including Eduard Hanslick, Edmund Gurney, David Prall, and Monroe C. Beardsley, explicating the consequences that arise from the illustrated theoretical perspective when it comes to the listening to popular music, Gracyk refers mostly to Hanslick's theory in his book "The Beautiful in Music". It is not surprising that Gracyk directed his attention in this chapter primarily to the famous formalist aesthetician and critic. The dichotomy of listening and hearing, which is his main topic in this chapter, he directly attributes to Hanslick's theory.[11] However, although he criticizes Hanslick in this chapter of *Listening to Popular Music*, in another chapter of this book Gracyk agrees with his ideas on „auditory imagination", by which Bohemian critic emphasizes that „music must be

constructed from the flow of sound" in the imagination of the listener.[12] Therefore, it seems that Hanslick's theory has influenced Gracyk's aesthetics of popular music at least to a certain extent. The most important aspect of Gracyk's interpretation of the "active listening" thesis is his analysis of the ways in which it could challenge the aesthetic experience of popular music. Taking into account that the aim of the advocates of this thesis was not to question the possibility of a genuine aesthetic experience of popular music, Gracyk believes there are at least three negative consequences of this conception as far as listening to popular music is concerned. I will briefly present these consequences in the following section and point out how they are related to the problems of the aesthetic experience of form in popular music compositions.

As the first consequence of the "active listening" thesis, Gracyk emphasizes the problem of the knowledge allegedly needed for an adequate experience of popular music. If the genuine aesthetic experience of a musical piece "always requires *conscious* exercise of critical categories concerning musical form",[13] then it can be brought into question whether listeners of popular music actually listen to popular music compositions. Gracyk responds to these conceptions by showing that listeners of rock music do comprehend the main characteristics of the compositions they listen to, so that their listening to this genre of music does not require any special knowledge for proper aesthetic experience. For example, this aesthetician believes that listeners of rock music already hear when the same melodies reoccur in different songs, the identical parts of the song are repeated in different compositions, or certain ways of creating melodies are used by the composer, such as the frequent appearance of so-called blue notes.[14] Although these arguments eliminate the need for conscious knowledge or proper skills for listening to rock music, it seems that Gracyk still does not dismiss the traditional aesthetic notion of "active listening" – on the contrary. As can be seen in Gracyk's own examples, the listener of rock music is expected to aesthetically experience formal aspects of the composition he is listening to – to perceive the basic characteristics of the melody of these compositions, but also to recognize the special formal devices in this kind of music, such as the presence of blue notes. Although Hanslick's analyses of various formal aspects of the classical music composition a listener is concerned with are much more in-depth, there are similarities in the way Gracyk examines the activities of a popular music listener and Hanslick's own approach to the listening of classical music. For example, Gracyk's suggestion that a popular music listener recognizes the characteristics of a melody of popular music reflects the way in which Bohemian critic points out in his examination of Beethoven's Overture to "Prometheus" that a listener is able to discern to the main aspects of the melodic movement in this composition (but not the emotional content allegedly represented in it).[15]

Another negative consequence of the traditional aesthetic notion of "active listening" is that every genuine aesthetic experience of popular music would be reduced to perceiving the formal structure of a composition. According to Gracyk, the traditional aesthetics of music believes that a listener needs to "extract a pure sound structure" from the "total aural experience" to approach a musical piece adequately. [16] This includes neglecting both the characteristics of the "concrete performance" of a composition and other aspects of a musical piece that do not contribute to the formal unity of a composition, such as the lyrics of a vocal composition. Gracyk's main concern here is the role of lyrics in a particular musical composition: when we exclude the lyrics from the aesthetic experience of a popular music tune, "[o]ne twelve-bar blues is remarkably like another".[17]

However, emphasizing the importance of the aesthetic experience of a formal structure need not be done by dismissing the significance of other aspects of a composition. Interestingly enough, although Hanslick considers the aesthetic experience of musical form the most important aspect of the experience of classical music, he does not think that the words ("libretto") in a non-instrumental classical music compositions would in some way distort and jeopardize the aesthetic experience of this composition – the opposite is the truth. Hanslick himself stressed out that „poetry" is "enhancing the power of music".[18] Even though Hanslick talks about „poetry" when he states that words can improve the expressiveness of a musical piece, which suggests he is considered solely with the aesthetically valuable examples of the poetic art, he is actually concerned with every situation in which „words are set to music".[19] Therefore, his thoughts on the role of poetry can be directly applied to the examination of the contribution of lyrics to the aesthetic value of popular music, regardless of the value of lyrics themselves. However, it seems that „poetry", whether it is good or bad, will not affect the aesthetic evaluation of the music if the specifically musical aspects of a composition have already made this composition valuable or not-valuable for the listener. In a note in the second chapter of his book, Hanslick agrees with Ferdinand Hiller that "even the most wretched poem, when set to beautiful music, can scarcely lessen the enjoyment to be derived from the latter, whereas the most exquisite poetry fails to compensate for dullness in the musical part", while later in the same chapter refers to the similar Mozart's thoughts in another note.[20]

Thus, from the perspective of Hanslick's theory, „poetry" can affect the aesthetic evaluation of a composition only if the value of composition hasn't been already established on specifically musical grounds. Applying these Hanslick's thoughts to the aesthetics of popular music, it seems that the lyrics of popular music would have the same role, altering in some way the evaluation of a composition that has not been already judged aesthetically on the basis of its musical characteristics. Surprisingly, Gracyk would agree to a certain extent with Hanslick here,

having in mind that he emphasizes „four decades of empirical research" that proves that listeners judge music usually before understanding the lyrics.[21] In Chapter 2, Gracyk is primarily interested in analyzing those listening activities in which listeners marked a certain piece of popular music as valuable before understanding its lyrics, so that their subsequent interpretation of the lyrics would improve their overall experience by suggesting them certain non-musical content.[22] Analyzing the examples of this kind, Gracyk tries to show that aesthetic evaluation of a (non-instrumental) popular music piece cannot be reduced to listeners' comprehension of the lyrics' meaning and thus evaluated according to the non-musical values promoted in it.[23]

In addition to that, Gracyk's argumentation assumes that the lyrics of a popular music composition do not contribute to the very structure of a listened piece. But having in mind that the lyrics usually provide a listener with the basic orientation in the arrangement of a song – telling her which part of a tune is the verse and which is the chorus – it is doubtful that any of the above mentioned traditional conceptions in the aesthetics of music would completely ignore the lyrics, and the same goes for the contemporary analysis of popular music. In the section dedicated to the aesthetic form of hip hop music in his famous text "The Fine Art of Rap", Richard Shusterman examines the structure of a hip hop song exactly by talking about lyrics – by describing the relations between stanzas and the chorus in a song that belongs to this genre of popular music.[24]

Finally, the third consequence of the traditional aesthetic notion of "active listening" on the aesthetic experience of popular music is very similar to the second one. Gracyk argues that the active listening to a popular music composition leads to ignoring the entire "expressive force" of popular music, so that rock music composition will not get any aesthetic qualities via the very sound of a distorted electric guitar and powerful drum beat.[25] Just as in the case of the previous consequence, these sounds are marked as "nonstructural" and thus disregarded in the aesthetic experience of a popular music composition. It is obvious that rock music will lose much of its charm with this formalist intervention. Still, this does not need to be the unavoidable consequence of stressing the importance of the formal and structural aspects of a composition when it comes to its aesthetic value. Hanslick himself often emphasizes the role of an instruments' timbre in the aesthetic experience of classical music.[26] Certainly, this formalist aesthetician does not claim that the timbre of the instruments in a composition will have a decisive effect on the aesthetic evaluation. What is Gracyk's opinion on this matter? In Chapter 2, he refers to Robert Walser's research in which this musicologist shows that people often listen to heavy metal music because of its „powerful drums & bass".[27] However, despite the fact that Gracyk uses the results of this research to prove that people most often listen to popular music because of their „aesthetic interest" in it,[28] it seems that he is unwilling to formulate his own

theory of the aesthetic evaluation of popular music that will legitimize the evaluations solely based on the qualities of a timbre. As I will try to show in the second part of this paper, Gracyk's thoughts on the stylistic and strategic competencies are mostly concentrated on formal aspects of a composition, but also include the remarks on the timbre of instruments used in a composition that belong to a certain genre of popular music.

Gracyk expands the topic of „active listening" further by analyzing the thesis that this kind of listening should be only reserved for the situations in which the listening is an „exclusive activity".[29] However, I will not analyze this problem in this paper, because it is not directly relevant to the examination of the role of musical form in the listening to popular music, having in mind that the experience of the form of a musical piece can occur even if the listening is not the only activity of the listener. Such is the case in Gracyk's own example of a couple dancing to the music while perceiving its rhythmic characteristics, and even its „tonality as a guide to determine when the piece is about to end".[30] In final remarks of the chapter on the dichotomy of hearing and listening, Gracyk conclusion is that "active listening", as traditional aesthetics of music views it, cannot be restricted to grasping the formal structure of a composition. Instead, he promotes the pluralism of genuine experiences of popular music. Our listening practice varies depending on the genre of music we are listening to, and "active listening" of the formal structure of a musical piece is just one practice among other sorts of listening.[31]

So far, Gracyk's "democratization" of various listening habits doesn't mean dismissing the "active listening" thesis at all. But it seems that Gracyk's analysis of "active listening" in this chapter of the book *Listening to Popular Music* is not limited to this conclusion. After considering the consequences traditional aesthetics' thesis has on the experience of popular music, Gracyk also points out that "applying the skills of analytical listening to a simple popular song can result in sheer boredom".[32] Unlike in the "democratic" conclusion already mentioned, Gracyk here not only disqualifies "active listening" as a way of listener's reaching out for the aesthetic merits that one popular music composition can provide but also warns a popular music listener that "active listening" could distort or disrupt his aesthetic experience of a piece of popular music. Does this mean Gracyk does not recommend this type of listening to popular music?

If the "active listening" implies reducing the aesthetic experience of popular music to the formal aspects of compositions of this kind, then I agree with Gracyk that it should be avoided altogether. But the analysis of his views on the consequences of the "active listening" thesis has shown that this is not the case. Affirming formal aspects of popular music composition does not necessarily mean disregarding other aesthetically relevant aspects of a listened musical piece. We can just as well approach the popular music compositions with the intention to aesthetically experience their formal structure without ignoring the non-structural and expressive aspects of it.

In fact, as I will try to show in the next section of this paper, aesthetically experiencing the formal characteristics of a popular music composition is exactly the practice Gracyk praises as the most trustworthy way of achieving the adequate aesthetic evaluation of a popular music composition.

3. The role of form in Gracyk's views on the aesthetic evaluation of popular music

In the chapter "Aesthetic Principles and Aesthetic Properties", Gracyk presented the reasons why the aesthetic evaluation of a popular music composition should not be driven by theoretically formulated aesthetic principles. Instead, he is proposing two "competencies" as the groups of habits a listener needs to develop when approaching a composition that belongs to a certain genre of popular music.[33] Using the terminology of music theorist Robert Hatten, Gracyk distinguishes stylistic and strategic competencies that encourage aesthetic evaluation.[34] Stylistic competencies provide a listener with the ability to perceive those characteristics of a composition that are telling her to which music genre this composition belongs to, while strategic competencies supply her with the expertise of identifying those characteristics of a piece of music that make it outstanding.[35]

Gracyk explains how these competencies govern the aesthetic evaluation of popular music by analyzing three different descriptions of the aesthetic experience of certain blues compositions: W. C. Handy's and D. Scarborough's first encounters with a blues song, as well as Bob Dylan's first time listening to the recordings of the blues musician Robert Johnson. William Christopher Handy is a musician, while Dorothy Scarborough is a novelist. While I will not analyze these descriptions of their listening to the blues separately, I will examine Gracyk's theoretical motivation behind his interpretation of these various experiences. Handy's description of the first blues songs he heard in a train and at a dance event in Mississippi, Gracyk regards as an example of acquiring the stylistic competencies needed for the further aesthetic evaluations of blues compositions.[36] In contrast to Handy's description, Scarborough's views on "that peculiar, barbaric sort of melody called 'blues'" Gracyk interprets as her failure to obtain stylistic competencies and think of the observed musical characteristics as the aspects of a distinct musical genre, and not the signs of the negative aesthetic value.[37] Finally, in Dylan's praise of subtle and unique Johnson's musical interventions to the standard blues song structure, Gracyk detects not only that Dylan is applying stylistic competencies in listening to Johnson's song, but also that he has acquired strategic competencies that go beyond indicating the main features of a blues song.[38]

There are some differences in these descriptions of the aesthetic experiences of blues compositions, the most important one being that two of the mentioned listeners of the blues are professional musicians – Handy and Dylan, while Scarborough is a novelist, although already

familiar with „other types of African-American music, the work songs and church music".[39] Moreover, it seems reasonable to presume that Handy successfully acquired stylistic competencies of blues by playing this kind of music, not just by listening to it: „Returning to Clarksdale, Handy set to work on band arrangements of African-American songs, among them 'Make Me a Pallet on Your Floor'".[40] Nevertheless, it is striking that Gracyk's analysis of the described listening activities is almost exclusively concerned with the ability of these listeners to grasp and adequately interpret the musical form of the compositions. Gracyk is emphasizing how Handy's own journey of acquiring stylistic competencies for listening to the blues started when he first experienced some of the formal characteristics of a blues song, such as repeating the lines of a verse three times. The acquiring of them was certainly completed when Handy identified other "basic elements of the blues" – Handy marked other formal aspects of this music such as "variation of a pentatonic (five-note) scale, with flattened thirds and sevenths" and "rhythmic syncopations".[41] Moreover, Gracyk's interpretation of Scarborough's description shows that this novelist did not manage to recognize the formal structure of a twelve-bar blues song, which led her to conclude that this new music "likes to end its stanza abruptly, leaving the listener expectant for more".[42] Citing Dylan's own analysis of Johnson's songs, Gracyk is openly speaking about musical form, emphasizing that "Dylan hears a mastery of form and sophisticated, disciplined songwriting".[43] This musician highlighted the altered song structure in Johnson's compositions, and this aspect of his unique approach to blues was crucial for Dylan's fascination with the father of the Delta blues. Johnson made the „perfected" kind of a blues song because „each song contained four or five verses, every couplet intertwined with the next", in an „utterly fluid" way .[44]

Not relying on these listeners' own words on the characteristics of the blues songs they have listened to, Gracyk expands these statements by examining them using the terminology of music theory. Analyzing Handy's thoughts on the blues, Gracyk additionally reviews the melodic and rhythmic characteristics of the blues, and while explaining the fact that Scarborough experienced blues song as „incomplete", he also describes the harmonic structure of a standard blues song.[45] Despite Gracyk does not analyze Dylan's words in detail, it should be noted that although this musician is referring solely to the formal structure of the lyrics of a blues song, these characteristics directly determine the arrangement of a musical piece, and also its rhythmic qualities. That being said, it seems that Gracyk examines these listening activities almost exclusively on the basis of the ability of a listener to perceive formal aspects, regardless of the fact these descriptions also include commentaries on the lyrics, sound or the performance of the compositions listened. Scarborough is talking about the „mournful liveliness of tone",[46] although attributing it to the „melody" of the blues, but not to the sounds of the instruments played in a blues song, so she might have been speaking metaphorically here. In addition to that,

Handy mentions some of the aspects of the blues musician's performance, such as the fact that he used a knife as a guitar slide (by which he indirectly also refers to the sound of the sliding on the guitar strings, that had the „unforgettable" effect), and even cites one part of the lyrics of his song.[47] Lastly, Dylan's words also mention the characteristics of the lyrics: Johnson's songs have „short, punchy verses".[48] However, according to his analysis of these descriptions in the manner of music theory, it seems that Gracyk's conclusion on which of these listeners has acquired the stylistic and strategic competencies hasn't been drawn from their ability to aesthetically experience the lyrics, sound or the performance of the blues, but its musical form.

These Gracyk's reviews of described listening activities are reminiscent of the way Hanclick musicologically analyzes a listening experience of classical music.[49] However, this does not mean Gracyk is promoting the idea of the necessity of this kind of formal analysis and the appropriate „formal musical training" for the adequate experience of popular music – he insists that stylistic and strategic competencies can be acquired unconsciously.[50] Nevertheless, without the formal musical analysis of its structure, the experience and evaluation of popular music that Gracyk described in this chapter would still be concerned with the formal aspects of a composition. Despite his expert analyses, Hanslick too doesn't think listeners should theoretize this way when they are experiencing a composition: „An analysis of this kind reduces, it is true, to a skeleton, a body glowing with life; it destroys the beauty, but at the same time it destroys all false constructions".[51] When Gracyk asserts that Hanslick is „equating listening with an educated response",[52] it does not mean that a listener should apply any kind of music theory to the music experienced. According to another Gracyk's commentary on Hanslick's theory, this educated response is „an intense aesthetic enjoyment that can only be derived from anticipations and confirmations of the music's pattern as it unfolds in performance. In order for this process to take place in one's imagination while listening to a performance or reading a score, one must know the conventions of the relevant musical tradition".[53] As suggested in Gracyk's words, it seems that Hanslick's theory just as well presupposes that listeners need to apply some kind of stylistic competencies („conventions of the relevant musical tradition") in their aesthetic experience of music. Additionally, when Gracyk cites Hanslick's words in which formalist aesthetician criticizes „passive" listeners because they do not succeed in grasping "what is special in every composition, namely, its artistic individuality",[54] it appears that Hanslick himself promotes utilizing procedures of evaluation similar to those conducted by Gracyk's strategic competencies.

4. Conclusion

It is doubtful that Gracyk's criticism of the "active listening" thesis has brought into question Hanslick's theoretical conception because this criticism hasn't actually been directly linked to

what the traditional aesthetician has stated in his own theoretical writings. Although less restrictive than Bohemian critic, Gracyk is on the same path as Hanslick in his analysis of stylistic and strategic competencies that govern the aesthetic evaluation of a popular music piece, because the competencies are mainly concerned with the formal aspects of a composition. While primarily promoting the experience of the formal characteristics of a musical piece, Hanslick does not simply ignore the role of „poetry" in non-instrumental classical music. Although insisting that lyrics should not be counted as less important than the „specifically musical" aspects of a composition (as Hanslick's theory suggests), Gracyk still does not overemphasize the importance of lyrics in his thoughts on the aesthetic evaluation of popular music. Lastly, taking into account Hanslick's commentaries on the role of timbre in the aesthetic experience of certain compositions, it cannot be said that the formalist aesthetician is insisting on „extracting a pure sound structure" from the complete aesthetic experience of a classical music piece. Certainly, Gracyk has put a greater emphasis on the qualities of sound in the aesthetic experience of music, but he is aware that Bohemian critic hasn't actually been in the adequate historical position to advocate for it, because Hanslick had written his famous book before the era of recorded music.[55] However, according to the way Gracyk presents his thoughts on the described aesthetic experiences of blues compositions, it seems that the quality of sound does not play the decisive role in the chapter of *Listening to Popular Music* dedicated to the basic assumptions of aesthetic evaluation of popular music.

This examination of the significance of musical form in Gracyk's own theory of the aesthetic evaluation of popular music gives reasons to think that the experience of the aesthetic form has an important role in his aesthetics of popular music, although this is not explicitly stated. Despite Gracyk's doubts that "active listening" can end in "sheer boredom" when it comes to listening to popular music, it appears that in the chapter "Aesthetic Principles and Aesthetic Properties" Gracyk promotes exactly that kind of listening to popular music – a stylistically and strategically competent experience of musical form. If we draw the consequences from Gracyk's analysis of stylistic and strategic competencies, it follows that not only this type of listening won't distort the aesthetic experience of popular music, but also that this is the only kind of listening that leads to "perceptual and imaginative habits required to appreciate the music".[56]

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[3] Richard Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 169-170.
[4] Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, 171, 188, 198-200.
[5] Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, 204-205, 232.
[6] Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music*, 24-26.

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[7] Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music*, 141, 156-157.
[8] Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music*, 45-59.
[9] Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music*, 6, 13-14, 34.
[10] Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music*, 135.
[11] Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music*, 139.
[12] Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music*, 187.
[13] Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music*, 139.
[14] Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music*, 139.
[15] Eduard Hanslick, *The Beautiful in Music* (London, New York: Novello and Company Limited, The H. W. Gray Co., 1891), 40-41.
[16] Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music*, 139.
[17] Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music*, 139.
[18] Hanslick, *The Beautiful in Music,* 45.
[19] Hanslick, *The Beautiful in Music,* 45.
[20] Hanslick, *The Beautiful in Music,* 60.
[21] Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music*, 62.
[22] Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music*, 62-67.
[23] Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music*, 59-62.
[24] Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, 233-235.
[25] Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music*, 140.
[26] Hanslick, *The Beautiful in Music,* 39, 41-42, 67, 75.
[27] Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music*, 58.
[28] Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music*, 59.
[29] Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music*, 143-146.
[30] Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music*, 146.
[31] Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music*, 150.
[32] Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music*, 142.
[33] Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music*, 77.
[34] Robert. S. Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 29-32.
[35] Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music*, 77.
[36] Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music*, 79.
[37] Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music*, 80, 85-86.
[38] Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music*, 82, 84-85.
[39] Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music*, 82.
[40] Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music*, 79.
[41] Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music*, 79.
[42] Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music*, 80.
[43] Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music*, 83.
[44] Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music*, 82-83.
[45] Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music*, 79, 81.
[46] Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music*, 80.
[47] Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music*, 78.
[48] Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music*, 83.
[49] Hanslick, *The Beautiful in Music*, 41-42, 75-76, 81-82.
[50] Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music*, 79.
[51] Hanslick, *The Beautiful in Music*, 42.
[52] Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music*, 145.
[53] Gracyk, *Listening to Popular Music*, 136.
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AESTHETICS OF JAPANESE CONVENIENCE STORES: FROM THE POINT OF "EATING ALONE"

Fuminori Akiba

Abstract

Convenience stores in Japan have a history of over 40 years. It is thought that they have greatly influenced Japanese ways of life. However, convenience stores are rarely the subject of research in aesthetics. This may be because convenience stores are bright and transparent, incompatible with traditional Japanese aesthetics of shadow in close proximity to light. They are also accused of selling so-called "convenience food," one of the causes of unhealthy "solitary eating," or "eating alone." From this point of view the food comics *Hitori Gohan* (Eating Alone) sold at convenience stores is interesting because the subject of solitary eating is the exact problem of convenience stores. Does *Hitori Gohan* show darkness or shadows of convenience stores? My hypothesis is that *Hitori Gohan* contains light, not just darkness of solitude. After testing this hypothesis directly against the manga and its readers, I conclude what the aesthetic stance is in today's Japanese convenience stores in comparison to *sabi,* a Japanese traditional aesthetic value, and its contemporary version, *mabusabi,* which closely relate to the solitude.

1. Introduction

Convenience stores in Japan have a history of over 40 years,[1] and the current number of users is said to be 1.4 billion every month.[2] Therefore, it is thought that it has penetrated the lives of people living in Japan and has greatly influenced their ways of life. However, convenience stores are rarely the subject of research in aesthetics. This may be because convenience stores are incompatible with traditional values, as seen in some accusations directed them. Through analysis of manga sold at convenience stores and its readers, this study attempts to reconsider two of these accusations (lack of shadow aesthetics and food culture) and suggest contemporary aesthetics in Japan.

1.1 Convenience stores in Japan

In Japan, people can buy almost anything at convenience stores: daily necessities such as food, underwear, detergents, stationery, medicine, and smartphone-related products including battery charger, Google Play Card, iTunes Card; luxury items such as tobacco and alcohol; in addition, newspapers, magazines, comics, and related goods such as Dragon Ball character figures, etc. However, this merely scratches the surface. At convenience stores, users can receive various products from Amazon or other home delivery companies. Furthermore, using the store's so-called

"multi-copy" machine, not only can users make copies, but they can also receive various kinds of tickets (including traffic tickets and for entertainment, such as concerts and amusement parks) from ticket-selling companies. There is also a bank ATM. Wi-Fi is available in the store, so one can work while having lunch at the dining space inside it. Numerous kinds of people visit convenience stores day and night to satisfy their needs. To meet that demand, most stores are open 24 hours a day,[3] shining brightly at the night through the transparent glass exterior.

1.2 The absence of shadow aesthetics

Regarding such a Japanese convenience store, Masayuki Qusumi, a famous Japanese original author of manga, criticizes as follows:

> "That strange brightness. You can see everything from the outside, always renovated, shiny, completely artificial odorless space from which shadows and darkness are completely eliminated."[4]

It is interesting to note that Qusumi states the shadows and darkness are completely excluded from convenience stores. This is because shadows and darkness have been instrumental in architectural spaces based on traditional Japanese aesthetics. Famous Japanese novelist, Jun'ichiro Tanizaki, wrote the essay *In Praise of Shadows* (1933), which expresses the aesthetics. He said, "As a general matter, we find it hard to be really at home with things that shine and glitter."[5] A group of researchers extracted some aesthetic features that appeared in architecture from the essay as follows:

a) Light passing through a *shoji* creates softness that does not clearly define the boundaries between objects.
b) Darkness exists in close proximity to lighting or light.
c) There is a shadow indicating slight movement in static darkness without motion by *Rosoku* (candle).[6]

Certainly, this aesthetics seem to be excluded from convenience stores. In that sense, traditional Japanese aesthetics and convenience stores are in opposition. This is what Qusumi is accusing. However, do convenience stores indeed eliminate the darkness?

1.3 The lack of food culture and the darkness of convenience stores

Convenience stores are not only criticized from this perspective. It is also accused of selling so-called "convenience food," one of the causes of unhealthy "solitary eating," or "eating alone." A convenience store where people can easily buy anything is especially convenient for busy single

people. Therefore, when they return home from work, they buy ready-made dishes and junk food at convenience stores and eat alone at home late at night.

Eating alone is not only prone to unbalanced diets, but also lacks the communication with others that comes with co-eating.[7] Solitary eating of convenience food might harm your health and your relationship with others. It seems to be a dark spot in a bright convenience store. Convenience stores exclude darkness as architecture, but do they contain darkness in the form of solitude?

1.4 Comics *Hitori Gohan* and the procedure of this paper

If so, the comics *Hitori Gohan* (Eating Alone) sold at convenience stores is interesting because the subject of solitary eating is the exact problem of convenience stores. Does *Hitori Gohan* show darkness "in close proximity to" the light of convenience stores? To think about the aesthetics of contemporary Japan that have emerged at convenience stores, I would first like to answer the following question.

Hereinafter, the following steps will be taken. In Chapter 2, I introduce some previous studies and briefly mention why there are only a few related studies and why we must consider comics sold at convenience stores. In Chapter 3, I reintroduce a food comic, *Hitori Gohan* (Eating Alone), in more detail and explain the story common to each episode. From this, I propose the hypothesis that *Hitori Gohan* contains light, not just darkness of solitude. Chapters 4 and 5 test this hypothesis directly against the manga and its readers. In Chapter 4, I compare *Hitori Gohan* with other food comics, especially other solitary eating comics, such as *Kodoku no Gurume* (Solitary Gourme). Through this comparison, the solitary darkness of *Hitori Gohan* is revisited. Chapter 5 uses reader comments to clarify the social nature of *Hitori Gohan,* comparing the sociality of the readers of *pachislot* manga magazine—called *Panic 7*—that is also sold at convenience stores. Through this consideration, I aim to confirm that *Hitori Gohan*'s darkness is not simply darkness but is to see the light that can only be seen after withdrawing from society. In the last chapter, I would like to mention *sabi,* a Japanese traditional aesthetic value, and its contemporary version, *mabusabi. Sabi* closely relates to the solitude and, thus, can assist in clarifying this paper's findings. Finally, I would like to suggest what the aesthetic stance is in today's convenience stores.

2. Related Studies: What is manga, and what role does it play in popular culture?

There is, of course, a huge amount of research on manga. Some research on food comics has recently appeared, for example, Kei Sugimura's *Gurume Manga 50 Nen Shi* (Fifty Years of Gourmet Manga),[8] and Nobunaga Minami's *Manga no Shokutaku* (Tables in Manga).[9] However, there is no analysis of food comics sold at convenience stores. Furthermore, there is almost no specialized research on the comics sold at convenience stores, except for Yoshimura (2018),[10]

which will be discussed later. The reason research is lacking relates to preconceptions about "what manga is" and "what role manga plays in popular culture," which have made comics sold at convenience stores invisible.

Most of the manga specialists in Japan continue to believe that comics sold at convenience stores as so-called "disposable manga," which is inferior to manga published in full-fledged magazines of the genre. They consider that such disposable comics are not worthy of serious research.

However, as previously mentioned, comics sold at convenience stores that are used daily by a huge number of people are thought to have many general readers, not just enthusiastic manga fans. Therefore, when contemplating contemporary Japanese culture, comics sold at convenience stores cannot be ignored. They are inevitable to the study of popular culture in Japan.

3. *Hitori Gohan* (Eating Alone)

I reintroduce *Hirtori Gohan*, a food comic (comics that deal with foods and meals) sold at convenience stores.

3.1 *Hitori Gohan* and its related manga

Comics sold at convenience stores are called *Conbini-comics* (hereinafter abbreviated as CC); that is, they are not sold at bookstores. The manga *Hitori Gohan* (the title means "Eating Alone") is one of the CCs bi-monthly releases by the Japanese publishing company, *Shonen Gaho Sha*. As of January 2020, the 28th issue has appeared.

Besides *Hitori Gohan*, other food comics are issued by the same publishing company, including *Omoide Shokudo* (Memorial Dining Hall), *Tokimeki-Gohan* (Heart Fluttering Meal), and *Min-na no Shokutaku* (Dinner for Everyone). Except *Hitori Gohan*, they all address meals with family and friends.

3.2 The structure of *Hitori Gohan* and the stories common to each episode

Hitori Gohan consists of around 20 short episodes made by different cartoonists. Each episode depicts a female protagonist, normally a young girl, who eats her meal "alone" for some reason. The protagonist, in most cases, is tired of something; for example, she has troubles with work, family, or friends. However, when the protagonist eats a meal, usually a common food,[11] she recalls memories of co-eating with her family during a meal or intimate fellowship with friends. At other times, that meal provides her with new discoveries and insights. Furthermore, it offers her a new interpretation or awareness of her memories. Finally, that memory or new discovery encourages and empowers her to try harder in the future. These are the stories common to almost all manga in *Hitori Gohan*. Sometimes, the protagonist cooks, and sometimes she only eats. In any case, protagonists or other characters often describe the meal preparation.

In the following, I aim to confirm that *Hitori Gohan* does not merely contain darkness but has light and darkness within it.

4. Features of *Hitori Gohan*

I would like to start by considering the manga genre. What are the characteristics of such *Hitori Gohan* compared to other food manga? In addition, how is it different from other "solitary-eating" manga? This is discussed below.

4.1 Comparison with general tendencies of food comics

A Japanese manga researcher, Kei Sugimura, organizes the reasons food comics are attractive into the following seven points:

a) They are faithful to our appetite for food.

b) They satisfy intellectual curiosity.

c) They provide a useful introduction to foods.

d) There are elements of conflict.

e) They are also "growing-up" stories.

f) They offer recipes for numerous dishes.

g) They stimulate our five senses using various means, such as onomatopoeia and exaggerated expression.[12]

For each aforementioned point, I would like to introduce Sugimura's explanation in more detail. 1) Because appetite is one of the most fundamental desires for human beings, comics dealing with appetite cannot be boring (but it is not easy for us to agree with this view because so many people suffer from eating disorders, such as anorexia). 2) They teach us about unknown cuisine. 3) You can learn the etiquette of the dish and how it is eaten. 4) The protagonist fights against the chefs (competitors) of the business-enemy through cooking, acquires various items, and cultivates friendship and romantic feelings. Finally, the protagonist wins. Like many RPGs, this story invokes the readers' empathy. 5) As the protagonist grows from an apprentice to a chef, readers also grow up together. 6) Recipes and tips on cooking are provided. 7) By skillfully incorporating onomatopoeia and exaggerated expressions into manga, which is a visual medium, it is possible to also stimulate taste, tactile sense, smell, and hearing. The meal is made more delicious by inserting useful information about the food (rarity, value of ingredients, etc.).

I do not deal with 1). Of these, 2), 3), 5), 6), and 7) will be easily found in *Hitori Gohan*. Because, as already mentioned, *Hitori Gohan* is a story where the protagonist gains new awareness through eating and develops as a character. If she is a beginner in cooking, she also gains new knowledge and knowledge about foods, such as recipes and food manner. In addition, in

scenes where she eats meals, onomatopoeia ("pu ha" after drinking beer, "zuzzu" when sipping miso soup etc.) and expression of taste (the main character's flushed cheeks, objects like flying soap bubbles, etc.) are used to make the reader realize the meal's deliciousness.

The circumstances are different with 4), because *Hitori Gohan* is a story that shows the protagonist overcoming her own weakness while eating a meal alone, switching her mind to the task of working hard from tomorrow forward. Therefore, she does not confront enemies but persists with a bearish self.

From the above discussion, we can see that *Hitori Gohan* generally shares many of the characteristics of food comics. However, its uniqueness is that the protagonist confronts herself through the act of eating alone. The story seems to be contained within the protagonist.

4.2 Comparison with other "eating alone" manga

In this section, I compare *Hitori Gohan* with other manga where the protagonist eats a meal alone. Through such comparison, I aim to confirm the characteristics of *Hitori Gohan* in more detail. The masterpiece of this genre in Japanese manga is Qusumi and Taniguchi's *Kodoku no Gurume* (Solitary Gourmet). The motto that forms the root of this comic is spoken directly from the mouth of a male protagonist. "When people eat, they must be free, not being disturbed by anyone, and ...how to say... they must be saved, alone, quiet and rich."[13]

What is decisively different is that the protagonist of *Kodoku no Gurume* is male, enjoying his meal in the diner of an unfamiliar town that he visits on business. He pays much attention to the town and the people living there. His interest is attracted by not only meals, but also by the people and the societies in which they live. This characteristic is not seen in *Hitori Gohan*. Furthermore, while eating, the protagonist of *Kodoku no Gurume* wants to be free, but it does not mean that he eats only what he likes. The protagonist is often forced to order something he does not want to eat for various reasons and, consequently, eats too much. Yet, such accidental events are something that does not exist in everyday routine work; therefore, he enjoys it. In this sense, he is free and rich while eating.

In addition, interactions with society and other people are described. Indeed, the remark of the protagonist quoted above ("When people eat...") comes from his anger for being hindered from his pleasure by a chef of the dining hall. Furthermore, the protagonist of *Kodoku no Gurume* does not evolve through eating. He simply eats something before him and observes all of his surroundings.

Truthfully, *Kodoku no Gurume* does not satisfy 1) to 6) of the seven characteristics of the aforementioned food comics. For that reason, it is different not only from *Hitori Gohan* but also from any other food comics.

Nonetheless, the comparison with *Kodoku no Gurume* highlights that the protagonist in *Hitori Gohan* is not disturbed by anyone when she is eating, and she has a taste of bliss. Therefore, comparing the two leads to the following questions: Where is the social nature of *Hitori Gohan*? In the next chapter, I will compare this point with *pachislot* manga, which is one of the representatives of CC. If *Hitori Gohan* really lacks sociality, it will only represent the darkness of solitude in convenience stores. There will be no coexistence of light and darkness. Is that indeed the case?

5. Sociality of *Hitori Gohan*

Next, I would like to consider the social nature of *Hitori Gohan*. This time, I consider from the reader's perspective. In this chapter, I compare *Hitori Gohan* with *pachislot* manga *Panic 7*, one of the representative comics sold at convenience stores. *Panic 7* is not only closely related to the reader's life, but it also has a strong social nature in connecting readers with each other by using various media. It may have a shadow concerning gambling but escapes the darkness of solitude by connecting readers. Here, it is questioned whether *Hiroti Gohan* also escapes the mere darkness of solitude and enables the coexistence of light and darkness.

5.1 A *pachislot* manga *Panic 7* and its readers

Panic 7 is a manga magazine set against the backdrop of the *pachinko/pachislot* industry that is worth 30 trillion yen sales in Japan, and it is sold at convenience stores alongside other comics such as *Hitori Gohan*. Its goal is to provide information to win the *pachislot* through manga and the DVD of the appendix. As of 2016, it has sold 100,000 copies. According to Japanese manga researcher, Kazuma Yoshimura, the following four strategies are responsible for such high sales:

a) Bold pricing
b) Sales at convenience stores
c) Effective issue format
d) Community formation

These are sales strategies that cater to the lifestyle of the *pachislot* practitioners, called "slotters." 1) The reason why the magazine can be sold at a high price is because it is quite natural for readers who aim to win through *pachislot* to invest money (usually about $8 USD, while *Hitori Gohan* is about $4.50 USD) for information on *pachislot*. An appendix DVD containing a movie showing in which the writer actually practices *pachislot* is also attractive. 2) It is reasonable for slotters that *pachislot* manga is sold at convenience stores because slotters are too busy pursuing *pachislot* from early morning until late night, so they cannot go to book stores within normal business hours. Therefore, when buying other daily necessities, they purchase *pachislot* manga

at a convenience store. *Pachislot* manga is a tool that will heal them as entertainment and offer them useful information toward the next slot game. 3) There are three kinds of *Panic 7* (normal, special, and gold): the magazine released on the 7th of every month, a separate volume released on the 17th, and a gold released on the 26th. Popular manga characters appear across all three magazines, and popular *pachislot* models are featured in each of the three magazines. Therefore, readers are enticed into buying all three magazines. 4) In addition, the publishing company hosts fan meetings in big cities, inviting prominent manga artists and writers who contribute to Panic 7, and it holds meetings with local readers at regional *pachislot* stores in cooperation with *pachislot* TV programs. In addition, the publishing company forms communities across the region using SNS, such as Twitter, and presenting or selling various kinds of cartoon characters' goods to keep the readers' interest.[14]

From the above consideration by Yoshimura, it can be understood that the *Panic 7* closely relates to the reader's life and strongly connects readers through various media.

5.2 *Hitori Gohan* and its readers

In comparison with *Panic 7*, what is the relationship between *Hitori Gohan* and the readers? I would like to reference *Panic7*. As stated in 1) and 2), *Panic7* was closely tied to the life of the readers (the slotters). How does *Hitori Gohan* compare?

There is no official website or Twitter created by publishers for *Hitori Gohan*. Therefore, the reader's tendency cannot be inferred from these. Instead, each issue has a "postcard" at the end to post comments or apply for a gift. Around 10 comments are introduced in the next issue. Therefore, it is considered that the reader's tendency can be understood to some extent from the comments written on the postcard. Of course, it is up to the publisher to decide which postcard is introduced, and it cannot be denied that the publisher may have chosen the postcard arbitrarily. Therefore, it should be noted that the following considerations are only to some extent valid.[15] The 239 comments are examined. The attributes of the 239 respondents are as follows. The first is age.

Under 17-years-old: 5
18–22-years-old: 6
23–29-years-old: 26
30–39-years-old: 80
40–49-years-old: 63
50–59-years-old: 41
60–65-years-old: 12
66–69-years-old: 6
70-years-old or more: 0

The ages between 18 and 22 years roughly corresponds to the age of Japanese university students. *Hitori Gohan* includes episodes in which a student from a region comes to a city such as Tokyo eats alone because she has no acquaintances. However, few readers are of that age. The reason for separating the age of under 65 from the age of 66 is that, in Japan, the 65-years-old is one measure of retirement. However, few readers who may be enjoying their meals alone appear to be over 65.

Gender is considered next. Postcards do not have a gender column. In addition, there is no need to fill in the name as most of them want to be anonymous, and the gender cannot be inferred from the name. Therefore, I can only say that most readers are from 30s to 50s. It can be said, however, that—regardless of gender—the generation is busy at work or home. According to the statistical research by Seven-Eleven Japan, the largest numbers of convenience store users are from 30s to 50s.[16] In that respect, the results of the postcard may not be so arbitrary.

I classified the 239 comments examined as follows. The total number exceeds 239 because one postcard may include multiple factors.

About each episode・・・65

    Impression on the episode overall・・・14

    About the characters in each episode・・・16

    About the ways of depiction・・・28

    About the story of each episode・・・7

About the effects of each episode on the readers・・・232

    On the action of the readers・・・112

    On the feelings of the readers・・・103

About the cartoonists・・・9

Others・・・8

"About each episode" is a reader's impression of episodes. "On the episode as a overall" is simply a comment that "the episode was fun." "About the character" means, for example, "the character's costume was wonderful." "About the ways of depiction" includes "the way of depicting food is quite real." "About the story" is a comment that predicts the next story development.

On the other hand, "about the effect of each episode on the reader" is divided into "about the action of the readers" and "about the feelings of the readers." Among them, "the action of the readers" means "I read the episode and I wanted to go and eat the dishes introduced there" or "I also tried to make the dishes." On the other hand, "about the feelings of the readers" include "I sympathized with the contents of the episode," "When things are not going well, reading the episode makes me cheerful," "I read and tears came out. Anyone can shine," and "I feel warm

after reading the episode." About the cartoonists is a message to the author such as "I like this author" or "Please do your best." Others are irrelevant to the episode or author.

It is too naive to say something about the relationship between *Hitori Gohan* and the life of the reader from these results. However, the result I show above is the only clue (I could never know the thoughts of many readers who have not applied for postcards). At least the following can be said. In the previous chapter, I highlighted that the protagonist is immersed in eating, compared to other food comics and other solitary eating comics. However, from the postcard's results, the closed act of the protagonist does not mean the closed act of the readers. From *Hitori Gohan* they receive some knowledge about food. Additionally, they want to eat the food and make it. More than that, they gain courage by sympathizing with the protagonist, seeing the protagonist overcome difficulties, and being healed by a warm story of "co-eating" with memories of her family. In this sense, *Hitori Gohan* is connected to the reader's life.

Another survey may indirectly tell us the link between *Hitori Gohan* and the readers' life. The publisher sometimes uses postcards to conduct a survey with their readers saying, "Please tell your memories of eating alone." The result shows that many readers take "eat alone" affirmatively. One hundred twenty-four of the 262 readers who answered this survey proudly wrote their favorite menu on the postcard. They can fully enjoy a special menu without worrying about anyone. I would also like to add that some answered as follows: sixteen people answered that when they eat alone, they can eat the meal more comfortably and more slowly;" additionally, twelve people said eating alone on the way home from work or overtime is quite delicious.

5.3 *Hitori Gohan* and its sociality

As stated in 4) in Chapter 5.1, the publisher of *Panic 7* strongly connects readers in real life through various media. In contrast, *Hitori Gohan* has no official website or Twitter, and there was only a postcard at the end of each issue. Therefore, there is no real connection between the readers. *Hitori Gohan* itself does not show special interest in social media. Of 510 episodes, I examined 101 episodes, including the scenes in which characters use smartphones. However, they only contact their family or friends by phone, email, or LINE before or after a meal. Of the 510 episodes, the scenes of photographing a dish, uploading it to the network, and sharing it with others only appears three times (No.4, *Akashi Yaki*, No. 11, *Inari Zushi*, and No. 18, *Chicken Nanban*[17]). The protagonist is immersed in eating itself while eating food without any external contact. The same applies to postcards from the readers. Only one in the "others" category mentions photographing dishes using a smartphone.

However, although *Hitori Gohan* does not create a connection in real life between readers, it offers the healing in a world of manga ("I am cheerful after reading the episode") and has the power to reconnect readers to real life. In other words, while *pachislot* manga connects

readers with each other as one of the closed circuits of *pachislot*, *Hitori Gohan* becomes a contact point that connects different circuits of personal life and the work of each reader. Moreover, in a sense, it can even be said that it is open to real life. In this regard, *Hitori Gohan* does not represent merely the darkness of solitary eating. It has the light side of giving hope for real life through the darkness of solitary eating. It is social.

6. Concluding remarks:
Hitori Gohan and a contemporary sensibility of convenience stores in Japan

Finally, I would like to confirm the findings of this study compared with the traditional Japanese aesthetic *sabi* and its contemporary version, *mabusabi*.

6.1 *Sabi* and *Mabusabi*

As quoted in the introduction, Tanizaki said, "As a general matter we find it hard to be really at home with things that shine and glitter." In a later part of the essay, he states:

> "Yet for better or for worse we do love things that bear the marks of grime, soot, and weather, and we love the colors and the sheen that call to mind the past that made them. Living in these old houses among these old objects is in some mysterious way a source of peace and repose."[18]

This paragraph might suggest a sensitivity that perceives the changes over time as *mujo* (impermanence, uncertainty, transitory). This sensitivity is what has been called *sabi*. However, convenience stores are quite new entities. It would be difficult to find this traditional aesthetics of *sabi* as it is in convenience stores or *Hitori Gohan*, even though I have succeeded in pointing out that light and darkness are adjacent in them.

Therefore, where does *mabusabi*—the contemporary version of *sabi*—fit in? A Japanese philosopher, poet, and the proponent of *mabusabi*, Motoaki Shinohara, stated:

> "*Mabusabi* that I advocated is the sensibility that accepts the two sensitivities with the heart of *sabi*. The two sensitivities that have been developed during the middle of the 19th and 20th centuries are the sensitivity to "*mabayusa* (dazzlement, the glare)" and the sensitivity to *sukitori* (transparency). The sensibility to *mabayusa* is inseparable from the development and use of various artificial lights, and the sensibility to *sukitori* is inseparable from the development and use of various transparent materials."[19]

Shinohara gives an example of *mabayusa*[20] by illuminating the past historical heritage with artificial light, noting that it gently highlights the heritage. He says that there is the heart of *sabi* that *mujo* is eternal. He also recalls that these artificial lightings will eventually become outdated

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with the appearance of new lighting. It is also the heart of *sabi*. On the other hand, he considers glass architecture as example of *sukitori*. In particular, he studies the glass pyramid of the Louvre by Ieoh Ming Pei. The Louvre contains the cultural heritage that Napoleon brought back during his Egyptian expedition. Thus, the transparent pyramid is a reference to the historical past with new transparent materials. He says that there is also the heart of *sabi*.

Accordingly, does Shinohara consider a convenience store filled with glass (transparency) and artificial lighting (brilliance or brightness) to be a manifestation of his *mabusabi* sensibility?

6.2 The findings of this paper

Nevertheless, convenience stores have no sensibility. If someone accepts a convenience store with the heart of *sabi* = gaze on impermanence, there is a possibility that *mabusabi* is established.

It seems possible. Convenience stores are full of impermanence of life. Some elementary school students fend off hunger with rice balls at a convenience store to attend a study school until 9 p.m. Some adults sit down and sleep at night in convenience store chairs because there is no home in which to return. Some elderly people who cannot go to distant supermarkets because they are old and live alone, due to fear of misfire, purchase ready-made dishes at convenience stores to avoid cooking. Some midnight workers eat at a convenience store that is only open late at night. There are foreigners who come from countries far from Japan and work part-time every day at convenience stores late at night, though someday their works might be replaced with AI. People who buy *Panic 7* and *Hitori Gohan* also have their own darkness. I am one of them.

However, if such impermanence is captured by personal sympathy or mere lonely feelings, it cannot be said that it is accepted with the heart of *sabi*. There are various meanings that have been put in the word *sabi* since the seventh century, for example, " the decay of life's vigor," "the brittleness and eventual disappearance of an original strength and form ," " feeling desolate, feeling sad deep down inside one's heart," "the fading away of colors," "lonesome, lonely," "flower withering, people leaving," "emptiness," "sense of desolation reflecting the feelings of someone who lived alone in a village deep in the mountains, and who spent his time indoors, looking over a snowy twilight" etc.[21] If anyone like poets can feel convenience stores with sensitivities that include all of these, then there may be *mabusabi*.[22]

Unfortunately, this paper did not succeed in confirming it. Rather, what this study has revealed is that convenience stores are not so brilliant or bright. Convenience stores and *Hitori Gohan* are where light and darkness are adjacent. The light wrapped in the darkness is placed next to the light and provided to the user. Even those who have darkness must be able to resolve the darkness in the light. Just as a light that only shines in the dark exists, there is a shadow that can survive only in the light. This is an aesthetic attitude present at convenience stores in Japan.

Fuminori Akiba

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1 For example, according to the website for Family Mart, a major convenience stores, its business started in 1978. https://www.family.co.jp/company/familymart/development01.html

2 https://www.jfa-fc.or.jp/particle/320.html

3 In recent years, there have been increasing debates that 24-hour business should be discontinued to improve the working environment. https://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXMZO53693320T21C19A2EE8000/

4 Masayuki Qusumi and Jiro Taniguchi, *Kodoku no Gurume* (Tokyo: Fuso Sha, 2000), 193.

5 Jun'ichiro Tanizaki, *In Praise of Shadow*, trans. Thomas J. Harper and Edward G. Seidensticker (New Heaven, Conn.: Leete's Island Books, 1977), 10.

6 Masahi Kawasaki, Hideyuki Hori and Tsuna Sasaki, "*Nihon no Dentoteki Kukan ni Arawareru In'ei no Ishosei ni Kansuru Kenkyu*" (*Doboku Gakkai Ronbunshu*, 458 (IV-18), 1993), 126.

7 Hiroko Tokunaga, Shoji Yu, and Naoki Mukawa. "Koshoku to Kyoshoku ni okeru Hito no Shokuji Kodo no Sikumi." *JCSS2015*, 680.

8 Kei Sugimura, *Gurume Manga 50 Nen Shi* (Tokyo: Kodan sha).

9 Nobunaga Minami, *Manga no Shokutaku* (Tokyo: NTT Publishing, 2013).

10 Kazuma Yoshimura, "Gyanburu Manga no Media Ron: Panikku 7 to Iu Na no Pachisuro Manga Zasshi ga Kaketa Mono," *Tobaku no Kigoron* (Tokyo: Shin Yo Sha 2018), 118-141.

11 Of the 510 episodes that could be investing, the best five are noodles (61 episodes), cutlet (26 episodes), *donburi* (rice bowl, 23episodes), curry (19 episodes), *sushi* (13 episodes), and *yakitori* (13 episodes). Of the 28 issues currently published, only number 9 was unavailable. However, the special feature of Volume 9 is "*Ramen*(Chinese noodles)", so it seems that this ranking will not change.

12 Kei Sugimura, *Gurume Manga 50 Nen Shi* (Tokyo: Kodan Sha, 2018), 4-7. I have attached the numbers from 1) to 7) for convenience.

13 Masayuki Qusumi and Jiro Taniguchi, *Kodoku no Gurume* (Tokyo: Fuso sha, 2000), 123.

14 Kazuma Yoshimura, *Gyanburu Manga no Media Ron* (Tokyo: Shin Yo Sha 2018), 122-134. The numbers are given for convenience.

15 If the tabulations introduced later were the result of arbitrary extraction by the publisher, it would represent the publisher's ideal *Hitori Gohan* image and ideal reader image. In other words, publishers want to make *Hitori Gohan* resonate with readers and make them feel more energetic. On the other hand, publishers seem to be asking readers to sympathize with the manga and to read and cheer up.

16 https://www.sej.co.jp/library/common/pdf/yokoga02018-19_all.pdf

17 Karo Jishima, "Akashi Yaki," *Hitori Gohan* 4 (Tokyo: Shonen Gaho Sha 2015), 121-122. Machi Yamakawa, "Inari Zushi," *Hitori Gohan* 11(Tokyo: Shonen Gaho Sha 2017), 70. Rin Asano, "Chicken Nanban," *Hitori Gohan* 18 (Tokyo: Shonen Gaho Sha 2018), 133. In the episode of "Parfait" the female protagonist also takes a photo of a parfait, but she uses a normal camera and does not send it to others. Beside the camera the word "only for the record" is written. Sally Imobata and Kitaki Taki, "*Pafe* (Parfait)," *Hitori Gohan* 18 (Tokyo: Shonen Gaho Sha, 2018), 195. In the episode of "Liver Cutlet" the female protagonist takes a photo of a liver cutlet, but she becomes aware that she posts only for getting evaluation from others, and stops posting. Umi Kuwana, "Liver Cutlet," *Hitori Gohan* 11(Tokyo: Shonen Gaho Sha), 149.

18 Jun'ichiro Tanizaki, *In Praise of Shadow*, trans. Thomas J. Harper and Edward G. Seidensticker (New Heaven, Conn.: Leete's Island Books, 1977), 11-12.

19 Motoaki Shinohara, "*Kireisabi, Barokku, Posutomodan: Fugamodan e*" *Between/Becoming* 1, 2011, 9.

20 M. F. Marra translates *mabusabi as,* "glaring lonesomeness." Michael F. Marra, "Aesthetic Categories: Past and Present," *Whither Japanese Philosophy? Reflections Through Other Eyes* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Center for Philosophy), 56.

21 Michael F. Marra, "The Paradox of *Inton*: Between Aesthetics and Anti-Aesthetics," *Mabusabi* (Kyoto: Shichigatsudo), 33-34.

22 In fact, *mabusabi* must be accompanied by various practices such as poetry writing, contemplation, and so on.

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DECONSTRUCTION OF MELODY AND RHYTHM AS AESTHETIC ELEMENTS OF CONTEMPORARY POPULAR MUSIC
(THE CASE OF KANYE WEST'S ALBUM «YEEZUS»)

Maxim Demchuk

Abstract

One of the main problems of the study of the verbalization of musical aesthetics is the phenomenon of consumption of musical products during the radical transformation of musical structures. What the audience is guided by when it comes to emotional and visual perception of music, if basic sound mechanics of influence on consciousness cease to be relevant? The melody serves as the basis for the *brainworm* phenomenon. But the paradox is modern music space are full of rhythm-based musical compositions. This is the basis for the designation of a new musical aesthetics. It is important to understand that we talk about popular music. According to *Nielsen* for 2017, hip-hop has become the most popular genre in America. An important precedent phenomenon that changed the vector of development of mass music was the release of the sixth Kanye West album "Yeezus", called a "protest against music" by the musician himself, but later established as a new aesthetic model, which became the dominant feature in modern pop music. Deprived of the traditional mechanisms of broadcasting musical pop aesthetics, the album occupied the top-3 of the American and English charts, and later became "platinum". The eclectic mix of different genres suddenly turned into a mainstream. Among the main elements of the "sound canvas" of "Yeezus", we can point out "ragged" rhythms, "tracks within tracks" and "aggressive" auto-tuning. In this study, we used the methods of qualitative and quantitative content analysis as well as musicological analysis. Quantitative content analysis allowed us to determine the emotional coloring of the comments of the audience and the texts of the authors of posts on the social network VKontakte immediately after the release of the precedent phenomenon. Qualitative content analysis is used to determine what verbal techniques were used to describe the object of study. Musicological analysis allowed us to isolate from the sheet music elements inherent in the new musical aesthetics and to highlight their functions partially. We concluded that the deliberate merging of many imaginative, semantic, historical and cultural plans is a key feature of modern musical aesthetics, and the postmodernist phenomenon of polystylism acquires a new life. With such a mechanism of creating a "musical canvas", a feeling of harmony is created within the framework of the modern picture of the world, but there are a lot of contradictions when considering each of the elements separately, if the context is understood, a condition that cannot always be met by a mass audience.

Key words

aesthetics, Kanye West, keys study, mass media, musical structures, new music, postmodernism

1. Introduction

Modern popular music has been functioning in the paradigm of postmodernism for a long time. It is a complex and multi-level phenomenon. The commonality of mass culture and postmodern is noted, for example, in the works of G. Yu. Litvintseva.[1] On the one hand, it demonstrates a

number of features characteristic of mass culture such as desire for universality and, the primacy of commercial function, style diversity, internationality, broadcasting of archetypical images established in the mass consciousness, the use of postmodern game, meaningful deconstruction and "moderate" mixing of cultural codes inherent in different traditions. On the other hand, mass culture is distinguished by reliance on clearly defined style dominants and interrelated musical traditions. A. G. Beltyukov identifies four basic traditions: African-American folklore, elements of Anglo-Celtic folklore, elements of Latin American folklore, and European academic tradition of the XIX - XX centuries. In his opinion, there is a special connection between the basic traditions, which ensures the development of musical culture from style to style, and the musical genre is the key carrier of this connection.[2]

However, in the modern musical picture of the world obvious tendencies to destructurize the genre system are outlined, in connection with which the principle of continuity on the grounds of basic traditions ceases to be relevant in some cases. The transformations of the structures of popular music genres, which are the current trend in musical aesthetics, have changed the principles of translation of cultural dominants, caused their mixing, and therefore, a number of features can be found within the framework of European music that appeared in a "concentrated" form only in the beginning of this decade in American, or even African music.

The key problem in the study of contemporary musical aesthetics lies in the phenomenon of the consumption of musical products during the radical transformation of musical structures. It is not completely clear what the audience is guided by when it comes to emotional-figurative perception of music, if the basic mechanisms of the effect of sounds on consciousness cease to be relevant.

According to Zettl[3], applied media-aesthetic analysis is not an abstract concept, but a process that considers the interaction between different media elements, and the perceptual reaction to them. One of these elements, in terms of musical aesthetics, is melody. It creates a logical combination of easily remembered sounds, readable by consciousness. It serves as the basis for the phenomenon of earworm or brainworm, the involuntary repetition of musical images[4]. However, melodies more and more often perform secondary functions (creating arrangements, postmodern "game") while rhythms become the "core" of compositions.

A number of researchers agree that aesthetics of form plays a key role in modern music. According to Kramer, B.[5] numerous streaming services provide users with individual musical proposals, thereby creating a new taste-forming paradigm, based not on the interaction of people and verbalized judgments, but on situational emotional preferences and aesthetics of form. This is also indicated by Hagen, A.[6], who claims that playlists that form the basis of music streaming services are constantly evolving and showcasing new ways of collecting music

information through streaming services, as a result of which they constantly shape and adjust the musical tastes of their owners.

Edelmann, A. Mohr, W. J.[7] believes that the growing development of a more formal theory of culture over the past two decades is due to the fact that the audience has ceased to perceive meaningful concepts. Continuing this thought, it can be assumed that the audience listens exclusively to cells or clusters torn from concepts, but not the product as a whole. Absorbs the form, ignoring the content. Bennett, A.[8] exploring the empirical study of music in the UK in the aspect of the concept of the neo-tribes Maffesoli, wrote that the musical tastes and preferences of people in the coming decades will not be tied to any specific social or cultural settings. The basis of popular music will be bright, but rapidly disappearing precedents. At this moment, it can be said that this hypothesis has been partially confirmed. Rapidly changing and extremely fluid eclecticism almost completely eliminated any taste statics, which makes it more and more often heard that music circulating in the framework of postmodernism is becoming increasingly stagnant and not quite justified. In our opinion, it would be more correct to say that genre stratification, reducing the role of music journalism, the disappearance of "generational" genre forms that marked whole generations and the secondary nature of ideas, against the background of total domination of hip-hop music, is a consequence of attempts to overcome the crisis that already has a place to be for a long time. Experiments with the form of modern musicians, which by the way performed within the framework of postmodernism yet, often turn out to be paradoxically successful, even within those cultural fields where their failure would seem inevitable. In fact, such precedents allow us to talk about the emergence of a new musical aesthetics, the main feature of which is the dominance of rhythms over melodies in the general musical context. The main platform for such experiments has become hip-hop.

According to Nielsen for 2017, hip-hop became the most popular genre in the Americas, with a margin of 12% ahead of the total number of albums sold and listening to streaming services from rock and pop music, which every year lose their positions more and more[9]. This trend is also present in Russia. One of the main moderators of the largest network of music groups in the social network VKontakte, E: music claims that users have become less disdainful about unfamiliar music associated with this genre, and the number of subscribers in thematic public pages is growing rapidly[10].

2. Methods

In this study, we used the methods of qualitative and quantitative content analysis as well as musicological analysis. Quantitative content analysis allowed us to determine the emotional coloring of the comments of the audience and the texts of the authors of posts on the social network

VKontakte immediately after the release of the precedent phenomenon. Qualitative content analysis is used to determine what verbal techniques were used to describe the object of study. Musicological analysis allowed to isolate from the sheet music elements inherent in the new musical aesthetics and to highlight their functions partially.

3. Results

As a study material, we chose Kanye West's sixth album "Yeezus" released in 2013. The work, called by the musician himself "protest against music", subsequently established a new aesthetic model that became the dominant feature of modern pop music. Deprived of traditional mechanisms of broadcasting pop music aesthetics, the album occupied the first lines of the music charts of the United States, Britain, Australia, Denmark, Russia and New Zealand, and also turned out to be in the Top 30 of almost all world ratings, becoming "platinum".

At the time of the release of the album, Kanye West was already a cult musician, whose works were included in the authoritative rating of 500 Greatest Albums of All Time by the American publishing house Rolling Stone. However, this album provoked a rather ambiguous reaction from both the professional public and fans. Russian editorial office of Rolling Stone gave it four stars out of five, but at the same time, did not write any reviews. Non-professional media on the social network VKontakte (having more than one hundred thousand subscribers at the time), - Fast Food Music, New Albums, E: \ music and Drugs And Booze also did not write any reviews or critique, limiting themselves to a few quotes from the musician himself (I just talked to Jesus, he said "what up Yeezus? I said Shit I'm chilling, trying to stack these millions")[11], information notes with contextual information (Winner of 14 Grammy Awards, producer, director, actor and just one of the most successful rap artists, Kanye West. The new album with the "modest" title Yeezus and the track "I am God" is available for listening)[12] or by links to reputable musicians (The best album of 2013 acc ording to Jack White. Awesome!)[13]. It can be assumed that for the critical discourse at that time there were not enough applied tools (musicological terms) or word-shaped keys (means of artistic expression that can describe such music so that the audience becomes interested in listening to it).

Opinions of subscribers of the above public pages is divided. While some praised the work noting a unique sound in particular, unlike the popular music and an eclectic musical component, others noted mediocrity and " dirtyness" of sound, and Kanye West himself was accused of saying that all his fame was nothing more than a consequence of outrageous behavior against the background of the degradation of the musical content of his new albums, or the exploitation of outdated styles.

But after a couple of months, an eclectic mix of industrial, punk, trap, acid house and modern experimental hip-hop suddenly turned into a mainstream, shifting traditional melodic, and seemingly universal, pop music. Among the main elements of the sheet music of "Yeezus", we can point out "ragged" rhythms, "tracks within tracks", "aggressive" auto-tuning, intentional sloppiness, frequent rhythmic "breaks", and the absence of traditional melodic audience "hooks" Polystylistics, which is an integral part of the musical culture of postmodernism, has long reached the stage when the "stitches" in the compositions became almost invisible, the boundaries between "own" and "alien" are blurred. However, in modern realities genre assimilation does not contradict the presence of collage effects created by quotations, but complements them, which is especially noticeable in "Blood on the Leaves" and the closing track "Bound 2". In the first case, Nina Simon's looped phrase from the bluesy standard "Strange Fruit" is distorted by autotune throughout the composition. In the second, a deliberately distorted musical soul-funk accompaniment (imitating lo-fi sound), belonging to the Ponderosa Twins Plus One group, deliberately mismatched with sharp industrial elements, vocal R&B pieces of singer Charlie Wilson, mid-century pop singer Phrases L and and the aggressive recitative of Kanye West himself. We should also mention the constantly changing rhythms crushing any melodies arising in the "musical canvas" without any transitions or preparation. The compositional elements described here are found throughout the entire album in one volume or another. It is possible to interpret their use in different ways, the synthesis of classical and modern or the collision of high musical style and modernist noises are only two of the possible ways. Despite such sharp oppositions, the comic effect is not created; moreover, often the sound is atonal and synthetic, filled with alarming artificiality. In our opinion, the sharp corners of stylistic contradictions are designed to destroy any stable images that arise when a particular musical element appears. It maintains a constant sense of cognitive dissonance. Subsequently, a similar scheme began to be used by musicians in various genres: from guitar instrumental music to all sorts of subgenres of hip-hop.

4. Conclusions

We concluded that the deliberate merging of many imaginative, semantic, historical and cultural plans is a key feature of modern musical aesthetics, and the postmodernist phenomenon of polystylism acquires a new life. With such a mechanism of creating a "musical canvas", a feeling of harmony is created within the framework of the modern picture of the world, but there are a lot of contradictions when considering each of the elements separately, if the context is understood, a condition that cannot always be met by a mass audience. Perhaps, the answer to the question about the emotional-imaginative perception of music, with the deconstruction of the basic mechanisms of the

effects of sounds on consciousness, should be sought not so much within the framework of music, as in the context of changes in the perception of time and space by a modern audience.

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TRAGEDY AND FARCE IN DUŠAN KOVAČEVIĆ'S POST-YUGOSLAV SCREENPLAYS

Aleš Čakalić

Abstract

Commenting on Hegel's remark that all great world-historic facts and personages appear twice, Marx famously appended that they do so the first time as tragedy, and the second time as farce. This paper intends to show how the film scripts by popular Serbian playwright Dušan Kovačević (b. 1948) can be read as a specific post-Yugoslav and post-communist artistic commentary on Marx's claim. Kovačević's scripts for three well-known post-Yugoslav films are discussed: Emir Kusturica's controversial Underground (1995), Goran Marković's The Tragic Burlesque (1995), and Kovačević's own The Professional (2003). Within the larger frame of post-Yugoslav cinema, these three films constitute an important segment of the ideological current of self-Balkanization, which seemed to be all over the place especially in the Serbian cinema of the 1990s. What these self-Balkanizing films have in common, according to Pavičić, is a perception of the Balkans as a zone of permanent and inveterate chaos, a zone to which occasional wars are actually rather endemic. The three Kovačević's scripts in question are very much in the same vein, yet they are substantially more farcical in nature when compared to self-Balkanizing films that were not written by Kovačević. It is in this specific Balkan mixture of tragedy and farce, exclusive to Kovačević's poetics, that one can detect an aesthetical reply to Marx's aforementioned view of history: tragedy and farce not as consecutive events, rather as two complementary artistic insights of the same event. And, while over the years there have been numerous exegeses on the political message provided in Underground by Kusturica, a lot less has been said about the effect of Kovačević's publicly known political stance as a royalist (i.e., a supporter of the 1945-deposed Karađorđević royal family) on his scripts. The three scripts in question prove to be completely consistent with such viewpoints.

Key words

tragedy, farce, post-Yugoslav cinema, royalism, self-Balkanization, Dušan Kovačević, Emir Kusturica

1. Introduction

Commenting on Hegel's remark that all great historic facts and personages recur twice, Marx famously appended that they do so „once as tragedy, and again as farce."[92] While Hegel's point had been that a pivotal event needs to be repeated in order to gain people's acceptance and general legitimacy in the course of history,[93] Marx focused on the „theatrical" aspect of such repetitions: those who repeat history are unable to take note that their time has passed, and are therefore comical in their miserable attempts. The radical left-leaning Jacobin phase of the French Revolution in 1793 and 1794 was thus, for Marx, a tragedy, whereas the French Second Republic between 1848 and 1851 represents a farce. During the 1790s, the French bourgeoisie had pushed for a thorough revolution (yet succeeded only partially – it did remove the Ancien Régime, but in the end, capitalism prevailed), whilst in the mid-19th century, it became farcically reduced to a reactionary movement.

This paper intends to show how film scripts by popular Serbian playwright Dušan Kovačević (b. 1948) can be read as a specific post-Yugoslav artistic commentary on Marx's claim.

In particular, a spotlight is shined on Kovačević's scripts for three well-known post-Yugoslav films: Emir Kusturica's controversial and much-discussed *Underground* (1995), Goran Marković's *The Tragic Burlesque* (1995), and Kovačević's self-directed *The Professional* (2003). Within the larger frame of post-Yugoslav cinema, these three films represent an important segment of the ideological current of self-Balkanization (a term developed by Croatian writer and film critic Jurica Pavičić), which seemed to be ubiquitous especially in the Serbian cinema of the 1990s, or at least, the most internationally renowned Serbian films of that period belonged to that trend. What those self-Balkanizing films had in common, according to Pavičić, was a perception of the Balkans as a zone of permanent and inveterate chaos, a zone to which occasional wars are actually rather endemic. The three Kovačević's scripts in question are composed very much in the same vein, yet they are substantially more farcical in nature when compared to self-Balkanizing films that were not written by Kovačević. In these three films, the tragic and the farcical aspects intertwine almost indistinguishably. Two inquiries into this intriguing microspace of popular culture will occupy me throughout this paper. Firstly, I will try to find out whether this specific Balkan mixture of tragedy and farce, exclusive to Kovačević's poetics, constitutes some sort of an aesthetic reply to Marx's aforementioned view of history. And, while over the years there have been numerous exegeses on the political message purveyed in *Underground* by Kusturica, a lot less has been said about the effect of Kovačević's publicly known political stance as a royalist (i.e., a supporter of the 1945-deposed Karađorđević Royal Family)[94] on his scripts. The paper will try to fill that gap by inquiring how this position plays into his post-1990 screenwriting oeuvre.

2. The artist

Popular Serbian playwright Dušan Kovačević (b. 1948) has left an indelible mark on the history of Serbian cinema. In the early 1980s, he signed the scripts for two comedies directed by Slobodan Šijan and set in the interwar Kingdom of Yugoslavia, namely *Who's Singing Over There?* (1980) and *The Marathon Family* (1982), both of which acquired cult status in the region, with the former also screening in the Un Certain Regard section at the Cannes Film Festival in 1981 and much later winning some polls for the best Serbian and even Yugoslav film of all time. Later on, after the breakup of Yugoslavia, one of Kovačević's pre-existing plays (to be precise, most of Kovačević's screenplays are updates of his pre-existing plays) was expanded by himself and the celebrated director Emir Kusturica into an exhilarating, controversial, three-hour allegory of the Balkans' permanent state of war, *Underground* (1995). This Cannes Palme d'Or winner was a textbook example of a trend in post-Yugoslav cinema that Jurica Pavičić, a Croatian writer and film critic, has labelled "the film of self-Balkanization".[95] Two further well-known examples of

this trend, both of which have nothing to do with Kovačević, are Srđan Dragojević's *Pretty Village, Pretty Flame* (1996) and Goran Paskaljević's *Cabaret Balkan* (1998). The common denominator of these films, the perception of the Balkans as a zone of permanent chaos, a territory on which occasional tragic conflicts are somewhat natural, is something the West wanted to hear in the 1990s in order to exculpate itself of guilt for inaction during the Yugoslav Wars, and some post-Yugoslav filmmakers were eager to satisfy that need. In short, self-Balkanizing films interiorize and often also hyperbolize Western cultural stereotypes about the Balkans. Pavičić's concept, as applied to the field of film studies, has its predecessor in Bulgarian historian Maria Todorova, who in 1997 referred to such naturalization of the region's cultural phenomena as Balkanism.[96] In doing so, she herself followed suit of Edward Said's well-known notion of Orientalism (1978).

The coexistence of tragic and farcical story elements is also true of both Kovačević's screenplays written for Šijan in the 1980s; a specific Balkan mixture of tragedy and farce has always been Kovačević's brand. But whereas, considering Kovačević's political stance as a royalist, the two Šijan's comedies can be read in retrospect as some kind of nostalgia for the pre-socialist Kingdom of Yugoslavia, Kovačević's post-Yugoslav screenwriting work is deeply concerned with Yugoslavia's socialist era and with its remnants in the post-1991 Serbian society. Let us now see how.

3. The new world

Underground continues the story where and when Kovačević's script for *Who's Singing Over There?* left off: in Belgrade on 6th April 1941, when the Luftwaffe began bombing the city. There and then catches fire Kovačević's and Kusturica's feral satirical stampede covering a turbulent half century of Yugoslav history, all the way until the 1990s. Which is to say Kovačević's 1977 play was updated (by both Kovačević and Kusturica) in order to include Tito's death in 1980 and the 1990s breakup war.

In the opening scenes of the film, the German "punishment" of the Serbian capital for the *coup d'état* against the accession of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia to the Tripartite Pact is harshly contrasted with archival footage of inhabitants of two other Yugoslav cities, Slovenia's Maribor and Croatia's Zagreb, emphatically saluting the German occupying forces in April 1941. The film, however, neglects to mention that there were thousands of ethnic Germans living in those two cities and that is was mostly them who saluted the invaders. Likewise, some highly unreliable Yugoslav characters in the first part of the story are referred to by unmistakable Croatian, Muslim, and Slovenian names. With such pieces of information and lacks thereof, *Underground*, although in a very naive sense a pro-Yugoslavist film (the sole moral character in the

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film is a firm believer in Yugoslavia), conveys a nationalist message that Serbs were always the victims and never the perpetrators, and that *other* Yugoslav nations bear all the blame for the evils that have befallen the Western Balkans. Such understanding of the meaning of the film has been prevalent in film studies, as well as being quite convincing.[97] Another possible reading was suggested by philosopher Slavoj Žižek, who contended in a 1997 essay that *Underground* was exactly what the Western gaze wanted to see in the Balkans: that this was a place of an incomprehensible, mythical cycle of passions, of Dionysian forces of nature that were inexplicable in rational terms.[98] Or, as Kusturica himself would say: "In this region, war is a natural phenomenon. It is like a natural catastrophe, like an earthquake that explodes from time to time. In my film, I tried to clarify the state of things in this chaotic part of the world. It seems that nobody is able to locate the roots of this terrible conflict."[99]

It was precisely this mystifying simplification that played a major part in the West's reluctancy to speed up the resolution of the Yugoslav conflicts in the 1990s,[100] although, of course, the simplification had already circulated in the West way before Kusturica triumphed with the film in Cannes. *Underground* was therefore, among other things, a translation of such statements into the language of cinema. By resorting to exuberant images and sounds of the Balkans as a place of inherent chaos (the constant loud music, hard partying, reckless machoism, obsessive fornicating), it failed to address the real reasons behind the Yugoslav Wars, such as nationalist ideology and cheap populism, or, indeed, even *encouraged* a chauvinist frame of mind (with the aforementioned labelling of unreliable partners in crime as a Slovene, a Muslim, and a Croat, and of Serbs as perennial victims). But what interests me most is the specific mixture of tragedy and farce which is very much at work in *Underground* yet considerably less potent in all the other films directed by Kusturica. One should take note that *Underground* is Kusturica's single film with Kovačević as screenwriter.[101] Being that Kusturica's other films do not intertwine tragedy and farce to such extent,[102] and since many other Kovačević's film scripts (including the Yugoslav ones) do so to a large degree, one can deduce that in *Underground*, too, this is a feature to be credited predominantly to Kovačević.

The core of *Underground* is a large cellar somewhere in Belgrade in which, during the Second World War, Serbian resistance fighter Marko hides his friends and family. Yet even after the war has ended, Marko keeps them down there, misleading them into belief that the war still goes on. The inhabitants of the cellar continue to manufacture weapons thinking they are meant for Tito's partisans fighting the Germans, but in reality, the weapons produced only serve Marko's private profit on the black market. All the while Marko enjoys life above ground as a

national hero and a celebrated poet in the Communist Yugoslavia. His deception is later exposed and he absconds, though the day of reckoning comes during the 1990s collapse of SFRY.

Throughout the first two parts of the film (covering the Second World War and the Cold War), the tragic and farcical aspects are intertwined rather than consecutive. If anything, tragedy follows farce instead of the other way around, seeing as the last part of the film, dealing with the characters during the 1990s Yugoslav Wars, is noticeably more mournful and solemn in comparison to the preceding events. Farcical aspects become scarcer. Kusturica and Kovačević do not spare us the tragedies of the civil war; as Marko finds out, "there is no war until a brother kills his brother."

Besides the obvious metaphor of the cellar standing for citizens of the Communist Yugoslavia being kept underground by a corrupt bon vivant, there are further clues in the last part of the film that offer an indictment of Yugoslav communism. The South Slavic paramilitary unit that in 1992 captures both "Ustashe" (Croats) and "Chetniks" (Serbs) is led by Marko's Partisan comrade Crni, who after all these years still walks and talks like a communist. Such an element of the plot confirms Dina Iordanova's reading of the meaning of the film that the communists (who have dominated the Yugoslav Partisan movement, ruled Yugoslavia until 1991, and are shown in the film in 1941 and 1961 as being morally corrupt and nihilistic) are to blame for the Yugoslav Wars.[103] In addition to that, both Pavle Levi and Jurica Pavičić take note of the film's repeated use of the song *Lili Marleen* which had been especially popular with the Germans during the Second World War. On two separate occasions, the song accompanies significant archival footage. Firstly, it complements the reception of the Germans in Zagreb and Maribor, while the second time, it underscores famous images from president Tito's funeral, the point of this musical analogy so manifestly being that the Titoist personality cult equals blind servility to Nazism.[104] Rejection of communism, evident in many of Dušan Kovačević's works, thereupon remains markedly alive and kicking in *Underground*, and is of course fully consistent with the playwright's royalist beliefs.

And yet, for all the somber tragedy of the 1992 chapter, *Underground* does end on a farcical note, with a fantasy coda of all the characters who had died throughout the story now alive again, in their best years, feasting and dancing, announcing a new life for the territory. The overall aesthetics of *Underground* therefore convey a feeling that tragedy and farce are two ways of life in the Balkans. It is not difficult to see why this film attracted charges of Balkanism, of exoticizing the Balkans and complying with the Western gaze, by film scholars and philosophers alike. I am sharing their opinion that the ideological force that ripped Yugoslavia apart was nationalism, oftentimes fuelled by religious zealotry, and not communism in itself. Which is not to

say that the Yugoslav communists were immaculate heroes, and nor would I want to belittle *Underground*, which is a very watchable and expertly made film full of bursts of unsurpassable creative energy. It is just that its controversies appear to be rather well-earned. The film's simplification of the complex causes of the Yugoslav Wars, the determined turning of a blind eye to nationalisms as important factors, going so far as to even *condone* Serbian nationalism – all of this leaves a bitter aftertaste to viewers who are more intimately familiar with the history of the region and are not content with tendentious answers.

4. The madhouse metropolis

Kovačević first wrote the play *The Tragic Burlesque* in 1990. The film version, directed by Goran Marković, is set in 1990s Belgrade but was filmed in Sofia, Bulgaria, in 1994. The story of the film is set in motion when a psychiatric hospital on the outskirts of Belgrade, due to the disintegration of the state and the sanctions imposed, runs out of medications and other necessary means to function properly. A doctor decides to leave the hospital with his twenty-some patients, escort them to the city by tram, and try to accommodate them with their relatives or even anyone at all who would be willing to accept them. Unsurprisingly, this turns out to be a mission impossible, yet the underlying message of the film is that Serbian society of the 1990s is already so psychotic in itself – through a chain of effects of wars in the region – that institutionalized psychiatric patients can meld with "normal" citizens almost seamlessly. Thus, the commotion the patients cause while cruising the Belgrade streets conforms to the Western stereotype of the Balkans as an inherently crazy, "mental" place, yet it goes even deeper than that. As Dina Iordanova wrote about the film in 2001: "The director's preoccupation is to show how, in today's Belgrade, traditional concepts of normality and insanity have become interchangeable – the 'normal' ones are depressed and incapacitated, while the deviant ones thrive on chaos, war and the trafficking of arms, drugs and fuel."[105]

The effect of this approach is deeply bittersweet: that which is funny is at the same time forcibly tragic. The film contains perspicuous accusations of the Communists' wrongdoings (mainly through dialogues), but, in the end, does not amount to much. The jokes are not hilarious, the characters are not interesting enough, the situations are weakly relatable and the story is thin in comparison to Kovačević's best works. There is no hook to keep us hooked. *The Tragic Burlesque* could be marked as a minor addition to Kovačević's screenwriting filmography.

5. Nothing ever changes

The Professional, too, was a play Kovačević first wrote in 1990. For the film version, shot in 2002, he updated the story so as to cover the most recent period of Serbian history between 1991

and 2001. The film, whose popularity has only grown over the years and now enjoys a cult following, is a high-concept story if there ever was one: what if one day a stranger walked into your office who knew everything about you? Well, that would be because of his job, which he would have been performing with the highest degree of professionalism. In the autumn of 2001, one year after the fall of Slobodan Milošević, an old man with a large suitcase walks into a publishing house in Belgrade where a strike is taking place on the ground floor, ignores the security guard, ascends a few floors and asks the secretary for a brief appointment with the new manager. The manager, Teodor Teja Kraj, a former literature professor and a dissident from the Milošević years, has no recollection whatsoever of the old man, who keeps calling him by his first name and asking him, "You *really* don't know who I am?" As it turns out, the old man, Luka Laban, is a retired officer of a national security agency, a dedicated professional whose duties in the previous decade included spying and eavesdropping on dissidents like Teja, and periodically taking action in order to ensure that Teja would not have compromised the regime. Luka seems to be ill, perhaps terminally, and appears to have visited Teja to "confess his sins". In the next "five minutes" of the appointment, which last for a few hours, Luka tells Teja how he twice came dangerously close to killing him because of his anti-Milošević and anti-communist rhetoric, and how he personally took care that Teja lost his job at a faculty. On the other hand, we get to see how Luka twice saved Teja's life, the reason being that Luka's daughter, a college student, was infatuated with her literature professor, Teja. Through these reminiscences, major episodes of Serbian 1990s history are revisited: the March 1991 anti-government protests, the 1995 fall of Knin, the 1996 post-electoral demonstrations and the 1999 NATO attacks. In Luka's large suitcase, there are countless items from Teja's life – things he lost or left behind.

The film is incredibly rib-tickling – one of the best jokes concerns the inflation crisis in Serbia's economy which meant that a copy of a newspaper cost 80 million dinars[106] – and *at the same time* unbearably sad: lives are shattered and loves destroyed. This is full-time tragedy and full-time farce on a large scale. Comedic attitude is shown to be one of the techniques to keep sanity, possibly in more ways than one: a rather corpulent lady remarks in 2000 that once Milošević is removed, she will be even fatter; now she at least keeps a tight rein on her weight because of all the worrying. In the farcical aspect, the film depicts the national security officer infiltrating a series of situations in Teja's public and private life, each time assuming a different disguise, even one of a Santa Claus (who then gets so involved in the action that he forgets he was supposed to be a Santa Claus, which leads to a hilarious exchange with those who expect gifts from him), without Teja ever recognizing his face. Again, as in *Underground*, tragedy and farce are shown to be inherent to the Balkans' way of life, and the film is moderately self-

Balkanizing in that it shows the recent history of Serbs as a neverending sequence of protests and wars, though this time, Kovačević does probe the role of Slobodan Milošević in the historical goings-on of the 1990s, the tragically negative role of the Serbian *vožd* which had been merely implicitly decipherable in *Underground*. So, on this occasion, Kovačević's heady mix of Balkanism and politics serves a more elaborate, a more down-to-Earth purpose.

The ending of *The Professional*, where it is revealed that Teja is still being monitored by the secret service even after the fall of Milošević and the retirement of Luka Laban, is all the more hurtful, the point being that on the level of politics, nothing ever *really* changes, power takeovers are revealed to be nominal rather than real. The new power continues to spy, and it unscrupulously spies upon "its own" people. *The Professional* shows what power with no outside (the concept, *pouvoir sans dehors*, stems from Michel Foucault and describes the plethora of micro-powers) means when transposed to a macro-stage in a totalitarian society such as Milošević's Serbia: in a society such as that, justice is unreachable because the perpetrators and the investigators of crimes are often one and the same; if one has access to enough power, one can arrange every political murder to come out as a suicide or an accident. Foucault acknowledged that resistance to such power must – and does – come from within the power itself,[107] and according to *The Professional*, this very resistance transpires from the personal ties that bind us. Each one of us has the capability to put personal above the political. It is precisely at this point that *The Professional*, sad and tragic as it is, offers at least *some* faith in humanity: when all has been said and done, and before leaving to check himself into a hospital, from where he may not emerge alive, Luka asks Teja to make a phone call to Luka's daughter in Canada and tell her that they (Luka and Teja) have met up – and, in the end, *parted amicably*. Obviously, prefering personal over political is an individualist and conservative outlook that perfectly complements Kovačević's dislike of communism, and it is the only recipe for fighting totalitarianism that Kovačević provides here. But it *is* a legitimate answer.

6. Conclusion

The three films discussed above have shown that tragedy and farce are not consecutive events as in the Marx statement; rather, they are two complementary artistic insights of the same event. History does repeat itself, in the Balkans perhaps even more so than elsewhere, but life can be, and often is, profoundly tragic and hysterically funny *at the same time*. From a more cynical viewpoint, if we were to take it, comedy could be understood as humanity's self-deceit to make the tragedy of life more bearable. The Western Balkans, famous both for their lengthy history of tragedies and for their excellent sense of humor, seem to be confirming this perspective.

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In Dušan Kovačević's post-Yugoslav screenplays, farce is abundantly added to the trage-dies usually attributed to (and shown in the films about) the disintegration of SFR Yugoslavia and to the 1990s transition period. However, in Kovačević's scripts, both Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav, farce does not follow tragedy, rather the two are shown to be two sides of the same coin, two complementary ways of addressing the Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav reality. If any-thing, in *Underground* it is solemn tragedy that follows a careful balance of farce and tragedy, but not without a final wink. As it happens, with his inclinations towards farce, Kovačević sig-nificantly enriched the otherwise more serious streak of self-Balkanizing post-Yugoslav films.

Whereas *Underground* was a major indictment of the moral nihilism and corruption of the Yugoslav Communists, implicitly blaming them for the Yugoslav Wars, *The Professional*, whilst similarly critical of the Communist era and its later remnants, allows for a more nuanced perception of power: the power is now oppressive and Orwellian regardless of who is in charge. In such circumstances, hope arises from resistance to the power, which has shown time and again to be the real guiding spirit, the real creator of the world's history, and a rectifier of at least *some* historical mistakes and injustices.

Regarding the other task I have taken on in the introduction of this paper, my conclusion would be that although the three Kovačević's scripts in question do not deal explicitly with the Karađorđević royal family, they do exhibit a clear dislike for the Communist regime and its con-tinuation into Milošević's Serbia, which, combined with Kovačević's soft spot for pre-socialist Serbia as shown in some of his other works, can be interpreted as fully consistent with his polit-ical stance as a royalist.

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92 Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon* (Gloucester: Dodo Press, 2009), 1.

93 Georg W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1924), 162. The first Roman emperor Augustus thus repeated and legitimized the intentions of the assassinated late Republic dictator Julius Caesar, Napoleon had to be defeated twice in order for his defeat to be historically confirmed, and the Bourbons in France had to be removed from power twice. Through a repetition, according to Hegel, something which was thought of initially as contingent, becomes actual and corroborated.

94 He is still, as of January 2020, mentioned as a member of the Crown Council of the Royal Family of Serbia on the official website of the Karađorđević Royal Family. As a matter of fact, so is Emir Kusturica, but Kusturica's contradictory political statements over the years would require a thorough analysis on their own. Kovačević's standpoints are much more »manageable« and consistent. The support of the Karađorđević Royal Family, which was deposed by the Communist takeover in 1945 but remains active in its aims to regain the Crown, is a constant of Kovačević's public life. For both his and Kusturica's membership in the Crown Council, see: »Crown Council«, The Royal Family of Serbia, accessed January 19th, 2020, »https://royalfamily.org/crown-council/«.

95 Jurica Pavičić, *Postjugoslavenski film: Stil i ideologija* (Zagreb: Hrvatski filmski savez, 2011), 137-141, 154-160.

96 Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

97 See, for instance, Pavle Levi, *Razpad Jugoslavije na filmu* (Ljubljana: Slovenska kinoteka, 2011), 81-89, and Dino Murtic, *Post-Yugoslav Cinema: Towards a Cosmopolitan Imagining* (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 46-60. This is also the viewpoint of Dina Iordanova in her monographs *Cinema of Flames: Balkan Film, Culture and the Media* (London: British Film Institute, 2001), 111-135, and *Emir Kusturica* (London: British Film Institute, 2002), 151-181.

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[98] Slavoj Žižek, »Multiculturalism, Or, the Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism", in Žižek, *The Universal Exception*, ed. Rex Butler and Scott Stephens (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 182-191. (Žižek's essay was first published in the New Left Review in 1997.)

[99] »Propos de Emir Kusturica«, *Cahiers du cinéma* 492 (1995): 69.

[100] Of the West's reluctancy to intervene in the Yugoslav wars, an overview is provided in Noel Malcolm, *Bosna: Kratka povijest* (Sarajevo: Buybook, 2011), 399-451 (the chapters on the Bosnian war). On the West's continuous exoticization of the Balkans as the »wild child« of Europe, numerous studies can be consulted, among others Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), and Božidar Jezernik, *Wild Europe: The Balkans in the Gaze of Western Travellers* (London: Saqui in the Association with the Bosnian Institute, 2004).

[101] In the late 1990s, Kusturica and Kovačević had two other common projects in the works, but both fell through: an adaptation of D. M. Thomas's 1981 novel *The White Hotel* for which Kovačević rewrote a pre-existing script, and *The Nose*, based on motifs from a Kovačević play.

[102] Before *Underground*, there had been no exaggerated humor in Kusturica's films. After *Underground*, Kusturica made two all-out farces with no tragedy whatsoever, *Black Cat, White Cat* (1998) and *Promise Me This* (2007), and two sad stories about Yugoslav Wars in which tragedy overshadows the occasional humor, *Life is a Miracle* (2004) and *On the Milky Road* (2016). In other words, neither before nor after *Underground* did Kusturica come close to an interlacement of tragedy and farce such as the one in his 1995 opus magnum.

[103] Iordanova, *Cinema of Flames*, 118.

[104] Pavičić, *Postjugoslavenski film*, 160. See a similar point in Levi, *Razpad Jugoslavije*, 81-89.

[105] Iordanova, *Cinema of Flames*, 268.

[106] The perfectly performed scene in *The Professional* where Teja pays one billion dinars for 10 copies of Politika (800 million dinars would be the price for 10 copies, the rest is tipping the newspaper salesman) is one of the two best artistic jokes on Yugoslav-related inflation crisis (that time in the late 1980s and early 1990s when prices and banknotes reached billions of dinars and which I am old enough to personally remember) I have ever encountered, the other being the line in Slovenian singer-songwriter Iztok Mlakar's song *Republika Palma de Cocco* (from his first album, released in 1992) where the narrator mentions that he received a lousy million for holiday allowance. What on Earth could he do with a lousy million dinars? All that remains is for him to put it in a sock, and once it is full, he will go on holiday... to a non-existing Republic of Coconut Palms.

[107] Mladen Dolar, *Kralju odsekati glavo: Foucaultova dediščina* (Ljubljana: Krtina, 2009), 98-99.

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Filmography

The Marathon Family (*Maratonci trče počasni krug*), directed by Slobodan Šijan, written by Dušan Kovačević, 1982.

The Professional (*Profesionalac*), directed and written by Dušan Kovačević, 2003.

The Tragic Burlesque (*Urnebesna tragedija*), directed by Goran Marković, written by Dušan Kovačević, 1995.

Underground (*Podzemlje*), directed by Emir Kusturica, written by Dušan Kovačević and Emir Kusturica, 1995.

Who's Singing Over There? (*Ko to tamo peva*), directed by Slobodan Šijan, written by Dušan Kovačević, 1980.

THE FAMILY OF MAN IN JAPAN: A PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITION FOR WORLD PEACE AND ATOMIC CULTURE IN THE 1950S

Yumi Kim Takenaka

Abstract

The ambitious exhibition *The Family of Man*, which made the popular culture of press photography an American modern art, is well known for touring around fifty countries during the Cold War and attracting nine million people. As a path-breaking case of the globalization of art exhibitions, historical studies on its reception in each country are ongoing. This paper reconsidered the Japan tour of *The Family of Man* between 1956 and 1957. It is noteworthy that it attracted one million visitors in a country and that the immediate removal of some photographs of the atomic bombing on Nagasaki, which were specially added to the installation, caused controversy. This paper investigated the press and criticisms on the removal and characterized the reception of *The Family of Man* in Japan: it was in cultural tensions between the aspirations for nuclear energy and the fears of nuclear disaster in the 1950s.

1. Introduction

The large-scale photographic exhibition *The Family of Man,* which was organized by the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MoMA) in 1955, made the popular culture of press photography an American modern art through the aesthetics of display. The exhibition that celebrated world peace left its mark on the history of photography not only in the U.S. but also in many countries around the world, because it toured 48 countries with the support of the United States Information Agency (USIA) and attracted nine million visitors globally during the Cold War. It also toured in Japan where more than one million visitors came to view this American exhibition. In spite of the large amount of previous studies on *The Family of Man*, the touring of this exhibition in Japan that attracted one-ninth of the total number of visitors in the whole world has not received much attention internationally. Why was it able to attract so many visitors in Japan? What was the special meaning of the exhibition traveling to Japan? While the Japan tour of *The Family of Man* was touring and welcomed across Japan between 1956 and 1957, a controversial incident occurred shortly after its opening at the first venue in Tokyo. That is, some photographs of the aftermath of the atomic bombing on Nagasaki, which had been specially added to the installation by the Japanese executive committee, were removed from the venue by the organizer of *The Family of Man*. Although the elimination of them was not

noticeable in subsequent tours through Japan, I suppose that it indicates an essential issue of the reception process of *The Family of Man* in Japan.

In this paper, I will investigate the press and criticisms on this elimination and will characterize this incident as the collision in some cultural contexts of Japan in the 1950s. First, these criticisms must also be seen in relation to the growth of the photographic medium in the 1950s. There was a boom of photography and photographic journals which occurred alongside with the rapid development of the Japanese camera industry after the World War II. Second, the atomic bombing photographs of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which had been censored by General Headquarters of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (GHQ/SCAP) during the occupation period were released to the public in 1952. And the radiation exposure of an experimental U.S. hydrogen bomb explosion was a big social issue in 1954. Third, there was another exhibition supported by USIA, *Atoms For Peace*, which also started its Japan tour in 1955 and attracted even more visitors than *The Family of Man*. The purpose of this paper is to show that the Japan tour of *The Family of Man* should be reconsidered as an event in the ambivalent atomic culture that was driven by an antagonism between the anti-nuclear weapons movement and the positive attitude towards nuclear energy development.

2. The Diplomatic Aspect of *The Family of Man*

The Family of Man was a monumental photo exhibition curated by Edward Steichen in commemoration of the 25th anniversary of MoMA in 1955. It was a large-scale installation work, in which 503 pictures by 273 photographers were structured three-dimensionally in about 40 sections depicting human life, such as marriage, childbirth, child raising, work, entertainment, hard times, war, death, and so on. Juxtaposing countries, races, religions, and cultures, Steichen presented a grand theme: "the essential oneness of mankind throughout the world."[108] Following a tour in the U.S., the exhibition then toured 48 countries between 1955 and 1962. As it attracted a mass audience, however, it encountered unfavorable reactions to "pictures touching traditional taboos, such as childbirth, pregnancy, sex and love"[109] and severe criticisms, including the naive humanism of its theme, Steichen's assertive curation that ignored the original context of the photographs and the photographers' intentions. [110] Likewise, the political aspects of this exhibition, devoted to world peace, were discussed because of the world tour of *The Family of Man* was being conducted under the auspices of USIA (known abroad as the United States Information Service [USIS]), which was established as a foreign affairs agency for public relations activities abroad in 1953 and was abolished in 1999.[111] Eric Sandeen discussed in his foundational study on *The Family of Man* that the show held in Moscow played an important role as a form of the U.S. cultural diplomacy during the Cold War.[112] Previous to this paper, I argued that the Clervaux Castle

in Luxembourg, where *The Family of Man* has been exhibited permanently since 1995, preserves the memory of the battle of World War II which had destroyed the castle, rather than celebrating peace in Europe after the end of the Cold War.[113] And at an international conference, "*The Family of Man* in the 21st century," held at Clervaux Castle in 2015, some presented papers investigated the reception of the show in Germany from new perspectives.[114]

Like with the Soviet Union and Germany, diplomatic relations with Japan were high on the agenda of the post-war U.S. In fact, the Japan tour of *The Family of Man* between 1956 and 1957 attracted over one million people, and so, it is remembered as the most influential exhibition of the U.S. in the history of Japanese photography. However, it has not been sufficiently discussed that some photographs of the atomic bombing on Nagasaki were added and showed only to the exhibition in Tokyo, and that they were removed soon after its opening. It is obviously not only a question about curatorial choices; it is actually a question that has political as well as foreign policy implications. The initial inclusion and the subsequent withdrawal of these images further suggest the collision around the representations of atomic bombing apparent at the time. In order to illuminate the collision, we need to start by understanding how the Japan tour of *The Family of Man* was organized and why the atomic bombing photographs were added to the show and then to consider the reasons and the reactions for the removal relative to the curatorial concept of the original exhibition at MoMA and to the social, political, and cultural context of Japan in the 1950s.

3. *The Family of Man* in Tokyo

According to the exhibition catalogue of *The Family of Man* in Japan, the Japan tour was promoted by MoMA, USIS and *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, a major financial newspaper. In addition to the executive chairman, Edward Steichen, the Japanese executive committee consisted of prominent photographers Ihee Kimura, Yoshio Watanabe, Shigene Kanemaru, Yasuhiro Ishimoto, the graphic designer Takashi Kōno who designed the catalogue, and the architect Kenzo Tange who designed the installation, et al.[115] It should be noted that, in advance of the Japan tour, Steichen himself visited the country and enthusiastically shared his idea with the executive committee members for the exhibition in the fall of 1955. Steichen and the committee members decided to recreate the set of more than 500 negatives in Japan and to leave printing and installation of them to the Japanese committee. For the circulation around the world, the set of photographs, which compose *The Family of Man,* was reproduced in four full-size versions with their three duplicated versions and several smaller-size versions.[116] The photography historian Masakazu Inubuse's survey suggests that another four versions, one full-size and three smaller ones, which were reproduced by the Japanese executive committee toured 25 cities, including

Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya, Kyoto, Okayama, Hiroshima, and Shizuoka, etc., and most of the venues were department stores.[117]

One of the reasons why the attendance figures of Japan tour of *The Family of Man* came to a total of one million is due to the large number of venues which were very easy to access. The fact that the department stores have been important venues for art exhibitions other than museums and art galleries is a remarkable feature of the history of art exhibitions in Japan. The Japanese major department stores had been dealing with fine arts and crafts from the initial period, and after the World War II, they started to hold various cultural events including art exhibitions.[118] Another reason is that *The Family of Man* coincided with the photography boom in Japan at that time. The technological development of optical weapons had been advanced in Japan through the two World Wars, and it improved the camera manufacturing technology after the World War II. The Japan camera industry rapidly developed as an export industry, and by 1955 the annual production of cameras in Japan exceeded one million.[119] With the confidence that Japan became the dominant player in the global camera industry, the number of cameras owned in Japan also has increased to three million at that time. The keen interest of Japanese people in photography and photojournalism has brought the publication of about ten photographic magazines in the 1950s.[120] Under these situations, as a matter of fact, on the same floor of *The Family of Man* venue in a department store, the special camera department was often set up for sales promotion. It means that *The Family of Man* attracted customers to the department stores and contributed to sales. Therefore, we should notice that the Japan tour of *The Family of Man, which* was a cultural diplomacy of the U.S., was welcomed in a domestic business cooperation between the media, the camera industry and commercial facilities such as department stores.

Turning now to the content of *The Family of Man*, at many sites where it was exhibited in the world, some photographs were excluded or added to reflect local culture and society. The inclusion and exclusion of certain images, depending on where they were being shown, was therefore not uncommon. Because the world tour of *The Family of Man* was provided by USIA, the authority over such decision was given to the senior public officer of the American Embassy in each country.[121] In the case of Japan, according to Yoshio Watanabe, a member of the executive committee, Steichen and the committee decided to add 60 works by Japanese photographers, among which five of Yosuke Yamahata's aftermath photographs from atomic bombing on Nagasaki were included, in order to make the show special.[122] As soon as the Tokyo exhibition was first opened on March 21, 1956, the venue, the Takashimaya Department Store, was crowded with enthusiastic audiences. However, when two days after the opening, the Emperor Showa visited the venue, one wall of one section was concealed with a white curtain to hide the images of victims of atomic bombing on Nagasaki.[123]. The fact that the images of the

Nagasaki bombing had been hidden from the Emperor was reported immediately by the newspapers. Shortly after that, the images were removed from the exhibition with the exception of an image of a boy holding a rice ball, from the original set of *The Family of Man*. Protests followed in newspapers and magazines that the Emperor should have been able to see the hidden photographs, and some publications published the image of the wall before it was removed.[124] For example, the April 29, 1956 issue of *Asahi Graph (The Asahi Picture News)* posted a picture of the whole wall with the headline "Your Highness the Emperor and Prince Yoshi, Please Look at These" so that readers could see what was removed.[125]

The original exhibition that was held at MoMA included a photograph of an experimental hydrogen bomb explosion. This image was placed at the climax of this section in the show. In the Tokyo exhibition, it was replaced by Yosuke Yamahata's mural-sized landscape of the ground zero at Nagasaki the day after it was bombed, showing nothing but burnt-out ruins, including corpses whose tortured and bent limbs show their sufferings from their burns. A quotation from Bertrand Russell, which had been placed next to the room with the image of the hydrogen bomb in the original installation at MoMA, was put on the upper left of the wall in the Tokyo installation:

> …the best authorities are unanimous in saying that a war with hydrogen bombs is quite likely to put an end to the human race. …there will be universal death—sudden only for a fortunate minority, but for the majority a slow torture of disease and disintegration…[126]

The burnt corpses in the apocalyptic landscape represent the "fortunate minority" in the quotation, and four photographs of survivors, who represent the unfortunate "majority", were placed over the landscape; a staggering mother and her son holding rice balls, a boy carrying his injured brother on his back, a father holding his injured baby, and a girl waiting for rescue, sitting between lying women who could have been her mother and sister. They are families who were living in Nagasaki, yet they were driven out of the exhibition, as if atomic bomb survivors were unsuitable for members of the "family of man".[127] The Japan tour of *The Family of Man* continued to attract a large number of visitors at all venues until 1957 without the images of the victims of atomic bombing or the image of an experimental hydrogen bomb explosion which was shown in other countries.

4. Criticisms of the Elimination of the Atomic Bombing Photographs

On the concealment of the wall from the Emperor, Inubuse explained from a semiotic perspective that the meaning of these photographs would have been differed for general audiences and the Emperor. For the general public, the unprecedented disaster caused by the atomic bombing was a symbol of a tragedy shared by all citizens of their defeated country Japan, and they were

able to accept the image as a universal symbol of the misery of war. However, the Emperor, the former head of the state, who was exempted from war responsibility under the occupation policy, could not be a victim of tragedy. Therefore, because the Emperor who could not on principle accept the photographs as symbols, the organizers naturally chose to conceal them.[128] Nevertheless, the Grand Steward of the Imperial Household Agency announced immediately to a newspaper that he had recognized in advance the photographs of the atomic bombing included in the show and had intended to show them to the Emperor, and his announcement suggested that the concealment was a sudden decision by the organizers.[129] Similar concealment of atomic bombing images from the imperial family followed before long. When the second son of the Emperor, Prince Yoshi, visited the Nagasaki International Cultural Center on April 3, the photographs and wax models of the atomic bomb victims in the exhibition were hidden. The media reported in the public opinion that the Emperor - and the Imperial Family - should know the real lives of the people and criticized the concealments by the meddlesome authorities.[130]

The media reported the comment of Steichen as the representative of organizers. He regretted that there had been a minor misunderstanding that he approved the installation of the atomic bombing images, although he had been impressed with Yamahata's photographs. He explained that he had consistently avoided any specific issues in the exhibition, devoting it instead to general themes of mankind because the signification of specific matters might be distorted in significance unless it is presented in detail.[131] However, mass media and photographers were not satisfied with this explanation, and the incident continued to be a focus of questioning. Yamahata, the photographer of the Nagasaki atomic bombing, wrote that he questioned whether atomic bombing could be called simply a specific event.[132] And a joint statement published on April 23, 1956 by nine influential photographers, editors and critics, including Yonosuke Natori, Tsutomu Watanabe, and Koen Shigemori was taken up as a hot topic by the media. It protested that the elimination of the atomic bombing images without any clear reason could be considered as a threat to freedom of expression and the right to view.[133] The promptitude of the protest by leaders of photojournalism is supposed to have stemmed from their concern over censorship.

After Japan's surrender in the Pacific War, the General Headquarters of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (GHQ/SCAP) ostensibly banned the type of censorship exerted by the former Empire of Japan, on the other hand, GHQ/SCAP issued and carried out severe censorship on Japanese media, such as newspapers, books including textbooks in the elementary schools, radio, films and photographs, during the occupation period. Besides expressions that disturb public tranquility, criticisms of the Allied Forces of Occupation and anything which might invite resentment against these troops were banned. Also, it was instructed that there must be no mention of censorship in the publication.[134] The images of the atomic bombings have been strictly

censored up until 1952. The critic Jun Eto's research on the GHQ/SCAP censorship revealed that the Civil Intelligence Section of SCAP tried to suppress the accusation of "atrocities" of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He wrote that the censorship was "an invisible war of attrition against thought and culture" in Japan after "the visible war ended."[135]

When the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty came into force on April 22 in 1952, the photographs of victims and damage by atomic bombings were revealed to the public in rapid succession. On August 6, 1952, the Atomic-bomb Day of Hiroshima, the special issue of *Asahi Graph* and *Iwanami Shashin Bunko 72 Hiroshima: Senso to toshi* (Iwanami Photography library 72 Hiroshima: War and the City) were published and sold out at once. On August 15, 1952, the anniversary of the end of World War II, the book *Kiroku Shashin: Genbaku no Nagasaki* (Photographic Document: Nagasaki of Atomic Bombing), which consists of Yamahata's photographs was published with a large social impact. [136] These liberated photographs and reports about the damages by atomic bombing not only reveal the hidden crucial information to the public but also seems to be presented as a symbol of the freedom of expression, which would mark the end of the invisible war in the postwar period that Eto mentioned above. The Japanese executive committee members of *The Family of Man* who had been in the publishing world from before the war were keenly aware of the information suppression and the censorship by both the Japanese military regime during the war and the GHQ/SCAP after the war. That must be one of reasons that they added the atomic bombing images of Nagasaki to the American art exhibition consisted of the press photography. In other words, the specialty of the atomic bombing photographs in *The Family of Man* in Japan is presumably that it was a statement that the disaster of the atomic bombing was the crucial issue for all humankind, and also, it was a demonstration of emancipation from the occupation by the GHQ/SCAP. It was a meaningful action that the Japanese executive committee members attempted from the inside of the exhibition, which was provided by USIA to show an American set of values.

As a result of eliminating the specialty, Steichen continued to be suspected by the Japanese media that there were political reasons. Steichen, however, simply explained that by including photographs of a specific incident the theme of the exhibition as a whole would be undermined. The photo critic Tsutomu Watanabe cited Steichen's career of conducting the photographic propaganda for the Navy during the Pacific War and stressed the political tone of his work, questioning the genuine nature of Steichen's universal humanism.[137] However, this criticism misses the mark, only to hit another point. Among the executive committee members, Ihee Kimura, Yoshio Watanabe, and Shigene Kanemaru were all involved in producing propaganda under the support of the Imperial Japanese Army General Staff Office during the war.[138] The international cultural propaganda in the 1930s that not only the executive committee members

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but also Tsutomu Watanabe himself and Yonosuke Natori, who released the joint statement together that protested the elimination of the atomic bombing photographs, had been involved was eventually integrated into the propaganda for the Japanese army during the war. Therefore, if Steichen's background should be questioned, the backgrounds of most leading figures in photography world of Japan at that time must be questioned as well.

5. The Original Concept of *The Family of Man* at MoMA

Photography critics who viewed *The Family of Man* in Japan praised the composition and installation without exception, although the concept and narrative of the exhibition were rarely discussed in detail. In the international conference, "*The Family of Man* in the 21st century," Miles Orvell analyzed the composition of the original exhibition at MoMA and suggested that the exhibition's central point was the image of a hydrogen bomb explosion.[139] Shown as a mural-sized back-lit color transparency in the original MoMA exhibition, this unique image was not included in any exhibition catalogues and was replaced with a black-and-white image in the other traveling versions. Orvell reads this image as the lynchpin of Steichen's argument, namely, a terrifying warning against the nuclear war.

> Of course, one might read the giant luminous bomb image as a Cold War threat as well, a warning to the rest of the world, a warning to our 'enemies', that we've got the power to kill you. But that power to kill is also suicidal, for the bomb is a threat to all mankind, not just the enemy. [...] the perceived differences represented in *The Family of Man* – between rich and poor, first world and developing world, city and farm, scientist and hunter – will be erased, not by love but by death.[140]

As Steichen was preparing for the exhibition, images of the victims of atomic bombing in Hiroshima and Nagasaki were first published in the U.S. in the September 29, 1952 issue of *Life* magazine. This was only a few weeks before the first experimental hydrogen bomb was successfully detonated at Eniwetok on the Marshall Islands on November 1, 1952. As Orvell argues, these two incidents must have inspired Steichen with his theme of imminent world peace. Thus, if the experimental hydrogen bomb explosion is a warning of a miserable future, the image of the United Nations General Assembly accompanied with the Charter of the United Nations in the following section of the image of the hydrogen bomb explosion may indicate a means of choosing a brighter future, allowing audiences to hope that they can avoid a horrible doom. In contrast, the apocalyptic images of the Nagasaki bombings are records of a past event, leading to the images being read as an event to be regretted. This is why the atomic bombing images conflicted with the optimistic tone of Steichen's original concept, and the Japanese executive

committees had not understood this point. It was what Steichen had referred to as "a minor misunderstanding" in his statement above.

6. Japanese Atomic Culture in the 1950s

If we observe the Japanese tour of *The Family of Man* from the outside, political factors become more visible, including the fact that the campaign for the peaceful use of nuclear energy was being promoted both in the U.S. and Japan at that point. After the occupation of the GHQ/SCAP was ended with the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty in 1952, restrictions on the study of nuclear energy were lifted, and the Japanese government and media launched a campaign triggered by Eisenhower's "Atoms for Peace" speech of 1953, which specified the necessity of repurposing existing nuclear weapons technology for peaceful ends.

The emphasis on the peaceful use of nuclear energy and co-development between Japan and the U.S. government also aimed to impair the memories of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Meanwhile, however, a tuna fishing boat, the *Daigo Fukuryu Maru* (Lucky Dragon no.5), which had been operating near the Bikini Atoll was affected by the nuclear fallout from a U.S. hydrogen bomb test in March 1954. Newspapers reported about the incident including images of the twenty-three crew members of the boat who suffered severe radiation illness leading to the death of one of them half a year after the exposure. This *Daigo Fukuryu Maru* incident rekindled the memories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and had a profound impact on the civil movement in Japan against the atomic and hydrogen bombs. The movement expanded rapidly not only Japan but worldwide, and more than thirty-two million signatures for the prohibition of nuclear weapons were collected when the first World Conference against A & H Bombs was held in Hiroshima in August 1955.[141] Nevertheless, on one hand, the media reported the surge of the civil movement against nuclear weapons, yet on the other hand, major newspapers were also posting opinions of politicians and intellectuals that the Japan nation needed to recover the confidence of the state, which had been totally destroyed by the atomic bombs, through peaceful use of nuclear energy. The aspirations for nuclear energy were not only provided by the U.S. after the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty came into force, but they had been born and growing during the occupation period due to an event: the theoretical physical scientist Hideki Yukawa became the first Japanese to win the Nobel Prize in 1949. Dr. Yukawa's feat excited the Japanese nation, which had been discouraged through its defeat in the World War II and subsequent occupation, and brought the discourse and images of "dreams of atomic power by Japanese scientists".[142]

It is noteworthy in Japanese popular culture after World War II, especially in comic magazines and children's magazines, that atomic power was frequently represented as a huge

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positive power during the occupation period, and then, as the photographs of the atomic bombings were released after the occupation by GHQ/SCAP was ended in 1952, and, moreover, after the Daigo Fukuryumaru Incident in 1954, novels and films that depicted the suffering of hibakusha and nuclear fear emerged. Just at that time, while *The Family of Man* was traveling around Japan, another exhibition organized by USIS, as a part of the campaign for the peaceful use of nuclear energy, was also being shown: the scientific exposition *Atoms for Peace / Genshiryoku Heiwariyo Hakurankai.* The exposition, which was much bigger in scale than *The Family of Man,* gave a pleasant image for the introduction of nuclear power and its scientists, nuclear reactors, the use of nuclear power in many fields, and finally the images of a bright future, supported by nuclear power for the masses. The Japan tour of *Atoms for Peace* started in Tokyo on November 1, 1955, sponsored by USIS and the largest Japanese newspaper *Yomiuri Shimbun*. The exposition traveled to ten venues around Japan, including the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, which had just been inaugurated for the memory of the atomic bombing there. Two and a half million visitors attended the exposition over two years. The popularity of the exposition was supported by significant media coverage by *Yomiuri Shimbun* and other newspapers, and in addition by support at local venues.

The purpose of the two USIA exhibitions was to display U.S. power: its artistic strength with *The Family of Man,* which absorbs the cultural differences of the world, and its scientific strength, with *Atoms for Peace,* which gives affluence to the world through nuclear energy. Thus, the two exhibitions traveled in coordination throughout Japan. Remarkably, while *Atoms for Peace* did not mention nuclear fear, *The Family of Man* dealt with it in an implicit way, such that the literal images of the atomic bombing were required to be eliminated. However, not all audiences in Japan received these as USIA intended, due to the complexity of the culture around atomic issues.

At the same time as the Japanese government and major media were rushing to use nuclear power,[143] there were heated civil movements against it and cool insights in popular culture. Two best-known works, the comic *Mighty Atom* and the film *Godzilla* are worth looking back here. The first serial appearance of the *Mighty Atom* was published in 1952. It features a nuclear-powered robot who is human enough in his distress that he is not human; this character fights against the greed and cruelty that mankind is still struggling with the future. Further, *Godzilla*, released in 1954, a surviving dinosaur made gigantic by the exposure to successive hydrogen bomb experiments, which symbolizes the very nuclear disasters as it attacks a fishing boat and then Tokyo. A scientist who develops a new weapon to defeat Godzilla chooses to die with Godzilla to prevent the weapon from being used in another war, which emphasizes the sense of responsibility among scientists. In other words, these two works, *Mighty Atom* and *Godzilla*,

represent the helpful side and the monstrous side of nuclear power. These perspectives in popular culture reflected the antagonism between the aspirations for nuclear energy development and the anti-nuclear weapons movement, and they surrounded the controversy over *The Family of Man* in Tokyo.

    The Family of Man was traveling all over the world, presenting the non-historical "oneness of mankind," however as previous studies have clarified, the differences in acceptance of the exhibition in each country appeared in criticisms and rejections rather than compliments. As we have seen in this paper, the controversy over the additional installation and the elimination of photographs of the atomic bombing in *The Family of Man* in Tokyo was triggered by the emancipation from the occupation by the GHQ/SCAP and the keen awareness that the atrocity of nuclear weapons is the crucial issue for all mankind. Therefore, this controversial incident pertaining to the representation of the atomic bombings in a photographic exhibition for world peace should be remembered as a case not only in the history of Japanese photography but also in the global cultural history of the 20th century.

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[108] Edward Steichen, "Introduction by Edward Steichen," *The Family of Man, exh. cat. (New York: MoMA, 1983[1955]),3*.

[109] Shamoon Zamir, "The Family of Man in Munich: Visitors' Reactions", in *The Family of Man Revisited: Photography in a Global Age*, ed. Gerd Hern, Anke Reitz, Shamoon Zamir (London: I. B. Tauris, 2018), Kindle: No.2175/6183.

[110] On initial critical responses to *The Family of Man* at MoMA, see Monique Berlier, "*The Family of Man*: Reading of an Exhibition, in *Picturing the Past: Media, History, and Photography*, ed. Bonnie Brennen and Hanno Hardt (University of Illinois Press, 1999), 206-241.

[111] "Records of the United States Information Agency (RG 306)," Last accessed January 31, 2020.
https://www.archives.gov/research/foreign-policy/related-records/rg-306

[112] Eric J. Sandeen, *Picturing an Exhibition: The Family of Man and 1950s America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 125-153.

[113] Yumi Kim Takenaka, "FSA photography and the Steichen Collections: *The Family of Man* and *The Bitter Years* in Luxembourg," *Aesthetics*, no.20 (March 2016): 62-74. Last accessed January 31, 2020.
http://www.bigakukai.jp/aesthetics_online/aesthetics_20/text20/text20_takenakayumikim.pdf

[114] The contributions of the conference and additional texts were published in *The Family of Man Revisited: Photography in a Global Age*. According to Zamir, the first exhibition of *The Family of Man* in Europe was held in Germany, Belin and Munich in 1955. It returned to Germany in 1958, Frankfurt, Hamburg, and Hanover, and drew totally 161,000 visitors. See Zamir, "The Family of Man in Munich: Visitors' Reactions," in *The Family of Man Revisited,* Kindle: No.1989/6183.

[115] *The Family of Man*, exh. cat., Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Shimbun, 1956.

[116] Sandeen, *Picturing an Exhibition,* 95-96.

[117] Masakazu Inubuse, "'Ningen Kazoku'ten no nihon ni okeru juyo," *Geijutsu*, 37 (December 2014): 18.

[118] Kenjiro Shiga, *Hyakkaten no Tenrankai*, Tokyo: Chikumashobo), 2018.

[119] Imtiaz Hossain Mohiuddin, "Nihon camerasangyo ni okeru yushutu marketing si," *Keizai -Ronso (The Economic Review)*, Kyoto University Economic Society, Vol.158, No.4 (1996): 66-107.

[120] Manabu Torihara, *Nihon Shashinshi (Jo)* (Tokyo: Chuokoron-shinsha, 2013), 129.

[121] Zamir, "The Family of Man in Munich," Kindle:No.2197/6183.

[122] "1956: Tokyo, Nihon junkaiten wo furikaeru: Watanabe Yoshio ni kiku," in *The Family of Man* exh. cat., (Tokyo: G.I.P Tokyo, 1993), 28.
When the restoration of a copy of *The Family of Man*, which was bequeathed to Luxembourg from MoMA, was completed, the show was held again in Tokyo from 1993 to 1994 by Centre National de L'Audiovisuel, Luxembourg, and its exhibition catalogue was published.

[123] "Ten'no niwa misenai: Genbaku shashin ni curtain," *The Asahi Shimbun News Paper*, evening ed., Mar. 23,1956, 7.
"Heika shashin-ten e: The Family of Man," *Yomiurii Shimbun News Paper*, evening ed., Mar. 23, 1956, 3.

[124] "Ten'no niwa misenai," ibid.

[125] "Ten'no sama Yoshinomiya sama, gorankudasaimase," *Asahi Graph,* April 29, 1956, 3. Translation of the headline is cited from Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *The Past Within Us: Media, Memory, History* (London: Verso, 2015), 116.

The wall was faithfully reproduced in the exhibition *War and Postwar: The Prism of the Times* held at Izu Photo Museum from July 18, 2015 to January 31, 2016.

[126] Quoted from the original exhibition catalogue. *The Family of Man,* exh. cat. (New York: MoMA, 1983[1955]): 179.

[127] Atomic bomb survivors, called "Hibakusha," have suffered from not only atomic-bomb disease but also discrimination against just because they are hibakusha.

[128] Inubuse, "'Ningen Kazoku'ten no nihon ni okeru juyo," 22-23.

[129] "Ten'no niwa misenai," ibid.

[130] "Ten'no sama Yoshinomiya sama, gorankudasaimase, " ibid.

See, for instance, a reader's column, "Ten'no ni arinomama wo," *Yomiuri Shimbun*, morning ed., Mar. 28, 1956, 3.

[131] "Tokuteijiken, saketai," *The Asahi Shimbun*, evening ed., Mar. 27, 1956, 3

[132] Shigeichi Nagano, Kotaro Iizawa, Naoyuki Kinoshita ed., *Nihon no Shashinka 23: Yamahata Yosuke* (Tokyo: Iwanamishoten, 1998), 64.

[133] The full text of the statement can be read in the following book.

Tetsuo Kishi, *Sengo shashinsi* (Tokyo: David-sha, 1974), 46.

[134] Monica Braw, *The atomic bomb suppressed: American censorship in occupied Japan* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1991), 41-42.

[135] Jun Eto, *Tozasareta Gengo Kukan: Senryogun no Ken'etsu to Sengo Nihon* (Tokyo: Bungei Shunju, 1994[1982]), 155. [my translation from Japanese]

[136] *Asahi Graph,* Tokyo: Asahi Shimbunsha, August 6, 1952.

Iwanami Shashin Bunko 72 Hiroshima: Senso to toshi, (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten), 1952.

Munehito Kitajima ed., *Kiroku Shashin Genbaku no Nagasaki*, (Tokyo: Daiichi Shuppansha), 1952.

[137] Tsutomu Watanabe, "U.S. Camera Hihan," *Geijutsu Shincho*, Shinchosha, (April,1956): 269.

[138] It is known that they were publishing the elaborated foreign propaganda magazine *FRONT*. The best-known propaganda photomural presented by the Army *Uchiteshi yamam* (Keep on Fighting [my translation from Japanese]), was produced by Kanemaru and the photographic workshop G.T.Sun, which produced the panels of the Japanese version of *The Family of Man*.

[139] Miles Orvell, "Et in Arcadia Ego: The Family of Man as Cold War Pastoral," in *The Family of Man Revisited: Photography in a Global Age*, Kindle: No.4416-4854/6183.

[140] Kindle: No.4445/6183.

[141] Yamamoto Akihiro, *Kaku to Nihonjin* (Tokyo: Chuokoron-Shinsha, 2015), 25-29.

[142] Ibid., 6-8.

On this subject, see Toru Takeda, *'Kaku'ron*, Tokyo: Chuokoron-Shinsha, 2006. Shunya Yoshimi, *Yume no Gensiryoku: Atoms for Dream*, (Tokyo: Chikumashobo), 2012.

[143] Soon after the owner of the Yomiuri Shimbun, Masutaro Shoriki, became Minister of State in charge of nuclear power in November 1955, he rushed to construct nuclear power plants.

See Mitsuo Ikawa, "Genshiryoku Heiwariyo Hakurankai to Shimbunsha," in Toshihiro Tsuganesawa ed., *Sengo Nihon no Media Event: 1945-1960nen* (Kyoto: Sekaishisosha, 2002), 247-265.

ON CONCEPTUAL ROOTS AND FUTURE VISIONS OF PHILOSOPHICAL POSTHUMANISM

REVIEW

Yvonne Förster

Francesca Ferrando's book on *Philosophical Posthumanism* engages in a passionate way with the history of posthuman thinking, its future visions and various schools of thought nourished by a critical stance toward classical humanism. The book sheds light on the different schools of thought pertaining to Post- and Transhumanism, their origin and agenda, which is a task rarely tackled. Beyond the comprehensive work on Posthumanism and its relatives, Ferrando develops a clear-cut vision of Posthumanism as a philosophical theory with practical implications for contemporary and future societies. She claims that Philosophical Posthumanism (PP) is not only a theory but also a practice and therefore she places her work in a context between studies of the classics and a lively discussion of current gender studies. Rosi Braidotti praises the book in her very engaging foreword as a "joyful de-familiarization" (XVI) from the inherited habits and schools of thought. This describes brilliantly the style of the book. The author does not hesitate to leave the trodden historical paths in order to establish PP as a theory with intricate links to classical humanist thinking and a complex vision of a posthuman future. Such a future should be true to the idea of an inclusive society with a positive outlook on the differentiation of life-forms and constant becoming instead of essentialist categorization.

The book has three systematic parts: The first one outlines the different disciplines pertaining to the current discussion of Post- and Transhumanism and their historical roots. In the second part Ferrando discusses the concept of the human that underlies the various theories and their ways of imagining a future beyond humanity as it exists today. The third and last one dives deeper into the metaphysical and ontological foundations of Posthumanism along the lines of a critical discussion of the concepts of evolution and becoming. The main focus lies on the question how humans, non-humans and technology are intertwined and how a concept of life and evolution can be developed that captures this complex dynamic of becoming. This inclusive perspective characterizes the whole book. Despite a few rather deep disagreements with some theoretical strands, especially in Transhumanism, Ferrando sticks to an argumentative and informative style. She emphasizes PP as a non-dualistic theory that enacts an open and inclusive stance toward all theories and cultural practices: "Philosophical Posthumanism is an onto-epistemological approach, as well as an ethical one, manifesting as a philosophy of mediation, which discharges any confrontational dualisms and hierarchical legacies; this is why it can be approached as a post-humanism, a post-anthropocentrism, and a post-dualism." (22)

With this, the agenda for the book is clear: In the next chapters Ferrando paints a broad picture of the various versions of Posthumanism as an umbrella term (26) for Trans- and Antihumanism, Metahumanism, New Materialism, Object Oriented Ontology and so forth. She argues that PP is different from Trans- and Antihumanism, because of its explicitly inclusive post-anthropocentrism and post- or non-dualism. Ferrando's version of a PP states that humans and all perceiving and cognizing entities are first and foremost embodied beings and hence the body-mind dualism does not hold. The author argues for a continuous concept of life as embodied form of existence. She places technology and its agency and cognition in a continuity with biological life-forms. This idea relates Ferrando's view of posthumanism in a productive way to theories that argue for a deep continuity of life and mind as for example Evan Thompson's view put forward in his book *Mind in Life* (Cambridge MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press 2007).

The first systematic chapter of the book focuses on the concepts and historical roots of Post- and Transhumanism. These two theories are different according to the author not only in their stance toward the future of human life, but also in their historical and conceptual roots. Both challenge the idea of a human nature as essential. They view the human as a constant becoming alongside developments in technology, culture and environment.

Posthumanism is rooted in postmodern thought and thus presents itself as a critique of anthropocentrism, dualism and biases originating from humanism. It challenges the traditions, cultures and forms of knowledge gravitating around classical humanist thinking. Ferrando emphasizes that posthumanism is dedicated to overcoming anthropocentric thinking. What is human

needs to be conceptualized in her view as a form of becoming, as an open process. There is no final idea that needs to be realized in this process of becoming. This version of Posthumanism does speak of transcending what is acknowledged as human today, but not with a definite goal. Rather it envisages a differentiation of life-forms and the forming of new commonalities with technology and other biological forms. Ferrando stresses that we can be posthuman already today (28) by embracing this openness and all varieties of embodiment, neural diversity or gender diversity. In that view, posthumanism is not only a theory, but also a lifestyle or an attitude toward life.

Transhumanism has become a cultural and scientific topic around the same time like Posthumanism, in the late 1980s/early 1990s (27). But according to the author this theory remains attached to humanist ideas. In Transhumanism, the concept of the human remains central as somethings that needs to be transcended with a clear goal. That goal is to overcome human finitude. In this view, humans are obliged to perfect their form of existence and their limitations are eventually to be transcended by the use of technological and medical enhancement strategies. Openness and mutability of what is human is not understood as a process toward diversification, rather it is determined by the idea of perfection, of overcoming human limitations toward an enhanced cognition, better health and eventually immortality (31 f.). Ferrando paints a similar picture of the relation of Transhumanism and PP as Janina Loh in her German introduction to *Trans- and Posthumanism* (Hamburg: Junius 2018), only that Loh coins the term Critical Posthumanism, while Ferrando calls it Philosophical Posthumanism. Both theorist argue on a similar basis. Ferrando puts a stronger emphasis on the practical impact of Posthumanism as an actual way of life.

Both Post- and Transhumanism essentially include technology as a driving force within the conceptual framing of human life. This is also pointed out in the discussion on Heidegger's view of technology as way of revealing (39 ff.). Transhumanism on the one hand side necessarily relies on technology in order to enhance and perfect human minds and bodies. Ferrando on the other hand side argues that in a posthumanist' perspective technology is poietic: It shapes bodies, cultures and ways of thinking. Such a poetic potential becomes problematic when it is used purely as means to the end of capitalist logic or control. As such, technology reveals the world as a *standing reserve*, as Heidegger frames it. The potential for diversity remains hidden from view within this scope. The ability of technology to produce diverse life-forms or rather enter a dynamic form of becoming with other forms of life is essential to Ferrando's thinking. She argues here with regard to Michel Foucault and Donna Haraway (44).

The second part of the book systematically unfolds the notion of human and non-human. Ferrando develops a fine-grained analysis of the concept of the human as historically instrumentalized as an exclusive notion that does not simply represent a species as a whole, but only a

defined group of individuals that are representative of what is socially accepted (65 f.). To be human historically is related to a certain concept of rationality, of gender, social standing and color of skin. Thus, the term human did not cover a natural kind but represented a social construct that excludes the other (women, children, slaves, diversely abled and so forth). Recapitulating Foucault's technologies of the self, Ferrando stresses how to be human is not a category but a process (83). She emphasizes that this process needs to be historically reassessed and critically engaged with today. In the remaining pages, Ferrando paints a vivid picture of the conceptual history of the human as well as the diverse forms of humanizing and de-humanizing processes throughout history. The combination of conceptual work and historical analysis is characteristic for the style of Ferrando's thinking. She develops an account of the origin of the term 'human' from Greek to Latin and the concept of mammals vs. homo sapiens in Linnaeus' *Systema Naturae*, which on the one hand side has placed human life in a continuity with organic life but at the same time has taken part in the development of anthropocentrism and male dominance (96f.).

The final chapter gives an overview on the diverse concepts of ontology discussed within posthumanist theories. Ferrando relates posthuman thinking to the anthropocene and human impact and entanglement with environmental developments on a planetary if not cosmic scale. With a nod to Haraway she writes: "The environmental turn, more than evoking an essentialization of the Earth, liquefies the relation between the Earth and the human; symbolically and materially, the Earth may turn into Gaia, the ancestral mother of all life; the human may acknowledge themselves as compost (Haraway 2015), eventually turning into humus, nourishing the Earth." (107) Ferrando inquires deeply into the notions of life as animal and human life, in the categories of animate vs. inanimate and eventually develops a notion of a deep continuity of live that is open to include technology as a form of life und human life merging with technology. After having taken a closer look at artificial intelligence, she discusses the possibility of opening up the paradigm of evolution to include technology not only as a factor in human evolution but also as being a subject of evolution itself. The major part of the last chapter is dedicated to developing an in-depth understanding of the ethical (bioethics) and ontological foundations (autopoiesis) of a concept of life that encompasses technology, AI und humans. The strength of this argumentation for an autopoietic and processual concept of life lies in the fact that the author draws a line between Francisco Varela's and Humberto Maturana's theory of autopoiesis and the discussion around Posthumanism. Ferrando manages to reveal the links between biology, technology and philosophy. In the closing section, she presents a very informative discussion of the role of New Materialism and Object Oriented Ontology as ontological foundations of Posthumanism. The book ends with a thought experiment meditating on the multiverse in its physical and philosophical framings as a joyful celebration of posthuman thinking.

The biggest merit of Ferrando's work is bringing together a very thoughtful historical analysis of the intellectual roots of Posthumanism, while at the same time using these considerations within the performance of posthuman theory as non-dualist and non-anthropocentric celebration of life in all its diversity. The author meets highest academic standards in presenting her arguments and adds a very accessible and engaging text to the canon of philosophical literature.

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FROM PUBLIC TO PUBLICS TO PURVEYORS

REVIEW

Sumati Yadav

Popular culture is too broad and too misunderstood a term, especially when pitted against our common understanding of 'culture' that the comprehensive understanding of what all it encompasses has been beyond the mindscapes of even intellectuals. Marcel Danesi, in the fourth edition of his book *Popular Culture* has done a tremendous job in giving the readers an all-inclusive account of popular culture with a standpoint that makes it a balanced study. Apparently aimed at and apt too for helping the student community, it is undoubtedly a good reference book for teachers too. The book seems on the bulkier side but the nature of the topic and the author's organization of the content by adding and updating the timeline/highlights/illustrations for each form of popular culture, relevant questions and glossary, entail the length it has. Although the author talks about popular culture exclusively in the context of America, nevertheless it can be good template for studying it in any other context too.

Marcel Danesi is a well-known semiotician, linguist and anthropologist currently teaching at The University of Totonto. His oeuvre stamps his expertise in these fields. This book presents the kaleidoscopic variety of the collage of popular culture in such a way that popular culture comes out as being reflective of the ever-changing living collage called society. Reading this book is like being on a navigational tour which starts with Danesi familiarizing the reader onboard with the compact itinerary, taking well into account the general apprehensions and reservations about popular culture. Tracing its origin in the Roaring Twenties as a populist culture, "crystallized as a new form of recreational lifestyle and a huge business enterprise" (14),

Danesi makes the reader travel back in time to witness how the ever progressive, ever evolving and ever adapting nature of popular culture has survived the test of times and trials by 'cognoscenti' and advocates of so called high culture.

True to his words in the Preface of the book, Danesi has extensively revised the chapters in this fourth edition, "taking into account the rise and dominance of digital media and new contexts for the delivery of pop culture." Although the content is finely laid out in twelve chapters like in the previous edition, the 'Origin and Spread' section in the First Chapter has been expanded to include an in-depth study of the eras and trends that were historically crucial for the evolution of popular culture: Mediaeval entertainments, Carnivals and Circuses and Opera surviving popularly in the form of ballads, amusement parks, media spectacles and rock concerts respectively. He further dismantles the general myopic view branding popular culture as 'low' through discussing its various features like Spectacle, Collage, Bricolage, Pastiche, Nostalgia, Occultism, Make-believe, Celebrities and Laughter, and reminding that many of their forms have easily assimilated within the texture of the 'high' culture.

Backing his arguments with the theoretical framework provided by Marshall McLuhan, Danesi showcases the dialectical synergy between popular culture, mass media and communication technologies through various examples. The author draws attention of the naysayers towards the functional value of the popular culture too; youth has always co-opted certain traits of the populist/mass culture to dissent or resist or project new, evolved attitudes. He declares, "In this framework, pop culture is much more than entertainment and a money-making enterprise; it is a mirror and a source of social change." (52)

In the second chapter, Explaining Pop Culture, Danesi offers its analysis from various interdisciplinary perspectives like communication models and various critical, psychological, sociological, semiotic and transgression theories. The obvious fact that so many disciplines have been exploring and trying to understand the workings of the multi-hued phenomenon of popular culture, speaks volumes about the all-pervasive presence and impact of popular culture. Danesi stamps the veracity of popular culture as a subject of serious critical study when he traces it to be a topic of analysis for even Plato and Aristotle to Frankfurt School to Carl Jung to Ferdinand de Saussure and Jean Baudrillard to Mikhail Bakhtin.

Danesi then moves on another crucial task of reiterating that the multiple popular channels of culture: materials, conceptual, performative and aesthetic have cemented their relationship with consumerist marketplace/economy and media platforms, which have now vastly converged in the digitalized global village today. In the well cutout discussion of the third chapter, Business of Popular Culture, Danesi provides the reader with answers to many of the complex questions about the sustainability of popular culture and its agents in the differently populated

cyberspace. In line with his assertion on the immense power of media to create celebrities, he introduces a new section in this edition, Nano-celebrity. It surely is a phenomenon made possible by the power of Internet to make the content and the resultant popularity viral but short lived.

Chapter fourth to eleventh has been organized as per the media that has transmitted popular culture to the masses. The discussion on offline/online print culture, radio culture, pop music, cinema//video, television, advertising/branding, pop language, online pop culture renders the reader confronted with the question of the future of popular culture in the digital age, which the author diverts onto a path of hope. While analyzing the whole popular culture industry, he convincingly substantiates his arguments on popular culture factoring effective structural changes in the social fabric through incorporating references like the flappers, Elvis Presley, Marlin Monroe, Marlon Brando, Louis Armstrong, Marcel Duchamp, the juke box, the Cadillac, Ford Mustang, Charles Schulz, Disney's Fantasyland, South Park (TV series), The Decameron (fiction), soap operas, Cabbage Patch doll, Barbie dolls, Rubik's Cube, Fast food, Park Jae-Sang (Psy), twitter, youtube, so on and so forth. It may be disturbing for a few that Danesi does not give enough space to the negative dimensions of the populist nature of popular culture. However, it cannot be denied that he recognizes its positive and negative aspects but intentionally dwells much on the progressive and sustaining aspect of it.

In every chapter, under every heading, the author emphasizes on the digitally transformed societies witnessing transformed formats of creating, spreading, accessing and responding to the content/trends of popular culture. The last chapter deliberates exclusively on the shifting landscapes of popular culture in the internet age where lines between real and hyperreal have blurred and commercial framework has changed. Although he rightly sees it to a challenge for the survival of popular culture in its traditional forms, but is positive too. It is right that "Pop culture perpetuates itself (and has always perpetuated itself) by adapting to the technologically changing media that deliver it to large masses of people" (48). We cannot agree more with him that the world and the world of pop culture have changed 'drastically', it remains to be seen what the next course will be.

Popular Culture is overall an interesting and engaging read which can enlighten the academia or even enthusiastic readers on the intricate bonding of popular culture and consumerist market when it comes to certain phenomenon happening on regular basis like the closing of Mad Magazine publication and the social platforms flooded with reactions; the production of two critically acclaimed ten seconds films under the Thumbstoppers challenge; the widely featured old female fan of Indian cricket team being made the brand ambassador of Pepsi and so on.

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