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The “Lying Intellect,” Imagination, and the “Other”

It is a widely accepted fact that imagination can be associated with the innocent capacity to contemplate on either non-existent or absent objects, which for some reason or another seem to be non-existent in our immediate or actual surroundings. It enables us to escape the confines of instantaneous reality, thereby liberating us from the subjection to our immediate surroundings and transferring us to transient worlds in our minds, which are somewhat cut off from actuality. With respect to this suggested nature of the imagination, some may argue that the ultimate power of imagination lies in its ability to empower the subject with a profound sense of freedom, that is innately strong enough to break the limits of what is actual and what is real. While on a personal level, imagination gives one the ability to traverse bounds of immediate reality; on a macro/community level, imagination can be very toxic for some. This paper will look at different real and fictional literary examples, while journeying through Sartre, Husserl, Castoriadis and Ricouer’s ideas and theories of imagination, and, trying to map out the essential aspects of the needs and formations of identities of different marginal individuals/communities. Elaine Fowler Palencia¹ in her poem “Someday When All the Graves are Turned Out”

¹ Elaine Fowler Palencia, of Champaign, IL, grew up in Morehead, KY and Cookeville, TN. A Phi Beta Kappa graduate in English of Vanderbilt University, she is the award-winning author of six books of fiction as well as four chapbooks of poetry and numerous essays and book reviews. She has lectured at many workshops and at universities where her work is

from her collection *Taking the Train*, points out how reality is nothing but a “lying intellect” for her son. Maybe she reaches this conclusion for a variety of reasons – one of them being the way her son was treated by the rest of the people around them. She points out how well the children around them have “been taught the drill” to run away from them and hide, as pointed out in the poem “The Empty Street of Children.” Palencia writes:

So well have they been taught the drill, so well do they know us
Though we have never seen them before,
That within seconds every child has vanished.
Down the empty street of children
My son lurches in his bent-kneed shamble.

(Palencia, 1997: 5)

The quintessential factor at play here seems to be imagination at large. It is imagination borne out of the language of parental love that gave the son the assumption that all children would be his friends – as a natural order of things. It is imagination on the author’s part as well, which may have led her to believe, even momentarily, that maybe some people around them would be more accepting of difference. And it is imagination induced by certain taboos that encourages the children to run away. If we take the innocence of this freedom of imagination into account, it is difficult not to see the described cases of censorship as gratuitous cases of violence against human nature. In what follows, what may be considered given in imagination remains without place within the bounds of actuality. At the same time, besides enabling an individual to escape the boundaries of actuality, imagination also lends entitlement to the individual to re-constitute the world that surrounds them. With respect to the

studied. Her work has appeared in such journals as *Appalachian Heritage*, *Appalachian Journal*, *Sow’s Ear Poetry Review*, *Virginia Quarterly Review*, *South Carolina Review*, *Still*, *Willow Review*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*, *Literary Mama*, *Pentimento*, *Crossroads: A Southern Culture Annual*, *Pine Mountain Sand & Gravel*, *River Styx*, *Bluegrass Now*, *Tipton Poetry Journal*, and many others, including such anthologies as *Bloodroot: Reflections on Place by Appalachian Women Writers*, *Appalachia Inside Out*, *Piano in a Sycamore: Writing Lessons from the Appalachian Writers’ Workshop*, and the fifteenth anniversary retrospective of *Iowa Woman*. She is a mother of two, and the poetry collection *Taking the Train* revolves around the struggles she faced bringing up her specially-abled son Andrew; as well as struggles he faced throughout his life. He recently passed away in the beginning of 2022.

first tendency, a subject/individual could liken an imaginative experience to a dream, and then with the second tendency in mind, one may even conclude further that the dream(s) in question is not content to remain in a dreamlike state, it is the need to realize that dream that becomes the driving force. While imagination has the power to put into question what presently exists and provide the incentive to re-constitute an individual's socio-historical reality, it also gives power to the collective to use imagination induced by existing norms to impose restrictions upon certain people. Imagination is thus by far not always entirely innocent. Rather, its tremendous force, and thus potentially its danger, lies in its capacity to re-shape the very world that embraces our everyday actions, feelings, and thoughts, which may very well be the constitutive aspect of imagination.

Imagination can thus embody the tendency to flee the world and the tendency to shape it simultaneously; albeit different individuals may manifest that in different ways. The author's son and other children playing on the street were all children in the universal sense of the term. But, are these two tendencies congruous with each other? How can one and the same power enable one to escape and to build, to flee and to form, to suspend and to constitute, and to negate and to mar at the same time? With such questions, we stumble against an apparent incongruity, which borders between the spaces of (ir)reality. While we cannot doubt that imaginary objects may be unreal because of their absence in the immediate reality, we need to simultaneously recognize imagination's capacity to transform reality.

Were the children on the street acting on imagination fueled by ideas and norms not present in objective form in the immediate reality? It may be so that these ideas and norms are a part of the language practiced by the majority of people around them, and thereby they allude to those via their imagination, which also points out to the lack thereof. Maybe it should not be understood as a mere suggestion that the contradiction that we face here and whose resolution comes at the price of cancelling one of the tendencies mentioned earlier. If we turn to Husserl's paradox of subjectivity, which he addressed in sections 53 and 54 of the *Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Husserl writes:

How can a component part of the world, its human subjectivity, constitute the whole world, namely, constitute it as its intentional formation, one which has always already become what it is and continues to develop, formed by the universal

interconnection of intentionally accomplishing subjectivity, while the latter, the subjects accomplishing in cooperation, are themselves only a partial formation within the total accomplishment? The subjective part of the world swallows up, so to speak, the whole world and thus itself too. What an absurdity!

(Husserl: 179)

While this may echo the dilemma we think we face, it still does not justify how imagination can place the subject outside the world as well as in the world. If we take consciousness into account, which is always conscious of some objective realness, or that the subject cannot be conscious without being conscious of an object; we can refer to this as intentionality, like Ricoeur does. We can safely conclude in this scenario that phenomenology concerns itself with an examination of experience: “as it in fact immediately presents itself, that is, as a structure of meanings, of intentional relations of subject engaged in a world” (Ricoeur, 1981: 10). And this would consequently necessitate a hermeneutic turn. While for Husserl, meaning may be “located in the subject’s intuition of the things themselves”, for Ricoeur – “intuition is always a matter of interpretation”. And when intuition is guided by one’s examination of experience, the children on the street running away to apparently protect themselves from someone that appears to be different from them reflects the kind of objectivity they see around them, especially ideologies followed by their caretakers, mostly parents, that becomes their language of experience. While for the author’s son, the language of experience is one that of love, which is not biased in any way. The son, through his unique view of the world, has his own intuitions as well, thereby his experience becoming a finding and a forming, creating, and giving meaning to a constructed reality around him. Hermeneutical phenomenology elucidates how humans make meaning in relation to sacred texts and to their shared history, like Ricoeur points out. It distinctively informs the meaning that may be given to a past behavior, the institutional actors, and to all the past narratives. Ricoeur is known to interpret texts in a particular way with the aid of history. He uses the process of historical analysis to discover the imaginative possibilities that arise anew from the search for meaning in the present of the past narrative – a practice that the author herself uses to understand her son’s world better. In the poem “Rock, Paper, Scissors”, the author points out how after her son picked up a round rock, felt it, and licked it, she did the same,

and as she felt "its cool grain", and understood the nature of rocks in a new method – one that was unthinkable almost before she learnt that from her child. One knows things not only because of what is internal to an individual, but because there are phenomena that occur independent of oneself that impact everyone, or that one sees, and are therefore grounded in facts outside one's mind – a complete analysis of imagination and language.

This move from a descriptive phenomenology oriented to perception, to a hermeneutic one oriented towards interpretation or understanding is necessary in order to re-think imagination in terms of language. One could read the entire history of the development of phenomenological accounts of imagination as a continuous shifting of attention from one tendency of imagination to the other. While Edmund Husserl's (2005) and Jean-Paul Sartre's (1962, 2004) contributions in an unprecedented way highlight imagination's utopian tendency, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's (1993), Gaston Bachelard's (1994) as well as Cornelius Castoriadis' (1997) accounts underscore the constitutive tendency. Jean-Paul Sartre's studies of imagination tend to represent the utopian tendency with vigorous emphasis. Yet by conceptualizing imagination in terms of its capacity to reach out for non-existent objects, absent objects, objects that exist elsewhere, or objects whose existence is neutralized, Sartre has in effect suppressed the constitutive tendency of imagination. In both *Imagination* and in *The Imaginary* – the two works that are known to be exclusively dedicated to the analysis of the imagination – Sartre interprets imagination as an escapist tendency that encourages one to flee from real problems as well as from the need to resolve them. Here, imagination is seen to share a lot of similarities with bad faith, which initiates a flight from facticity and liberates one from responsibility. *The Family Idiot* by Sartre, which was also his last work, shows us a similar notion of imagination in the figure of Flaubert, who being incapable of modifying his worldly state of affairs, is shown to fall back upon an imaginary resolution to his difficulties. In the analysis of Sartre's and Ricoeur's philosophies of imagination, besides such an escapist notion of imagination, in such works as *What is Literature* and "A Plea for Intellectuals", Sartre furnishes a significantly different understanding of imagination, which conveys to us that even though there is no prose without imagination, prose does not fall victim to the escapist tendency that lies at the core of other forms of arts, such as poetry, painting,

and music. Unlike the poet, the prose writer employs words as signs directing the reader to clear meanings in the process of communicating a judgment about this world, according to Sartre. Literature is known to lift life from the amorphous level of the lived to a thematic structure that may sometimes be restrictive. While some argue that Sartre's philosophy of the imagination relies upon two significantly different sources, besides offering a pictorial theory of imagination, which draws its inspiration from Husserl's phenomenology, Sartre also conceptualizes imagination as spontaneous and self-determined. And it seems not just reproductive but also productive imagination plays a significant role in Sartre's work, notably in his account of aesthetic experience. With these analyses in mind, it may be clear that Sartre presents us with two significantly different conceptions of imagination. Yet the following question remains – what exactly is the relation between these two significantly different notions of imagination? In Sartre's works, this question remains unexplored. In contrast to Sartre, Cornelius Castoriadis – thematizes imagination almost exclusively as a *vis formandi*, which, according to him, is intrinsic to all other human activities, experiences, and thoughts. Castoriadis writes: "To put it bluntly [...] it is because radical imagination exists that 'reality' exists for us – exists *tout court* – and exists as it exists". Castoriadis outlines a distinction between two basic forms of radical imagination, namely the imagination of a singular human being and the social imaginary (Castoriadis: 136–154). Yet just as Sartre's strong emphasis on utopian imagination seems to be drawn from the recognition of the constitutive capacities of imagination, similarly, Castoriadis' focus on radical imagination does not make him lose sight of reproductive imagination. Nonetheless, the question concerning the exact relation of these two types of imagination remains unexplored even in Castoriadis' works. This is where Paul Ricoeur's phenomenology of imagination occupies a special place. In this context, Ricoeur seems to be the only writer to have worked extensively on bridging such gaps.

Imagination is supposed to act as an agent in the creation of meaning in language and through it. According to Ricoeur, images are constructed and given voice before they are seen, and, paradigmatically, they are voiced out in the form of poetic metaphors which in turn create new meaning by metaphorical reconciliation of pre-existing opposing meanings. If interpreted ontologically, a poetic imagination – "creates meaning by responding to the desire of being

to be expressed" (Ricoeur, 1967: 12). Imagination tends to function by divulging new possibilities of being in the world by means of semantic innovation, which in turn points toward social transformation. Ricoeur writes: "Without imagination, there can be no action (or reconciliation or just peace)" (Ricoeur, 1967: 12). While Ricoeur may write in a context describing how imagination and language work to make possible the interpretation of sacred texts, the same line of thought can be applied to lived realities as well. Elaine Fowler Palencia in her poem "The Zero Moment" describes how the mother was filled with despair, and yet a simple gesture from her "sprawled, retarded" son and a soft murmur of his voice were symbols enough to motivate her to be hopeful for her son. The language used here certainly contains a few powerful symbols. A symbol is considered a sign as long as it stands for something, but a symbol may not merely be a sign; rather, a symbol can signify two or more meanings simultaneously. In contrast to allegory, that simply relates one meaning to another without residue or ambiguity, a symbol points at more than one meaning by way of enigmatic suggestion or evocation. One could hope and argue that contemporary language can be restored to its poetic and symbolic power, thereby recovering language in its symbolic fullness. This would require demythologizing myth as a false explanation of reality and claiming myth's capacity to describe a state of affairs that is yet to be fully realized, something that the mother of the child does in Palencia's poem. This is a good instance of the process of temporalization that makes present actions meaningfully operational by interpreting them with respect to a recollected past and a projected future. Historical, normative tradition and genuine innovation have the potential to belong together. Tradition can work as the living transmission of an innovation that is always capable of being reactivated by initiating a return to the most creative moments of poetic activity. Reciprocally, innovation, and for that matter, even imagination remain forms of behavior governed by precedents for behavior derived from history and culture in most cases.

Poetic language reveals a capacity for nondescript "reference to those ontological aspects of our being-in-the-world that cannot be spoken of directly. 'Seeing-as' would imply 'saying-as,' as well as 'being-as'" (Kearney: 38). Narrative works, that are both historical and fictional, function as poetic symbols ultimately in their referential capacity. The important point that we can focus

on is that historical narrative, thus understood, requires imagination for its reconstruction. If we believe that any narrative is properly understood, that rests on the capacity of memory based on pre-narrative structures that influence and limit human imagination to act in the world in a significant manner that may be symbolic in nature. If we would want to express this more simply, we could say that human beings are continuously transforming a sequence of life events into a unified structure and weaving a story, creating a plot that has the potential to influence them for life. Ricoeur recognizes a role for poetry in transitioning from speculative theory to an ethical one because poetry is oriented towards and for action. He writes:

It is the function of poetry in its narrative and dramatic form, to propose to the imagination and to its mediation various figures that constitute some many thought experiments by which we learn to link together the ethical aspects of human conduct and happiness and misfortune.

(Ricoeur: 12)

The son in the poem “Rock, Paper, Scissors” weaves a narrative of his own through his unique understanding of the world. And it is precisely this connection with the larger world that drives his actions; he succeeds in creating his imagined reality alongside the normative narratives in society. But we are yet to address the issue of the “other” in society, in the cases discussed so far, that can very easily be the son, and his family, especially the parents. Palencia writes in her poem “When Speaking With the Family of a Retarded Child”:

Sooner or later one of them,
Like a bard of old
Drawing a hand across his harp,
Will quietly open a vein
And express the inexpressible.

(Palencia, 1997: 20)

Here, confronted with the limits imposed by reality, the self-experiences frustration, disappointment, and pain. As a response to reality, the self takes flight into the imaginary, as those that fit into normative narratives take center stage. Something seems to have occurred with respect to the subject in this interval of time; it is as if a certain deracination of the very subjectivity of the subject

appears to have transpired. There is a movement – a resultant of external forces in action that are actively making the subject/self feel like an “other.” This typical subjective displacement from host/self to hostage/other self marks a huge difference. A host is usually associated with initiative, willingness, invitation, reception, and welcome, on the one hand, while, on the other, a hostage gets associated with very different connotations, such as passivity, unwillingness, unpreparedness, and violence most of the time. There is a narrative shift in the case of the parents of the child in this case. They have been othered and violated by the simple action of voice alone. And this invading of one’s narrative of identity leaves traumatic marks. The hostage subject is always already accused in its being, thus entailing the necessity of no longer writing of the identity and ego as universal or transcendental structures. Rather, the subject in this scenario is shown the necessity of writing in the first person singular form, from the point when this process of trauma of accusation begins. Simply put, it is from a “me” who has already been summoned before “I” had the opportunity to pay attention. The continuity of consciousness is interrupted in this regard, and whenever the consciousness of the “other” is in question, their reality is reduced and relocated in the mind of the host.

In a short story titled *Small Caucasian Woman* by Elaine Fowler Palencia, the collective voice of the narrator explains how easily they fell prey to their prejudiced views about a single woman who was a mother to a child, when she put an advertisement in their local newspaper. While justifying their thoughts on the basis that the entire society was a small one, not very connected with the world beyond their area limits, and generally suspicious of any change, it is not enough to accept the trauma that May Linda, the “small caucasian woman,” and the old man Bert, her new partner went through. If we look for answers within the study of hermeneutics, we can conclude that implicit bias was at work in this case, as well as in some of the characters described in the poems by Palencia discussed earlier. In the face of legitimate claims by each party of the bias bestowed upon them by the other side in question, each may make a case for calling the other prejudiced. While the parents of the retarded child in Palencia’s poem may make a case that their hosts were impolite and accommodating to their cause, the hosts might also make a case that their lived experiences do not offer them that insight to do so. But it is important to recognize here that

it is simply a matter of compassion and sensitivity as well. The problem with normative structures that bring forth such insensitivity is that it incorporates biased ideologies into narratives of origin, for instance, linking the human moral choice to cosmological cycles of fate, destiny, or predestination.

The parents in the poem, the son deserted by the other children on the street, the small caucasian woman, the old man Bert are but “others” in society. Their identities are seen as anomalies, determined by some force beyond themselves to do what they do and practice, thereby justifying their alienation in the eyes of the rest of the population around them. While meditating on the origins of such prejudices and moral practices may prove helpful to the larger society, in reality, such an awareness is difficult to be imagined by most. Pre-existing structures, and strong adherence to the same diminishes the scope of imagination of individuals, which in turn assists their moral compasses to demonize certain alterities – the small caucasian woman was demonized based on the worldview of prostitutes and escorts. The people at the facility for old people in the story *Small Caucasian Woman*, decided to help May Linda and Bert after they learnt the entire truth. If human identity is narrative in character, where memory and imagination are intermingled, so much so that they are necessarily reinvented and reconstructed more than once at least in their lifetime, we see a good example of that is how the collective at the facility for old people re-invented and supported May Linda and Bert later in the story. By virtue of reimagining the other in an empathetic process, or maybe by trying to locate oneself as another, the possibility of re-narrativizing – kind of forgetting after remembering – a different and freer future emerges. Certain unique facts and experiences of May Linda’s life evoked imagination in the people who helped her, thereby giving them a chance of experiencing a shared human experience. While the imaginary knows no censorship, as it may be suggested by a morality based on abstract rules, narratives do involve an element of ethical solicitation based on an ethics of experience, that mostly revolves around cultural paradigms of suffering and action, happiness, and dignity, which further opens up a variety of ethical possibilities.

Alterity or otherness has different origins, varied lived experiences, and comes with diverse degrees of nuanced imagination of the self. Extreme political disorder, individual traumatic exposures, violent socio-political clashes around the world, instances of rape – are but a few kinds of narratives that encounter

alterity in different forms as well. In a poem titled "Where Did Gopal Vanish" by Harekrishna Deka,² a boy who had a speaking disability suddenly uttered his first word "Dhoom!" – symbolising a bomb explosion that took the life of Gopal. He writes:

হাটলৈ যোৱা গোপাল ঘৰলৈ ঘূৰি অহা নাই।
উভতি অহা বোবা ল'ৰাটোৰ মুখতহে মাত ফুটিল,
'ধুম।' ঠাৰে-চিয়াৰে বুজাই দিলে, আকাশ ভাগি পৰিল।

[Gopal never saw the exit of the village market.
The mute boy made it back, and made noises that started making sense,
As the skies started tearing down in liquid pain, he uttered 'Dhoom!' –
his first word].

(my translation)

The trauma was so massive for the boy, that he started speaking in a tongue that was recognized by everyone around him. While such a situation of suddenly starting to speak should have been a case of celebration and relief, in this case, it was a mark of violence, that was endured not just by the boy, but also the community he lived in. The language to deal with such trauma does not seem to exist, and more so, the irony was that while language was gained, language was also lost. This may be an instance of how power struggles maim and mute voices of communities. They are "othered" in a way that their voices simply become faint whispers underlying stories of gory violence. Their stories and narratives are silenced. So, are such alienated communities and individuals impeded in different ways by structures of power and politics? In such a scenario, the "alienated other" becomes the community of people who are the living hallmarks of perseverance. The crisis arises when the agency of the spoken word of this "other" is taken away, or pushed to the background. The need to fit

² Harekrishna Deka (born 1943) is considered one of the foremost writers of Assam with his novel experiments in modern and postmodern Assamese literature. He has distinguished himself in poetry, fiction and literary criticism. After serving in the Indian Police Service, Assam-Meghalaya cadre, he retired from service as the Director General of Police. He has written more than thirty books. He received the Sahitya Akademi award in 1987 for his poetry collection *Aan Ejon*, the Katha award for short story in 1996, Assam Valley Literary Award in 2010 for his overall contribution to Assamese literature, and the Padmanatha Bidyabinod Literary award in 2015 for his contribution to Assamese poetry.

subjects of scrutiny into certain structures of established systems further adds to the need of the “self” – the audience, in this case – to perhaps fulfil their mental capacities of humane emotions and interactions. But is it certain that it might help the “alienated other” in any way? Does it help those who had close connections with the victim(s)? Why does the “self”, that is away from many acts of violence, not pay heed to the narratives of the ones who still live in constant situations of endangerment even now?

It would also be interesting to know how the social (and individual) imaginary changes with respect to such situations. The social imagination could serve an ideological role of grounding a social identity as well as a utopian role of the turbulent projection of alternatives in relation to the present. Therefore, a poetics of creation can be linked to an ethics of action, like Ricoeur points out (Kearney: 69). In this regard, it may seem that a good life would be possible only if an individual or a community adheres to existing, established institutions. Thus, hermeneutic philosophy, in such cases, can be elucidated as one that centers on a relationship between poetics and ethics. It may lead to a process where one or a collective may adopt a process that pivots towards demythologizing one’s historical narrative, and then reimagining and projecting that story into the future, that may lead to looking at one’s life as if it were more than being a part of a nihilistic game, the kind that even Palencia calls “lying intellect” or reality. It becomes a way of resisting the toxicity of existing narratives, and preserving the originary myths, while infusing new ones – the kind that creates unique identities.

Another example of existing structures causing impediments to communities is made prominent in *These Hills Called Home: Stories From A War Zone* by Temsula Ao,³ that is apprehensive with many issues related to the Naga freedom struggle in Northeast India. The Nagas’ quest for a separate ‘identity’ and the resultant subjugation of the rebellion by the Indian Army led to various atrocities from both sides, which resulted in the suffering of the common

³ Temsula Ao (October 1945 – October 2022) was a Naga poet, fiction writer, and ethnographer from Northeast India. She was a Professor of English at North Eastern Hill University (NEHU) from where she retired in 2010. She served as the Director of the North East Zone Cultural Centre between 1992 and 1997 on deputation from NEHU. She was awarded the Padma Shri award for her contribution to Literature and Education. *These Hills Called Home: Stories from a War Zone* was her first, published short story collection. Her works have been translated into Assamese, Bengali, French, German, Hindi, and Kannada.

people. It is a battle that seems to be ceaseless – of ideas as well as arms, new concepts along with or against old traditions of power, bitterness and compassion. The communities have learnt to continue with their livelihoods by taking into stride the impairments thrust upon by the powerful. Ao starts one of her short stories titled *A New Chapter* with the following lines:

Gradually the earth seemed to be settling down, as though after a protracted period of violent storms that had ripped through her heart [...]. People were talking of sowing and planting crops in the fields as in the old days before the upheavals [...] Schoolchildren were seen rummaging through the rubbles of their homes to see if any book could be salvaged as school buildings were now being repaired.

(Ao, 2005)

This opening scene may be written in a very simple manner, but it speaks volumes about the obstacles surrounding that community, irrespective of their age, gender, wealth, and health. The scene tells its readers that the region had seen tremendous amounts of violent “upheavals”, the people probably had to run away and hide while their town was massacred along with those who could not escape, but they had to push themselves and try to normalize their existence as much as they could, for the sake of the young children, in memory of those that had vanished, and in honor of their motherland who had given them shelter in the best and worst of times. It is this spirit of pushing through that makes it possible for those communities to give out their occasional sigh of relief; the fact that they did not give up even in the face of extreme violence and in the aftermath of it. They found a language of their own, and used it imaginatively to promote a vision for the future. A different kind of language, an alterity, that made it possible to imagine a unique method of survival - an experience that Palencia would be extremely familiar with as she writes in her poem “The Zero Moment”:

My son... murmurs, Ma-ma,
I know what I'm doing here:
At every fork of every road we've ever driven,
He's steered me down the rocky way
Marked Love

(Palencia, 1997: 10).

That, whether a impairment is inflicted by pure chance, carelessness of a professional health worker, or by society's heinous power struggles, the language of love and perseverance finds a way and language to survive. And no matter what the case is, if the larger populations perceive one as an "other," they tend to construct narratives based on pre-conceptions, that impair one's self-narrative in the eyes of the majority, thereby, those becoming their "lying intellect."

In another story, titled *The Curfew Man* by Ao, she describes this character Satemba who chose not to think about the "rightness or wrongness" of the methods the central government was using in order to control the Naga population. He took such a stand, for a short time in his life, in order to find a good source of income, but only to lose the full use of his knees as a result of that, which shows the helpless plight of people in that region. It is not simply aggressive methods of control applied by those in power, but the struggles that a common man like Satemba faces everyday – threat of unemployment, maintaining a certain standard of living, and so on. There is also the struggle of ideology. Satemba tries not to think about the ideological conflicts between the Naga militant groups and the central government forces – but both groups have different ideas of power and sovereignty, based on their historical experiences that are stored away in their memories. Memory serves as a site of internal conflict in such stories. Retrieval of memories has become an instrument of resisting the injustices of the present. In between warring sides, it is common people like Satemba and his wife who face the dilemma of ideologies. Who would they turn to for support? Whose side are they on? Do their lives matter even the slightest to any of the warring sides? Their vulnerability is preyed on by those in power. Ricoeur argues that through stories individuals or communities learn to plot their own lives and to project possibilities for their societies, while ethical intervention in history occurs simultaneously via responsible decisions that take place during stressful times between the horizon of expectation of the future and the space of experience (Kearney: 71). And such uses of narratives also have the potential to enable one to identify their positionality imaginatively with respect to other people, thereby extending the circle of selfhood.

In certain crucial times, when the unstable or decomposable nature is brought to attention, usually people believe or should believe in imagining their return, so as to preserve human dignity. But can the fragile consciousness

of the individual or collective be trusted to survive or even realize, depending on the positionality of different sides or beings? It is one’s own certainty and inner self that can alleviate them from any skepticism of the self and remove themselves from being narrativized in any negative light by a lot of pre-existing structures and ideologies. Regardless of any violation inflicted upon the “others,” it is important to note how these “others” choose to empower their bodies as well as living narratives based on old and new narratives of self-worth – a process that stands outside the logic of proper exchange. There is this innate tendency to carve out a niche for one-self, where they can practice their language of imagination, thereby reinstating the phrase that Elaine Palencia Fowler uses in her poem “Someday When All the Graves are Turned Out,” to describe reality – “lying intellect.”

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The “Lying Intellect,” Imagination, and the “Other”

Summary

Imagination can be associated with the innocent capacity to contemplate on either non-existent or absent objects, which for some reason or another seem to be non-existent in our immediate or actual surroundings. It enables us to escape the confines of instantaneous reality, thereby liberating us from the subjection to our immediate surroundings and transferring us to transient worlds in our minds, which are somewhat cut off from actuality. With respect to this suggested nature of the imagination, some may argue that the ultimate power of imagination lies in its ability to empower the subject with a profound sense of freedom, that is innately strong enough to break the limits of what is actual and what is real. While on a personal level, imagination gives one the ability to traverse bounds of immediate reality; on a macro/community level, imagination can be very toxic for some. This paper will look at different real and fictional literary examples, while journeying through Sartre, Husserl, Castoriadis and Ricouer’s ideas and theories of imagination, and, trying to map out the essential aspects of the needs and formations of identities of different marginal individuals/communities. Along side that, it will also try and connect the different ways of survival and perseverance that people find via imagination.

Keywords: imagination, Another, Other, identity, reality, impairment, action, and thought

Słowa kluczowe: wyobrażenia, Obcy, Inny, tożsamość, rzeczywistość, ułomność, działanie, myśl

Cytowanie

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