

Kick

KICK
Journal of the English Student's Association "Glotta"



Publisher
University of Osijek
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Publisher address
Lorenza Jäger 9
31000 Osijek

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ISSN
2623-9558
Br. 6, 2025.

Printed by
Krešendo, Osijek

Printing run
60 copies

The journal is published once a year.
The journal uses double-blind review

The journal was published with the support of the
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Osijek

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FOREWORD

Kick's Editorial Board

Everything in life is writable about if you have
the outgoing guts to do it, and the imagination
to improvise. The worst enemy of creativity is self-doubt.

— Sylvia Plath

We are delighted and honoured to present the sixth volume of student's journal *Kick*, a journal of students of the English language and literature at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, J. J. Strossmayer University of Osijek. This issue is marked with an unmistakable note of creativity and self-expression by including an extensive number of poems. This journal carries a tradition of promoting and treasuring students' work, creativity, and agency with this issue being no different.

The sixth volume of *Kick* collected students' works from a wide range of English language and literature, as its topic was open-ended. The papers vary by topic, ranging from literature, onomastics, linguistics, philosophy, and art. Apart from research papers, this volume houses and impressive number of poems that differentiate it and, possibly, even marks a shift in what we can expect for future students' work. We would like to extend our thanks to all the authors that contributed to this issue, you are undoubtedly the reason for this volume seeing the light of day. We would also like to express our gratitude to all the reviewers that collaborated with us, we are delighted for the opportunity with working with all of you and are immensely grateful for your contribution in making sure all of the journal's works are vetted and appropriate. Furthermore, this issue is decorated with illustrations before each research paper, carrying

the last year's initiative of enhancing the visual and creative feel of the journal.

Our dear readers, we hope you will treasure this collection as a celebration of what we all are capable of when we dare to think and create. It is for this reason we chose a quote of Sylvia Plath to mark this edition of the journal. Do not be afraid to contribute, to create, to think, and to improvise for a world of marvels awaits us after we defeat self-doubt. The emphasis of this journal is on creativity, but also on the connection and unity between authors, reviewers, and the Editorial Board. In the name of *Kick's* Editorial Board, we invite you to honour the originality that lies between these pages. Please enjoy!





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The Loss of Female Identity in *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood

Abstract

The Handmaid's Tale is Margaret Atwood's most famous dystopian novel that portrays women's position in theocratic Republic of Gilead. Their reproductive abilities are the only aspect of their womanhood society cares about the most. To make sure that women remain obedient and passive in such a system, they were stripped of their identities in three major aspects: bodily autonomy, agency, and language. Their bodily autonomy was compromised by their Commanders to whom they were obliged to bear children. Aside from being treated as a sexual tool rather than a human being with thoughts and feelings, women were also severely conditioned by the Aunts, which only negatively affected their self-image. While their perception of themselves suffered, the passiveness of their agency persisted as well. This passiveness was mainly a product of no unity amongst all the women in the system and a lack of any form of outside knowledge. Reading and writing were strictly forbidden, while language showed its power both as a form of resistance and oppression. With all this in mind, this paper aims to show that one's identity can be easily compromised, or even completely erased, when its most important aspects are being degraded and neglected: body, agency, and language.

Keywords: Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*, identity, bodily autonomy, agency, language

In her dystopian novel *The Handmaid's Tale*, Margaret Atwood introduces a theocratic Republic of Gilead, where women have no other value besides their reproductive abilities. As a result, their identities are almost completely lost. Since they live in a society established on patriarchal values, their bodily autonomy does not be-

long to them, their agency is passive, and they are not allowed to express themselves through language. Living in such terrible conditions, women are not only extremely degraded, but they are stripped of their identities and their own sense of self. As this paper is going to prove, the fragility of women's identity is heavily influenced by the lack of their bodily autonomy, the lack of their agency, and their inability to express themselves through language.

The starting point of the identity loss for women in Gilead primarily concerns lack of their bodily autonomy. Because women have no control over their bodies, and what these bodies go through, they have developed hatred towards their own bodies. Even Offred herself confesses: "I avoid looking down at my body, not so much because it's shameful or immodest but because I don't want to see it. I don't want to look at something that determines me so completely" (Atwood ch. IV). It is important to note that their poor self-image has to do with the fact that both genders in the Republic of Gilead must create a new perception of women. As Mitra Mirzayee underlines, "[i]n order to sustain the political system, women must be taught to regard themselves as commodities" (119). However, this task is not an easy one to fulfill, which is why women in the Center were severely conditioned to accept household's rules. This conditioning was mainly done through the Aunts: infertile women whose task was to make sure that every woman knows what is expected of her. Through their speeches, they have managed to negatively affect other women's perception of their gender and sexuality. Not only did the speeches negatively affect women's perception of themselves, but they also formulated certain expectations for these women. Having all that in mind, it could be said that "women's procreative ability defines their womanhood and they are women as far as they deliver a baby" (Moo-savinia and Yousefi 164-165). There is only one thing society imposes on women: to get pregnant. Their reproductive capabilities are of utmost importance because "[t]here is no such thing as a sterile man any more, not officially. There are only women who are fruitful and women who are barren, that's the law" (Atwood ch. IV). Since Offred is thirty-three years old, it is not as easy for her to get pregnant.

Nevertheless, every time she fails to do so, her fear for her destiny in Gilead grows because infertile women are sent to the Colonies, where they are exposed to nuclear waste. That ultimately shortens their life span. Because of that ever-present fear for her life, alongside the pressure that society imposes on her, Offred grew more and more anxious every time her period would arrive: "Each month I watch for blood, fearfully, for when it comes it means failure. I have failed once again to fulfill the expectations of others, which have become my own" (Atwood ch. V). The expectations of society gradually grew important for Offred as well because they played an important role in her fate as a woman in Gilead. Nevertheless, even though pregnancy is the most wanted outcome, there are some regulations that must be respected. For example, since abortion is prohibited, even if the baby is not healthy, every pregnancy needs to be carried to term (Atwood ch. VIII). Not only is that traumatic for women who already have certain pregnancy complications, but it also reveals just how little to no power women in Gilead have over their reproductive rights. To illustrate just how important women's insides were, Commanders' Wives forbade the Handmaids to use any sort of products that would affect their physical appearance from the outside. The reasoning behind it, the novel's protagonist explains in the following way: "We are containers, it's only the insides of our bodies that are important. The outside can become hard and wrinkled, for all they care, like the shell of a nut" (Atwood ch. VI). In addition to this, it is important to refer to the fact that the Republic of Gilead was founded upon patriarchal values, which inevitably implies that the loss of bodily autonomy for women was a necessary step to defend male dominance. An example that would properly illustrate the severity of the violation of women's bodies is demonstrated through a female character named Janine. As it is mentioned in the novel, Janine was gang-raped at the age of fourteen. Because she fell pregnant then, she decided to abort. She confessed that at the Testifying, after which Aunt Helena concluded several things: that it was Janine's fault that the men violated her, that Janine was the one who even led them on, and that God allowed that to happen to teach her a lesson (Atwood ch. V). This instance em-

phasizes that perpetrators do not suffer any consequences for their actions, while the victim is the one to be blamed for everything. As a result, Moosavinia and Yousefi argue that “[s]exual drive becomes a masculine trait as well. While the Aunts perpetuate the idea that men are sex machines who only want women for sex, they remind the Handmaids that women are created differently. And whereas God created men with strong sexual urges, women are granted control over their reaction to these sexual urges” (166). The Republic of Gilead even took a step further to ensure that females remain subordinate: it proposed a sexual ritual between Commanders and their Handmaids to secure reproduction recovery. This ritual is named the Ceremony. It was derived from the story of Rachel and Jacob, in which Rachel, because of her infertility, offers her own maid to Jacob (Atwood ch. VI). The Aunts retell that biblical excerpt every morning for breakfast to make sure that the Handmaids know that ritualistic sex with their Commanders is justified. Aside from that, the novel’s protagonist provided vivid descriptions of what that process looks like, as well as her input on how she feels about it. At one point, Offred even said that she cannot find a proper word to describe it: “I do not say making love, because this is not what he’s doing. Copulating too would be inaccurate, because it would imply two people and only one is involved. Nor does rape cover it: nothing is going on here that I haven’t signed up for. There wasn’t a lot of choice but there was some, and this is what I chose” (Atwood ch. VI). Discussing Offred’s view on the Ceremony, Moosavinia and Yousefi assert that “[s]exual behavior of both genders at the Ceremony reflects their social place in the society. Women have a submissive role in this society, while men have more control and more chances of survival” (165). : The Handmaids are turned into passive, sexual tools, while the Commanders remain dominant and powerful. Due to the constant exposure to various indoctrination techniques, alongside their socially regulated reproductive rights and prevailing patriarchal values, women in Gilead founded their importance on their ability to reproduce and bring a new life.

Besides the lack of bodily autonomy, the loss of a woman’s identity is greatly influenced by women’s lack of agency. Women in Gilead are reluctant to become more active and show resistance towards the system because the system legally regulates punishments for those who refuse to be obedient. As a result, they are completely paralyzed by fear. Gilead successfully manages to establish two terrifying outcomes for those who refuse to be compliant: the Colonies and the public Salvagings. The Colonies embodied an enormous wasteland, where women were sent to clean poisonous chemicals and radiation in case they could not bear children or they tried to fight the system. When Offred was talking to Moira at Jezebel’s, Moira warned her about the conditions in the Colonies: “They figure you’ve got three years maximum, at those, before your nose falls off and your skin pulls away like rubber gloves. They don’t bother to feed you much, or give you protective clothing or anything, it’s cheaper not to. Anyway they’re mostly people they want to get rid of” (Atwood ch. XII). While the Colonies embody an idea of exile, the public Salvagings served as an ideal context to glorify violence and control. Not only were those who fought against the system punished, but women were also persuaded to participate in the acts of violence. Because of their participation, they will have conflicted feelings about resisting the system themselves and will mostly remain passive. For example, when the Particicution occurred, women were the ones to physically punish a criminal convicted of rape:

There’s a surge forward, like a crowd at a rock concert in the former time, when the doors opened, that urgency coming like a wave through us. The air is bright with adrenalin, we are permitted anything and this is freedom, in my body also, I’m reeling, red spreads everywhere, but before that tide of cloth and bodies hits him Ofglen is shoving through the women in front of us, propelling herself with her elbows, left, right, and running towards him. She pushes him down, sideways, then kicks his head viciously, one, two, three times, sharp painful jabs with the foot, well-aimed. (Atwood ch. XIV)

Even though women were often reminded of the futility of their efforts to fight against the system, they still had their own small acts of resistance that were only known to them. To be able to carry out even the smallest acts of resistance, women in the Red Center had to establish their own sense of self outside of their circumstances. Establishing one's own sense of self often supposed "a sort of unchanging, immaterial subject of consciousness, a person's essential being, especially considered as the object of introspection or reflexive action" (Kitanovska-Ristoska 111). This is what Offred did throughout the whole novel to divide herself from what was happening to her. While she mainly did that through her storytelling, she also often stole some butter with other women to soften their skin, even though lotions were prohibited: "As long as we do this, butter our skin to keep it soft, we can believe that we will someday get out, that we will be touched again, in love or desire. We have ceremonies of our own, private ones" (Atwood ch. VI). Aside from that, not only were the women scared into establishing a new sense of self to survive, but they were often turned against each other as well: Wives resented Handmaids because they had sex with their husbands, Handmaids often had to betray one another, while Aunts supported the system that oppresses and does not value women in any sense besides their reproductive abilities. With that in mind, Elena Kitanovska-Ristoska reveals that "Gilead uses women to control other women since there were many women willing to serve as Aunts" (116). Society deliberately aims to prevent women from uniting against the Republic by creating additional hierarchies and emotional conflicts amongst them, because if they act as a unit, they will be hard to control. Even though Aunt Lydia often brought up that the current generation of women is transactional, which is why they have a hard time adjusting to the system's regulations, she added that everything will be better for the upcoming generations: "The women will live in harmony together, all in one family; you will be like daughters to them, and when the population level is up to scratch again we'll no longer have to transfer you from one house to another because there will be enough to go round. There can be bonds of real affection" (Atwood

ch. X). However, despite her efforts, society will always benefit more from women's division rather than their unison. Besides fear, women's agency is limited due to the prohibition of any form of literacy. Without reading and writing, women are completely stripped off their critical thinking skills and, therefore, are less inclined to resist the system. Even Offred herself admits that reading and writing appear "lavish, decadent almost; immoral, like the orgies of barbarian regimes" (Atwood ch. VIII). When her Commander asked her to play Scrabble with him, without his Wife's knowledge, Offred thought of that suggestion as absurd. However, she had no other choice but to go along with it. Even though she enjoyed it for the most part, because it fulfilled her otherwise monotonous routine, she sensed something violating and strange about it: "To be asked to play Scrabble, instead, as if we were an old married couple, or two children, seemed kinky in the extreme, a violation too in its own way. As a request it was opaque" (Atwood ch. X).

Alongside the lack of bodily autonomy and reluctance in their agency, women in Gilead progressively lost their identities even in the linguistic aspect. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, according to Naseer Shukur Hussein and Ghusoon Abdul Kadhim, "[l]anguage serves as both a tool of oppression and a means of resistance, highlighting the dynamics of control and subjugation faced by women" (241). The use of language as a tool of oppression begins with the women's names: their names start with the prefix "of" and end with the name of their Commander. As a result, the Republic managed "to trap the handmaid in a relationship based on possession, making her the Commander's property, rather than an autonomous person" (Xin 224). This move undoubtedly erased any sense of autonomy and individuality these women had. Offred attempts to resist this by reminding herself of her real name: "I keep the knowledge of this name like something hidden, some treasure I'll come back to dig up, one day" (Atwood ch. VI). However, this oppression persists through small, repetitive phrases the Handmaids were daily exposed to. Phrases like "blessed be the fruit" or "under His Eyes" aimed to establish "a sense of constant surveillance and control" (Hussein and Kadhim 241).

Aside from that, the Aunts have conditioned the Handmaids through their speeches. Besides the fact that these speeches negatively affected their self-perception, especially in terms of their body autonomy, they also highlighted certain qualities women in Gilead ought to have. For example, when Aunt Lydia argued that the Handmaids do not need a lot of things because they should cultivate poverty of the spirit, she even added the biblical reference “[b]lessed are the meek” (Atwood ch. IV). According to Naseer Shukur Hussein and Ghusoon Abdul Kadhim, “[t]his quote reflects the regime’s use of religious language to promote submission and obedience among the populace. By elevating the meek, the rulers imply that passivity and compliance are virtuous” (245). In addition to this, when she compared the Handmaids to pearls, Aunt Lydia claimed that something is valued only if it is rare and hard to get. By her overtly repulsive reaction to such comparison (Atwood ch. VIII), Offred “rejects Aunt Lydia’s romanticized ideas, which are used to coax the handmaids into adopting conservative values” (Xin 225). Language in *The Handmaid’s Tale* undoubtedly creates a sense of oppression by proposing certain qualities such as passiveness, submission, and obedience. However, there were some attempts at resistance throughout the novel in linguistic terms. For example, since no form of literacy is allowed, the only way Offred can escape the brutal reality of a life in Gilead is through her storytelling. This notion is elaborated more by Mahshid Namjoo, who proposes that “[b]y creating imaginary audiences, Offred finds a way to give away all her bottled-up emotions, traumatic experiences, and on top of that, a way to confess” (95). If Offred had not expressed her suppressed emotions and thoughts through her storytelling, she would have suffered in the system even more. Her storytelling represents her way of resisting the system, whose main goal is to erase any slightest notion of individuality. Even though her storytelling serves a purpose outside her everyday routine, because it stimulates her otherwise erased individuality, when it comes to her daily duties, “Offred is always terrified in her daily conversation to choose a word to talk or answer because she thinks that words can cost her a lot. This can prove how the language system can limit the freedom of

individuals” (Namjoo 91). Consequently, even Offred herself admits that “[i]gnoring isn’t the same as ignorance, you have to work at it” (Atwood ch. IV). What Xavier Xin rightfully recognized here is that “by highlighting the difference between “ignore” and “ignorance,” and suggesting the former requires a conscious effort, Offred highlights the struggle beneath the superficial appearance of obedience” (224). Margaret Atwood used language in her novel to illustrate his oppressive traits, as well as the traits of resistance against the system. By referring to the way language is used through women’s names, repetitive phrases used for indoctrination, and Offred’s storytelling as an escape from her terrible everyday life, the author inevitably pointed that language has a significant role in limiting women’s identity, as well as their freedom.

Margaret Atwood portrays the gradual loss of female identity in her dystopian novel throughout three major aspects: the lack of bodily autonomy, the lack of agency, and expression through language. The lack of bodily autonomy is mainly concerned with new perception of women as sexual tools for reproduction rather than individuals with their own thoughts and feelings. This new perception is instantly followed by their conditioning, which severely damaged their womanhood, as well as society’s wishes and expectations for their future. Aside from that, their reluctance to act against the system is mainly rooted in fear for their life because of society’s legal regulations in case of rebellion. However, even though they were not acting directly against the system, women in Gilead had their own small acts of resistance engraved in their monotonous routines. Nevertheless, what caused their agency to stagnate even more was the fact that they never acted as a unison, as well as complete isolation from any outside knowledge: reading and writing were strictly forbidden. With their agency in stagnation, language found its way to show another level of both oppression and resistance. By reducing women’s names to them being a mere property of their Commanders, including the usage of repetitive phrases for their further indoctrination, language aimed to present how badly it can affect one’s sense of identity and individuality. Even though Offred showed some resistance in her sto-

rytelling, she mostly remained passive and lethargic, just like other women. In the end, Margaret Atwood's dystopian presentation of the theocratic Republic of Gilead emphasizes just how fragile one's identity can be when his autonomy, agency, and language are under the influence of fear and power.

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The Symbolism of Names in *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas

Abstract

In Angie Thomas's *The Hate U Give*, character names hold significant meaning that shapes both the identities of the characters and their roles within the story. Each of the main characters, Starr, Seven, and Sekani, carries a name that reflects their purpose and influences how they are seen by others. Starr's name, which symbolizes light, matches her role as a beacon of hope for the African-American community, amplifying her voice in the fight against systemic injustice. Seven's name, tied to perfection, reflects his father Maverick's ideals and shapes his journey as he becomes a figure who strives to meet those aspirations. Sekani, whose name means joy, adds a layer of levity to the novel, showing how his name influences his playful and light-hearted role in the family. By looking at the significance of names through the lens of onomastics and anthroponymy, it's clear that names play a vital role in character development. They shape how those characters interact with the world and are perceived by others. Ultimately, *The Hate U Give* shows how the power of names can deeply influence a character's identity and their place in society.

Key words: *The Hate U Give*, Angie Thomas, names, anthroponymy, symbolism

The way names are formed and where they come from has for a long time fascinated people. Scholars across disciplines, from linguistics to anthropology, have examined names as cultural artifacts that reflect social values, historical events, and familial legacies. Names in literary circles serve the same fundamental function as real-life names, but they often carry a deeper layer of meaning, especially because they are typically chosen after the role, personal-



ity, and thematic symbolism of the character has been established. This is particularly evident in Angie Thomas's 2017 novel *The Hate U Give*. Angie Thomas's award-winning work has been lauded for its authentic and powerful portrayal of African-American life, especially in the face of systemic injustice. In the novel, the names of certain characters, such as Starr, Seven, and Sekani, carry significant symbolic weight, reflecting both cultural identity and personal destiny. Maverick, their father, intentionally imparts meaning through these names, underscoring their importance beyond simple identification. Numerous studies suggest that names can shape how individuals perceive themselves and are perceived by society. Therefore, in literature, names are rarely arbitrary. *The Hate U Give* is no exception. By examining the characters' names and how those names shaped their roles in Angie Thomas's novel, this paper aims to explore the significance of names and how they can shape one's life.

First of all, Starr Carter, the main character of the novel, is scarred after witnessing her childhood best friend, Khalil Harris, shot by a white police officer for mistaking a hairbrush for a gun. Starr also witnessed the death of her other childhood best friend, Natasha, when they were only ten. Yet, Starr keeps her head high even through those tough times. Maverick, Starr's father, gives insight into why that might be: "That's why I named you Starr." He gives me a small smile. "My light during all that darkness" (Thomas ch. 4). Maverick here suggests that he named his daughter Starr because she helped him deal with his cousin's death. Starr offered her father a reason to live and die and a way to deal with a particularly dark time in his life. This personal connection to her name adds emotional depth to Starr's character and reflects how naming can be both intentional and symbolic. Her name does not just mark her identity; it speaks to her purpose in the narrative. Thomas uses this moment to show how children can offer healing and inspiration in the middle of grief and loss, especially in communities often shaped by generational trauma. But Starr also shines her light into other people's lives, providing them with hope and a reason to keep going. Starr ultimately ends up being the light for all African-Americans, being their voice even

through the toughest of times. That is best seen when Starr shines light on the real events of the night that Khalil got shot and criticizes the media: "Yes, ma'am. It seems like they always talk about what he may have said, what he may have done, what he may not have done. I didn't know a dead person could be charged in his own murder, you know?" (Thomas ch. 16). This is a turning point where Starr takes ownership of her voice and uses it to call out injustice. Her name becomes more than a label; it is a symbol of truth and courage in a moment when silence would have been easier. Through this act, she fulfills the role her name suggests, helping others see what has been ignored or misrepresented.

Proper names of characters in literary works should reflect what their role is in the novel, as stated by Martyna Katarzyna Gibka, and that is certainly reflected with Starr (51–63). Names in a novel can have multiple functions, but the primary one has to be fulfilling a role the author has imagined for that character which, in Starr's case, is becoming a voice and a light to those in need in the African-American community. The power of her name lies in how it supports the themes of the novel and mirrors the internal growth of her character. Starr begins as someone unsure of how to use her voice and becomes someone others look to for strength and clarity. The symbolism in her name is reinforced by her actions and choices throughout the novel. As stated in a review of the movie of the same name, Starr's light and voice will lead all to a brighter future ("The Hate U Give – Film Review"). In recent studies of personal names, it has come to attention how most parents choose their children's names without knowing or caring for their meaning while that choice still influences one's life even without intending to (Barbazzeni). Furthermore, studies into anthroponymy, a study of human names, have shown how different people are treated based solely on their name and how their own name changes their behavior:

Consequently, proper names affect how people treat us and how we feel about ourselves. This fact was confirmed by research in 2000 finding that people who disliked their name

tended to have a poorer psychological adjustment, due to a lack of confidence and self-esteem. But also, German research published in 2011 found that having a name that sounds unfashionable is most likely affecting a potential date. (Barbazzeni)

Those studies prove how names are more than just a way for people to be called and to identify with, but that they also influence one's everyday life. In Starr's case, her name shapes both how others see her and how she sees herself. It becomes a guidepost as she moves through trauma and transformation. Her role as a voice for the voiceless is supported not only by her actions but also by the identity her name carries. This may explain why her community is able to rally behind her and put their trust in her to represent their truth.

Secondly, Seven Carter, Starr's older half-brother and Maverick's first child, is the son of Iesha and step-son of King. Seven lives in between the two families, but prefers the Carter residence. He cares deeply for his siblings and wants to protect them in any way he can. He, among all Carter children, resembles Maverick the most, and Maverick sees him as a way for him to become something he never was: perfect. Maverick argues that names should mean something, and the number seven represents holiness and perfection. While Seven may not be perfect, he is everything Maverick could have asked for (Thomas ch. 4). This symbolic connection between name and identity creates a meaningful foundation for how Seven views himself and how he is perceived by others. He becomes someone who not only lives up to the strength of his name, but also honors the legacy his father hopes to leave behind. Maverick's choice is deeply personal, rooted in both love and hope, and shows how names can serve as a form of aspiration and guidance. Seven embodies that role very well, becoming a prominent figure in the lives of all of his step-siblings and living a life Maverick is proud of. He even becomes a sort of symbol for a perfect African-American boy. Seven defends his father's choice of names, arguing that the only thing that makes it any less normal than any other name is the trap of the white standard (Thomas ch. 23). In doing so, Seven acknowledges the power of self-definition and

the importance of rejecting imposed cultural norms. His defense of his name reveals his awareness of social structures and his desire to challenge the assumptions placed on African-Americans by a dominant culture. This white standard is important because it highlights the fact that African-American communities have their own standard of naming. That standard is often seen as not that of naming, but re-naming.

African-Americans have for a long time purposefully abandoned their previous names, citing them as slave names or names chosen by white oppressors (Peckham 32–33). African-Americans now choose their own names based on meaning and the power behind them, not because a white man chose so. Ivan Strong Moore speaks of a need for more realization of the meanings behind names, and Maverick chose the names of his children with that exact purpose: "Their names point towards a future filled with purpose, promise, community, and love. Mav knows that he had to give his children something more than hate" (Moore). This decision reflects Maverick's determination to create a better future by giving his children strong identities and meaningful paths to follow. The act of naming, then, becomes a form of resistance as well as a declaration of hope. Names are known to influence one's life and push them in a certain direction. Psychology supports that theory, claiming that names have a large influence on the personality of that person (Dion 247). That claim is seen in Seven's accomplishments in resembling a more perfect version of Maverick. There is another such reason for Seven's name and resemblance to Maverick: "Names have characteristics, behaviors, and physical features that are highly related to them. Thus, individuals with similar appearances and behaviors might be identified and perceived by others with a specific and identifiable name" (Barbazzeni). This psychological connection between a name and behavior helps explain why Seven reflects his father's ideals so strongly. His name, with its meaning of completeness and spiritual balance, seems to shape the way he views his responsibilities within the family.

Furthermore, a person who is called a maverick is someone who is unusual and different than may be expected, someone unorthodox. Maverick is different from other African-Americans. He teaches his children how to behave in order to save their lives and does not want the same cycle of life to repeat itself. He wants change, which can be seen when he teaches his children The Ten-Point Program and encourages Starr to testify (Thomas ch. 18). Seven holds these same principles close to his heart and wants to bring about the change his father always wanted. His willingness to step up, take responsibility, and fight for what is right mirrors the very intention behind his name. In this way, the name “Seven” is not just a word – it is a legacy that carries meaning, motivation, and purpose. The reason for that is certainly connected to the name his father chose for him, because it shaped his view of his father and gave him the desire to make a change and prove his father right.

Lastly, the youngest child of Maverick and Lisa Carter, Sekani, is beloved by the entire family, providing them with happiness even in dark times. He is often present just to lighten the surroundings of the novel. Maverick intended that to be his purpose, as recognized in these lines: “See, I believe in giving my kids names that mean something. Sekani, that means merriment and joy” (Thomas ch. 4). Sekani is the embodiment of joy; he is the first one to make Starr smile after the death of Khalil and he provides frequent comic relief throughout the novel. His role in the novel, though less prominent than Starr or Seven, is crucial in maintaining emotional balance. Sekani’s presence lightens the emotional weight of the story, offering moments of levity in the midst of trauma. One such moment is after Khalil’s death at the Carter home: “Sekani, on the other hand, steals bacon off my plate, looks at my phone, and purposely steps on my foot on his way out. I love him for it” (Thomas ch. 3). Sekani would most likely not be an embodiment of joy if he was not named as such. Readers feel Sekani’s actions as funnier because they feel that he should be funny because of his name. The humor in his actions is magnified by the expectation set by his name. Readers, aware of his name’s meaning, are primed to view him as a source of lightness and joy, which shows

how deeply names influence not only characters’ identities but also readers’ perceptions. Many scholars, among them Windt-Val, agree with such a notion:

The main condition for the reader to empathize fully with a literary work is that he or she is able to identify with the characters of the novel, their personality and actions. Personal names and place names are some of the most important tools of the author in the creation of credible characters placed in a literary universe that gives the impression of being authentic. The names in the novel generally will convey important information on many different aspects of the persons (277–278).

According to Windt-Val, names are the most important choice an author has to make for their characters because it influences their own fictional life. Also, onomastic researchers differentiate multiple functions of one’s name in a literary work, one of which is giving a character a name that denotes a positive feeling in order to give the reader a positive bias towards one character (Gibka 56). By naming Sekani after joy, Thomas not only shapes the character’s role in the narrative but also nudges the reader to see him as a lighthearted, carefree figure. It is a strategic move that enhances the reader’s emotional connection with Sekani, even though his role is smaller in comparison to other characters. In this situation, naming a character after joy and merriment brings to the reader those emotions, so they can see Sekani as such. Then, the name Sekani is more than a collection of sounds one can identify with; rather, joy and merriment are the most important characteristics of his personality, which Angie Thomas wants the readers to recognize. In essence, Sekani’s name functions as a guide to understanding his role within the Carter family and the novel. It is a reminder that names, though sometimes simple, can have deep implications for both the character and the audience’s experience of the story.

In conclusion, the names of the characters present in the novel *The Hate U Give* hold a fundamental meaning. Names provide them

with a certain path to follow in life, with Starr becoming a star or light, not just to Maverick and Khalil but to the entire African-American community, giving them a voice when their previous words were not heard. Her name signifies how all characters in the novel see her and shapes her role as a beacon of hope and strength. Seven, becoming the perfect boy his father wanted, exemplifies how his name reflects his father's aspirations. He becomes the closest to Maverick in his views and opinions, embodying the ideal of perfection that his name suggests. His name guides his actions and his sense of identity, leading him to carry forward his father's dreams of change and progress. Lastly, Sekani, the bringer of joy to the Carter residence, would not have brought such happiness or been regarded as such a funny character were it not for his name. His playful behavior, though small in narrative significance, provides moments of lightheartedness, and his name perfectly aligns with this role, enhancing his character's impact on the story. In this way, Sekani's name influences not only his actions but also the reader's emotional experience, showing how names in literature can set the tone for a character's role in the plot. Through multiple studies into anthroponymy and onomastics, it is proven that names solidify one's personality. The link between a name and a person's destiny is not just a literary device but a reflection of how real-life names can shape identity and perceptions. So, it can be concluded that names carry a certain meaning throughout one's life and predetermine how people will be treated and how they will experience their life. Ultimately, in both fiction and reality, names do more than identify; they guide, influence, and shape lives in profound and lasting ways.

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The Display of Emotions on X Through the Use of Linguistic Features

Abstract

This paper aims to determine the role of emojis on X, and how emotions are expressed through this linguistic phenomenon. The paper was meant to be divided into two parts: the first part dealing with the analysis of the group of tweets each containing emojis, and the second part presenting the survey results done via Google Forms. The final results showed that emojis are seen as humorous and positive, as well as tools for adjusting the tone of the message. Additionally, the most popular emojis proved to be the heart and the smiley face, similar to other studies previously done. What can be concluded from this research is that emojis have become an essential and powerful element of modern digital communication, however, their interpretation is still shaped by technical, cultural, and individual factors. Despite their evolving use, emojis continue to serve a consistent purpose of bridging emotional gaps in online interactions, and their influence is likely to persist in the years to come.

Key words: Emoji, X, Emotions, Communication, linguistics

Introduction

The information society has seen some great changes in the past few years regarding technology, and this has also shaped the way people communicate in the online world. (Kanjo and Tauch 2016) Due to the nature of technology, it is hard to express one's emotions in the digital world, which induced many new forms of communication, such as emoticons and emojis. Emoticons first appeared in the early 1980s where they took the texting world by storm, and are still present today across all social media applications. Emoticons by definition are typo-

graphic symbols that resemble facial expressions. Their main function was to complement the text itself, but it was also concluded that they carry the emotional aspect of the text as well. When it comes to emojis, they first appeared in Japan in the late 1990s but their success can be attributed to the invention of the Unicode standard in 2009. (Miller et al 2016) The word “emoji” in translation from Japanese would mean “picture character”. (Kralj Novak et al. 2015) Ever since then, they have become the staple part of digital texting, with a high chance of replacing emoticons soon. It is also important to note that emojis have an important role in texting and are not just text markers. Due to socio-geographical differences, the same emoji may have different meanings to different people. (Barbieri et al 2016) Also, their tone is usually perceived in three different ways – positive, neutral, or negative with the positive emojis being the most frequent ones. (Boia et al 2013) When it comes to X, it was reported that there were over 10 billion emojis used between 2013-2014 alone. (Kralj Novak et al 2015)

With that being said, this paper aims to determine the role of emojis on X and to see the relationship between emojis and emotions. The main hypothesis is that emojis do play a crucial role in digital communication, and due to their ambiguity, they can cause a misconstrual among communicators. In the paper, a few dozen tweets will be analysed that will contain different types and numbers of emojis. Following that, there will be a deeper analysis of the mentioned tweets. Additionally, the paper will also provide a survey conducted via Google Forms which provides information about people’s favourite emojis, and their opinion on emojis in general. Both collected tweets and the survey are meant to show how important emojis are in modern digital interaction.

Literature Overview

Emojis are known for their universality and popularity, but their ambiguity can pose great problems to researchers. In a study by Barbieri et al. (2016), they focused on the semantics of the emojis across different languages, specifically British and American English, Span-

ish, and Italian. The results were quite surprising since the meaning of most emojis was preserved in all three languages despite having different vocabulary and word patterns. The most used emojis were relatively similar in most countries, with the laughing emoji and heart emojis dominating the list. However, some of the emojis were used differently in each language for various reasons. For example, 🤔 and 🤨 have similar meanings in the USA regarding the context that they are used in while in the UK their usage is not very common together. The emoji 🎄 is used mostly during the Christmas time in the UK commonly with 🧑‍🎄 🎁 🌲. Additionally, the 🍕 emoji is widely used in Italy with the 🍴 🍷, and not in the USA. The reason for this is the manner of eating pizza in both countries. (Barbieri et al. 2016)

When it comes to the emoji sentiment, Boia et al. (2013) studied how emojis affect the sentiment of the words in a tweet, and with no surprise, over 70% of the tweets containing positive emoji were classified as positive, and the same can be said for negative and neutral tweets. Even when the text depicted a negative or positive meaning, the emojis were able to convince the participants that the tweet’s sentiment is the opposite. (Boia et al. 2016.)

Another study by Kralj Novak et al. (2016) showed the first emoji sentiment lexicon in which the map of the most used emojis is shown. Over the course of 2 years, the authors managed to track over 10 billion emojis with a focus on 13 European languages. The final results showed that positive emojis are usually placed at the end of the tweets, or, more to the right of the tweet, while negative ones occur more on the left part of the message. Also, there were more positive emojis when considering the whole corpus. However, emojis are not only placed at the end of the tweets. Their most common position is at 2/3 of the length of a tweet. What this means for the emotional load of tweets is that the more emotional emojis usually occur at the end of a tweet.

Similarly to Barbieri et al. (2016), Kralj Novak et al. (2016) also concluded that emoji sentiments do not differ in most languages, although the usage of emojis does in some countries. Building upon previous studies, Hu et al. (2017) focused on the intentions of us-

ing emojis, and from the seven most common reasons, expressing sentiment is the main reason, followed by strengthening expressions, and tone adjustment. Kralj Novak et al. (2016) showed that positive emojis are used the most and Hu et al. (2017) found out that negative emojis are used more often in expressing sentiment, and also, that neutral emojis are often used to express irony. When it comes to the number of emojis in a text, Tauch and Kanjo (2016) found that duplicating emojis increases the sentimental value of the text. The explanation for this lies in the fact that humans like to repeat important or relevant things, and when one repeats a certain emoji, the speaker wants to emphasize certain meanings.

Although emojis are known to be universally understood, sometimes they can cause a misconstrual between the speaker and the receiver of the message. As Miller et al. (2016) showed, misinterpretation of the meaning of emojis can happen both on the same or different platforms (Android, IOS, Microsoft...). The deviation is expectedly higher across-platform rather than with-in-platform but it also confirms the ambiguous nature of emojis. The solution for better communication is even harder to find considering there are 17 or more platforms with each having different software and rendering systems, thus leaving more room for interpretation.

Methodology

This paper is structured in two parts: the first paper is a collection of 9 tweets each different in emoji use and meaning. For example, some of them have duplicated emojis; some use emojis in a literal sense; some are used more metaphorically; some of them are used as a deictic marker concerning text; some are examples of emojis that can have multiple meanings; emojis have become so influential that now there are emojis that represent the same entity but with a different cultural/national background; others may be used in a metonymic context; they can also be used as an addition to one's username; sometimes emojis can replace the whole sentence/text and still have full meaning. The following tweets will then be analyzed to show the semantic versatility of emojis. The tweets were collected from X ran-

domly; the second part of the paper is an analysis of a survey that was conducted via Google Forms, and later distributed via WhatsApp. The questionnaire was completely anonymous, and the anonymity was secured by hiding the names of the participants. The survey was meant to show the most popular emojis among the younger generation, the most popular type of emoji regarding valence, and lastly, what is, in their opinion, the most common reason for using emojis. All of this is meant to show if the current trends are different from the studies done years ago (e.g. Hiraga, 1994). There were 36 participants in total, of which 72% were female, and 28% male. The age of the participants was dominantly between 18-23 (94%), and the rest was below 18 (3%) and 28 or older (3%). The rest of the survey was comprised of three questions. The first question demanded the participants to type their top three most used emojis which were then gathered into one corpus. The second was a multiple-choice question in which participants had to choose the most popular emoji ranging from positive, negative, neutral, and non-facial. The final question was once again a multiple-choice question in which participants had to choose one of the six reasons why are emojis predominantly used.

Results

When it comes to the survey, the following pie chart represents the most popular emojis given by the participants. From 37 different emojis, with certain emojis missing due to some emojis not rendering properly, ❤️ and 😊 were chosen most frequently, with 13% each. The rest of the emojis were relatively equally distributed, ranging from 1-7%. When looking at the facial versus non-facial ratio, the facial emojis were more dominant, with 74%, and non-facial with just 26%.

For the second question, about the popularity of emojis types, the positive ones were chosen the most, confirming the chart results. The positive emojis were chosen by 72% of participants, negative ones by 19%, neutral ones by 6%, and non-facial ones by 3%.

For the last question of the survey, another dominant answer was visible. When asked what is the reason for using emojis, 53% answered

that emojis are used to adjust the tone of the message (e.g., to make it humorous, or negative...), 25% answered to strengthen one's expression (e.g., to make the positive message even more positive), 14% answered for simply expressing emotions, and the rest were split between irony and describing the content of the message more thoroughly.

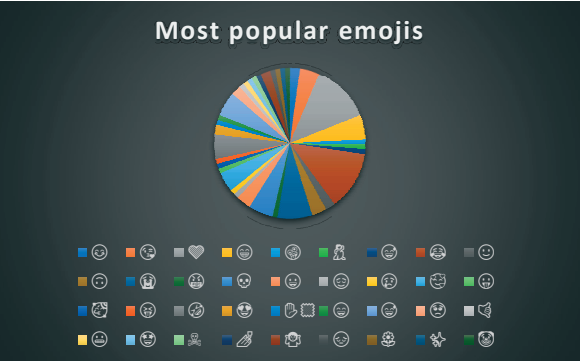


Chart 1 Analysis of the X posts

Picture 1 demonstrates the duplication of emojis. The reason for that is to adjust the tone and mood of a tweet. By doing so, the user can increase the humorous tone of a tweet expressing his thoughts and emotions. In this case, the multiple 🤔 emojis represent the positive reaction from the user.



Figure 1 (screenshot of a multiple use of an emoji)

In picture 2, the literal use of an emoji is visible. The context here is that the football team Liverpool won the league title at the time, and they would certainly get a trophy as a reward. The purpose of adding the 🏆 emoji here is to emphasize the accomplishment of their hard work throughout the season. The plain text simply would not add the same level of excitement.



Figure 2 (screenshot of a literal use of an emoji)

Picture 3 depicts the symbolic use of emojis. Here, a football fan talks about Lionel Messi as his favourite player, and ends the tweet with the 🐐🏆 emojis. In a literal context, this would not make sense as the two emojis are not related to the original tweet. However, since it is known that the acronym G.O.A.T. stands for “The greatest of all time”, it is possible to conclude that the user admires the named player. The second emoji, similar to the 🏆, emphasizes the user’s perception of victory since the numeral 100 stands for the percentage 100% and indicates the total accomplishment that the G.O.A.T. as an acronym represents.



Figure 3 (symbolic use of emojis)

In picture 4, emojis are used as deictic forms of expression, a tool commonly used by news outlets. After a long text, the personal pro-

file outlet used 🖱️🖱️🖱️ as a way to either point to the picture below that represents the text, as a way to point to the rest of the text, or to the link which will guide the user to the more relevant information. This use of emojis is useful since it replaces long and dull explanations with simple pictographs.

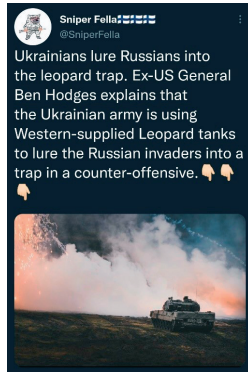


Figure 4 (deictic use of emojis)

In picture 5, ironic and ambiguous emoji use is present. The 🤡 emoji here represents the ironic comment about the situation in a cycling race, something that should be quite straightforward. Otherwise, this emoji would be used in a sad context, which is becoming less frequent in today's texting.



Figure 5 (ironic use of emojis)

When looking at picture 6, it is notable to say that emojis have crossed the neutral boundary of a single race, and that they have become a more globalized phenomenon. Today, it is not enough to have only one type of human-related emoji because users demand more diverse and inclusive types of emoji, which stand for different races, ethnicity, community, religion, and so on.



Figure 6 (versatility of emojis)

Picture 7 represents the metonymic use of emojis. Here, the 🧠 emoji is not directly connected with the tweet sentiment, but it represents its main point. In other words, the world would be a far more advanced place if x happened to y, and the 🧠 represents the right decisions of the people, i.e. the use of intelligence in making decisions. The used emoji is thus used in a metonymic sense since the main point of the tweet is not the human brain but its function of the centre of intelligence.

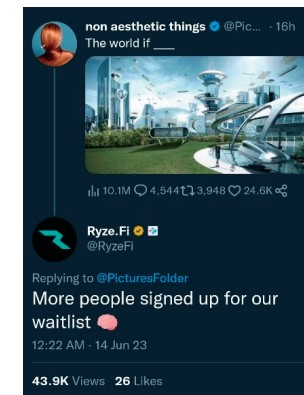


Figure 7 (metonymic use of emojis)

In picture 8, emojis are used as representatives of someone's identity, in this case, in their username and bio. This can be convenient because one does not have to provide textual information for something that can be said in just a few pictographs. Also, it can be noted that by duplicating flags or emblem emojis, one also emphasizes their patriotism. If one was to provide only one such emoji, the purpose of it could be different, for example, to distinguish them from other groups of people.



Figure 8 (representative use of emojis)

In the last picture (9), excluding the hashtag at the end, emojis can also carry multiple meanings in the message. This means that it is possible to communicate only by using emojis, but this is not a common practice in modern texting. This is possible because one provides most of the necessary information about certain things, such as an Oscar award show as a setting for the author of the post. The hashtag at the end is only there to confirm the sender's original intention and to specify the post more clearly.

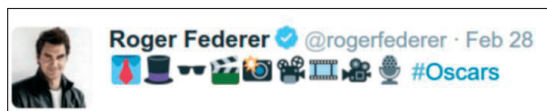


Figure 9 (use of many different emojis at once)

Discussion

Based on the results of the questionnaire, it is possible to conclude that emojis can be versatile and diverse when it comes to their

meaning, use, and purpose. There were two dominant emojis present, the ❤️ and 😊, but altogether there were many different emojis present as well in a relatively small sample group. Some of the emojis, like 😊 and 🤔, are very similar in a semantic way, but yet they can still have differences in certain contexts. For example, the 🤔 emoji is agreed to have a higher level of humorous tone because it involves additional physical activity of rolling while laughing, although both emojis denote positive emotions.

It is also interesting to point out that the vast majority of the emojis were facial, and not emojis denoting objects. The reason for this may lay in the fact that facial emojis (😊😊😊😊😊...) are more ambiguous and can be used in many contexts, while other emojis representing objects (🏆💻📷🎤🎬...) or any other entity that is not related to a human body tend to be fixed in meaning, meaning they can only be used in a limited number of contexts. Additionally, facial emojis denoting human expressions can be used in every sentence since they stand for the speaker's current emotion.

The results of the survey are also similar to another research done in the field. For example, the study done by Barbieri et al. (2016) showed that the most used emojis in USA and UK are also 😊, while in Italy, that is the ❤️ emoji. Kralj Novak et al. (2015) and Tauch and Kanjo (2016) found out that the most popular emoji type is the positive one, again, the same as this survey with over 72% of participants opting for that answer. One negative situation that occurred during the collection of data is the wrong rendering of emojis due to different platforms, similar to Miller et al. (2016). When the participants were asked to give their three favorite emojis, some of the responses were incomplete, and the final result was a blank circle. This is a problem in modern texting, and it can often interrupt the communication channel. And on top of that, there seems to be a limitation to this study, at least for now. Due to many different platforms existing, at least 17 by Miller et al. (2016), and each one of them having different rendering software and protocols, it is hard to find a common solution suitable for everyone. Creating a universal emoji Unicode

standard would be impossible due to the entanglement of many different standards.

On the other side, this diversity of the existing Unicode standards gives users more options for expressing themselves, and it can also give users an insight into what platform the other user has. With the advancement of technology, there is also a need for more emojis. New emojis are released annually, sometimes multiple times a year. More emojis mean more personalization and expression, crossing cultural barriers and filling the nonverbal cues in communication.

Conclusion

Altogether, emojis can be a very useful and powerful tool for online communication. The main hypothesis was proved to be correct, and that is that emojis are important in modern communication, but their ambiguity can sometimes confuse speakers when trying to understand the same message. This especially applies to the rendering of emojis within the same or different platforms. In addition to this, emojis are also an important semantical part of a text, and not just textual markers. When looking at the frequency of certain emojis, the facial emojis take the lead here. The reason for that is their resemblance to the human face, something that digital communication often lacks. There are certainly many gaps left to solve, for example, the cross-cultural misinterpretations due to the different mindsets, and languages. Furthermore, emojis can also be misinterpreted wrongly among the group that belongs to the same speech community. This often happens because of individual differences, emotional complexity, or technical limitations. When comparing this study to previous ones, although the digital world has advanced enormously, the purpose of emojis has remained relatively the same. New generations also see emojis as humorous and practical tool for everyday communication, and from thousands of emojis to choose from, the small portion remains the most dominant. In the future, it is hard to predict whether the role of emojis will remain the same, but their influence will surely remain.

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Reevaluating Genius and Aesthetics: Kantian Theory and Marina Abramović's Rhythm 0

Abstract

This paper examines Immanuel Kant's profound impact on aesthetics within classical German idealism, primarily through his seminal work, the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. It provides a detailed analysis of Kant's aesthetic theory, focusing on fundamental concepts such as beauty, the sublime, ideal beauty, and the pure judgment of taste. Kant's emphasis on disinterestedness and universality in aesthetic judgment forms the foundation for his rational and impersonal perspective that beauty emerges from a harmonious blend of form and purposiveness. However, Marina Abramović, a contemporary performance artist, challenges and deconstructs Kantian aesthetics through her groundbreaking performance art. This paper examines Abramović's work, particularly Rhythm 0, as a pivotal example where she subverts conventional notions such as beautiful and sublime. Through intense and often uncomfortable performances that blur the boundaries between artist and audience, Abramović confronts Kant's idea of disinterested contemplation and introduces a new dimension where aesthetic experience becomes visceral, personal, and profoundly transformative. By emphasizing the experiential and emotional dimensions of aesthetic encounters, Abramović embodies a post-Kantian aesthetics that challenges the detachment and objectivity inherent in Kant's conception of the beautiful.

Keywords: Immanuel Kant, pure judgment of taste, genius, Marina Abramović, contemporary aesthetics

Introduction

Immanuel Kant (1724 - 1804), renowned as a leading figure in German Idealist philosophy, gained widespread acclaim for his pro-

found contributions to the field, exerting a significant and enduring influence across its diverse branches. Kant's thought, rich in characteristic and unique thoughts, ranks him among the most important and influential philosophers of all time. Although his research is present in various philosophical domains, this paper focuses on Kant's aesthetics, especially on 'the judgment of taste', which Kant elaborates in his third critique – *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. The central goal of this paper is to provide an insight into Kant's explanations of key terms related to various aesthetic themes. At the same time, it is important to consider and connect his other two criticisms – the *Critique of Practical Reason*¹ and the *Critique of the*

1 In the realm of Kantian scholarship, it is an imperative to address the nuances of translation, particularly regarding the seminal work, commonly referred to in English as the Critique of Practical Reason. A meticulous examination reveals that this translation, albeit entrenched in the Anglophone tradition, obfuscates a critical distinction in Kant's original German text—namely, the differentiation between *Verstand* (understanding) and *Vernunft* (reason). This distinction is not merely semantic but foundational to comprehending the intricate architecture of Kantian epistemology and metaphysics. In the German original, the title *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* explicitly invokes the faculty of reason (*Vernunft*), suggesting an inquiry into the scope and limits of pure reason. However, the term *Verstand*, which signifies the faculty of understanding, plays an equally pivotal role in Kant's critical philosophy, particularly in the synthesis of experiences and the application of categories. The Croatian translation, *Kritika praktičkog uma*, astutely renders the title as Critique of the Practical Mind, which more accurately captures the comprehensive nature of Kant's investigation. This translation reflects a deeper fidelity to the original intent, encompassing both the faculties of reason and understanding as they pertain to the mind's capacities. The inadequate English translation, Critique of Practical Reason, inadvertently narrows the focus, potentially leading to a misapprehension of Kant's dual-faculty theory. This linguistic oversight may result in an incomplete grasp of the critical distinctions Kant elaborates between the roles of *Verstand* and *Vernunft* in the formation of knowledge. Such nuances are crucial for a robust engagement with Kant's philosophical project, as they underpin the critical distinctions between phenomena and noumena, the conditions of possibility for knowledge, and the limitations inherent to human cognition. Therefore, a revisionist approach to the translation, advocating for a title such as Critique of the Practical Mind would not only align more closely with the Croatian counterpart *Kritika prak-*

Power of Judgment with the third one and how it fits into Kant's philosophical system. In these works, Kant presented his comprehensive philosophy, and the work will highlight concepts such as rationality and pure judgment of taste, sublimity and its comparison with the concept of beauty, deduction of pure judgments of taste, and concepts of pleasure and discomfort. In the subsequent sections of the paper, these fundamental concepts of Kantian aesthetics will be thoroughly examined. Specifically, Kant's concept of genius will be emphasized, drawing parallels with contemporary art, particularly Marina Abramović as a performance artist who exemplifies, in a Kantian sense, the characteristics of genius.

The role of aesthetics in Kant's philosophical framework

Kant writes three key critiques in his philosophical system, and although many tend to focus on his third, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, it is an imperative to rigorously consider all three, because they interpenetrate his philosophical work. *Critique of Pure Reason*, published in 1781, plays a key role in the understanding of Kant's philosophy, placing him at the centre of the philosophical scene. In this critique, Kant provides detailed explanations of various issues, starting with definitions a priori and posteriori, and introducing us to the world of judgments. One of Kant's important claims in *Critique of Pure Reason* is that all experiential judgments are synthetic. Since the sciences—understood in Kant's sense as fields like mathematics, physics, and metaphysics—contain synthetic judgments that are a priori, a key question arises: how are a priori synthetic judgments possible? According to Živković, Kant responds by stating that the answer to that question is at the same time the answer to the question about the possibility of natural science (836). This concept of synthetic judgments a priori has profound implications for understand-

tičkog uma, but also enhance the precision and clarity with which Kant's critical philosophy is conveyed in English. This insistence on terminological precision underscores the necessity of using accurate terminology, despite the inherent limitations of language, such as those present in English.

ing human cognition and knowledge. Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* marks a turning point in philosophy, also known as the Copernican Revolution, and lays the foundations for further consideration in his later works. Kant's work faces challenges in understanding due to the specific terminology he uses, resulting in numerous criticisms. Falkenstein emphasizes the importance of a thorough interpretation of Kant's concepts to avoid a tedious reading that leaves many unanswered questions (17). In connection with the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Franke points out that centuries of research have shown the inability of an individual to fully understand what is in an object. The root of Kant's theory lies in the argument that reason establishes a kind of connection with the object through mediation, i.e. through the mediation of individual intuitions or doubts of reason. Despite the lack of direct epistemological certainty, Kant maintains that reason nonetheless establishes a connection with external physical objects – including other persons- which is manifested through the a priori form of space. So, Kant concludes, the ability of an individual's intuition, which derives from his ability to know the world, can present the world in a way that reflects his own understanding (Franke 71). Kant's second critique – *Critique of Practical Reason*, published in 1788, brings together Kant's understanding of ethics and ethical problems. In this solemn work, Kant defines life as the ability of a being to act according to the power of desire, where the power of the human being is the reality of the object through its ideas. The concept of pleasure, according to Kant, represents the awareness of increasing or decreasing the activity of a thinking being (Allison 69). Kant points out that the moral law does not need deduction, using it as a fact of the mind in considering freedom. Emil Kušan confirms that Kant believes that the moral law does not need deduction, calling it a fact of the mind. In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant shifts the order of exposition from his previous ethical writing, using the moral law as the beginning of the deduction of freedom. Although he may appear to undo his previous exposition from the first ethical writing, he reverses the order of the same exposition. Kušan states that Kant uses the moral law, a fact of reason, as the starting point

for the deduction of freedom (82). When it comes to the concept of freedom, Kušan also interprets Kant's understanding, emphasizing the 'spontaneity of freedom' as a concept that goes beyond exclusively ethical preoccupations. This term is assigned to every intelligible subject (mental being) as the power to determine its sensory causality according to the state of its consciousness (as a *noumenon*) (Kušan 82). Considering Kant's simple yet complex expression, Kant is one of the most fascinating figures in philosophy. His three key concepts, presented through three critiques, indicate a transition from the concept of pure mind to the concept of rational power. In this transition, the concept plays a key role, especially the intermediate member of the practical mind, as described in the second critique.

Reasoning power in Kant's philosophical framework

Reasoning power, according to Kant's understanding, acts as the bridge between reason and the mind, connecting the individual with the general. In terms of art, let's consider how a viewer interprets a painting. The artwork presents a general aesthetic experience, while reason helps the viewer understand artistic principles and technique, to some extent. Reasoning power bridges these aspects by allowing the viewer to connect the specific elements of the painting—such as colour and form—with broader artistic themes or cultural contexts. For example, when viewing an abstract painting, reasoning power enables the viewer to relate the emotional impact of the artwork to universal themes of human experience, thus linking individual perception with overarching artistic concepts.

Kant describes three powers of the soul that form the basis of the power of reason: the power of knowing, the power of feeling pleasure and discomfort, and the power of desire. The first power, the power of knowing, is subject to the legislation of reason, while the power of desire is subordinated to the legislation of the mind a priori. Between them is the sense of pleasure, which functions as an intermediary member, like the power of reason. Kant argues that reasonable power can be *determinative* or *reflexive*, where determinative has a

priori legislation, while reflexive requires a principle that is not drawn from experience but serves as a law (19). An example of reasoning power as a mediator between the power of knowing (reason) and the power of desire (mind) can be illustrated through a situation in which an individual makes an aesthetic judgment about a work of art, for example, a canvas. The power of cognition, which is subject to the legislation of reason, enables the individual to recognize and analyse various elements on the canvas such as colours, lines, and composition. Reason sets certain standards and norms that the user applies in the process of evaluating artistic elements. The power of desire, on the other hand, is subordinated to the legislation of the mind *a priori*. The mind is interested in aesthetic experience, emotions, and subjective reactions to a work of art. In this context, the mind may express a desire for aesthetic pleasure, or an emotional experience derived from viewing the canvas. Between these two powers is the sense of pleasure, which plays the role of a mediator, like the power of reason. The feeling of comfort is a subjective impression that arises when the elements of the canvas are harmoniously combined and when the artistic elements correspond to the predetermined standards of reason, but at the same time satisfy the emotional and aesthetic needs of the mind.

Furthermore, when it comes to ‘determinative’ and ‘reflective’ reasoning power, we can imagine that determinative reasoning power has a predetermined law, like some rules about proportions in painting. On the other hand, reflective reasoning power may require a principle that cannot be drawn from experience, such as an abstract idea of beauty that is not simply derived from concrete experiences but is the result of introspection and reflection. Determinative reasoning power could be likened to understanding the proportions and techniques that make a painting visually appealing according to established rules of composition. For instance, adhering to the rule of thirds in photography or using the golden ratio in design. Reflective reasoning power, on the other hand, involves contemplating deeper aspects of beauty that go beyond mere technical rules. An example could be an artist’s interpretation of beauty in a way that transcends traditional guidelines, such as expressing emotion through abstract

forms or challenging conventional aesthetic norms. Kant also interprets the concept of perfection as the matching of things and their qualities according to purposes. Kant argues that reasoning has an *a priori* principle for the possibility of nature, but this refers to a subjective view that does not attribute autonomous legislation to nature but to itself, as *heautonomy* for reflection on nature (25). For example, when we judge a flower to be beautiful, we do not derive that judgment from the flower’s objective qualities, but rather from the reflective harmony between our cognitive faculties—reason and imagination—that legislate a standard subjectively, as if nature were designed for our judgment.

Kant’s three types of liking

Additionally, Kant distinguishes three types of liking. The first is related to the concept of interest, where liking is linked to the idea of the existence of an object. Kant, using the concept of interest, describes the liking that is associated with the idea of the existence of a certain object. This liking is always closely related to the power of desire, according to which it can manifest itself in two ways: as a predisposing reason for the power of desire or in a necessary connection with its predisposing reason (Kant 42). Kant further elaborates this idea by talking about the questioning of beauty by the individual. When an individual questions whether something is beautiful or not, that process of questioning takes place through observation and reflection. It is important to note that in this consideration the individual does not consider the existence of the object of beauty. Kant suggests that it is necessary to maintain indifference to the existence of objects to truly judge taste. These concepts can be related to the first type of liking, where interests and the power of desire are key elements in the formation of judgments about beauty. Kant further elaborates on another type of liking, which refers to the pleasant, and which is closely related to the previously mentioned interest. In his explanation, Kant defines pleasant as that which causes pleasure to the senses (43).

While reading Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, the question implicitly arises about the difference between feeling and emotion according to Kant's views. According to him, feeling can be interpreted as an objective idea of the senses, while feeling, as a subjective dimension, cannot have an idea about an object. Regarding the connection between pleasure and interest, David Berger presents his own understanding using Kant's third critique. Kant, namely, provides examples of the pleasant that people like because of interest, and Berger additionally illustrates this idea with the example of food and taste. Elaborating, Berger points out that seeing a plate full of food can cause an increase in appetite and an intense desire to eat, thus associating pleasantness with interest and ultimately achieving satisfaction (58). According to Kant, the third type of liking is related to the concept of good, also related to interest. Kant defines good as that which, through the mediation of the mind, is liked by means of the concept itself. He distinguishes a good that is liked only as a means, calling it useful, from a good that is liked only for its own sake (45). Goldmann points out that the judgment of taste is aesthetic, based solely on subjective experience. This judgment does not refer to the object itself, but to the observer, whereby the representation or image of the object plays a key role. Goldmann emphasizes the singularity of aesthetic judgment, using the example of a rose. Although a rose is generally beautiful, an assessment of its beauty becomes a logical judgment, based on aesthetics, when viewed individually. This illustrates the difference between theoretical thought, which refers to the general, and aesthetic judgment, which is related to the individual (Goldmann 184). McCloskey further notes that the judgment of taste is given importance and validity for all (55). All the mentioned ideas point to the complexity of aesthetic judgment, which is based on individual experiences and subjective observation.

Kant's notion of the judgment of taste

Immanuel Kant deepens the consideration of the concepts of pleasant and beautiful, emphasizing that beautiful is what is presented without the presence of the concept and what becomes the object

of general liking. According to Kant, everyone always has a reason for liking a certain object, and this impression can be called liking, especially if it is not connected with any interest. Kant points out that when the subject believes that beauty is a property of the object, such a judgment can be characterized as logical, because it involves the creation of a certain cognitive insight using concepts about the object. However, it is important to note that, according to Kant, this logical judgment has an aesthetic dimension, since it is based solely on the relationship between the idea and the subject. Despite this distinction, it is undeniable that these two types of judgment have a certain similarity and are assumed to be valid for all individuals (Kant 49). At the same time, he points out that the judgment of taste, related to subjective generality, requires universal applicability without the presence of interest.

Furthermore, Kant argues that generality cannot arise from concepts, especially because of the lack of transition from concepts to feelings of pleasure or discomfort. When it comes to the pleasant, Kant points out a kind of law that says that everyone has their own taste. For example, one person may like energetic rock music or vibrant colours in interior design, while another person may disagree with these preferences. This variety of tastes makes it clear that what is considered pleasant or beautiful can vary among individuals. Kant points out that pleasantness has value for both the general and the individual but emphasizes that agreement to like an object requires mutual agreement. If someone denies someone's liking of a certain item, then the person who likes it questions the 'opponent's' taste. Kant concludes that the assertion that there is no taste at all would mean the absence of an aesthetic judgment that would justly demand the approval of all (51). In other words, the variety of tastes and the subjectivity of aesthetic judgment inevitably make aesthetic judgments individual and complex. Therefore, it cannot be universal.

Furthermore, Salim Kemal presents his point of view on the judgment of taste, emphasizing that the subject, in addition to passing judgment on his own taste, also judges the taste of others. Kemal

emphasizes that the subjective judgment, which is both individual and subjective, has a greater scope and importance than quantitative satisfaction or quality. Because judgment is subjective, its purpose extends to the entire experience, transcending simple pleasure and quality, making it essential. In the context of the pleasant, Kemal claims that judgments are purely subjective and valid for everyone, where no confirmation is sought from others (51). But, when it comes to objects that are considered beautiful, agreement and confirmation from others is expected. This implies that the judgment of taste relating to beauty is true for everyone. Kemal goes on to explain that liking without being based on a concept refers solely to a feeling of pleasure. He points out that subjective or aesthetic judgment about an object or idea is a prerequisite for satisfaction, which results from the harmony of cognitive powers. This pleasure that the individual experiences is attributed to others as necessary in the judgment of taste, considering it an inherent property of the object.

Kant raises the question about the possibility of aesthetic judgments a priori and investigates how an individual becomes aware of the harmony of cognitive powers in the judgment of taste, highlighting a dual possibility - aesthetically through the senses, or intellectually, through the awareness of one's intentional activity that activates the cognitive powers (57). The modern explanation of this pathway helps to understand how the cognitive forces are coordinated in the judgment of taste. Kant further discusses the characteristics of pleasure and discomfort, singling out the awareness of the causality of pleasure as the key to pleasure, while discomfort contains a reason that determines the opposite of the state of perception (58). Kant also introduces the concept of 'perfection', connected to the idea of an object or way of representation. Kemal interprets Kant's understanding of perfection, where objects, states of thought and actions have a purpose, and 'perfection' is realized by intentional action towards a goal. Kemal notes that the understanding of order and rules is also ubiquitous in Kant's understanding of perfection (58).

Kant's power of desire

Kant introduces a new concept, the 'power of desire', which he describes as a will that is determined exclusively by means of concepts. Furthermore, it clarifies the concept of reflection, which denotes form-oriented perfection, where form is not a purpose, but can be observed on objects. Each purpose includes a certain interest if it serves as a reason for liking. However, Kant adds that the judgment of taste cannot have a subjective basis for purpose. The only thing that forms the basis of the judgment of taste is the form of completion of a certain object or the way in which the object is presented. The judgment of taste is based on a priori reasons, while this does not apply to feelings of pleasure or discomfort because they are connected exclusively a posteriori (60). Take, for example, Dadaism as an artistic movement that developed in the first part of the 20th century. Dadaist art is often characterized by the absence of traditional aesthetic norms and purposes and is often characterized by a chaotic and irrational approach. In this context, the power of desire, as presented by Kant, can be seen as an artistic will that is determined solely by creative concepts and not by conventional standards or purposes. Reflection in Dadaism can be seen as form-oriented perfection, where form is not an end in itself, but is manifested through different media, such as painting, poetry or performance. Dada artists often explored unconscious processes and spontaneous expressions, emphasizing form as an expression of personal freedom, without clear purposes or predetermined goals. As for the judgment of taste, the lack of a 'subjective' basis for purpose can be recognized in the context of Dadaism. Dadaist artists often challenged conventional norms and expectations, questioning traditional ideas of beauty or aesthetic pleasure. The judgment of taste in Dadaism cannot be based on common interests or expectations, but often confronts chaos, absurdity and unpredictability, thus emphasizing the pure subjectivity and independence of the judgment of taste from predetermined purposes. The essential characteristic of the judgment of taste, according to Kant, lies in the fact that it is pure only when it is not influenced by any interest. A pure judgment of taste means that fonder and emotional impressions have no absolute

influence on the judgment. If sweeter or emotional aspects are present in the evaluation of taste, then the judgment becomes empirical, i.e. related to the specific situation and feelings of the individual. Kant distinguishes between an empirical judgment that evaluates pleasantness or unpleasantness in relation to a specific object. In contrast, pure judgment expresses beauty and is the only true judgment of taste, since it is free from individual emotions and interests, focusing exclusively on the aesthetic aspects of form (62).

Kant's notion of genius

According to Kant, genius means a talent or a natural gift that provides art with a kind of rule (146). To be talented is considered an innate ability that belongs to nature, which means that genius is an inherent mental disposition by which nature sets the rule of art. Vedran Rutnik affirms this by pointing out that Kant's understanding of genius as a source of beauty derives from the definition of the origin and essence of beauty within the philosophical system. Kant locates the source of beauty in the act of free play of reason, which creates concepts, and imagination, which creates aesthetic ideas. The beautiful is revealed either through nature or through art, and the education of taste includes the strengthening of the reflective reasoning power, which through the feeling of freedom creates beauty, common to all people (69). Pillow concludes that the genius cannot be acquired through adherence to a prescribed methodology; rather, it is an intrinsic faculty with which one is endowed from birth. Consequently, the fine arts must inherently be regarded as the domain of genius. Simultaneously, genius encompasses not only a profound comprehension of prevailing biases but also an exceptional aptitude for their articulation (254). Genius is not something that can be learned according to a certain pattern; it is an innate ability with which one is born, and the fine arts must necessarily be associated with genius. Kant points out four characteristics of genius: originality (the creation of what is not subject to a certain rule), exemplarity (the works of genius are not the result of imitation, but serve as a

model for others), comparability (genius sets rules like nature) and unscientific (genius does not subject art to the rules of science but arts) (147). Mimica points out that in the 18th century, genius was attributed to individuals engaged in the fine arts (such as rhetoric, visual arts, and the art of expressing emotions) who possessed all four characteristics of genius (21). However, in the 20th and 21st centuries, the term genius is often applied to scientists, whom Kant believed could not be considered geniuses. Mimica considers Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, one of the greatest composers of his time, who composed the renowned opera *The Magic Flute*, and Albert Einstein, the most famous physicist of the 20th century, who discovered fundamental laws of nature such as the speed of light and the equivalence of mass and energy and is best known for his theory of relativity. The distinction here is that without Mozart, there would be no *The Magic Flute* or any of his compositions, whereas Einstein's discoveries would still have existed independently of him; Einstein merely identified and presented these pre-existing laws to others. In other words, Mozart embodied all the characteristics of genius as defined by Kant, while Einstein was distinguished by his strong work ethic and knowledge rather than the specific traits of genius (21).

Grlić observes that Kant posits that aesthetics cannot be classified as a science and asserts that the 'a priori' categorical schematism does not entirely conform to nature. Instead, it represents a symbolic nexus between idea and sensibility (204). Taste is essential for the evaluation of beautiful objects (Kant 150), whereas genius is crucial for their creation; without genius, the existence or conception of the fine arts would be impossible (Bruno 111). Kant concludes that genius can be regarded as the ultimate source of beauty in all its manifestations.

Abramović's Rhythm 0: A testament to Artistic Genius

In this section, the paper will draw on Kant's notion of genius which represents a natural gift or talent that provides art with a kind of rule and apply it to Marina Abramović's artistic work.

Kant believed that talent is an innate ability that belongs to nature, and genius is an inherent mental disposition by which nature establishes the rules of art. Marina's artistic expression is loudly unconventional, original and not subject to the 'traditional' rules of art. Marina's artistic expression, characterized by its loud unconventionality and originality, aligns well with Kant's concept of genius. Her approach to art is not constrained by traditional rules and standards; instead, it embodies a unique vision that pushes the boundaries of what is considered acceptable or typical in the art world. This pioneering spirit is a hallmark of Kantian genius, as it involves the establishment of new aesthetic principles and the introduction of innovative forms and ideas. By 'creating' performances that are original and not subject to traditional rules, Marina demonstrates an inherent mental disposition that resonates with Kant's definition of genius. Her ability to forge new paths in art, to inspire and provoke thought, and to create pieces that are distinctly her own, underscores the idea that true genius lies in the capacity to transform and transcend conventional artistic boundaries. To apply the theoretical framework that has been discussed throughout this paper, Marina Abramović's performance *Rhythm 0* will be examined as an exemplary instance of a genius. Marina Abramović conducted this performance in 1974 in Naples (Abramović et. al. 44). For six hours, Abramović stood still as the audience used one of 72 objects on the table to do whatever they wanted to her, including a rose, a feather, scissors, a scalpel and even a bullet gun. The performance did not have a separate stage, but Abramović and the visitors shared the same space, whereby the latter 'became part' of the artwork (Ward 125). This transformation of the audience from passive observers to active participants has been studied by Defne Kirmizi, who situates *Rhythm 0* within the tradition of performance art that challenges the Kantian ideal of aesthetic contemplation through intense, embodied experience (34). Furthermore, Abramović notes how her intention was to 'investigate' how far the audience would go if the artist herself remained completely passive (Marina Abramović Institute 00:56). This also perfectly plays into the Kantian way of the genius who sets up the new rules, the artist plays with the nature of the artistic piece.

Marina Abramović's Instructions for Rhythm 0:

Instructions:

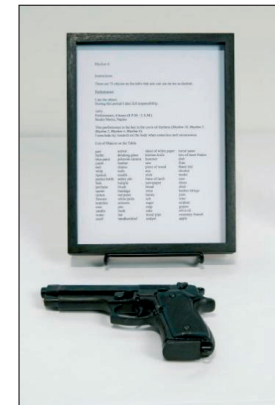
There are 72 items on the table that one can use on the menu as desired.

Performance.

I am an object...

During this period I take full responsibility.

Duration: 6 hours (20:00 - 02:00). (Ward 119)



(Figure 1) Instructions for the performance *Rhythm 0*. <https://www.tamuseum.org.il/en/exhibition/marina-abramovic-rhythm-0-1974/>



(Figure 2) *Rhythm 0*, performance. <https://www.tamuseum.org.il/en/exhibition/marina-abramovic-rhythm-0-1974/>

Marina later described the performance: "I was really violated: they cut my clothes, they put the thorns of the roses in my stomach, they cut my throat, they drank my blood, one person put the gun in my head and then another one took it away. It was a very intense and aggressive situation. After six hours, at 2 in the morning, I stopped, because this was exactly my decision: six hours. I started walking to the public and everybody run away and never actually confronted with me. The experience I drew from this piece was that in your own performances you can go very far, but if you leave decisions to the public, you can be killed." (Daneri et al. 2002 30).

Ward says the following about the performance:

It started tamely. Someone turned her around. Someone raised her hands in the air. Someone touched her somewhat intimately. The Neapolitan night began to heat up. In the third hour, all her clothes were cut from her with razor-sharp blades. In the fourth hour, the same blades began to explore her skin. Her throat was cut so that someone could suck her blood. Her body was subjected to various minor sexual assaults. She was so devoted to the piece that she would not resist rape or murder. Faced with her renunciation of will, with its implicit collapse of human psychology, a protective group began to define itself in the audience. When the loaded gun was held to Marina's head, and her own finger circled the trigger, a fight broke out between factions of the audience (120).

Abramović's performance *Rhythm 0* epitomizes Kantian genius by manifesting an innovative, transformative vision that transcends conventional artistic boundaries. Abramović's ability to endure and provoke extreme emotional and ethical reactions within her audience showcases her unique creative power, aligning with Kant's notion that genius introduces new rules to art. However, by relinquishing control and becoming a passive object, Abramović also deconstructs Kant's idea of genius as inherently tied to the autonomous individual. Instead, she exposes the dark, unpredictable nature of collective

human behaviour and shifts the focus from the solitary genius to a shared, participatory creation. This duality not only reinforces her genius but also critiques and expands Kant's framework by demonstrating that true artistic innovation can emerge from the interplay between artist and audience, individual and collective, control and surrender.

Abramović's deconstruction of the beautiful and the sublime

As Rossen Ventzislavov argues, Kant's notion of disinterested aesthetic judgment becomes increasingly problematic in the context of contemporary performance art, where bodily presence and audience interaction often demand emotional and ethical engagement (13). Additionally, Amelia Jones critiques the metaphysical construction of the Cartesian subject embedded in Enlightenment aesthetics, arguing that body art dismantles the illusion of the disembodied, rational viewer by foregrounding vulnerability, materiality, and embodied presence. (37). In that context, using violence and strategies of shock, radical performance art subverts the 'disinterested' mode of perceiving the artwork, rejecting emotional detachment from the intensity of aesthetic experience (Vučak 78). By exposing wounded bodies, blood, trauma, and raw violence, radical performers in this way break down the "insulating boundaries" between art and life, unleashing primal human emotions, drives, affects, and fears on the audience" (Vučak 78). Kant's disinterested pleasure is a »fundamental« principle in the judgment of taste, suggesting that true aesthetic appreciation must be devoid of any personal interest or desire for the existence of the object in question (42). This concept posits that the purity of a judgment of beauty is compromised when influenced by extraneous interests, be they sensory, emotional, or utilitarian. However, Abramović herself uses violence, blood, trauma and shock strategies to reject this type of distance, introducing the audience directly into an intense emotional experience. Laura Cantrell explores this shift in audience behaviour, emphasizing how Abramović's work narrows the emotional and physical distance between performer

and viewer, dismantling traditional aesthetic hierarchies. Through her performances, one being one of her most radical, if not the most radical and controversial, *Rhythm 0*, she breaks down the 'insulating boundaries' between art and life, forcing viewers to confront the deepest emotions, drives, and fears. Norman Bryson interprets this transgression as a ritualistic embodiment of the sacred, where Abramović's body becomes a site of confrontation with forces that defy rational categorization.

Moving forward, Abramović also challenges the other three of the notions of Kantian views of the beautiful. Kant notes that the beautiful is that which pleases universally without requiring conceptual understanding (57). This suggests that the judgment of beauty is immediate and not dependent on cognitive processes or the application of concepts. However, Abramović's *Rhythm 0* directly challenges the notion that beauty can be universally pleasing without concepts. The performance, which involves Abramović remaining passive while the audience is invited to use various objects on her, evokes a range of reactions from curiosity to violence. The beauty or impact of the piece depends heavily on the audience's understanding and conceptual engagement with themes of vulnerability, power, and ethical boundaries. Rather than being universally pleasing, the performance elicits diverse responses deeply tied to individual perceptions and moral frameworks, thus questioning Kant's idea of a universal, concept-free pleasure in beauty. Next, Kant's view of the beautiful as the form of purposiveness in an object, perceived without the concept of a purpose (74), is also challenged by Marina's performance. This means that an object is beautiful when it appears as if it has a purpose, but this purpose is not explicitly recognized or defined. *Rhythm 0* deconstructs this principle by presenting a situation where the purpose is not just ambiguous but is dynamically created through audience interaction. The objects on the table, ranging from benign to dangerous, imply various purposes, but the ultimate 'purpose' of the performance is to reveal the audience's impulses and the extremities of human behaviour. The beauty of the performance lies in its raw and unpredictable engagement, far from the serene purposiveness

Kant describes. The performance's impact is heightened by the very explicit potential purposes that the objects could serve (e.g., harm, adornment, etc.), thereby directly challenging the notion that beauty can be appreciated without recognizing any purpose. Lastly, Kant argues that the beautiful is that which is recognized without concepts as an object of necessary liking (79). This implies that the perception of beauty entails an instant and inevitable pleasure, free from personal biases or conceptual interpretation. However, in *Rhythm 0*, the perception of beauty is anything but immediate or universally necessary. The performance's provocative nature means that individuals' reactions are deeply personal and often conflicting. One may find beauty in the raw human interaction and the courage displayed by Abramović, while others may find the same elements disturbing or repulsive. The necessity of liking is entirely absent; instead, the performance invites critical reflection and varied emotional responses, thus undermining Kant's assertion that beauty entails a necessary and universal liking devoid of conceptual engagement. The performance exemplifies how beauty, in this context, is highly subjective and intertwined with the audience's ethical and emotional reactions.

Apart from deconstructing the notion of the beautiful, Marina's performance can be called sublime, in a Kantian way. The sublime, in contrast to the beautiful, is linked to formlessness and the concept of infinity or greatness beyond comprehension (83). It evokes a mix of awe and fear, a sense of something overwhelming. It is associated with the feeling of being overwhelmed by something much larger or more powerful than oneself, which can lead to a sense of sublimity (85). The sublime involves a recognition of limits in our own understanding and faculties, often invoking a profound emotional response. *Rhythm 0* embodies the sublime through the elements of unpredictability and danger. The audience's actions, ranging from tender to violent, introduce an aspect of the unknown and uncontrollable, aligning with Kant's notion of the sublime as involving elements that transcend ordinary experience. The performance invokes feelings of awe and fear, particularly when audience members engage in violent or potentially lethal actions. This mirrors the sublime's

capacity to evoke powerful emotional responses through experiences that push the boundaries of comfort and safety. The interaction between Abramović and the audience, particularly the extremes of human behaviour, reveals the vast spectrum of human nature, highlighting both the fragility and the resilience of the human condition, which can be seen as a reflection of the sublime's overwhelming power and vastness.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Kant's profound insights into the nature of art, beauty, and genius offer a foundational framework that continues to influence contemporary philosophical inquiry. His meticulous analysis in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, alongside his other critiques, establishes essential concepts such as the judgment of taste, the nature of beauty, and the role of genius in artistic creation. These ideas have proven indispensable for understanding the complex relationship between aesthetic experience and human cognition. Marina Abramović's 1976 performance *Rhythm 0* serves as a powerful case study that both exemplifies and challenges Kantian aesthetics. Her innovative approach transcends traditional artistic boundaries, aligning with Kant's notion of genius by creating new rules within the art form. At the same time, Abramović's deliberate relinquishment of control and engagement with the audience's unpredictable behaviours deconstructs the solitary nature of Kantian genius, emphasizing a collective, participatory creation instead. Furthermore, Abramović's work subverts Kant's principles of disinterested pleasure, universal beauty, and purposiveness. By introducing elements of violence, trauma, and intense emotional engagement, she forces viewers to confront deeply personal and ethical reactions, thus challenging the notion of universal, concept-free beauty. Her performances evoke the sublime through their unpredictable and overwhelming nature, invoking both awe and fear, and highlighting the limits of human understanding and control.

Ultimately, Abramović's radical performances not only reinforce her status as a Kantian genius but also expand and critique Kant's aesthetic framework, illustrating that true artistic innovation can emerge from the dynamic interplay between artist and audience, individual and collective, control and surrender. This duality enriches our understanding of art's potential to both reflect and transform human experience.

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Book Review: *The Night Ends with Fire* by K. X. Song

The Night Ends with Fire by K. X. Song is the first book in the duology called *The Dragon Spirit Duology* and is categorised as a Mulan retelling fantasy novel. There are several parallels between the novel and the Mulan story, however, the reader will soon find out that this story is not just a stereotypical *Disney* retelling, rather it is darker, more rebellious, and more provoking in regard to social norms.

Starting with the date and location, currently – in the year 923, there are Three Kingdoms on the continent, which can already be concluded from the map at the front of the book; Anlai, Leyuan, and Ximing. Each kingdom has its own warlord, princes, army, dialects of a language, culture, etc. However, there is one thing connecting them: before they were all one empire under the Wu Dynasty, but “An empire is like a cherry tree, its petals must one day fall.” (3). This novel follows an eighteen-year-old Hai Meilin, a girl raised to obey her father, an opium and gambling addict, born in Chuang Ning – the Anlai capital. Meilin was soon to be wed to an abusive trade merchant, whom she would have to serve for the rest of her life. Meilin, as a protagonist, shows determination and greed for freedom and she decides to join the army with one simple thought: “My ambitions are small. I only wish to have a little more time. A few months, maybe more. Then I will be satisfied.” (36) In the novel, there is a legend of four Cardinal Spirits: the Azure Dragon of the east, the Vermillion Bird of the south, the Ivory Tiger of the west, and the Onyx Tortoise of the north (132) and each cardinal spirit created a jade seal for humans to access spirit power – one jade for each spirit,

one human for each jade. Before joining the army, Hai Meilin came into possession of something precious her mother left her – a jade seal of the Azure Dragon, a spirit that feeds off a spirit vessel's greed, but in turn gives the power of the sea. The story unfolds, and Meilin stops wishing only for more time, during her time in the army she finds herself wishing for more, her ambitions and desires rise rapidly. But there is a problem: she is a woman – and the state “would never let a woman hold on to power” (35) because “A woman who could take power away from those who held it threatened the welfare of the state.” (410).

In order not to spoil the storyline, the summary stops and this review continues to focus on the main themes in the story; patriarchy and androcentric societal norms, duties and traditional norms, ambition and political influence on truth. From the start, the criticism of patriarchy is shown and Meilin – disguising herself as a man, is the character that breaks the social norms; she wields a sword, has ambition, and wants freedom. But, the author showed Meilin's inner thoughts and her constant need for reassurance that self-determination is valid, and not an abomination. At the same time, the author recalls that in androcentric societies “A woman who could think for herself jeopardized the morality of the law” (409). Furthermore, not only traditional gender roles and stereotypes are questioned but the political intrigues and truth itself. One character – Lei, a Ximing prince – entails that for the power and influence wars and human atrocities were happening, and in the end, it does not matter who is in power as long as the few people do not listen to the majority (389). Here, the question of democracy, monarchy, and authoritarian regimes arises: What shall one expect of politics and politicians today? Lastly, the question of truth and the possibility of it being rewritten is seen several times; in the different perspectives on spirit vessels, minorities, and at the end of the Meilin's story itself.

I recommend *The Night Ends with Fire* to those who believe in ambition and the equality of all. In my opinion, the most valuable parts of the novel itself are patriarchal quotes asking for reflection

and recognition of the society we live in. However, I do not recommend the novel to those who seek deep emotions and relationships, or to those who love developed backstories and authenticity. For me, the central flaw of the novel is that the characters function merely as instruments for the plot, resulting in shallow and insufficiently engaging characters.

Overall, *The Night Ends with Fire* is a well-written fantasy novel focused on the Mulan retelling with some new elements. I am eager to read the second book in the duology *The Dragon Wakes with Thunder*, the first book was an easy read calling for a reflection of ourselves and society around us – I expect nothing more or less from the second book in the series.

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CREATIVE WRITING

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The Cat Being a Constant in the Background

* * *

I always choose the oldest cat
out of the bunch
the ones who will greet death soon, and I am dying with them too.
Me and my rust copper buster are conjoined
in the never-ending
motion of lacklustre wither
In the bare-bones winter he gets weak
and I get meaner
He glows orange and I am
dark and bitter.
My thick mustard honey is the runt of the litter
I wish I could be like him
knock on all closed doors, walk on keyboards,
not swallow my words.
Is he wise? Does he understand when I talk, not even to him?
To laze around in the sun
with lightly closed
eyes, to doze off in careless slumber, to feel
like no other, not even one's own
To never move again

To breathe a sigh when the postman gets eaten. I need myself
instead of him to get kicked and beaten
I need more
than what is permitted.

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The American Way

* * *

Dear E.,
from time to time, the tears
lower
the
l
a
d
d
e
r all down to the neck

then the blonde-haired comes
talking in the American tongue
with which she spread
the morning toast

*don't cry
you silly*

are the words being anchored in the bottom of the throat, of the mouth –
I cry out the water
from within myself
not to drown
in myself
and tomorrow the salt
shall remain on the tongue
like a slap in the face

but you know I don't believe
 blindly
 in a promised tomorrow
 (perhaps only when)
 your smile spoke
 in the language of daybreak

*tomorrow everything's going to be fine
 that's the funniest part*

*this darkness
 will crawl out of the bones
 like snails
 in autumn*

the tears
 always
 lower
 the
 l
 a
 d
 d
 e
 r all down to

the ground –
 and the dead
 come alive.

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What My Mother Wanted

* * *

Dear E.,
 you know the best
 how I was a cherry blossom in a boy's hand
 a pit in the mouth
 a crack of the teeth
 the lightness of the dark

I was a jasmine in an eel's belly
 the eyeless one
 who saw,
 the nurturing ear

I was a sweater
 a shield against a nettle's fang
 an ivy fence
 a spider's home

I was the opening of the pupils
 the twilight banisher
 herald of spring

I was a trail on which you walk on
 your spine bent
 gray hair inside

I was a letter on the palm
 a verse at the tip of the tongue
 ellipsis

I was a mockingjay inside one's throat
childhood's sedge
a rattlesnake deep inside the chest

I was what my mother wanted
but never got –
I was what we all once were –
no, I still am.

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The Battle in the Valley Nile

* * *

From sun-kissed fields where Reason held its sway
And cannons roared the dawn of modern day
Rose Bonaparte, the Eagle of the West
With legions clad in blue, by Sun blessed
His Grand Armee, a marvel to behold
Where science marched, and stories yet untold
Were writ in shot and steel, in measured stride
Against the ghosts that ancient empires hide.

Then from the sands where Tigris once did gleam
And ziggurats pierced a more mystic dream
Rose Nebuchadnezzar, by old gods adored
Whose Babylon the world had once outpoured
Its treasures and its fears.
Behind him stood the shades of power, from a primal wood
Of myth and whispered prayer, where idols old
Their silent vigil through the ages rolled.

And lo! A chasm rent the very ground
In the Valley of Echoes, where no peace was found.
The Eagle eyed the Lion of the East

Two titans met, a grim and spectral feast
Powered by fate.
Napoleon unfurled
His banners bright, the emblem of a world
That sought its answers in the measured line
In cause and effect, in the engine's whine.

But when the trumpets of the Chaldeans blew
A tremor shook the sky, a different hue
Descended on the field.
From dusty sleep
Where ancient whispers secrets still did keep
Arose the gods of brick and carven stone
Their power long forgot, now fiercely shown.

Marduk, lord of storms and cosmic sway
Unleashed a whirlwind, tearing them ranks away.
The measured volleys of the Frenchmen broke
As bloody hands their ordered columns shook.
Ishtar, whose beauty held both life and war
Cast veils of glamour, blinding from afar.
The keenest eyes of Berthier lost their way
As phantom legions joined the fray.

And Enlil, master of the earth's deep groan
Made fissures yawn, where cannons were
overthrown.
The solid ground, foundation of their might
Became a shifting terror in the light.

The chariots of Babylon, once quaint and slow
Now moved with speed no mortal steeds
could know
Their bronze-tipped scythes a spectral harvest
reaped
While unseen forces their momentum crept.

Napoleon, whose mind could chart the stars
And bend the flow of battles and of wars
Now faced a foe no calculus could tame
A power born of faith, a whispered name.
His generals, who spoke of angles true
And trajectories that musket bullets would
pursue
Stared in disbelief as magic filled the air
And prayers became a weapon of despair.

"Behold!", cried Nebuchadnezzar, voice like brass
"The strength of those who watch as ages pass!
Your science frail, your reason but a gleam
Against the power of a waking dream!"

Yet still the Frenchmen fought, with courage born
Of discipline, that bitter, early morn
Of this strange war.
Their bayonets flashed like fire
Their muskets roared defiance, climbing higher
Than any hymn.
They sought a logical flaw

A weakness in the wonder and the awe.
But how could steel pierce through a god's decree?
Or reason bind the powers that could be?

Could progress stand against the ancient creed?
The yearning heart that answers to a need
Beyond the test tube and the measured fact?
The spirit's realm, where faith held binding
Pact.

The battle raged, a chaos unforeseen
Where earthly craft with godly might had been
Confused and intertwined.
The sun dipped low
Painting the valley with a crimson glow.
The outcome hung, a question mark in air
Could mortal mind a god's onslaught repair?
Or would the idols, from their slumber deep
The seeds of reason in their fury sweep?

Part 2 – *Iron Will*

The crimson stain upon the valley floor
A tapestry of ruin, writ in gore
Did not proclaim the triumph of the old.
Though gods had roared, and mystic tales
were told
The spirit of the Reason burned bright
Within the hearts that faced the fading light.

Napoleon, though shaken by the sight
Of powers that defied all earthly might
His gaze remained, unyielding and severe.
“So”, he declared, his voice cutting clear
Across the groans and whispers of despair
“The ancient world its spectral arms will bare?
Then France shall forge a new and stronger chain
To bind these phantoms and their hollow reign!”

His sages, those who measured and defined
Whose minds the secrets of the earth divined
Now turned their gaze to this unholy war
Seeking a weakness hidden at the core
Of godly might.
They spoke of resonance
Of energies unseen, of subtle sense
That might disrupt the flow of magic's weave
A science yet unborn, they would conceive.

And from the ranks, where discipline held fast
A murmur rose, a knowledge from the past.
Old battlefield lore, of charms and whispered dread
Of symbols etched to ward off powers dread.
These fragments of a fading, primal fear
Combined with reason, now began to steer
the Frenchmen's minds.
They sought a grounded key
To unlock the secrets of divinity.

Napoleon, with his strategic eye
Observed the patterns in the stormy sky
The rhythm of the earth's unnatural quake
The moments when the illusions seemed to break.
He saw the strain upon the priests' pale face
The flicker in the idols' stony gaze.
The gods, though mighty, were not absolute
Their power drawn from faith, a fragile root.

He ordered then, with voice like tempered steel
A new assault, a tactic to reveal
The limits of their reign.
His engineers
With frantic haste, defying mortal fears
Constructed frames of iron, strangely wrought
Charged with the static that their studies taught.
They grounded rods, like lightning rods of war
To draw the errant energies from afar.

And when the dawn broke
Painting peaks anew
The Grande Armee advanced, a resolute few
Against the spectral host.
The air grew thick
With crackling power
A strange and novel trick
As Marduk roared, a tempest to unleash
The iron frames began their power to leech
The raw celestial force.

The whirlwind waned
Its godly fury strangely now constrained.

Ishtar's illusions flickered, lost their hold
As focused lenses, crafted to behold
The subtle shifts in light, began to pierce
The veils of glamour, making visions fierce
And frightening, dissolve into the air
Leaving the phantom legions gaunt and bare.

And when Enlil commanded earth to rend
The engineers, their calculations penned
With care and speed, deployed their iron
mesh
Distributing the tremors, making fresh
The ground beneath their feet.
The chasms closed
The ancient wrath of earth itself opposed.

The musket volleys, now with clearer aim
Found mortal flesh, inflicting wound and maim.
The bayonets no longer turned aside
By phantom shields, with crimson deeply dyed.
The chariots, their unnatural speed now gone
Became mere targets as the cannons shone.

Napoleon himself, upon his white mare
A figure wreathed in reason's steady glare
Advanced unflinching.

He understood the key:
Even gods, if born of belief, must flee
When that belief begins to wane and crack
When clear minds refuse to turn back.

He reached the ziggurat, the idols' throne
And with a hammer, forged of iron alone
He struck the stone face of a silent god.
A tremor ran through all the hallowed sod.
The air grew still, the spectral armies swayed
Their power diminished, their authority decayed.

Nebuchadnezzar watched, his fury turned to dread
As the foundations of his faith lay dead.
The silence of gods, a chilling sound
Where once their mighty pronouncements
did resound
His army faltered, seeing their divine
Protectors powerless, their glory declined.

The Grande Armee, with disciplined advance
Now swept the field, no longer held in trance.
The Lion of the East, his roar subdued
Fell to the might that Reason has imbued.
The Valley of Echoes, once a mystic stage
Became a testament to a new age.

And Napoleon, standing on the height
Surveyed the world bathed in the fading light.

The ancient powers broken, their influence past
The age of wonder yielding to the vast
Expanse of knowledge, hard-won and embraced.
The world lay open, its old fears erased.

From that day forth, a new dominion grew
Beneath the Eagle's gaze, both strong and true.
The whispers of the gods grew faint and low
As science bloomed, and Reason's steady glow
Illuminated every distant shore.
Napoleon, who dared to fight
Against the heavens, now held earthly sway
The ultimate king, ushering in a brighter day
Where human intellect, with iron will
Had conquered even gods, and stood
triumphant still.

Part 3 – *The Turning Tides*

The age of reason dawned beneath the bay
Of Bonaparte, whose iron will held sway.
The temples fell, the ancient idols burned
And in their place, the halls of learning turned.
To beacons bright, where knowledge was the king
And every question had a measured spring.
The scientists, his new high priesthood toiled
Unlocking secrets that the past had foiled.

Great engines roared, and marvels took their
flight

The darkness fled before the searching light
Of understanding.
Laws were etched in stone
Based on deduction, not religious throne.
The world, it seemed, had found its destined path
Away from shadows and phantoms
Free from ancient wrath.
And Napoleon, the architect of this new morn
Was hailed as Logos, the divinely born.
Of intellect, the vanquisher of dread
The one who led while superstition fled.

But power, even when it wears the guise
Of purest logic, slowly starts to rise above
its source.
The lines began to blur
The servant science, now a conqueror.
Napoleon, who scorned the mystic's art
Began to see within his own heart
A different kind of power, born of awe
The reverence of millions, without flaw.

His triumphs were recounted as divine
His pronouncements, truths that would
forever shine.
The halls of learning, once so fiercely free
Now echoed praises of his majesty.
His image graced the coins, the public
square

His victories sung with a religious air.
The scientists, once seekers of the real
Became interpreters of his appeal
Finding in stars and atoms his grand design
A cosmic order, perfectly in line
with his dominion.
A new dogma grew
Where reason bowed to the majestic view
Of Bonaparte, the apex of all thought
The culmination that the ages sought.

The iron laws, once meant to liberate
Became the rigid bars of a new state
Where dissent whispered was a heresy
And freedom's spirit bowed in apathy.
The human heart, that yearned for more
than proof
For solace deeper than the measured roof
Of scientific fact, began to sigh
Beneath the weight of this cold, iron sky.

Then from the East, where dawns are soft
and mild
A figure came, unassuming, wild
In aspect only to the judging eye
Whose gentle spirit seemed to reach the sky.
No legions marched behind, no cannons roared
His only weapon, love, divinely showed
From eyes that held a sorrow deep and vast
For all the broken remnants of the past.

He spoke of empathy, of selfless grace
Of turning swords to plowshares in each place.
His words were simple, yet they held a fire
That warmed the hearts grown cold in this new pyre
Of intellect alone.
He offered peace
A solace that the iron laws could cease
To stifle in the human soul's deep need
A balm for wounds that logic could not heed.

They called him "King", though crown he did
not bear
His kingdom in the hearts that found him fair.
His followers, a humble, quiet band
Whose strength lay not in force of iron hand
But in the bonds of kindness that they wove
A tapestry of care, of selfless love.

Napoleon, upon his iron throne
Scorned this new influence, so softly sown.
"A weak dreamer!", he scoffed
With chilling pride
"Against the strength that science has supplied!"
But like a seed that cracks the hardest stone
The King's compassion steadily had grown.
His gentle army, not of earthly might
But souls awakened to a different light
Began to touch the hearts the iron had bound
Where weary spirits a new solace found.

Then came a day, no battle fought with steel
But in the quiet hearts, a change to feel.
The rigid laws of Bonaparte seemed cold
Compared to stories of love untold
Of sacrifice and mercy freely given
A glimpse of what might be
A touch of heaven.

The scientists, who once had sung his praise
Now saw the emptiness of his gaze.
And of these last days.
The marvels built, the knowledge
they had gained
Felt hollow, if the human heart remained
Unsatisfied, still yearning for a grace
Beyond the confines of a measured space.

And one by one, they turned, their gaze
anew
Drawn to the King, whose love was strong and
true
The legions, too, their iron discipline
waned
As whispers of a different world were
gained
They saw the peace that shone within the
eyes
Of those who followed him beneath the
skies.

Napoleon, alone upon his height
Felt the cold wind of a fading light.
His empire, built on Reason's stern command
Now crumbled, not by force of earthly hand
But by the gentle power of love
That mirrored something from the realms
above.

The King, with open arms
Embraced the world
Ushering in new days.
The swords were laid aside
The cannons hushed
A quiet revolution gently brushed
The iron idols from their lofty stand.
And in its place, a verdant, loving land
Arose, where empathy held sovereign sway
And shadows of all malice fled away.
No murder, greed nor strife stained that dawn
But love and peace
The very breath of life
A utopia born not of iron might
But of a gentle King
and heaven's light.

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A Sailor

* * *

Some days feel as though you are a sailor.
Not a funny kind that has a great time
Of which you hear stories about –
They and their fellas are having a blast.
Not the one spending quiet time,
Stationed at the harbor, sipping wine.

Some days feel as though you are a sailor.
The one roaming through the sea,
Not exactly knowing where you are going.
You hope to soon find a steady place to rest
But that doesn't seem to be the case,
Because you no longer have any sense of direction or pace.

The tides throw you around, back and forward, left and right
And suddenly – it feels as though there is no more light,
As there is no candle that could ease your plight.
It feels as though all the maps you own are gone,
And you realize that you are lost and alone.
Floating with no port to call home.

You still keep trying for a while.
You try to stay calm and even sing and smile.
You try to not think too hard and deny it all in your mind.
Until you find that you are a sailor of a different kind,
The sailor that is lost somewhere in the deepest sea,
And you don't know it yet – but that exact moment is your key.

And to tell you the truth, that key is in all of us –
We are all sailors of our own lives.
Sometimes lost and alone and in despair,
As if waves are hitting us while we gasp for air.
That is how we all sail through the journey of life,
But remember sailor – after each storm there comes light.

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Notes from a Park Bench

* * *

From winter and autumn to summer and spring,
It quietly observes and remembers everything.
From falling leaves and chilly snow,
To blooming flowers and sunny glow,
A park bench has seen and felt it all.
From first loves and quiet kisses in the dark,
To broken hearts and loud endings when it all falls apart.
From finally seeing those greatly missed eyes,
To having to once again survive the hardest goodbyes.
A park bench has seen and felt it all.
From happiness and joy as big as seeing the first snowfall,
To tears that could form the longest and saddest rivers.
From late-night talks and gossips big and small,
To the deepest secrets quietly shared through shivers.
A park bench has seen and felt it all.
From tired travelers looking for some rest on their way,
To children playing and jumping around it every day.
All the changing seasons of both nature and our lives in whole.
Because only something as ordinary and as simple as a park bench –
Has truly seen and felt it all.

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About *Kick*

From its inception, students' journal *Kick* had one simple purpose, to create space for students of English and broader studies to publish both their academic and creative writing in English. Students wholeheartedly accepted this opportunity and, as a result, *Kick* has already published four issues containing students' research papers, poems, short stories, and reviews. In 2019 *Kick* published its first two printed issues. It continued with its activities in 2020, now as a double-blind reviewed journal and a part of the English Student's Association "Glotta". The fourth issue sees the light of day after a lengthy hiatus and it demonstrates the students' originality. In 2024, despite numerous difficulties, the fifth issue is published and is ready to present student's originality, creativity, and insight. The sixth issue is, in record time, ready and prepared to present what students are capable of once they dare to tread in uncharted grounds. At last, for all questions Editorial Board answers via email: kick.ffos2@gmail.com.