QUESTION

Contents

Sustainability and Innovation

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Before you lies the 7th issue of the SWW DTP's own PGR-led journal, compiled from submissions made by our fellow PhD students over the academic year 2021/2022. Following on from last year's Research Festival, which had the theme of 'Futures. Time, uncertainty and the imagination', this issue explores the subjects of sustainability and innovation. It has been wonderful to see the diversity of interests and approaches that the SWW DTP has come up with, with submissions ranging from practice-based art works to linguistics, history and sociology. Beautiful artwork to go with this theme has been provided by Houda Al-Kateb.

Although the official theme of this issue was sustainability and innovation, reading the final contributions, a second underlying theme struck us: community. Many of the papers in this issue deal with the impacts of change (either self-made or imposed by outside factors) have on local communities and identities.

Megan Furr, Mark Higgins and Kerstin Grunwald-Hope trace the concept of 'technostalgia' through three periods in history, exploring how communities adopt and reject certain technological advancements, often simultaneously. These ambiguous reactions are studied by the authors through different recorded media, namely written letters, poems and blog posts.

In a similar vein, Katy Humberstone and Adam Kubik explore how minority cultures in Europe attempt to make themselves better known, while also preserving their authenticity. Taking Cornish and Silesian culture as case studies, the authors place this issue of societal sustainability centrally in a discussion of cultural marketization and commodification.

Iona Ramsay, Maria Rupprecht and Alice van den Bosch present an ancient historical approach to martyrdom, outlining how such transgressive figures can be used by societies to re-imagine themselves. They outline several instances of how the stories of martyrs may be used to challenge social norms or support the status quo, depending on specific historical contexts.

Finally, some contributions used the theme to expressly tackle the most pressing type of sustainability in our current day and age: climate change. Catriona Parry analyses the recent Angolan film *Ar Condicionado* (2020), which frames the power that ordinary people hold to change socio-political realities within a global capitalist system through the story of falling air conditioning units in the city of Luanda.

Sebastian Bustamante-Brauning has made a powerful photographic essay of the effects of sodium nitrate mining in northern Chile on the local environment.

Finally, Nemo D'Qrill's contribution to the theme, 'Duo Lunar', consists of an interpretative dance piece using the Simon and Garfunkel song 'The Sound

of Silence'. In this piece, they express their vision of the interrelation between media misinformation, pollution, the destruction of nature and technological advancements. This submission will be made available on our website to coincide with this issue.

As always at the start of a new academic year, some of the editorial team are moving on, either because they are starting to write up or because they have submitted their thesis. For Issue 8, the joint post of general editor will be taken up by Amber Stevenson and Felix Sadebeck, while further vacancies for submissions editor and subject editors are still open at the time of writing. Keep your eyes peeled for any announcements in the SWW DTP newsletter, or get in touch if you are interested in contributing at questionsubmissions@gmail.com.

Berber van der Meulen-van der Veen
Georgia Holly

Mail Coaches, Telegraphs and the Internet: Technostalgia and Socio-Cultural Sustainability

Megan Furr, Mark Higgins and Kerstin Grunwald-Hope

Whilst new technologies hold the promise of progress, innovation in communication has been met with both anxiety and suspicion throughout history.[1] We are an early modern literary scholar, a nineteenth-century historian and a contemporary musicologist who joined forces at a collaborative publishing workshop in November 2021 to explore nostalgic reactions caused by the superseding of one communication technology by another. As a methodology, cross-disciplinary collaboration is still in its infancy in the humanities as most articles are either single-authored or by multiple authors within the same discipline. Our co-authored article aims to showcase the hitherto unrecognised connections and correlations between technological milestones that a team of writers from very different disciplines can produce. We each contributed examples from our areas of expertise that allowed us to analyse tensions between the enablement of and resistance to technological innovations that we consider as having revolutionised means of communication from the eighteenth century onwards. This approach has produced three case studies which decentralise specific events and shine new light on the relationship between 'technostalgia', to borrow Tim van der Heijden's term, and concerns surrounding socio-cultural sustainability. Following van der Heijden's approach, we define technostalgia 'not [...] as a longing for the past but rather [a] mediat[ion] between the past and the present'.[2] Instead, when seen as part of a wider trajectory, each case study establishes how technostalgia not only helps communities to engage with superseded and incoming communication technologies but also how backward-looking tendencies are always bound up with the desire for a future in which means of communication are inclusive and sustainable.

The first case study focuses on technostalgia caused by the rise and fall of the mail coach system. Since communities faced wide-reaching and fast-moving changes in communication technology in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the opinions of contemporary writers who witnessed and experienced these leaps in technological innovation offer an insight into whether the speeding up of nationwide communication was seen as universal progress. The second case study examines the technostalgia created by the introduction of the telegraph

in the mid-nineteenth century. Using a comparative analysis of two poems by Emily Dickinson, this case study will consider how the letter and telegram were experienced in terms of intimacy and physical connection. The third case study looks at the musical subculture that gave rise to dubstep music in the early-2000s. This offers an insight into the enduring importance of antiquated technology, as well as an uneasy relationship with the internet, which facilitated the growth of the scene while simultaneously posing a threat to its cultural value. Spanning a timeframe of four-hundred years, our cross-disciplinary and collaborative approach is the first to synthesise seemingly unconnected ways in which different innovations in communication were met with parallel technostalgia.

Technostalgic Responses to the Rise and Fall of the British Mail Coach

When John Palmer introduced the mail coach network in 1782, letters started to reach their destination with unprecedented speed. However, not everyone in England benefited equally from the expanding mail coach system. Hannah More wrote in 1787; 'I cannot partake; mail-coaches, which come to others, come not to me. Letters and newspapers, now that they travel in coaches like gentlemen and ladies, come not within ten miles of my hermitage'.[3] Esther Milne rightly reads More's complaint as a nostalgic concern about 'a change in the pattern of communication'.[4] Milne explores the history of epistolary writing and to which degrees correspondents felt connected through the practices of writing letters, postcards and emails. A literature studies perspective enriches Milne's consideration of More's technostalgia because it provides a nuanced understanding of how tensions between perceived enablement by and resistance to technological innovation are textually constructed. For example, More metaphorically transforms the mail coach into an emblem of the elite to which only 'gentlemen and ladies' have access.[5] The mail coach, as a means of transport, represents a microcosm of longstanding social exclusion, as only some gentlemen and ladies could afford an uncomfortable ride inside the coach cabin with poorer travellers facing even rougher conditions on outside seats mounted at the back of the coach.[6] More accuses the mail coach of perpetuating similar inequality; in this case unequal access to communication networks. Her nostalgia therefore centres on the coach as both a means of transport and as a communication technology, suggesting that technological innovation does not necessarily result in more sustainable means of communication for all. On the contrary, More claims that the mail coach system has transformed ten miles into an almost insurmountable distance. In her view, the mail coach drives a wedge between rural communities and the rest of the country by slowing down rather than speeding up access to

news and correspondence from isolated locations. By referring to her home as a 'hermitage' far removed from means of transport and communication, she hyperbolically heightens her perceived exclusion from society at large. Whilst More is nostalgic because she yearns for the supposed glory days of the pre-mail coach world, she nonetheless accepts that the postboy-era is a thing of the past and looks with concern to the future. The mail coach system network remained very London-centric and communities away from the route network faced higher postal charges than those between London and other cities.[7] Therefore, despite its innovation in communication which promised greater sustainability and connectivity, the mail coach imposed a financial burden on populations outside large cities and socially isolated rural communities. In this light, More's technostalgic resistance identified a very real side effect of supposedly universal benefit brought on by advances in communication technology.

Before the mail coach system could fulfil its promise of a better-connected nation or its perceived threat of inequality and exclusion, the coach met its match in the train, which from the 1830s onwards promised an even faster postal service.[8] For an evocative response to the transition from mail coach to postal rail, Milne turns to Thomas de Quincey's essay 'The English mail coach'.[9] De Quincey reacted to postal rail superseding the mail coach service with nostalgic resistance. In his view, the fact that 'the inter-agencies are gone in the mode of communication between the horse and his master' is just one example of a wider technology-driven trend that dehumanises means of communication and transport and thereby puts organic links between and within communities at risk. For this reason, he inflates a sense of rupture with past practices and describes how the 'iron tubes and boilers [of the train] have disconnected man's heart from the ministers of his locomotion'.[10] De Quincey's main concern here surrounds the kinetic energy of travelling on a mail coach to which travelling by train cannot compare. Nonetheless, he employs technostalgia as a purposeful memory strategy which commemorates the mail coach as a tangible and engaging means that enabled communication by uniting the bearer and receivers of news across the country to form a national identity: paradoxically the same identity-forming exchange of news that More felt excluded from because of the mail coach. In De Quincey's view, however, it is the mail coach, not the post-boys of More's youth, which is the means of communication with a personal touch. Communal connectivity and inclusivity are lost due to technological progress in the form of impersonal postal rail. De Quincey thereby echoes More's future-orientated nostalgia over unprecedented and increasing marginalisation. To both writers, innovation in communication is unsustainable because it removes the end user from a 'conscious presence of a central intellect [...] in the midst of vast distances'.[11]

The eighteenth and early nineteenth century technostalgic tensions which this case study has explored with the help of More's and de Quincey's writings are on a chronological trajectory of equally conflicted responses to the new technologies that continued to change means of communication in unprecedented ways. To illustrate another manifestation of this perpetual process, the second case study focuses on how late nineteenth century poetry captured and engaged with the introduction of the telegraph.

Emily Dickinson and Technostalgic Reflections on the Letter and the Telegraph

The nineteenth century witnessed a significant transformation in communication technology. The introduction of the telegraph to America in 1844, heralded by the famous words 'What have God Wraught?' transformed how people thought about communication, with poets such as Emily Dickinson reflecting on what this new way of communicating meant and how it was experienced. While the previous case study has looked at innovation in technology through the lens of speed and distance, this section will instead compare and contrast two of Dickinson's poems, 'The Way I Read a Letter's- This-' and 'Myself Can Read the Telegram,' to understand how physical and personal connections (or the lack thereof) created technostalgia.[12] In doing so, this case study will question the extent to which the introduction of the telegraph served as a break with the traditions of interpersonal communication.

Dickinson's reflections in 'The Way I Read a Letter's- This-' focus not on the contents of the letter, but rather on the experience of its reader. By seeing the letter as a material object, Dickinson points to the physical connection between the sender and the receiver, describing both 'pushing it with [her] fingers' and 'slowly pick[ing] the lock'. This kind of intimate experience is further emphasised through the first person 'I' which contrasts with the use of 'myself' suggesting the telegram does not arouse the same personal relationship. Eliza Richards notes that while the 'markets speak [...] the speaker seems unable to claim herself'.[13] This can be explained by the physical (and personal) mediation, which the speaker relishes, being interrupted by the telegrapher. Another important factor highlighted in 'The Way I Read a Letter's- This-' is the privacy the speaker demands when reading a letter, requiring a locked door in the 'furthest off [room]' and 'the conviction of a mouse'. This can also be understood through what Ruth Livesey has described as 'a conscious act of ceremony' which is experienced by the reader on their own terms.[14] This kind of ritual suggests the receiving of a letter was a message in itself.

'Myself Can Read the Telegram' instead focuses on the contents of the

telegram, in particular, the stocks, the weather and the news, which are described as being 'null as nothing'. This speaks to the telegram falling into certain patterns of usage, which were the antithesis of personal and private communication. Indeed, the telegrams which Dickinson refers to were primarily meant for mass readership and therefore did not require the back-and-forth correspondence of a letter. Similarly, unlike the letter, Dickinson points to the telegraph as a way to send mundane information which suggests that one technology cannot be easily substituted for another. In Shannon L. Thomas' analysis of 'Myself Can Read the Telegram,' she argues the poem 'captures the absurdity ... of attempts to read telegrams [as a] personal letter' given the reader is not allowed the same kind of personal communication and thus 'fails to fulfil their needs'.[15] From the outset, the experience of receiving information via the telegram does not arouse the same personal and physical relationship and cannot emotionally satisfy the speaker. This is reflected in contemporary understandings of the telegraph, with an article printed in the New York Times in 1858, for example, describing the telegraph as being 'superficial, sudden, unsifted and too fast for the truth'.[16] However, scholars such as Jerusha McCormack have noted that telegraphic style influenced Dickinson's poetry, particularly through her use of punctuation.[17] This suggests the tension between the enablement of technology on one hand and the resistance on the other was a complex process – not only did differences in content have to be negotiated, but also concerns over public and private communication and even language.

As an innovation in communication technology, the introduction of the telegraph allowed Dickinson to reflect upon her use of letters. In doing so, her poetry demonstrates how new technology did not eliminate previous patterns of usage, and instead reinforced the sustainability of the old technology. In other words, as Wendy Martin argues 'at a time when Americans began to define themselves as members of an expanding nation, Dickinson moved inward, celebrating the individual and interpersonal relationship'.[18] The next case study examines technostalgia through the musicking practices of the dubstep community in the UK and how they have actively employed traditional practices in the face of the new media landscape of the Web.

Technostalgia, the Internet and Subcultural Sustainability in the UK Dubstep Scene

Mail coaches and telegraphy ultimately give way to today's World Wide Web, and tensions in the relationships between old and new media remain apparent. Henry Jenkins – who is best known for his work on the encounters between the practices of old and new media technologies and their effects on popular culture –

has referred to these tensions as characteristic of the kind of 'convergences' that typify these encounters.[19] One such convergent tension can be found in the emerging dubstep scene in early-2000s London. Amid this tension, dubstep music began its ascent from a small, niche subculture to the global mainstream.[20]

Dubstep music fundamentally owes its creative fecundity to the contemporaneous growth of the Web. The expansion of the subculture was facilitated by blogs such as Hyperdub and Blackdown Soundboy, forums such as Dubplate.net and Dubstep Forum, as well as the file sharing site Barefiles. One of the most important ambassadors for dubstep in the United States, DJ Joe Nice, has made clear the importance of the internet in his exposure to the music, while many of the UK scene's pioneers have variously spoken of the relationship between the proliferation of dubstep and Web culture.[21] However, in spite of dubstep's indebtedness to the Web, there was still a strong sense of tradition within the scene, and a reliance upon fairly antiquated technological practices inherited from the movement's musico-cultural forerunners, namely the circulation of music on 'dubplate' and on vinyl records.

'Dubplate' is a vernacular appropriation of an industry medium originally used in the process of manufacturing records. This enables the production of single issue, one-off discs, which are then exclusive to a DJ or a musical collective. This practice was directly inherited by dubstep DJs via preceding traditions in UK dance and rave music, though it reaches back to 'soundsystem' culture in 1960s Jamaica. As with 'soundsystem,' the circulation of music on exclusive dubplates was a big part of dubstep's subcultural centre of gravity. Anyone who wanted to hear the latest developments in this musical arc could only do so by attending small, underground club nights, in which the music was selected by DJs in possession of exclusive discs. This continued to be the case into the mid-late 2000s, which point to the strange tension between minimally circulated music on an antiquated format and the growing vitality of the movement made possible by the Web.

Evidence of the tension can be found in two posts, published within a reasonably short space of time by Martin 'Blackdown' Clark on his Blackdown Soundboy blog. The earlier post, published on June 15th 2005, sees Clark promoting the then newly launched *Bleep* website, in high praise of digital downloads, a medium which he claims 'isn't the future... it's the present'. However, only nine days later, a much more impassioned post links *past* with present. In almost reverential tones, Clark writes about the indescribable 'buzz' of cutting dubplates for the first time.[22]

Bleep, promoted by Clark and an offshoot of the sizable, independent label Warp Records, sits in contrast to the small record labels at the heart of the

dubstep movement contemporaneously, which were not engaged with digital music distribution. These labels – such as Big Apple, Tempa and DMZ – adhered to a traditional model of releasing music on vinyl only. Furthermore, the market for vinyl sales at the time, coupled with dubstep's status as a very niche movement, meant that only a small number of units were issued on each release. The Discogs listings for early-2000s releases from these labels reveals that site members who 'have' these records listed in their collections is consistently less than 300, rising to only 900 by the second half of the decade.[23] The high prices commanded by these now sought-after records reflects the very same dynamic in the aforementioned soundsystem culture. Rare and highly collectible music continues to change hands for large sums. This is, albeit inadvertently, another way in which dubstep is rooted in its genealogical past, and yet another source of tension between the dynamics of traditional media activities and the unrestrained accessibility expected of Web-based media.

The consequences of this media convergence have been described as a disruption to dubstep's foundational 'hyper-regionalisation'.[24] Resistance to this disruption in the name of what we might call 'subcultural sustainability' is emblemised by the co-founder of the DMZ label and club night, Mala. Mala has maintained a minimal digital footprint throughout his creative career, described by Soraya Brouwer as harnessing 'strength through scarcity'.[25] For Alex McFadyen, this scarcity was an essential part of DMZ's 'allure'.[26] Even by the 2010s, at which point Western culture is utterly enmeshed within the Web, there are still dubstep 'traditionalists', such as the S.Y.S.T.E.M and Bandulu promotions who adhere to a model of vinyl only music circulation and zero online promotion.[27]

This is concurrent with Svetlana Boym's meditations on nostalgia.[28] Boym's *The Future of Nostalgia* focuses on the way that nostalgia mediates the relationship between past and present, in either a reflective (commemorative) sense, or a restorative (reconstructive) sense. Dubstep seems to have shifted through both of these modes. While in the movement's early years, dubplate cutting and vinyl circulation may have been informed by teleology, subject to the same necessities as its preceding musical cultures, there was at the same time something embedded in the music that has been described by commentators as echoing London's historic, sonic, urban personality. Simon Reynolds, for example, recognises a clear sense of the 'past being better,' writing that 'in dubstep in Britain, there's a lot of referencing of roots reggae, or the early days of house, or the early days of jungle. In dance culture, the purist stuff, there's sort of this in-built reverence to the past'.[29] Boym would identify this as reflective nostalgia, but by the time S.Y.S.T.E.M and Bandulu are pushing what they perceive as dubstep's own embedded musico-cultural traditions, this has given way to a restorative nostalgia: an

attempt to recreate the ways of the past in the here and now. This mode of nostalgia is perhaps less a celebration or reverence for perceived 'better times' than it is an outright resistance to discomfiture with the present. This is a thread that can be traced throughout dubstep's journey as a musical and subcultural force.

Conclusion

Technological innovations have resulted in ever increasing connectivity between agents throughout human history. Here we have discussed three significant moments in the advancement of communications technologies and how they have impacted upon the communities exposed to them. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, technostalgia coloured how writers related to innovation in communication and how they remembered the communicative technologies that came before. Fears of societal exclusion and eroding community cohesion were at the heart of More's and de Quincey's matching technostalgia. In the mid nineteenth century, technostalgia was evident in the reflective nature of Emily Dickinson's musings on the letter and the telegram. Her emphasis on the physical and personal experience were central to contemporary anxieties surrounding the early telegraph. In the twenty-first century anxieties persist around the corrosive effects of new technological media, and there are enduring relationships with established media practices. This is evident within the convergent tensions of the early dubstep scene. What is consistent across all of these case studies is a tension between enablement on the one hand and resistance on the other. Many communities have faced the threat of disenfranchisement, or outright exclusion, in the face of communication technologies, and this has provoked nostalgia for the certainty of times past and a desire for the sustainability of present cultural circumstances.

'Sustaining Cornish and Silesian?': The Case of Two (In)visible and (Un)heard Minority Cultures in Europe

Katy Humberstone and Adam Kubik

1. Introducing Issues of Sustainability

Minority cultures are no longer abstract from their market conditions, for they are marketized, commodified and commercialised.[1] While this presents socioeconomic opportunities for minority peoples, challenges emerge around cultural sustainability. It is precisely this opportunity versus challenge 'nexus' in which this paper is situated. A comparative angle is taken on the minorities of Cornish and Silesian. Summarising these cultures, we pivot on two ultimately intertwined themes – media and commodification – the latter focusing, in addition to Cornwall and Silesia, on two overseas (diaspora) communities. Our exploration enables us to chart opportunities and challenges in terms of social sustainability, answering: to what extent are these cultures sustainable?

2. 'Defining' and 'Delineating' our Overview

The focus of this article is a comparison between Cornwall – a site of originally Celtic settlement in Great Britain – and Upper Silesia, an overlapping area of Germanic and Slavic cultures in continental Europe. The present section proceeds to provide some background in relation to these two predominant areas of focus and sets this paper within the key concepts of 'old' and 'new' media, commodification, and finally, diaspora.

2.1 Contextualising Cornishness: A Pushing and Pulling of Centre-Periphery Relations

Cornwall, a duchy in far south westernmost United Kingdom (see **Figure 1** for a map of the region), has a long-held distinctive identity, being a site of Celtic migration during the fifth and sixth centuries. It has its own language – Cornish – repressed by English for several centuries.[2] Since the nineteenth century, a Cornish revival has been taking place, fuelled by a European-wide pan-Celtic movement, and, thereafter in the twentieth century, a linguistic revival.[3] There has been increased reflexivity around Cornwall's uniqueness, reinforced during the industrial age, when Cornwall developed a world-renowned mining industry.[4]
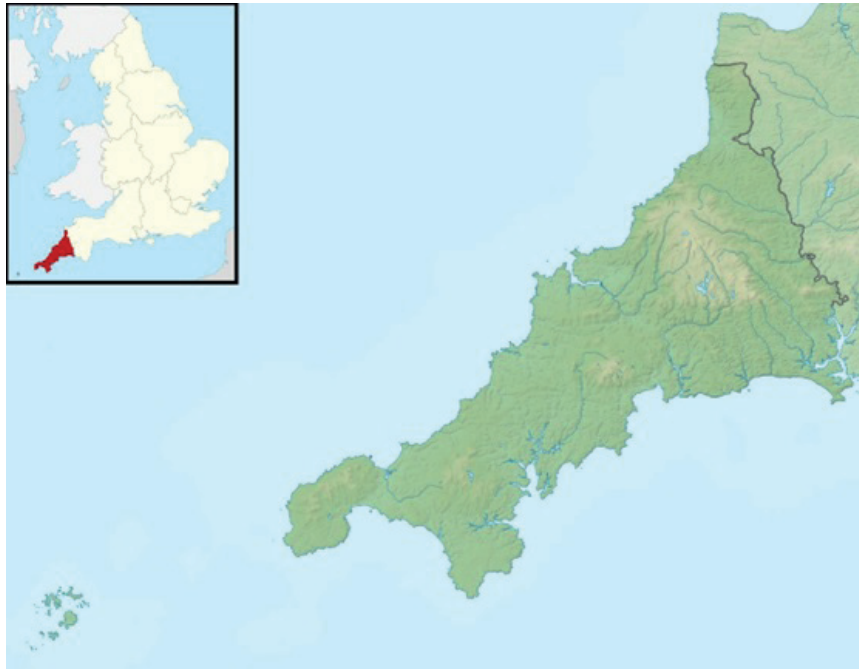
Figure 1 A map of Cornwall showing its geographical position in relation to the rest of the UK
(see cartography in top left-hand corner for point of reference). Nilfanion, created using Ordnance
Survey Map Data, and licensed under a Creative Commons CC-BY-SA 3.0 License[5]

This waned, however, and the opening (and anglicisation), of Cornwall in rela-
tion to the rest of England continued, with the recontextualization of Cornwall's
mining heritage for tourism. Such ambiguous and indeterminate Anglo-Cornish
relationships lead Cornish Studies Scholar, Bernard Deacon, to state that Cornish
identity is both 'of England, and not of England'.[6] This quote essentially encapsu-
lates a struggle between preserving a distinct Cornishness, while depending on
its precarious tourism economy – thus forcing the region to 'open-up' its identity
to visitors with sometimes-concerning implications for local lived experiences
of Cornishness.

2.2 The Bumpy Road Towards Silesian Recognition
The Central European region of Silesia has, throughout the centuries, been cul-
turally influenced by different rulers: the Great Bohemians, the Piast Dynasties,
Austrian Habsburgs, Prussians and, from World War I and II onwards, the Polish,
even though smaller areas remained in Germany and the Czech Republic.[7] In
Upper Silesia, after an era of expulsion and repression, almost 850,000 people
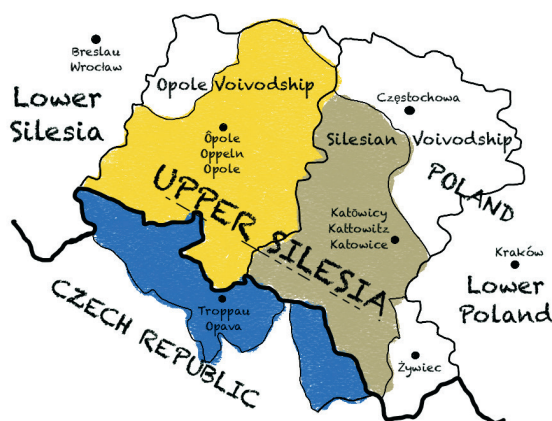
Figure 2 Map showing the division of historical Upper Silesia (coloured). The region is divided between the Czech Republic and Poland, and into Voivodship of Opole/Oppeln and Silesia. Today, only a small part of the historical region (surrounding Katowice/Kattowitz) is officially recognised under the name 'Silesia'. Map created by the authors

in Poland and approximately 31,000 in the Czech Republic nowadays claim to be of Silesian nationality;[8] almost 530,000 people use the Silesian language.[9]

And yet, the Polish government does not recognise Silesian nationality or the Silesian language, and dismisses legal projects for recognition, for which it has been criticised by the Council of Europe.[10] Poland's farcical arguments include, as of March 2021, that Silesian might cause Polish people, a group of around 40 million speakers, to stop speaking Polish.[11] Linguistic arguments that prove Silesian's status as a language are already used by scholars[12] and the US Library of Congress, where it was first listed as a language with code authority ISO 639–3, provided the SIL International identifier 'szl'.[13] In January 2022, MEP Łukasz Kohut prepared an EU-Resolution on the Recognition of Silesian as a language[14] and convened the 'Silesia in Europe' conference in the EU-Parliament, having previously used Silesian in a speech there in December 2020.

Figure 3 A banner indicating the presence of 'The First Silesian Embassy' – the office of MEP Łukasz Kohut, based in Nikischschacht/Nikiszowiec, in an historical part of Katowice, with traditional coalmine architecture, where Silesian culture is flourishing. Photo taken by the authors

2.3 (Old and New) Media; Commodification; Diaspora

Having contextualised the predominant sites of focus for this paper, we now provide some theoretical scaffolding in relation to the core terminology which we adopt.

The first theme on which we focus is old and new media. Scholars distinguish between 'old' media such as television, radio, and print media, and 'new' media, which rely on computer technology for (re)distribution.[15] Examples of the latter include websites, virtual reality, social media[16] and other video networking mediums.[17]

The second core theme taken-up is commodification. Commodification is omnipresent in our everyday society and essentially encapsulates how sociocultural phenomena are increasingly marketized. Scholarship on the topic, crossing several disciplinary bases, often adopts Appadurai's notion of 'diversion'[18] to explain how culture may be exported and reshaped into a product,[19] and thereafter placed on an economic market for consumption. This lies in contrast to Appadurai's notion of 'enclaving', whereby a cultural phenomenon or product was, historically, used for identity-building.[20] In small cultures and languages scholarship, Pietikäinen and others note that commodification is not a new phenomenon in minority contexts, but its ubiquity and contextual uses are novel.[21] Commodification is not without its tensions, however; Fithrattulah, for example, notes how commodification can present advantages and disadvantages for minority identities;[22] cultural commodification can sanitise, and eclipse the communicative value of heritage, but may equally support a culture, 'saving [it] from extinction'.[23] Within Sociolinguistics, Duchêne and Heller encapsulate this shift from culture-as-enclaved to culture-as-diverted[24] in the shift from Pride (identity-building) models of cultural heritage to those of Profit or so-called Pride versus Profit.[25] In more recent work, Pietikäinen and others attest not an entire shift, but rather a dialogic interaction of Pride and Profit, which may 'coexist sometimes in tension and sometimes seamlessly with one another'.[26] An awareness of the foregoing is pertinent, as it enables us to be aware of and explore both the challenges and opportunities for minority languages and cultures posed by commodification.

Moving to the final term: diaspora. The term 'diaspora' is equally debated in scholarly literature. Grossman argues that this indecision stems from researcher positionality, and how the researcher may conceptualise diaspora.[27] Without using 'diaspora' uncritically, we adopt Grossman's definition that it '[...] is a community whose members (or their ancestors) emigrated or were dispersed from their original homeland but remain oriented to it and preserve a group identity'.[28]

3. Old and New Media: Cornish and Silesian

We now offer a necessarily brief overview of the 'old' and 'new' media provided in, or around, the Cornish and Silesian languages.

3.1 A Cornish 'Lens' on Media

For Cornish, development of the Standard Written Form (SWF) in 2008 comprised an attempt to standardise the language, providing 'bodies and the educational system with a universally acceptable, inclusive and neutral orthography.'[29] SWF has facilitated publication in the medium of Cornish – to include translations of classic stories: recent years have seen the publication of original children's literature such as the Tales from Porth series written by Will Coleman, and illustrated by Brian Hoskin and Emma McCann (Golden Tree Productions),[30] which offers an engaging take on the scenery and people of Cornwall. New editions of core learner literature have also emerged, such as Bora Brav by Polin Prys.[31] Indeed, new market conditions – leading to the possibility of new e-book mediums – have enabled resource accessibility from beyond Cornwall, with research in one transglobal Cornish community indicating engagement with such new formats.[32]

There emerges one core challenge for Cornish in the media, however: how can we sustainably grow new resources? Its solution is multi-faceted, and, although there has been considerable uptake in Cornish learning (especially during the pandemic),[33] the production of resources (and indeed, the teaching of the language), requires an advanced linguistic and pedagogical knowledge, thus requiring this specific combination of skills.[34] Another sticking point is the lack of funding provided to Cornish.[35] The one exception to this, perhaps, is the European-Union Cross-language learning application, IndyLan, which recently gained funding to develop a mobile application through which to learn Cornish, in addition to Gaelic, Scots, Basque, Galician, and Saami.[36]
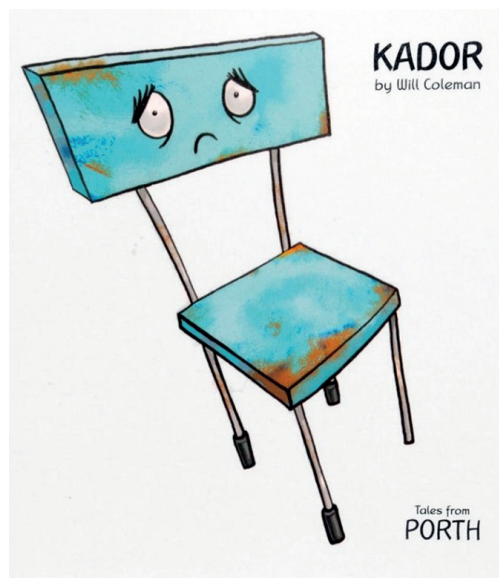

Figure 4 Kador the Chair: A publication from the 'Tales from Porth' Series, written in the Cornish language and aimed at children. Photo Credits: 'Tales from Porth', Author Will Coleman, Golden Tree Productions. Illustrated by Brian Hoskin and Emma McCann. Reproduced with kind permission from Golden Tree Productions

Figure 5 Some original publications in Silesian and translations of world classical literature can be found in regional 'geszefts' (stores) as illustrated above. Pictured here, the 'Ajncla' store in Nikischschacht/Nikiszowiec. Photo taken by the authors

3.2 Old and New Silesian Media

Following Poland's entry to the EU in 2004, initiatives surfaced aimed at protecting and standardising Silesian. Two organisations were established thereafter: 'Danga' (Rainbow) and 'Pro Loquela Silesiana' (For the Sake of Silesian), the latter of which helped to standardise the now commonly used Silesian alphabet, 'ślabikŏrz', thanks to its first publications.[37]

In this way, both Cornish and Silesian are similar in that they both possess a standard form. Upper Silesia is home to a few publishing houses which publish in Polish, German and Silesian: namely, Oberschlesisches Eichendorff-Kultur- und Begegnungszentrum (established in 2000), Ślōnskŏ Nacyjnŏ Ôficynã (2003), Instýtut Ślůnskij Godki (2011) and Silesia Progress (2012). The latter became the most popular because its founder, Pejter Długosz, has been involved in a group project alongside Grzegorz Kulik (Silesian translator and creator of Silling.org – corpus of Silesian language) and Rafał Szyma (Silesian writer, translator and blogger). Together, they have established the most popular webpage about

Silesian culture: Wachtyrz.eu (Guardian), which, in the four years since its launch, has received over 3,000,000 visits.[38] Other websites providing information about Upper Silesia through the medium of Polish and Silesian are *Tuudi.net* and *Gryfnie.com*, as well as several channels on YouTube on themes such as gaming, tourism, and culture, among others.

Unlike the case of Cornish, grammars, textbooks, and other course materials for learning Silesian have not yet been developed, but the Silesian Language Agency *ponaszymu.pl*, in addition to its translation service, is now offering the first professional online Silesian Language Course. These initiatives are grassroots in nature, and have gained in popularity, particularly after two Silesian writers, Szczepan Twardoch[39] and Zbigniew Rokita,[40] won literary prizes. Moreover, a welcome addition in the domain of new media is the Silesian language version of well-known applications, internet-browsers, and social media-websites, in addition to a Silesian Wikipedia.

Figure 6 The most known cultural website about Silesia, Wachtyrz.eu (Guardian), alongside the logos of its sister projects which include Youtube-channel 'Chwila z gŏdkōm' by Grzegorz Kulik, blog 'OSCHL' by Rafał Szyma and the publishing house 'Silesia Progress' by Pejter Długosz. Wachtyrz.eu – with thanks to the editors of Wachtyrz for allowing us to reproduce their image here

4. Commodifying Cornish and Silesian: Similarities, or Differences?

The following section compares the commodifying dynamics at play within the Cornish and Silesian cultures. It shows how advanced commodification is in some cases and reveals both opportunities and difficulties in relation to centre-periphery dynamics, political obstacles, and state support. Then, we integrate a discussion in relation to commodification in two overseas sites – the Cornish in Mexico and Silesians in Texas, respectively. Coincidentally, emigration from both Cornwall and Silesia to the aforementioned sites emerges from 19th century migratory waves. For now, we turn to explore the commodifying dynamics at play in Cornwall and Silesia.

4.1 'Commodifying Cornish': Under-Explored, Crucial Perspectives

Despite a paucity of literature on the topic, commodification is perhaps one of the foremost issues faced by Cornwall. As refracted in other peripheral sites, Cornish tourism, too, has capitalized on selling Cornwall on the basis of its peripherality – in this case, its location on the Westernmost British 'fringes'.

For Cornwall, Leitch,[41] notes that such discourses of peripherality focus almost exclusively on remote rural land- or seascapes. Leitch summarises this Cornish paradox: owing to the decline of its traditional mining and agriculture sectors, Cornwall now rests upon the success of its tourism industry.[42] This very fact, however, threatens to undermine heritage in what Duchêne and Heller term 'profit'.[43] Such 'diversion' of Cornishness, following Appadurai,[44] may become problematic when discourses misappropriate Cornish history, either conflating it with national (broader, 'English') heritage,[45] or sanitising Cornwall as a 'place to be consumed, to occupy, and to entertain'.[46]

And yet, other sites demonstrate that if recontextualized sensitively, the commercialisation of a minority culture need not necessarily provoke tensions. Echoing this is Jaffe's exploration into the experience of Corsican heritage by locals in Corsica, noting that despite the playful framings of Corsican culture, initiatives such as Virtual Reality trails, in addition to a tightly organised and stylised visual landscape of colours, sounds and Corsican language, appeared to blur the boundaries between the public and the private.[47] Jaffe thus showed how these initiatives offered opportunities for bidirectional encounters between tourists and locals,[48] where Corsicanness was not sanitised.[49] In this case, such spaces put locals and tourists together at the heart of the cultural revival, making for fruitful cultural exchanges.

Figure 7 A proud display of Upper Silesian flags at the entrance of the store with the Silesian branding 'Ajncla': a positive marker of public space at Nikischschacht/Nikiszowiec, Katowice. Photo taken by the authors

Figure 8 Slogans in the Silesian language at the Silesian Business Park in Katowice: a way of helping the minority language enter the business sphere. Photo taken by the authors

It is interesting to consider in the Cornish context whether the creation of similar initiatives could bring together tourists and locals in better harmony. Indeed, the visibility of the Cornish language itself has been increasing in the commercial sphere over recent years. Therefore, alongside this, it could be fruitful to draw on the phenomenon of co-creation, as increasingly drawn on in language revitalisation programmes.[50] Co-creation, as conceived within the latter, is concerned with an agentive approach to linguistic heritage, which provides communities the opportunity to collaborate with stakeholders, and have a voice in co-developing resources, initiatives and policies aimed at language revival for the collective good; this dynamic lies in contrast to what is termed as a 'unilateral transfer'[51] of information, be that on the part of governmental organisations, boards, or other such top-down bodies. It serves to further explore how we might bring this idea into a tourism context for Cornwall. Co-created initiatives might make for more beneficial encounters, where different local communities are valued, pride is balanced alongside profit, and where local, representative heritages are preserved.

4.2 The (Market) Visibility of Silesian

The increased support for Silesian language and culture, further facilitated by the standardisation of the language, has also been bolstered by political activists, who established the 'Gŏdōmy po ślōnsku' (We speak Silesian) campaign in public offices to support the spoken language at a local government level. This campaign led to the establishment and visibility of signs in the Silesian language in offices and public places – a phenomenon which, unlike in Cornwall, remains relatively uncommon in Upper Silesia.

International brands have initiated advertising campaigns in Silesian, which are visible in the public arena. The so-called *geszefts* (stores) Gryfnie, Ajncla, Kaj ôn show and Silesia Progress, became popular by making and selling cultural products featuring the Silesian language, thus proudly demonstrating Silesian identity. To date, the commodification of Silesian is salient for the most part within gentrified areas of (post)industrial Eastern Upper Silesia, primarily because of the political division of the region into two separate provinces – Opole/Oppeln (the historical capital of Upper Silesia) and Silesia (52% of it is Lower Poland).[52]

More initiatives are welcomed which would support commodification in Western parts of Upper Silesia,[53] a mostly rural area inhabited by the also-Silesian-speaking German minority. Indeed, such a commentary points to the varying capital each culture is accruing in our respective sites; whereas Silesian appears to be clambering for recognition in heritage and business (a desire

to move towards 'Profit'), it is perhaps the case in Cornwall that 'Profit' models must somehow be balanced sustainably with those of 'Pride',[54] if we are to integrate authentic lived Cornish stories into the frame.

4.3 Shifting Focus: Cornwall to Mexico

Of course, to study linguistic and cultural sustainability is to not limit our lens to our territories of origin. We shift focus to one under-studied, yet crucial part of the Cornish revival: the Cornish-Mexican diaspora. The Cornish migrated to Hidalgo, Mexico – a silver mining region eighty kilometres northwest of Mexico City – c.1815–1920,[55] drawn for their mining expertise. The Cornish-Mexican community was not the most sizable in terms of Cornish emigration worldwide,[56] but nonetheless left a present-day imprint on Hidalgo's landscape.

Figure 9 Mina de Acosta (Acosta Mine) in the small town of Real del Monte, Hidalgo: A mining imprint left by the Cornish.[57] Diego Delso, delso.photo, Creative Commons, License by CC-BY-SA

Like Silesia and Cornwall, Hidalgo has shifted away from a once-flourishing mining industry, this decline occurring into the 1940s.[58] Recently, such (in some cases, preserved)[59] mining sites have been recontextualized for tourism purposes, falling into a broader remit of heritage tourism, which, as Altaba and García-Esparza note, 'seeks to surprise visitors with popular culture, traditional activities, or actions that bring traditional culture closer to tourists'.[60] Examples of this phenomenon are salient in several sites across Hidalgo. The *Mina de Acosta* (Acosta Mine) in the hilltop town of Mineral del Monte is now a working museum, enabling visitors to venture into former mines, and forms a trail of mining tourism sites across the area. As part of the latter, we find the former Pachuca Train Station (dating from Cornish migration), which is now the *Archivo Histórico y Museo de Minería* (Historical Archive and Mining Museum) for the local area.

Such examples point to a Cornish-Mexican commodification, of which social responses were not a core focus of recent research,[61] but comments observed signpost avenues around the perceived cultural sustainability of Cornish heritage. Some highlighted that visitors (with familial links to Cornishness, but also without), come to learn about Cornish-Mexicanness.[62] A case in point is the Museo del Paste (Paste Museum, Paste being a Mexican twist on the Cornish Pasty),

Figure 10 Shared spaces to learn about Cornish-Mexican cultural heritage in Hidalgo: a sign denoting the entrance to the Museo del Paste.[63] TheTurducken, Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic License

which teaches visitors how to make Pastes together. These discussions raise questions: are we witnessing a more sustainable Heritage Tourism in Hidalgo (akin to the dynamics of Jaffe on Corsican),[64] and if so, how? Such discourses necessitate attention in relation to framings for Pride and Profit,[65] perhaps additionally serving as a comparison with Cornwall, which would help to further elucidate the finely balanced nature of Pride versus Profit.[66]

4.4 The Silesian Cowboys in Texas

Prompted by poverty and overpopulation in rural Central-Upper Silesia, and following the consequent invitation of priest Leopold Moczygemba, there was a significant migratory wave from Silesia to Texas, USA, in the second half of the 19th century.[67]

From the beginning, Polish monks of the Resurrectionist Congregation, following the values of religion as much as of polonization, guided the parishes and schools with the help of Polish Felician Sisters. Consequently, Silesian Texans believe they are 'Polish', despite not totally understanding the Polish language and calling it 'Warsawian'.[68] Kubik revealed in 2019 the polonization of historical narratives, demonstrating the impact on American historians of Polish sources from the Polish-nationalistic communism era.[69] In 2021, this culminated in the

Figure 11 The tourist store in Panna Maria, Texas, refracts salient aspects of polonization by avoiding the term 'Silesia' and calling Silesian Texans 'Polish Texans' or 'Texas Polonia'. Furthermore, the usage of Polish language and national colours (white and red), instead of Silesian and yellow and blue (as colours of Silesia), strongly point to the symbolic importance of Polish in the diaspora. Photo taken by the authors.

opening of the Polish Heritage Center at Panna Maria, (the latter being the first Silesian settlement in Texas), a centre which focuses on the history of Poland and Polish in the USA, rather than on the full complexity of the Bohemian-German-Polish identities of Upper Silesia and Silesian settlers. As Silesian is not recognised in Poland as a regional language, there are no strategies on the Polish nor US-American side to preserve the slowly dying Texas Silesian language, which is currently only spoken by between 100 and 500 people.[70] Nonetheless, the first novel about Silesian-Texans by Michael Sowa,[71] a Silesian-German living in Berlin, reintroduces the historical complexity of Silesian identity in an accessible way.

5. Conclusion

Opportunities and challenges for sociocultural sustainability emerge for our respective cultures, owing to globalised flows, or 'borderless societies'.[72] This refracts a broader phenomenon, reaching across and beyond Europe. Societies without borders create new economic opportunities, but tensions around rights, agency, ownership and, importantly for this paper, sociocultural sustainability. How do we 'open out' a culture to make it better known, whilst at the same time ensuring the preservation of 'authentic' heritage? Can we indeed ensure the sociocultural sustainability of heritage at all without making it better known – the latter, perhaps forcing us to commodify it? This evokes an apt statement from Pietikäinen and others: precisely that 'small languages exist in cluttered fields of competing ideologies'.[73]

Under such conditions, however, there emerge creative avenues for minority cultures to ensure sustainability, without falling into the trap of neglecting lived experiences. By the same token, our 'borderless society'[74] enables such finely grained, comparative analysis across cultures, providing the key for policymakers and communities to innovate with initiatives authentic to local people. We hope our paper – which in its own way reaches across and beyond Europe – is the start of this fruitful dialogue.

Untitled from the Series NaNO3 (2011)

Sebastian Bustamante-Brauning and Luis Bustamante

The sodium nitrate (NaNO3) mining industry thrived in the north of Chile from mid-19th century to early 20th century. It was mostly driven by foreign demand and provided a sizable source of revenue for the country. It also created massive wealth in Europe, with two large markets – agriculture for which it provided a cheap fertiliser and the weapons industry which used it for gunpowder.

The ownership of strategic materials by countries in the periphery of power brought about armed conflict. Like other commodities at the peak of demand, nitrate was once called 'white gold' and fuelled a war between Bolivia, Chile and Perú lasting from 1879 to 1883. After the war Chile took possession of the whole territory, but the control of the nitrate industry ended up in foreign hands.

The local miners' life became a paradigm of human suffering punctuated by bloody massacres. In one of these, at the school of Santa María in Iquique in 1907, over 2,000 men, women and children were machine-gunned by troops.

The industry began to decline with the invention of synthetic nitrate in Germany at the beginning of WW1 in response to Britain's virtual monopoly of the mineral. Large scale nitrate mining in Chile had all but vanished by the time of the Great Depression.

The industry's brief existence offers a telling snapshot of a ruthless economic model that brings disproportionate progress to some places but leaves a blighted legacy elsewhere.

Our planet is beset under the strain of this model – perhaps there is no such thing as the balancing power of nature, only constant, irreversible, change.

Text by Luis Bustamante

Witnessing Change: The Ambivalent Endurance of Martyrdom

Iona Ramsay, Maria Rupprecht and Alice van den Bosch

Martyrdom has an ancient history but remains as relevant and contentious as ever. In this article, we apply a cross-disciplinary approach to explore how Christian martyrologies are produced and sustained through linguistic and cultural processes. We take as our focus the practice of martyr-making – not the violence, suffering and faith which become the subjects of martyrologies, but rather the social processes which frame such experiences through the recognisable language of martyrdom. Such practices of martyr-making, we argue, should be taken more seriously as processes that shape how past, present and future are interwoven, and which continue to be powerful ways to re-imagine society.

Our argument is structured into three parts. First, we trace the linguistic evolution of the English word 'martyr' and the rich heritage of meanings available in the concept; we show that modern understandings of the term are rooted in earlier, transcultural notions of 'witnessing', and that any study of martyrdom needs to pay attention to the multiplicity and histories of meaning embedded in the concept. The discussion then builds on these insights by shifting to a more cultural register of analysis, focussing on two very different examples of Christian martyrdom, ancient and modern, to examine: first, how martyrs are seen as figures who enact social and political change; and in the final section, how the culture of remembrance around martyrs generates, sustains and transforms communities. This comparison highlights the need to understand martyrdom, in all its diverse manifestations, in fundamentally social and political terms.

Meanings of Martyrdom

There is remarkable etymological continuity in the idea of the martyr, particularly across different Indo-European cultures and languages. The Present Day English word 'martyr' traces back to Indo-European roots, finding instances in Sanskrit *smṛi-* and the Ancient Greek *μάρτυρ (martyr)* 'witness'. Compared to today, there is a much broader semantic differentiation in the Ancient Greek form *μάρτυρ (martyr)*. Before the Christian use as a 'witness of faith', we find a range of meanings related to legal testimony (e.g. in court).[1] This legal meaning remained in pagan Roman writing until Jerome introduced the Christian sense

subsequently transferred into vernaculars across Europe and Asia until eventually reaching Old English, one of the Germanic languages.

It is in the New Testament usage that the *martyr* extends beyond the purely legal field to the religious sphere. In the context of Christianisation, the legal sense and the wider range of meanings were largely lost and it was predominantly the Pauline usage (e.g. Romans 1:9) that was transferred. This Christian sense was transferred by Latin Theological writings and Bible interlinear translations from Latin into Old English. The first attestation of Old English *martyr*, according to the OED, appeared in Bede's Ecclesiastical History in 1025.[2]

Adopting the Greek loan *martyr* into the lexicon, the new conceptualisation of *martyr* ignited extraordinary linguistic productivity and innovation. Through orthographic integration, derivation and integration into the inflectional system, *martyr* soon played a significant role in the Germanic language, creating an entire semantic field, including words such as the familiar compound *martyr-dom* but also now extinct items like *martyr-cynn* 'a race of martyrs' and the verb *gemartyrian* 'to martyr'. The concept was further cemented into Old English through loan translations that were added to different native words including OE *þrowere* 'sufferer', a more interpretative term, and *cȳþere* 'witness', an etymology-based term that is much closer to the original Greek meaning, both of which were similarly productive.[3]

Why was it that the Greek loanword *martyr* survived whereas all these native Old English forms eventually became extinct? Timofeeva observes that in terms of frequency and 'semantic precision',[4] the term *martyr* was preferable in combining both meanings of 'suffering' and 'witnessing'. Additionally, sociolinguistic and political factors also contributed to the survival of the term *martyr*, including the prestige of the language, and the Church's increasing global influence. This rich linguistic heritage should not be seen simply as a tokenistic historical footnote, as so many studies of martyrdom begin, but rather as part of how the sign of the *martyr* remains present today, and as a concept whose meaning continues to evolve while drawing on its latent meanings.

Witnesses of Change

These dynamic linguistic transformations can be further explored by turning to concrete examples. In the remaining discussion, we centre our analysis on two seemingly very different examples of Christian martyrdom, one from antiquity, one from the present day. This juxtaposition allows us to examine martyrdom both as a well-established tradition and one that continues to be reinvented. Our first example is Thecla, the young, female protagonist of the second century 'Acts of Paul and Thecla', an influential text in Christian hagiography. One of the most

popular martyr-saints of Late Antiquity, she became a model for later martyrologies. Our second example is the current-day phenomenon in which victims of communist regimes in former socialist states such as Russia, Romania, Estonia and Bulgaria,[5] are being turned into martyrs, either officially or unofficially. These loosely termed 'New Martyrs',[6] which have developed very differently in different national and denominational contexts but nevertheless share many similar features, are seen by their supporters as having relived the suffering of the so-called 'Great Persecution' of the early Church. Rather than drawing an anachronistic comparison, we use these two examples to explore the fluid temporalities and creative, ambivalent culture of Christian martyrdom.

Studies of martyrdom typically centre around death, with martyrologies without death seen as anomalous rather than representing an inherent ambiguity in martyrdom. The focus is frequently on how martyrdom refuses 'the *meaninglessness* of death itself, of insisting that suffering and death do not signify emptiness and nothingness'.[7] However, although martyrologies are entangled within Christian theology's transcendence of death, studies of martyrdom need to re-centre death within a broader understanding of witnessing and suffering. The lines between confessors and martyrs are frequently blurred: in recent years, for example, the language of martyrdom has been used to invoke not only individuals who died in prisons or labour camps, such as the Romanian and Ukrainian Greek Catholic bishops beatified by the Roman Catholic Church, or the official New Martyrs in Russia,[8] but also those who suffered but survived their imprisonment. Martyr language has been used even more loosely by Christian advocacy groups (e.g. Voice of the Martyrs) to describe the experience of all Christians living under communism. These broader uses of martyr language frequently emerge from non-official, grassroots Christian groups.

Similar ambiguities were also present in earlier constructions of martyrdom. Thecla survives both her executions unscathed. In contrast to the vivid scenes of near-death in the arena, her eventual death is captured in a single line: '[she] went to Seleucia and enlightened many by the word of God; then she rested in a glorious sleep'.[9] In a later fifth-century hagiography, she simply vanishes into a rock leaving behind a single scrap of clothing. Nevertheless, she is unanimously described as a martyr, and often a 'protomartyr' like the figure of Stephen from the 'Acts of the Apostles'.[10] The 'Acts of Paul and Thecla' was more interested in Thecla's baptism, miracles and preaching, presenting her act of martyrdom through a speech in which she testifies her faith before the governor following her miraculous escape from the beasts.

Martyrdom might therefore be more usefully approached as a multi-layered concept, revealing a wider experience of suffering as witness that reveals

how fragility and finitude can, paradoxically, express notions of transcendence and eternity. As witnesses, martyrs draw attention away from themselves and towards their cause. Studies of martyrdom should therefore not merely look at martyrs as heroes embodying particular virtues, but should also look *with* martyrs, from their 'borderline'[11] position, at the world around them. Thinking 'with' martyrs, in this sense, involves not merely a process of life-writing, but a broader vision of justice which appeals for social and political change. In both the cases of Thecla and the New Martyrs – and as with all martyrologies – martyrdom emerges within and seeks to transform a situation of injustice.

Paul Middleton[12] has already influentially demonstrated the need to understand martyrdom as socially constructed, yet less attention has been paid to how martyrologies challenge social norms. Martyrs are disruptive figures, characterised by the clash between the martyr's values and those of the dominant social order responsible for the martyr's suffering. For female martyrs, the counter-hegemonic nature of martyrdom frequently involves subverting gender norms. Thecla is introduced to readers as a young woman betrothed to one of the leading men of the city, with the conventional expectations of marriage and children. This is suddenly overturned when she hears Paul preach about virginity and decides to embrace a life of chastity. Her community responds angrily, masking an existential fear about the effects on society if other women reject marriage. Thecla's own mother is one of the most vocal critics, calling for her daughter to be burned so that 'all the women who have been taught by this man [Paul] may be afraid'.[13] Thecla later dresses up as a man, representing the traditional 'masculine' authority she has achieved though also highlighting her physical vulnerability. These stories arose during the nascent years of Christianity, when its promotion of virginity over marriage served to encourage a faith that was dangerous to the socio-political order.

A counter-hegemonic framing likewise undergirds accounts of the New Martyrs, whose claim to martyrdom rests on their being figures of opposition to an atheist, materialist political ideology (even when this meant adherence to far-right ideology).[14] Spiritual life, for them, represents a necessarily and systematically anti-communist way of being. Furthermore, new counter-hegemonic narratives have recently begun developing around some New Martyrs. Groups such as the Arsenie Boca Foundation in Romania, who have used the memory of former political prisoners to articulate anti-liberal narratives of spiritual resistance to secular, liberal modernity, see themselves as heirs to the earlier New Martyrs' struggle against 'political Marxism' in the new struggle against 'cultural Marxism'.[15] Such narratives demonstrate how fluidly new narratives of resistance can evolve around martyrologies.

However, such stories of heroic resistance against tyranny are frequently told to support the powerful. While the earliest accounts of Thecla's martyrdom emerged when Christianity was still politically marginal, later martyrologies continued to celebrate the more subversive elements, long after the Roman emperors had adopted Christianity. Martyr stories thus remain available as sources of legitimation for new forms of social and political hegemony. They can also serve to distract from difficult questions of political accountability, as in the case of the New Martyrs, where the veneration of former political prisoners as martyrs has shifted attention onto victims and away from perpetrators, and helped to centralise control over collective memory.[16] At the same time, veneration of the same New Martyrs has played a role in encouraging condemnation of Soviet terror.[17] These kinds of martyrologies therefore remain ambivalent, available to both movements of subversion and legitimation of power on the basis of real and imagined histories of persecution.

Radical Re-Membering

If martyrs are understood as figures that witness to necessary or desirable change – whether of a political regime, social structures and customs, or justice making – the cults that develop around martyrs should likewise be recognised as dynamic, imaginative and controversial forces in this process. For believers involved in (re)producing martyrologies, rituals of remembering martyrs help re-constitute the relationship between past, present and future, and offer new ways of engaging with the world as an individual and as communities.

The process of re-telling and re-writing is central to martyrology. While Thecla's story was subversive in terms of its message and protagonist's behaviour, it also demonstrated how Christians drew upon literary models and influences from wider Greco-Roman culture. Scholars have long noted the similarities between Thecla's story and that of its popular contemporary genre of the Greek novels, which frequently involve a pair of highborn lovers who are separated and face many trials before being reunited.[18] The way Thecla is depicted as hanging onto Paul's words subverts this conventional love story, replacing it with the image of Christ as Thecla's 'lover'. In this way Christian writers continued the Hellenistic tradition of adapting and innovating earlier literature.

While literature and intertextuality are central in the production of martyrologies, the enacted practices around martyrs, including both official and non-official commemorative performances, also represent powerful sites of engagement. One of the most well-studied forms of collective religious remembrance is pilgrimage. Throughout Late Antiquity and beyond, cults to Thecla flourished in different parts of the Mediterranean world and were visited by pilgrims from

far and wide. Their journeys are attested in personal accounts, as well as souvenir flasks decorated with the martyr's image. Similarly, victims of communism commemorated as New Martyrs have also produced a wide variety of pilgrimage sites, including former political prisons, monasteries, and burial sites. Examples of these types of popular pilgrimage locations range from Aiud (Romania), which now houses a mausoleum in the cemetery near a former political prison, to Ganina Yama (Russia), the execution site of the Romanov family. These sites frequently involve multiple, interwoven practices of commemoration, including prayer before icons and relics, typically body parts or clothing of the martyrs, and dedicated services. These kinds of pilgrimage practices, as anthropological studies have shown,[19] involve complex relationships between personal piety and national history.

Commemoration of martyrs also involves an interplay between past and future. While commemorative rituals make the martyr's past present, they also look to the visions of the future imagined by those martyrs. As a constant interplay between history and eschatology, martyrdom is a historical moment of liminality in which martyrs occupy a position both of and beyond their own time. As both Thecla and the New Martyrs show, the overlaying of martyrologies and dynamic practices of commemoration create a tangled version of the past, and complicate linear narratives of history. The stories of the New Martyrs, for instance, are given meaning by interpreting their lives in parallel with those of the Early Church. Direct comparisons have been made between New Martyrs and earlier figures such as Blandina, or the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste. The shifting narratives and numerous versions reveal the martyr's testimony to be fragile and transient, in need of rituals of renewal in order to remain remembered and alive, not as a flattened atemporal story, but precisely in all its entangled temporality. More than other secular commemorative practices such as statues or national remembrance ceremonies, martyrologies radically affirm the centrality of the future as the key to understanding the past. As a site on which old and new are brought together and reconceived, martyrology enhances the community's experience of temporality. Martyrology therefore involves creative practices of re-envisioning time and shows the act of remembering as an act of faith.

This complex temporal entanglement, both between different generations of martyrs, and between martyrs and their believers, suggests a need to rethink the role of imitation in martyrology's calls for individual and social change. While imitation is a central part of martyrdom – going back to Christ's death – martyrs have never been straightforward models to emulate. Identification with and imitation of martyrs and their virtues of self-control, courage and faith have long been an important part of piety, both collectively and personally. In a fourth

century biography, the ascetic Macrina the Younger uses the name 'Thecla' in secret and models herself on the life of the famous virgin.[20] Similarly, the New Martyrs are today frequently presented as examples of faith for Christians in a modern secularised world. However, 'improper' imitation is also criticised. For example, in third-century Carthage, Tertullian criticised a group of women for apparently taking Thecla as a model for their being allowed to baptise and preach, which directly contradicted dominant conservative views on women teaching.[21] The accusation of imitating martyrs too literally or simplistically has also long been a way to de-legitimise opponents, although intentional imitation of suffering in the form of suicide or masochism – formally rejected theologically – is in reality much more blurred throughout the history of martyrdom. The call to imitation represents a complex one for individual and collective change, a radical demand for re-ordering social and political structures that is neither quite political ideology nor social campaign, but rather a call for the practice of witnessing and remembering. This demonstrates the need to consider martyrdom as a more complex set of dynamic and creative practices of collective witnessing that re-imagine and renew identity and their relationships to time.

Paradoxes of Martyrdom

Through ancient and modern stories of martyrdom, we have sought to reconsider martyrology in terms of a tradition of witnessing that re-centres notions of justice and creative practices of remembrance. At the centre lies the paradoxical nature of martyrdom, with its inversion of not only suffering and death, but also finitude and transcendence, rupture and continuity, past and present, social disruption and establishment, imitation and imagination. These exist alongside each other through the liminal figure of the martyr, and in the ongoing creative practices that coalesce around such figures. At the same time, there is an ambivalence to such processes in the role they have played in legitimising power and reinforcing exclusive collective identities, as well as other important questions we have not addressed here such as agency. Yet it is precisely because of its fluid nature that martyrdom remains such a powerful force of social and political change. It is within the paradoxes and often uncomfortable ambivalences of martyrdom that we confront difficult questions of history, identity, belief and justice. The enduring fascination of martyrologies, and the ways in which they are re-told, re-invented, and re-lived, tell an important story about the role of human finitude in sustaining temporal and transcendent meaning, and renewing and reimagining hope for the future.

'What Else Do You Expect in a City With No Trees?': Climate Justice, Crisis and Resistance in *Ar Condicionado* (2020)

Catriona Parry

The opening credits of *Ar Condicionado* (2020), directed by Angolan film-maker Fradique (Mário Bastos), are set to a black and white photo-series by the artist Cafuxi. His striking images depict scenes of daily life in Luanda, situating the film firmly in the heart of the densely populated Atlantic capital, home to a third of Angola's population. Before the film's action begins, definitions of the words 'ar', 'condicionar' and 'ar-condicionado' appear on screen. The latter – 'a machine that regulates the heating or cooling of a room, building, or vehicle' – is *Ar Condicionado*'s central motif, and lays the foundations for the film's plot.

The film opens in a *candongueiro* – the cramped blue and white minibuses which make up Luanda's informal public transport network – where we learn that air conditioning units across Angola have mysteriously begun to fall from buildings. The film's action subsequently follows Matacedo (José Kiteculo), a war veteran working as a security guard in a downtown apartment block, and his friend Zezinha (Filomena Manuel), a housekeeper in the building. The pair are tasked with repairing the broken air conditioning unit belonging to Zezinha's boss, Dr Nok. Their meandering journey through the city appears at times less concerned with the disturbing phenomenon of the falling air conditioners, and more an elegy to the chaotic and resourceful minutiae of everyday urban life in Luanda. As Fradique himself notes, his film is first and foremost 'a reminder that our city is made up of people, memories and not empty, glazed skyscrapers'.[1]

The dictionary definitions also establish another of the film's concerns; the global climate crisis, its causes and its uneven effects. The verb 'condicionar' is given three meanings: to determine the outcome of something; to place conditions to; to control. The film's title, *Ar Condicionado* – which, unlike the cooling apparatus it references, remains unhyphenated – takes on a dual meaning. Air – the 'fluid that surrounds the earth', 'the fluid we breathe', as well as one's 'manner' of being – is subjected to processes of 'conditioning'. Through the metaphor of the air conditioner, Fradique's work explores the various conditions and controls placed upon everyday people in Luanda, their ways of being, and the environments in which they live.

Luanda can be described as an 'extreme city', the term Ashley Dawson uses to describe 'an urban space of stark economic inequality' where the interconnected challenges of late capitalism, rapid urbanization and climate change converge most obviously and intensely.[2] At the end of the 1980s, Angola's ruling political party, the MPLA, officially transitioned from a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist independence movement to the formal adoption of Western neoliberal capitalism. Exploiting Angola's rich natural oil reserves, the party transformed the nation into one of the twenty-first century's fastest growing economies,[3] consolidating its position within a global economic system fundamentally 'at war' with the planet.[4] While Angola's elites amassed extreme private wealth and enjoyed increased global status, this growth did not translate into improved living standards for much of the population. After two decades of peace, Angola remains one of the world's most unequal countries.[5]

Having failed to diversify its economy, the global oil crash in 2014 triggered a financial crisis in Angola, disproportionately affecting poorer members of the nation and deepening inequality. Although the recession is predicted to end in 2022, the majority of Angolans not only face ongoing financial uncertainty, but also the growing risks of climate change.[6] The nation is already experiencing the effects of the climate crisis, including rising temperatures, droughts and increased flooding in Luanda.[7] While Angola's government ratified the Paris Climate Agreement in 2020, any meaningful institutional responses to climate change or moves towards a more sustainable economy remain to be seen.[8]

As Jason Moore notes, 'capitalism's governing conceit is that it may do with Nature as it pleases, that Nature is external and may be coded'.[9] Air conditioners are tangible symbols of this flawed principle; they are markers of wealth, status and class, as well as global heating, urban development and the capitalist 'organization' of nature for personal and commercial gain. In Luanda, cold air is a sensory indicator of the city's visible and extreme inequality, both in socio-economic and ecological terms. In this context, Fradique's film exposes the crucial link between climate change and capitalism, using falling air conditioning units to demonstrate the uneven effects of and responsibility for climate change under the conditions imposed by Angola's dominant socio-economic value system.

Ultimately, the reason that air conditioners are falling is never confirmed. However, the phenomenon is repeatedly connected to the impact of human beings on the planet. Intermittent radio broadcasts associate the event with an ongoing heatwave, which has led to a rise in heat-related deaths. Other characters develop their own theories: Kota Mino[10] (David Caracol), the eccentric repair shop owner, believes air conditioners have become overloaded with memories, which circulate in the city like air. His theory takes on an ecological dimension

when he likens the falling air conditioning units to ripe fruit; 'what else do you expect in a city with no trees?'. Implying the inherent interconnectedness of nature, humanity and society, his assertion refutes a capitalist logic which maintains that nature is an unlimited resource fit for exploitation or – in the case of Luanda – practical eradication.

This article thus considers where *Ar Condicionado*, understood as an ecological narrative of resistance for the Anthropocene, moves towards the category of *ecocinema*. According to Paula Willoquet-Maricondi, eco-films 'play an active role in fostering environmental awareness, conservation, and political action', testifying to social and climate injustices and compelling audiences to reassess humanity's relationship with the planet.[11] In the case of *Ar Condicionado*, as well as exposing the dominant capitalist value systems which 'condition' the urban experience and perpetuate and intensify climate change, the director centres moments of everyday resistance in the city, offers alternative futures, and reminds audiences of what they stand to lose.

I argue that *Ar Condicionado* deals both overtly and implicitly with such climate-related issues. However, for an increasing number of critics, 'ecocinema studies is not simply limited to films with explicit messages of environmental consciousness'.[12] I am reminded here of a question posed by Mark Bould: 'what happens when we stop assuming that the text is not about the anthropogenic biosphere crises engulfing us?'.[13] What do we stand to gain by centring the climate crisis in our research?

Luanda: Capitalism, Class and Climate Change

Ar Condicionado's opening scene immediately establishes a connection between the climate crisis and global capitalism. The morning news report references a bilateral agreement between Angola and China, noting suspicions that air conditioners are falling by design to increase demand for imported Chinese fans. Even if this is conspiracy, it is an all-too-plausible example of Naomi Klein's 'disaster capitalism', by which disasters and crises – including the climate crisis – are considered exciting market opportunities.[14]

Growing demand for domestic cooling systems is also no fiction. Air conditioners are an increasingly common response to rising global temperatures; it is predicted that air conditioning usage will more than triple by 2050, with the value of the global heating, ventilation and air conditioning industry reaching over $200 billion by 2025.[16] Moreover, air conditioners are huge contributors to the warming of our planet. Chemicals used as refrigerants in these systems are highly damaging to the ozone layer. Overwhelmingly used in urban settings,

when air conditioners release hot air back into cities, they also directly contribute to the artificial warming of built-up environments.

However, the ability to regulate one's own environment remains almost exclusively the reserve of the middle and upper classes. Through *Ar Condicionado*, Matacedo and Zezinha's palpable relief upon feeling cold air reinforces the lines of wealth and class which determine access to cooling. It is clear that their boss, Dr Nok, occupies a more privileged socio-economic position than other residents of the building. Entering his large, airy apartment in a smart suit, he refers to himself as 'presidente' of the apartment block. He is profoundly individualistic in his response to the crisis, and only concerned with fixing his own air condition-ing unit: 'I don't care if everyone else's are failing. Mine can't fail'.

Air conditioning units are thus a powerful symbol both for the uneven effects of climate change and the inherent inequality and individualism of late capital-ism. Around the world, it is often those contributing least to global emissions, particularly in the global South, who are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change-related phenomena.[17] Later in the film, another radio broadcast reports that a man has died after being hit by a falling air conditioner. An indignant inter-viewee decries 'the people who live it up, driving fancy over-priced cars in utter comfort while common folk perishes because an air conditioner fell on his head'.

His statement implies that imported models of development, which worsen extreme climactic events and benefit only a privileged few, actively harm the majority of Angola's population. The film's backdrop, the urban landscape of Luanda, is further proof of this assertion. After the Civil War, the MPLA embarked upon an intensive process of national redevelopment, with the alleged vision of building a modern, inclusive nation. Efforts were highly concentrated in Luanda, with billions of dollars spent on a 'Dubai-style urban reinvention'.[18] For Ricardo Soares de Oliveira, 'the irony behind the showmanship of Luanda's gaudy remake [...] lies in its utter neglect of foundations', particularly the real people who make up the city.[19] Many Luandans were forcibly relocated to make room for luxury developments, some of which now stand empty as the social sector is neglected and pressing issues of overpopulated urban housing are overlooked.[20] It is therefore unsurprising when another radio commenter calls for the dismissal of the government and a new social housing policy 'in harmony with the weather conditions of our country'.

The city's hostility towards ordinary Angolans is indicated through the opening photo-series. The first image depicts a young boy in Luanda bay. His makeshift raft forms a stark contrast to the luxury hotels and skyscrapers which loom in the background, exposing the city's extreme inequality and the precarity

of life for many urban dwellers. As a coastal city, Luanda is at increased risk from rising sea levels, flooding and other extreme weather events, consequences of climate change that will be felt most keenly by the city's poorer inhabitants.[21] In the black and white image, the sea is almost as menacing as the urban skyline; the dark water could easily engulf the young boy, thus revealing the double threat of capitalism and a changing climate as experienced by the 'extreme' city's most vulnerable members. The severity of this threat is confirmed when we are told that Matacedo – a veteran of one of Africa's longest and bloodiest civil wars – 'fought in the jungle, but will fall in the city'.

Ar Condicionado's soundtrack also explicitly draws attention to the connection between capitalism and the climate crisis, through an overtly political performance from rapper Tito Spyk. His lyrics critique Angolan society as 'lost in consumerism, adrift, in dire straits', using natural imagery to express feelings of anger, desperation and alienation within this system. The rap begins 'give us some oxygen', suggesting the urgency of the struggle against the prevailing socio-economic order in climate-related terms.

His performance references the difficulty of challenging these systems in a nation still processing the trauma of colonial rule and multiple wars. Angola is a 'land of grieving folk', their reality is the 'inheritance of the exploited'. However, the lyrics function on a double level, referring also to issues faced by younger generations of Angolans, who will experience the greatest consequences of climate change in their lifetimes due to the actions of 'old timers'. Spyk's performance gives a voice to this new generation, who are seen less frequently in the film. The line 'they gave us lemons, we planted an orchard', suggests that there is energy for climate-focussed change within this younger generation, and is particularly powerful in light of Kota Mino's description of Luanda as 'a city without trees'.

Resistance: Cinema, Memory, and Alternative Futures?

Ar Condicionado exposes the intersections between capitalism and climate change in Luanda, and their unequal effects at a systemic, local and individual level. However, the film also offers moments of resistance to the conditions imposed by Angola's dominant socio-economic order, presenting alternatives to a capitalist system that values profit over ordinary Angolans, humanity and the planet.

The film moves away from Luanda's hyper-visuality of extreme wealth and consumerism, an image of the city promoted by the MPLA on the global stage.[22] Instead, Fradique centres daily acts of leisure and community, such as Matacedo playing ludo with friends, or drinking tea with Zezinha. These acts resist capitalism's demands for relentless labour and pursuit of wealth and, crucially, dispel equally damaging stereotypes of a city crushed by war, poverty and neglect.[23]

Many scenes are markedly slow and uneventful, recording unexciting action, such as Matacedo brewing tea, in real time with minimal cutting and long periods of silence. The technique resonates with elements of da Luca and Jorge's 'slow cinema', rejecting the 'accelerated tempo' and hyper-productivity of late capitalism.[24]

The final scene closes with another slow act of leisure, as Matacedo and Zezinha enjoy a beer on Dr Nok's balcony. Despite their recovery of his air conditioning unit, the pair refuse to submit entirely to the demands of the prevailing socio-economic order Dr Nok represents. Instead, they physically occupy his apartment – a space Matacedo was previously told not to enter – to carry out their small act of resistance. For Asef Bayat, it is precisely this 'nonmovement' of ordinary people, and their refusal 'to exit from the social and political stage controlled by authoritarian states, moral authority, and neo-liberal economies', which holds the potential to enact real societal change.[25]

Quiet acts of resistance and dissent are taken literally in the film when it is revealed that Matacedo can communicate telepathically with a group of Cape Verdeans living in the building. Their non-verbal interactions can be seen as a form of conspiratorial communication taking place within the margins, beyond the reach of official 'control' or 'conditioning'. This covert 'non-action' is translated for the viewer through subtitles, which reveal the contents of the telepathic conversations. Here, the text becomes a visible marker of the cinematic interventions which allow for such forms of collective resistance. Through their silent communication, Matacedo receives a cryptic piece of advice from the Cape Verdeans: 'the thing you're looking for, you'll find in a TV set'. The clue literally refers to Kota Mino's memory retrieval device, which is fashioned from an old TV set. However, more broadly, their statement could allude to the capabilities of cinema – particularly eco-cinema – and other audio-visual media to engage productively with issues of capitalism and climate change in the 'extreme city'.

While audiences may enjoy the film's slow pace and surreal, dreamlike qualities, particularly as 'an "Edenic" respite from conventional consumerism' and the stark realities of global crisis, they are also reminded to engage with the issues on screen.[26] Extended, trance-like scenes are occasionally punctuated by moments of sharp and confronting clarity, which directly affront the audience and jolt us from any passive viewing of the film. As we follow Matacedo on his errands around the apartment building, for example, he suddenly turns to face the camera head-on. Again, the film reflexively draws attention to itself as a cinematic object, highlighting the potential for cinema to encourage political and environmental awareness, critical reflection and action.

The film's slowness also creates a level of sensuality, evoking the multi-

sensory reality of daily life in Luanda. Cinematographer Ery Claver's use of a Steadicam for much for the film, which allows the viewer to experience the perspective of 'walking' at street level, heightens this effect. At the repair shop, an extended montage in which Matacedo eats soup prepared by Kota Mino centres another everyday act of community, and evokes a non-visual sensory experience through slow motion and close-up shots of the food being prepared and blissfully consumed. Through these sequences, Fradique creates what could almost be considered a sensory archive, through which Angolan audiences can access and conserve collective experiences of life in Luanda. As such, *Ar Condicionado* contributes to a wider agenda of Angolan cultural sustainability, preserving and valorising memories of everyday acts and interventions in the city which fall outside of any value system or formal economy imposed by the dominant socio-economic order.

Ar Condicionado is unequivocally, and perhaps most obviously, a film about memory. Its primary concern is to tell the stories and histories of real people in Luanda who – after two decades of peace – still 'scramble for the memories they don't have'.[27] Beyond this, the film also expands the significance of memory in the context of a world that is burning, asking the viewer to consider what they see on screen as *future memories*. Again, this is foregrounded through the opening credits. Despite depicting contemporary scenes from the city, the black and white photos convey a sense of the 'past', leading viewers to consider how they might look back upon the present day. Later, when Matacedo shows Zezinha their memories on the TV set in the repair shop, the close-up shots of food are reminiscent of the meal cooked by Kota Mino the previous day, reinforcing how present experiences transform into memories. In this way, the film engages with the notion of anticipatory memory, a narrative device common in climate change-related cinema. For Stef Craps, this device holds great potential as 'a strategy to convey the urgency required to address climate change', forcing audiences to ask what they stand to lose, and what legacy they want to leave behind.[28]

Craps' exploration of 'anticipatory memory' references a number of films in which protagonists surviving in a post-human future 'irrevocably marked by climate change' mourn a lost human civilization, asking why we did not act before it was too late.[29] *Ar Condicionado* instead considers the process of mourning in the present-day, using the theme of memory to interrogate the relationship between capitalism and climate-change. Towards the end of the film, Matacedo attends a mourning ceremony at an apartment in the building. We do not know who has passed away, but he seems reluctant to attend. When he does visit the apartment, we discover the funeral is for an air conditioning unit.

Kota Mino has established air conditioners as a metaphor for Angola's

memories. As such, the pain expressed by Matacedo and the fellow mourners is felt for the loss of collective identity and shared histories. However, even for a viewer aware of this metaphorical significance, the scene is jarring. Are consumer goods truly considered comparable – sometimes even *more* valuable – than human lives? What about other living beings on our planet? And when these machines fail – as they surely will, if we continue to believe the Earth is an endless resource for capitalism's exploitation and extraction – what memories are we left with? The scene further exposes the pervasiveness of capitalism, suggesting what a potential, dystopian future might look like should we continue to adhere to this economic and political system.

However, the death of the air conditioner also creates space for something new. At Kota Mino's shop, we find an example of what such alternatives could entail. When Zezinha and Matacedo enter the backroom, they discover a mysterious machine, intended to piece together all of the nation's lost memories. Following them inside, Kota Mino proclaims: '*apresento o vosso futuro!*'.[30] The room is a radically egalitarian space, presenting an alternative future that not only addresses and democratically protects Angola's past – 'where none of our memories are left out' – but also considers the nation's ongoing ecological and cultural sustainability. Nature here is thriving, no longer at risk of becoming a memory: the room is filled with plants – albeit the last in the city – and birds can be heard in the background. The machine is fashioned from the waste products of consumer capitalism – the shell of a car, old cassette players, etc. – suggesting that different, more equitable futures can be salvaged from our current surroundings if we adjust our perspective and values.

The notion that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism – attributed to both Žižek and Jameson – is often quoted in discussions of capitalism and climate change.[31] Interestingly, in *Ar Condicionado*, we very rarely see an air conditioner fall. Where this event is shown, the air conditioner's descent is obscured, blurred, or relegated to the background and edges of the shot. Instead, by centring slow acts of community and leisure, as well as the creation of Kota Mino's radical space – which directly rejects the notion that capitalism is our only remaining, viable option – the director chooses to focus on the existing power of ordinary people to resist and reimagine this dominant system. Subverting established regimes of visibility and expanding our potential imaginaries, *Ar Condicionado* can be considered *ecocinema* in these appeals for political action, suggesting that viable alternatives to current global and local socio-political realities are not only possible, but perhaps already in reach.

Beyond this, the failure of the air conditioning units confirms the fundamental unsustainability of Luanda's socio-economic conditions and the trajectory

of cultural and urban development in Angola.[32] Drawing attention to the complex ways in which these conditions and power structures disproportionately affect the urban dispossessed, Fradique's film succeeds in capturing the interconnected concerns of the 'extreme city'. Again, for Ashley Dawson, how such cities cope 'with stratifications of race, class and gender (or how such inequalities are left to fester) has everything to do with how well it will weather the storms that are bearing down upon humanity'.[33] Through the various strategies of resistance explored in the film, *Ar Condicionado*'s hope appears to lie with a profound belief in and respect for the creativity, resilience and resourcefulness of Luanda's ordinary inhabitants, and the possibility for cinema to expand these.

Ar Condicionado is currently available to stream on MUBI.

Duo Lunar: Text to Accompany Video

Nemo D'Qrill

The dramatic rendition and lyrics of the song 'The Sound of Silence' resonates with the choreographers perception of environmental debates and how technological advancement since the moon race has been used to justify pollution and the destruction of nature on our mother earth, Gaia. The lyrics, rendition of the song, and physical choreography come together to highlight the dialogue and conflict in the sustainability movement since the 1950s. It focuses on the historical silence brought on by misdirection and misinformation of media, fake experts leading to epistemic noisy forums, and the blinding of flashy *neon-light* technological goals.

To quote some of the lyrics:

> 'People talking without speaking
> People hearing without listening
> ...
> And no one dared disturb the sound of silence
> ...
> Words like silent raindrops fell and echoed in the wells of silence
> And the people bowed and prayed, to the neon god they made.
> And the sign flashed out its warning, in the word that it was forming.'

Performer and Choreographer: Nemo D'Qrill (They/Them) – The Great Dane (@nemo_liftalot)
Supporting Artist: Jude Elizabeth (She/Her) (@jude_elizabeth_movement)
Music: The Sound of Silence (Version by Disturbed. Original composers Simon and Garfunkel.)
Venue: Colston Hall, Bristol, United Kingdom

This submission can be found with the QR code or on our website: www.questionjournal.com

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