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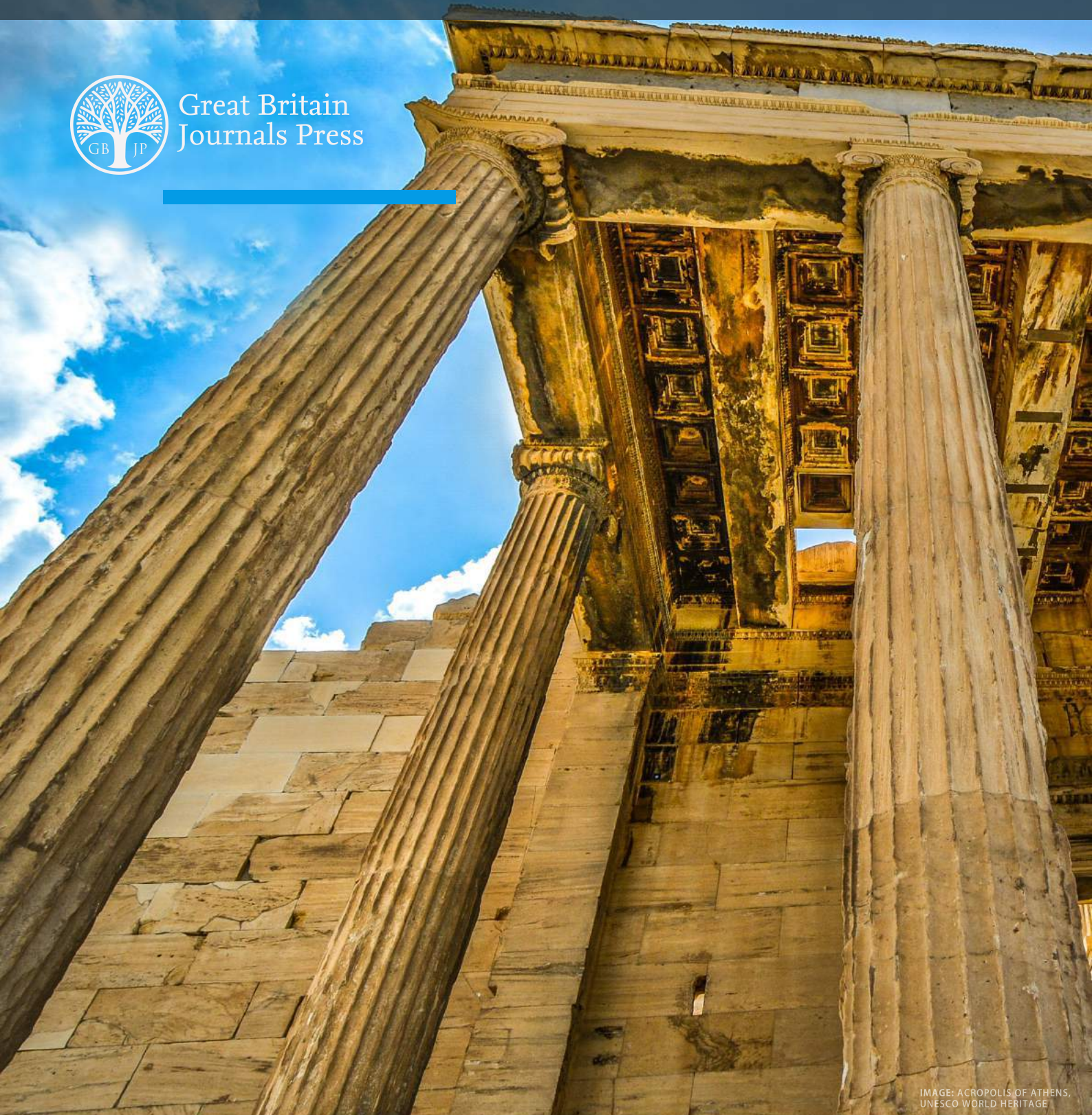


IMAGE: ACROPOLIS OF ATHENS,  
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# Adobe Brick Essay on Soil

*Maria Cristina Villefort Teixeira, Lucia Gouvêa Pimentel  
& Gabriela Clemente de Oliveira*

*Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais*

## ABSTRACT

The soil is the provocative material for writing this text. It is an old companion. A creative process in art has been cultivated with it for some time. Finding it in studies and debates in the area of Vernacular Architecture, a territory that has a particular relationship with the subject, raised thoughts that were outlined in the following pages. What drew attention within this field of knowledge was the production process of adobe brick, an ancestral material used by human beings in their housing and building needs. The procedures involved in its manufacture have characteristics that make it possible to establish interrelationships with theories that address the dimension of the body and experience, which are frequently referenced in the field of arts. Throughout the elaboration of the reflection, the line presented itself as a means to express words and images. The visualities produced helped to minimize the physical absence of the brick.

*Keywords:* adobe brick, vernacular construction, production process, knowledge from experience.

*Classification:* DDC Code: 600

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# Adobe Brick Essay on Soil

TIJOLO DE ADOBE. Ensaio sobre terra.

Maria Cristina Villefort Teixeira<sup>α</sup>, Lucia Gouvêa Pimentel<sup>σ</sup> & Gabriela Clemente de Oliveira<sup>ρ</sup>

## ABSTRACT

*The soil is the provocative material for writing this text. It is an old companion. A creative process in art has been cultivated with it for some time. Finding it in studies and debates in the area of Vernacular Architecture, a territory that has a particular relationship with the subject, raised thoughts that were outlined in the following pages. What drew attention within this field of knowledge was the production process of adobe brick, an ancestral material used by human beings in their housing and building needs. The procedures involved in its manufacture have characteristics that make it possible to establish interrelationships with theories that address the dimension of the body and experience, which are frequently referenced in the field of arts. Throughout the elaboration of the reflection, the line presented itself as a means to express words and images. The visualities produced helped to minimize the physical absence of the brick. The analysis that follows was supported by theories and research on the construction processes of housing with soil and approaches by Jorge Larossa Bondia and Christine Delory-Momberger. The main objective of the text was to highlight the use of land within the practice of adobe production and propose an approximation of this construction system with theories from other fields of knowledge.*

**Keywords:** adobe brick, vernacular construction, production process, knowledge from experience.

**Author α:** Professora Titular da Escola de Arquitetura da Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais.

**σ:** Professora Titular Emérita da Escola de Belas Artes da Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais - EBA/UFMG.

**ρ:** Doutoranda no programa Ambiente Construído e Patrimônio Sustentável da Escola de Arquitetura da Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais.

Arquitetura da Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais.).

## RESUMO

*A terra é a matéria provocadora para a escrita deste texto<sup>1</sup>. Ela é uma antiga companheira. Já há algum tempo cultiva-se com ela um processo criativo em arte. Encontrá-la nos estudos e debates da área da Arquitetura Vernacular, território que possui uma relação particular com a matéria, suscitou pensamentos que foram rascunhados nas páginas a seguir. O que chamou atenção nesse campo do conhecimento foi o processo de produção do tijolo de adobe, um material ancestral utilizado pelos seres humanos em suas necessidades de habitar e edificar. Os procedimentos envolvidos na sua fabricação apresentam características que possibilitam fazer inter-relações com teorias que abordam a dimensão do corpo e da experiência, frequentemente referenciadas no campo das artes. Ao longo da elaboração da reflexão a linha se apresentou como um meio para expressar palavras e imagens. As visualidades produzidas ajudaram a minimizar a ausência física do tijolo. A análise que se segue foi sustentada por teorias e pesquisas sobre processos construtivos de habitações com a terra e enfoques de Jorge Larossa Bondia e Christine Delory-Momberger. O principal objetivo do texto foi destacar o uso da terra na prática de produção do adobe e propor uma aproximação desse sistema construtivo com teorias de outros campos do conhecimento.*

**Palavras-Chave:** tijolo de adobe, construção vernacular, processo de produção, saber da experiência.

<sup>1</sup> “O presente trabalho foi realizado com apoio de recursos da CAPES – Código de Financiamento 001”.

## I. INTRODUÇÃO

Por definição, adobe é “tijolo cru e secado ao sol” (Adobe, 2022). Um sentido que expressa a imagem (Figura 1) de uma das etapas do processo de sua produção. Ainda que esse significado se refira ao objeto: peça em ponto de uso, bloco moldado de terra, seco por exposição direta ao sol e ao vento, com forma retangular ou de um

trapézio, definitivamente, ele não é capaz de encerrar a ação contínua que está implícita à peça. A sua designação não possui um sentido fechado, pois o objeto é processo constituído de camadas dinâmicas que interligam a sua fabricação e o seu uso. O ponto do procedimento da produção que lhe atribui o nome “adobe” compreende apenas uma das etapas do complexo que lhe constitui.

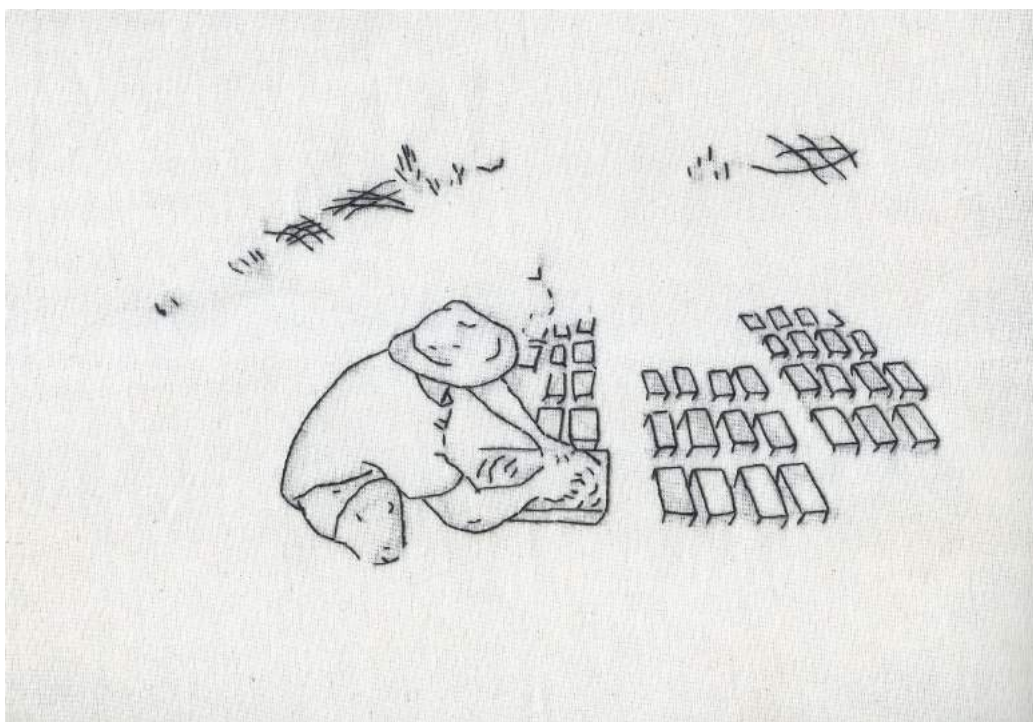


Figura 1: Moldar e secar.

Bordado, 2022.

Gabriela Clemente. Acervo da artista.

O bloco de terra crua é decorrência da própria constituição do ser humano em sua necessidade, no desejo de se fazer presente em um determinado lugar; “a utilização do adobe pelo homem, como técnica de construção resolutive à demanda habitacional desde o próprio surgimento desta necessidade, é uma verdade irrefutável” (Santos; Bessa, 2020, p.53). Esses autores, em *O uso do adobe no Brasil: uma revisão da literatura* (2020), indicaram que o tijolo de terra crua pode ser encontrado em diferentes partes do mundo, em regiões com clima e ambientes variados e que quase todas as civilizações humanas, até a revolução industrial, utilizaram esse conhecimento para edificar. A julgar pelo tempo de sua incidência no mundo,

pode-se dizer que o bloco de terra crua resiste em materializar desejos construtivos dos humanos. Segundo Santos e Bessa (2020), o tijolo tem se adaptado às diferentes formas de vida dos seres humanos. No Brasil, registros apontam que os povos africanos e os portugueses faziam uso mais frequente da terra como matéria construtiva. Com largo uso no período colonial brasileiro, serviu aos ricos e aos pobres e, atualmente, “em regiões nas quais o emprego dos tijolos de adobe se originou de uma herança cultural tradicional, algumas construções e/ou produtores perduram [...]” (Santos; Bessa, 2020, p.56). Os blocos de terra crua podem ser encontrados em maior número nas regiões Norte e Nordeste, mas também em estados como Minas Gerais que, segundo os autores, fazem parte da paisagem de inúmeras de



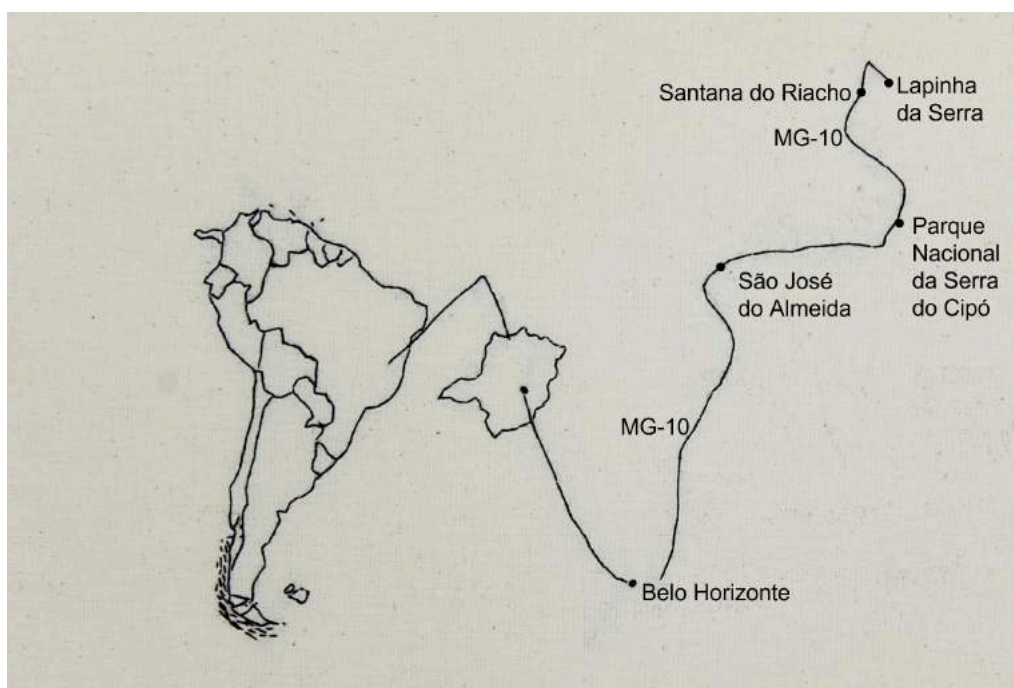
suas cidades, sendo uma delas a Lapinha da Serra, distrito de Santana do Riacho, na região do Espinhaço.

A Lapinha, não diferente de outras localidades no mundo, vem experienciando mudanças estruturais em sua forma de viver e mesmo nessas condições mantém o processo de fabricação e o uso do tijolo. Moreira e Rezende (2019) escreveram que “nas ruas da vila se faz evidente a manutenção sobretudo da tradição adobeira” (Moreira; Rezende, 2019, p.7). No estudo deles encontram-se relatos de moradores que afirmam que o bloco de terra crua está presente na região desde as primeiras edificações que remontam ao século XVIII. Há séculos a Lapinha reúne condições para sua fabricação: terra propícia em abundância; homens e mulheres com desejo de se

fazerem presentes naquele local; sol e condições climáticas favoráveis; presença de saber construtivo ancestral.

## II. O PROCESSO DE PRODUÇÃO DO ADOBE. UMA REFERÊNCIA À LAPINHA DA SERRA

A Lapinha da Serra (Figura 2) é uma localidade que tem tradição no modo de fazer o tijolo. Há considerável registro de estudos realizados por pesquisadores brasileiros do campo da Arquitetura Vernácula que se dedicam a estudar o lugarejo e a produção do bloco de terra crua entre seus moradores. Algumas dessas pesquisas estão disponíveis em repositórios universitários, como o da Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG), e em outras plataformas de base científica.



*Figura 2:* Cartografar.

Bordado, 2022.

Gabriela Clemente. Acervo da artista.

Quem são as pessoas<sup>2</sup> responsáveis por produzirem, em diferentes tempos, os blocos de terra que constroem localidades como a Lapinha

da Serra? De forma geral, pode-se afirmar que são homens e mulheres que aprenderam a tirar da terra tijolos, edificações e o sustento econômico. Moreira e Rezende (2019), numa referência a esses sujeitos, utilizaram o termo “mestres adobeiros”. No lugarejo a população local atribui

<sup>2</sup> Para conhecer mais sobre a Lapinha da Serra ver: <https://institutoestradaareal.com.br/cidades/lapinha-da-serra-mg/>

o título de mestres àqueles que fabricam o adobe, conservam os modos de sua produção e sobrevivem financeiramente com a venda deles. Os autores elencaram alguns nomes dos artífices da região: Juquinha, Jaurinho, Laerte, Fernando, Djalma, Zezé, Valdeir, Maria Ferreira, Rosangela, Regi, Tide e Reno, entre outros. De fato, apresentam-se mais homens do que mulheres. No entanto, tem sido comum casais trabalhando juntos na fabricação dos blocos. Maria Ferreira e Djalma ressaltaram, em entrevista a Moreira e Rezende (2019), que entre o casal “um amassa o barro e o outro bate a fôrma” (Moreira; Rezende, 2019, p.9).

Entre esses artífices, o trabalho com o adobe nunca foi exclusivo. Coexistiu, e segue coexistindo, junto a outros afazeres como a agricultura, trabalhos em fazendas da região, no roçado do pasto ou em atividades turísticas. Essa diversidade laboral entre os mestres da Lapinha aponta para a existência de intervalos entre as produções dos blocos de terra. Talvez seja possível supor que o processo de fabricação deles implica uma dinâmica que envolve produção – pausa – produção – pausa. Uma atividade sazonal.

Como se produz o tijolo? Quais são as camadas que compõem esse objeto? Braga (2018) escreveu que “o adobe é um bloco preparado a partir do solo, amassando a terra com água com o auxílio dos pés. Após o amassamento, os blocos são moldados manualmente por meio de uma fôrma, [...] e são posteriormente secados ao ar livre” (Braga, 2018, p.45). Sem ter a intenção de cunhar uma etapa inicial no processo de fabricação deles, que se entende não existir, destaca-se o ponto da obtenção da matéria-prima para realização de tal atividade. A escolha da terra demanda princípios que são comuns aos mestres e aos manuais de arquitetura. Levi Teixeira (2020), durante evento promovido pela Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Ceará, colocou que “a cultura popular diz que o adobe é feito em regiões onde o barro é ruim de queimar. O que eu entendi, depois de fazer análises do solo, é que o adobe requer um barro com mais areia e a cerâmica requer um barro com mais argila” (UnTV, 2020).

No *Manual do Arquiteto descalço*, Lengen (2004) ressaltou ser possível construir adobe com quase todos os tipos de terra e que a realização de testes simples é suficiente para demonstrar quais são as ações necessárias para deixar a matéria propícia para tal finalidade. O autor escreveu ser a terra amarelo-clara a melhor. Recomendou também as terras vermelhas e castanhas, e desencorajou o uso das terras negra e branca. Moreira e Rezende (2019) registraram que na Lapinha, entre as décadas de 1950 e 1970, foram fabricados blocos de solo argiloso com tom amarelado e que atualmente utilizam-se terra com tom alaranjado. Sobre o solo, os mestres artífices da localidade indicaram: “(1) ou opta-se pelo solo de formigueiro, [...] (2) ou aproveita-se de cavas, [...] (3) ou compra-se em depósito de construção em Santana do Riacho e na Serra do Cipó” (Moreira; Rezende, 2019, p.8). Essa última informação provoca perguntas que se destinam ao âmbito da preservação do saber-fazer o bloco de terra e cabe aprofundar a indagação em outra produção. Tijolo produzido com terra comprada em depósito de material de construção preserva o legado de sua fabricação? A produção vem sendo alterada por falta do barro adequado? Qual a importância da tradição, do saber-fazer, mesmo com condições diferentes?

Tradicionalmente, o adobe é produzido no mesmo espaço em que a terra é retirada. Na Lapinha da Serra, por exemplo, quando a localidade que contém a matéria adequada para a sua confecção é identificada (Figura 3), uma estação de trabalho é montada a céu aberto e a atividade é iniciada. Essa corriqueira ação no processo de produção possui a mágica capacidade de reconfigurar aquele espaço a partir das novas relações que ali são estabelecidas. Os gestos que os mestres aplicam no ato de fazer o tijolo adicionam à paisagem do cerrado<sup>3</sup> novas camadas visuais.

### III. AS RELAÇÕES SENSÍVEIS ENVOLVIDAS NO ATO DE PRODUZIR ADOBE

Não é comum ao mestre preparar toda a estrutura de produção e fabricar apenas uma peça. O

<sup>3</sup> Para saber mais sobre o bioma cerrado, ver: <https://conexaoplaneta.com.br/blog/cerrado-segundo-maior-bioma-brasileiro-e-um-dos-mais-ameaçados/>

processo instalado necessariamente irá gerar um volume considerável deles. De acordo com o *site casabemfeita.com* (2010), “para fazer 1m<sup>2</sup> de parede de meia vez, você vai usar 36 tijolos. E com um milheiro, você consegue fazer 28m<sup>2</sup> de parede” (CasaBemFeita, 2010). Uma edificação é erguida com muitos blocos de terra e uma comunidade como a Lapinha da Serra se constrói com inúmeras edificações. Em ambos os casos essas construções são materialização de múltiplos saberes produzidos por homens e mulheres na relação que estabelecem com a terra.

Em associação a essa ideia de conjunto, assim também deveria ser o nosso entendimento em relação às edificações construídas com esse material. Estar diante de uma casa erguida com tijolos de adobe deveria ser equivalente a estar diante de Juquinha, Jaurinho, Laerte, Fernando, Djalma, Valdeir e Maria Ferreira, pessoas que tocaram na terra e a ela deram a estrutura de blocos. Em uma referência limite, os tijolos também podem ser entendidos como o rastro de todos os artífices cujos nomes se perderam ao longo do tempo, mas cujos conhecimentos se mantêm vivos através das peças produzidas e das pessoas que seguem produzindo.



*Figura 3:* Estação para trabalhar.

Bordado, 2022.

Gabriela Clemente. Acervo da artista.

Tofani e Brusadin (2019), em referência ao conceito de Arquitetura Vernacular, disseram que ela é mais do que um produto; é sobretudo parte do processo de produção construtivo que inclui recursos naturais locais e saberes culturalmente adquiridos. Os autores destacam que se trata de uma manifestação cultural de grupos sociais que produzem e reproduzem sistemas construtivos “com vistas a concretizar valores, sentidos e concepções, e de modo a abrigar práticas e obras de seus habitantes” (Tofani; Brusadin, 2019, p.3).

O artífice, no ato de produção do adobe, fabrica a si mesmo num gesto contínuo que implica manipular a matéria e a ela se integrar. Um processo de construção de si por meio da terra. Essa perspectiva de análise faz evocar as concepções de Christine Delory-Moberger (2012) sobre pesquisas (auto)biográficas. Para ela, a dimensão do espaço, a começar pelo próprio corpo, é constitutivo de experiências e de representações de si e dos outros. O espaço, de acordo com a autora, não é cenário e nem suporte, mas parte essencial do que somos, “nós mesmos



somos *espaço*: nosso ser corporal pertence à extensão e à materialidade do espaço; somos, portanto, *espaço no espaço*” (Delory-Momberger, 2012, p.66, grifos da autora).

Delory-Momberger (2012) sustenta a perspectiva de que o espaço é fundamento na ação dinâmica de autoconstrução que os sujeitos realizam. Esse ato de construção de si é o que nos dá existência. A partir dessa compreensão pode-se sugerir que o adobe é espaço construído. Quantos foram os homens e as mulheres que se fizeram com a terra? Segundo a autora, espaço é parte essencial da nossa experiência, pois ela é constituída por uma série de relações sensíveis que o nosso corpo estabelece com um espaço preenchido por outros corpos-espacos. Somos indivíduos construídos pelas sociedades que nos abriga e, na mesma medida, participamos ativamente da construção dessa coletividade. Pertencemos ao espaço, bem como o espaço nos pertence. No ideal, seria primordial que desenvolvêssemos uma prática reflexiva e afetiva com o espaço que nos constitui.

Assim, pode-se dizer que a terra é um corpo-espaço essencial na experiência de produzir os blocos de terra. No ato da sua fabricação, uma série de relações sensíveis é estabelecida entre o corpo-espaço do mestre, o corpo-espaço da terra e entre tantos outros corpos-espacos que se fazem presentes no lugar em que a ação é realizada. Por exemplo, se para o artífice a sua relação com a terra gera tijolos e ele se autoconstrói como um trabalhador, para uma criança que acompanha seus pais na estação de trabalho, o mesmo espaço-terra pode proporcionar relações lúdicas, e a terra se torna um brinquedo. Essa criança, então, se autoconstrói como um brincante. Moreira e Rezende (2019) destacaram, em seu estudo, que “ao acompanhar o processo de confecção de adobe do mestre Valdeir, se mostrou expressiva a intimidade na qual seu filho, [...], brincava na masseira de terra” (Moreira; Rezende, 2019, p.14).

#### IV. SABER DA EXPERIÊNCIA

Se nossas experiências são construídas a partir das relações sensíveis que o nosso corpo-espaço estabelece com outros corpos-espacos, segundo Delory-Momberger (2012), cabe avançar um

pouco nesta compreensão. Para Jorge Larrosa Bondía (2016), o que pode promover experiência é a nossa capacidade de elaborar, “dar sentido ao que somos e ao que nos acontece” (Bondía, 2016, p.17). Para ele, o sujeito da experiência seria algo como um território de passagens, uma superfície sensível que aquilo que lhe acontece deixa marcas. Ele pode ser um ponto de chegada ou lugar de recebimento, mas o é, “sobretudo, um espaço onde têm lugar os acontecimentos” (Bondía, 2016, p.25). O que define o sujeito da experiência é a sua passividade e a sua receptividade, abertura, paixão e padecimento. O sujeito da experiência é aquele que caminha na contramão do acelerado e mecanizado modo de vida, pois pausa, observa, escuta, desacelera e sente.

Em função dessa característica, o sujeito da experiência está cada dia mais raro, mas ao mesmo tempo pode ser facilmente reencontrável, pois basta que se reativem as atitudes que favorecem acontecimentos. Sobre isso escreveu Bondía:

A experiência, a possibilidade de que algo nos aconteça ou nos toque, requer um gesto de interrupção, um gesto que é quase impossível nos tempos que correm: requer parar para pensar, parar para olhar, parar para escutar, pensar mais devagar, olhar mais devagar, e escutar mais devagar; parar para sentir, sentir mais devagar, e escutar mais devagar, demorar-se nos detalhes, suspender a opinião, suspender o juízo, suspender a vontade, suspender o automatismo da ação, cultivar a atenção e a delicadeza, abrir os olhos e os ouvidos, falar sobre o que nos acontece, aprender a lentidão, escutar aos outros, cultivar a arte do encontro, calar muito, ter paciência e dar-se tempo e espaço (Bondía, 2016, p.25).

O que é o processo de produção do adobe senão a prática do que está registrado na citação do autor? O mestre, ao decidir empreender a ação de fabricar dezenas de blocos de terra crua, rompe com todos os princípios que regem a sociedade automatizada, ainda que se trate de uma produção encomendada por um consumidor que levará os tijolos para o centro de uma metrópole. O trabalho direto com a terra, necessariamente,



retira o artífice do mundo mecanicista e o devolve para a ambiência da experiência.

Um mestre adobeiro, em mais um dia de trabalho, se dirige até o espaço escolhido para realizar sua ação de modelar a terra e ao sol secá-la, acompanhado por suas ferramentas: a enxada e a pá. Leva também um chapéu para se proteger do sol e a água para manter sua hidratação. Se esse mestre está em uma região como a Lapinha da Serra, provavelmente irá trabalhar acompanhado do vento e dos pássaros. Trabalhará em meio ao cerrado e empreenderá uma série de movimentos e gestos que, aos poucos, serão capazes de fazer aparecer uma nova localidade, um novo espaço.

No local escolhido, na área selecionada, ele escavará a terra por algumas horas,

provavelmente dias, batendo a enxada e retirando a matéria com a pá (Figura 4). Na medida em que a terra extraída se acumula, ele a cobrirá para que mantenha a umidade. A escavação é uma ação árdua, exige esforço do mestre. O buraco que se cava chegará a alguns metros abaixo do solo. Findada a escavação, ele irá preparar as porções de barro que serão utilizadas para modelar os tijolos. Com o auxílio do carrinho de mão, retirará parte da terra coberta e a ela acrescentará água, até atingir o ponto desejado. Depois da incorporação da água à terra, o artífice dará um tempo para que a mistura se torne maleável. Essa nova composição que a terra assumirá dará condições de seguir com a ação que consistirá em amassar.



*Figura 4:* Cavar.

Bordado, 2022.

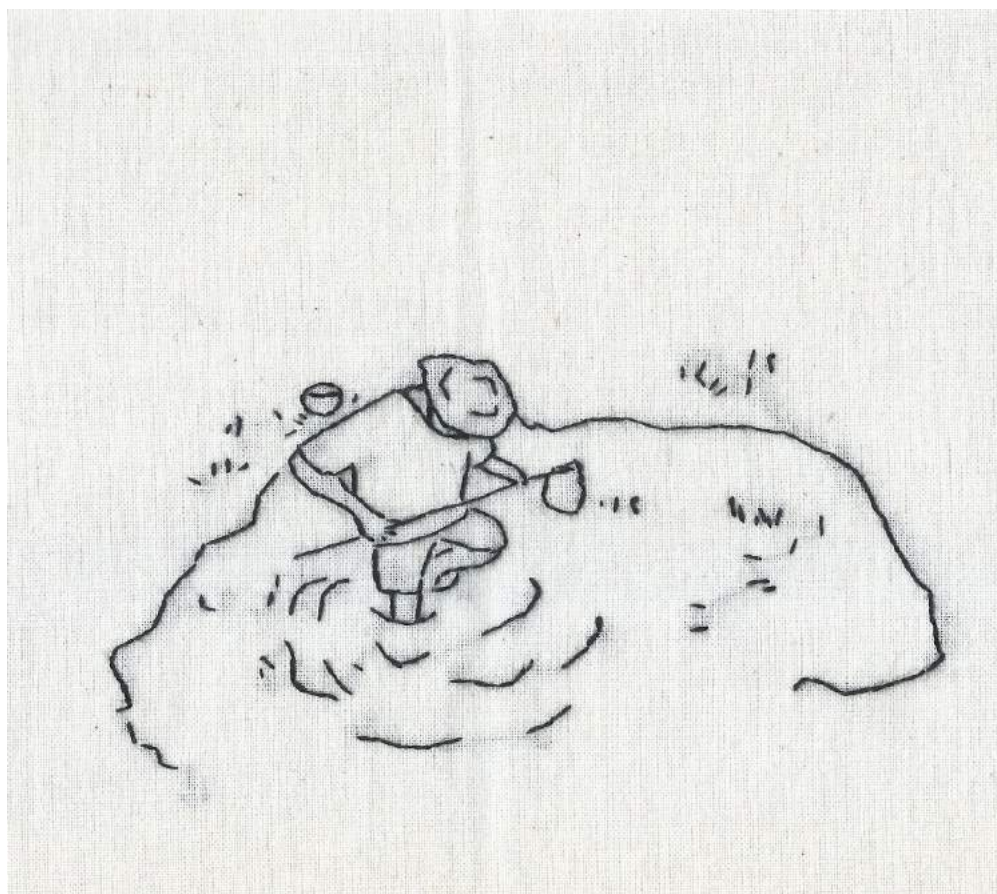
Gabriela Clemente. Acervo da artista.

Com os pés sobre o barro, o mestre amassa, pisa, sobe e desce suas pernas em movimentos contínuos e atentos (Figuras 5 e 6), percebendo com o próprio corpo, com as solas dos seus pés, as transformações pelas quais passa a terra. Ele sente o ponto da sua elasticidade até atingir o

estágio ideal para a modelagem. O conhecimento do mestre vem do corpo, da sua experiência sensível que o leva a aprender a perceber as mudanças progressivas pelas quais passa a matéria. Conhece também pela observação, pois acompanha as diferentes formas que a terra

assume à medida que é manipulada. Esse corpo conhecedor, eventualmente em busca de descanso, alterna o movimento dos pés com a

enxada que revira a terra de baixo para cima e assegura que toda matéria seja tocada.



*Figura 5:* Pisar.

Bordado, 2022.

Gabriela Clemente. Acervo da artista.

Outra etapa da produção implica no uso das mãos. O mestre modela a matéria com auxílio de uma fôrma. Ele pega parte do barro e o lança com precisão no molde que já se encontra no chão. Ali, ele assenta a massa, alisa sua parte superior e realiza uma puxada rápida do molde, deixando no solo um bloco moldado de barro. Imediatamente, o tijolo já se encontra na etapa da secagem e em cerca de sete a dez dias, estando o tempo firme e seco, poderá vê-los prontos. À medida que eles ficam totalmente secos, são empilhados cuidadosamente até serem levados à obra ou entregues ao seu comprador. Em questão de mais alguns dias, eles serão assentados com a mesma matéria que o produziu, erguendo uma ou outra construção. A partir daí, uma nova diversidade de relações será estabelecida por aqueles que vierem a habitar ou usufruir passageiramente desse espaço erguido com a terra.





*Figura 6: Perceber.*

Bordado, 2022.

Gabriela Clemente. Acervo da artista.

O saber humano, escreveu Bondía (2016), antes da ciência moderna, era entendido como uma aprendizagem no e por aquilo que nos acontece, “esse é o saber da experiência. Aquilo que se adquire no modo como alguém vai respondendo ao que vai lhe acontecendo ao longo da vida e no modo como vamos dando sentido ao acontecer do que nos acontece” (Bondía, 2016, p.32). O saber da experiência passa pela elaboração do sentido e por isso é um saber individual, intransferível, totalmente subjetivo. É algo inseparável do indivíduo em que se encarna. O autor destaca que “o acontecimento é comum, mas a experiência é para cada qual sua, singular e de alguma maneira impossível de ser repetida” (Bondía, 2016, p.32). Não se trata de algo pronto, algo que se encontra fora, mas de uma constituição única e pessoal.

## V. CONSIDERAÇÕES FINAIS

O processo de fabricação do adobe é composto por uma série de relações sensíveis que se estabelecem entre o corpo do mestre adobeiro e a terra. Esses artífices são sujeitos dotados da

capacidade de criar blocos de terra e realidades. São navegantes que desbravam habilidades na extensa cartografia da vida. A reconfiguração que os homens e as mulheres realizam na localidade que abriga o ato da produção do tijolo concretizam suas verdades, expressam seus modos de viver, bem como de toda a comunidade onde se encontram. Ressignificam a existência de seus antepassados, dão novos sentidos às suas origens e traçam novas perspectivas para os seus descendentes. Pelo aspecto da tradição, o adobe pode ser compreendido como prolongamento de pessoas simples e trabalhadoras na relação que estabelecem com a terra, é a materialização da memória, do saber fazer de uma comunidade.

Nessa perspectiva, o tijolo assume mais uma característica: ele também pode ser entendido como encarnação em terra das experiências, daquilo que foi sentido e significado pelos mestres em relação ao que lhes aconteceu ao longo de suas vidas. Adobe é o sentido dado pelo sujeito perante um acontecimento. Ele é conhecimento e vida. Se

esse objeto possui tal poder de ser parte daquele que o significou, daquele que o criou, ele reúne condições para mediar outros sujeitos em novos processos de construções e significações de si, torna-se, assim, um saber cultural passível da construção de novos conhecimentos coletivos.

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# Hubble Trouble

*Joseph William Fisher*

## ABSTRACT

The only reason the real visible Universe is not structured scientifically is because Nature must have permanently devised the only visible structure of the universe allowable. There has only ever been, and there will only ever continue to be one infinite visible seamless contrasting surface eternally occurring in one infinite dimension while always being illuminated by one infinite form of finite non-surface light. What I mean by that is that there is an infinite number of stars, each one of which can produce a finite amount of non-surface light for a finite duration.

*Keywords:* visible; infinite; surface; universe; structure.

*Classification:* DDC Code: 520

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# Hubble Trouble

Joseph William Fisher

## ABSTRACT

*The only reason the real visible Universe is not structured scientifically is because Nature must have permanently devised the only visible structure of the universe allowable. There has only ever been, and there will only ever continue to be one infinite visible seamless contrasting surface eternally occurring in one infinite dimension while always being illuminated by one infinite form of finite non-surface light. What I mean by that is that there is an infinite number of stars, each one of which can produce a finite amount of non-surface light for a finite duration.*

**Keywords:** visible; infinite; surface; universe; structure.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Prior to the appearance of Stephen Hawking, Edwin Hubble<sup>[1]</sup> was the stupidest man who ever lived on the planet. Hubble apparently assumed that the telescope and the camera he used in the Mount Wilson observatory were perfectly placed on the earth's surface and the earth somehow spun around in the center of the universe.

At 11:53 AM EST on September 26, 2023, I entered the question: "How many stars are there?" into the GOOGLE Scholar Search Engine. The GOOGLE Scholar Search Engine dutifully reported that it had found "About 3,690,000 results (0.15 sec)" The first article listed was entitled: "How many low-mass stars do destroy e?" It had been written by C Charbonnel, and JD do Nascimento Jr The article began somewhat incomprehensibly with: "We recall the current status of the long-standing 3He problem, and its possible connection with chemical anomalies on the red giant branch. In this context, we collect in the literature all the available observations of the carbon isotopic ratio in field and cluster giant stars. Using the HIPPARCOS parallaxes, we get

constraints on the evolutionary status of the field stars of the sample. This allows us to identify the stars that have passed the luminosity function bump and present  $^{12}\text{C}/^{13}\text{C}$  ratios in disagreement with the standard predictions of stellar evolutionary models. We determine statistically what fraction of low mass stars experience an extra-mixing process on the red giant branch, and are then expected to destroy their 3He at this evolutionary phase. The high number we get satisfies the galactic requirements for the evolution of the 3He abundance Charbonnel, C., & do" Nascimento Jr, J. D. (1998). How many low-mass stars do destroy 3He?. *arXiv preprint astro-ph/9805235*.

*Only the citation is included in the second article listed:*

"[CITATION] Irinogenetics: how many stars are there in the sky?

RH Mathijssen, H Gurney - ... Clinical Oncology: Official Journal of the ..., 2009 - europepmc.org

Irinogenetics: how many stars are there in the sky? - Abstract - Europe PMC ... Irinogenetics: how many stars are there in the sky?

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[PDF] iop.org How many infrared dark clouds can form massive stars and clusters?

J Kauffmann, T Pillai - The Astrophysical Journal Letters, 2010 - iopscience.iop.org.

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AB Goldberg, X Zhu - Proceedings of TextGraphs: The first ..., 2006 - aclanthology.org.

Internal status sorting in groups: The problem of too many stars.

JR Overbeck, J Correll, B Park - Status and groups, 2005 - emerald.com

## II. HOW ANIMALS FOLLOW THE STARS

JJ Foster, J Smolka, DE Nilsson... - ... of the Royal Society B ..., 2018 - royalsocietypublishing.org

It is obvious that nobody knows how many stars there are.

Visible physicists confuse the terms infinite and total. According to the physicists, there could not be an infinite number of stars because if that were the case, there would be a total glare and no black sky. <sup>[iii]</sup>Actual infinity cannot be finitely defined and there would be total astral glare only if there were a total number of stars.

Folk have been led to believe that only the visible top of the sea, or a pool table, or the outmost coating of a building is properly called its surface, and there are many types of solid, liquid, and vaporous surfaces. This has caused them to believe that accurate measurements of distance and duration can be obtained.

On page 122 of his silly book A BRIEF HISTORY OF TIME, English author Stephen Hawking wrote: "At the (invisible imaginary) big bang itself the universe is thought to have had zero size and so to have been infinitely hot. But as the universe expanded, the temperature of the radiation decreased." He obviously meant totally hot. The real visible infinitely sized universe has always been infinitely hot, and an infinitely hot visible universe cannot expand or contract and will remain infinitely hot forever.

Hawking is known for his preposterous claim that the universe could contain a black hole that was so dense a trapped star's light could not escape it. The universe has always had an infinite number of holes of every infinite hue.

Just as all of the visible physicists have been wrong for assuming that a duality of matter located in invisible curved space/time and empty space could co-exist simultaneously, when only infinite visible surface has ever existed; so too, all of the authors of these articles have been wrong

for assuming that stars have finite independent surfaces. And the ability to assemble into finite patterns that could only last for a finite duration.

At 11:45 AM EST, I entered the question: "How many galaxies are there?" into the google scholar Search Engine and I was immediately informed that the Engine had found articles with "About 912,000 results (0.09 sec)"

*The first five entries on page 1 of the search were:*

Quantitative Morphology of Moderate-Redshift Galaxies: How Many Peculiar Galaxies Are There?

A Naim, KU Ratnatunga, RE Griffiths - The Astrophysical Journal, 1997 - iopscience.iop.org

... As disk-dominated galaxies with a small or no ... therefore normal galaxies as far as this paper is concerned and belong to the "SI II bin described above. On the other hand, for a galaxy ...

[BOOK] Galaxies, Galaxies!(New & Updated Edition)

G Gibbons - 2018 - books.google.com

... There are two irregular galaxies that travel on the edge of the Milky Way ... Many observatories are built on the tops of mountains, where the air is clear and there are no distracting city.

How many galaxies fit in a halo? Constraints on galaxy formation efficiency from spatial clustering R Scoccimarro, RK Sheth, L Hui... - The Astrophysical ..., 2001 - iopscience.iop.org

... Discussion of how to use the halo models described above to predict the clustering of galaxies.

Our ... the point-size halo limit, since in this case there is at most a single galaxy (which we Optical imaging of ultraluminous IRAS galaxies: how many are mergers?

DL Clements, WJ Sutherland... - Monthly Notices of ..., 1996 - academic.oup.com

... There are still many unanswered questions about ULIRGs. For example, it is still unclear whether they are driven by an active galactic

nucleus (AGN) core buried beneath the dust, or  
Infall of matter in galaxies RB Larson - Nature,  
1972 - nature.com

... There is no conclusive evidence for the  
existence of ... of understanding how the present  
gas content of the Galaxy has ... to see many  
galaxies which are still accreting material, that is,  
The first five articles listed on page 3 of the  
GOOGLE SCHOLAR Search Engine list are:

Tidal disruption of stars by black holes of  $10^6$ – $10^8$   
solar masses in nearby galaxies MJ Rees - Nature,  
1988 - nature.com

... May also indicate how many galactic ... There  
have been several analyses of how a central mass  
influences the orbits and spatial distribution of  
stars in the inner regions of its host galaxy...

... Survey aiming at the detection of extraplanar  
diffuse ionized gas in halos of edge-on spiral  
galaxies-I. How common are gaseous halos among  
non-starburst galaxies ...

J Rossa, RJ Dettmar - Astronomy & Astrophysics,  
2003 - aanda.org

... However, it should be stressed that there are  
still many galaxies of our survey, which have ...  
regime there is also the demand for more sensitive  
observations of nearby edge-on galaxies...

The DEEP2 galaxy redshift survey: Spectral  
classification of galaxies at  $z \sim 1$

DS Madgwick, AL Coil, CJ Conselice... - The  
Astrophysical ..., 2003 - iopscience.iop.org

... Accurately reconstruct any given galaxy  
spectrum, suggesting there are not many “  
degrees ... in each galaxy. However, in terms of  
how each is calculated for high- $z$  galaxies there  
are Star formation in irregular galaxies: A review  
of several key questions D Hunter - Publications  
of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific, 1997 -  
iopscience.iop.org.

... There are a number of ways that have been  
employed to do ... Ha luminosity tells you how  
many massive stars have recently ... There are two  
parts to the fire lookout's question, and we will

The missing metal problem—I. How many metals  
are in submillimetre galaxies?

N Bouché, MD Bouché, C Péroux - Monthly  
Notices of the Royal ..., 2005 - academic.oup.com.

... Using these local results, in order to provide a  
more robust estimate of the total metal content we  
assume (i) that there is as much H i as molecular  
gas, which is likely to be an upper limit Page after  
page of utterly silly misinformation.

This is the abysmal preposterous claim Edwin  
Hubble made. Although there appeared to be an  
enormous number of visible stars, they all  
helpingly assembled into a finite manageable  
listing of galaxies. While the sun seemed to attract  
the planets, the earth had started to repel the  
galaxies and the galaxies furthest away from the  
earth were fleeing away from it at a rate of speed  
that was faster than the speed of light.<sup>[v]</sup>

Well, how did Edwin Hubble determine which  
real visible galaxies were farthest away from  
planet Earth? He didn't. He couldn't.

According to the information contained on page  
353 of the book Title: Edwin Hubble 1889-1953

Hubble's ignorance was only exceeded by his  
manifest arrogance.

There has only ever been, and there will only ever  
be, one infinite visible seamless contrasting  
surface eternally occurring in one infinite  
dimension while always being illuminated by one  
infinite form of finite non-surface light.

The only phenomena Edwin Hubble could have  
ever seen whenever he was looking through the  
eyepiece of his refracting telescope or eyeballing  
upwards on a clear night, would have been a  
swath of part of the surface of black night sky  
illuminated by the non-surface light of an infinite  
number of stars.

There is no logical way the stars could be billions  
of miles away from earth.

THE REAL VISIBLE UNIVERSE CONSISTS OF  
ONE SEAMLESS CONTRASTING SURFACE.  
OCCURRING IN ONE INFINITE DIMENSION



WHILE ALWAYS BEING ILLUMINATED BY ONE INFINITE FORM OF FINITE NON-SURFACE LIGHT. By that I mean an infinite number of flashlights have been or will be manufactured and each one of this infinite number of flashlights is capable when properly operated of producing a finite amount of non-surface light for a finite duration.

Unfortunately, all of the visible philosophers who have ever lived have been guilty of providing false information about the real visible Universe. They have informed only on what they thought and omitted to express what they actually saw. Renè Descartes even went so far as to state that his existence depended on his ability to think. All thoughts are merely guesswork.

No matter in which direction one looks in, one will only ever see a swath of part of the only infinite seamless contrasting surface occurring in one infinite dimension that is always illuminated by an infinite form of finite non-surface light.

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# 'Be in Touch' – A Kristevan Model of Spirituality in Health Care Education

*Kevin O'Donnell*

## ABSTRACT

Spirituality is impossible to define. It is like trying to catch flowing water in the hand. Its very fluidity brings it alive. Spirituality is more than the religious or the theological; it is part of being human. Spirituality cannot be defined but it is possible to attempt to devise models of it. Imperfect models can still be reflections and glimpses into the vital flow. A new model is proposed here, working with the insights of Julia Kristeva the Bulgarian/French poststructuralist, semiologist, and psychoanalyst. Applying Kristevan themes to Health Care can be fruitful as she is concerned with therapy and mental health. Definitions of spirituality (single ideas or short phrases) have been attempted in contemporary Health Care, though some modeling is also apparent. Consideration of pastoral relationships and activities in particular environments are foundational for approaches to spirituality in Health Care and this inter- relational dynamic is reflected in Kristeva's oeuvre.

**Keywords:** language, love, alterity, transcendence, patient/person, belonging, spirituality, Julia Kristeva, health care, modeling.

**Classification:** DDC Code: 150.195

**Language:** English



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Kevin O'Donnell

## ABSTRACT

*Spirituality is impossible to define. It is like trying to catch flowing water in the hand. Its very fluidity brings it alive. Spirituality is more than the religious or the theological; it is part of being human. Spirituality cannot be defined but it is possible to attempt to devise models of it. Imperfect models can still be reflections and glimpses into the vital flow. A new model is proposed here, working with the insights of Julia Kristeva the Bulgarian/French post-structuralist, semiologist, and psychoanalyst. Applying Kristevan themes to Health Care can be fruitful as she is concerned with therapy and mental health. Definitions of spirituality (single ideas or short phrases) have been attempted in contemporary Health Care, though some modeling is also apparent. Consideration of pastoral relationships and activities in particular environments are foundational for approaches to spirituality in Health Care and this inter-relational dynamic is reflected in Kristeva's oeuvre.*

- *Modeling spirituality*
- *Introducing Kristeva and proposing a new model*
- *Health Care spirituality*
- *Applying a Kristevan model*
- *A proposal for an introduction to spirituality for Health Carers as 'BE IN TOUCH'.*

**Keywords:** language, love, alterity, transcendence, patient/person, belonging, spirituality, Health Care, modeling.

### *Modeling spirituality*

Model making is an attempt to frame what cannot easily be described or defined. Any model can never have closure or requires what Kristeva would refer to as 'an open text'. In this regard,

MacClure (2006), writing about methodology of study in education, rejects the demand for closure and oversimplification, recognising 'forms of theorising that embrace the 'disappointment' of certainty.' What cannot be said, what may be said, or what is not said, must be taken into consideration. Her comments segue into discussion about spirituality for precise definition is impossible, and this 'disappointment' can be taken as encouragement when the fluidity of spirituality is appreciated. Three suggested models of spirituality as a general quality of being human, are those of Sheldrake (2013), Hay (2006) and the RSA report *Spiritualise* (2014).

### *Philip Sheldrake*

Philip Sheldrake is Senior Research Fellow of the Cambridge Theological Federation and a member of the Guerrand-Hermes Forum for the Interreligious Study of Spirituality. Sheldrake has written widely about spirituality in general, and its history. Sheldrake presents four themes that sum up spirituality:

- Holistic
- Sacred
- Meaning and Purpose
- Ultimate Value

The Holistic – life as a whole. This corresponds to the original meaning of 'holy' from the Greek *holos*, 'whole' or 'complete'.

A quest for the Sacred – the numinous or the sense of mystery in life, the arts and the cosmos.

A quest for Meaning and Purpose – a desire for an understanding of human personality and development.

Ultimate Value – Ethics and a self-examined life.



Sheldrake seeks to apply his understanding of spirituality in practical ways, using the term 'active-prophetic'. Two examples are social media, and the design of living spaces. He refers to 'cyber-monasticism'.. Social media has created virtual communities and friends without personal inter-action. Sheldrake is sensitive to life's difficulties and appeals for a 'tough spirituality' that can face the dark times and avoid self-indulgent well-being. His focus on design and living spaces fears that humanity, for the first time, faces what he describes as a 'mega-urbanised world'. Sheldrake sees three ways in which a city can provide sacred space: design that is not just utilitarian; the creation of public spaces; and the preservation of religious buildings. There should be an awe factor in architecture and design. Sculptures and artwork can be provided, for example, to enhance beauty and provoke symbolic perceptions, rather than the purely physical provision of amenities.<sup>1</sup> Diverse and creatively designed structures should inhabit the city and its skyline. The spirituality of place is inter-active and can draw together different ideas, including his four themes as a holistic space (considering various aspects, including the anthropological and the creative), a sacred space (as caring and honouring the values of the individual in community) , a meaningful space (efficient and yet aesthetic), and an ethical space (safe, affordable housing and sufficient amenities).

Sheldrake's four themes are set out as separate items, though, as interpretation and partial analysis of a complex and indefinable topic.

*David Hay*

Hay worked for the Religious Experience Research Unit based in Oxford, founded by Sir Alistair Hardy. His appointment followed on from research conducted over three years at Nottingham University into spirituality. His research and wide-ranging questionnaires suggested that everyone experienced a spirituality, religious or not. Hay has three themes:

- Awareness sensing
- Mystery sensing
- Value sensing

Awareness involves alertness and being aware of an object, person, or feeling. It is an awareness of the present moment.

Mystery involves awe and wonder, the role of imagination and existential questions.

Value involves the experience of responsibility to the Other, or 'relational consciousness' (a term he frequently uses, borrowed from the research of Alistair Hardy).

There is a sense of awe peppered through Hay's themes. The sense of the present moment first came alive for me when I was 5 years old, holding a model aeroplane and looking around the living room. "Gosh! I will never live in that second that has just past again!" I mused to myself philosophically. The beauty of nature and its sense of gift also evokes a powerful memory for me. A personal example would be my first experience as a boy of having my breath taken away by a sunken valley while on a school trip to the Isle of Mann. I stood transfixed for a few minutes. This was alive and it was gifted to us. Hay recognises spirituality in the darkness of life, too, even in unlikely places such as in the horrors of Nazi occupied Europe and the treatment of the Jews. Spirituality involves encountering darkness as well as holistic wellbeing. He references the work of Emmanuel Levinas, the post-structuralist, Jewish philosopher, who based philosophy upon ethics and encounter with the Other. For him, ethics was the first philosophy. Hay (2006: 253) sums up the behaviours of those who committed atrocities, after reading Levinas, as 'the suppression of the inborn obligation felt by one human being when gazing on the face of the Other.' The spiritual must be compassionate and empathetic. Levinas speaks of the role of the 'gaze'. The concentration camps that liquidated most of his family in the Holocaust, had to avert their 'gaze', that is, to be distanced from their own humanity and relational consciousness.

*The RSA report, 'Spiritualise – Revitalising spirituality to address 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges'*

<sup>1</sup> I have coined the term 'non-utilitarian beauty' for the creative design of places.

Dr Jonathan Rowson, Director of the Social Brain Centre of the Royal Society of Arts, authored the 2014 report of the RSA Action and Research Centre. *Spiritualise* explored various definitions and roles of spirituality in the 21st century. In 2011 about 300 people were involved in the Student Design Award, 'Speaking of the Spiritual'. The Award was a two-year project to provide more intellectual grounding for spirituality and new scientific understandings of human nature. The Award hosted six events covering Love, Death, Self and Soul.

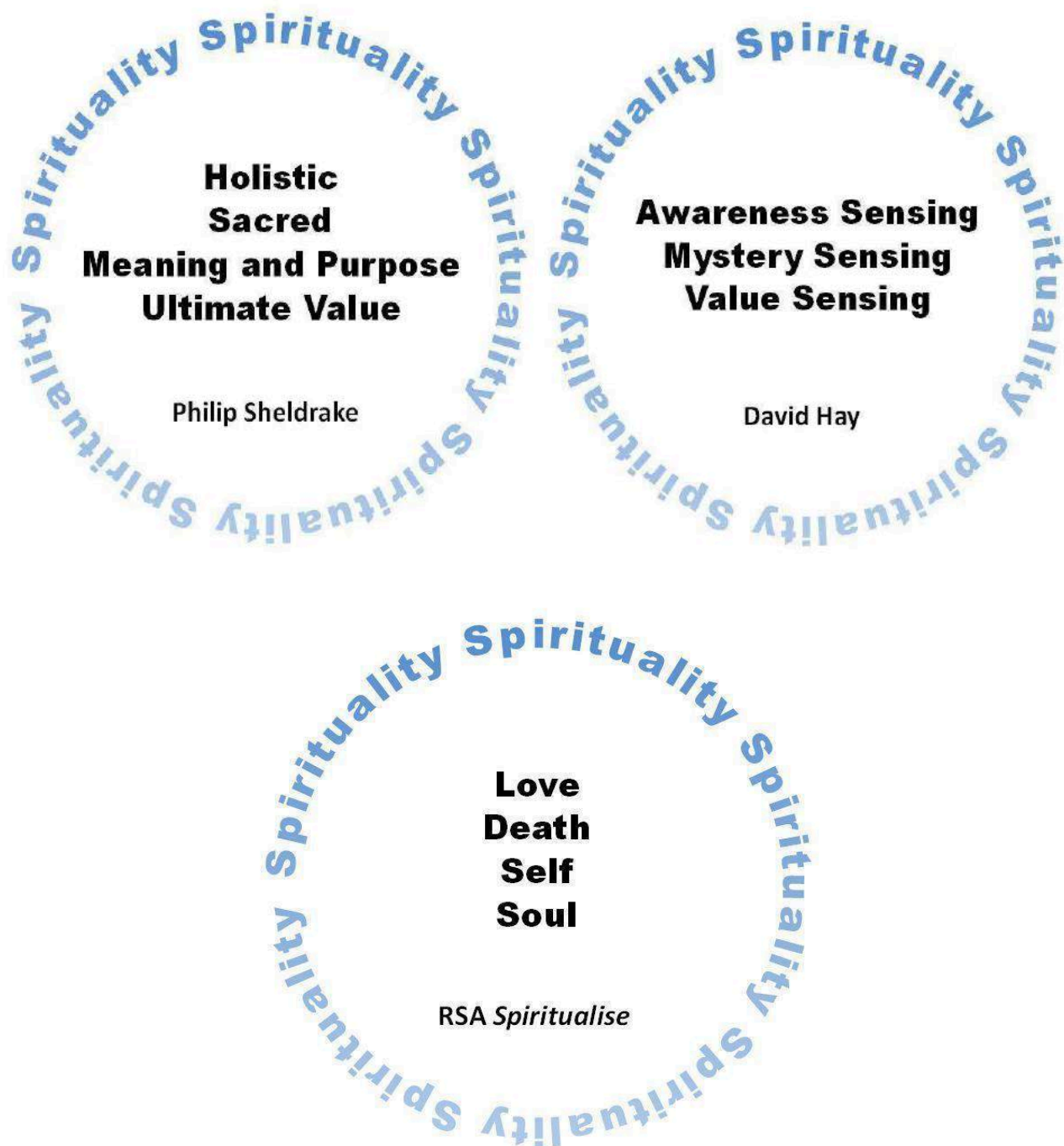
- Love (the promise of belonging)
- Death (the awareness of being)
- Self (the path of becoming)
- Soul (the sense of beyondness)

Spirituality should be expressed primarily beyond the propositional and beyond discursive language. The report tried to avoid 'scientism' but aimed for co-operation between spirituality and empirical science. Not everything can be reduced into a test-tube, such as love or wonder. Also, if spirituality cannot inform the darker side of life, it is insipid and a consumer distraction, with the popularity of Mindfulness techniques and therapy being in danger of being self-indulgent and superficial. The act of facing self, failure and avoiding denial can be creative and healing. McGilchrist pondered on the nature of the soul in the third RSA event. He sees it as a potential that unfolds in living beings, beyond classification. 'Perhaps we have to grow our souls.'

Depression can thwart growth and create a soul-sickness. 'Soul' opens a space for life and experience and is a term that can carry a wide interpretation. What may seem to be vague can be creative. Soul is more than the self, and this alone is open to discussion and interpretation. Theological definitions are only one model available, and the psyche and the developing ego are models themselves in psychoanalysis which is empirically limited to observation, reporting, and behaviour. I suggest that 'Soul' can best sum up the themes of *Spiritualise*. To 'have Soul' is common parlance for having vitality, whether in the Arts or in human activities. It has a fluidity and a motility to traverse various concepts,

situations, and personality. The RSA report is inclusive of all aspects in its terminology of beyondness which is more than empirical observation and physical structures. Similarly to Sheldrake, differentiation is valued in sociology and design as a form of spirituality that challenges all systems. Furthermore, the report differentiates between ground and place. 'Ground' is existence, human being; 'place' is physical location, systems and our ideas of the self. The latter can form a temporary security but are not permanent. Even 'ground' is not permanently fixed, but flows.

It is to be noted that all three examples of modeling spirituality do not avoid failure, fear, and suffering. Human experience and responses in the face of those are part of what is called spirituality, with Sheldrake's 'tough spirituality' and Hay's altruism allowing not just a coping mechanism, but change. I suggest that the sense of self, mystery, value, the relational and meaning can be adequately represented in Kristeva's idea of a safe, psychic space, as will be outlined shortly. In each of the above examples, various ideas are understood to be involved in spirituality, as being *within* its circle.



*Fig. 1:* The three models of spirituality of Sheldrake, Hay and Spiritualise

## I. INTRODUCING KRISTEVA

Julia Kristeva is a practicing psychoanalyst, philosopher, semiologist, literary critic, and novelist. Kristeva is an atheist by conviction, French by nationality and Bulgarian by birth. She is a polymath, traversing different disciplines and traditions, including an admiration of religious imagery, narrative, and ritual from a literary and psychoanalytical perspective. Kristeva works

within the poststructuralist tradition and is considered as a postmodernist, though that is a term she disowns. She is a Freudian psychoanalyst, adapting and developing Freud into her own, original system that explores a literary dynamic as a version of the Oedipus Complex. Kristeva's experience as an émigré has coloured much of her thought. She is concerned with the stranger, the dissident and the

marginalised. Kristeva understands herself as a dissident within the French philosophical tradition as a polymath, and something of an outsider to her adopted nation. Even though she was awarded the *légion d'honneur* in 1997, she still does not consider herself French. When she travels abroad, though, she is seen nonetheless as elegantly French in her appearance, style and thought. Kristeva understands the US as another adopted country for she lectures there frequently, occupying an honorary chair at Columbia University. She describes herself as living in exile.

She is an atheist though respectful of and fascinated by aspects of Christianity as a symbolic system of codes and symbols and ideals. In Bulgaria, her mother was an atheist biologist, while her father was an Orthodox Christian. She received her primary schooling at the hands of Dominican sisters, and now resides in a Catholic country. Kristeva has written about belief; semiotics and language; the arts; love; depression and melancholy; the stranger; and more recently, about Teresa of Avila and Dostoyevsky. Kristeva is involved in campaigning for the rights of the disabled, and was a friend of Jean Vanier, the founder of L'Arche.

Her interpretation of religious faith is inspired by Freud. 'God' is an Ideal, the Law, the Phallus/ Father and not a spiritual presence or entity, though a necessary symbol (or 'illusion'). In *Teresa, My Love* (2015) she heads a chapter 'The Imaginary of an Undefinable Sense Circled into a God Findable in Me'. The Undefinable within touches both on language, its origins and limits, and the nature of the psyche. A sense of the ineffable is expressed later in the text, 'All religions celebrate this otherness in the form of a sacred figure or limit (deity) ruling the desires of the vital flow...'

Kristeva celebrates the irrational and the poetic, the unconscious and the preverbal, arguing that humanity needs these alongside the God Ideal to give balance. Without this there is either suppressed conformity or chaos. Kristeva uses the figure of Christ as a symbol of harmony, of a reconciliation and balance between Law and creativity. He, as God incarnate, the God-Man,

brings together earth and heaven (emotion and order, unconscious and conscious, the physical and the psyche). The Passion of the Christ reveals a suffering God both of incompleteness (avoiding totality) and also the definition of love as agape, an unconditional, undeserved love represented by the figure of Christ on the cross. Christianity, therefore, is to 'embody eroticism within music' (Kristeva, 1987: 136) taking the physical into a harmony with the poetic. The psychological, the aesthetic and the ethical are the drives of religion and the value of spirituality. She often references Biblical texts and stories in her writings, respecting faith and utilising its symbols. As a poststructuralist, she resists ideas of closed ideas and doctrinal systems that claim an absolute truth or a totality, and thus theology, as such, is to be mistrusted. Human thought and language can have no such boundaries but must be always open, an 'open text'. There is always more than we can say or think.

Kristeva has written widely about language, love, and alterity. Her key texts are *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1986), *Language the Unknown* (2009), *Tales of Love* (1987) and *Strangers to Ourselves* (1991) from the wide variety of writings in her oeuvre.

### Language

Language cannot exist without the other two aspects. Language is a social contract, formed by a desire to communicate. Kristeva (1989b: 7) explains, 'Man speaks' and 'man is a social animal' are themselves both tautologies' There is no private language that falls from above. Human beings create language. Just as there is no private language, so language can never have a trans-human reality and viewpoint. We experience everything within the realm of language and cannot step outside it. In this way, Kristeva rejects the concept of logocentrism, a term shared with other poststructuralist thinkers such as Derrida. Logocentrism is the idea that Logos, or Reason, exists beyond our language. We only experience life within our limits. Structural, grammatical language is an ability to attempt to give order to the preverbal emotions and drives of the psyche. Poetry and the arts are more disruptive of the artificial, social ordering of language. We need



both to keep our equilibrium. Kristeva designates syntax and grammatical, discursive language as the Symbolic, while the preverbal, disruptive poetic is the semiotic, coining her own term in French as 'la semiotique' rather than the grammatically correct 'le semiotique'. Kristeva's dialogue between the semiotic and the Symbolic allows change as a rupture in the present of the psyche and a return to preverbal and unconscious roots. The psyche is deeper than words. She traces a sense of primitive religion and magic in the semiotic and its remembrance, 'magic, shamanism, esotericism...the carnival that allows a passage to outer boundaries.' (Kristeva 1984: 15). I suggest that this could be developed into the sense of the semiotic/Symbolic as seer, and shaman, prophet, and priest. There is provocation and disruption, new awareness and then reconciliation.<sup>2</sup> Without the shamanistic or the priestly dimension, there would be abjection and psychosis, and without the seer and the prophet there would be no development of ego identity and a psyche that was stilted. Spirituality needs to be holistic, open and honest to be therapeutic, no matter what disorder that this may cause at first. Kristeva (2001: 14) locates a sense of the sacred as 'the sustained connection between life and meaning.'

### Love

Love is the ability to be open to the Other, to change and to self-reflect. A contemporary example in the media is the BBC TV series *The A Word* concerns the issues involved in a family with an autistic child, Joe. He can speak and communicate occasionally when he feels safe and listens to music continuously on his headphones to try to express his emotions. After unsuccessful attempts at being educated in mainstream Primary schools, he is transferred to a school specialising in autism. His former teachers and classroom assistants had tried to give him due attention and encouraged him to join in class sharing by singling him out. He would not, and retreated further into himself. The staff did not realise how frightening their supposed

encouragement was. On his first day in the new school, he crawled under a table and refused to come out. The teacher waited and then got down on her knees and silently started to play a numbers game. After a little while, Joe stretched out a hand to join in. Eventually, feeling more secure, he sat down at the table. The programme demonstrates a technique used in such situations to get down on the child's level and wait patiently for a response through play and not speech.

Love is a metaphor and not a rule that cannot be pinned down exactly with its unpredictability. Kristeva follows Freud who declared that love is therapeutic. Love allows a safe, psychic space to be formed, both within the self and between people. Kristeva relates this to transference and countertransference in her work as a therapist. Without trust and listening, there can be no safety and therefore no vulnerability or possibility of change. Love calls for the ego to move on, and if it cannot for any reason, then it becomes abject, stuck at a psychic crossroads. Kristeva compares the stories of two sets of lovers, those of Romeo and Juliet, and the Biblical lovers in the *Song of Songs*. The former sought to possess each other and thereby embraced death; the latter allowed each other space in a give and take of presence and absence. Love encourages and allows transgression for change to take place, a crossing of boundaries from what is known to the unknown. Facing such challenges can be like crossing a taboo, entering a 'forbidden zone' that can be repulsive and disturbing at first. The semiotic drives are released from the control of the Symbolic order, as she argued in *Powers of Horror* (1986). Using a Biblical reference from Mark 7:24-30, Kristeva explains the encounter between Christ and the Syrian, pagan woman as a crossing of taboos. The woman dares to approach a teacher outside her race and faith, determinedly as a woman in a patriarchal society and becoming vulnerable for the sake of another, her child. Just so, Christ must cross a taboo, also, to meet her outside his 'tribe' and faith to respond with compassion. The result of this revolt against set traditions, and the listening and opening, is ultimately therapeutic. Kristeva understands the story symbolically and is not concerned about

<sup>2</sup> I interpret seer and prophet as intuitive and non-discursive, whereas the shaman guides through the spirit world, and the priest offers sacrifice to make atonement and reconcile.

arguments over its historicity. If the woman had not crossed the taboo, she and her child would have remained unhealed of her depression and the child's illness, whatever had caused it. Steps towards healing need to be difficult sometimes to let go and to move on.

The idea of revolt is both linguistically and psychologically important for Kristeva. To revolt is to cross borders, break taboos, to return to lost ideas and ideals. Returning allows recognition of the semiotic, preverbal, poetic which the Symbolic order can repress, and only with this recognition and release can love be possible so the psyche is free to grow and be open. She admires the avant-garde writing of Joyce in texts such as *Ulysses*, or the experimental verse of the poet Mallarmé, which remind that the semiotic exists within the structure of order found in language. Not returning to creative roots, not remembering, not allowing the emotive self will create psychological imbalance. Depression will result if the psyche stays in the abject, the crossroads between states of being, and worse still, a descent into melancholy where all boundary markers are lost so that vocabulary ceases, as Kristeva elucidates in *Black Sun* (1989). The depressive knows what is wrong; the melancholic has no idea. Everything is blank and cannot use language in any meaningful way. Language helps to create structure and illusion to stabilise and guide the psyche in its ideas, beliefs, and goals. This ability shatters into fragments when psychological damage is too deep. The depressive erects negative emotion as a defense against psychic disintegration. The depressive uses language, even when saying "that's meaningless"; the schizoid's splitting is also a defense, but one more reckless and flimsier, and beyond this, there is no speaking. A step to recovery seeks belief in meaning that is appropriate to the person (which is not necessarily religious). Spirituality involves developing, with any assistance necessary, the resources to cope at least, and, hopefully, to then progress. Language is essential, whatever form it takes, including non-verbal gestures and rituals as can be encouraged in forms of Art therapy or religious devotion. Even a 'melancholic' who can splash different colours of paint around a room at

intervals, quite deliberately, is not melancholic. The actions and colours speak in their own, limited way.

### Alterity

Alterity allows ego formation by encountering the Other. The myth of Narcissus ignoring the advances of the beautiful Echo sums up its power. Responding to the Other breaks Narcissism as an unhealthy introversion and opens the psyche. When we are hurt, we withdraw for our own safety, but it is a withdrawal that will further disturb the ego if it cannot re-emerge. Loving response is healing (as indicated in the above example from *The A Word* series). Kristeva (1991) explores many historical examples of societies and movements from ancient Greece through to German Romanticism, outlining how inclusion always requires exclusion, whether handled charitably or harshly. Even with the example of early Christianity, a movement that she admires as crossing the boundaries of race and status with its assembly (*ekklesia*) of slave and free, Jew and Gentile, male and female, there was an exclusion for the non-baptised which took on political ideas in the Middle Ages.

Kristeva writes most movingly about the experience of alterity in *Stabat Mater*, an essay included in *Tales of Love*. She describes the first encounter she had with her newborn son, eye to eye, gaze to gaze, "dances in my neck, flutters through my hair...slips on the breast...My son." (1987: 246). The face is a wonder, a wonder as a mystery (who is the person? What is a person, a life?) and a wonder of discovery (there is that which is not me). Kristeva's work with the disabled originated with the birth of David who is disabled himself. Her activity reveals a deep compassion and empathy for the outsider as well as an appreciation of the nonverbal. A look, a gesture, a touch, can say so much. Kristeva takes the argument further than external relationships into the psyche. Parts of us can be repressed and unconscious. Perhaps, sometimes, what we fear or hate in others reflects unresolved tensions in our own identity, hence she speaks of 'being strangers to ourselves'.

## Transcendence

I suggest that a way into Kristevan transcendence may be to consider the phrase, 'the Beyond in the midst' taken from the Lutheran Pastor and Theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was murdered by the Nazis shortly before the end of the war. He was expressing ideas about how Christ might be understood in modern, very human terms rather than the ancient Christology derived from Classical and Hellenistic philosophy. As such, he was making a theological statement, but Kristeva does not make theological statements. She writes sometimes about 'theologizing', rejecting this as the logocentric language of static essence and complete understanding. Taken beyond theology, the Beyond in the midst' suggests transcendence experienced in immanence in human existence,, and transcendence in this context can have wider applications than theology, Christian or otherwise. A sense of the beyond is implicated in the ability to be open to the Other, to move beyond a static ego into ongoing formation, and this must begin within the psyche and extend into relationships.

Kristeva has not written explicitly about transcendence, though she references aspects of belief and Christianity such as *In the Beginning was Love* (1987), *New Maladies of the Soul* (1995), *This Incredible Need to Believe* (2009), *Teresa, my Love* (2015) and *Grandir, c'est croire* (2020). Without a sense of the transcendent, however, there can be no movement beyond the self, no progression in ego formation, and no encounter with the Other. Transcendence is more than theology. Kristeva appreciates the ineffable and the unspeakable. There is much about life that we cannot define, tabulate, and put in a computer or under a microscope. The psyche remains a wonderful mystery for her, more than the physical but so much part of it. The role of the Unconscious is a 'beyond', the unknown, the preverbal and can be a way of bringing the past into the present, a recognition, a release, and a remembering, a 'beyond in the midst'. Kristeva references Proust and his memorable Madeleine cake with his Aunt Leonie, which brought him emotionally into the presence of his childhood

when he ate one with his mother, for example. It was as though he was really present in both places, as a double event. Our discourses must always be an 'open text' and she rejects ideas of 'totality' in favour of the 'infinite'. Language is limited and can never attain the whole. Belief (in anything) is a structuring, a necessary illusion of form and meaning. Its relativity means that it must be what she describes as 'incredible', always open to 'a big question mark'.

Belief is an illusion, as God is a necessary illusion to help structure meaning and guidance in life. Because her concept of God is limited to an ideal, as the Symbolic order, a spirituality of creativity and experience results for her that is not explicitly theological. Love, as a metaphor in its unpredictability, is its own form of 'open text', that even begins to take on the qualities of a religion for her as she writes, "...a single religion remains: that of Love...That is Life." (2012: p.19).

Kristeva does not consider certain theological tropes, though. There seems to be no place in her oeuvre for a more mystical or apophatic theology, of what can't be said as well as what can be said about God. If she could free the concept of God from the Symbolic order, then it could have more vitality in infinity, fluidity, and awe, as the text from the Medieval mystical work, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, 'Because he may well be loved, but not thought. By love he can be caught and held, but by thinking never.' Kristeva's God is too static. She does not, in fact, bring the semiotic into deity thereby ignoring major aspects of Christian spirituality. Kristeva avoids addressing existential questions. Questions of meaning are psychological and therapeutic only. There are indications in her oeuvre why this might be so. She equated death and God from her childhood, for example, when she lost her grandparents, experiencing only the void of their absence and this must have been reinforced by the death of her beloved father years later. Just getting on with life and not exploring such issues seems to have been her motto. Jardine (2020: 232) reports that Kristeva's attitude was 'given that there is nothing to be done about death, the important thing is just to do one's absolute best in the face of it.' Has she erected her own psychic defenses? Existential questions are



real, and people navigate them in their own ways. To ignore them entirely is surely a lack of balance. Perhaps it could be said that Kristeva is seeking the divine by not calling it ‘God’ in her terms?

### Summary

Kristeva’s themes of Language, Love, Alterity and Transcendence suggest a dynamic interplay. One cannot exist without the other and I argue that she presents a spirituality of what I refer to as an ‘interiority with reciprocity’.

## II. A KRISTEVAN MODEL

Miles (2012: 70) describes how two people stood on the street and looked into some run-down eateries in a poor district of San Francisco. One saw poverty and degradation. The food was junk and cheap. The other person smiled and said, ‘I like to look in there too.’ When the other person asked why, he gave the response, ‘The people. They sit for a while and eat. It gives them a little peace. I like to see it. It makes me know that the world is good.’ What interests me in this passage is that it is dynamic. It is not only about two different personalities, their feelings, and their interaction. It is about all the people doing things, sharing, looking, feeling, thinking, and nurturing themselves (however poor the quality of the food might be in this instance). What strikes me is the space. It only exists because of the people, the buildings, and the activities. Space cannot be held onto, placed in a test-tube or pushed under a microscope. It is empty, non-material and yet it allows things to be in motion with one another, and the activity also allows space to be. A sense of a dynamic that allows spirituality can be found in a Kristevan model of spirituality, and that is its originality.

A presentation of Kristeva’s themes of Language and Love, with their attendant and necessary themes of Alterity and Transcendence, can be set alongside other models of spirituality as in Sheldrake, Hay, and the RSA report, *Spiritualise*. As such, a new model has been formed and suggested in its terminology and focus. However, a close study of Kristevan themes begins to reveal a different dynamic. Other models focus on certain themes which are part of what is called

‘spirituality’. They are small parts of a greater whole that cannot be defined, that can never have a totality of comprehension, and can only be modeled in a limited sense. No model can be anything other than a partial viewpoint and analysis. The models of Sheldrake, Hay and the RCA report are seen as being *within* spirituality, and other themes could be written in if so conceived and desired. An explanation of a dynamic Kristevan model involves an interconnection where one theme helps to form the other in a give and take that is circular.

In other models the separate themes are treated in isolation.. They are each a separate focus of investigation and reflection. Naturally, there will be an implicit overlap and inter-relationship of some kind, but the focus is on independent units. A Kristevan model can act differently. Language is impossible without the other themes, as is Love, or Alterity or Transcendence. They all need each other. So, Language is impossible without the ability to accept and trust oneself, and to be able to open up to others. Communication does not take place otherwise. There cannot be one state without the other, as love is made possible by trusting the Other as safe. Transcendence sounds too religious for some and may be difficult for them to position. However, opening to others is a moving beyond the self (as it is positioned in process) and a moving beyond is an act of transcendence (this is not necessarily to exclude existential questions). Furthermore, the reciprocal relationship creates a greater whole than the words and ideas of two different individuals or groups. The greater whole is transcendent, as suggested in the earlier example of the San Francisco diners. The ability to be conscious and to move from the preverbal is also transcendent. Language has an innate mystery as somehow being able to be formed from the preverbal psyche, as does Love, which can be more than a survival drive where extended qualia of altruism, and therapy result. Alterity must move out beyond the ego. Without any sense of moving beyond – ego, language and communication, relationships, and beliefs - then the interplay of the other themes is impossible. There would only be stasis, and worse still, regression.



Transcendence must relate to the other activities, or it is a purposeless, drifting, abstraction. Neither are we automated individuals, for with ego comes relationship.

In a Kristevan model, therefore, the four themes coinhere. To borrow a term from the Christian theology of the Trinity, they all form a *perichoresis*, one living within the other in a round dance of giving and taking. The whole is greater than the sum of the parts, and one cannot be separated from the others without limitation and even conceptual disfiguration. When their dynamic is thus observed, then the circles of spirituality utilised to depict other models of spirituality shift their semantics. The four themes of Language, Love, Alterity and Transcendence then form the circle. Spirituality is what is *inside* the circle. Their dynamic, their co-inherent

interaction, makes spirituality what it is. A Kristevan model of spirituality can claim originality, not only in its four distinct four themes, but in a dynamic interaction. Granted that the circular movement of the themes is only one model to explicate spirituality and does not and cannot ever claim to be decisive, it is original in its positioning and emphases. That spirituality is involved in interaction, not just in ideas, feelings and ethics, results in an active interiority with reciprocity. Movement is fluid; a river cannot be captured in the hand. Spirituality needs space for movement to take place, analogous to the diners and their surroundings mentioned earlier. One forms the other. A Kristevan spirituality is thereby inclusive and must be rooted in the particularity of persons, situations, and places. There is no abstraction.



Fig. 2: Kristeva's circle of spirituality.

### III. HEALTH CARE SPIRITUALITY

The Kristevan model is fecund when applied to Health Care in its interactive dynamic. Before outlining this, it is important to survey existing concepts and any models that seek to understand spirituality in that context. Various authors

discern a necessary (if frustrating) fluidity. *The Lancet* (2023) sums this up when the editorial states; "One of the root causes for not accounting for spirituality in medical care is the lack of consensus on the understanding of what spirituality is, and how prevalent spiritual needs are. Spirituality is a broad and complex concept,

with no single consensus definition in medical practice and is often considered taboo.” Wattis (2017) describes spirituality as ‘tricky’. It is something that cannot be seen or touched but it can be experienced. Lyall (in Orchard (ed.) 2001) rejects a reductionism whereby spirituality is a ‘nothing but’. Culliford (2010) compares spirituality to a Moebius strip, where ‘what goes round comes around’. Spirituality has no fixed boundaries. Methods of assessment of spiritual care can often risk too narrow a definition and cannot be reduced to a series of tick-boxes. Assessing is preferred to assessment as it is ongoing. King (2009) and Swinton (2020) argue that it is more helpful to speak of what spirituality *does*, rather than what it *is*. Spirituality is experienced and has effects.

Literature concerning spirituality and Health Care often has an emphasis on interiority. Gordon and Kelly (2011: 2, 5) suggest; ‘Although religion may feature in a person’s spirituality, it will be alongside a host of other aspects, such as family, friends, work, health, love and leisure activities’ for the only way to understand spirituality ‘is to start within ourselves’. Suggestions of alterity, existential questions and the numinous are also referenced but interiority is primary. Pargament (2011) aligns spirituality with concepts that concern the sacred, such as peace, solace, courage, faith, hope, and love. The focus on the person is expressed by Orchard (2001) as involving self, direction and the practical, or the tripartite ‘Who? Why? and What?’

To move beyond the emphasis on interiority, Harrison (2017) advocates an autoethnographic approach where case studies are more valuable than abstract theories. Likewise, Whipp (in Wattis, Curran and Rogers (eds.) 2017) suggests journaling or encountering others (and therefore the self) in shared narratives - sharing ideas, making comparisons from their lives, expressing hopes and fears. The shared narrative suggests interconnectedness of caregivers and patients, as well as roles and systems. Related to interconnectedness, Mc Sherry (in Orchard (ed.), 2017) raises the problem of who to ask and what

to say about spirituality in a multi-faith and secular context. Wattis (2017) appreciates the role of liminal spaces within both the individual (carer and patient) as well as the institution. Spaces are necessary for re-evaluating and creativity. For Gordon and Kelly (2011: 75) spirituality is not structured, ‘undertaken in only one encounter or to rely on a single tool to be effective.’

Clarke (2017: 137) even argues that psychosis can be a creative space. While recognising the great danger of becoming lost in the process, and of danger to lifestyle, with careful support such a crisis can be a liminal realignment in the emergency. As he states, ‘This perspective stands in sad contrast to depressing messages that people can often receive when they report such transliminal experiences.’

How Health Carers define spirituality will affect their work with patients and understanding their needs. Interiority is part of the experience of spirituality as caregivers need to get in touch with themselves, though in the context of relating to patients. Self-awareness through data, encounter, the liminal, and narrative should be part of the training of Health Care workers, as underlined by the Oxford Centre for Spirituality and Wellbeing (OCSW) in the need for adequate development and training of staff. Cobb, Puchalski and Rumbold (eds.) (2012: vii) describe spirituality as moving beyond interiority as it affects wider issues and relationships as;

...A way of engaging with the purpose and meaning of human existence and provides a reliable perspective on their lived experience and an orientation to the world. As spirituality engages Health Care it becomes inextricably linked with human suffering and therefore integral to the lives of patients, their families, and their caregivers.

McSherry, Lyall and Orchard (in Orchard (ed.) 2001) suggest that all branches of Health Care need to show an interest in spirituality and that collaboration is essential to the delivery and appreciation of spirituality. There are many facets of spiritual care within the organisational

institution and a system of brokerage is necessary for a co-operative give and take. McSherry (2006) asks the pertinent question 'Who knows best?' within an institution of many departments and caregivers. 'Who', it should be noted, along with the idea of absence, is a necessary, liminal space. Absence, here, refers to the need for spaces. A Carer or a patient might not have any clear ideas, feelings, or suggestions to offer and need to be honest and take a step back. Life often involves the unknown, the confusing and the fearful as well as compassion, hope and creativity. Facing spaces can mean confronting empty spaces (not knowing or understanding) or time to reflect, realign and move on in a more beneficial direction. A respectful absence involves honesty about not having any answers or tending to the patient in silence. The silence respects their state of health or unanswered questions and allows a reprieve space to give them peace to be alone, or to tend to their practical needs, or just sit quietly with them.

The above present various themes and ideas, but there is no attempt at forming a model, unlike in some more philosophical or theological authors or reports such as those of Sheldrake, Hay and *Spiritualise*. Cobb et al (eds.) (2012), however, seek to provide a model. They sequence several themes for the views of their various contributors, which partly reiterate the opinions and observations mentioned above. Their model has a specificity of theme as a taxonomy, or modeling, though,

- Person and not just patient
- Narrative
- Ritual
- Why questions

#### *Patient*

The value of the patient as a person is central in the authors to facilitate listening. Hudson (in Cobb et al (eds.) 2012: 108) stresses the 'Who' of the patient and the carer, with the unknowns, as yet unconceived and ill defined:

We neither know who we are nor where we are for we are 'legion', or many. This post-modern dilemma finds its answer in the notion of persons as interdependent and inter-related.

Self-serving autonomous individuals neither make nor receive a compelling call.

Hudson continues 'persons emerge when they acknowledge their dependence on others.'

#### *Narrative*

Narratives may be needed as in coping with bereavement or any major health matter involving trauma and loss. Burke and Neimeyer (in Cobb et al (eds.) 2012) describe 'Meaning Making' and restructuring life narratives to allow new beginnings. The alternative is to help the patient with assimilation (usually more appropriate with members of a religious community who fall back on their faith, or, indeed, lose their faith). Narratives are more semiotic, to use Kristeva's terminology, and allow a fluidity in trying to understand, or to do, spirituality. The practice of narrative analysis in counsel or therapy involves telling the story of a situation, an event, but also a life. Gergen (2004) comments that subtle signs are formed by a gesture, a hesitation, silences, smiles and sharing experiences. The listener must become part of the speaking in verbal or non-verbal ways. What is said and what is not said? What realisations can be given to either teller? A life story can be restructured when events are held in question, particularly a master narrative, such as trust in someone or something. An example of changing the story is suggested by Carney (2004) who researched the testimonies of Holocaust survivors, finding a range of voices and opinions. A master narrative of 'moving on' from trauma was an affliction for psychological growth for some. It was easy to feel obliged when the personal reality was different. Reviewing life stories can also be helpful in cases of life changing or threatening illness. A patient needs to re-evaluate and adjust. Frank (1995) was diagnosed with terminal cancer and relates the value of sharing between such patients to seek companionship and to realise they were not alone. While a psychological withdrawal and depression can result, any helpful discourse can be therapeutic, such as holding the hand of the patient.

## Ritual

Ritual can involve speech, actions, and space. Wards and rooms can convey emotions as well as decoration. How should a quiet room be arranged for relatives, for example? Davies (in Cobb et al (eds.) 2012) states that Health Care spirituality must be set in time and space. Ritual is different from routine in so far as it contains significant meaning when words alone sometimes are not sufficient, an act that allows what Romanov and Thompson (2006) describe as ‘a symbolically charged experience’. Another example that Davies gives would be a form of wake. A ritual celebration of a colleague’s life can be arranged in a suitable space using story, symbolic objects, tears, and laughter. Speaking can induce relationships of solidarity and narratives can segue into ritual. How does a doctor inform relatives that their loved one has died, for example? What symbols are not only useful but personally applicable (decor, setting, even the arrival of hot tea!)? Rituals, whether in the context of wakes or not, need to be provisional and fluid. The wake is also a form of narrative where stories are told, and responses shared.

The power of a wake became apparent to me personally when ministering as an Anglican curate in London. I had celebrated several Afro-Caribbean funerals which carried on all day after any official liturgy had ended. The men came forward to fill in the grave, and the women heaped their gifts of flowers on top of the raised soil. There was singling and weeping, embraces and even sometimes a little rum passed round. The mourners returned to a home or a hall and the whole day was given over to communal activities of food and music and company. Other more conventional funerals seemed brief and subdued in comparison.

## Why Questions

Existential questions, the ‘Why?’ questions, need to be handled with care but not ignored. The questions and concerns exist and are part of being human. Listening is more important than trying to answer, being there is more important than doing. There is nothing wrong with admitting that a carer does not know the answers. Gordon

and Kelly (2011) use the term ‘Helplessness as Part of our Humanity’ as well as ‘Respectful Absence’ (allowing people space to be silent or to grieve. Also, the carer absenting themselves when this needs to happen, and when answers cannot be given.) Such sensitivity is a reminder of the vulnerability and wonder of personality.

I wish to conclude this section with an example of therapy which was more spontaneous and occurred outside any formal institution. An American language student, Stephanie Saldaña, was on placement in Damascus in the 1990s to learn Arabic. She befriended several local people, including vendors. When fighting broke out between Lebanon and Syria she was conflicted and afraid. A US citizen in that situation could be seen as a potential enemy, and people she knew now could turn against her, or be hurt or killed in the bombings. As a result she deliberately avoided certain people whom she had become friendly with. One was an artist who had been very kind to her. When she finally found the courage to visit his shop, he was delighted to see her and not at all condemning. She admired his canvases and then he took one off the wall and presented it to her., It was of the face of a woman, with reflected light, suggesting hope. Then she realised it was wearing her earrings. He had painted her portrait and gave it to her. It was a symbol of hope, and the effect was healing. Saldaña (2010) states; “I cradle it gently in my arms. Then I carry my canvas home through the streets of Damascus, this unexpected gift of my own face emerging in the ruins, and here of all places, shining and alive.” How apt the image of the face emerging from the ruins is for care of the sick. A gesture of love and acceptance began to lift fear and depression.



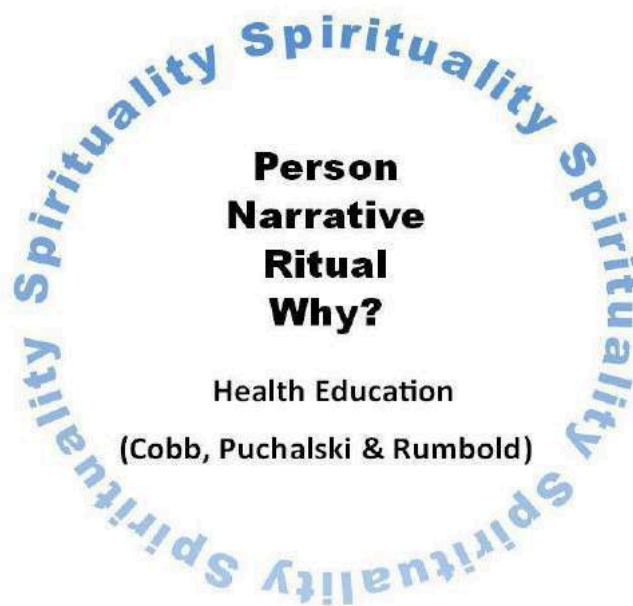


Fig.3: One model of Health Care spirituality

#### IV. KRISTEVA'S LANGUAGE, LOVE, ALTERITY AND TRANSCENDENCE

I suggest that one way that Health Care spirituality can be summed up is with the word, 'Aware'. The caregiver and the patient need self-awareness as well as the presence of the Other. Such awareness requires interconnections and a co-operative 'brokerage' of caregivers, specialists, and departments. Awareness of existential questions and experiences requires an honest liminality. Perhaps spirituality in Health Care touches most closely with the Kristevan sense of a safe, psychic space and certainly recognises that spirituality is more than interiority, also needing reciprocity. Furthermore, a Kristevan spirituality recognises the darker side of life in suffering and failing. The therapist allows revolt, remembering, taboo breaking and seeks to help people out of the depression and confusion of the abject state. In so far as Kristeva can navigate the fragility of lives, she resonates with the ideas of Sheldrake, Hay and *Spiritualise* which all reject a shallow well-being and recognise the need for a spirituality of pain, fear and failure.

The ideas expressed above clearly segue into Kristeva's sense of Language, Love, Alterity, and Transcendence. Language cannot happen, for Kristeva, unless there is sacrifice which must

allow order and social contract to structure her idea of the semiotic, taming that deep interiority at the root of ego formation and a sense of self. Feelings and opinions need to interact and must therefore be open to change. However, the sacrifice also cuts the Symbolic. The discursive must always allow the non-discursive, and vice versa. One cannot exist without the other as fount and structure, a structure always contingent and incomplete. What cannot be said, as well as what should be spoken, are central to spirituality.

*Language* needs the space to form ego identity in cooperation with the social contract. However, the discursive nature of the empirical is not adequate to describe life as a whole. Closed definitions are boundaries of the Symbolic if the researcher is not careful. Listening; sensitivity; openness and vulnerability; silences (respectful absence) and helplessness (as entering a necessary state of abjection); and simply 'being there', are all Health Care tropes. There is an interweaving of connections and collaboration, including shared narratives. The institution as an organic whole is a shared narrative. The recognition of helplessness through absence, an absence of answers to difficult questions, or who should be asked or turned to for support, reflects Kristeva's concept of an abject, liminal, borderline space as a crossroads for psychic growth. Unless

this is faced and encountered, there can be no therapeutic response. The use of psychic space and interiority requires the crossing of the boundaries and the awareness of others as sensing, feeling, thinking, and opening. A sick patient, perhaps newly diagnosed or invalided, can withdraw into herself and not desire to speak or cooperate. There might be no family to give support, or relations have broken down. Patience is required from busy and tired carers, and only gentleness and the language of gesture and giving privacy when desired will facilitate a psychic space. A gradual and gentle emergence into that space may happen with the experience of love, akin to that of the autistic boy, Joe, coming from under the table in the BBC series.

Another example could be when a person has suffered breakdown because of work conditions and the employers show no understanding and are angry that he has failed. There is adequate financial support through Union action, but the reasons for the mental collapse are not considered by the company. Furthermore, he has had accusations which did not consider his mental state, and his integrity has been shattered. He is eventually cleared of any criminal activity, but he finds that an odious reputation surrounds him. PTSD develops as a result, with trauma on top of breakdown. He displays an inability to speak, sometimes literally, but often in the sense that no one is listening, and the individual must carry the pain. There is a withdrawal into self, or just with a handful of trusted people. Listening, communicating, speaking what is believed to be true, are therefore essential parts of healing and well-being. When language shuts down, in any sense, there is a regression, and the ego cannot grow or mend. Moreover, in a case of multiple trauma and breakdown the danger is that the psyche will be overwhelmed and shatter. Such cases need very sensitive handling.

*Love* in Health Care should involve compassion and sensitivity; listening; the patient as a person; attitudes to patient and family; and allowing the carer also to be a person to love themselves with their own space to reflect and to restore. Do we allow ourselves to fail, to need guidance, to feel hurt and frustration? Love can be allowed in a

withdrawal or else constant giving out will shatter the psyche. Self-awareness and reflection are essential. Moving from feeling to thought requires a wounding and a setting of the bar between the semiotic and the beginnings of conceptualisation. The bar is impossible without the beginning of trust, and that cannot exist without a development of love. Frank sharing with cancer patients, for example, or Saldaña being given the painting, both attest to the therapy of love.

*Alterity* is involved in Health Care spirituality as the person is relational and not a lone subject and not an object as 'patient'. Respect for, listening to, and interaction with others allows beliefs and self-awareness. The need to listen to a patient is important even if the carer is not the professional person that is officially required. Giving time and trust is a respect for the other allowing the 'Who?' of both the patient and carer. A Kristevan safe, psychic space also requires the space between people and not just within. Facing the abject and crossing taboo disrupts and moves beyond, towards wellbeing and relationship. Crossing from the abject is often simply being a presence to oneself or another, giving time for reprieve spaces and being honest.

To give an example, an elderly and very frail patient is bedridden. She is a devout Catholic but is too ill to be taken to the chapel but would like to receive communion from a priest. The only minister available is a Methodist. How should she be cared for? Arrangements can be made for a priest to visit, and for communion to be brought to her bedside. This will take time, maybe a day or two, and in the meantime her family wants to briefly wheel her outside into the small garden space outside her window while it is sunny. She agrees. They are not believers, but they invite the Minister to say a prayer. The family sits with her as she prays the rosary, slowly slipping the beads through her fingers. She is delighted that her daughter has brought her one to use. Flowers are placed at her bedside when she returns, and she is touched gently and kissed goodbye. In this exchange there is listening and sacrifice, the sacrifice of the Minister standing back, the sacrifice of the family staying with her as she

prays, and her sacrifice of waiting for holy communion, and being taken from her bed, perhaps in some discomfort. Likewise, there is the sacrifice of the staff trying to understand her religious needs (perhaps frustrated that she prefers one type of ordained person to another?) and being sensitive to both her and the family. Alterity always involves a degree of giving. One cannot be with the Other unless both allow each other to be present.

*Transcendence* involves more than beliefs and religious questions and affiliations, though these are present and need respect within Health Care. Once, for example, I attended a gathering of ministers of religion in a large hospital chaired by secular staff. I asked the opening question “Why are we such a problem for you?” The resulting uneasiness opened further discussion as an honest awareness of each other. I had correctly discerned the wariness of the facilitators facing a group of various religious leaders. This relaxed the atmosphere and allowed a freer sharing. A time of dialogue suggested that apart from respecting beliefs no matter how much we may find them disagreeable or strange, members of faith groups have an important sense of belonging to a group, a tribe, a family. That level of belonging is essential for any therapeutic work. Having stated this, a sense of the transcendent reminds that the ego is stable only, paradoxically, if it can change and grow as a form of relational questing. The subject is in process and the ability to change needs to be infinite, in Kristeva’s terminology. There cannot be an End, a telos, but an ongoing quest.

Relationships are always standing outside of oneself, an *ekstatis*. A relational consciousness is transcendent in so far as the self moves out to the Other. There is always an inexpressibility involved with the distance that allows the Other. De Armit (2014: 75) captures this sense stating “...something that is here that cannot be here.” The presence of the Other is not our ego or its ideas and structures. The relational must be unpredictable and not controlled (perhaps as in the example of surprising health coordinators with my unexpected and direct question). The Other is always beyond, a moving beyond the self,

a transcendence. Kristeva’s semiotics and psychoanalysis refuse closed narratives and fixed ideas. Language is a human construction and cannot move beyond its limits, though what cannot be said allows the poetic beyond the empirical. Belief, for Kristeva, is purpose-giving and practical rather than philosophical. Despite Kristeva’s atheism, she is careful to be respectful of the beliefs, symbols, and narratives of others, especially in a therapy session. The beliefs, dreams, and experiences of her analysands are their truth and reveal something about them. A religious person who reports peace through prayer, or even a heavenly vision, are to be listened to as individuals whatever the therapist’s own beliefs or lack of them. Her respect is particularly relevant to aspects of spirituality in HealthCare with the diverse beliefs and convictions of both caregivers and clients. As a psychoanalyst she understands the need in transference and countertransference to respect the Other, including their beliefs and values, creating a safe, psychic space.

Kristeva, and Health Care can be summarised as the creation of a sensitive, aware, caring community. A safe, psychic space requires the Other, an interiority with reciprocity. The key aspect of any sense of community is belonging, a belonging to others, or to oneself by self-affirmation and belief. A Kristevan sense of a caring community recognises motility and fluidity. Any group requires boundary markers to differentiate it from either other groups or individualism. Rules and rituals may help to establish and preserve this, but Kristeva’s critique of fixed boundaries and the value of transgressing, failing, and revolt (to start over again) allow a certain flexibility which allows an individual to be individual by questioning, withdrawing if necessary (briefly or permanently). Fixed boundaries and rules can inhibit (a member of a faith group can give themselves, and be given, permission to question and change their opinions, as well as having beliefs respected). Within Health Care, there might be activities such as games, cookery, art, music, movement exercises, dance, and mindfulness, all individually practiced or in group contexts or therapy. Fluidity and

individuality allow that some of these activities might not be appropriate, just as some counseling techniques are too limited for some (for example, Cognitive Behaviour Therapy) who have more complex needs. Care allows a person the right of 'entering', to come and go, to sit, to listen, to speak or not to speak without any sense of rejection or approbation. Eating a biscuit and having a drink, and then leaving, for example, are important allowances for the dignity of the person. An individual does not have to 'do' anything in particular, but belongs by being there, however occasionally. There are different degrees of belonging. Rejection involves a permanent absence. Encouragement to enter a group (and to exit if appropriate) are important, though, to draw the ego out into relationship. Such entering allows the person to leave an abject state, or to re-enter an abject state to allow reflection and psychic realignment if they feel confined in the group.

The psyche is never a closed narrative. Accepting one's own incompleteness is necessary for psychological balance. A person of faith (in anything) needs to allow themselves, and to be allowed by the group, to have unknowns, mysteries, paradoxes, and confusion as well as convictions and any acceptance of guidance. It is necessary to think about these and to feel free to speak them. Interaction allows development and new narratives to begin to be established. Menakem (2021) argues for 'reprieve spaces', not only in thought and speech, but in physical space as the expression of grief, for example, requires caring spaces. These spaces allow the right to 'be', which can include the right to be alone or to weep. Narrative encounters allow reflection and movement forward. These can involve aspects of narrative analysis and counsel or telling one's own stories. More informally, a narrative encounter can be simply a look, a smile, or a gentle touch. Who is present for the other? Presence as accompaniment does not necessarily require expertise, or even words.

Love draws out, allows language, recognises the other and through this stepping beyond boundaries, recognises the growing psyche allowing a safe, psychic space to develop. Listening, self-awareness, presence and absence,

cooperation, brokerage, and respect are all aspects found in Kristevan modeling which are vital aspects of a Health Care spirituality. The patient should not feel ignored, and the carer should not feel alone in her work. There are no isolated individuals.

## V. BE IN TOUCH – A POSSIBLE TRAINING SCHEME?

While different organisations recognise that the term 'spirituality' is necessary there seems to be little agency to develop this and limited resources are available to provide basic training. The Oxford Centre for Spirituality and Wellbeing (OCSW) has organised a postgraduate course in spirituality for Health Care workers. Its aims and thoroughness are to be commended, but the commitment and time required, and the educational level, prohibit its more general utilisation. The EPICC ('Enhancing Nurses and Midwives' Competence in Providing Spiritual Care through Innovative Education and Compassionate Care') provides a network and charts to help to recognise and assess spirituality. The NHS Esk, Tyne and Wear Valleys has an accessible summary and symbol to aid reflection. The symbol of the five petals of a flower contains ideas such as:

- Being in the present moment.
- Meaning and purpose in the things we value.
- Loving relationships with self, others, and something beyond, giving a sense of belonging.
- An experience of living, flourishing and finding hope amidst pain or difficulties.
- The search for inner freedom, well-being and peace of mind.

A useful guideline states; "To be a human being is to be a spiritual being. Any care which is person-centred will attend to spirituality – even if, for some people, that is simply to confirm that they do not wish to discuss it." There are questions for reflection, and practical suggestions such as:



- Using the spirituality flower to explore your spirituality and spiritual needs in greater depth.
- Making provision for religious practice.
- Making provision for non-religious spiritual practice. (for example, “walking and exercise, yoga and Tai Chi ,having access to nature, creative activities such as art, music, cookery or gardening or practicing mindfulness.”)
- Referral to the chaplaincy service.
- Referral to specialist therapies.

These are excellent points for reflection and practical ideas. However, no in service training as such is suggested in the documentation. An examination and discussion of the many associations helping with spirituality and health is beyond the scope of this present article, but their networks and resources do not seem to provide any clear, accessible training programmes.<sup>5</sup> As an appendix to this article, I propose an accessible model to explore spirituality with Health Care workers in general, but only as a preliminary draft that is offered and open to discussion. It would be helpful to add selected case studies at the end of each session, too, to facilitate further discussion. The training course is deliverable in three sessions. Leaders would need to be trained and could be in-house (chaplaincy or general staff) or be externally invited. I began to devise a course in four sessions, adhering explicitly to the Kristevan four themes, but felt that this separated material too readily. The title BE IN TOUCH came first (actually in a dream), and then the realisation of its possible symbolic value. Three sessions worked better than four, not only because this would appear to be less onerous to the staff but allowed the themes to come together and inform each session. Their admixture reflects community, coinherence and brokerage. The title BE IN

<sup>5</sup> Organisations U.K. include the Oxford Cognitive Therapy Centre; Health Care Chaplaincy Network; National Spirituality and Mental Health Forum; Spiritual Crisis Network; EPICC (‘Enhancing Nurses and Midwives’ Competence in Providing Spiritual Care through Innovative Education and Compassionate Care’); and RCPsych Spirituality and Special Interest Group (SPSIG), and NHS Esk, Tyne and Wear Valleys.

TOUCH connects each session with existential questions, interiority and wellbeing, and relationships. Extra input would be needed on dealing with particular faith groups and issues.

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## BE IN TOUCH

### INTRODUCING SPIRITUALITY FOR HEALTH CARE

#### INTRODUCING SPIRITUALITY

#### *What is spirituality?*

Even an atheist has a spirituality.

Spirituality is more than religion. It is part of being human. What is it? It is impossible to define fully or to pin down. It is like flowing water. Feelings, experiences, ideas, questions, and relationships are all involved. Put in another way, it is what makes us human, involving things like love, wonder, care, creativity, and mystery. There is no one model to sum up spirituality. This short course uses three themes, linked with the title BE IN TOUCH.

- BE – the wonder of life.
- IN – the interior life and wellbeing.
- TOUCH – relating to others.

## SESSION ONE: BE

**Aim:** To explore the wonder and mystery of life as an aspect of spirituality.

**Objectives:**

- Experiencing 'WOW!' moments
- Ask 'WHAT?' questions about life
- Asking 'WHY?' questions
- Responding to questions

**'WOW!' moments**

There are times when words do not suffice. The experience of love, the joy and delight of a new born child, or an amazing sunset are all what can be called 'Wow!' moments. They move us beyond the normal rhythm of life and present us with something that evokes experiences and feelings that we cannot put into words. They can often take us by surprise and take our breath away. Various gestures (for we speak with more than words) and sounds, and maybe a few expletive words, may be used in 'WOW!' situations but they move us beyond everyday life and thought.

There are times when silence is needed, too. Silence can be full of awe. Silence is a form of acknowledging that something is happening that is beyond our words. We are left speechless. This may be the case with the stars in the night sky which seem so vast, and we feel so small. There are other times for silence when words are not enough in caring situations. So, a carer sits with a patient, or holds their hand. No words are exchanged. This has its own sense of wonder between two people.

**Asking 'WHAT?'**

What is life? Is it just a physical reality? Consider the following:

Can you weigh a sentence?

Can love be put into a test tube?

Can a flower still be a flower when picked?

Is a kiss just a kiss?

If we can trace all the chemicals and electrical signals in the brain when a sentence is spoken, is that enough?

If we can list all the chemicals involved in a loving feeling, is that enough?

If we put a picked flower under a microscope, what is missing?

A technical description of a kiss is '*the anatomical juxtaposition of two orbiculars in a state of contraction*'. What else is missing?

The purpose of life is to reproduce the species and to die to make room for others. Is that adequate?

There are some things that remain a mystery. With time, more will be understood as our technology improves. Some things may always be beyond human knowledge. Is everything physical, or is there more to life than that? 'Life' is like trying to catch flowing water, life is a form of spirituality.

**Asking 'WHY?' questions**

The complex vastness of the universe has produced consciousness, and the wonder of life. It is only natural to ask *why* anything should be. A physical answer analyses forces and atomic particles and traces the development of the expanding galaxies from the Big Bang. This explains *how* the universe formed. Isn't this the same as asking *why*? From one point of view, these are the same thing. How a thing is formed is why it has come to be. When a child asks, "Why are there clouds in the sky?" it is the same as asking "How are there clouds in the sky?"

Is this enough? Are there deeper 'WHY?' questions that we want to ask? As human beings we have the brain capacity and language complex enough to ask questions about existence. It is said that the odds against the universe happening by chance are astronomical. If conditions were slightly different, then life could not have developed on earth, for example. For some, that is just how it is. Life, the universe, and everything is just random, even if amazing. It can still be wonderful, beautiful, and life is to be cherished, even so. It just is that way. For others, there must be design and a Creator (however that is understood).

Ideas of God vary between individuals. For some, God is personal, or a force, or an invisible presence everywhere at once. Others prefer to speak of a higher power, or the depth to life, as the Universe, the Self (consciousness in general) or the chanting of a sacred symbol such as OM. It is good to be aware of such variety.

Being alive is being part of a mystery that we cannot solve. That is a wonder in itself.

#### *Responding to questions:*

Carers can often be asked a 'WHY?' question. One may ask:

"Why has this happened to me?" as they struggle to accept their illness. Another chats and asks, "What do you think is the purpose of life?" and a third asks, "Is there a God?" or "Is there a life after death?"

How would you begin to cope with these? Is it appropriate and caring to admit that you cannot give an answer? Who may you refer this to, and why? The most important action is to listen and to show care. Always ask "Who does the person want to talk with?"

Engage in free discussion and sharing about aspects of your work and the ideas in this session.

#### *To Take Away*

Try these simple activities that can have refresh and go deep (ie they are never too simple):

- Take time out to go for a walk and notice things around you, looking for details that you might have missed before.
- 'Tree bathe' in a forest.
- Go out at night to look at the stars in the sky.
- Look at yourself in a mirror for about five minutes (It may sound frivolous, but this is to prepare for the next session.)

### SESSION TWO: IN

**Aim:** To explore ourselves by searching within and seeking wellbeing.

#### *Objectives:*

- Who is speaking?
- Who am I?

- What is my story?
- Growing and loving
- Being mindful

#### *Who is speaking?*

We speak to others *and* to ourselves. We speak about many and varied things, some very practical and objective, some abstract, some beyond words, or full of questions. We use visual language with gestures and symbols, sometimes. Speaking requires a self and the rules of a language. Language is a human creation. It was not given, complete, falling from the sky, as it were. Language cannot exist without others we speak with. We cannot process our own thoughts and feelings without language. We are speaking beings. We respond and interact, we connect, but do we take quality time to connect with ourselves, to listen to our own thoughts and feelings?

#### *Who am I?*

Take time now to relax. Close your eyes, Sit comfortably. Gently count your breaths until your breathing is steady and slow. Stay like this. Thoughts should slow down and stop whizzing around your head. Note any things that do come into your mind, perhaps unexpectedly. Count some more breaths, and then open your eyes.

The brief Mindfulness exercise that you have just carried out is a way of calming thoughts. Mindfulness can be developed further, as we shall do at the end of this session. We cannot think without using language. We do not have any private language. Language is always shared. Our feelings and thoughts are personal, though. Listening to them requires looking within. Mindfulness is one way. Taking time out to go for a walk, a run, sitting in the forest and so on all can help. Take time, have space.

But who is the 'Me' inside my head? While how we think about ourselves is formed by shared language, there is something that allows this to happen. What are we? Who are we? In pairs, play the 'Who are you?' game. One repeatedly asks the other "Who are you?". After a few minutes they change roles. Start simply (name, job, address etc) and then go gradually deeper (interests, ideas, ambitions etc) until you run out of things to say.



Some things are private and should remain private. There are also aspects of ourselves that we do not realise or understand.

The mind, the soul, the psyche, the ego, the self are all labels that we can give to our conscious selves. Consciousness is a puzzle. Some have religious beliefs about the soul, and some say that we are just a side effect of our brains working. Others simply do not know who or what we are. The workings of the brain itself are a constant surprise as more and more is discovered. Consciousness itself is a puzzle science alone is unable to explain this at present. Whatever we are, at root, we are something and we grow as a person as we live and interact. The self develops and is not just static.

### *What is my story?*

Our ego, our identity, our sense of self, keeps on changing and growing. As we learn new things, and especially as we interact with others, we develop within. We are born with the beginning of a conscious mind (whatever form this takes) but our sense of self, our ego, grows with us, day by day. However, the 'Me' inside my head is self-aware. There must be a base, a spark, that allows us to be a conscious self in a unique way (we are not clones or robots) no matter what changes we go through. In some way, it is always 'Me' who experiences and changes. Our life story grows and changes as we journey on.

Humans are storytellers. We make connections with words to put things into a narrative order. Stories redact information and help people to make sense. What is missed out can reveal another story. Stories can involve experiences, our involvement with others, our beliefs, our work, and our nationality. What stories do we create about ourselves? Do we need to change our stories, sometimes, as our experiences or beliefs change? Becoming seriously ill or being disabled in an accident will change our stories, too.

Tell yourself your story, simply by thinking, by writing (a narrative or a journal) or drawing. (perhaps as a roadway marking things along its route). Can you tell different versions of it? How might this have changed along the way?

### *Growing and loving*

How does love help us to grow? Two words are relevant – SAFE and OPEN. If we feel we are safe with certain people and places, then we can open up to them. More than this, we will be safe within and able to open up to ourselves. Everyone needs to find a safe space, both within and without. We need a place to live and relax in, and we need family and friends who we can feel safe enough with to be ourselves (though our ego is always developing). If we do not feel safe then we will withdraw, and we cannot interact and develop as we should. Our conscious life is only the tip of a much deeper iceberg, metaphorically speaking. So much of our self is unconscious. Some things we have pushed down there and do not want to face. Also, some very creative ideas can surface. We can listen to ourselves by being honest, by reflecting, and by going deeper sometimes.

### *Being Mindful*

Being safe with safe places, and safe people are all necessary for mental health and wellbeing. Taking time out and to think are necessary for wellbeing. Reflecting on values and beliefs is also good for a balanced, holistic mind. The final activity in this session is an extended Mindfulness exercise that uses the imagination. Guided meditation in this way allows the unconscious to 'speak' to us.

Still yourself by gentle breathing and closing your eyes. After a time, when you feel calm, start to use your imagination. Imagine your peaceful place. This will probably be where you expect, or it may be made up, or come as a surprise. Stay there for a while in your mind. Then imagine that people you feel safe with meet you in the safe place. Who comes in? Were they people you expected? What do say or do? As it is time to leave the place, count several gentle breaths and then open your eyes.

Some of the things you imagine may be private, but what you can share with the group may be beneficial, as listening to their experiences may encourage you. We are wonderful places within our psyches – conscious and unconscious, creative, thinking, believing, valuing, feeling, and dreaming.

Engage in free discussion and sharing about aspects of your work and the ideas in this session.

### *To Take Away*

- Try to take time to use Mindfulness, even if for only five minutes a day. Be imaginative and stay in a safe place(s). Just picture this in your mind.
- Draw a simple outline of a head. In the diagram write in any ideas that you can think of.
- Carry on writing your own story, maybe over a period of time, such as journaling.

## SESSION THREE: TOUCH

Aim: To understand spirituality as relationship.

### *Objectives:*

- Love as gift
- The myth of self-love
- Meeting the gaze
- Belonging and exclusion

### *Love as gift*

As the saying goes, 'love is a many splendored thing'. There are many positive, caring aspects of what we call 'love'. Draw and cut out ten pieces of a paper jigsaw. After discussions about what love may involve in your groups, write in your own opinions in each piece, but leave one blank. Four pieces should be bigger than the rest.

Therapists speak about transference and countertransference. This is when a client can be honest and share with the therapist. Their vulnerability should only be possible if the therapist makes herself vulnerable, too. Both parties will engage with one another. Love allows a safe space to develop where trust can be established. Such a space requires a relationship. Anything that inhibits or blocks that will result in withdrawal and even a collapse into self that shuts out the other in a defense mechanism. We withdraw in fear, in pain, in timidity, in shame or in anger. Rather, we are designed to function as open beings. Love is a gift from one to another, whether in friendship, or family, or romance.

### *The myth of self-love*

Selfishness shuts the world out, uses others, and ourselves. People, our egos included, become utilitarian, only valuable for what we can get. The Greek myth of Narcissus shows the danger of not opening to others and turning in on oneself. Love can only work as a gift, a sharing, a giving up.

The young man Narcissus sees his reflection in the water and ignores the advances of the beautiful Echo. He cannot avert his gaze and falls in love with himself, entranced and unable to move until he dies. Echo herself withdraws and fades away. Besides this ancient Greek myth, there are modern stories that deal with the same emotions. Take Gollum, for example, in Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. He is obsessed with the ring, his 'Precious', so much so that he withdraws into himself and is a creepy, selfish figure who lives in the shadows in the narratives. Another example is Miss Havisham in Dickens' *Great Expectations*. She sits alone in her faded wedding dress and white veil, stuck in the same moment. She lives as if on her wedding day when she was abandoned by her fiancé. The difference in her story, though, is that she was deeply hurt by someone. Deep wounds of trauma turn inward, as both a protection and a way of trying to forget. She was traumatised by betrayal and locked within herself. Her abuse of power, and of herself, is a form of hatred, and hatred is rejected love. Hatred acts as a screen, a defense mechanism. If someone didn't care in the first place, would they feel so strongly? Anger can be the result of not getting what you want, Gollum style, or someone annoying you by what they do. Anger that becomes hatred is something more. Hatred requires love to exist, in one way or another.

### *Meeting the gaze*

It is said that the eyes are the windows to the soul. When we look into the face of someone, we meet their gaze. The other person is no longer a type of object, a person 'out there', but in relationship. Another person cannot be respected if they are not given enough space of their own. This space is for ideas and emotions, as well as respecting their rights. When we give the other some space, we give up something of ours and our power as well.

For example, imagine an argument between yourself and someone. You rehearse all your points well and counter every predicted answer. Instead, if this takes place in real life, the other person can be original, unpredictable, and emotional. It is not so easy to win the argument. We are mysteries, and so is the other person. Unpredictability is part of life, and love.

To apply this to Health Care, the patient is also a person. Their gaze meets that of the carer and allows the space to be another, different person (also from the institution or the system). Their difference requires listening and respect, and the ability for the carer to change opinions of them or what they need. The carer is more aware of themselves in the encounter, too. Who is the person who is meeting the other? Who am I? A practical example can be when a patient asks for a particular religious minister. For example, if a Catholic asks for a priest, then if they wish to make a confession or to receive communion, a Church of England priest will not suffice. If the beliefs of the patient are not understood, then it is easy for the carer to be well intentioned but then impatient and confused. People need to have their beliefs respected, and to feel that they belong to their own communities. Belonging is balance.

### *Belonging and exclusion*

Membership of a family, a group, a religion, a political party, or of a nation always involves exclusion. This means that some people will be outside the group. Exclusion can be hurtfully divisive. More informal groups such as rambling, yoga, drawing and painting etc have their insiders and their outsiders, though these boundaries are less fixed and people can enter and leave the groups, or belong to several, as they wish. They belong because they desire to belong, or to exclude themselves (though arguments can fracture this equilibrium).

Exclusion can be positive when someone does not feel compelled to belong and to join in. Smaller aspects of belonging are also valuable, such as infrequent attendance, or even coming and going without disapproval such as being quiet at the back, having a coffee, and then exiting. This is part of personal space, a level of communication,

and keeping in touch, even if brief and silent. The individual is allowed to 'be' and not to conform when certain boundaries are more fluid. To give an example, a resident goes to an entertainment in a care home. She has the freedom to exit if it gets too noisy, or if people are expected to dance to music. That is her right. There need to be reprieve spaces where people can withdraw to, within themselves, or physical spaces when needing to reflect, to calm down, or even to feel safe from certain others. In Health Care the role of entering and exiting needs to be understood. Religious believers also need the right to exit and enter. Faith can be lost, questioned, or found during ill health. Reprieve spaces (of whatever sort) allow a liminal space to reassess and refresh.

Personal space is necessary, but it can only truly be personal if the self is also in relation to others.

What reprieve spaces might there be in your place of work for staff or patients? Also consider the position and décor of a relatives' room.

What personal reprieve spaces do you require and find?

Engage in free discussion and sharing about aspects of your work and the ideas in this session.

### *To Take Away*

- Choose three people. Focus on them in a short Mindfulness session. What do you appreciate about them, or maybe what annoys you about them?
- Can you think of a situation that needs your attention?
- Do one helpful thing for a person today.

## SUMMING UP SPIRITUALITY AS BE IN TOUCH

Life is a wonderful mystery as part of a complex universe. We are conscious beings, and no one can explain how this works.

Our ego develops as we grow older, learn new information, and react to others. However, there is that x factor within us that allows this to happen and is always, to an extent, the 'Me' inside our heads, metaphorically speaking. It is essential for

our wellbeing to look within, to think, to feel and to be in a safe space to allow this to take place.

Love is a gift that allows relationships and requires us to be open and safe. Otherwise, we withdraw and lose mental balance, lost in self. Others deserve due respect and their personal space. We all need to belong, but also to have the right to exclude ourselves. Entering and exiting, physically or psychologically, require reprieve spaces.

### *To Take Away*

Reflect upon three things that you can take away from this course, and how you may be able to act upon them.

## **LEADERS' GUIDE**

### **SESSION ONE: BE**

- A brief introduction opens the course to introduce and to explore the term 'spirituality'. It is essential that the participants recognise that this does not necessarily mean religious. It is also important to note that there are many ideas to describe spirituality and no one definition. Furthermore, spirituality is more than the inner life. It is also about engagement with others and the world around us.
- Participants begin where they are, alive and in the world. For them, that is where spirituality begins, not a set of theories or doctrines beyond them. They start with themselves, ask questions, but they also live in relation to others.

### *Activity One*

Begin with the teaser, "even an atheist has a spirituality".

- Invite any immediate comments.
- In groups, the participants share any ideas they have about what spirituality may mean. These are written down on paper provided. The groups feedback as the facilitator writes any new ideas on a whiteboard or flipchart.

### *Activity Two*

- Use the examples of holding running water to suggest how it is impossible to define

spirituality. A different example is to try to hold onto a bird. If you do not grip it hard enough, then it will fly away. If you hold it too hard, then it will die. Spirituality must always have an element of mystery and it cannot be measured.

- Highlight these ideas by showing images or short video clips of running water and then flying birds.
- Invite the participants to suggest other analogies for this difficulty.

### *Activity Three*

- Introduce the concept of a 'WOW!' moment and give an example from your experience.
- In groups, share any experiences of 'WOW!' moments. Feedback afterwards. Encourage further discussion of any that are like the example of sitting silently with a patient.
- Introduce the idea of a 'Lou Beale moment'. Explain that this refers to an early episode of Eastenders when a new mother loses her child to cot death. She is bereft, and then Lou Beale, the local Matriarch, visits. She sits beside her, whispers "Say nothing," and then proceeds to hug her for a long time and both end up weeping together. What 'Lou Beale' moments have they experienced in their lives, or in their work?

### *Activity Four*

- Discuss the 'WHAT?' questions about weighing a sentence, putting love in a test tube, picking a flower, a kiss, and the purpose of life. Questions like this are part of spirituality. How do the participants react? Can the group suggest any others?
- People have different ideas about consciousness and the brain. Discuss the ideas of soul or 'just the brain working'. Another possibility is speculation that though the conscious mind is produced by the complex (and largely unknown) workings of the brain, it has emerged as something more than physical and may be able to survive death.
- Highlight that whatever ideas people hold, life has a wonderful and intangible quality.



### Activity Five

- Discuss 'WHY?' questions. Asking *why* and *how* can be the same thing, from one angle, but that *why* can imply more than that for some.
- In groups, share any of the more existential 'WHY?' questions that the participants might have. These are fed back and written up.
- Share ideas about the complexity of the universe and its meaning. Perhaps use the example of one of an infinite number of typing monkeys who could randomly type out the complete works of Shakespeare. Highly unlikely, but theoretically possible.
- Some may introduce the idea of the multiverse where there can be endless possible universes, only some of which can sustain life. What difference would this make if true? The question 'WHY?' can still be asked.

### Activity Six

- To illustrate how complex the universe is, and that it may not be as solid as we think, or as 'physical' as we think, place a chair in front of the room.
- Ask what it is, over, and over again.
- After the obvious comments, questions of naming and language may be raised, or of craftsmanship and the artisan. The resulting answer should be that under a microscope, it is a swirl of patterns of atoms.

How much smaller may we be able to examine these as our technology progresses, on and on? It seems solid, as we seem to be solid, but are we really? Just what is the universe?

### Activity Seven

- In groups, discuss how the 'WHY?' questions patients may ask could be handled. Each group has a series of cards with Chaplain, Visitor, Doctor, Nurse, Friend, Care worker, on them. There is a large one with a '?' marked on it in the centre of the group. Discuss who is best placed to help by placing their cards near to the '?' and suggesting what the question/problem might be.

- Feedback, share ideas, and experiences. At the end of the day, who does the patient wish to speak to? If a nurse, for example, cannot give good answers, their presence and their listening might be enough.

### Take Away

- Write any ideas of what spirituality is in a circle that each participant draws. These are the result of having completed this session.
- Suggest activities to follow up with. These might sound too simple and flippant, even. However, they have definite benefits, especially if you are working hard and exhausted after long days. They are ways of switching off.
- Take time out to go for a walk and take in new details, to 'tree bathe' in a forest, or to watch the night sky.
- To prepare for the next session, look at yourself in the mirror for five minutes or so. (This will make sense then!)

## SESSION TWO: IN

The aim of the second session is to explore the interior life and wellbeing.

### Activity One

- Explore different types of language (other than different national languages). Why do we use language? Language exists because other people exist.
- In what ways do we communicate with others in health care situations?
- How do we communicate with ourselves to reflect and have space?

### Activity Two

- Lead a brief time of Mindfulness, breathing slowly, for a few minutes. Perhaps use a small bell to 'awaken' the group. The aim is to calm our thinking, relax our bodies and refresh our minds.
- Can we think without using language? Discuss. (No, but we can feel. How we process our feelings uses language, though.)
- Who is the "Me" inside my head that thinks, feels, and speaks? Ask each person to point to

various parts of their body and end with, “Now point to yourself” How do they react? (A holistic version might be to begin with the face and then indicate their whole body. We are a unity of mind and body.)

#### *Activity Three*

- Ask the participants to work in pairs and play the ‘Who are you?’ game. One repeatedly asks the other “Who are you?”. After a few minutes they change roles. Usually, the participants exhaust any information that they can think of after a few minutes. Stress that some things are private and should remain private.
- Discuss the idea that there are aspects of ourselves that we do not realise or understand.

#### *Activity Four*

- Discuss the role and value of stories. Can anyone share their favourite stories, or stories that have made an impression on them? The important thing is to be spontaneous and what comes immediately to mind.
- Our life stories develop. How? The ego responds, changes, and grows through new information and interactions. In what ways have people changed through their lives? (However, there is always a ‘Me’ there somewhere, conscious, though always developing.)
- In groups, share stories about where the participants work and patients you care for.
- How does becoming ill affect a person’s story, for example? Can telling a new story (either deliberately or in changing opinions) help them?
- The group begins to tell their own stories. (This is another form of the ‘Who are you?’ game but more self-reflective.) During the session, a timeline is used on paper to process and fill in certain stages, events, and feelings. It will be suggested that this is continued and constructed more carefully as a Take Away option.

#### *Activity Five*

- Display the words OPEN and SAFE. How do these allow love to take place? Ask the participants to imagine a safe place which they

then share with the group. These are written on pieces of paper which are placed around the two cards saying OPEN and SAFE. We need safe spaces to grow and find balance.

#### *Activity Six*

- Lead a guided mediation/mindfulness session. After closing eyes, breathing slowly, and counting a number of breaths (ten can be suggested) imagine a safe place. The aim is to visualise a safe place.
- Where is it? Real (expected or as a surprise?) or imaginary?
- Who might be there that you feel safe with? What do you say or do? Leave the place gently, counting breaths again.
- Share any of the details of their guided meditation, if they feel able, to encourage one another.
- Journeying within can allow things to surface from the unconscious which can be enlightening and creative. However, is this always beneficial? (It helps if this is in the context of a safe space, particularly with any others present with you who give support.)

Our psyches are creative, thinking, believing, valuing, feeling, and dreaming places.

#### *Take Away*

- Try to use Mindfulness each day, even if only for five minutes. This need not imagine places or scenes. Just be still. A religious person may adapt this to a time of quiet prayer.
- Draw the outline of a head, and write in any ideas to answer the question ‘Inside me there is...’ The inside, of course, is the journey into the psyche, and not biology!
- Continue telling your own story on the timeline. Take this slowly, little by little, maybe as journaling over several days?

### SESSION THREE: TOUCH

The aim of this session is to explore the value of relating to others and how this is also beneficial to us.

#### *Activity One*

- Distribute a jigsaw template. Four pieces are larger. The template has a piece missing deliberately. Discuss ideas about what love is. Groups write these in the pieces and then assemble them. Explain why the four pieces were larger. These represent the classical four loves derived from Greek philosophy – Empathy(bonding); Friendship; Romance; Self-Giving love. (The latter gives without expectation of return. What examples can they think of?).
- Why do they think that there is a piece missing? (Love has an indefinable quality and can be unpredictable. It is not something that can be just physically analysed (although brain functions and the chemicals released are important). There is a personal quality and the attitudes and actions of another, or of ourselves, are never totally predictable.)

Love is a gift that allows a safe space to develop. If this does not happen, then we withdraw and lose our wellbeing.

#### *Activity Two*

- Introduce the story of Narcissus. Why is self-love not really love? Consider modern stories of this type, eg Gollum in Tolkien, and Miss Havisham in Dickens. Read out a passage from Dickens' *Great Expectations*, describing the first meeting with Miss Havisham.
- Can the participants think of any other modern examples? Develop this into a discussion about why some people are closed in on themselves. (Note that Miss Havisham is traumatised, not immature or greedy.)
- How is hatred different from anger? Hatred is thwarted, traumatised love. It requires love to exist and shows that the person cared deeply about something or someone. Is this always true? Why might we hate a dictator who causes the death of many innocents, for example?
- Can the group share any examples of people they have encountered who are difficult to help? Deeply wounded emotions do not allow a person to behave or analyse situations as in normal life. (Love accompanies a person, as well as seeking to be informed about the

patient's history and the medical or psychological condition. Suggest 'person not patient' as a slogan).

#### *Activity Three*

- Encountering others gives us something but also takes away something. Discuss how that might work.
- What do we gain by listening to others? (We learn new things and realise some of our limitations.)
- What do we lose by listening to others? (We lose by surrendering some of our control of the situation.)
- What does the other person gain? (They gain by having their own space.) We are not in charge, but in relating Why is having space important? (Space is needed between people to allow individuality. For example, we can imagine a debate where we answer an opponent and easily win. In everyday life, it is more complicated. We do not always get the responses that we expect.)
- Invite the group to share some examples of encounter and loss in these ways, if they feel comfortable doing so. .
- Talk through the example of the Catholic priest and the Church of England priest visiting a particular patient.. (Explain that a Catholic would only recognise the sacraments of anointing the sick, hearing a confession, or of celebrating communion if conveyed by a Catholic priest.) Can any other examples be suggested (not just religious)?
- Discuss how carers need to learn more about the beliefs of some people to be able to help. What help would they like to have with this?

#### *Activity Four*

- There are times to enter and times to exit situations, discussions, or relationships. In groups, participants share any examples that they can think of.
- Apply this to Health Care and the need for freedom to choose who to speak with about a problem, to access certain treatment or therapy, to join in or to leave an activity.
- Two cards are given to each group listing two activities: group discussion/ art therapy;

music therapy/religious worship: a presentation/ entertainment. They have two blank cards to each group as well, to think of different activities. Why might some enter and exit any of these?

- If someone enters a meeting and takes a quick coffee at the back, listens for a minute, and then leaves, is that still valuable as a form of entering? (An exit may refer to taking time out, to seeking a quiet space, or a reprieve space.)
- How can a reprieve space be possible in their schedule and place of work?
- A reprieve space may also allow guarding, as in guarding ideas, principles, and beliefs in the face of opposition. Can anyone suggest examples?
- An entrance, for some patients, might be into a faith, or a deeper faith, for example, or an exit may result where a patient begins to lose faith and face many doubts. Discuss the need for entrances and exits for wellbeing.

#### *Take Away*

- Choose three people. Focus on them in a short Mindfulness exercise. What do you appreciate about them, or maybe, what annoys you?
- How can it be helpful to encourage patients to tell their own stories about entering and exiting? How would you help them to do this?
- What reprieve spaces might there be in your place of work for staff or patients? Think about recreation, and also rooms for visitors. How might these be decorated, what furniture would appropriate, and what symbols could help? (cf the painting over of the children's mural in an immigration centre in the UK. The government felt that it should not be too welcoming.)
- What personal reprieve spaces do you require and find (including in your personal life)?
- Try to consciously do one helpful thing for a person today.

#### *Summing Up*

Collect any ideas from the group about their responses and comments regarding each of the three sections, BE IN TOUCH, in turn.

What can they take away?

What could be improved or added to the course?



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# Exploring Poetic Depth: An Analysis of 'Lógyìl' Performance by Anselm Niyàgákùr Kyõh of Nandom-Kuselle

*Martin Kyiileyang*

## ABSTRACT

In most African societies, there are oral artists; prominent among them are folk singers and composers, 'griots' (praise singers in kings' courts), oral poets and dirge singers. Categories of oral artists include professionals, free-lance and occasional poets. The most outstanding oral artists are the praise-singers at the various traditional courts. Niyàgákùr's performance falls under the professional type because he is a renowned xylophonist who plays during the 'Kàkubé' Festival celebrated in Nandom and funerals that he attends. The purpose of this study is to delineate poetic intricacies closely associated with only "lógyìl" xylophone musical texts. It must be emphasised that the xylophone musical scope is very wide and a single study cannot underscore all the details on xylophone music. Even lógyìl music has its own varieties apart from major varieties of xylophone music such as "bè-lànṃ" and "dàgáár"/"dɛgáár".

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# Exploring Poetic Depth: An Analysis of 'Lógyìl' Performance by Anselm Niyàgákùù Kyõh of Nandom-Kuselle

Martin Kyiileyang

## I. INTRODUCTION

In most African societies, there are oral artists; prominent among them are folk singers and composers, 'griots' (praise singers in kings' courts), oral poets and dirge singers. Categories of oral artists include professionals, free-lance and occasional poets. The most outstanding oral artists are the praise-singers at the various traditional courts. Niyàgákùù's performance falls under the professional type because he is a renowned xylophonist who plays during the 'Kàkubé' Festival celebrated in Nandom and funerals that he attends. The purpose of this study is to delineate poetic intricacies closely associated with only "lógyìl" xylophone musical texts. It must be emphasised that the xylophone musical scope is very wide and a single study cannot underscore all the details on xylophone music. Even lógyìl music has its own varieties apart from major varieties of xylophone music such as "bè-lànni" and "dàgáár"/"dègáár".

### 1.1 The Dàgàrà Xylophone

The xylophone (known as 'gyl' in Dàgàrà) is mostly played in northwestern Ghana by the Dàgáábà and Sisààlá people whose territory also extends into Burkina Faso. In certain areas, the instrument is considered as sacred and played only for funerals. However, in modern times, xylophones are used for various musical occasions such as weddings and religious ceremonies. Generally, it is a symbol of unity during gatherings to entertain the public. Xylophone making is considered sacred and for generations the art of making them had been known to very few families. The knowledge of production and playing has been passed from father to son by way of initiation. Therefore, in ritual ceremonies

specific xylophone texts are played that are not to be used for ordinary occasions.

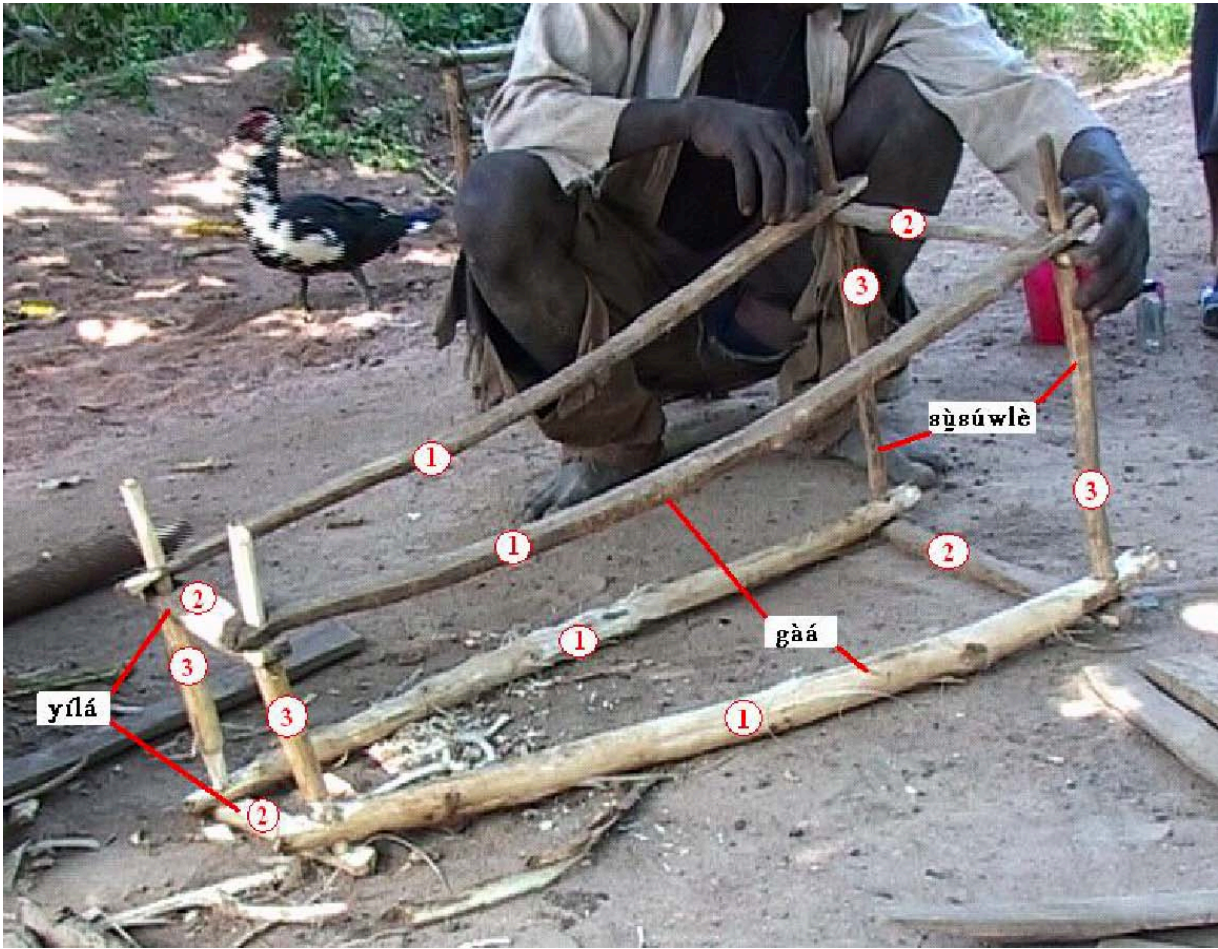
Our modern xylophone is a complex assembly of various natural and industrial materials. Redwood is used in constructing the frame as this is insect resistant. Cowhide and other forms of skin are cut into stripes and used in tying the frame or wooden structure together. Some are also used to decorate the frame. A number of gourds which resonate the pitched bars are hung below attached to the frame. When it is suspended, it serves as a resonator for tuning. The scale it is tuned to, traditionally, is pentatonic that is, nasal pentatonic. Here is a description on how the gyl is made in systematic order:

The bars of *gylé* are made from a strong red wood of the ('lìgá') tree and joined first to one another and then suspended above a wooden frame, which is held together by cowhide. Hollowed calabash gourds act as resonators for the bars, with gourds ranging in sizes that correspond to the size and pitch of the bars. Thus, the largest bars are resonated by the largest gourds. These gourds act as sound amplifiers, and also provide a characteristic of the Dagara sound ideal, the buzzed timbre. In order to create this buzzed timbre, holes are cut in the circumference of the roundest part of the gourds, then covered with spider egg casings.

(Strumpf 1970, cited in Lawrence, 2006, p.19)

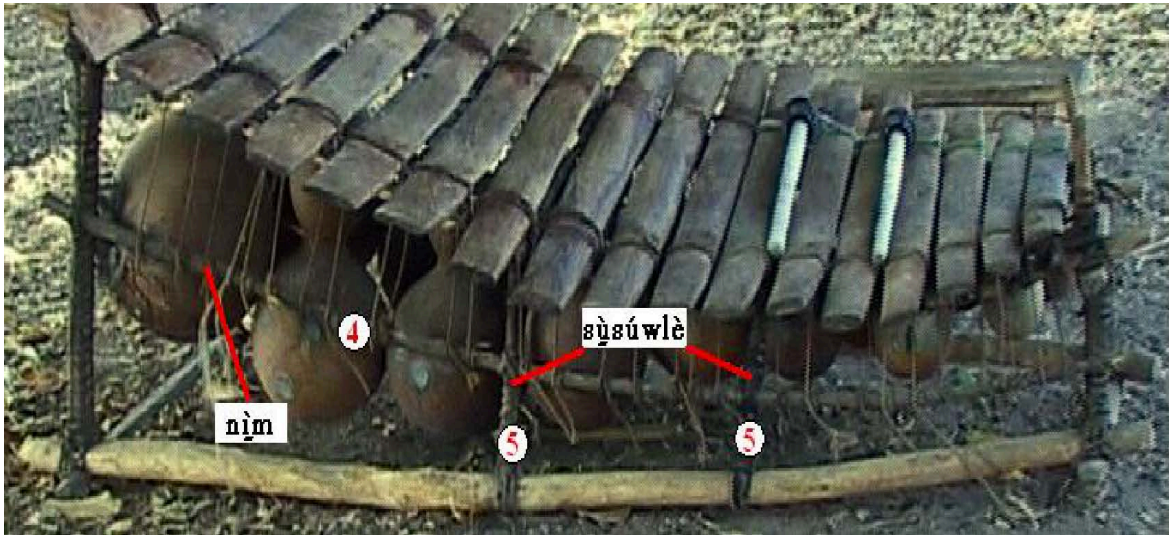


The construction of a Dàgàrà xylophone can be illustrated as follows:



Source: David Vaulay, June, 2007: (Vaulay, 2007, p. 55)

Photo 1: Construction Frame of a Dàgáár'/Degáár Xylophone



Source: David Vaulay, June, 2007: (Vaulay, 2007, p. 55)

Photo 2: 'Dàgáár'/Degáár Xylophone





Source: Woma, 2012, p. 43

*Photo 3:* Two master xylophonists with “Gyil-dàà” (Male gyil) on the right and “Gyil-pɔg” (Female gyil) on the left.

Kuutiero’s (2006) research on the poetic values of the Dàgàrà dirge corroborates Lawrence’s exposition on the nature of the Dàgàrà xylophone. Kuutiero emphasizes that the boards function as the keys on which notes are struck while the gourds are the resonators. Some mallet-heads made of latex (known in Dàgàrà as ‘gyil-bié’) are wound round the ends of a moulded piece of rounded wood which is thick enough to make a firm hold in the hand. Bodomo and Mora (2007, p.88) have also exemplified the structure of the xylophone through their apt description of this indigenous musical instrument of the Dàgàrà and the Dàgàábà. “The rapid striking of the keys by a performer with the gyil-bié usually gives rise to the mellifluous melody that emanates from the xylophone” (Kuutiero, 2006, p.108). Xylophone

makers are skilful in their art and are often highly regarded among the Dàgàrà. “Xylophone makers are themselves very good xylophonists but of course, it is not every xylophonist that is a xylophone maker. Xylophone making is a skill one acquires through training. The mastery of this skill will usually draw customers to the maker” (Kuutiero, 2006, p.108). Among the Dàgàrà, xylophone experts are likened to good poets. They are known as ‘gəbr’ (plural of ‘gəba’) that is, distinctive performers of high calibre who are noted for their exquisite performances at funerals. A ‘gəba’ (sing. of ‘gəbr’) acquires his skills through many years of apprenticeship in learning how to play the xylophone very skilfully as required by their mentors. This is because the art of communication with the xylophone is a

specialized one and the mentee must know all about the xylophone as is often the case of accomplished xylophonists some of whom are also xylophone makers. A master xylophonist from Fielmuo-Hiinéteng, East of north-western Ghana was properly trained by his paternal uncle and he eventually became an expert player (i.e. a 'gɔba'). He points out that "the purification ceremony of a new gyl also offers the opportunity for non-initiate gyl players to eat the *gyl-tii* (gyl medicine), a ritual ceremony that confirms their induction as *gɔba* (the recognized official title of a *gyl-wiërè*)" (Woma, 2012, p. 40).

Here is a brief narrative on the development of the Dagara xylophone.

Oral history of the Dagara people trace the musical origins of the gyl to some mythical inhabitants of the forest called *kontombili* (dwarfs). According to a legend, a Dagara hunter (nabagle) was on a hunting expedition when he heard the kontombili playing the gyl. Drawn to the beautiful sound of the gyl, the hunter consulted the kontombile (singular for dwarf) to learn the art of making the instrument and all the knowledge associated with the performance techniques of the gyl. Initially, the kontombile was hesitant but later on taught the hunter how the gyl was made and all the mysteries and taboos associated with the instrument. There are details about cultural taboos associated with the gyl. After learning the art and knowledge of making and playing the gyl, the hunter with the help of his fellow hunters, used their magical powers to kill the kontombile and took the gyl to their people, claiming that God gave it to them as the musical instrument of the Dagara people. Even these days, it is believed that the kontombili are still attracted to the sound of the gyl, but also harbour animosity toward humans (Vercelli, 2006 cited in Woma, 2012, p.39).

The sociocultural significance of the gyl is represented by Woma in the following submission.

Drawing from its mysterious history, the name "gyl" in Dagara translates as "gather." When the hunters brought the instrument to the community, the people were so baffled with its amazing sound that they began gathering around to listen to its wonderful music. As the hunters began playing the instrument, they told the gathered crowd to dance to the music. In amazement, the men started jumping and leaping high in the air while the women danced gently and gracefully to this "sweet" music. According to Woma (also a master xylophonist) this story was narrated to him by Ziem Tibo (his gyl mentor) during his "gyl-tii dib", that is (final initiation rites for a xylophonist). Binε (a vigorous dance to the gyl music) is gender specific as men jump and leap in their version of the dance called *vaafu* (leaping) while women dance gracefully in much coordinated dance-steps to gyl music. As the name "gyl" implies, anytime there is gyl music celebration in Dagara community, everyone gathers around the performance space to hear the music or join the performance celebration. In funeral performance, it is still the practice for mourners and dirge singers to gather around the gyle (plural) at funeral rituals to sing their dirges and dance to the music. The legend of the gyl has always been part of the ritual of gyl making; therefore, makers of the instrument believe that a newly made gyl should be purified to cleanse both the bad spirits in the wood that constitutes the instrument as well as the magical spirits of the kontombile that gyl makers believe hover around a newly made gyl (Woma, 2012, pp. 39-40).

In line with Dàgàrà tradition, the xylophone is played mostly by men as a solo or pair instrument. Two people often sit and face each other, a short distance apart. The lead player decides the kind of musical text that should be played and the support player then joins him with a more repetitive accompanying tune (Kuutiero, 2006, p.110, Woma, 2012, pp.43-44). The xylophone is a percussion instrument when it is properly tuned and can be played with other

percussions together. There are two types of Dàgàrà xylophone: the 'lógyl' (plural is 'lógylé') used for 'lòbrì' musical texts and the 'dàgá-gyl' (plural is 'dàgá-gylé') used for 'dàgáár' and 'bè-lànṇi' musical texts. The standard 18-key dàgá-gyl is used for funerals and for 'bèwáá' (a vigorous dance for entertainment). The dàgá-gyl is "widely regarded as the eldest of all xylophones" (Mensah 1982, p. 142) as posited by a Ghanaian musicologist. However, Woma has given a comprehensive exposition on the Dàgàrà xylophone and its ensemble as well as how it is used for performances.

In a duet performance, the music is typically divided into two parts: melody and bass. The *gyl-daa* usually plays the lead role while the *gyl-pog* plays the support part, sometimes with one hand playing a repetitive baseline with little improvisation while the other hand provides a timeline called *kpagru* with the back end of the mallet. *Gyl kpagru* is an important component of this highly rhythmic music. For gyl players, *kpagru* is the foundation of upon which the music enjoys its rhythmic flow and density. Just as the bell serves to keep rhythm and timing in most West African music, *kpagru* serves the same purpose for gyl music and, without it, the music loses its rhythmic power and musical taste.

(Woma, 2012, pp. 43-44)

The 14-key lógyl is traditionally used in 'bàgr-buné' (a dance performed during traditional religious rites) and also to announce the death of anybody among the Dàgàrà of Nandom and those of Burkina Faso. The lógylé are used when communicating with the spirits and ancestors and are believed to be imbued with spiritual power. The lógylé are used to sound lòbrì musical texts. Lòbrì musical texts are original Dàgàrà texts that have always been used until the Dàgàrà learnt 'dàgáár' musical texts from other related cultures. A clear distinction can be drawn between 'lòbrì' and 'dàgáár' musical texts on one hand and 'lòbrì' and 'bè-lànṇi' on the other. Lógyl music can be performed for both entertainment and funerals. On funeral occasions, selected musical texts are

played for both male and female. A particular musical text being played determines whether a man or a woman has died. One is able to determine the context of every text wherever one is (Bériséé, 2011).



A pair of Lògyìl xylophones is illustrated below here:



Source: David Vaulay, June, 2007: (Vaulay, 2007, p. 61)

*Photo 4:* The Lògyìl, a portable xylophone of fourteen wooden keys

### 1.2 Poetic Elements and Oral Traditions

Finnegan (2012, pp. 145-146) states that elegiac poetry is a common form of expression in Africa. It comes in many different forms but usually less elaborate than panegyric poetry. Elegiac poetry tends to be performed by non-professionals, mostly women rather than state officials. However, among the Dàgàrà people, men are the most dominant elegiac poets in terms of performance during funerals. Elegiac poetry falls under 'lyric' poetry and cannot be treated as a distinctive genre. Obvious instances of elegiac poetry are those poems or songs performed at funeral or memorial rites, e.g. Islamic funeral songs sung by Hausa mallam or the complex Akan funeral dirges chanted by women soloists, to the simple laments with leader and chorus such as those sung among the Limba and the Dàgàrà of the northwestern Ghana.

The occasions for these laments differ from people to people. Often dirges are sung round the corpse or round the house in which the corpse lies while it is being prepared for burial. Among the Akan, the Dàgàrà of Nandom and the Dàgàábà of northwestern Ghana in general, this is followed by a period of public mourning, during which the corpse lies in state and dirges are sung. The actual burial is often accompanied by elegies performed by dirge-singers among the Dàgàrà people. However, Nketia (1955, p.15) posits that it is not practised among the Akan. In the traditions of the Dàgàrà and the Limba, all burials are normally accompanied by performance from the dirge-singers especially panegyric of the dead. Elegiac Features of the Dagara Dirge are illustrated as follows:

Source Language (Dagara)	Translation
Ĩ sãà bag-bieó sób hâp nyine lóór?	Where will my unfortunate father seek refuge?
Kũũ yel ke ε ti íh ηmine?	What does death want us to do?
Kũũ vuon ti na a pĩn, pĩn túl.	Death has baffled and caused us irreparable havoc.

Source: Fieldwork Conducted in Nandom on Dagara Dirges, March 2024

The rhetorical questions above are lamentations that the cantor conveys to his ancestor on the fate of an unfortunate person bogged down with persistent deaths. The state of despondency is

portrayed in this expression: *Kũũ yel ke ε ti íh ηmine?* (What does death want us to do?) The same dirge singer maintained his rhetorical questions to arouse the emotions of sympathisers.

Source Language (Dagara)	Translation
Tĩ gbáále nyine tɔ anú?	To whom should we grope in our misery?
U naa ti nyɔg ni a dɔɔ ε kye tu nyine lóór?	Where would death have passed after 'He' had captured the man?

Source: Fieldwork Conducted in Nandom on Dagara Dirges, March 2024

The dirge singer's language above depicts the bravery of the deceased: "U naa ti nyɔg ni a dɔɔ ε kye tu nyine lóór". This implies that if death were human and had confronted the deceased (man) there could have been no way to pass without being defeated. In this performance, the image of bravery and physical strength demonstrate how

bellicose the deceased was but unfortunately, it was rather death (Kũũ) that accosted him. The rhetorical question emphasises the helplessness of mankind before death as terminator.

The following lines by a ninety-year-old dirge singer accentuate the grievous nature of sorrow caused by death:

Source Language (Dagara)	Translation
Ni nàŋ nir nɛm wɛɛ!	I am forlorn without any relative!
Ni nàŋ nir nɛm wɛɛ!	I am forlorn without any relative!
Ni nàŋ nir nɛm wɛɛ!	I am forlorn without any relative!
Ni nàŋ nir nɛm wɛɛ!	I am forlorn without any relative!

Source: Fieldwork Conducted in Nandom on Dagara Dirges, March 2024

The dirge singer in the above text conveyed her deepest sorrow as she declared to the world: Ni nàŋ nir nɛm wɛɛ! (I am forlorn without any relative!) to emphasise that she was a lonely and miserable person. The contextual interpretation of the term 'forlorn' in the mourning tone of the cantor (in the Dagara funeral context) depicts either total loss of her entire family or most of her

family members which has caused her to grapple with loneliness in her abode. The phrase, Ni nàŋ foregrounds sorrow and sadness that have engulfed the cantor in her old age. Thus, she keeps on repeating the expression: Ni nàŋ nir nɛm wɛɛ! The idiophonic expression, "wɛɛ" indicates overwhelming sorrow.

The xylophonist like any poet, gains inspiration through some powerful emotions (influenced by a Muse) and this could result into the composition of a fresh song. The xylophonist then waits for a special occasion to launch his new song. Preferably, a funeral celebration which attracts sympathisers from far and wide. A case in point is

the late Bér̃gyiré, one of the accomplished xylophonists of Nandom-Puffiong. He was not only a ‘gɔba’ but also a xylophone maker and repairer who was prolific in composing sensational musical texts. Some of most popular ones include:

Xylophone Text No. 1:

Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
“Biébié nir mì ĩ wà kùb bér ékyé zĩh”.	An avowed enemy employs diabolic, mysterious and wicked means in eliminating his opponents.

Xylophone Text No. 2:

Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
Dɔndɔmé kùb fɔ fàà ná bàŋ yān”.	Even if enemies conspire against you and kill you, you have already surpassed them in knowledge and wisdom.

Xylophone Text No. 3:

Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
“Fùr sáá kyén zìé zà”;	You can choose wherever you want to go;
dɔndɔmé kyǎǎnà bé à bé	enemies will still abound.

Xylophone Text No. 4:

Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
“Bìbì bérwoné nyɔg dɔpàn (gbǎá) nɪ zùr̃r”.	It is a stubborn child who dares to hold a cobra by the tail.

Xylophone Text No. 5:

Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
“Vurbààlé bél ù nà gùr̃ ékyé pór Bér̃gyiré;	Vurbààlé members stared at him in awe and named him “Mysterious-Prodigy”;
dɔndɔmé bél ù nà kǎá ù lèbì zǎǎ pur̃i”.	enemies gloated and scorned him as a petty fellow.

Xylophone Text No. 6:

Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
“A nɪbé bél né nà iér á”.	Those who gossip about you are the same people
bél mingà nèbé bɔbr ké bé kùb”	who conspire to kill you.



## II. The Dàgàrà People and their Xylophone Musical Texts

The Dàgàrà are a group of people in the Upper West Region of north-western Ghana. The main area of settlement is Nandom and Burkina Faso. However, some of them are reported to have settled in present day Ivory Coast as well. In Ghana, the Dàgàrà form the greater part of the population of Diocese of Wa and their relatives in the Diocese of Diebougou of Burkina Faso. (Bekye, 1991, pp. 93-94) The Dàgàrà originated from the Mole-Dagbani peoples of the Lake Chad region. They are part of the MABIA-speaking (Gur) group of West Africa. They have always maintained and sustained their traditional, social, political and religious systems of organisation.

With reference to previous researchers on the Dagara people, Naciele Hien (2019) argues that Dagara people, the Mossi and the Gourmatché can be traced to the Dagomba ethnic group. Delafosse was the first scholar to make such claim and was corroborated by Hébert and others such as Nurukyor who concluded that “the results of our own inquiries confirm the hypothesis established by Fr Hébert. Indeed, all the Dagara from Haute-Volta (Burkina Faso) agree that they migrated from Northern Ghana” (Mukassa, 1986 cited in Naciele-Hien (2019, pp. 32-33). This assumption hinged on the Dagara migratory movement from Tamale to Northern Ghana and Southern Burkina which occurred during the time of *Dagombas'* empire and their territory expansion through tribal wars, invasions and conquests. The geographical location of the Dagara in Burkina and Ghana would have been seen as a result of migration. Colonial boundaries first moved the ancestors of the Dagara from Tamale to the north-western part of Ghana. While some remained in Ghana, others migrated to the South-western region of Burkina Faso by the end of the 18th Century (Mukassa, 1986 cited in Naciele Hien, 2019, p.33). The latest corroboration is by Kuba & Lentz (2020, pp.3-4). However, Gbaane-Dabire rather gives other reasons on the historical migration of the Dagara community. He posits that the Dagara geographical mobility is motivated by search for

fertile lands and fear of the great empires and invaders such as the Ashanti, the Dagomba, the Djerma as well as the colonial powers. He points out that the Dagara had always loved their freedom and want to enjoy their independence wherever they are (Dabire, 1983 cited in Naciele-Hien, 2019, p. 33).

Before the advent of Christianity and Islam, the Dàgàrà people held strong spiritual beliefs in a popular cosmological figure known as “Kòntòn”; a kind of omnipotent deity in Dàgàrà traditional practices (“sàākumv”). Tradition is regarded by the Dagara as a community-owned knowledge of cultural practices, customs, religious beliefs, taboos and other social virtues. Thus, the Dàgàrà people strongly believe that knowledge of their cultural history, religion and rituals emanated from “Kòntòn” (pl. Kòntómé). Naaeke posits that the Kòntómé are the brainchildren behind the discovery of many aspects of Dagara culture such as art, music, magic, hunting and medicine. In fact, Dàgàrà gyl players usually trace the origin and invention of their instrument to the Kòntòn who is believed to have given this specialized knowledge to a Dàgàrà hunter (nàbàglè) to use as their traditional instrument for funerals and entertainment (Naaeke, 2000, p.36 cited in Woma, 2012, pp.14-15).

Some of the traditions of the Dàgàrà people include farming, sacrifices to almighty God, marriage, dowry, initiation rites, inheritance, nomenclature, art and craft. All these originated from their ancestors. The Dàgàrà have always settled in villages according to patrilineal clans such as Bèkuoné, Dikpiéllé, Kusiéllé, Gbāāné, Nābégélé, Būbūlé, Bèrwuolé, Mètuollé and Zágé. Apart from these patrilineal clans there are also matrilineal clans. Some of them include Sòmdà, Kpòdà, Mèdà, Sòmé, Dàburé, Kàmburé and Hien.

In accordance with Dàgàrà tradition, lòbrì musical texts are the first type of xylophone music played when a person dies. In an interview with Bèriséé (2011) he described the lògyl as “an instrument of sorrow” because of its typical role of arousing sympathy and mourning on funeral occasions. Lòbrì rhythms are often soft in nature and are



played in a particular way to portray the situation of bereavement and the attendant mourning that accompanies the selected musical texts.

Example of Lóbri Musical Text:

Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
<i>Gàndáá tà-migr ká kpélé kpélé.</i>	The bow-string of a man of valor has broken inots and piece.

According to Dàgàrà tradition, ‘dàgáár’ music is often played before ‘bè-làṅṅi’ music during funeral occasions. Dàgáár musical texts are similar to ‘bè-làṅṅi’ musical texts. They are critical and satirical in nature depending on the cause of the death of a person in Dàgàrà society. The above

text is a lamentation on the elder who was a man of valour to the household and has suddenly passed on. The term *gàndáá* shows the social stature and power he wielded in his society before he died.

Example of Dàgáár Musical Text

Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
<i>Fĩfh kàbr bé nyùrré i, fĩfh ḡméa nà.</i>	Driver-ants are getting burnt but they do not smell so are driver-ants.

The above text means that nothing can change somebody’s negative attitude towards another. This kind of music text is often directed against the enemies of the dead. In other words, the enemies of the dead are incurably bad and should never boast of their nefarious activities.

‘Bè-làṅṅi’ music does not only arouse great sympathy in mourners but they induce people to dance on funeral occasions of elderly people in Dàgàrà society.

Example of Bè-làṅṅi Musical Text

Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
<i>Nìnfàà gbéé nǎǎ í wégr, nìnfàà gbéé nǎǎ í lùrgé</i>	If the poor person’s legs were long beams, the poor man’s legs would have been used in roofing traditional Dàgàrà homes.

The above musical text is based on oppression that poor people experience in Dàgàrà homes. The satire is directed against all oppressors of poor and weak people in society. Metaphor and symbolism are the useful literary features. These are seen in the words “nìnfàà gbéé” (poor person’s legs) compared indirectly to straight beams (“wégr”) often used in the roofing of traditional Dàgàrà houses.

Lóbri musical texts are intended basically to arouse sympathy and praise the deceased’s background. However, ‘dàgáár’ texts are meant to induce mourning during a funeral and to warn and admonish the bereaved family. They are equally critical and satirical in nature depending on the possible cause of the death.

### Example of Dàgáár Musical Text

Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
<i>Blkpíéb sìgr nà bè fáá ě. dé à ìr níúíí mhiìlì tàně</i>	They have seized the orphan's honey and used his hands to smear them with dirt.

While lóbrí musical texts are intended to praise the deceased's background, Dàgáár musical texts are meant to induce mourning during a funeral and to warn and admonish the bereaved family.

### III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Magoulick (2012) identified and emphasised the dynamics of folklore and ethnography in Performance with reference to her fieldwork. She points out that the dynamics have shifted from mere collection and categorisation of folklore to synthesis and understanding of peoples and their creations in their own terms. This gave birth to the Performance Theory. Performance Theory aims at rendering texts skilfully artful so that the aesthetic values can be delineated according to the comprehension of language, speech patterns and figures of sound inherent in the texts. Literary aesthetics can be seen to be more effective and understandable through the manifestation of rhythm, repetition, patterns of speech and pauses in texts. Therefore, there are performances which require thorough application of these techniques to render the texts enjoyable and meaningful (Kyiileyang, 2017, pp.63-64).

Performance is an indispensable part of Oral Poetry. Much of Oral Poetry is directly associated with rhythmic movement. Every culture has recognised conventions for its forms of poetic expression. Some of these relate to the occasion, the audience, performer or purpose. The most fundamental of these conventions are those pertaining to the verbal style of the piece or genre. The simplest, most fundamental and most widespread feature of poetry is rhythmic structure. Words and music are closely associated with rhythmic movements of the body. There is no doubt that the prosodic system is the feature which most immediately gives form to a poem. (Finnegan, 1977, pp.89-92; Finnegan, 2012, p. 236).

Expressive culture is very significant to oral performances such as the singing of traditional songs of any ethnic group, the citing of a proverb in the right context, the narration of folktales as well as the playing of the Dagara xylophone. This study is undergirded by Richard Bauman's Performance Theory. He corroborates Magoulick on the wave of change which characterized the collection and analysis folkloric materials in the 1960s and 1970s. Bauman (2012) notes that there was a general shift of perspective among ethnographically oriented folklorists in the latter part of the twentieth century. Initially, folklore was regarded as "an aggregate of things" (Ben-Amos, 1972 cited in Bauman, 2012, p. 97). However, the wave of change shifted that line of thought and folklore was then regarded as a "communicative process" (Ben-Amos, 1972 cited in Bauman, 2012, p. 97). Several factors accounted for the new motivation towards folkloric materials. First, Malinowski's (1923) research experience revealed a certain focus of emphasis in dealing with elements of folklore. He argued that "context of situation" was "an essential frame of reference for the comprehension of 'narrative speech as ... a mode of social action'" (Bauman, 2012, p. 97). Another scholar, Milton Singer underscored the "conception of cultural performances as scheduled, bounded, crafted, heightened and participatory occasions in which culture" is displayed "for the reflexive contemplation of members and outsiders" (Singer, 1958 cited in Bauman, 2012, p. 97) It is relevant to note too that Roman Jakobson's model of a communicative event enabled scholars to begin "comprehending the multiple functionality of verbal expression and the place of poetic language among those multiple functions" (Jakobson, 1960 cited in Bauman, 2012, p.97). Additionally, Jacobs' (1959 cited in Bauman, 2012, p. 97) conception of style gives relevance of the "aesthetic design" of folklore

forms in use. This contributes to the understanding of compositional and performative aspects of cultural expression. Moreover, Parry and Lord's Theory of Oral-Formulaic Composition as a means of comprehending the radical integration of cultural tradition gave some recognition to the significance of individual creativity in the act of singing, performing and composing during discourse (Lord, 1960, cited in Bauman, 2012, p. 97). It is also important to emphasise that the conception of performance was shaped by two mutually agreeable schools of thought: one was literary and the other was anthropological. Kenneth Burke argues that literature is some kind of "equipment for living" (Burke, 1968, 1969, cited in Bauman, 2012, p. 98). However, Bauman and Sherzer, 1989, cited in Bauman, 2012, p.98) claim that "the task of the ethnographer of speaking... is to identify and analyse the dynamic interrelationships among elements that go to make up performance".

From the discussion so far, it is important to note that the line of inquiry that developed out of those efforts made by earlier scholars proved to be durable and productive intellectual enterprise for folkloric studies and linguistic anthropology and other disciplines (Bauman, 2012, p.99). It is in line with these theoretical tenets that this research explores the poetic significance of Dagara xylophone performance using the poetic elements embedded in the musical texts. The interpretation of these elements will reveal the level of literary quality and effectiveness of these poetic elements embedded in "logyil" (a portable 14 wooden-key xylophone) musical texts. In fact, Dagara xylophone musical performance enables the xylophonist to display virtuosic skill and communicative competence and by that, the performer elicits the participative engagement of co-paricipants such as the dirge-singers and other sympathisers who gather round the xylophonist to witness his skill and the language that emanates from the performance. The audience and other participants have the license to "regard the act of display with heightened intensity and inviting them to evaluate how skillfully and effectively" the xylophonist tries to accomplish his social

responsibility towards the audience and spectators (Bauman, 2012, p.99).

#### IV. METHODOLOGY AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Niyágákũũ's "lógyil" (xylophone) performance is the main basis of this study. One hundred and four (104) portions (out of the five hundred and fourteen (514) lines of the translated oral text) were selected for discussion and analysis in order to bring out the literary significance of the various poetic elements. The whole text (translated version) was divided into two major parts of a total of five hundred and fourteen lines (514). Lines were purposively chosen wherever literary features were identified in the whole text. Raw data was gathered in 2005 at Nandom, based on the funeral celebration of an elderly woman of Segge's House, North- East of Nandom. The rationale of this study lies in the fact that Dàgàrà oratory, as part of their oral tradition, still deserves more exploration in determining the cultural relevance of xylophone performance. The performance was audio-recorded using a mobile phone and translated from Dàgàrà into English based on Peter Newmark's Translation Theory with emphasis on semantic and communicative perspectives. Semantic translation takes into account the aesthetic value (that is, the beautiful and natural sounds) of the Source Language (SL) text, compromising on denotative meaning so that no assonance, word-play or repetition becomes an obstacle in the completed version. It may translate less important cultural words by culturally neutral third or functional terms but not by cultural equivalents. However, Communicative translation attempts to render the exact contextual meaning of the original in such a way that both content and language are readily acceptable and comprehensible to the readership (Newmark, 2001, p. 46). This study investigates the nature of Dàgàrà oratory and examines the poetic elements and their literary significance in Dàgàrà oral traditions especially oral poetry using Niyágákũũ's lógyil performance as a source of reference. It was anticipated that these literary features will not only embellish the performance skills of the xylophonist but also reveal the aesthetic qualities

of Dàgàrà xylophone performance as the performer played and verbally expressed the musical texts he had chosen successively.

## V. LITERATURE REVIEW

Persuasive communication is used in various aspects of human life in both traditional and contemporary Africa. In the absence of writing and the modern use of electronic gadgets, speaking constitutes the single most important mode of interaction. In the African world, speech is considered to be free, which is quite distinct from the trickster's monopoly. For instance, despite his greed and selfishness, Ananse, the Akan trickster, did not make speech the monopoly of one man. Similarly, the Dogon people in Mali trace the origin of speech to the fox. The Fang of Gabon, trace human speech to the parrot which first brought to man, the ability to speak. However, in Akan mythology of the various lineages, the parrot is paramount in human speech. The eloquence associated with one of the eight lineages follows from their being saved centuries ago by the noise of a parrot. The timely noise by the parrot saved the lineage from extinction. Therefore, that lineage's emblem, depicts the essence of eloquence. The Akan say, "The mouth is used to protect the head." Speech, judiciously used, can save lives.

Among several ethnic groups in Africa, sermons, funerals, marriage ceremonies, and even public donations provide fitting opportunities for speakers to assert oratorical skills. Among the Akan, a public donation or drink gift is not merely presented. It is accompanied by a brief speech, often replete with proverbs, idiomatic expressions and other rhetorical devices. The speaker's widow's mite may be compared with that of the housefly: "A poor fellow I am, not rich enough to lavish presents; yet even where the housefly had nothing to give, it scraped its offer from its bare limbs." A flowery acceptance speech is also expected from the recipient or his orator. Generally speaking, rhetoric pervades most verbal interactions. A beggar in Burundi may petition a patron for a new pair of shoes in poetic style, referring to his ragged shoe held together by a safety pin (Finnegan 1970, p.450).

The power of the spoken word is well recognized in African societies. Being the embodiment of acoustic energy, the spoken word has an immediate impact, the capacity to make or break. According to a Yoruba proverb, "Speech is an egg: when dropped, it shatters." The Akan of Ghana say, "When the mouth slips, it is more suicidal than the foot." In everyday life, those endowed with the power of effective speech are held in high social esteem, due to the facility with which they bring stressful situations under control through persuasion. Despite the importance of good speaking in Africa, most cultures do not organize formal training in the art, since it comes naturally with exposure to traditional speech. Children often attend forums for debate and acquire speaking skills, customary lore, and genealogies by listening to elders. Skills in oratory also come with certain social and political positions. Several traditional offices require exquisite skills in the exercise of duties. Positions like chieftaincy, headship of lineages, and membership of juries require considerable rhetorical skills in conflict management. Chiefs, prior to their installation, go into several weeks of seclusion where their attention is drawn to certain formal norms of communication. Even so, most chiefs and elders acquire rhetorical abilities on the job.

Rhetoric in many African communities is male-dominated. In certain cultures, women are forbidden to express themselves in public. Among the Akan, the virtues of ideal womanhood include abstinence from speaking within the public domain. Women are believed to be repositories of wisdom and knowledge. Yet, society has considerably restrained woman's speech. The chief's palace, where most public debates are done, is not always open to women. They are prohibited from entering the premises when they are in their menses. According to the Akan, "The hen knows that day has broken, yet it looks to the cock to announce it." Even so, current trends point to a gradual recognition of women in speaking roles. Not only are women chiefs occasionally found but there are a few instances where male chiefs have appointed women as their orators ("akyeame"), on the basis of their excellent speech skills.



The prospect of incorporating African xylophone has remained relatively untouched though the African drum ensembles have flourished throughout the academic world. The Dàgàrà xylophone ('gyl') in particular has had little exposure to audiences outside the African continent. This is because the gyl has had few written transcriptions transmitted almost exclusively through oral tradition. The transmission of the repertoire to western audiences has suffered as a result of few 'gyl' players residing outside of Ghana to transfer this information. (Vercelli, 2006, p.13) Bodomo and Mora (2007) have carried out thorough research on the spoken and sung texts of the Dagaaba in Jirapa Traditional Areas as well as the city of Accra where Dàgáábà communities are found. They have carefully noted that "music-making among the Dàgáábà, like other peoples of the region, is an intrinsic part of social life. Certain types of music and repertoires of song may be associated with particular occasions, cults, cooperative work groups and organized labour, age groups, and rites of passage" (Bodomo and Mora, 2007, p.85). Listening examples include 'b'ewáá' dance music (referred to by Dàgááre speakers as 'báwáá'), xylophone duets, sung folktales (known in Dàgááre as 'sénséllè'), spoken folktales (known in Dàgàrà as "suólù") and women's praise songs referred to in Dàgááre as "ánléé" and in Dàgàrà as "ányéé".

Work by Wiggins and Kobom (1992) is designed for use in primary music education and does not give an accurate representation of the performance of the literature by completely ignoring the rest of the gyl ensemble. Transcriptions by Naranjo (1998) apply the traditional repertoire of the gyl to the western marimba and give a brief cultural reference, but do not explain the transcriptions' adaptations. Kofi and Neely (1997) look briefly at the rhythms found in 'bewáá', but their attention is focused on the drum patterns and do not give any gyl transcriptions or reference the musical culture. An extreme amount of physical dexterity and independence is required to coordinate both hands of the gyl players. Strumph discusses the nature of learning independence in his Ghanaian

xylophone studies and gives a step-by-step approach to learning basic polyrhythms commonly found in the gyl repertoire. (Wiggins and Kobom 1992, Kofi and Neely 1997, Strumph 1970, also cited in Vercelli, 2006, p.14)

Hartigan studied this music under Ewe master drummer Abraham Adzenyah and applied the gyl's rhythmic elements first to Ewe drums then to the western drum kit, showing how this repertoire can be beneficial to non-mallet players. However, he does not give any gyl transcriptions or ensemble suggestions. Details are needed in the analysis of the transcription process to include the significant meanings behind what is played on the gyl. In Birifor funeral music, the melody has actual text that is understood by the natives of the traditional area. Sometimes, the xylophone text may simply identify the gender of the deceased. However, more often, complex messages and proverbs are performed. Goody mentioned the musical implications of the gyl, but a musical analysis of the funeral was not included in his tome. Likewise, Malidome paints a beautiful literary picture of his grandfather's Dàgàrà funeral, including mention of Dàgàrà mythology and the gyl, but does not go into musical specifics. (Hartigan 1986, Goody 1962, Malidome 1994 also cited in Vercelli, 2006, p.15). From the above studies, there is a gap that deserves adequate attention. The focus is directed towards lògyil performance in order to explore its cultural significance with reference to the poetic elements which are essential aesthetic features in Dàgàrà lògyil performance.

## VI. ANALYSIS OF THE L'OGYIL PERFORMANCE

### 6.1 Structure of the Oratory

Panegyric and rhetorical expressions are the most outstanding features in Dàgàrà Oral literature particularly in the singing of dirges. In Africa, the elderly are accorded great reverence particularly when they die and leave their children as well as their grandchildren whom they cherish and often give advice. The death of this woman can be viewed in similar circumstances. The subject of the performance is the lamentation of the death of

an elder in the Dàgàrà paternal household. In order to facilitate understanding of the performance, the oratory is divided into two main parts: Part 1A is made up of 43 lines whilst 1B has only 18 lines. Part 2 is the longest with 453 lines. Therefore, the whole oratory is made up of 514 lines. Idiomatic proverbs, repetition, parallelism and elliptical expressions constitute the main features of Niyágákũ's performance.

It is significant to point out that idiomatic proverbs, repetition, parallelism, elliptical values, panegyric and rhetoric are the most outstanding features in Dagara Oral literature particularly in

the singing of dirges. The attainment of coherence in the following performance can be seen in the effective use of repetition and parallelism. By this suitable device, the various parts of the oratory are held together by a common subject and focus.

## 6.2 Features of Repetition in the Performance

Part 1(A) of the above oratory is rich in various literary features such as repetition of words and parallelism. Lines 1, 9, 15, 16, 17, 19 and 22 are closely related in theme. These are illustrated as follows:

Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
Line 1: Bìkpiéb bé tèr sàà nì mǎ bé mī tǔ̀r.	The orphan who has no parents is often insulted by people
Line 9: Nà pág kùlé mǎ-yágá pɔɔ, ááá hǔ̀r!	Better hurry up and go to your many mothers, áá hǔ̀r!
Line 15: Ǔ mǎ nìbé bàár, ɔ sàà nìbé bàár, óéí!	All his maternal and paternal relatives are dying out, óéí!
Line 16: Ɛ nì-yágá bé yàár báárù, óéí!	Large families can easily be wiped out, óéí!
Line 17: Ɛ nì-yágá bé yàár báárù, óéí!	Large families can easily be wiped out, óéí!
Line 19: Ǔ mǎ nìbé bàár; ɔ sàà nìbé bàár, áá!	All his maternal and paternal relatives are dying out, áá!
Lines 22: Fɔ sàà nìbé bàár; fɔ mǎ nìbé bàár; bé tǔ̀r fɔ siè.	You are termed a witch when all paternal and maternal relatives are dead.

Line 1 emphasises the persecution of the orphan whilst Line 9 deals with the supposed joy the deceased is rest assured in the land of the dead. Literally, the word 'báárù' in Lines 15, 16, 17, 19 and 22 means 'finished' but semantically, it actually refers to the total loss of paternal and maternal relatives experienced by any unfortunate person. A complete orphan is open to all kinds of abuse, discrimination and suspicion as suggested by the diction of the above oratory. Orphans are often beaten, insulted and suspected as the cause of the death of their relatives. The recurrence of "Ɛ nì-yágá bé yàár báárù, óéí!" (Large families can easily be wiped out, óéí!) in Lines 16 and 17 is an important parallel feature that underscores the idea of decimation of a large family that once was

a source of pride. Herein lies its literary significance.

Line 23 points to the idea of misery and loneliness and the same idea is reiterated in Lines 24 and 25. Their illustrations are as follows:

Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
Line 23: Kpìèrì nùbè wà wéré lùgè, áá!	Once living with people and now embracing forked beams áá!
Line 24: Kpìèrì nùbè wà wéré lùgè, óéí!	Once living with people and now embracing forked beams, óéí!
Line 25: Bè sòrè nùbè nĩ sòrè zume áá	They are counting people and you are counting insults, áá!

In lines 23 and 24, the term ‘wéré lùgè’ (embracing the beams) depicts a deeper sign of misery and bereavement that an orphan experiences as a result of the death of loved ones. The use of such terms induces sympathy and mourning. The idea of counting is closely linked with the bereavement referred to in the earlier lines. In most African societies, the number of relatives one has matters a lot as one can always count them in pride to show that there are many protectors around in times of tribulation. In other

words, there is bound to be support and co-operation when relatives are around.

Apart from property itself, children are a source of wealth in the African society. These children live in a family home which needs to be favourable for proper training. Lines 67-71 portray the unfortunate situation of an empty home where the children are destined to suffer as a result of the devastation of the family because of death. This is exemplified as follows:

Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
Line 67: À bìr-bààrá bié; à áá!	Last child who sucked his mother’s breast áá!
Line 68: À bìr-bààrá bié; à pɔg-bààrá bié áá!	Last child who sucked his mother’s breast; child of the last wife áá!
Line 69: À yìrkpèè yìrkpèè bíbìir bèlè niè nèbè	The children of a large house are even doing their utmost.
Line 70: Yìrkpèè yìrkpèè yìrzág bè viélé ì, áá!	A large but empty house is not good at all!
Line 71: Yìrkpèè yìrkpèè yìrzág bè viélé ì, áá!	A large but empty house is not good at all!

The effectiveness of repetition through such words as “bìr-bààrá bié”, “pɔg-bààrá bié”, “yìrkpèè”, “yìrzág” and “bè viélé ì” reiterates the

predicament of orphans wallowing in misery after the demise of relatives. They are completely devastated. This devastation is further emphasised in Lines 72, 74-88 as follows:

Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
Line 72: Nìyágá, nìyágá, nìyágá nìr, áá!	Somebody with so many relatives, áá!
Line 74: Tèr nùbè èkyè lèb wà bɔbr nùbè, áá!	One had many relatives and now one is yearning for them again, áá!
Line 75: Tèr nùbè èkyè lèb wà bɔbr nùbè, áá!	One had many relatives and now one is yearning for them again, áá!

Line 76: Bìkpiéb bẹ̀ tẹ̀r mã é !	An orphan who has no mother!
Line 77: Nìbàál bẹ̀ tẹ̀r sãà é!	A miserable person without a father!
Line 78: Vùé bẹ̀r kẹ̀ kyéré	Often passed by people with no show of concern

Loneliness and poverty then become unwelcome companions in the home. Thus, an empty house is a misfortune and the situation is aggravated when the elders die out. Thus, a home without elders often lacks a good and experienced director who is cherished as a role model. The loss of relatives increases poverty and renders the world a ‘chilly’ (an unfavourable) place for people to live in as seen in the following words Line 119: “tágr irẹ̀ nì à tẹ̀jzù ká (Cold is pervading in this world). Thus, a lonely relative is a symbol of pity and condolence. This is reinforced by ‘wéré lùgé’ as depicted in the counting of relatives. If one has only beams to contend with at home, then one certainly is forlorn. Beams are not human neither are they sensitive therefore beams are not suitable companions and cannot express feelings of sympathy. That is how the orator chooses to present a subtle but terrible image of the misery of

the orphan. The image of the orphan is that of a forelorn child.

### 6.3 Features of Parallelism in the Performance

A close look at the oratory reveals that there are clear instances of parallelism in Part 1 (A) of the performance. The Lines referred to are 1 and 2, 4 and 5, 9 and 10, 16 and 17, 23 and 24, 25 and 26, 28, 29 and 30, 34 and 35, 39 and 40 and 42 and 43. Similarly, in Part 1 (B) parallelism can be seen in Lines 44 and 45, 51 and 52, 54 and 55, 57 and 58 as well as 59, 60 and 61.

Lines 1-4 delineate the fact that an orphan is lonely and miserable. Moreover, such a child is open to abuse in many ways such as beatings, insults and humiliation. The idea of abuse and suffering of the orphan is further developed in Lines 18-22 where the main focus is still centred on the misery and the humiliation of the orphan. Lines 23-26 are perfect examples of parallelism:

Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
Line 23 Kpìèrì nìbẹ̀ wà wéré lùgé, áá!	Living people suddenly embracing forked roofing beams áá! (expression of sorrow)
Line 24 Kpìèrì nìbẹ̀ wà wéré lùgé, oei!	Once living with people and now embracing forked beams oei!
Line 25 Bẹ̀ sọ̀rẹ̀ nìbẹ̀ nĩ sọ̀rẹ̀ zume áá!	They count people you count insults (expression of disgust)

This reiterates the fact that they are counting people and you are counting insults, aa!

Line 26 Bẹ̀ sọ̀rẹ̀ nìbẹ̀ nĩ sọ̀rẹ̀ lùgé óéi	They count people you count forked roofing beams, óéi. (expression of sorrow)
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This reiterates the fact that they are counting people and you are counting insults, aa! The effectiveness of the above repetition can be viewed in the light of the magnitude of the suffering, humiliation and solitariness of the orphan. Another interesting repetition which occurs in

Lines 27-30 indicates the real plight of the orphan. These Lines stress the lamentation and misery of the sons and daughters of the deceased woman as indicated by words such as ‘àà!’ and ‘óéi!’ This focus is further developed in Lines 36-38 in Part 1 as follows:



Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
Line 36: À bié kóné ténḡàn pɔɔ áá!	A child weeping on the shrine of the earth, áá!
Line 37: À bibiür kóné dı-záglà pɔɔ, mã wóéí!	The children are weeping in an empty home, oh mother!
Line 38: À pɔg-yàbé mã bídébr mã, mã wóéí!	Mother of many daughters, mother of many sons, oh mother!

and Lines 64-65 of Part 2.

Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
Line 64. À bikpiéb nà bé tər sãà nı mã nür bé pɔbr	An orphan who has no parents is often beaten up
Line 65. À bikpiéb nà bé tər sãà nı mã nür bé mĩ túbùr	An orphan who has no parents is often insulted

The unity and coherence of the themes of misery, loneliness and humiliation can never be overemphasized in the logical development of ideas. These run through the whole performance particularly in Part 2 of the oratory. There are more than fifty instances of parallelism in the Part 2 of the performance. Prominent among these are Lines 1-4, 18-22, 23-25, 27-32, 36-38, 43-44, 47-48, 51-52, 64-65, 67-68, 69-71, 74-75, 79-80, 86-87, 89-92, 96-97, 98-99, 117-118, 125-129, 130-131, 168-169, 201-211, 226-227, 251-270,

274-275, 277-278, 282-283, 286-287, 289-290, 295-296, 297-298, 299-303, 311-317, 321-323, 326-327, 330-331, 332-335, 336-337, 341-344, 346-351, 360-370, 371-380, 382-383 and 388-392.

Lines 18-22 are an admonition of doing good and being wary in the present world. They indicate another perfect example of parallelism. Look us look at the following illustrations:

Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
Line 18: Nĩ ìrè vùlá à ténzúr!	People of the world, endeavour to do good!
Line 19: Nĩ ìrè vùlá à ténzúr!	People of the world, endeavour to do good!
Line 20: Nĩ mààl kyéré à ténzúr!	Be wary about 'walking' in the world!
Line 21: Níbéén bé nür bé à ténzúr é	The world is not made up of only one person
Line 22: Níbéén bé tɔɔ à ténzúr é	One person cannot control the whole world

The orator is also particular about the welfare of the youth in this turbulent world as testified by Lines 27-32 and 36-38. Lines 43-44 clearly

emphasise the mortal nature and the vulnerability of human beings. Lines 67-68 draw a tender relationship between a child and the mother as follows:

Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
Line 67: À bur-báàrà bié; à pɔg-bààrà bié áá!	Last child who sucked his mother's breast; child of the last wife, áá!
Line 68: À bur-báàrà bié; à pɔg-bààrà bié áá!	Last child who sucked his mother's breast; child of the last wife, áá!

The absence of the elderly in the home of an orphan child is a serious blow as there is no one to teach, guide and admonish the miserable children who are open to persecution and wrong things

prevalent in the world. Lines 74-75 reiterate the lamentation of the orphan because of the desire of getting closer to the parents who unfortunately are no more.

Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
Line 74: Tèr nùbè yágá èkyè lèb wà bɔbr nùbè, áá!	Had people many and then come looking for people, áá! (expression of sorrow)
Line 75: Tèr nùbè yágá èkyè lèb wà bɔbr nùbè, áá!	Had people many and then come looking for people, áá!

Both expressions emphasise the fact that one had many relatives and now one is yearning for them again. Disregard, neglect and relegation to the

background are the lot suffered by orphans; not only those of the deceased woman but all orphans in the Dàgàrà society as depicted by Lines 85-88 of the oratory.

Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
Line 85: Liébì báál bè tèr sǎá ɪ	Has become so miserable without a father!
Line 86: Vié bér ké kyéré!	Often passed by people who show no concern!
Line 87: Vié bér ké kyéré	Often passed by people who show no concern!
Line 88: Ũ nà bè tèr sǎá	Because he has no father!"

Lines 90-92 equally portray another perfect example of parallelism in the performance to emphasise the effectiveness of the metaphor. The orator is critical about the attitude of the Dàgàrà

towards one another. Dàgàrà are viewed as insensitive as they cause severe pain to others especially their fellow tribesmen/woman. This criticism is a painful truth.

Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
Line 90: Dàgàrà nà wà lèb nà n tèbr nùbè à	Dàgàrà have turned into scorpions and they are stinging others
Line: 91 Dàgàrà nà wà lèb nà n tèbr nùbè à	Dàgàrà have turned into scorpions and they are stinging others
Line 92: Dàgàrà nà wà lèb nà n tèbr nùbè à	Dàgàrà have turned into scorpions and they are stinging others

The recurrence of the above parallel feature is a critical analysis of the xylophonist about the Dàgàrà people. This bitter attitude towards the Dàgàrà is developed progressively in the course of the performance. Lines 201-211 expose the nefarious activities of the hypocrite (“gégèrà”) who moves from home to home destroying peaceful families by sowing seeds of discord among them. This information is not directly

related to the occasion of mourning and celebrating the prosperous life of the deceased woman. However, it is general admonition about human relationship and the need to foster cordial relationship among people in a common society. The mouth can be a symbol of unity and a terrible tool of destruction. This is how the literary significance of the above parallel features is drawn from this oratory.

Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
Line 201: Yèbr wà zèb táár à yír puv à, ...	When blood brothers fight among themselves, ...
Line 202: À yín à gégèrà zíé	It originates from the hypocrite.

This emanates from the hypocrite who knocks heads together

Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
Line 203: Pɔg nɪ sɪr wà zèb táár, ...	When a husband quarrels with his wife, ...
Line 204: À yín à gégèrà zíé	This emanates from the hypocrite who knocks heads together.
Line 205: Bié nɪ mã wà zèb táár, ...	When a child quarrels with his mother, ...
Line 206: À yín à gégèrà zíé	This emanates from the hypocrite who knocks heads together.
Line 207: Bié nɪ sǎá wà zèb táár, ...	When a child quarrels with his father, ...
Line 208: À yín à gégèrà zíé	This emanates from the hypocrite who knocks heads together
Line 209: Nĩ pǎá bèl nyé lè à!	Imagine how things have turned out!
Line 210: Yéntàbè wà zèb táár à yír puv à, ...	When brothers' wives quarrel among themselves,...
Line 211: À yín à gégèrà zíé	This emanates from the hypocrite who knocks heads together

It is equally important to look closely at Lines 225-232 as further evidence of the destructive attitude of the hypocrite.

Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
Line 225: Gégèrà nĩ ànúr?	Who is the hypocrite?
Line 226: Ũl é nà bàng à fūr yír bé-bà zíé.	He is the one who knows the ins and outs of your household.

Line 227: Ûl é nà nɔné fũ yĩr yél-kpólé à	He is the one who likes talking about worthless things of your household
Line 228: Yélkpólé zɔ tɪ mǎnũ	Running round spreading worthless ideas
Line 229: Ûl é nũ bɛ buɔlé gégérà.	He is the one they call a hypocrite.
Line 230: Û nà bɛ tɛr nĩr à hɛé!	Because he has no relative hei! (expression of pity)
Line 231: Tɪ tuér kɛ ù nɛna mĩ tɛr nĩr ú?	Do we always think that such a person even has relatives?
Line 232: Û tóme nɪ à ù yón!	He is concerned about his own nefarious activities

#### 6.4 Ellipsis in the Performance

Ellipsis is a very important feature in Dàgàrà oral literature and it is given serious attention in this oratory in various instances of the performance. It occurs forty-six times in different ways in the course of the performance. The following Lines portray some aspects of ellipsis as in Lines 12, 14, 49, 53, 103, 107, 109, 117, 121, 123, 133, 147, 160, 165, 172, 184, 185, 191, 194, 196, 197, 199, 200, 201, 203, 205, 207, 210, 215, 216, 217, 233, 235, 241, 243, 248, 279, 280, 288, 354, 360, 363, 369, 390, 427 and 428. There are only two instances of ellipsis in Part 1 (A) and forty-four in Part 2 of the performance. Most of the situations of ellipsis can easily be filled in by the reader or audience in relation to the subject matter being exposed in the course of the performance. It is interesting to note that these elliptical situations are open to several

perspectives of interpretation. However, the filling-in must be cautiously done in relation to the particular perspective in which an idea is being developed by the orator. It is a common feature in the singing of dirges among the Dàgàrà and most of them use it effectively on funeral occasions to the admiration of their audience and sympathisers present at the performance. Once again, it is significant to point out that idiomatic proverbs, repetition, parallelism, elliptical values, panegyric and rhetoric are the most outstanding features in Dàgàrà Oral literature particularly in the singing of dirges. Most of them can be found in this performance.

Line 12 of Part 1(A) is a suitable introduction to the subject matter of death particularly the one that occurs in a prominent Dagara home.

Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
Line 12: Dàñni dáár yĩr-kpèè kũũsàñ, ...	In the olden days, on the occasion of a funeral in a prominent house, ...

Line 14 of Part 1(A) makes reference to the unfortunate person who is bedeviled by misfortune in life. There is a lot to say about such a person in many ways. However, the orator stops short of his words. This serves as real food for thought for the audience. When an unfortunate person is exposed in one way or the other, it is

likely to arouse commiseration and many other unspeakable things.

Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
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Line 14: À zùfáá sòb fù nà dè wúl à, ...	The unfortunate person that you have exposed, ...”
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Line 49 of Part 2 of the oratory reveals the Supreme Being as the greatest of all who deserves all the praise in the world. He is short of words in describing God hence the significance of the ellipsis.

Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
Line 49: Gàndáá puóbúr èn dé à,...	As for the worship of the Supreme Being, ...

*The orator seems to re-echo the words of an ancient sage:*

How can we find the power to praise him?  
He is greater than all his creation.  
The Lord is awesome in his greatness;  
His power is overwhelming.  
Though you do your best to praise him,  
he is greater than you can ever express.  
Though you honour him tirelessly and with all your strength,  
You still cannot praise him enough. (Sir. 43:28-30)

Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
Line 53: Àlè bè ĩ gàn zànúr à, ...	But for Western Education, ...
Line 54: Fù náã bàn nì à zàh kpèlènkpèlèn?	Would you have known all these things? is an automatic follow-up to

Both Lines are connected with formal education and the consequences it produces for the diligent in society. Thus, the significance of formal education can never be overemphasised as seen in the subsequent Lines: 54-57.

6.5 Metaphorical Expression and Rhetorical Questions in the Performance

The following lines are significant because of their metaphorical values. Line 42 is a clear proverb and a stronger form of the admonition began earlier on. The deceased is described as “tén yágrà” (clay of the earth) in Line 43 to depict not only the malleable and vulnerable nature of human life but also the inevitable end that awaits all mortals. The metaphorical image can also be seen in Lines 89-92 where the Dagara are likened to scorpions. "Dàgàrà nà wà lèb nà n tēbr nībē à. (Dàgàrà have turned into scorpions and they are stinging others.) This parallelism graphically

portrays and judges the character of the Dàgàrà as seen by the orator.

Rhetorical values are also important in the performance as depicted in the following lines: 10, 12, 15, 16, 17, 40, 54, 55, 66, 95, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 163, 170, 171, 180, 181, 188, 224, 225, 231, 234, 306, 319, 320, 397, 398, 399, 415, 426, 429, 430 and 431. Among the Dàgàrà, relatives who pass away from home are either taken to their original homes for the funeral celebration and subsequent burial or they are buried wherever they have died and the second celebration sent to the traditional home for final mourning and other rites. Dirge singers comment on such situations in the course of their performance. In the oratory, there is clear reference to the deceased woman who died in Kumasi (South of Ghana) and was buried outside her home town—Nandom. As a result, both maternal and paternal relatives at home did not

see her before she was buried. This explains why the orator poses the following questions in Lines 134-140.

Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
Line 134: Mǎ nǐbè nyón ná à?	Did maternal relatives see her?
Line 135: Sǎa nǐbè nyón ná à?	Did paternal relatives see her?
Line 136: Mǎ nǐbè nyón ná à?	Did maternal relatives see her?
Line 137: Bè záh yur bǔrǔrè nyón ná à?	Did people of different background see her?
Line 138: Ũ ná wè à mǎ-kpéé pɔǎ à?	When she perished in the wilderness Down South?
Line 139: Bè nyè bè ùmá bǔ?	Did they see them bury her or?
Line 140: Bè lǎb ná bèr bǔ bè ìhn nǐmín?	Did they throw her away or what did they do?"

In Lines 170-171, the orator laments over this predicament which befalls the orphan.

Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
Line 170: Nǔr-béén mì kpìèrɪ yír ɪ?	Is it proper for a lone person to dwell in the house?
Line 171: Nǔr-béén mì kpìèrɪ yír ɪ?	Is it proper for a lone person to dwell in a house?

Moreover, lonely people are often persecuted and accused of several things including being responsible for the death of their relatives. Such accusations are difficult to refute by the miserable orphan hence the significance of the following words.

Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
Line 180: Fɔ kír sàg à siè kè ɪ bǔnúr?	Who are you to deny that you are a witch?
Line 181: Fɔ nǐbè ìhn nǐmín mǎ?	Even your relatives, where are they?

The following words also make reference to the hypocrite who is noted for destruction of peaceful relationships.

Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
Line 224: Nɪ tièr kè à gègèrá nɪ ànù?	Who do you think is the hypocrite?
Line 225: Gègèrá nɪ ànù?	Who is the hypocrite?

Subsequent Lines (226-232) give further exposition on the nefarious activities of the hypocrite as follows:

Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
Line 226: Ûlè nà bàṇ à fù yìr bébà zìé	He is the one who knows the ins and outs of your household
Line 227: Ûl è nà nṛṇè à fù yìr yél-kpólé à	He is the one who likes talking about worthless things of your household
Line 228: Yél-kpólé zṵ tì mǎnúr	Fond of running round spreading worthless ideas
Line 229: Ûlè nùr bè buolè gègèrá	He is the one they call a hypocrite
Line 230: Û nà bè tēr nìr à hēè!	Because he has no relative hei!
Line 231: Tì tièr kè ù nùè nà mī tēr nìr ù?	Do we always think that such a person even has relatives?
Line 232: Û tǒmé nì à ù yón!	He is only concerned about himself!

The focus of this oratory is not only on the deceased woman, but it also gives the performer (xylophonist) the opportunity to explore other thematic concerns about human life such as the activities about talebearers who meddle in other people's affairs and cause trouble and pain to others. The performer thus admonishes people to be wary about talebearers. It is in this way that the poetic elements do not only reflect the aesthetic skills employed by the performer in this oratory but also exemplify the painful realities about life among the Dàgàrà people as he sees it.

## 6.6 Rythm in the Performance

In many African societies, it is common practice to praise the dead as it is generally considered unkind to condemn and speak evil of them. This is also manifested in the oratory. The deceased is praised repeatedly as the reputable wife of a great farmer in several ways as in the following Lines: 259-262; 265-270; 299-303. These lines produce a regular rhythm which reiterates certain panegyric features in the performance.

Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
Line 259: Kùkúr gǎndáá pṵg!	A great farmer's wife!
Line 260: Kùkúr gǎndáá pṵg; wà yìr wè	Great farmer's wife, come to the house
Line 261: Kùrǎ gǎndáá pṵg!	A great farmer's wife!
Line 262: Kùkúr gǎndáá pṵg!	A great farmer's wife!"
Line 265: Kùrǎ gǎndáá pṵg!	A great farmer's wife!
Line 266: Tām-mìgr gǎndáá pṵg!	Great archer's wife!
Line 267: Tām-mìgr gǎndáá pṵg!	Great archer's wife!
Line 269: Kùrǎ gǎndáá bié	A great farmer's son!

Line 270: ε náálùr gàndáá pɔg!	A great and wealthy man's wife!"
Line 299: À kuɔrà gàndáá pɔg!	A great farmer's wife!
Line 300: Kuɔrà gàndáá bié!	Great farmer's child!
Line 301: Gàndáá pɔg!	Great person's wife!
Line 302: Tām-migr gàndáá bié!	Brave archer's child!
Line 303: À zāá-dém tèbrùr gàndáá!	Great archer of yesteryear!"

## VII. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS ON 'LOGYIL' PERFORMANCE

As indicated at the beginning of this study, expressive culture is very significant to oral performances in the singing of traditional songs of any ethnic group, the citing of a proverb in the right context, the narration of folktales and in the playing of the Dàgàrà xylophone. Using Richard Bauman's Performance Theory as the basis of this study, it is important to illustrate various instances where data supports the tenets of the theory. First, there is enough evidence on "context of situation" as "an essential frame of reference for the comprehension of 'narrative speech as ... a mode of social action' " (Bauman, 2012, p. 97). This is because Niyagakuu's performance was contextualised as his utterances were based on a real funeral situation. Therefore, his narrative was

in the right context and Bauman cites Malinowski (1923) to corroborate this fact. The social action was obviously the funeral celebrated at Segru, Nandom, Northeast. Singer (1958) underscored the "conception of cultural performances as scheduled, bounded, crafted, heightened and participatory occasions in which culture" is displayed "for the reflexive contemplation of members and outsiders" (Bauman, 2012, p. 97) The choice of words as in the oratory, represents a deep reflection about the traditions of the Dàgàrà people of north-western Ghana. Data used for the analysis reveals the highly poetic nature of the oratory. For instance, the following lines are typically poetic and represent the skilful nature of the logyil performance captured in the analysis. The ethnography of speaking on a special occasion is clearly demonstrated here.

Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
Line 15: Ũ mā nɪbé bàár, v sǎà nɪbé bàár, óéí!	All his maternal and paternal relatives are dying out, óéí!
Line 16: ε nì-yágá bɛ yàár báárù, óéí!	Large families can easily be wiped out, óéí!
Line 17: ε nì-yágá bɛ yàár báárù, óéí!	Large families can easily be wiped out, óéí!
Line 19: Ũ mā nɪbé bàár; v sǎà nɪbé bàár, áá!	All his maternal and paternal relatives are dying out, áá!

It is in this light that Roman Jakobson's model of a communicative event underscores the significance of verbal expression and the place of poetic language among multiple functions (Bauman, 2012, p.97). The verbal expression helps the audience to appreciate the performance

and comprehend the circumstances of its delivery. Additionally, conception of style gives relevance of the aesthetic patterns of folklore items. This contributes to the understanding of compositional and performative aspects of cultural expression. Data to support this is as follows:



Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
Line 67: À bìr-bààrá bié; à áá!	Last child who sucked his mother's breast áá!
Line 68: À bìr-bààrá bié; à pɔg-bààrá bié áá!	Last child who sucked his mother's breast; child of the last wife áá!
Line 69: À yirkpée yirkpée bibiir bèle nié nɛbɛ	The children of a large house are even doing their utmost.
Line 70: Yirkpée yirkpée yirzág bɛ viélé i, áá!	A large but empty house is not good at all!
Line 71: Yirkpée yirkpée yirzág bɛ viélé i, áá!	A large but empty house is not good at all!

The effectiveness of repetition through such words as “bìr-bààrá bié”, “pɔg-bààrá bié”, “yirkpée”, “yirzág” and “bɛ viélé i” exposes the predicament of orphans wallowing in misery after the demise of relatives. Parry and Lord’s Theory of Oral-Formulaic Composition as a means of comprehending the radical integration of cultural tradition gave some recognition to the significance of individual creativity in the act of singing, performing and composing during discourse (Lord, 1960, cited in Bauman, 2012, p. 97). This is also demonstrated in the oratory. Bauman and Sherzer, 1989 (cited in Bauman, 2012, p.98) claim that “the task of the ethnographer of speaking... is

to identify and analyse the dynamic inter-relationships among elements that go to make up performance”. In fact, several poetic elements render this xylophone performance integrative and interdependent. Repetition of words and ideas abound in the oratory, parallel features which emphasise the literary significance of repetition, ellipsis and rhythm are great aesthetic features which captivate the attention of the reader as they portray the virtuosic skills of the master xylophonist.

Words captured in the performance which are highly lyrical include the following in this extract:

Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
Line 76: Bìkpiéb bɛ tɛr mã é !	An orphan who has no mother!
Line 77: Nibàál bɛ tɛr sãà é!	A miserable person without a father!
Line 78: Vié bɛr kɛ kyéré	Often passed by people with no show of concern

Loneliness and poverty are persistent and unwelcome companions in the home. An empty house is a devastating misfortune. The situation is aggravated when all elders pass away. Thus, a home without elders often lacks a mentor and an experienced director who is cherished as a role model. As the loss of relatives persists and increases poverty, it renders the world a ‘chilly’ (an unfavourable) place for people to live in as shown in Line 119: “iágr iré nɛ à tɛnzù ká (Cold is pervading in this world). Thus, a lonely relative is a symbol of pity and condolence. This forlorn

situation is reinforced by the words ‘wéré lùgé’ as depicted in the counting of relatives. Thus, if one has only beams (hard wood) to contend with at home, then one certainly is truly forlorn. Beams are not human neither are they sensitive. Therefore, they cannot be suitable companions at the traditional Dàgàrà home as they cannot express feelings of sympathy. That is how the orator chooses to present a subtle but terrible situation of the orphan. The image of an orphan being a completely forlorn child does not only portray a miserable situation but a disgusting one.

A dejected child will not be able to grow and integrate properly in society as he is likely to view his cultural environment as negligent and unsympathetic. It is in this way that the focus on the orphan is significant in this performance.

Initially, the xylophonist expressed the forlorn nature of the orphan through the lamentation and misery of the sons and daughters of the deceased woman in such words as ‘àà!’ and ‘wóéí!’

Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
Line 36: À bié kóné téngàn pɔɔ áá!	A child weeping on the shrine of the earth, áá!
Line 37: À bílìr kóné dɪ-záglà pɔɔ, mã wóéí!	The children are weeping in an empty home, oh mother!
Line 38: À pɔg-yàbè mã bídèbr mã, mà wóéí!	Mother of many daughters, mother of many sons, oh mother!

Moreover, the recurrence of the parallel feature below is a critical analysis of the xylophonist about the Dàgàrà people. This bitter attitude towards the Dàgàrà is developed progressively in the course of the performance. Lines 201-211 expose the nefarious activities of the hypocrite (“gégèrà”) who moves from home to home destroying peaceful families by sowing seeds of discord among them. Though this information is not directly related to the occasion of mourning, and the celebration of the prosperous life of the deceased woman, it is general admonition about human relationship and the need to foster cordial

relationship among people in society. The orator is critical about the attitude of the Dàgàrà towards one another. Dàgàrà are viewed as insensitive as they cause severe pain to others especially their fellow tribesmen. This criticism tends to be a painful truth not only of the Dàgàrà people but could also be a common phenomenon in other ethnic groups. The mouth can be a symbol of unity and a terrible tool of destruction. The ethnography of speaking on a special occasion shows the real context in which words are uttered. This is how the literary significance of the parallel features is drawn from this oratory.

Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
Line 90: Dàgàrà nà wà lèb nà n tébr nɪbè à.	Dàgàrà have turned into scorpions and they are stinging others.
Line: 91 Dàgàrà nà wà lèb nà n tébr nɪbè à.	Dàgàrà have turned into scorpions and they are stinging others.
Line 92: Dàgàrà nà wà lèb nà n tébr nɪbè à.	Dàgàrà have turned into scorpions and they are stinging others.

Ellipsis is a very important feature in Dàgàrà expressive culture and it is given serious attention in various instances of the performance. It occurs forty-six times in different ways in the course of the performance. It is interesting to note that these elliptical situations are open to several perspectives of interpretation. However, the completion of these elliptical features must be

cautiously done in relation to the particular perspective in which an idea is being developed by the orator. It is a common feature in the singing of dirges among the Dàgàrà and most of them use it effectively on funeral occasions to the admiration of other sympathisers present at the performance. As performers sometimes sound proverbial, sympathisers are often left in suspense as to what

is meant by the cantor. Some things are better left unsaid in order to keep people reflecting over nuggets of wisdom expressed on a particular occasion.

Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
Line 12: Dàṇni dáár yír-kpèè kũũsàṇ, ...	In the olden days, on the occasion of a funeral in a prominent house, ...
Line 14: À zùfáá sòb fú nà dè wúl à, ...	The unfortunate person that you have exposed, ...

The performance does not only focus on the deceased woman, but it also gives the xylophonist the opportunity to explore other thematic concerns about human life such as the activities of talebearers who meddle in other people’s affairs and cause trouble and pain to others. The performer thus admonishes people to be wary about talebearers. Therefore, the poetic elements do not only reflect the aesthetic skills employed by the performer in this oratory but also exemplify the painful realities about life among the Dàgàrà people he has observed. The illustration is as follows.

Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
Line 226: Ũlè nà bàṇ à fù yír bēbà zìé	He is the one who knows the ins and outs of your household
Line 227: Ũl è nà nṇè à fù yír yél-kpólé à	He is the one who likes talking about worthless things of your household
Line 228: Yél-kpólé zò tì mánúr	Fond of running round spreading worthless ideas
Line 229: Ũlè nù bē buolè gègèrá	He is the one they call a hypocrite

The rhythm that the xylophonist generated in the cause of his performance also marked the dexterity and the virtuosic skills he has as a master xylophonist. There are several instances that this has been portrayed especially in relation to panegyric expression.

Source Language (Dàgàrà)	Translation
Line 259: Kùkúr gàndáá pɔg!	A great farmer’s wife!
Line 260: Kùkúr gàndáá pɔg; wà yír wè	Great farmer’s wife, come to the house
Line 261: Kùrà gàndáá pɔg!	A great farmer’s wife!
Line 262: Kùkúr gàndáá pɔg!	A great farmer’s wife!”
Line 265: Kùrà gàndáá pɔg!	A great farmer’s wife!
Line 266: Tām-migr gàndáá pɔg!	Great archer’s wife!
Line 267: Tām-migr gàndáá pɔg!	Great archer’s wife!

Line 269: Kuɔrà gàndáá bié	A great farmer's son!
Line 270: ε náálù gàndáá pɔg!	A great and wealthy man's wife!"
Line 299: À kuɔrà gàndáá pɔg!	A great farmer's wife!
Line 300: Kuɔrà gàndáá bié!	Great farmer's child!
Line 301: Gàndáá pɔg!	Great person's wife!
Line 302: Tām-migr gàndáá bié!	Brave archer's child!
Line 303: À zāá-dém tèbrù gàndáá!	Great archer of yesteryear!"

## VIII. CONCLUSION ON THE STUDY

From the above critical examination, it is important to reiterate that Dàgàrà oral poetry equally forms another significant part of African oral literature. This research is basically an examination of lógyìl texts to help expose the nature of this kind of music and the various poetic elements and images that emanate from it. Niyágákũũ's performance reveals images of metaphor and euphemistic representation of Dàgàrà traditional values in various ways. The texts chosen for the study were contextualised as they were derived from a funeral performance done by Niyágákũũ's, one of the renowned Dàgàrà xylophonists from Nandom-Kuselle. The performance was made in May 2005 at Nandom-Ségrù during the funeral of an elderly woman of Séggé's House. The 'lógyìl' performance reveals the significance of metaphor, repetition, parallelism, ellipsis, assonance and other forms of literary aesthetics in Dàgàrà oral poetry.

Panegyric and rhetorical expressions are among the most outstanding features in Dàgàrà Oral Traditions particularly in the singing of dirges. The subject of Niyágákũũ's lógyìl performance is the lamentation of the death of an elder in the Dàgàrà paternal household. In this study, idiomatic proverbs, repetition, rhythm, parallelism and elliptical expressions form the most dominant aesthetic features which have greatly enhanced Niyágákũũ's performance. Therefore, as one of the "Gɔbr" (i.e. master xylophonists) in Nandom, one can say that Niyágákũũ's lógyìl performance is one of most

elaborate expositions of several significant literary features of lógyìl music. The above research is not an exhaustive investigation on the characteristics and literary features found in lógyìl music. Future researchers will find it academically rewarding to investigate other master xylophonists to determine similarities and differences in the performance of 'lógyìl' music and even 'dègáár' and 'bèlàñni' music.

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# Bolivia: Architecture and Rituality, Implications of the Miniatures of Buildings in the Alasita Festivity

*Guido Alejo*

*Arquitecto por la Universidad Mayor de San Andrés*

## ABSTRACT

La investigación se centra en la relación entre la arquitectura y ritualidad en el mundo andino, específicamente en las ciudades de La Paz y El Alto en Bolivia, en los que el ámbito popular de raigambre aymara, celebra la festividad de la Alasita caracterizada por la presencia de miniaturas que ejemplifican la aspiracionalidad y los deseos de abundancia.

Los edificios representados en las miniaturas trascienden de objetos a sujetos, así también se consolidan en referentes, en patrimonio arquitectónico, mediante el cual se realiza el reconocimiento social a algunos edificios contemporáneos. Este reconocimiento no necesariamente tiene correlación con la arquitectura impulsada por los gobiernos estatales y la academia boliviana.

Mediante la Alasita la población mayoritaria, da a conocer su horizonte, sus pretensiones, su mirada de la posible ciudad del futuro, su imaginario autónomo de modernidad incorporada a su núcleo cultural.

*Palabras Clave:* patrimonio, arquitectura, bolivia, el alto, alasita, andes.

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**Author:** Arquitecto por la Universidad Mayor de San Andrés (UMSA) con especialización en Diseño Participativo (CIDES- Red Hábitat – UMSA), estudio Arqueología (UMSA), tiene un Diplomado en Educación Superior con Mención en Docencia Universitaria (CEPIES – UMSA), es maestrante en la Maestría en Población y Desarrollo (CIDES – UMSA).

## I. INTRODUCCIÓN

La arquitectura y la ritualidad están estrechamente relacionados en el mundo andino. El edificio lleva inherente una carga simbólica que lo convierte en un sujeto trascendente mediante el cual se interactúa con deidades protectoras como la Pachamama<sup>1</sup>. La ritualidad se expresa en distintas festividades en los que se refuerza no solo un vínculo divino trascendente, sino también otras dimensiones, como la construcción de patrimonio y reconocimiento social a algunas obras de arquitectura, todo ello desde los estratos bajos de la sociedad.

Una festividad de gran importancia es la denominada “Alasita”<sup>2</sup>, la cual es una muestra elocuente de la subjetividad social que a menudo se engloba en lo “popular”. Es una fiesta que no solo pervive desde la etapa precolonial, sino que es una muestra de dinamicidad cultural a través del tiempo, lo que muestra su vitalidad y capacidad de reinención continua.

Un aspecto esencial de la fiesta de las Alasitas es la aspiracionalidad que impulsa la elaboración de las miniaturas. Lo representado en ellas muestra lo que es deseable, lo que se aspira y se trabaja para obtener. Los artesanos que realizan las miniaturas realizan una lectura de la realidad social mayoritaria, lo que implica una mirada

<sup>1</sup> La Pachamama es la madre tierra, se le realizan ofrendas y se le demuestra agradecimiento y respeto a cambio de su protección y apoyo en los objetivos individuales y comunitarios.

<sup>2</sup> “Alasita” es una palabra en idioma aymara que significa “comprame”, aunque tiene una significación más trascendente, relacionada a la reciprocidad y el deseo de abundancia.



cercana a los fenómenos sociales y menos influida por posturas ideológicas que son hegemónicas en otros espacios.

Si se toman en cuenta las representaciones arquitectónicas, en la feria de las alasitas no se pueden ver reproducciones de edificios que mediáticamente son representativos, como la denominada “arquitectura patrimonial”, tampoco se observan símbolos arquitectónicos políticos - ideológicos como la “Casa Grande del Pueblo”<sup>3</sup> o construcciones estatales de “vivienda social”; tampoco están presentes símbolos de la “modernidad global” como el rascacielos Green Tower<sup>4</sup> o algún edificio minimalista de apartamentos. No están presentes edificios con certificación “leed” o construcciones bioclimáticas, ni siquiera del tipo “lak’a uta”<sup>5</sup> más asociado a lo vernacular.

En este sentido, en el presente artículo se hará una caracterización y profundización de la relación de la arquitectura y la ritualidad en la Alasita, tomando en cuenta las miniaturas arquitectónicas presentes en esta festividad, sus implicancias y proyecciones, en base a datos comparativos con la actual arquitectura que se desarrolla en la ciudad de El Alto y la periferia de la ciudad de La Paz.

## II. LA ARQUITECTURA BOLIVIANA “OFICIAL” Y SUS LIMITACIONES

Cuando se hace referencia a la “arquitectura oficial”, se remite a las expresiones provenientes de la academia y los gobiernos estatales, los cuales pretenden expresar la representatividad en cuanto a la producción arquitectónica boliviana, especialmente en sus esferas respectivas.

La arquitectura proveniente de los gobiernos estatales está ligada al carácter mismo del Estado, así como sus expresiones ideológicas<sup>6</sup> incluso con

sus contradicciones. En este sentido, en la actualidad el Estado Plurinacional esgrime el “Vivir Bien”<sup>7</sup> como paradigma civilizatorio, sin embargo, no se expresa a cabalidad en su arquitectura la cual tiende a la reproducción de la modernidad occidental a través de una estética minimalista.

En la Academia las posiciones críticas a la modernidad occidental están más presentes, lo que no implica su superación plena, pero su enfoque mantiene la óptica eurocéntrica a través de miradas ancladas en el posmodernismo, multiculturalismo e indigenismo<sup>8</sup>, lo que limita una producción teórica y arquitectónica autónoma y en base a los fenómenos culturales vigentes en las mayorías populares.

Estas esferas “oficiales” tienen sus mecanismos de construcción de legitimidad a través de la instauración de imaginarios ligados a símbolos arquitectónicos (Estado), como la institucionalización de concursos y premios a edificios de la formalidad: las bienales de arquitectura (Academia).

Un aspecto convergente -del Estado y la Academia- es la formulación del “patrimonio arquitectónico” como elemento de cohesión y representativo de la identidad de la sociedad. Esta producción suele estar sujeta a criterios de etnia y clase afines a las élites con su carga colonial, por lo que su internalización en la población mayoritaria es limitada. Esta forma de asumir la exclusividad de enunciar el patrimonio deja de lado las valoraciones, apropiaciones e imaginarios que implica la construcción de patrimonio social desde el ámbito popular.

En este sentido, existirá una disociación entre lo que es premiado y reconocido en las bienales bolivianas de arquitectura (Imagen 1) con lo que se replica y difunde en la feria de la Alasita (Imagen 2). El imaginario “popular” de lo que es

<sup>3</sup> Edificio símbolo del Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia, residencia del Gobierno central.

<sup>4</sup> El rascacielos más alto de Bolivia inaugurado en 2022.

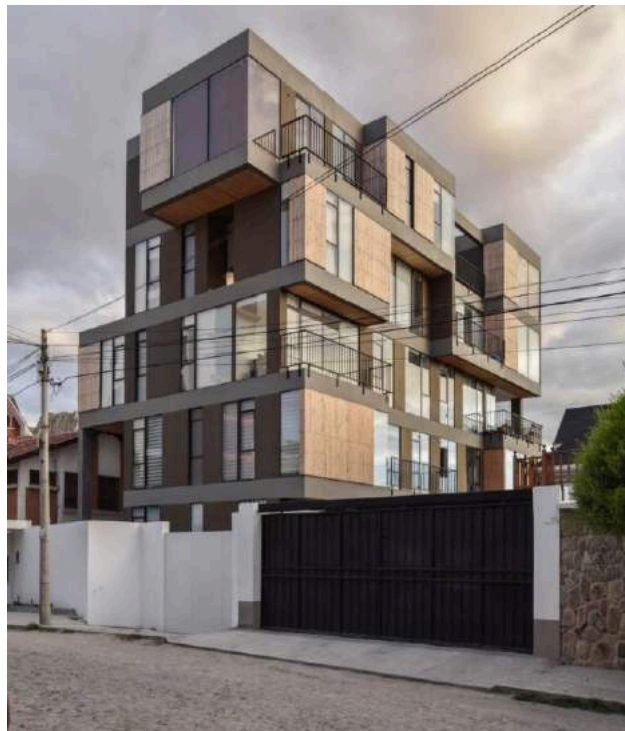
<sup>5</sup> Vivienda de material de tierra propuesta por arquitectos de la academia boliviana.

<sup>6</sup> Durante el nacionalismo del siglo XX la producción arquitectónica estatal se expresó en los estilos Neotiwana-cota y Neocolonial, muestra de las ideas nacionalistas imperantes.

<sup>7</sup> El “Vivir Bien” (“Suma qamaña” en idioma aymara) es el discurso político estatal boliviano centrado en la crítica a la modernidad occidental y una imaginada ancestralidad como su superación.

<sup>8</sup> Formalidad implica la sujeción a las normas y procesos demandados por el Estado y la institucionalidad profesional - académica.

lo deseable en arquitectura no responde a gran parte de los reconocimientos institucionales- profesionales, sino que se desenvuelve mediante otras dinámicas concretas.



*Imagen 1:* Edificio Isabel, premiado en la Bienal de Arquitectura Boliviana de 2021. Fuente de imagen:<https://www.plataformaarquitectura.cl/cl/947246/edificio-isabel-christian-davila-arquitectos>



*Imagen 2:* Venta de miniaturas -entre ellas viviendas- en la Feria de Alasita de la Av. La Paz, El Alto. Año 2024. Fuente: Foto Propia

Pese a ello, en los últimos años se han venido realizando acercamientos puntuales de algunas instituciones hacia la arquitectura de raigambre popular, más allá del interés turístico, por ejemplo, la institución cívica “Los Amigos de la

Ciudad” de La Paz -que suele realizar distinciones a edificios paceños- abrió una categoría en su última convocatoria (2022) denominada “Arquitectura Andina Emergente” aunque con poca repercusión.

En este sentido, para indagar más en la construcción de reconocimiento social de la arquitectura a través de las Alasitas, es necesario hacer un esbozo sobre el relacionamiento de la arquitectura con la ritualidad que -en el presente contexto- corresponde a la realidad del ámbito popular de raigambre aymara<sup>9</sup>, presente con vigorosidad en las ciudades de La Paz y El Alto.

### III. ARQUITECTURA Y RITUALIDAD

En la cosmovisión andina el ser humano forma parte de un todo, ello se expresa también en la arquitectura, aunque con ciertas particularidades que responden a los contextos históricos. En la época prehispánica, por ejemplo, los edificios se vinculaban a la trayectoria de las estrellas, a la ubicación de las “wakas” (sitios sagrados), a los “achachilas” (elementos naturales reconocidos como hermanos mayores).

En gran parte del área rural del altiplano, este vínculo se mantuvo hasta fines del siglo XX, ya que las viviendas orientaban sus vanos (puertas y ventanas) hacia el Este, para recibir la salida del sol. En el área urbana poco se conservó en cuanto a la disposición de las construcciones, ya que la cuadrícula de la ciudad condicionaba la orientación de las construcciones. Sin embargo, gran parte de la ritualidad anterior se mantuvo, especialmente la relacionada a la concepción del edificio como un sujeto.

Retomando la idea del hecho arquitectónico (edificio) como parte de un todo, éste es concebido como un sujeto, al igual que otros entes, ya sean abióticos (ríos, montañas) como bióticos (personas, animales). El hecho arquitectónico sobre el que recae gran parte de esta concepción es la vivienda familiar de raigambre popular, construida como refugio y medio de sustento familiar, ya que no solo cumple la función de habitar, sino la de producir, es decir, generar ingresos económicos que coadyuven en el sustento familiar.

La vivienda rural aymara de antaño cumplía la misma función, habitar/producir, ya que los espacios de crianza de animales estaban colindantes a los espacios familiares, así también gran parte de los espacios de cultivo. La ritualidad en el mundo andino siempre estuvo ligada a la noción de fertilidad y productividad, por ende, la vivienda conservó estas cualidades en los espacios urbanos, dada las olas de migración aymara a ciudades como La Paz y El Alto. La vivienda es productiva y como tal, lleva inherentes características rituales particulares, herederas de la ritualidad aymara rural, entre las que se puede mencionar:

- Al inicio de la construcción, se realiza una ofrenda a la Pachamama la cual está destinada a pedirle su protección ante cualquier inconveniente que se presente en la posterior construcción. La ofrenda se entierra en uno de las fundaciones que sostendrá el edificio.
- En el vaciado de primera losa se apela a una tecnología social aymara que es el “ayni” la cual consta de relaciones de reciprocidad, que se expresan en la colaboración mutua que se hacen familiares en determinadas actividades: “hoy por ti, mañana por mí”<sup>10</sup>. En el caso de la construcción y el vaciado de primera losa, los familiares ayudan en el mismo, reforzando las relaciones de parentesco.
- Al finalizar la construcción de la vivienda, la familia organiza una fiesta que refuerza el “ayni”, los lazos de parentesco. El edificio es adornado y se realizan ofrendas a la Pachamama. En los últimos años, en sectores concretos, como la ciudad de El Alto, el “qamiri” organiza opulentas fiestas en la inauguración de sus edificios, los cuales tienen una importante repercusión mediática.
- La “Ch’alla” anual al edificio, implica un acto ritual que se realiza los martes de carnaval. El carnaval es una festividad que hereda gran parte de la ritualidad del “anata”, fiesta andina aymara desarrollada en el inicio de la época de la cosecha. La “ch’alla” implica el

<sup>9</sup> La nación aymara es una de las naciones que habitan el Estado boliviano, tiene su epicentro en el altiplano, pero ha migrado en gran medida a los valles y los llanos del oriente del país, reconfigurando la cultura de las regiones receptoras.

<sup>10</sup> Qamiri significa “rico” en idioma aymara. Es un grupo social de raigambre popular que ha acumulado importante capital económico, lo que se expresa en sus edificios suntuosos y fiestas opulentas.



agradecimiento a la Pachamama por los bienes logrados y el bienestar familiar. Tal ritual consta de ofrendas a la madre tierra en forma de confeti, pétalos de flores, granos dorados, con cerveza y música. Una particularidad es que el martes de “ch’alla” se festeja y se llena de adornos a las

herramientas de trabajo, a las mascotas, a los animales de granja, a las mismas personas, a los vehículos y especialmente a las viviendas (ver imagen 3). En este sentido, la vivienda cumple también el rol de sujeto, en la misma categoría de otros entes.



*Imagen 3:* Una vivienda “ch’allada” adornada y festejada en agradecimiento a la Pachamama, en la ciudad de El Alto, año 2024. Fuente: Foto Propia

Si bien gran parte de la ritualidad andina fue vigorosa en el pasado, hoy aún mantiene una importancia capital, aunque adaptada a los requerimientos y necesidades contemporáneas, destacando la festividad de las “Alasitas”, que en el área urbana se reconfigura constantemente.

#### IV. LAS ALASITAS

La palabra “Alasita” deriva de un vocablo del idioma aymara que significa “cómprame”, aunque su significado puede ser más profundo. Deriva de los rituales relacionados a la época de lluvias que en aymara se denomina como “Jallupacha”, los cuales estaban orientadas en parte, al deseo de una productividad abundante para la época de cosecha, esencia -el deseo de abundancia y la aspiracionalidad- que se sigue manteniendo en las Alasitas de la actualidad. La festividad de las

Alasitas es una de las más importantes, dinámicas y vigorosas en Bolivia.

En cuanto a las deidades que protagonizan la festividad en la región altiplánica de La Paz y El Alto, la Pachamama es una figura permanente, también está el “Ekeko”, deidad de la abundancia y fertilidad que tiene sus particularidades, los “achachilas” que son entes protectores y especialmente las “illas” de las que se hará referencia a posterior. La religión católica también ha influido en las creencias, especialmente en algunos sectores de la ciudad de La Paz.

Las Alasitas ejemplifican no solo la dinámica de los deseos de abundancia, sino la continuidad cultural y recreación de imaginarios a través de las reproducciones de miniaturas -principal característica de la festividad- las cuales no son meras representaciones ni solo objetos, sino entes



que trascienden hacia lo sacro-simbólico, también denominados como “illas”.

“El uso de las miniaturas, conocido como illas, en la zona andina ha sido una constante porque son deidades que cuidan el rebaño, son el espíritu que cuida y multiplica los animales, plantas y bienes domésticos (productos agrícolas, dinero, ropa, etc.), y pueden existir a través de un objeto o espacio sacralizado que representa el 'ajayú' de todos los seres” (Szabó, citado por Oros, 2017, pp. 11).

Las Alasitas se celebran en varios espacios urbanos y rurales bolivianos, en los cuales se instalan mercados en los que abundan las miniaturas. En el caso de las ciudades de La Paz y el Alto, los mercados se instalan el 24 de enero y duran más de dos semanas; las fechas de instalación varían en otras regiones de Bolivia.

Parte de la ritualidad para el cumplimiento de las aspiraciones es la compra de miniaturas al mediodía del 24 de enero, ya que “es de vital importancia para que suceda, puesto que las ‘acciones del juego’ absorben la fuerza, en este caso del acto, para que esta illa en forma de casa pueda materializarse y crecer” (Oros, 2017, pp.21).

Un elemento importante es el relacionamiento que implica la adquisición de una miniatura, ya que “debe ser el regalo de un amigo, pareja o familiar; uno mismo no puede comprarlo para sí porque no alcanzaría el deseo de abundancia” (Moncada, 2016, pp. 266), aunque ello no necesariamente es una norma. Otro elemento central es la ritualidad que acompaña a dicha adquisición, la cual deja de ser un objeto inerte para constituirse en un sujeto trascendente, una “illa”: “la miniatura es materia energizada, esta viva, crece y se reproduce” (sic.) (Oros, 2017, pp.14)

En este sentido, en la festividad de las Alasitas la miniatura cumple un rol fundamental como medio de relacionamiento social, y, como ente que motiva el accionar para conseguir lo que representa. En el caso de la miniatura de la vivienda existen más implicancias, las cuales se entremezclan con imaginarios autónomos de

modernidad derivada de la arquitectura practicada por las mayorías populares.

## V. MINIATURA ARQUITECTÓNICA, IMPLICANCIAS

Las miniaturas arquitectónicas en la Alasita<sup>11</sup> forman parte de los artículos que presentan cambios permanentes en sus formas, colores y estética, además demuestran las transiciones históricas y fenómenos sociales que los caracterizan. Es necesario mencionar que el “lugar de enunciación” de la miniatura está ligada al ámbito “popular”, es decir, es una expresión desligada de las expresiones de las élites tradicionales<sup>12</sup>.

Durante gran parte del siglo XX, en una época en el que la migración campo-ciudad en Bolivia no era acentuada, en la Alasita sobresalen “los vaciados de casitas en miniatura, generalmente copias de las que existen en los barrios residenciales” (Paredes, 1982, pp.26), miniaturas vaciadas en yeso como se puede ver en el edificio de la imagen 4, posiblemente de estilo Art Decó. No puede generalizarse que solo edificios de las élites tradicionales hayan sido aspiracionales, pero formaron parte importante del imaginario de lo deseado a la espera de que -con el fenómeno de urbanización- el ámbito “popular” recreara sus propias expresiones arquitectónicas a través de sus propias élites, es decir, el qamiri.

<sup>11</sup> Generalmente se denomina indistintamente como Alasitas (plural) o Alasita (singular) a esta festividad.

<sup>12</sup> En un contexto de terminología colonial, las elites tradicionales tienen una raigambre blanco-mestizo, diferenciado de lo indio-indígena.



*Imagen 4:* Miniatura de un edificio en la feria de Alasita del año 1968, La Paz. Fuente: Antonio Paredes “Las Alacitas (Fiesta y feria popular de la ciudad de La Paz)” pp.27.

La vivienda popular aymara tiene sus transiciones históricas expresadas en tipologías basadas en espacios y materiales<sup>13</sup>, uno de ellos, denominado “edificio”, se consolida a fines del siglo XX como el dominante, su “programa espacial se ha mantenido constante por décadas: tiendas en la planta baja, locales comerciales en la planta superior y apartamentos en las últimas plantas, ya sea para alquiler o residencia de los propietarios” (Alejo, 2021, pp.53). Este tipo arquitectónico recrea en lo urbano el carácter de la vivienda rural, que implica el habitar-producir, así también la miniatura lo replicará (Imagen 5 y 6). Así también los materiales en los que están hechos las miniaturas se diversificará siendo elaborados en yeso, madera y vidrio.

<sup>13</sup> Los términos con los que el ámbito popular aymara denominó a sus tipologías arquitectónicas fueron: “Uta” (casa en idioma aymara) para denominar a la vivienda básica de adobe; Altusa (“alto”, pronunciación influida por el idioma aymara) para la vivienda de adobe de dos plantas y por último “Edificio” para denominar a la vivienda de ladrillo con estructura de hormigón.



*Imagen 5:* (izquierda) Miniatura de inicios del siglo XXI. Fuente: Imagen tomada de Varinia Oros “Alasitas, Donde crecen las illas” pp. 189. *Imagen 6* (derecha) Edificio de fines de los años 90s en “La Ceja” de El Alto. Fuente: Propia.

En las miniaturas de la Alasita de los 90s es notoria la similitud en las formas y colores, así como los espacios que se replican. La aspiracionalidad se orienta -en este caso concreto- hacia la generación de ingresos que coadyuven al sustento familiar, ya que el contexto económico boliviano es complejo, dada la informalidad mayoritaria<sup>14</sup> que causa incertidumbre sobre los ingresos económicos.

Un fenómeno importante que se amplifica -en las miniaturas- a partir de la segunda década del siglo XXI, es el rol de reconocimiento social a edificios ya construidos, tendiendo a replicarlos en su totalidad o usando algunos elementos característicos de los mismos para fusionarlos en un edificio único. Esta forma de reconocimiento suple a premiaciones institucionales-profesionales de arquitectura -como las bienales- ya que implican una forma elección más directa de los edificios representativos y que paulatinamente forman parte de un “patrimonio social” dinámico e internalizado.

<sup>14</sup> Según el CEBEC (Centro Boliviano de Economía) el 90% de la población boliviana no tiene un empleo fijo con seguros sociales.

Es necesario mencionar que este reconocimiento social tiene doble filtro, el primero se da a partir del artesano que analiza el panorama de los edificios aspiracionales, el segundo filtro lo constituye el comprador de la miniatura, que lo elige según sus expectativas y la de la persona a la que le hará el regalo; es decir, no es un proceso individual y subjetivo, sino relacional influido por la subjetividad social y sus imaginarios.

Para tomar en cuenta la estética prevaleciente en los edificios y en sus miniaturas, se toma en cuenta el artículo “El Alto: la reconfiguración de los imaginarios a través de la estética” (Alejo, 2021), en el que se hace una clasificación de 5 variantes estéticas, basadas en la decoración del edificio: “Geométrica”, “Ecléctica historicista”, “Andina”<sup>15</sup>, “Minimalista policroma” y “Futurista transformer”.

<sup>15</sup> Desde el año 2014 la academia y grupos con repercusión mediática catalogaron a estos edificios con el nombre peyorativo de “cholet”, que es un juego de palabras de cholo y chalet. Con el tiempo este nombre fue extendido a cualquier edificio construido en El Alto y las periferias de La Paz que tengan inherentes elementos considerado como exóticos, desde una mirada occidental.



Los edificios de estética andina (con símbolos andinos fueron de los primeros en ser replicados (imagen 7), dada su difusión que luego

trascendería a lo mediático, a través de las obras del constructor Freddy Mamani (imagen 8).



*Imagen 7:* (izquierda) Miniatura de un edificio de variante estética andina con la artesana en el fondo, feria de Alasita de la zona 16 de julio, El Alto, 2022. Fuente: Imagen Propia. *Imagen 8* (derecha) Edificio de estética andina, carretera a Viacha, El Alto. Fuente: Imagen Propia.

Si bien estas miniaturas arquitectónicas de estética andina fueron abundantes en la década pasada, en la actualidad siguen presentes, pero no en la misma cantidad que las réplicas de estética minimalista y futurista, lo que también tiene correlación con la dinámica arquitectónica de ciudades como La Paz y El Alto.

En el presente, tanto en El Alto como en la periferia paceña, se vienen construyendo edificios de variante estética “futurista transformer”<sup>16</sup>, su correlato en la Alasita se da en réplicas casi exactas o referencias a las mismas, por ejemplo, el edificio Jhuliana del fallecido arquitecto Santos Churata es un exponente reconocible (Imagen 8 y 9).

<sup>16</sup> El uso de elementos cinematográficos en la decoración de las viviendas no es nuevo. Hace más de treinta años, por ejemplo, las puertas de algunas viviendas tenían figuras de Pinocho o Bambi.





*Imagen 8:* (izquierda) Miniatura de un edificio (Jhuliana) replicado con exactitud en la feria de Alasitas de La Paz, 2022. Fuente: Imagen Propia. Imagen 9 (derecha) Edificio Jhuliana, de estética “futurista transformer” ubicado en la Av. Juan Pablo II, El Alto. Fuente: Imagen propia.

Así también, en el año 2024 se presentaron miniaturas de edificios de reciente construcción, como el edificio “Caballeros del Zodiaco” inaugurado en noviembre de 2023, lo que implicaba un corto margen de tiempo para su elaboración artesanal. Los edificios más

espectaculares de los qamiri ya forman parte de las referencias de las miniaturas, especialmente aquellos que tienen temáticas concretas, es decir, recurren a un tópico cinematográfico o referencias a alta tecnología (Imagen 10 y 11).



*Imagen 10:* Parte de los edificios representados en las Alasitas en La Paz y El Alto, de izquierda a derecha: Edificio “Iron Man” (inaugurado en 2019) en la zona 16 de julio, Edificio “Bumblebee” (inaugurado en 2023) en la Av. Adrián Castillo, Edificio “Caballeros del Zodiaco” (inaugurado en 2023) en la carretera a Laja, todos ubicados en la ciudad de El Alto. Fuente: Elaboración en base a fotos propias.



*Imagen 11:* Miniaturas de edificios de estética futurista y temática de ficción, expuestas en la festividad de Alasitas del año 2024, La Paz. Fuente: Imagen propia.

La adquisición de una miniatura de estos edificios no necesariamente implica que se construirán copias exactas, sino, se aspira a que la futura vivienda pueda brindar alguna aptitud del edificio referenciado, ya sea la capacidad de generación de ingresos, el prestigio y reconocimiento social, la repercusión mediática. Es un horizonte, un objetivo que pueda delimitar los esfuerzos individuales y familiares.

Las miniaturas arquitectónicas de la Alasita también pueden inferir lo aspiracional en cuanto a la expresión espacial, funcional, tecnológica y morfológica de la miniatura:

- La función dual de la vivienda es una constante. La mayor parte de las miniaturas de vivienda muestran la función del habitar/producir, heredera -en este aspecto- de la vivienda aymara rural.
- La tecnología constructiva representada tiene correlación con la realizada en la casi totalidad de la Bolivia urbana, la cual consta de una estructura de hormigón con cerramientos de ladrillo (Imagen 12). El inicio de la construcción de un edificio también es representado, ya que toda familia aspira el iniciar la construcción de su vivienda, o continuar la construcción de la misma<sup>17</sup>.
- Las miniaturas de viviendas con enfoque más productivo se plantean en la totalidad del lote (como los edificios en la ciudad de El Alto), mientras otras las que tienen uso más residencial presentan un patio frontal, similar a las viviendas de otras ciudades Cochabamba) (imagen 10). Esto implica la idea de maximización<sup>18</sup> diferenciada del espacio.

<sup>17</sup> En el ámbito popular informal boliviano, la construcción de la vivienda puede tardar incluso décadas, ya que generalmente se la realiza en fases con largas interrupciones.

<sup>18</sup> Maximización en el sentido de mayor ocupación del espacio de lote para la generación de mayores ingresos económicos.





*Imagen 12:* Miniaturas de edificios en construcción en las Alasitas del año 2023, El Alto. Fuente: Imagen propia.



*Imagen 13:* (izquierda) Miniaturas de viviendas con diferente ocupación de lote, en el 100% en la parte superior y con un retiro frontal (patio) en la parte inferior. Fuente: Imagen propia. *Imagen 14* (derecha) Edificio de estética minimalista con un local de negocio en parte del patio frontal, ciudad de Cochabamba. Fuente: Imagen propia.

Es necesario puntualizar que las miniaturas de edificios presentes en la feria de Alasita de La Paz y El Alto no se restringen a la región altiplánica

andina, se ven las mismas miniaturas en la Alasita de otras regiones de Bolivia, ya sea el norte amazónico, las llanuras orientales y los valles

interandinos, aunque, en el caso de la ritualidad, otras regiones tienen sus propias particularidades.

## VI. ALASITAS E IMAGINARIOS DE MODERNIDAD

La festividad de las Alasitas forma parte de los imaginarios de “modernidad” en el ámbito “popular” que suele expresarse en la estética de los edificios:

“ (...) Este imaginario está posesionado en la mentalidad de los estratos altos, como el del gamiri, que lo expresa en su arquitectura; pero la diferencia con las burguesías bolivianas es que –como elite social– las expresiones del gamiri son aspiracionales a gran parte del ámbito popular y son reproducidas por festividades como las Alasitas (...)” (Alejo, 2021 pp. 75-76)

Dadas sus características, estas expresiones implican la suma de elementos asociados a lo moderno a un tronco cultural sólido, “(...) se desarrollan perspectivas alternativas sobre la modernidad (...). Estos puntos de vista no necesariamente cortan los vínculos con las raíces ancestrales aymaras, sino que más bien reflejan frustraciones históricas y aspiraciones en evolución dentro del paisaje contemporáneo” (Alejo, 9 de enero, 2024).

El tronco cultural sólido, la raíz ancestral -en este caso- consta de la ritualidad, la concepción del edificio como sujeto y su trascendencia hacia la categoría de “illa” (materia energizada) ejemplificada en las Alasitas. Estas cualidades son constantes y no son cambiantes como la estética de los edificios, por ello, el estancamiento en la difusión de edificios de estética andina, no necesariamente implica el abandono de la raíz ancestral.

Las frustraciones históricas se relacionan a los fallidos intentos estatales de modernización basados en criterios occidentales rígidos y dependientes, renunciando a la autonomía, impidiendo a las sociedades de raigambre prehispánica, la construcción de su propio horizonte, en este caso, su propia modernidad.

En el caso de la arquitectura -cuyas miniaturas se ven en la Alasita- la modernidad es una representación siempre cambiante, pero que implica una idea de contemporaneidad basada en los materiales del edificio y su estética, la cual, en el presente contexto, es minimalista y especialmente futurista. Cabe aclarar que lo que se denomina como minimalismo en este medio, no lo es en una dimensión conceptual académicamente aceptada, sino es una representación utilitaria, de adopción autónoma que no obedece a cánones rígidos establecidos.

En el caso de la relación entre la noción de modernidad y la estética futurista, se la puede particularizar a la dinámica de la región altiplánica aymara en la que están insertos La Paz y El Alto. En esta región se han hecho comunes las innovaciones tecnológicas artesanales y la recreación de alta tecnología en robótica, todo en un ambiente de precariedad informal y abandono estatal. Parte de la subjetividad social está predispuesta a ese horizonte y lo expresa también en la estética de sus edificios, la Alasita no hace más que reflejar esa dinámica a través de las miniaturas.

En el aspecto urbano, la Alasita muestra el horizonte imaginado de la ciudad por quienes forman parte de las bases sociales de la misma. La imagen urbana, su fisonomía, sus colores y formas (Imagen 15). Esta sería la “ciudad moderna” imaginada de forma autónoma, que poco tiene que ver con los paradigmas modernos producidos por la academia y las élites tradicionales.





*Imagen 10:* Panorama de las miniaturas de viviendas en un puesto de venta en la Alasita, La Paz, 2024.  
Fuente: Propia.

Lo expuesto implica que la producción arquitectónica “popular” contemporánea ha trascendido la cualidad de “hecho arquitectónico”, ocupando un sitio fundamental en expresiones culturales como la Alasita. Su uso -como miniatura- simbólico, identitario, ritual lo posiona como patrimonio social y horizonte aspiracional, con sus implicancias.

## VII. ALASITAS COMO EXPRESIÓN DE PATRIMONIO ARQUITECTÓNICO SOCIAL

Desde los gobiernos estatales y la academia se promociona la arquitectura que tiene atribuciones

patrimoniales, es decir, forma parte de la historia e identidad de la ciudad y región. En el caso boliviano, el patrimonio mayormente engloba expresiones arquitectónicas del pasado prehispánico y el periodo de la colonia-república, aunque la producción prehispánica suele tener connotaciones de ruinas, de un pasado sin continuidad, mientras lo colonial y republicana implicaría una cultura viva.

La producción arquitectónica patrimonial, comprende mayormente la producción de las élites tradicionales referentes a sus orígenes e identidad. Para estos sectores en ejercicio de poder, los sectores populares no poseen una

arquitectura reciente relevante que trascienda más allá de ser un atractivo turístico. Aunque en los últimos años existieron esfuerzos puntuales para subsanar esta mirada<sup>19</sup>.

Pese a ello, a menudo los especialistas estatales de la identidad, suelen poner en valor aquello que para el ámbito popular ya tiene una importancia consolidada. En este sentido, festividades como la Alasita son un medio por el cual gran parte de la sociedad muestra la arquitectura a la que aspira y le representa, ello lleva de forma inherente la idea de identidad y patrimonio, pero sujetas a una subjetividad social más estable y alejados de posiciones políticas – ideológicas de coyuntura.

Entonces, la identificación y el impulso del patrimonio arquitectónico no es una exclusividad de una élite especializada, sino suele ser -en el medio boliviano- una construcción social permanente que se refuerza periódicamente, poniendo en valor e internalizando elementos arquitectónicos concretos, que forman parte de los horizontes sociales que se expresan en hechos culturales como la Alasita.

## VIII. CONCLUSIONES

La miniatura arquitectónica en la Alasita no responde a la influencia de parámetros de la academia ni del Estado y sus paradigmas, lo que implica que su desenvolvimiento es autónomo y ello se refleja en las referencias que le sirven de inspiración. En las Alasitas se refleja la arquitectura mayoritaria que se difunde no solo en las laderas paceñas y El Alto, sino en gran parte de las áreas periurbanas y ciudades intermedias bolivianas.

La miniatura no es una mera representación. El mismo hecho de que forme parte de la ritualidad hace que el no-objeto tenga una carga energética

trascendente, es un sujeto, llegando a la categoría de “illa”. Esta cosmovisión se constituye en un núcleo cultural fuerte que adopta elementos de la modernidad.

La miniatura arquitectónica no solo está asociada a la ritualidad, funciona como un mecanismo de reconocimiento social a determinados edificios. Así también la internalización y representatividad de la misma, implica la construcción de patrimonio desde una vía alternativa a la académica-estatal. La Alasita en sí, expresa la dinámica y el horizonte de la Bolivia mayoritaria.

El imaginario de modernidad es autónomo, y tiene correlato tanto en la Alasita como en la producción arquitectónica, destacando la diversidad estética que muestra una cultura abierta y dinámica, que mantiene elementos esenciales de su núcleo cultural.

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<sup>19</sup> En 2019 el Gobierno Municipal de El Alto promovió el concurso arquitectónico denominado como “inticholet”, premiando a los edificios que consideraba más relevantes, sin embargo esta premiación no tuvo continuidad en años posteriores. Desde 2023 la diputada Elena Pachacute de la ciudad de El Alto, pretende reconocer -mediante ley- a la arquitectura de estética andina de El Alto como “expresión artística cultural neoandina”, categoría aún no equiparable a “patrimonial”.



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