



Mediation and Mediators in Carlos Morton's *The Miser of Mexico* and *Trumpus Caesar*

Edit-Mária DÁNÉL

University of Bucharest (Bucharest, Romania)
Doctoral School of Literary and Cultural Studies
daneeditmaria@gmail.com
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7163-7944>

Abstract. This paper aims towards identifying those protagonists who occupy the position of mediator in the process of decoding the message by uniting detached ideologies in Carlos Morton's *The Miser of Mexico* (1989) and *Trumpus Caesar* (2021). On the level of the narrative, border-resurfacing and its impact on society are presented by anecdote and humour. Jon Yates's 2022 book entitled *Fractured. How We Learn to Live Together* mentions that in order to reconnect divided societies, ideologies, and races, the factor of laughter proves to be the most effective means: "If the person smiled, you knew you had someone in the mood to buy; if not, it was time to move on" (Yates 2022, 17). Slavoj Žižek in his work entitled *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism? Five Interventions in the (Mis)use of a Notion* argues that humanity can restore communication with the Divine only by the mediated assistance of Jesus Christ, who "must sacrifice himself" (Žižek 2002, 50) in the process. In order to mend broken relationships, Carlos Morton's subjective-participative mediators assume the position of honest advisors, critics, non-judgmental and non-political entities, individual and self-sufficient characters, who by partial or total detachment point out the tragic in the comical. With the help of humour and satire, the playwright's protagonists in the dramas mentioned above captivate audiences by softening critical situations through mutual acceptance and tolerance.

Keywords: border narratives, dramatic mediation, subjective and semi-objective mediators, oracle-mediator.

I. Introduction

This paper focuses on identifying those entities or protagonists with an independent, self-contained existence which occupy the position of mediator in the process of decoding the message concerning dramas by Carlos Morton. It implements the notion of *dramatic mediator* in the context of introducing the

subjective-messianic-active-invested negotiating protagonists in the playwright's dramas: *The Miser of Mexico* (1989) and *Trumpus Caesar* (2021). George Packer's essay *How America Fractured into Four Parts* discusses, among many others, the idea of national identification concerning American culture with a history of self-empowerment and open-minded approach towards a "shared reality" (Packer 2021). According to Packer, identity is based on belief systems, identification, and self-reflection, which invites seriousness and awareness: "That long gaze into the mirror has to end in self-respect or it will swallow us up" (Packer 2021). In order to comprehend the occurring socio-political rupture of the present, one has to understand how a nation considered to be "the shining city on the hill" (Packer 2021) turned into Unjust America in a relatively short period of time culminating in oppression and psychological trauma. Reintegration is only possible through border-resurfacing on the level of the narrative, as Jon Yates's 2022 book entitled *Fractured. How We Learn to Live Together* mentions. In order to reconnect divided societies, ideologies, and races, the ludic factor proves to be the most effective approach. Broken discourse in every form needs a negotiator.

For identifying these mediating entities, I have used Slavoj Žižek's idea concerning the role of Jesus Christ as intermediary between God and Mankind: "in order for humanity to be restored to God, the mediator must sacrifice himself" (Žižek 2002, 50). Following this concept of negotiation and conflict resolution, the opposite poles are supposed to reach consubstantiality by disappearance. The absurdity, however, according to Žižek, lies in the fact that by making this humanly impossible, enormous sacrifice, this divine act might present the problem hindering reconciliation between God and Man: "Christ as mediator between God and humanity is – to put it in today's deconstructionist terms – the condition of possibility and the condition of impossibility between the two: as mediator, he is at the same time the obstacle which prevents the full mediation of the opposed poles" (Žižek 2002, 50).

Carlos Morton's negotiators initiate the individual healing process by inviting protagonists to witness the exact moment and place when their personal, existential rupture happened. These subjective, empathic, messianic arbitrators suggest that change is possible and hope must never be abandoned. His mediators constantly try to modify past history by a humorous, sarcastic quantum leap of events. Due to this fundamental alterity, elements of perception gravitate towards the same goal, and these negotiators can be considered philanthropic actors in close harmony with the protagonist(s), contributing to an external shock of self-awareness, undertaking the itinerary from non-identity to rediscovering themselves. Even if the individual's past actions and their consequences are immutable, his perception concerning the events must radically change in order to heal any caused wounds. It is at the end of the process that the mediating entity is immersed into the shaping of new identities to the extent of identification and self-sacrifice.

II. Mediation and Mediators: Argumentation and Etymology

Mediation is viewed as a process to artistic and personal self-discovery because it involves negotiation between two parties and triggers the acknowledgement of the protagonists' limitations concerning their inability to fundamentally change their past. These negotiators function as stimulating agents, establishing the relationship between cause and effect where the object of change has to recreate these intermediary spaces to re-experience the characters' unmodified past and gain fundamental transformation. Before reaching his noble goal, the negotiator, in these cases, will operate on the temporal systems of memory, family, and death.

Etymologically, the notion of *mediator* enjoyed a vast distribution from medium, counsellor, interlocutor, and interpreter to philanthropist, including contemporary methods of modern digitalization as well as being associated with litigation or divorce cases assisted by a third party. Mediation, according to Joshua Smilovitz, implies "bargaining" (Smilovitz 2008, 2) and empathy, a conflict-detecting and non-directive method first used by Carl Rogers in the nineteenth century. Psychologist Morton Deutsch observes a difference between "destructive" and "constructive conflict" (qtd. in Strasser and Randolph 2004, 141), as it is revealing the flaws of a certain relationship with two possible outcomes: a more harmonious understanding between those involved or permanent estrangement.

The negotiator does not hold any juridical, psychological title; he is mostly impartial aiming towards contributing to the resolution of the conflict by exposing the problem through a philanthropic attitude, theory supported by Anghel Diana-Ionela, who in her doctoral thesis *Medierea în viața socio-politică* [*Mediation in Socio-Political Life*] identifies the important functions of an intermediary as follows: "informatory function (reuniting non-connected parties), tactical and surveillance measures (due to mutual distrust, parties fail to reach an agreement) and connective and networking functions (facilitation by compromise)" (Anghel 2010, 210).

III. Absurd Identity

This study offers a comparative manner to analyse the above-mentioned dramas as well as mediated assistance to direct attention towards social-individual matters such as depression, fear, regrets, prejudice, and their impact on future generations.

Carlos Morton uses theatre to reawaken the past in order to raise awareness. He describes oppressors and the oppressed and uses farce and satire to reach a dramatic effect: "Whether he treats mythical, religious, and social themes and presents human beings in search of liberation there is always a sense of

humor in the character, situation and language” (Lomelí and Shirley 1992, 187). His influence is considered to be Luis Valdéz, the mastermind behind *Teatro Campesino* “founded as the cultural arm of farm workers’ union in California (Huerta 2016, 2). It is a working class theatre making a statement, exposing the many problems that plagued their communities” (Lomelí and Shirley 1992, 187). Carlos Morton consciously uses myths of Mexican-American culture with a “sardonic view of humanity and a folkloric interpretation of classic patterns, skillfully employing characteristics of the classical rites to construct a comedy or a tragedy that deals with rituals” (Lomelí and Shirley 1992, 190). The dramatist reconstructs ancient themes and rituals, placing them into a more personalized Chicano context: in this sense, Carlos Morton considers theatre to be not only “a ceremonial activity, but a combination of ritual within a ritual” (Lomelí and Shirley 1992, 190) presenting a new perspective on life and its events.

There are three important factors that the *Teatro Campesino* can be discussed around: historical, socio-political, and certainly artistic ones. Historically, this theatre movement needs to be traced back to the Ancient Mayan concept of “zero” (Valdez 2022, 51) meaning that all individuals need to find their well-decided place in society, arriving into existence with nothing, ending with nothing. This artistic endeavour of “full emptiness and empty fullness” (Valdez 2022, 37) is characterized by a non-violent manner of presentation, spiced with Mexican folk humour in a bilingual environment. The actors were called “*payasos*” (Valdez 2022, 38), or clowns, which would breed a series of misconceptions in the public. Besides not being taken seriously at first, the actors were often considered to have womanizing, homosexual, or even worse tendencies. As the popularity of *Teatro Campesino* grew, it became a weapon, singing in the face of fear and intimidation, artistically employing four stereotypes of characters: the “*Huelgistas*,” or the strikers, the “*Patroncitos*,” or the growers, the “*Esquiroles*,” or the scabs, and the “*Contractistas*,” or the labour contractors (Valdez 2022, 40). The plays were called “*actos argumentales*” (Valdez 2022, 41) or simply *actos*, fifteen-minute improvised pieces with or without music, performed mostly in Spanish, influenced by Bertolt Brecht’s conception about the provoking of a reaction from its audience. These *actos* shed light upon specific social issues, express peoples’ feelings, satirize the opposition, and, most importantly, “show or hint at a solution” (Valdez 2022, 41). Thus, a mediated dramatic form involving ancient myths and ballads has been employed to present the conflict.

Whenever the need of getting a message across is concerned, the arbitrators in Carlos Morton’s plays have to sacrifice themselves, becoming a Christ figure of hope and de-traumatization of horrible past events, inviting general acceptance, reclaiming fundamental parts of stolen identity concerning the protagonists. His dramas have an underlying theme: educating people by strengthening their historical, socio-political legitimacy. This matter, seemingly forgotten or neglected

as it may be, urges to be heard and understood even nowadays in a time when George Packer's theory about the first great American narrative of Free America has brought disappointment. Morton's characters deal with the harsh realities through mediators who support their realizations and endeavours precisely because reconciliation is not a painless struggle, but it contributes to spiritual purification. Carlos Morton, as an American citizen with Mexican heritage, most definitely belongs to the category of the disadvantaged for their otherness living on a territory with a multicultural collision somewhat forced upon him. Behind Don Profundo Quequemáfer's constructed identity of power and ambition in the play *The Miser of Mexico* there lies a disappointed, secluded man. Trumpus Caesar in the play bearing the same title becomes a tyrant, a person with distorted morals, seeking recognition and positive feedback for horrible, inhuman deeds. Carlos Morton himself becomes the dramatic mediator for his own, personal struggles, as an educated member of the second great narrative called by Packer Smart America, to complete the steps of self-acceptance in a land called free not only at the surface. In order to successfully graduate this adventure called life, one has to consider the union of body, heart, mind, and spirit, in other words to aim towards a personal spiritual balance and happiness before the popping of "life's fragile bubble" (Valdez 2022, 52).

Individuals joining the *Teatro* were mostly offsprings of farm workers, thus a very low level of literacy can be observed among its members. From a political point of view, this type of theatre was established as a "counter-culture revolution" (Valdez 2022, 6), a reaction supporting the Grape Strike, which took place between 8 September 1965 and 1970 and was a peaceful labour-movement in Delano, California, against the exploitation of farmers. Artistically, producer and playwright Luis Valdez established a theatre "of, by and for the striking farm workers" (Valdez 2022, 37) as well as stated in their mission: "We were the Farm Workers Theatre, as dirt poor as our name, but we had a life-aiming cause" (Valdez 2022, 37). It is without a doubt that *Teatro Campesino* has achieved its goal considering Peter Brooks' respectful acknowledgement concerning its activity as being "a living organic theatre movement [...]-(*their*) baptism by fire had created an unusual theatre group that had rapidly found its way to precise and practical understanding of the theatre process" (Valdez 2022, 45).

IV. Memory, Family, Annihilation

In order to understand the present, unravelling the past is necessary to comprehend and balance the future. The artistic method that Carlos Morton uses is one triggered by borderline situations when the individual suffers an existential loss and his identity is questioned. Generally, his plays employ a benefactor, a mediator, serving as the *axis mundi* who the protagonists all gravitate around. The places

of these encounters involve bars, gambling caves, restaurants, houses, which become sanctified islands of safety and stability. These subjective-messianic-active-invested negotiators emanate a natural sensation of trust, between mediator and character, which exceeds the realms of humanly acceptable standards. On the other hand, negotiators are the ones placing characters into a void of decisive events. Not being able to see the obvious solutions, protagonists do not entirely manage to quantum-leap their problems, remaining in the absurd situation of never fully resurfacing victoriously despite the acceptance of their issue. In a world where morals are turned upside down, after being granted forgiveness, Morton's characters often celebrate their partial victory by dancing and singing, diminishing the borders between good and evil, renouncing the titles of illegal aliens, being reformed and no longer deformed.

Carlos Morton's drama entitled *The Miser of Mexico*, a play about a father who is conflicted when it comes to choosing between his fortune and the integrity of his family, is based on real historical events. From a socio-political point of view, the play is set in Juarez, just before the Mexican Revolution, which, just like in the case of Don Profundo's decline, resulted in the end of a long dictatorship. In Mexico, this is the political era of establishing a constitutional republic as a result of the widespread dissatisfaction with Porfirio Díaz's actions favouring wealthy landowners and industrialists. Thus, Don Profundo's character mirrors that of Porfirio Díaz's, whose reign was abolished by Emiliano Zapata's bloody attack on the local rural political leaders, the "*cacique*." As a result of these attempts, in the spring of 1911, the revolutionary forces took Ciudad Juárez, forcing Díaz to resign, and declared Madero president. *The Miser of Mexico* presents the entanglements and unusual ties inside the family of Don Profundo Quequemáfer and his children, Clemente and Elisa. The semi-objective-subjective, equally invested mediator pair of this play are Tan-Tan and Fanny. The first arbitrating entity has various qualifications from cook to coachman, functioning as a reliable information vessel between Don Profundo, a deep thinker, and the world around him. Tan-Tan's name has a duality: he exposes the problem in a cold, detached manner, being the only trustworthy company for Don Profundo, mirroring him. His provenience, age, family situation are unclear. The interwoven languages of English and Spanish which Tan-Tan mostly uses have a psychological undertone triggering a more intimate context since true, honest, heartfelt feelings are best communicated in our mother tongue:

You are the butt of a thousand jokes, and your stinginess is legend. One person says you wouldn't lend him a light from your candle to light his cigar, because you were afraid it would lose some of its glow. This one tells the story that you once brought a lawsuit against a neighbor's goat for eating your grass. They say your nose is so big because the air is free. They say you save

your spittle, so you can drink it later. Shall I go on? You are the laughingstock of the entire world. They never talk about you except by the name of miser, skinfrit, cheapskate, *codo*, *tacaño y mezquino*. (Morton 1992, 130)

In writing the play, Carlos Morton was influenced by Jean Baptiste Poquelin's, or, more prominently, Molière's *The Miser*, which, according to the playwright himself, qualifies as a comedy, a literary genre not very famous in the seventeenth century. The written form of the play has also been different from public expectations regarding a dramatic literary work: "the public did not take to the play because it was written not in verse but in prose" (Molière 2000, 181). Another similarity that Morton's *The Miser of Mexico* and Molière's *The Miser* share is the comic elements that the servants as mediators contribute to the general atmosphere of the plays in question: "Comic servants can see what their master cannot" (Molière 2000, 182). In Molière's *The Miser*, there are multiple arbitrating protagonists. One of these mediators is Valère, who nurtures affectionate feelings for Élise, the daughter of the miser Harpagon. I personally named him a *Machiavellian oracle-mediator* due to the fact that he can influence and manipulate the characters' attitude by providing them with the required fake care and attention: "I find the best way to get on the right side of people is to pretend to fall in with their view of things, agree with their principles, encourage their foibles and applaud whatever they do" (Molière 2000, 185). He manages to gain the trust of Harpagon using his technique: "I'm lucky to have a man like him in my service" (Molière 2000, 200) to an extent of him acquiring "full parental authority" (Molière 2000, 199) over Élise. Valère is the gallant knight in shining armour who has previously saved Élise from drowning and whose provenience is a mystery until the end of the play when indeed his actions give him justice.

The miser's identity is also hidden at the beginning of the play. The spectator only receives indirect descriptions regarding his persona. La Flèche's words concerning Harpagon, the momentarily indirect protagonist, offer a detailed characterization of him: "I never came across anyone nastier than this bad-tempered old man, if you asked me, I'd say he is the very devil" (Molière 2000, 188). He further completes his description as follows: "And how the devil do you think anybody could ever pinch anything of yours? Is it likely you'll ever be robbed since you keep everything under lock and key and stand guard day and night?" (Molière 2000, 188). Harpagon's stinginess is further humorously elaborated by La Flèche:

Of all human beings, our Mr. Harpagon is the least human being of the lot. Of all mortal men, he's the hardest, the tightest-fisted mortal man there is. There is no service you can do that would make him grateful enough to put his hand in his pocket. Praise, compliments, kindly cordial words,

yes: plenty of those. But money? Forget it! You can gain his approval, be in his good books, but you'll get nothing out of that dry old stick. He hates the word "giving" so much that he won't even give you a "good morning." (Molière 2000, 206)

Furthermore, he also mentions certain distinguishable physical characteristics of the miser having "prying eyes" (Molière 2000, 188) and "forever snooping" (Molière 2000, 188) around.

Tan-Tan's informatory, less tactical interventions and somewhat self-imposed emotional detachment in describing Don Profundo Quequemáfer are inspired by Molière's Harpagon characterization of semi-objective mediator Maître Jacques, who similarly to Morton's Tan-Tan serves multiple functions at the miser's household. In fact, placing the two mediating descriptions side by side one would obtain the complete picture of *The Miser* in general. Here is Maître Jacques's testimony about Harpagon:

Since you will have it sir, I'll tell you straight – you're a laughing stock everywhere. We get bombarded on all sides with jokes about you. There's nothing makes people happier than laying into you and telling stories about how mean you are. According to one tale, you have special calendars printed twice the number of fast days and vigils on them so you can save money by making everybody in your house abstain more often. Another says you'll always have a quarrel to pick with your servants on quarter-days or when they're leaving your service, just so you can have an excuse for not giving them anything. According to one chap, you once had the law on a neighbor's cat for eating up the leftovers from a leg of mutton. Another reckons you were caught one night stealing oats from your own horses and says that your coachman, the one before me, gave you a damn good hiding in the dark that you never said anything about. What more can I say? We can't poke our nose out of doors without hearing you being put through the mincer. You're a figure of fun, a bye-word for everybody and no one refers to you by your name: they all call you a miser, a cheap skate, a skinfit, a tight-fisted old shark. (Molière 2000, 218)

Tan-Tan and Maître Jacques bear similarities with Shakespearian protagonists as well. They resemble Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, presenting facts in a ludic way. By living outside this *axis mundi*, this centre and focal point, their partial attachment makes them perfect negotiators, working towards the heart of the family machine. If Tan-Tan in Carlos Morton's play was the detached semi-objective mediator, Fanny can be considered his subjective counterpart. She is extremely involved in the outcome of events, slightly modifying, "softening" the

general message. As the tactical, empathic, participative aunt of Mariana, a beautiful girl in love with Clemente, Fanny's behaviour exhibits care and attachment with the tendency to adjust the reflector according to the situation: "Mariana (*aside*): What a beast!" (Morton 1992, 132). Fanny: "It's just that she is overcome by your noble visage. Besides, good girls aren't supposed to display what their heart feels!" (Morton 1992, 133). In some cases, Fanny intervenes without being asked, she is the co-creator of events: "She says you cut quite a handsome figure" (Morton 1992, 133). Morton's *The Miser of Mexico* and Molière's *The Miser* share a mediator-protagonist in the person of Fanny, who in Morton's play is witty, chatty, but also a wise servant. Her mirror image, transgressing between dramas and ages, is Frosine, who in Molière's play is referred to as a "go-between" (Molière 2000, 182), suggesting a somewhat mysterious provenience, which in itself resumes her role as a subjective-involved arbitrator with the special gift for "arranging marriages" (Molière 2000, 208). As yet another Machiavellian character, she has a manipulative nature of telling interlocutors what they desire to hear. Despite her initial reaction upon meeting Harpagon, she addresses him in the following manner: "Goodness me, how well you're looking – the picture of health" (Molière 2000, 207), even going further by adding that he was in his "prime of life" (Molière 2000, 207). When presenting Marianne's modest family background to Harpagon, the reader witnesses a mastery of comic vocabulary: "she's been brought up on a very economical diet. Here's a girl used to living on salad and milk, apples and cheese..." (Molière 2000, 209). Frosine is present at Harpagon and Mariane's first official meeting. As the involved, very subjective mediator, she also modifies the message according to the situation at hand. Harpagon's compliments "you are a star" (Molière 2000, 221) and "the loveliest star there is in the company of stars" (Molière 2000, 221) are not returned by Mariane, who utters the following: "Oh, Frosine! What a face!" (Molière 2000, 221). These words in their final, somewhat dignified form become: "She's a little overcome. Young girls are always shy at first to show their feelings" (Molière 2000, 222). Frosine attempts to approach the beauty and the beast of the drama, who gravitate away from each other, as the following example shows: "Mariane (*aside to Frosine*): What a horrible man!" (Molière 2000, 222). Due to a purposefully erroneous reception of the initial message, Harpagon relies on Frosine to mediate the information that HE wants to hear. The end product is as follows: "She said she thinks you're wonderful" (Molière 2000, 222). Mariane's radical refusal of Harpagon, exclaiming "What a beast!" (Molière 2000, 222), is naturally also "edited" by Frosine, turning into very "gratifying feelings" (Molière 2000, 222) for the interlocutor.

Both plays end with the acceptance of one's fate rendering no plausible solution. Both misers fade away into their indecision about which modality of affection to prefer: the love of family or the almost sickly affection for money and power. Morton's Don Profundo remains alone, while his loved ones are murdered or

have left him, and Molière's Harpagon finds comfort in counting his money in his solace: "And I'll go back and see my lovely money-box again" (Molière 2000, 251).

The dangers of social and financial power are further discussed by Carlos Morton, as he places Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* in a postmodern setting in his play *Trumpus Caesar*. Similar to Julius Caesar's tyrannical behaviour pushing ancient Rome towards tragedy, Carlos Morton considers former American President Donald Trump, alias the Orange Ogre's regime between 2017 and 2021 to have had equally devastating consequences. His play *Trumpus Caesar* opens with describing a country on the brink of a civil war, without moral values and a leader encouraging political turmoil and social, spiritual demoralization. *Trumpus Caesar* is a dramatic text of the three Americas mentioned by Packer; at the same time, it is an obvious adaptation of the classical political and social patterns depicted by Molière and Shakespeare. After a considerable estrangement from true human values, the resulting fraction, due to oppression and *psychological* trauma, would need a solution in the form of a possible forgiveness.

Carlos Morton's drama *Trumpus Caesar* addresses these past issues, when Rome-America was safe and whole under the protecting arms of moral integrity. Behind the perfect façade, citizens suffered from lack of employment, which inevitably triggered lack of security and mistrust in church, education, finances, and the media. The flourishing of small businesses brought along the sinking of the working class. The general atmosphere in Morton's drama mirrors the First Great American narrative mentioned by Packer about a Free America with the idea that anger and despair lead to irresponsible leadership which, instead of building up, diminishes socio-moral values.

At the beginning of the play, Trumpus is presented as an "overly ambitious ruler" (Morton 2021, 1), who alongside his Chorus of Trumpets makes up the semi-objective mediating entities reflecting one another's actions. The choir, being an ancient Greek influence, functions as commentator of events "acting as a bridge between scenes" (Morton 2021, 1). In the prelude, Trumpus is characterized as being: "a toy of the big boys" or a "thug with an orange mug" (Morton 2021, 1). As newly elected Council of Rome, Trumpus orders to ban Muslims and Hispanic people and to build a wall against the invasion of foreign nations, added to which are the personal cult and praise, all of these elements contradicting the Free American values preached by his forefathers. The symbolic political failure of Trumpus is foreseen as he and his wife Malpurnia are entering a "descending escalator" (Morton 2021, 3), a scene followed by yet another objective-factual intervention of the choir stating that Trumpus has clearly not risen up to the people's expectations regarding his competence in leadership. Simultaneously to these events, young, educated female protagonists enter the equation such as an intelligent woman called Kamala, a direct allusion to American Vice-President Kamala Harris, who as "the woman of the hour" (Morton 2021, 49) represents

the Second Narrative described by George Packer as the Smart America. Kamala is holding multiple diplomas, passes on her values based on “meritocracy” (Packer 2021), a term used to denote material gain according to work effort, to her children, which eventually leads to the presence of further malefic circles of “institutions with higher walls, and the gate is harder to open” (Packer 2021), producing exhausted, boasting yet humiliated future generations.

Trumpus and Vlad Putus’s strong connection is emphasized by them both entering the country-yard at Caesar’s Palace on a white horse. The linguistic humour and ludic exchange of ideas between the two great leaders is a direct allusion to their success: they are both great entertainers, wonderful showmen, which Rome-America seemed to lack after the September 11 events and the 2008 financial crisis, not to mention centuries of segregation and migration. Their intimate relationship counting many “Golden Showers” (Morton 2021, 17), as well as a “fraternal socialist kiss” (Morton 2021, 17) culminates in the mastery of language. Morton presents the ways in which these characters tease each other: Trumpus considers Vlad to be his “Evil Prince” (Morton 2021, 16) and Vlad Putus calls the emperor “Trumpie” (Morton 2021, 16) or “Darling” (Morton 2021, 43). Vlad Putus is the only protagonist in the drama Trumpus Caesar proposes his alliance to: “What if we build a Trumpus Tower on the River Don?” (Morton 2021, 17), to which his interlocutor replies: “Don ... know. But don’t worry we make a deal, Trumpus, you The Man...” (Morton 2021, 17). At this point, Trumpus embraces the idea of connecting to another political power as a sign of reintegration, but only to suit his own interests.

Melpurnia’s presence as the subjective-messianic-actively invested, involved mediator is obvious: by putting her reputation multiple times on the line for Trumpus, and compromising for wealth, she has gained a deeper, more spiritual insight into her husband’s affairs. Melpurnia is the active counterpart of passive Trumpus, totally submerging herself into the issue at hand. She acts, talks, and sees more, while her partner focuses on less important problems, ignoring the red flags presented by her. Melpurnia’s lucid description of her dream about Trumpus’s downfall is remembered by the latter as the events described in it slowly become reality for the emperor:

Thrice I have cried out in my sleep: He proclaimed himself Emperor! Help, no! They murder Trumpus! [...] Husband, must ominous omens / The sun rose not in the sky, but sneaked upwards like a snake / Like a guilty thief afraid to show its face. / The once proud flaming orb / Blushed like a faint light bulb in the smoggy heavens [...] Once blue sparkling lakes are sprouting algae, / Rivers turning murky brown, / The Gulf Coast snaked with oil. (Morton 2021, 19)

The Third Narrative described by Packer is related to The Real America, a country that seemingly embraces the weak and the fallen in a time of crisis because when political venom is administered to its citizens, they trust in the holy providence, at the same time being hostile to the outsiders with a non-white Christian background. Real America resembles a melting pot of nations, where the *pure white* individuals consider themselves the elite: “The village can fix their own boilers, and they go out of their way to help a neighbor in a jam. A new face on the street will draw immediate attention and suspicion” (Packer 2021). Trumpus’s values and integrity are questioned when the “horrible plague” (Packer 2021), the Kung Flu is cast upon Rome, which is a direct allusion to COVID-19. Under these circumstances, Morton uses a Shakespearian twist presenting the ghost of Fredus Trumpus, the emperor’s father. Trumpus can be considered a postmodern Hamlet with similar passivity as his literary ancestor. He refuses to wear a mask in public and instead of listening to science and inventing a possible cure for the horrible disease, he diverts his attention towards the stock market because, as he claims: “Sick, dead people are really making me look bad” (Morton 2021, 53). In these times of Trump-Trumpus’s dictatorship, Clara Barton, “a government clerk” (Packer 2021), brought medical supplies during the COVID-19 pandemic claiming the extreme vulnerability of American citizens and the responsibility to act on their behalf. Fredus Trumpus, the indirect mediating entity, in agreement with his late wife, calls Trumpus an “idiot with zero common sense” (Morton 2021, 46) and a disastrous individual. He teaches his son never to admit being wrong and describes him as a “Dumkopf” (Morton 2021, 47), which leads to Trumpus’s ultimate insult against Brutus and his political allies led by Kamala: “We don’t want people from shit hole countries” (Morton 2021, 51), also preparing his downfall, as stated by Kamala’s reply: “Your backward ways will do you in, / The cause of freedom is sure to win!” (Morton 2021, 51).

After Trumpus having received the positive result for his COVID test, it would appear that divine justice is served at the end of the play, not punishing the anti-hero but just acknowledging his human shortcomings and hopeful demeanour in the future. His transformation into a piñata as well as his literal falling apart suggest that his character traits are eliminated and this reborn character is being provoked to embrace a new form of existence with the promise that the fourth chapter in American history would be a just one.

V. Conclusions

In the present study concerning mediation and mediators in the dramatic literary genre, specifically in the case of postmodernist playwright Carlos Morton, I considered Slavoj Žižek's affirmation that arbitration is a divine process where Christ functions as the negotiator between God and humanity which ends with the mediator's disappearance in order for the process to be complete. I hypothesized that Carlos Morton in his plays *The Miser of Mexico* (1989) and *Trumpus Caesar* (2021) presents subjective-messianic-actively invested mediators and complementary semi-objective, indirect, and oracle types of arbitrators who aim towards remaking, fixing character's perception about past events. Thus, history can be replayed but never modified. These advocating types share the feature of being the catalysers of conflict in order to start the painful healing procedure towards self-discovery. Prior to the final realization and the inability of coping with the unchangeable, protagonists apply different methods from denial to refusal and complete rebellion against their situation. Negotiators operate on different temporal-historic-psychological systems to initiate the remedial process by suggestively approaching characters and periods in their existence with the help of memory, family, and final annihilation through empathic, participative, diplomatic, and predictable demeanour. Mediators are neutral agents, objective time and space travellers who appear at existential crises in order for the protagonists to gain fundamental transformation and as the objects of change to recreate these intermediary spaces of change.

The playwright's artistic world has the aim to educate spectators by strengthening their identity and self-reflection, but most importantly the realization that humankind, regardless of skin colour, religion, or other beliefs, needs a general look inward, which is possible with the help of mediation as a painful itinerary worth undertaking for the joy of spiritual purification. He is one of the playwrights whose artistic contribution is yet another manifesto that "only by claiming their own histories can the indigenous people of America begin to reclaim the legitimacy of their own evolution, stolen or obscured by 500 years of colonization" (Valdez 2022, 47).

I further hypothesised that in order to solve the existential problems, mediators appear exactly at the point when individual integrity is questioned, reuniting the broken pieces in the protagonists' lives. *The Miser of Mexico* and *Trumpus Caesar* present different types of mediating entities as humorous sources in Carlos Morton's plays, closing the existential cycle of life by depicting the present American society on the brink of senselessness led by unjust representatives mirroring the choices people have made under different motivations. Carlos Morton's tolerant, understanding, positive approach concerning the future is meant to serve as a lesson and a belief in the fact that upcoming generations would produce different, more dignified idols and examples to follow.

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