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Ethical Literary Criticism: A Basic Theory[1]

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Abstract Ethical literary criticism is a theory of interpreting and analyzing literature from an ethical perspective. It examines literature as a unique expression of ethics and morality within a certain historical period, and argues that literature is not just an art of language, but also an art of text. Ethical literary criticism is aimed at interpreting literary texts, claiming that almost all literary texts are the records of human beings' moral experiences and contain ethical structures or ethical lines. Ethical lines form the main ethical structure. Compared to the written text in literature, the text of oral literature, which can be termed as brain text, is stored in the human brain. The material and fundamental existence of literature is based on written context. The evolving definition of literature is dependent upon the culture and context from which it originated.

Key words ethical literary criticism; ethical consciousness; brain text

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What Is Ethical Literary Criticism?

Ethical literary criticism is defined as a critical theory for reading, analyzing, and interpreting the ethical nature and function of literary works from the perspective of ethics. Seeing literature as a product of morality, it argues that literature is a form of ethical expression in a specific historical situation. The theory examines literature as a unique expression of ethics and morality within a certain historical period and

1 The main body of this article is the first chapter of the monograph《文学伦理学批评导论》(*Introduction to Ethical Literary Criticism*) , translated from Chinese to English by Luo Liang-gong, et al.

that literature is not only an art of language but also an art of text. Literature is, in essence, an art of ethics. Out of the demand for ethical expressions, human beings invented written symbols to record their lives and their understanding of ethics as texts. Consequently, the first form of literature came into being.

In the conceptual system of ethical literary criticism, "ethics" mainly refers to ethical relationships and moral orders that maintain human relations in the world created by literary works. In modern times, it also encompasses the moral relationship and moral order between humans and nature, humans, and the universe. In literary works, the central concern of ethics is the accepted ethical relationship established between man and man, man and society, and man and nature. In addition, it is also concerned with the moral order derived from the ethical relationship and various ethical norms. The task of literature, accordingly, is to depict how ethical relationships and moral order undergo changes, examine their consequences, and ultimately provide experience and lessons emerging from human life for the progress of human civilization.

In Darwin's theory of evolution, human beings evolved from apes into an advanced species. Although apes evolved from bipedal animals into human form and developed complex brains that enabled them to communicate with each other using sounds and symbols, they did not acquire the qualities to define them as humans. They could hardly distinguish themselves from animals until the emergence of ethics. Realizing the misfortune caused by the disintegration of the familial relationship, humans became aware of the importance of maintaining blood relationships. Gradually, they began to consider why the order of blood relationships was so important and sought reasonable explanations. The understanding of blood ties led to the development of ethics. Due to the emergence of ethical consciousness, human beings attempted to be free from ethical chaos and establish ethical order. They realized the necessity of ethical order for human survival and reproduction, and abided by basic ethical rules such as taboo, responsibility, obligation, and so forth. Humans made the choice to be different from animals after achieving human form. Human reason made it possible for human beings to learn about themselves and how to make choices in their ethical life. It is also the reason that motivated human beings to look for fixed forms to save their ethical experiences, to pass on to future generations. Once ethical consciousness and the strength of desire to establish ethical order matured, human beings invented written symbols and developed texts of literature.

From the earliest days of humanity, literature was produced for teaching people to be moral humans. According to ethical literary criticism, moral enlightenment

is the fundamental function of literature, which is achieved through the reader's esthetic experience in the process of reading. Esthetic experience relates to a process in which the reader reads and appreciates literary works. In this process, the reader is the subject and literature the object. With regard to the reader, esthetic appreciation is used to discover and fulfill the instructional value of literature. Thus, esthetic appreciation is not a function of literature, but a means to achieve the moral teaching function of literature. Literature enables people to understand society and life from an ethical perspective, offers moral warning for people's material and spiritual life, and provides moral experience for reference in their pursuit of self-perfection.

From the perspective of the history of human civilization, literature cannot be divorced from history but instead reflects history. Literature is produced in different historical periods and is circumscribed with particular ethical contexts; thus a premise for literary interpretation is to understand literature based on the ethical environment and the ethical context of its particular historical period. Literature cannot be read and interpreted in accordance with the current ethical environment and context; otherwise, it would cause an ethical paradox in the literary judgment. That is, literature in conformity with morals of a particular historical period is not necessarily in conformity with today's morals. Sometimes, those literary works that were denied in history are the very ones that are affirmed today, or vice versa. Therefore, ethical literary criticism aims to examine literature from the viewpoint of historical development, interpreting the literature of different periods from an ethical perspective, so as to overcome the radical gap of literary interpretation in different ethical conditions and contexts.

Ethical literary criticism is mainly aimed at interpreting literary texts, claiming that almost all literary texts are the records of human beings' moral experience and are made up of ethical lined structures or ethical lines that string ethical knots together in various ways to form the main ethical structure of literary texts. The degree of complicacy of a literary text is determined by the number of ethical knots it possesses, as well as the degree of difficulty in untying them. Thus, the task of ethical literary criticism is to reveal, through literary interpretation, the process of how ethical knots form ethical lines, or to untie existing ethical knots.

On most occasions, different processes of forming and untying an ethical knot causes different interpretations of the same literary text. In literary interpretation, sometimes an ethical knot is presupposed. For example, in Homer's *Iliad*, the abduction of Helen, the Queen of Sparta, by Paris, the Prince of Troy, is considered a presupposed ethical cause for a series of ethical conflicts, as it does not appear

directly in the text but is mentioned in characters' narrations. In the Greek tragedy, *Oedipus Rex*, the ethical knot of the prophecy about Oedipus killing his father and marrying his mother is also presupposed. Sometimes, an ethical knot is produced during the forming process of the text. In *Hamlet*, the fact that Hamlet's mother married Claudius resulted in an ethical taboo for Hamlet's revenge, which is closely intertwined with ethical knots in the tragedy and manages Hamlet's thoughts and actions. In some literary texts, ethical knots will appear as ethical chaos or reconstruction of the ethical order, such as Viola's disguise in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, Anna's betrayal of traditional morality and her self-construction of ethical order in Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*. Analysis of ethical knots by means of ethical literary criticism will enable the interpretation and understanding literary texts.

In comparison to many other forms of literary criticism, ethical literary criticism focuses on an objective ethical analysis and interpretation of literature itself, rather than an abstract moral evaluation. In other words, ethical literary criticism partakes of the characteristics of interpretative criticism and the main task of ethical literary criticism is to use its unique methods to conduct an objective ethical analysis and clarify various social life phenomena in literature, rather than simply to make moral evaluations. Therefore, ethical literary criticism requires the critic to be placed in the historical period of the literary work and act as an agent of a character in the particular situation and context of literary work—a defense lawyer of the character, that is to say—to empathize deeply with the character. An example can be found in *Hamlet*; the reader cannot find the main character, Hamlet, wronged or misunderstood in many critical contexts unless they stand with him. Considering this from a different perspective, we could find that Hamlet's hesitation in his attempts to get revenge is not because of his flawed nature, but his failure to solve the ethical dilemma encountered in the process of getting his revenge. If Hamlet does get revenge, he would probably commit the serious incestuous crimes of killing his father, his king, and his mother; however, if he gives up, he cannot fulfill his moral obligation and responsibility to avenge his father's death.

At the dawn of human civilization, the core factor that sustains the ethical order is taboo. Taboo is the foundation and guarantee of the ancient ethical order. Taboo is the origin of morality—in the progress of human civilization, we have gone through the transformation of taboos into morality. Taboos presently play a role in morality. The formation and change of the ethical order of human society are institutionally premised on taboos. The original purpose of literature is to textualize taboos and turn unwritten taboos into written taboos. The earliest form of written taboos in China was inscribed oracle bones, while in Europe, written taboos were embodied

through godly oracles. Based on written taboos, taboos are institutionalized to form an ethical order.

Ethically speaking, before the human social system actually came into being, literature served as a manifestation of the ethical order, such as Greek epics and tragedies. Literature was still a literary expression of social systems and unwritten laws even after they were established. Therefore, the ethical function of literature existed from the beginning of its formation. Since then, even though its function has changed, the ethical nature of literature remains unchanged. The task of ethical literary criticism is to illuminate the ethical function of literature, to explain different phenomena in literature and the underlying ethical reasons from the perspective of ethics, and to make a value judgment on them.

From the point of view of ethical literary criticism, literature was initially produced out of human beings' demands for ethical exposition. The literature textualizes ethics and establishes the ethical order of society. In this sense, literature from its origin is also a sign of the progress of human civilization.

Word, Brain Text, and Written Text

As a critical theory, ethical literary criticism features an innovative way of understanding literature, even a rebellious departure from traditional Chinese literary theories. Ethical literary criticism subverts the traditional definition of literature, which is believed to be concerned not with nature but merely concepts of literature. Hence, it attempts to shift attention from literature's abstract concepts to literature ontology, that is, from the metaphysics of literature to specific literary works. The initial issue should be the fundamental conditions of literature: "words" and "texts."

"Literature," originating from Latin word "littera" (letter), relates to a text written in words. In terms of its origin, literature has two fundamental preconditions: words and texts. Words serve as the vehicle of meaning, while text functions in the form of literature. Literature consists of texts, and texts are composed of words. Words themselves are not literature; instead, they are just a series of signifying signs. Although signifying signs could express meanings, they cannot convey the significant value of literature. This is mainly due to the meaning of words that are simple, single-dimensional, and even scattered before texts are composed of them. Signifying signs could be assembled and synthesized as groups to form literary texts with multi-level meanings. Once words are organized into literary texts, they can transmit literary meaning instead of merely acting as an utterance or the smallest unit of represented speech.

Before written symbols were used, ancient people used their memories to store language; however, memory ceases to exist when the body perishes. At the very beginning, language itself could only convey meaning in oral form. Then, where is the meaning language convey from? It originates from brain texts, which can be defined as memory stored in the human brain. As a peculiar biological form, the brain text contains human beings' perception and cognition of the world stored in memory. Brain texts can be recollected through memorization, represented via auditory organs, and transformed into written texts that usually take the form of materials such as paper, rock, pottery, metal, and so on. Considering its biological basis, the brain text serves as the initial form of literary text. Before written texts and digital texts, non-material senses could only be stored in the brain text in the form of memory. As a biological form of text, the brain text cannot be passed on by heritage, but only orally. The only way to preserve brain text relies on oral expression, so that brain text can be kept permanently. Consequently, a vast number of brain texts possessing literary significance disappeared, and only a small part could be passed down via written texts. Fundamentally, almost all literary works result from writers' retrieving, assembling, processing, rewriting, storing, and representing the brain text. Without brain texts, there would not be texts produced by writers, and thus there would not be written texts or digital texts. It is the brain text that ensures the existence of written texts, digital texts, or literary works in any other form.

In terms of the text's transformation, with the appearance of written symbols, brain text can be transformed into written text. Only in this way could humans record, read, and analyze their invisible brain texts.

In contrast to written text, oral language conveys people's thoughts. On the one hand, as a sound transformed from a person's brain text, the manifestation of language relies on the media of sound. Language is a manifestation of sound transmitted from brain text through vocal organs and is received by auditory organs. Language can only be used in human oral communication and speech. On the other hand, words rely on the media of signifying signs that can be manifested by writing. Before the invention of print, there was no way for human beings to read printed letters and language. Once language was preserved in letter form, it no longer depended on the brain or vocal organs. Literature transformed into a new form—literary signs.

Language is in the form of sounds, while printed text is material-dependent. When language is recorded on paper or other carriers, invisible vocal language (also known as spoken language) becomes visible. Printed letters are grouped into texts

that produce complicated meanings and scilicet-literary texts. As letters come into being, abstract thoughts can be encoded by way of brain text into written or literary texts. Written texts are different from spoken language in that they can be written or printed on natural material such as paper, rock, pottery, and metal. Thus, language and ideas are retained and recognized by readers.

Literary texts can be transformed into spoken language, while spoken language can be transformed by way of writing tools and materials into literary texts. Spoken language can only be memorized as brain text rather than stored and recorded before it is transformed into literary text; therefore, the text refers to any letters and thoughts that can be recognized, read, and interpreted. In modern times, human language, thoughts, and literary texts can be transformed into a new form of text, the digital text.

Material Form of Literature

The form of literature in current textbooks in China is regarded as "a social ideology" (Sun 1) or "an aesthetic ideology" (Qian 100-146). This stance believes that literature, as seen in epistemological viewpoint, is an ideology that reflects objective existence. Everything that literature represents comes from an objective existence. Another view sees literature as "the art of language" (Liu and Sun 15), and hold: "Literature must be a language text that has its own form such as voice, words, structure, etc. It can be passed down with oral form or written letters, or existing in printing works and network media" (Yan 1). Literature can be considered a complicated perceptual existence that connects the writer, the world, and the reader through the media of text. Literature is a language text that integrated the aesthetic experience" (Yan 2). Some scholars claim "literature is the manifestation of language symbolization of the subject's aesthetic consciousness" (Ouyang 14). This definition "notices the aesthetic connection between man and the exterior world, recognizing that the subject's aesthetic conscious is important to literature. It not only avoids the partial definition of the nature of literature only from the approach of Sociology, Epistemology, Expressionism, and Formalism, but also distinguishes literature from other forms of art in terms of literary ontology, which corresponds to the nature of literature" (Ouyang 14). The manifestation of language symbolization is merely a way of saying "literature is a social ideology" or "an aesthetic ideology."

"Literature is a social ideology" or "an aesthetic ideology" is currently the mainstream view in China; an abundance of illustrations on what literature is can be found in textbooks and monographs. Though diverse in expression, most agree with

the viewpoint mentioned above. For example, one viewpoint argues that literature "is the reflection of the social life in human mind" (Zhang 20); literature is the product of society and history, a social phenomenon, therefore, "literature is the aesthetic ideology manifested in the implication of utterance" (Tong 75). It is only a variation of "literature is a social ideology" The expression of what literature is might be different in textbooks, but is essentially the same. The problem is that all these views on literature have not answered the question of what literature is.

From the viewpoint of ethical literary criticism, the standpoint of "literature is a social ideology" fails to illuminate the nature of literature. "Ideology" refers to abstract thought, which is only the meaning coming from literature, not the definition of it. In the network of thought, language, word, text, and literature, thought is abstract and can be stored as brain text and conveyed via language. Language and word are not literature themselves, but the conditions for the production of literature. Literature exists only after thoughts and language are transformed into texts via written words. Hence, literature is a literary text. Literature refers to literary texts, which also decide its material form; thus, literature has a material existence.

Word is the carrier of meaning and component of the text. Text is the vehicle of literature, and it constitutes different genres of literature, such as poetry, drama, and novel. Words clearly convey the meaning of the signified, so that readers can understand the meaning of the text by interpreting words. In this sense, when reading literature, we are actually reading a text that is composed of letters and words.

Words are tools for recording, writing, and saving language and thoughts. One of its functions is to record language, thoughts, and events through text. Literary creation needs character as a tool to transform abstract ideology into literary texts. Hence, literary writing denotes the process by which the writer assembles letters and words into the text. Because of the myriad letters with various meanings, there is a diversification of literary forms. Due to this, literature remains evergreen and offers nourishment for humans' minds.

There is no limitation on the number of written words in literature, and it is possible that all written words that record events or convey thoughts become literature. As a result, literary texts may consist of several thousands of or even millions of written words that have a clear deictic meaning. In the early stages of writing, texts were not rich enough to record complicated events or thoughts, and the recordings were simple and the texts were short. At that time, even before literary genres such as poems, plays, and novels appeared, the text composed of

words can be regarded as literature. Before literature developed into different genres, all readable text, dealing with religious rituals or daily life and regardless of the number of characters, could be considered as early literature. Oracle bone inscriptions from three thousand years ago in China (they cannot be verified as letters since the inscription on the pottery is not readable)[1], Egyptian hieroglyphs written on tombstones or grass paper, and ancient Sumerian cuneiform carvings on rocks and clay plates are the earliest forms of literature.

Before the intervention of digital technology, the mere form of literature is a text that consists of characters. Ideographic texts, as the foundation of the literature, are material forms of literature. Texts are made of characters consisting of various combinations of symbols, which are carved on rocks, clay plates, turtle shells, animal bones, papyrus, and bamboo slices. As the concept of literature was not formed in an age when these texts appeared, all these texts belong to the category of literature regardless of whether they are classified as literature, history, philosophy, or natural science. With the improvement of human cognition, there came a new understanding and cognition of the nature of written texts. New standards and concepts were established. Because of the value of these written texts as teaching and learning material of so-called literariness, they were gradually classified as literature and distinguished from texts of other disciplines. Typical texts of literature include poetry, essays, stories, and plays, while texts without so-called literariness were excluded from literature. Essentially, non-literary texts were classified into philosophical, historical, and scientific texts. After the concept of literary texts was established, people began to accept the concept of literature.

In the historicization of literature, literary concepts appeared, and were accepted and habitually used in the discussion of texts. As such, literary concepts were formed during the process of developing ethical choices. In the history of the evolution of literary concepts, written texts were turned into literary texts in the

1 It is arguable whether the inscriptions on pottery were the earliest characters in China among experts. There are many material on scripted pottery, such as during the period of Da Wenchuan culture, Long Mountain culture, and Liangzhu culture. Among all of them, Banpo culture, which existed between 4800 BC- 4300 BC. is considered the earliest. Due to the fact the inscriptions, which appeared as single symbols, were unreadable scholars argue on whether they are characters or symbols. Qiu Xigui believes they are “marks,” Guo Moruo thinks they are “the symbols with the nature of characters,“ and Yu Xingwu and some other scholars argue they are characters. Presently, there is no evidence of the texts that are made of plural characters like the oracle bone script. Whether they are characters that record events or symbols of meaning remains unknown. This is why we cannot say they are texts of narration, and hence, the inscriptions on pottery are excluded from literature.

ethicalization of textual understanding. For instance, before Walt Whitman, only those poems adhering to certain formal norms of rhythm and rhyme were considered poetry. After the concept of free verse received approval, traditional and habitual ideas of poetry were rejected. With ethical acceptance, the so-called free verse has become a new kind of poetry.

Literary texts are crucial for understanding literature. This idea is due to the material form of texts that literature can be read, defined, understood, and separated from other arts such as music, painting, sculpture, and so-called oral literature, which we now regard as a type of literature. Lacking textuality, which is essential to literature, art does not belong to literature,, even though it also expresses certain thoughts and emotions. The primary difference between art and literature lies in that literature is embodied in written texts. Notably, music and painting are also dependent on texts; however, musical texts consist of notes and paintings are composed of lines, light, and colors. Neither possesses written texts. Therefore, they do not belong to literature.

Whether before or after the formation of literary forms such as poetry, drama, and novels, the written text is an essential characteristic that distinguishes literature from other forms of art. Plays and movies, for example, are art. However, only the written script of plays and movies can be considered literature. If we discuss Shakespeare's plays from the perspective of literature, it probably refers to the written script, not the performance. Regardless of the enduring popularity of *Hamlet* on stage, performance belongs to theater. In contrast, all versions of its written text can be defined as literature. Similarly, the so-called oral literature can only be understood as an oral expression of literature just like theater; nevertheless, oral expression itself is not literature. Oral literature is somewhat a pseudo-proposition, because it is not literature itself but merely an oral expression of literature. Homeric epics were originally oral performances. Long before and even after the appearance of the written text, they were performed orally; however, only the written epics, that is, written texts, can be referred to as literature. Written text is the only characteristic that distinguishes literature from other forms of art.

With the development of science and technology, both the form and concept of literature have changed significantly, prominently reflected in the media. Before the 1940s, there were no digital texts, and what we read was only printed texts. Nowadays, printed texts consisting of symbols can be transformed into digital ones, and literary texts can be digitalized so that they can be preserved longer. With the help of electronic screens, digital texts can still be read in a way similar with that of traditional texts. In virtue of the ubiquity of technology, literary texts today

are not only limited to paper-based texts such as books and magazines, but also electronic texts in television, radio, tape, and computer. Although paper is still the major carrier of literary texts today, digital technology has dramatically impacted traditional forms of text, and digital text will presumably replace written text in the future. With the change in the living environment of literature, digital texts will become one of the major carriers of literary texts.

The Complexities of Defining Literature

Currently there is no generally acknowledged definition of literature. Even the *Encyclopedia Britannica* merely explains "literature" as "written works" and "a form of human expression," and holds that "not everything expressed in words—even when organized and written down—is counted as literature." For instance, "those writings that are primarily informative—technical, scholarly, journalistic—would be excluded from the rank of literature by most, though not all, critics," but only "certain forms of writing are universally regarded as belonging to literature as an art" The purest literary form is the lyric poem, and after it comes elegiac, epic, dramatic, narrative, and expository verse. [1]

If we try to examine the definition of literature habitually, we should put literature back into its ethical environment. In different historical periods, there are ethical environments in which concepts of literature have been formed. Without ethical environments, literature cannot be learned or understood. The definition of literature varies in different ethical environments, so there are different definitions at different times. In ancient Greece, all written works, namely texts, were regarded as literature. The authors of scientific works were also called poets. In China, Confucian classics have always been considered as the literary essence since ancient times, although they are not aligned with Western concepts of literature in the light of its form. This indicates that there are different definitions of literature under certain conditions in different historical periods.

Literature can be defined from the following aspects:

1. All the written works, namely the texts that were written before the emergence of literary concepts such as poetry, drama, and fiction, belong to the genre of literature. The most representative texts include the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs inscribed on stele, slates, or written on papyrus, the Sumerian cuneiform characters on clay tablets, and Chinese oracle bone scripts.

2. All literary texts were defined using literary concepts. Literary texts are those previous texts identified by literary concepts, and those produced following

1 "Literature," Encyclopedia Britannica, Encyclopedia Britannica Inc, 2007.

literary concepts. The formation of new literary concepts is an ethical process that results from the conceptual evolution of literary texts, and their acceptance is similar. Those written texts in accordance with the concepts of poetry, drama, and fiction were not defined as such until the formation of these literary concepts, while those newly created texts that are not in accord with the definition of poetry, drama, and fiction were no longer regarded as literature. All preceding texts still belong to literature.

3. From the theory of modern literature, poetry, drama, and fiction constitute the main body of literature, while history and philosophy have been separated from literature as independent subjects. Literature usually refers to poetry, drama, fiction, and other widely acknowledged literary forms.

Texts, namely written texts, usually refer to the words or characters written or printed on paper, but all texts, which were written or inscribed on other media such as tortoise shells, animal bones, slates, clay tablets, papyrus, bamboo slips, wooden slips, cotton cloth, or silk, and can convey meaning, are written texts. The nature of such written texts has not yet been completely determined. All these ancient texts are narrative or argumentative, so they can be called narrative texts or philosophical texts. According to the subsequent literary concepts, narrativity and argumentativeness are the most important characteristics of literature (e.g., *Homer's Epics*). Thus, all the written texts before the separation of history and philosophy from literature, including the most ancient ones, have been habitually regarded as literature.

The understanding of literary concepts has constantly changed. With the constant broadening of literary concepts, literature transcended its definition as literary works and developed into a subject. Literary studies have also been included in the scope of literature, such as the academic texts of literary theories and criticism, studies on the author and the reader, and so on. Although they are different from literary texts of poetry, drama, and fiction, they still belong to literature.

The dynamics of literature's evolution from written texts to literary texts comes from literary concepts. In literature, literary works precede literary concepts; while the nature of literary texts had not been determined, literary genres had not been differentiated, and literary interpretation was not possible until literary concepts were formed. This indicates that literature cannot be separated from literary studies. For example, Aristotle's *Poetics*, Horace's *Ars Poetica*, and Liu Xie's *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons* can never be excluded from literature. Therefore, literary texts refer to literature in a narrow sense, through generalized notions about poetry, drama, and fiction, while literature encompasses not only literary texts but

also texts, including those of literary studies.

To define literature, in its nature, is to explore what literature is—a question inevitable in understanding literature as well as a problem to be solved in the development of literature. During its development, a basic fact is that literary concepts were formed on the basis of literary texts. Without literary texts, there are no literary ideas or literary concepts. Literary ideas are determined by existing literary texts, while literary concepts result from the learning and understanding of literary texts. Before literary texts were defined, texts of different natures had not been differentiated from one another, which led people to seek a standard to distinguish literary texts from other texts.

The concept of literature is historical, and literature, from the perspective of its development to make the definition more scientific, can be defined as:

1. Before the emergence and recognition of literary forms, literature was a broad term, and all written texts belonged to literature. For instance, all kinds of texts were included in literature in ancient Greece and ancient China before the Qin Dynasty. It can also be said that all written symbols belonged to literature.

2. After the formation of different literary genres such as poetry, fiction, drama, history, and philosophy, all texts were categorized as poetic, fictional, dramatic, and historical texts according to different genres. Habitually, some texts were regarded as literary texts, while others were regarded as historical, philosophical, or scientific texts. Therefore, poetry, fiction, and drama were separated from other texts and became literature. Since the acceptance of new literary ideas, literary ethics have been exerting its influence. Historical and scientific texts were no longer regarded as part of literature, and a new concept of literature arose in application.

3. With the development of science, forms of texts have changed, and digital texts have come emerged and newer literary concepts have begun to take shape. Once such concepts are accepted, a new literary ethic will emerge. Overall, the development of literary ideas has been intertwined with habits and customs. It can be said that the concept of literature has been recognized by habits and customs, namely ethics. Therefore, the definition of literature is an ethical concept.

The Relativity of the Definition of Literature

The argument on the definition of literature in China originated from its Western counterpart. With the entry of Western literary theories into China, Chinese scholars borrowed Western terms and concepts to construct their own literary theory. Both sides share similarities in their disputes regarding literary theories. René Wellek and Austin Warren's book *Theory of Literature* had a great impact on Chinese readers.

By tracing different definitions of literature in history, the two authors pointed out one viewpoint of literature, that is, all printed texts can be called literature. Specifically, whether the text is printed or hand-copied can serve as studies in civilization and literature. As Edwin Greenlaw has argued, "Nothing related to the history of civilization is beyond our studies"; we are "not limited to belles-lettres or even to printed or manuscript records in our effort to understand a period or civilization," and we "must see our work in the light of its possible contribution to the history of culture" (qtd. Wellek and Warren 20). The mixture of the history of civilization and of literature will do no good to the explanation of literature beyond a historical context.

Wellek and Warren offered another way of defining literature, in which the criterion combines esthetic worth and general intellectual distinction. Whatever the subject is, what is emphasized here is whether it is "notable for literary form or expression" Literature is hence limited to "great books," and the works of philosophers, historians, theologians, moralists, politicians, and even some scientists such as George Berkeley, David Hume, Bishop J. Butler, Edward Gibbon, Edmund Burke, and Adam Smith, are treated as literature. It gives no distinction between literature and non-literature, let alone a clear definition of literature. Wellek and Warren stated, "Within the history of imaginative literature, limitation to the great books makes incomprehensible the continuity of literary tradition, the development of literary genres, and indeed the very nature of the literary process, besides obscuring the background of social, linguistic, ideological, and other conditioning circumstances" (Wellek and Warren 21-22). On the basis of a historical examination of definitions of literature, Wellek and Warren concluded that the term "literature" seemed best if it was limited to the art of literature, that is, to imaginative literature. They recognized "fictionality," "invention," or "imagination" as the distinguishing trait of literature, with fictionality as the central quality of literature (Wellek and Warren26).

In Britain, it was not until the 19th century when the esthetic concept of literature was established. It was closely linked to the nationalistic sense of English literature. In the 20th century, there were innumerable esthetic and critical theories that contributed to the explanation of literature, most of which were, nevertheless, in dispute with each other. As Fowler Roger held, "for most students of literature, the concept of 'Literature' is a given idea, something agreed by common sense" (Fowler 5); he realized the primary fact that the concept of literature was built on theory. The theory of Roman Jakobson, Northrop Frye, Wolfgang Iser, Terry Eagleton's *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, and Ann Jefferson's *Modern Literary Theory: A*

Comparative Introduction, all point to a similar conclusion that theories construct different literary entities in the domain of literature. Regarding the definition of literature, there are all sorts of understandings and expressions. For instance, the French novelist J. H. Bernadin de Saint Pierre (1737-1814) compared literature to a fairy, which came to the secular world to eliminate human beings' pain. William Godwin (1756-1836) regarded literature as a dividing line between the human and animal kingdoms (Godwin 13). The French writer Charles Nodier (1780-1844) believed that literature is the expression of words (Oliver 124). The Scottish essayist Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) treated literature as an outcome of spiritual thinking.[1] The British writer Robert Aris Willmott (1809-1863) took literature for an enduring language.[2] Ezra Pound (1885-1973) said, "Great literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree," and "Literature is news that STAYS news" (Pound 28-29). To some extent, these ideas made sense, yet no clear definition of literature can be drawn from these discussions.

Literature is a historical concept, with its connotation changing with the evolution of history. The classification of literary works according to various standards leads to different outcomes. If we examine literary works, which were accepted in the historical periods from the perspective of fiction and fact, we understand the evolution of literary ideas more deeply. In 17th century in Britain, literature not only referred to the works of William Shakespeare (1564-1616), John Webster (1580-1632), John Donne (1572-1631), Andrew Marvell (1621-1678), and John Milton (1608-1674), but also included the essays of Francis Bacon (1561-1626), the sermons of John Donne (1572-1631), and the spiritual autobiography of John Bunyan (1628-1688). According to Eagleton, *Leviathan* by Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) and *History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England* by Edward Clarendon can also be included in this category. In the 19th century, the works of Charles Lamb (1775-1834), Thomas Macaulay (1800-1859), and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) were also regarded as literature. However, the works of Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), Charles Darwin (1809-1882), and Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) were excluded from the literature category. This interpretation can help infer how people defined literature through history.

Dating back to ancient Greece, Plato did not put forward the idea of literature; instead, he used two other ideas, namely, "Poesies" and "Poetics." Poesies, meaning

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1 Thomas Carlyle, "Inaugural Address" and "Sir Walter Scott," in *Characteristics*. Rockville: Wildside Press, 2008, p. 464.

2 Robert Eldridge Aris Willmott, *Pleasure of Literature*, 5th edition. London: Bell and Daldy, 1860, p. 6.

poetry, has the same meaning as literature in the modern sense, while poetics is the study of poetry; therefore, poetry and poetics were the basic terms concerning the study of literature. René Wellek discovered that the words denoting literature—litérature, letteratura, and Literatur—have come to occupy the space of "poetry" only within the last two centuries. But in English, the word "literature" was first used in the 14th century. From the late Middle Ages to the nineteenth century, "literature' predominantly meant an intellectual property of a person. In Samuel Johnson's two volumes of *The Dictionary of the English* edited in 1755, literature referred to book learning. In contemporary English dictionaries, literature has more definitions. For example, "literature" in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1971) has three definitions:

Literature: 1. Acquaintance with "letters" or books; polite or humane learning; literary culture. Now rare and obsolescent. 2. Literary work or production; the activity or profession of a man of letters; the realm of letters. 3. a. Literary productions as a whole; the body of writings produced in a particular country or period, or in the world in general. Now also in a more restricted sense, applied to writing which has claim to consideration on the ground of beauty of form or emotional effect, b. The body of books and writings that treat of a particular subject, c. colloq. Printed matter of any kind. (Fowler "Literature," 7)

Obviously "literature" does not totally refer to literary works. In the *Collins Dictionary of the English Language* (1986), there are six items under the entry of "literature":

Literature: 1. written material such as poetry, novels, essays, etc., esp. works of imagination characterized by excellence of style and expression and by themes of general or enduring interest. 2. the body of written work of a particular culture or people. 3. written or printed matter of a particular type or on a particular subject. 4. printed material giving a particular type of information. 5. the art or profession of a writer. 6. Obsolete. Learning.

In general, the entry of "literature" in contemporary English dictionaries has two basic meanings; literary works and documents of literature. The second usage is quite common, and here are some examples:

1. A list of references of the essential literature on a topic or subject.

2. The sources consist not only of various dictionaries but also of works of literature.

3. The reader will be directed to substantial discussions of the words or phrases in the secondary literature on Middle English.

4. The methodology has been tested by means of the creation of a few hundred

dictionary entries, but no complete dictionary has been compiled using this methodology.

Etymologically speaking, the connotation of "literature" has undergone a dynamic change. From the 19th century, "literature" mainly directed to an integral sense. The meaning of the document still exists today.

Terms for literature and their connotations have evolved with the development of literary facts. The history of literature has proven that the definition is closely associated with ideas, which is a characteristic embodied in the development of human civilization. In Europe, classical literature consists of works of history, philosophy, speech, and science. Before the 18th century, literature was not separated from philosophy and history, like the current situation of medical disciplines and some other modern science subjects that have not become independent from the realm of science. When it comes to ancient Chinese literature, literature refers to essays and teachings in the pre-Qin Dynasty of China, and literature contains historical and philosophical works, and essays. Thus, it lays the theoretical foundation that there is no absolute dividing line among literature, history, and philosophy in China.

Before the 19th century, Chinese scholars knew little about Western literary ideas. To them, the lack of a formal representation of concepts resulted in an inadequate ability to understand and analyze literature theoretically at that time. Compared to literature in the West, Chinese literary ideas focused not on literature and drama but on poetry, philosophy, and history. It is only from the 20th century that Western literary ideas and concepts of novels, drama, and poetry helped inspire Chinese scholars to talk about literature that they termed new literature. A large number of new literary forms took shape, and literature, philosophy, and history developed into independent disciplines, which have changed the traditional Chinese views of the undividedness of the three disciplines (i.e., literature, history, and philosophy) and further influenced the construction of literary criticism and theory in China.

This indicates that it is impossible to look for a single definition that can transcend history and cover the entire domain of literature. An interdisciplinary perspective of the ideas and the definition of literature along with literary ideas in different eras might be helpful for providing a relative definition of literature at a certain age. The concept of literature is relative rather than absolute, as its connotation differs regarding the historical and ethical milieu. In the infancy of literature, all written texts were regarded as literature. Some incomplete written texts discovered during excavations by archeologists, and regardless of their carrier

and content, were considered to be literature.

With the progress of human civilization, words that had been used in the beginning for recording facts were gradually used for writing. Thus, during this period, the literary genre almost came to be defined by what literature itself was. Later, tragedies and comedies, history and philosophy, essays, and other forms of literary works emerged, and literature was endowed with a richer meaning, with all the texts written in words included in the category of literature.

While the form and content of literature developed on a large scale, people found that the forms of different types of text varied. The question of literature identity arose, namely, how different types and forms of texts were distinguished. Based on the need for such differentiation, people categorized different forms of texts according to their formal characteristics. The texts of a certain category ranged into a wider scope in literature, or into other newly emerging types different from literature, such as history and philosophy. This classification separates history, philosophy, and ethics from literature and forms new independent disciplines. At the same time, new types of texts such as novels appeared in the world of literature, which demonstrates that the concepts of literature in different historical periods were constantly modified. Literary concepts connoted different meanings in different historical eras, as no one could find one single literary concept that focused on the entire history of literature.

Literary Concepts and Interpretations

Literary ideas are specified by literary concepts. Globally, these ideas were not formed simultaneously, so people did not have an identical understanding of literature. For example, before literary concepts came into being in ancient China, the literary idea of the wholeness of literature, history, and philosophy had long been accepted among people. Consequently, ancient Chinese literature included philosophical essays and historical records in addition to *shi*, *ci*, *ge*, and *fmu* (four different forms of poetry in ancient Chinese literature). Applying the modern standard of classification, philosophical essays and historical records are excluded from literature. This would be a great loss to the legacy of ancient Chinese literature. In ancient Greece, the earliest literary ideas were related only to poetry, and later to drama, philosophy, and history. After the formation of modern literary ideas, philosophy and history were separated from literature and became independent disciplines. Currently, the works of philosophy and history are relevant to literature; yet if they are thought to belong to literature, that is certainly against modern literary ideas. In other words, different literary ideas lead to different literary concepts.

Literature differs in form in various historical periods. As Benedetto Croce (1866-1952) humorously stated, "art is what everybody knows it to be." (Croce 1) Everybody has their own understanding of specific questions. Literature is regarded as the expression of feelings, the imitation and representation of the real world, something consisting of language, the embodiment of intuition and instinctive desire, an artistic symbol, or a kind of social ideology. Opinions illustrate that readers cannot achieve a consensus on the definition of literature. In all those historical periods, there are different literary forms, accompanied by corresponding literary ideas that result in different literary concepts and definitions of literature.

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Revisiting George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, Yaşar Kemal's *The Sultan of the Elephants and the Red-Bearded Lame Ant* within the Context of Socialist Realism[1,2]

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Abstract English author George Orwell (1903-1950)'s novella *Animal Farm* (1945) is an allegorical portrayal of the difficulty of creating classless societies because of power-hungry leaders. Likewise, Yaşar Kemal (1923-2015)'s children's novel entitled *The Sultan of the Elephants and the Red-Bearded Lame Ant* (1975) depicts elephants and ants in an anthropomorphic portrayal of totalitarianism. This study intends to disentangle two authors' socialist realist depiction thorough these works from distinct literatures. Therefore, the study aims at comparing and contrasting Orwell's and Kemal's selected works to indicate how socialist realism functions through the genre, characters and content in the works. The study applies for the tenets of socialist realist literature stated by Maxim Gorky (1868-1963), who is among the leading founders of socialist realist literary theory, to enrich the close reading of the selected works. The analysis indicates that although they appeared in different countries and years, they bear parallelism in terms of genre, characters and content within the context of socialist realism. However, while *Animal Farm* warns against the betrayal of the revolution through his suspicious approach to the realisation of a socialist society, *The Sultan of the Elephants and the Red-Bearded Lame Ant* creates hope out of despair for a socialist society.
Key words Yaşar Kemal; *The Sultan of the Elephants and the Red-Bearded Lame*

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2 Translations of Turkish quotations are by the author of this article unless otherwise stated in the reference list.

Ant; George Orwell; *Animal Farm*; socialist realism

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Introduction

After its advent in Russia, socialist realism appeared in the literary works of different countries. Fedor Gladkov's *Cement* (1925), Maxim Gorky's *The Life of Klim Samgin* (1926-1936) and Iurii Krymov's *The Tanker Derbent* (1937-1938) are among Russian works of socialist realism which can be regarded as canon in the Russian literature (Clark, 2001, p. 176). The reflection of Marxism and socialism also came into sight through socialist realist works in Western literature. In the West, French Revolution (1789) and particularly Industrial Revolution, which characterised the nineteenth and twentieth century-Western life through a growing state economy, colonial and industrial enterprises and the deepening gap between the private property owners and workers paved the way for problematising the relationship between individual and society. While the nineteenth century was dominated by works of realism which depict the sufferings of the working-class and poor people, socialist realism appeared in different genres in the twentieth century. German playwright Bertolt Brecht based his play entitled *Mother Courage and Her Children* (1939) on Gorky's *Mother* by fusing the features of socialist realism and the ones of epic theater. While depicting the sociopolitical terrors of the Nazi Germany, the play connects the setting of the Thirty Years War in Europe to the contemporary capitalist society (Shookman 464-465). Furthermore, *Animal Farm* (1945) by Eric Arthur Blair (1903–50), better known by his pen name, George Orwell, represents a socialist realist approach to totalitarian capitalism through dystopian genre, as will be detailed later in the study.

In Turkey, socialism, which appeared in the 1920s, acted "both as an ideology and a technique of action designated to achieve rapid modernization through the rational organization of economic life" particularly between the 1930s and the 1960s (Karpat, 1967, p. 157). In the mid-twentieth century, most Turkish authors emphasised socio-economic issues including exploitation and the gap between the oppressor and the oppressed in society (Moran, *Eleştirel Bir Bakış* 7). Many Turkish young people opposed capitalism by adopting Marxist revolutionary and socialist ideas. Social realism, based on Marxist ideology, was adapted by many authors, including Nazım Hikmet (1902–1963), Suat Derviş (1903–1972), Sabahattin Ali (1907–1948), Kemal Tahir (1910–1973), Orhan Kemal (1914–1970), Aziz Nesin (1915–1995), Yusuf Atılgan (1921–1989), Yaşar Kemal (1923–2015), and Fakir Baykurt (1929–1999), who were concerned with the inequality between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie especially in village novels telling social issues in villages (Moran, *Eleştirel Bir Bakış* 17). As Kaya argues, as in most non-Western societies, modernising Turkey developed two contradictory approach to the West which was both admired and criticised (283). Thus, although industrialisation and Western notions represent societal development in these authors' novels, they criticise these same forces for dehumanising people. Deriving their force from Marxist and communist ideologies, these authors urge readers to support the rights of the exploited or othered subjects against characters that represent the bourgeoisie within the context of socialist realism.

Rather than the fantasy world of witches, fairies, or giants, the 1970s' social realist phase in Turkish literature introduced child readers to the bitter realities of the capitalist system, which progressively worsens the life conditions of the proletariat, including villagers, industry workers, and animals (Konuk 111). In the 1970s and afterwards, Turkish children's novels conveyed a sense of hope for equality to children, who were regarded as "the protector and saviour of the future" (Konuk 36). Thus, they drew attention to the proletariat, whose revolutionary voice would overturn every exploitative system. This led some Turkish authors to argue that individuals should confront the truth of their societies and construct attitudes to them in young readers, paving the way for a fairer system in the future. Yaşar Kemal was among the twentieth-century Turkish authors to have criticised capitalism, imperialism and totalitarianism through his works. His novel *The Sultan of the Elephants and the Red-Bearded Lame Ant* (1977), intended for children, is read by readers of all ages. That it can be compared to Orwell's *Animal Farm* indicates that exploitation is not merely a national issue, entailing that socialism is the way to escape oppression through collaborative resistance.

The study intends to compare and contrast Orwell's novella *Animal Farm* and Kemal's novel *The Sultan of the Elephants and the Red-Bearded Lame Ant* technically and thematically within the context of socialist realism in order to exemplify how the approaches to the possibility of an ideal socialist society is reflected through works, produced in different cultures. The selected works are two representative twentieth-century works written in the fable tradition. *Animal Farm* was published in Great Britain in 1945, while *The Sultan of the Elephants and the Red-Bearded Lame Ant* was published in Turkey about three decades later. Both books portray the socio-political realities of a dystopian world in an anthropomorphic way. This study argues that despite their differing dates and places of publication, both of the works follow the same technical and thematic pattern while exposing how totalitarianism retains authority over subjects through a range of political methods. It also indicates that the works differ in their expectations of executing socialism for a better life because unlike Kemal's optimistic novel, *Animal Farm* is concerned with the conflict between individual desires and social issues which may lead to the violation of socialist purposes by individual's overwhelming hunger for power. However, *The Sultan of the Elephants and the Red-Bearded Lame Ant* is a critical dystopia, propagandising socialism as the way to escape oppression through collaborative resistance for a more inhabitable system in the future.

Considering Maxim Gorky's socialist realist theory, the tenets of which he states in *On Literature: Short Articles*, this study aims to explore the reflection of socialist realism in English and Turkish literatures with particular attention to the selected works. Deriving its force from Marxist philosophy and Soviet communism, the socialist realist theory is an appropriate tool to illuminate the Orwellian criticism of the Soviet's failure in creating an ideal socialist society and abusing the proletariat's labour force in *Animal Farm*. Moreover, it facilitates to comprehend how socialist realism strengthens Kemal's optimistic approach to socialism, exemplified through *The Sultan of the Elephants and the Red-Bearded Lame Ant.*

A Comparative Analysis of *Animal Farm*, *The Sultan of the Elephants and the Red-Bearded Lame Ant* within the Context of Socialist Realism

In *On Literature*, Gorki states the role of socialist realist literature in depicting that the source of evil and conflict in the society lies in the class distinction among people (235). Thus, he asserts the Marxist viewpoint that the world has witnessed the war of the classes throughout human history (Marx and Engels, *Manifesto* 14) especially after the change from the feudal system to the capitalist system of power

which has resulted in an unbalanced economic and social relationship between the private holder and the worker. In this aspect, socialist realism feeds on the Marxist approach as it creates hope out of despair for the proletariat (Kew 18-19). As socialist realist works which are set in "the traditional village, the collective farm, the ruralized city, and the new settlements of blast furnaces, a country struggling to construct modernity and socialism at the same time" (Booker 665), Orwell's and Kemal's works portray animals' rural life. The works benefit from defamiliarisation as a primary literary strategy on which to base their criticism of the prevailing or potential social and political system. In this context, the use of anthropomorphic representation, where human traits such as speaking and wearing clothes are attributed to animals or non-living beings, is an efficient literary device to defamiliarise the socio-political realities represented (Lea 104-105). In particular, animal characters in fables enable authors to present satirical comments on ongoing social realities. As Dilidüzgün argues, they enable children to confront realities, allowing them to defeat their fears rather than escape them (38). In this aspect, anthropomorphology is a more efficient way to convey a message to children than direct training. The selected works depict how, in Marx and Engels's words, "[s]ociety as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat" (*Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* 22). In Kemal's novel, an elephant called the Sultan represents exploitative power holders, while ants stand in for exploited hardworking people, the colonised or the working class (Şahin 115-116). Like Orwell, who associates oppressive figures with pigs whom he describes as "disgusting brutes" (*My Country* 451), Kemal states that "[c]onsumerism…turns people into gluttonus beasts" (Tharaud 205). On the other hand, Kemal notes on the back cover of the novel his regret about his choice of elephants to represent exploitative people as it may lead children to hate elephants, adding that no animal can be as evil as an exploitative human in life. In this respect, Kemal also uses anthropomorphism to soften the harsh social reality of class struggle among people and achieves a fusion of his political and artistic purpose to appeal to his child readers, as Orwell does for *Animal Farm* (*Age Like This* 7).

Orwell's and Kemal's selected works also have some common aspects in both the content and the literary form of the novel in the socialist realist context: both works problematise class distinction and exploitation in a totalitarian world populated by subjugated animals. The works portray the era of capitalism, when, as Baysal argues, "the human hegemony is observed most clearly" (206). The protagonists represent totalitarian capitalist leaders who benefit from the labour of the other animals. In both works, capitalism and totalitarianism go hand in hand, separating

the rich and the proletariat into unbalanced categories and denying democracy for all. Some people "blinded by their capitalistic ambition overexploits and destroys" the non-human world for their benefits (Çetiner 33), as represented by the protagonists of the works. In *Animal Farm*, Napoleon forces hardworking animals to build a windmill to produce electricity and pull the plough, and for the chickens to hatch more eggs and the cows to give more milk. While the working animals become exhausted, poorer, and hungrier, the pigs become fuller, wealthier, and more comfortable, justifying their privileges because they are "brainworkers" and arguing that they bear the whole burden of the farm (Orwell, *Animal Farm* 51).[1] Moreover, they use science to explain why they consume all the apples and milk, arguing it is scientifically proven that such comestibles "contain substances absolutely necessary to the well-being of a pig" (51). Similarly, in *The Sultan of the Elephants*, the Sultan, who exercises sovereignty over the ants and their country, makes the ants build palaces for him, fill the storehouses with food from all over the world, and serve him by declaring his authority and superiority as he dreams of "leading a heavenly life by taking advantage of the ants" (Kemal 41).[2] That the working animals commodify themselves and become alienated from their environment and themselves while attempting to produce ever more goods asserts the Marxist point that "[t]he worker becomes all the poorer the more wealth he produces" (*Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* 71). The unjust exchange between the pigs and the other animals in *Animal Farm* and the elephants and the ants in *The Sultan and the Elephants* results in the commodification of labour.

The thematic similarity between Kemal's novel and Orwell's novella is constituted by the common strategies that the dictators in both works follow to facilitate the other animals' subjugation. First, in both works people are declared the common enemy of animals, and both works depict, in Gorky's words, "partisan war waged by individuals [/the proletariat] against bourgeois property" (317). In *The Sultan of the Elephants*, humans are regarded as "the only creature that consumes without producing" in the world (28). In *Animal Farm*, the respected pig Old Major warns in his inspiring speech before his death that "[a]ll the habits of Man are evil" (31). Old Major accuses humans of betraying animals, encouraging the farm animals to rebel against the injustices inflicted upon them by Mr. Jones, end the master–slave relationship they labour under, and start a fresh order in which all will live together peacefully (31-32) because "[a]ll animals are equal" (31). However, Old Major's

1 Henceforward, the quotations from *Animal Farm* are cited merely with page numbers.

2 Henceforward, the quotations from *The Sultan of the Elephants* are cited merely with page numbers.

speech satirises Karl Marx's *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), which argued that communism is the sole way out for the working class, as what has been promised is later negated (Joshi 76). Under Napoleon's leadership and Snowball's mentorship, the pigs gain control of the political system. The "animalism" they demand supposedly promotes equality and freedom among the proletariat farm animals; however, Napoleon's totalitarian authority enslaves the other animals, creating a new class system that merely replaces the old system under Mr. Jones. Thus, as Meyers states, Orwell indicates that the pure illusion of Soviet communism is doomed to fail in creating a classless society because of its power-hungry leaders (32). Thus, the pigs become indistinguishable from the humans against whom they originally rebelled. They wear clothes, do business with traders, and sell the other animals' produce without consent in return for alcohol or other material riches. The pigs become the "lord of all the animals" (28) like men. Moving away from Old Major's Leninist communist approach, also followed by Snowball, Napoleon brings in totalitarianism for his own and the other pigs' benefit. The taste for power results in the corruption and disappearance of the revolutionary utopian socialist ideals, replaced by a capitalist system in which the pig rulers get to the point where they cannot be distinguished from their former enemy, the bourgeoise humans.

In *The Sultan of the Elephants*, too, humans are depicted as the source of all evils which range from capitalism and imperialism to every other exploitative system. As Uğurlu notes, the Sultan uses fear of humans to gain authority over the ants (501). Nevertheless, like Napoleon in *Animal Farm*, the Sultan ends up replicating human behaviour in the ants' country by making the ants the elephants' servants. Just as Napoleon antagonises Snowball, who struggles to realise Old Major's utopian communist life in which all animals would be equal, the Sultan declares the rebellious red-bearded lame ant an enemy in addition to human beings. He then associates hatred against red ants with that against humans, who are negatively portrayed (Uğurlu 501). As in *Animal Farm*, the novel satirises the exploitation of animals. In the context of socialist realist, both works present, in Gorky's words, "[s]elf-criticism" which is essential for the comprehension of reality (341) and the adaptation of a revolutionary attitude for an ideal socialist society.

Another common point that makes the Sultan resemble Napoleon as a dictator is the use of constructed truths that distinguish the oppressor from the oppressed and justify oppression. Both leaders create chaos and fear among the animals they exploit. They make them the enemy of each other and prevent any potential resistance to their authority through divide and rule policies by creating abstract beliefs. As Orwell argues, "[t]he more abstract the idea and the language expressed in it, the

more ideological the work, and vice versa" (Colls 10-11). The dictators feed animosity and murder over love and compassion because as Orwell states, totalitarian regimes discipline not only subjects' actions but also their thoughts and emotions (*My Country* 135). In this regard, the Sultan calls elephants to collaborate to sustain their lineage and future against the so-called invasive ants, thereby justifying their future exploitation of the ants. Addressing the elephants as "*My* brothers, soldiers" (12), the Sultan encourages the elephant army to want revenge against the ants, who are supposedly thirsty for the elephants' blood (12). Blinded by this abstract idea, the elephants are compelled to realise their ideological mission. Likewise, in *Animal Farm*, animals become volunteer "slaves" (57), working to realise their utopian farm for their own prosperity not for Mr. Jones's. The hardworking animal Boxer keeps repeating "Napoleon is always right" (34) while working for the sake of collective purpose.

In both works, the exploitive leaders take the advantage of language to create and exert the constructed "truth" of the dominant power, about which Gorky warns the proletariat (90) because as Orwell argues, political language is produced to "make lies sound truthful and murder respectable" (*Collection of Essays* 931). In *Animal Farm*, titles such as "our Leader," "Father of all Animals," and "Protector of the Sheepfold" (93) are used to justify Napoleon's superior status and his authority over all other animals. Because Old Major addresses the animals as "comrades" (p. 14, 15) and calls for them to revolt, Joshi regards him as a representation of Lenin whose utopian communist ideals paved the way for a totalitarian system (78). It is the Stalin's communist discourse, which Gorky also uses in his speech in the Congress many times (29, 35, 46, 315, 341). Likewise, the Sultan disseminates knowledge via schools and media tools, including newspapers, television, and radio, which Orwell regards as "a crucial component of any strategy for cultural reform" (Bounds 129). The novella also exemplifies the role of books through which Napoleon gains puppies unquestioning support by shaping their minds in pigs' ideology. It indicates that he knows how to have a human-like life through Jones's children's "old spelling book" (19-20). Similarly, in Kemal's novel, as a result of an assimilative propaganda, the alienated ants begin to insult their families, ant friends, and fellow citizens and accept that "it is the elephants' age" (43). In this respect, the insidious amendments of language, history, and law corrupt perceptions of reality, serving totalitarian ideology, which turns out to be "the most blatantly untruthful of all forms of discourse" (Bounds 148), concealing the truth rather than indicating it.

Considering the totalitarians' taking advantage of language, it stands as one of the main points in socialist realism. Gorky reminds that language is human-made,

thus, it requires attention to ensure "the wholeness of the collective mentality" among the proletariat, who may also be victimised through the corruption of language, as it refers to the history of culture for a nation (89-92). In this respect, the Sultan deems language "the main problem" (57) because as the fundamental part of culture that enables the exchange of values and ideas it is needed to ideologically condition the ants. He forbids the ants from speaking their own language; indeed, he requires them to relinquish their own cultural and historical background, thereby erasing their past, because, he argues, suppressing the ants' language is more effective than cutting off their heads (89). This emphasises how losing one's language—and thus one's culture, past, history, and ability to express oneself independently—facilitates exploiting a nation because such a "[l]oss of choice in language leads to the loss of particularization, and this leads to unconsciousness" in distinguishing the Self from the Other (Lea 137). The ants are convinced that obedient "noble" (83) ants who speak the elephants' language will be rewarded by allowing them to reattain an ancestry—an elephant ancestry—because the elephant language, "elephish," rather than the ant language, "antish," is associated with civilisation. Believing this, the ants claim: "We should not fall behind in civilization while all creatures speak elephant language" (52). Language is used to uphold "a distorted, untruthful version of reality" (Lea 113). Ants who never speak their native language internalise the elephants' justification for colonising their land and this prevents them from collaborating to thwart the elephants' authority. The Sultan forbids the use of such words as "equality," "freedom," and "peace" (110) to prevent the ants attempting to rebel. Moreover, he bans the ants from using the word "imperialism" to hinder them thinking or talking about their exploitation. Indeed, the exclusion of some words from speech shows how exploitation is hidden from the consciousness of those who are exploited so they cannot resist even its implications. Thus, as Orwell argues, "to *preserve* [certain words] is always to *extend* them" (*My Country* 108, original emphasis) through perverted language. Similarly, Kemal also puts emphasis on the language through which he creates a bind to the reader and states that "the structure of the language has a great impact on the form and content of a novel" (Tharaud 204) to create a bind to the reader.

The Sultan produces specific combinations of words which differ from the oppressed ants' native language to encode the prevailing oppressive ideology. He also introduces new terms to the language such as "eleph-ant" (*filkar*) to refer to ants. He suggests that they come from the elephant lineage, benefiting from the fact that the word "ant" (*karınca* in Turkish) is included in the word "elephant" (*fil* in Turkish). He also constructs the word "ant-eleph" (*karıncafil*) to refer to ants who

have graduated from elephant schools and can speak the elephant language fluently but "cannot see, hear, think and realize the realities" (175) about themselves. Furthermore, "elephantland" (*filistan*) refers to the elephant's country, whereas "humanland" (*insanistan*) refers to the country inhabited by people. As Rai observes about Orwell's novels, language functions as "the necessary and insidious means of the 'totalitarian' control of reality" (122) in subjugating people to the prevailing ideology without permitting questioning.

In *Animal Farm*, the utopian socialist notion that "[a]nimal must ever tyrannise over his own kind. Weak or strong, clever or simple, we are all brothers" (31) is revised later through some simple alterations on the words in the "Seven Commandments" for animals in the farm to render the pigs' superiority sound plausible. "Four legs good, two legs bad!" is transformed into "Four legs good, two legs better!" (114) which has almost an opposite meaning by changing a single word. In time, the class distinction among animals, particularly between pigs and the others are intensified through the maxim "ALL ANIMALS ARE EQUAL BUT SOME ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS" (126). As Fowler argues, this statement stands as "a self-contradictory 'justification' for the superiority of the pigs" (76), problematising the meaning of "equality." A similar contradiction also occurs in *The Sultan of the Elephants* in an imperialist context when the Sultan wants every ant to "die for becoming an elephant" (57). The brainwashed ants take on the ways of elephants: they eat like elephants, rub their hips against trees like elephants, and even suppose they are elephants. They are mocked by their provisional identity. That they imitate elephants suggests neither that their identities are entirely changed nor that coloniser and colonised enjoy equal rights. It exemplifies Yılmaz's point that Westernatisation turns out to be a handicap for the colonised who imitates the coloniser in all aspects (73). When the Sultan cannot cope with the ants, who become lazy because they imitate the elephants closely, he revises his strategy and exalts the ants, upholding the superiority of their race. He now suggests that the elephants are descended from the lineage of "noble" and "spectacular" ants and calls for unity and solidarity with all animals through the notion of "One for all, all for one" (68). He urges the ants to work in order to become as noble as the elephants. The ants become merely "machines, devoting themselves to elephantland" (175), as allowing the colonised to think would threaten the sustainability of their exploitation. Both Napoleon and the Sultan make the exploited animals work constantly so that they cannot even contemplate a way to fight against injustice.

Like Marx and Engels, Orwell argues that a classless and egalitarian society is possible through the struggle of the working class. However, opposed to commu-

nism being upheld through the "conquest of political power by the proletariats" (27), Orwell relies on socialism[1] as a way out of "all kinds of tyranny" (Armstrong 54-55). He expresses his distrust of communism, explicitly claiming that it could turn out to be fascism in time as in the Soviet Union (45). He states that the backbone of the struggle against tyranny was working-class people in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) against the fascist totalitarian leader Francisco Franco (210). Despite Orwell's pessimism, he ponders that "a concerted action of libertarian socialists" could change the totalitarian system one day (Bounds 27). His mere suspect is related to the proletariat's interference with his individual desires, which threatens the wholeness of the society. Gorky resembles people who are blinded with the lust of "supreme power" with Doctor Faustus negotiating with the Devil preparing his own tragic end (61). In this respect, the resemblance of Napoleon and his followers to the capitalist men at the end of *Animal Farm* asserts Gorky's point as they deviate from the collective consciousness of socialism and become alike capitalist bourgeoise benefitting from the proletariat's labour.

As different from Orwell, Kemal is more optimistic in his expectation for socialist society. Therefore, unlike Orwell who makes the story of the novella revolve around a "negative" hero like Napoleon, initiating his struggle with collective consciousness but ending up with individual desires, Kemal creates a protagonist who fits well to Gorky's portrayal of "positive" hero. He adopts a socialist attitude against all forces that exploit and oppress the countrymen and threaten their happiness and peace (İpekçi). He asserts this when he associates the independence of the ants with the collaboration of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie elephants in the novel. As Moran argues, a social realist work not only represents the conflicts in the real world but also indicates where it goes by emphasising the "ideal" way out of it (*Edebiyat Kuramları* 54). Thus, it assigns the reader with both individual and societal responsibilities. The novelist conveys these duties through the "positive hero".

From Gorky's approach, "positive hero" is the literary character who is so "purposeful and conscious of his purposefulness [that] he can enter the privileged caste which is universally respected and called 'positive heroes' " (Dennis 49). Such a "positive hero", the red-bearded lame ant represents the working class as he is a blacksmith from a lineage of blacksmiths. According to Çiftlikçi, Kemal portrays blacksmiths in some of his novels as sophisticated and outspoken people who sustain their work as a family job and have a religious bond with fire (327). Kemal ap-

1 Socialism differs from communism by opposing the communist notion of gathering all social and economic production under the control of the state, disallowing private property (Bottomore 501-502).

pears to rely on the conscious acts of the socialist working class, putting forward the socialist realist notion that they are capable of facing the hard realities of capitalism (Lea 117). To this end, the red-bearded ant is literate, reading widely for hours and contemplating a way out for all ants. His literateness also indicates his being positive hero, who is characterised by education and reading books (Gorky 341).

In Gorky's socialist realist view, socialist realist literary work concerned the struggle between the capitalist bourgeoise and proletariat stands as a protest against the capitalist system and creates a fighting spirit for a better future (234-237). In this aspect, besides his job and literateness, his red colour also represents socialist identity striving against capitalism. Both Ulukepez and the chief call him "the red ant," referring to his communist identity against the Sultan's exploitation. In this respect, the ant provides working-class people with a rebellious voice in the novel. The red ant is the only one who disrespects and rebels against the totalitarian leader who constricts his freedom and attempts to exploit him and his nation. He represents Dennis's definition of "positive hero" who "has either no faults at all or else but a few of them—for example, he sometimes loses his temper a little" (49). In this aspect, he is so much like real men. However, he focuses on the purpose and strives for it. Therefore, the Sultan believes he is a potential danger as an unconformist for his authority because his rebellious thoughts could quickly be propagated among the animals, threatening the elephants' superiority. The red ant sparks a kind of resistance among the ants against the notion that they are obliged to serve the elephants and hoopoes to survive, declaring, "Ant countries belong to ants and we are free and independent" (190). His discourse of resistance represents an influential weapon, which he indeed points at the Sultan's exploitative totalitarian authority, reappropriating the Sultan's discourse, in Orwellian fashion, judging it to be lying propaganda (Bounds 151). This exemplifies Baccolini and Maylon's notion of the dystopian protagonist's resistance, which, according to them, "often begins with a verbal confrontation and the reappropriation of language . . ." (26). Thus, educating the proletariat through realist representation of life to transform them into warriors for an ideal socialist society is also another basic feature of socialist realism in literature (Gorky 262-266). Gorky underlines social education both for peasants and children who are required to learn that freedom of thought is possible only through the socialist system rather than the capitalist one (281-282). To this end, in literature, the socialist realist author creates an inspiring "positive" hero who affects the reader through his courage, action and creativity against class distinction (Gorky 238-239).

Another point in relation to "positive hero" is his/her capability of distinguishing between individualism and collectivism by foregrounding collective ac-

tion (Gorky 92-95). From this point of view, Gorky emphasises the socialist realist author's significant role as an ideology teacher organising proletariat for the struggle against capitalist forces. He regards the artist as the "ear, eye and heart" of his country and "the voice of his time" (58). For Gorky, thanks to the socialist realist author, art can serve as "a mighty weapon of socialist culture" (342) and it is "positive hero" that acts out socialist realist authors' role in text. More precisely, socialist realism enables the individual to comprehend that "life is action, creativity" necessitating people to live in conformity with both the nature and their requirements (Gorky 343), and the socialist realist author acts as "an engineer of human souls" by focusing on the social issue of the society s/he lives in (Clark 176). In both works, folk song strengthens collectivity consciousness for a socialist society. Gorky notes that the history of culture is comprised of songs, proverbs and sayings providing the proletariat with spiritual strength which is essential for fight capitalist forces (298-300). In both works, the use of song works as an agent of propaganda to reflect the rebellious spirit of the animals who struggle to free themselves from tyrannous forces. Songs represent the rebellious voice of the proletariat in both works.

In *Animal Farm*, Old Major introduces the song "Beasts of England," which expresses the free spirit necessary to live in "the golden future time" free from oppression (32); however, Napoleon replaces it with the song entitle "Comrade Napoleon" (81) including many praises about himself, thus, serving as a propaganda production of his totalitarianism. In the same vein, in *The Sultan of the Elephants*, the red-bearded lame ant musters all the ants against these subverted and manipulative notions through the ants' folk song, reminding the ants of their cultural identity and their past in which they were free, independent, equal, and happy. The song represents the revival of their freedom, motivating them to take back their own identity and fight against such villainy. The folk song, heard and felt only by the ants, who are true to their society, may be associated with the blood of the Turkish youth. The novel closes with an open-ended socialist statement: "When all ants of the world come together ..." (208). Thus, as in Orwell's novella, Kemal also presents a socialist way of creating a utopian world out of a dystopian one for all oppressed people, suggesting the whole through the words "the world." Kemal does this through a tiny lame animal who inspires the oppressed people to challenge the established authority as a socialist reconstruction of Marx's call in his manifesto: "WORKINGMEN OF ALL COUNTRIES UNITE!" (*Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* 243). In this regard, both socialist authors "evoke a future in which the people have been released from meaningless labour, freed from poverty and delivered into a world of substantive liberty" (Bounds 170).

Conclusion

The study has performed a socialist realist reading on the basis of two works produced in different countries and years. George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and Yaşar Kemal's *The Sultan of the Elephants and the Red-Bearded Lame Ant*. Orwell's and Kemal's selected works exemplify how socialist realism functions through genre, character and content to criticise the growing gap between the bourgeoisie and the working class. Thus, they present the reader as an influential guide to see the light at the end of the struggle against the capitalist system. Both works are products of socialist realism, embedded in the dystopian genre drawing the portrayal of the bitter realities behind exploitation which is executed by spreading terror among the oppressed. On the other hand, anthropomorphic representation in the works smooths the bitter social reality that occurs because of oppression and exploitation in capitalist societies. The comparative analysis of the two works indicates that despite their similarities in techniques employed to depict the totalitarian regime of capitalist forces and to present socialism as a way out for the proletariat, they differ in the protagonist they focus on. In the context of socialist realism, *Animal Farm* revolves around a "negative hero" who betrays the revolutionary ideals of socialism as a victim of his individual desires, whereas *The Sultan of the Elephants and the Red-Bearded Lame Ant* presents the model of a "positive hero" striving through collective consciousness in the spirit of socialism. Unlike Orwell who underlines the interference of individual desires with collective purposes as a threat to obtaining a real socialist society, Kemal argues that total independence is realisable through a socialist revolution depending on solidarity and unity. As a classic dystopian work *Animal Farm* is pessimistic about such a result due to power-hungry leaders; however, the Turkish children's novel reveals a critical dystopia illuminating the end of the tunnel for the proletariat.

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Marginalization, Mimicry and Subversion: A Bhabhian Reading of Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

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Abstract This paper examines the process of marginalization as experienced by Hamid's protagonist, Changez, in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) from Bhabhian perspective. It highlights the West's tendency to destroy the non-Western ways of knowing-something achieved through its institutionalized education systems. The experience of marginalization proves epiphanic for Changez as he stops looking at the world from the Eurocentric optics. Marginalization, thus, turns out to be a springboard for Changez, as it enables him to adopt mimicry as a form of colonial subversion. While it acts as a catalyst in Changez's acculturation, mimicry also discloses the ambivalence of the colonial discourse and deauthorizes America's position of subjectivity. It empowers Changez to question the Western ways of thinking. It challenges epistemic violence, American ethnocentrism, and impels the reader to perceive marginalization as a privileged postcolonial motif and mimicry as an anti-colonial tool that set Changez against the imperial machinery of silencing.

Key words marginalization; mimicry; subversion; deauthorization; ambivalence

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Introduction

The Reluctant Fundamentalist is the story of a drastic volte-face in the worldview of the principal character, Changez. Changez relinquishes his Pakistani self to blend in with the U.S. culture. He establishes his credentials as a top-ranking financial analyst and as the finest graduate of Princeton University. His relationship with his girlfriend, Erica, directly corresponds to his relationship with America. A smooth relationship with Erica reflects a smooth relationship with (Am) Erica, and the fading of Erica reflects fading away of the American dream. In the aftermath of 9/11, Changez experiences stiff marginalization in American society which transforms him into an explicit anti-American. He cannot come to terms with the idea of being treated as an outcast in America despite embracing the American culture by all means. The inability to reconcile with his marginalization turns him against America. He, therefore, unleashes his anger by preaching anti-Americanism to his pupils as a university lecturer in Lahore, Pakistan.

Marginalization shatters the American dream of Changez and impels him to subvert the subject position of the West. It sets Changez on a rebellious path against the imperial dominance of America. Changez's disillusionment with America is not due to his religious leanings; it is rather the result of racial/cultural insensitivity that he encounters during his stay in America. For Morton (2010), "Marginality is one of the privileged metaphors of postcolonial studies. It is from the margins of colonial subordination and oppression on the grounds of race, class and gender or religion that postcolonial writers and theorists claim political and moral authority to contest or oppose the claims of a dominant European imperial culture" (162). Marginalization provides Changez the moral justification to attack America's cultural imperialism of its non-native and especially Muslim residents: "The menace of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority" (Edmund 126). Changez turns American consciousness on its head. He mimics the colonial culture to gain acceptance in America, though his marginalization prompts him to dismantle the American consciousness.

The colonial subject's fantasy to mimic the colonizer's culture renders Changez an outcast. The subaltern is caught up in two different worlds ideologically, while "the disavowal of difference turns the colonial subject into a misfit — a grotesque mimicry or 'doubling' that threatens to split the soul and whole" (Edmund 107). Changez turns his back on the native culture to attain self-aggrandizement. His mimicry of the American norms reaffirms his otherness, while his actual self is completely at variance with his adopted colonial self. The fall of the Twin Towers serves as a turning point in the life of Changez. The toppling of the Twin Towers symbolizes the toppling of Changez's identity and dreams. He loses his sense of self in the process of acculturation: "We cannot reconstitute ourselves as the autonomous beings we previously imagined ourselves to be. Something of us is now outside, and something of the outside is now within us" (105). Changez inherits certain traits from the American culture that can never be abandoned. The post 9/11-disillusioned Changez experiences a shift of perspective — the lover of America turns into the hater of the same.

By subverting the stereotypical representation of events, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* shows the perspective of the subaltern (Changez) on 9/11. For Parkash (1994), "The term 'subaltern,' drawn from Antonio Gramsci's writings, refers to subordination in terms of class, caste, gender, race, language, and culture" (1477). The subaltern's version of reality challenges the U.S. ethnocentrism. Hamid tends to convey that the subaltern's narrative cannot be controlled by the West any longer. In fact, the subaltern launches a literary backlash by coming up with his own voice. Changez is subalternized on account of his cultural background. He becomes a victim to America's rising ethnocentrism in the post-9/11 phase. For instance, the insensitive remarks from a driver directed against his culture, Erica's father's diatribe against Pakistan, and his intense checking at the airport instigates Changez to revolt against the humiliation inflicted on him for being a Muslim coming from the third world. The sending of a shadowy, nameless American to allegedly murder Changez for speaking against America in front of the international media shows America's hawkish mentality. This sense of marginalization provides Changez the moral pretext to settle scores with America for treating him as an alleged terrorist.

Changez's disempowerment ironically empowers him to destabilize the Western ways of thinking. The chief goal of marginalization is to hijack the voice of the subaltern and to dispossess him of his identity. Changez's (un)silencing in the wake of marginalization impels the reader to analyze the thematic politics of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* from the non-Western optics. Changez exposes the colonial machinery which tends to treat him as the cultural other. The counter-

hegemonic practices of Changez undermine America's position of subjectivity: "Under cover of camouflage, mimicry, like the fetish, is a part-object that radically revalues the normative knowledges of the priority of race, writing, history. For the fetish mimes the forms of authority at the point at which it deauthorizes them" (Bhabha 91). Subalternization culminates into resistance, while the (ex) colonized subverts the colonial dominance. Ironically, the desire to mimic the colonial culture turns into hatred for the same. Therefore, the mechanics of discrimination adopted by America to reduce Changez to slavery turn him into an anti-colonial agent.

In the wake of persistent marginalization, Changez makes a conscious decision to get rid of all the American influences. By shifting his loyalties towards Pakistan, Changez signals his disillusionment with America. This ideological shift is the result of racial affronts that Changez encounters during his stay in the U.S. Not only the central character spurns the guidelines of the imperialist state, he starts preaching anti-Americanism to his pupils as a university lecturer. In the article "Precarious World: Rethinking Global Fiction in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist",* the emphasis is on Changez's disillusionment with America: "No longer able to work for the "officers of the empire," he [Changez] returns to Pakistan to become a university lecturer" (Darda 111). Changez awakens to a new plane of existence and decides to settle scores with America that played a critical role in dividing his loyalties. He becomes overtly hostile to the American domination. He asks his compatriots to pour scorn on America for betraying Pakistan at a time of crisis. This will bring about intellectual illumination among Pakistanis: "I made it my mission on campus to advocate a disengagement from your country by mine" (Hamid 108). Changez urges Pakistanis to cut off relations with America. This is the outcome of marginalization that Changez undergoes as a Muslim and a Pakistani.

Changez as a Mimic Man

In order to avoid becoming the subject of scrutiny, Changez learns the art of camouflaging his Pakistani identity. He does not disclose to the natives of America that he hails from Pakistan. It is a calculated move to hide his origins so that he can blend in with the American culture, otherwise, he might be perceived as a threat to American culture. Changez does not want to be a social outcast: "And I learned to answer, when asked where I was from, that I was from New York. Did these things trouble me, you ask? Certainly, sir; I was often ashamed. But outwardly I gave no sign of this" (Hamid 38-39). In order to integrate with the U.S. customs, Changez intentionally relinquishes his Pakistani self. He puts on a deceptive appearance for the sake of getting benefits, though the prejudice of Americans remains unshaken:

"I was the only non-American in our group, but I suspected my Pakistaniness was invisible, cloaked by my suit, by my expense account, and—most of all—by my companions" (Hamid 42). The way Changez disguises his Pakistani self makes it clear that he does not want to incur the displeasure of his foreign colleagues. The fear of getting singled out for being a non-American prompts Changez to dress like an American.

Changez, as a subaltern, does not battle for supremacy; he wants to be on par with Americans: "The struggles waged by the oppressed and subordinated, i.e, the subalterns, were seen as struggles for recognition as equals" (Pandey 4735). In order to become socially acceptable in America, Changez imitates all the U.S. mannerisms. Since Changez's accent exudes foreignness, his colleagues keep a high opinion of him: "I attempted to act and speak, as much as my dignity would permit, more like an American. The Filipinos we worked with seemed to look up to my American colleagues . . . and I wanted my share of that respect as well" (Hamid 38). Changez masters American accent to gain respect in the U.S: "Whatever the reason, I was aware of an advantage conferred upon me by my foreignness, and I tried to utilize it as much as I could" (25). He fully understands that in America, a person's sense of worth is determined by his appearance and dressing.

With his acculturation, he disregards the traditional conventions of morality, Now, he is more in pursuit of personal happiness and independence. Changez's attempts o assimilate reaffirm his otherness: "Disavowal of difference turns the colonial subject into a misfit – a grotesque mimicry or 'doubling' that threatens to split the soul and body" (Edmund 107). Changez desires to put on the American mask to hide his cultural origins but ends up as a misfit in the U.S. culture. Therefore, Changez subverts the colonial structure as he 'mimes the forms of authority" (Edmund 130). Thus, one sees how mimicry facilitates (de)authorization of the colonial machinery.

Changez becomes self-indulgent in the process of becoming an American. In order to solidify his love affair with Erica, Changez disregards the conventional standards of morality. Not only he is besotted with his girlfriend, he relishes the prospect of entering into the realms of fantasy. "My excitement about the adventures my new life held for me had never been more pronounced" (Hamid 18). It shows the sexual maturity of Changez. From an intellectually refined individual, Changez is now on his way to becoming a pleasure-seeker. In order to feel at home in America, Changez adopts a hedonistic mode of life. Transgressing all the moral boundaries, Changez intends to achieve sensual pleasure with Erica. Overcome by moral wickedness, Changez gives vent to his sexual energy by having intercourse with

Erica: "I cannot, of course, claim that I was possessed, but at the same time I did not seem to be myself. It was as though we were under a spell" (Hamid 63). Despite satiating his sexual lust, Changez does not feel any overwhelming happiness. In fact, he explains that he commits the sexual act in a state of mind where emotions take control of him.

As a result of divided loyalties, Changez experiences intense crisis of identity. He is in two different worlds ideologically: "I did not know where I stood on so many issues of consequence; I lacked a stable core. I was not certain where I belonged—in New York, in Lahore, in both, in neither . . . because my own identity was so fragile" (Hamid 89). His intense self-examination gives an indication of his confusion. Since he is victimized in the U.S. on account of his Muslim and Pakistani identity, therefore, he starts feeling demoralized. He does not know whether he has ideological leanings towards the U.S. or his homeland Pakistan. This ambivalence is the result of American doctrines that are hammered into Changez at Princeton. Regardless of his exalted position at Underwood Samson later, he feels disempowered while his fragile identity makes him feel ashamed. Therefore, Changez renounces his Pakistani self and adopts the ways of Chris (Erica's ex-lover) to be at home in America: "The menace of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority" (Edmund 130). Changez mimics the American norms to avoid becoming the victim of racism in the U.S. It establishes Changez as America's cultural other. The ambivalence of the colonial power, especially in terms of the acculturation of the non-native other, deauthorizes the supremacy of America's colonial subjectivity.

Looking at Changez, Erica's father makes a gross assumption that Changez might be a fanatic as he wears a beard. Changez, nonetheless, enlightens Erica's father that he was clean shaven when he first came to America. Actually, the treatment that Changez receives in the U.S. in the form of racial insensitivity, intense inspection on ethnic grounds, and attack on his cultural belonging impels him to keep beard as a mark of protest: "Perhaps you misconstrue the significance of my beard, which, I should in any case make clear, I had not yet kept when I arrived in New York" (Hamid 32). In the same vein, Changez observes that the nameless American is looking at his beard with suspicion. The Americans brand the bearded people as terrorists following the attacks on World Trade Center. Changez urges the American visitor to cast off his preconceived notions about Pakistanis. Changez clarifies that beard is a cultural symbol, and not a symbol of provocation: "Ah, I see I have alarmed you. Do not be frightened by my beard: I am a lover of America" (Hamid 1). Keeping "lustrous beard" (45), therefore, does not indicate

that he harbours an active ill-will for the Western community. The yardstick to determine one's character should not be one's appearance. This again endorses that in the post-9/11 phase, the U.S. citizens keep a biased opinion against Muslims. In the view of the U.S. tendency to generalize things about Muslims, Changez tries to remove misconceptions about Muslim cultural symbols.

As a testament to the U.S. hatred for Muslim cultural symbols, Changez is subjected to discriminatory attitude in the U.S. as he does not shave his beard. Wainwright urges Changez to reconsider his decision of keeping beard, as the colleagues at Underwood Samsung have reservations about it. Changez encounters cultural resistance in America; it prompts him to mentally detach himself from everything that is associated with the U.S. This voluntary mental disengagement with the U.S. is a defining point in Changez's life. "Wainwright tried to offer me some friendly advice. 'Look, man,' he said, 'I don't know what's up with the beard, but I don't think it's making you Mister Popular around here' " (Hamid 78). Bhabha, in relation to this, holds, "And it (mimicry) is a double vision that is a result of what I've described as the partial representation /recognition of the colonial object" (Bhabha 88). Changez is treated as an outcast because of his beard. The Americans cast aspersions on the identity of Changez for his non-native (ness).

In the wake of 9/11 attack, the ideological gulf between America and Pakistan widens. With the recent commencement of hostilities, Changez faces racial bigotry in America. While Changez tries to live an orderly life with his American colleagues, he is treated as a shady character. This tactical maneuver of the U.S. brings Changez out of his comfort zone. Therefore, he lambastes American racial intolerance by remaining a part of the U.S. culture: "You can never represent or act from an 'outside', since you are always already situated inside discourse, culture, institutions, geopolitics" (Kapoor 640). Even his colleagues make him an object of ridicule: "I was subjected to verbal abuse by complete strangers, and at Underwood Samson I seemed to become overnight a subject of whispers and stares" (Hamid 78). On account of wearing beard, Changez gives discomfort to his colleagues at Underwood Samson.

Changez experiences an uncanny feeling of pleasure on the collapse of World Trade Center. America is castrated and stripped of its colonial, phallogocentric self the same way it had castrated Changez and made him give up his ethnoreligious identity. Nevertheless, he elicits "looks of concern" (Hamid 44) since he is perceived as a threat to the security of Americans. Regardless of Changez's influential position in his company, his religio-cultural background makes him a possible suspect in the attack on twin towers. The security personnel constantly keeps an eye on Changez,

as he does not look like an American. Changez, at all this, feigns composure, though Jim senses his unease: "My entrance elicited looks of concern from many of my fellow passengers. I flew to New York uncomfortable in my own face: I was aware of being under suspicion" (Hamid 44). Two Americans hurl insults at Changez by calling him a "fucking Arab" (Hamid 70). This derogatory epithet prompts Changez to change his ideological position with respect to the U.S. He feels outraged for being marginalized at a place that claims to be the home of cultural pluralism. In fact, Changez intends to have a war of words with the people who mock him on the basis of his ethnicity and religion: "'Fucking Arab,' he said. I am not, of course, an Arab. Nor am I, by nature, a gratuitously belligerent chap. But my blood throbbed in my temples" (Hamid 70). Being on the periphery proves epiphanic for Changez since "Marginality is one of the privileged metaphors of postcolonial studies. It is from the margins of colonial subordination and oppression on the grounds of race, class and gender or religion that postcolonial writers and theorists claim political and moral authority to contest or oppose the claims of a dominant European imperial culture" (Morton 162). Changez's marginalization, therefore, proves to be a springboard that throws him up to his own awakening.

In a fierce polemic, Erica's father gives a disapproving portrayal of Pakistan. He himself has never been to Pakistan, while the way he decries the culture of Pakistan gives a hint of his racial bias. By relying on the articles published in the US journals, Erica's father launches a diatribe against Pakistan. He makes fun of the style of governance prevalent in Changez's homeland and believes that the upper class is exploitative. Most important of all, Pakistanis, for Erica's father, are charged "with fundamentalism" (Hamid 33). Similarly, the country's "Economy's falling apart though, no? Corruption, dictatorship, the rich living like princes while everyone else suffers . . . And fundamentalist. You guys have got some serious problems with fundamentalism" (33). Pakistan is painted as a place unable to govern itself. It is on the verge of destruction. As a matter of fact, "The objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest" (Bhabha 70). The colonial machinery constructs its cultural other to justify the exercise of colonialism. Ironically, however, disempowerment of the colonized turns on its head and leads to subversion of the colonial apparatus.

With a sea change in the U.S. policy for Muslims, Changez discovers the dehumanizing treatment given to him following the attacks on World Trade Center. A clampdown is started against the Muslims to track down the suspected engineers of the attack. By stripping the Muslims of their self-respect, the U.S. proceeds

according to her new plan. With this new desensitized version of America, the loss of Muslims' identity becomes an ordinary occurrence. Not only the Muslims are put into custody, they are killed under the guise of interrogation. How "the FBI was raiding mosques" (Hamid 56) shows that U.S. suspects Muslims to be the attackers of World Trade Center. And so, "Pakistani cabdrivers were being beaten to within an inch of their lives . . . Muslim men were disappearing, perhaps into shadowy detention centers for questioning or worse" (56). In the guise of interrogation, third degree torture is carried out against Muslims. The deaths of Muslims in FBI's custody show how Americans treated the outsiders following the attacks on World Trade Center.

In the recent ideological offense against the Muslims, the U.S. makes the contracts of Muslims null and void. The "groundless dismissals" (72) of Muslims highlight the rage of the U.S. community. Americans wish to oust Muslims from their country, so that the potential threat to their security can be minimized. Changez, however, still wants to serve the American Empire, as he is in the quest of selfish pursuits. In the aftermath of the "September attacks" (72), the U.S. blacklists Muslims: " I had heard tales of the discrimination Muslims were beginning to experience in the business world─ stories of rescinded job offers and groundless dismissals" (Hamid 72). The insulting treatment given to Muslims in America shows what the U.S. culture actually stands for. Despite the claims of being a multiethnic society, America shows racial bias against Muslims in the post-9/11 phase.

Changez dices with death by expressing his anti-American views in front of the international media. The frequent replaying of the video might propel the U.S. to make Changez pay for denouncing her foreign policy. The U.S. knows the art of silencing the voices of resistance. America follows a violent course of action to eliminate all the potential threats to their system: "But my brief interview appeared to resonate: it was replayed for days, and even now an excerpt of it can be seen in the occasional war-on-terror montage" (Hamid 110). Towards the end of the novel, the nameless American puts hand in his jacket to settle all the disputes with gun which shows that he is a trained CIA operative. Changez is, therefore, under constant American scrutiny for lambasting America on international media.

Against the backdrop of marginalization, Changez starts questioning the motives of the nameless American whose ways confirm Changez's suspicion that the former is an undercover U.S. agent. Soldiers truly understand the pre-wartime anxieties that unsettle the contestants. It can be perceived as counter-accusation on the American colleague. On a macro level, it represents the deterioration of relationship between Pakistan and the US: "Aha! Then you have been in the service,

sir, just as I suspected! Would you not agree that waiting for what is to come is the most difficult part? Yes, quite so, not as difficult as the time of carnage itself—said, sir, like a true soldier" (Hamid 77). The nameless American considers Pakistan an intolerant society and believes that his life is in jeopardy in Pakistan. Changez experiences cultural insensitivity and ethnic persecution abroad, which compels him attack the double standards of America. Changez and the nameless American have serious doubts on each other's integrity. This symbolizes the fissures that characterize the relationship of Pakistan and America in the post-9/11 phase.

Conclusion

Marginalization empowers Changez to destabilize the Western ways of thinking. He removes his Eurocentric optics and challenges the epistemic violence against the colonized in the post-9/11 world order. His (un)silencing marks a watershed in his career, as he recovers his identity and starts preaching anti-Americanism to his pupils. The reactionary Changez deauthorizes America's position of subjectivity through his colonial mimicry. He unsettles the American colonial machinery of silencing by highlighting the modes of discrimination adopted against the colonized. Changez's marginalization, on one hand, disposses him of his identity, though it ironically provides him the moral grounds to unlock his fundamentalist self. So, marginalization is a privileged postcolonial motif as it impels Changez to adopt mimicry as a form of resistance. The disempowerment of Changez, therefore, turns on its head and leads to the subversion of the colonial hegemony.

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The Existential Arab Antihero in Rawi Hage's *Beirut Hellfire Society*

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Abstract this article aims at investigating the transformation of the contemporary Arab protagonist into an existential antihero in Rawi Hage's *Beirut Hell Fire Society* (2018) which is set during Lebanon's civil war. The crafting of postmodern antiheroism in the context of war has become a medium to voice out the traumatic experiences of this individual around whom events of death, loss, destruction, and chaos are centered. The representation of the antihero in postmodern Anglophone Arab war fiction is of paramount importance as it reclaims the past through depicting historical events. It also dwells on the representation of the antihero's psyche reflecting the complex nature of the antihero figure in times of conflicts. This research is theoretically framed using *The Archetypal Antihero in Postmodern Fiction* (2010) by Rita Gurung to scrutinize the character's evolution and transformation into an antihero, and trauma studies including Cathy Caruth's readings of traumatized literary figures and her findings of trauma in her *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995). It also incorporates Craps and Beulness' ethical direction of trauma to understand how war can shape and influence the antihero's transformation, and to position the existential Arab antihero in Hage's novel in the field of Anglophone Arab war fiction. Thus, interweaving politics, history and psychology, this article aims at bridging the gap between postmodern Anglophone Arab war literature and the concept of antiheroism through examining the deranged psyche of Hage's protagonist Pavlov in order to delineate the metamorphosis he undergoes to becoming an existential antihero in the context of war.

Key words antiheroism; Anglophone Arab war fiction; existential antihero; metamorphosis; trauma

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Introduction

In the Western literary stream, in the postmodern age, the antihero becomes deeply afflicted by existential concerns and nihilism. Major postmodern writers of the twentieth century such as Kafka, Sartre, Camus, Beckett and others who followed wrote in a nihilistic fashion to reflect realistically the fragmented contemporary world, and to exhibit the failure of the contemporary hero to fulfill the role of archetypal heroism. Similarly, in Anglophone Arab War fiction, the postmodern Arab antihero can also be approached from an existential perspective to discuss how war can shape and influence characters to become existential antiheroic figures. Hence, this study will investigate the traumatic experiences of war in Lebanon as represented by the diasporic Lebanese novelist Rawi Hage in his novel *Beirut Hellfire Society*. Clearly, the existentialist antihero is a man absorbed by feelings of fear, anxiety, isolation, angst, boredom and nausea, and he/she represents nothing more than a puppet in the greater scheme of things.

Research Methodology

The definition of the concept of the antihero underwent significant changes throughout the centuries. In effect, antiheroism emerged early in literature, but only began to gain prominence when the central character began to lose the trappings that are traditionally associated with heroism. In *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), Northrop Frye classifies the hero according to his power of action, starting with the superior divine hero, the hero of the romance, the hero leader, the hero of comedy and realistic fiction, and finally the ironic hero. The classification shows the steady shift of the European literature from idealized mythical heroism to the ironic unheroic mode. The traditional ironic antihero is described as a minor character, inferior in power or intelligence to the common man. He embodies antiheroic traits of bondage, frustration, villainy, and absurdity (33-34). Suitably, this research investigates Frye's ironic antiheroic mode that has taken a central position in the postmodern fiction.

The concept of the antihero has gained significant literary critical attention

particularly in the postmodern war fiction. This period was marked by a nihilistic and absurdist approach. Accordingly, the tormented psyche of these antiheroic characters often positions them as antiheroes. Harold Skulsly (1981) argues that characters' transformation into antiheroes is "considered as a psychotic breakdown or rather serious mental regression" (171). Indeed, under the conditions of war, it would not be surprising to find a hero alone and disillusioned. The antihero's recoil and metamorphosis can be considered as a prolonged *cri du coeur* of anxiety, constraint, physical discomfort, and above all estrangement. Rita Gurung (2010) asserts that "the postmodern antihero is…a victim of alienation, cultural or spiritual sterility, seeking solace and refuge in alcohol, self-deception, power, social withdrawal and anonymity" (8-9).

It is important to note that the interpretation of a flawed character can be justified differently in accordance to his/her perturbed psyche due to the destructive environment by which he/she is surrounded. Rita Gurung (2010) sets different categories of the postmodern antihero that includes those who feel estranged in the world, those who are disillusioned with a distorted spirit, those who feel inferior and are oppressed by the system, those who choose to remain passive and alienated, those who feel outsiders and outcast in their own land, the nihilists, and the antiheroic rebels whose rebellious actions always end up in failure (27). As a matter of fact, these diverse categories elucidate the complex and heterogeneous nature of the postmodern antihero figure. Some antiheroes turn villains, while some are transformed and metamorphosed into rebels, and some others remain static and passive. Alternatively, this article will discuss the existential antihero shaped and influenced by war. The antihero in Hage's *Beirut Hellfire Society* is restrained by violent circumstances that hinder his attempt to overcome the traumatic experiences generated by war.

The complex nature of the contemporary antihero in the context of war is better explained in relation to trauma studies theorized by Cathy Caruth and Craps and Beulness' ethical direction of trauma to provide a wider and deeper insight to the eventual metamorphosis of the central antihero characters in the field of Anglophone Arab war fiction. Trauma theory has increasingly gained more attention in the critical field of literature since the 1980s. Cathy Caruth registers the earliest evidence of this shift in her *Trauma*: *Explorations in Memory* (1995) in which she highlights the phenomenon of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, commonly abbreviated as PTSD, "which include[s] the symptoms of what had previously been called shell shock, combat stress, delayed stress syndrome, and traumatic neurosis" (1). She links it to different disciplines through examining "the impact

of the experience, and the notion, of trauma on psychoanalytic practice and theory, as well as on other aspects of culture such as literature and pedagogy" (2). In other words, trauma can now be approached via different disciplines with contributions by clinical psychologists, psychiatrists, sociologists, creative writers and literary critics. Based on Freud's description of trauma, Caruth (1995) wrote of trauma as a wound that carries "a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviors stemming from the event" (2). She further argues that traumatic experiences are located in the way the traumatic event "returns to haunt the survivor later on" (3). Trauma theory, then, traces the psychological wound that troubles survivors in their lives. Alongside Caruth, the primary scholars who have made substantial contributions to trauma theory are Shoshanna Felman and DoriLaub (1992), Judith Herman (1992), Bessel van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart (1996) and Geoffrey Hartman (1995). These theorists agree that traumatic memories are unlocatable and intrusively appear as flashback and nightmares.

However, it is important to note that the experience of war trauma is not confined to the Western culture exclusively; it is a universal concept that differs according to different sociopolitical conditions and circumstances. In this respect, this study will investigate the traumatic experiences of war in the Arab world, particularly in Lebanon as represented by the diasporic Lebanese novelist Rawi Hage in his novel *Beirut Hellfire Society*. Craps and Beulnes (2008) argue that trauma studies are exclusively concerned with traumatic experiences in the Euro-American context and they note that:

> Instead of promoting solidarity between different cultures, trauma studies risks producing the very opposite effect as a result of this one-sided focus: by ignoring or marginalizing non-Western traumatic events and histories and non-Western theoretical work, trauma studies may actually assist in the perpetuation of Eurocentric views and structures that maintain or widen the gap between the West and the rest of the world. (2)

Notably, Craps and Beulness position trauma theory in postcolonial and ethnic studies. Their literary critical contribution aims at spotlighting colonial traumas to examine problems such as "dispossession, forced migration, diaspora, slavery, segregation, racism, political violence, and genocide" (3). They also call to relocate every trauma narrative in its specific geographical, historical, and sociopolitical national stances. In so doing, the focus is put on the collective rather than on the

individual in order to approach the suffering of the non-Western post-war societies (4).

As the above survey shows, while the concept of the antihero has been thoroughly explored in the numerous Western literary works, a scant theoretical attention has been paid to the critical concept of the antihero in the field of Anglophone Arab war fiction. In this respect, this article will position traumatic experiences of war in the Arab world through delineating the concept of the antihero in the Anglophone Arab war literature. In "Bringing Lebanon's Civil War Home to Anglophone literature: Alameddine's Appropriation of Shakespeare's Tragedies" (2016), Yousef Awad notes that diasporic Arab novelists such as Rabih Rabih Alameddine in his novels *I, The Divine* (2000) and *An Unnecessary woman* (2013) strategically put to light the devastation that Lebanon's civil war caused to universalize and to demonstrate how Arab writers in diaspora writing in English for an international readership represent the traumatic experiences of Arab characters. Awad (2012) further attests that Arab Writers in diaspora "straddle two cultures" and skilfully use English to relay the experiences of Arab characters in the Arab world and in diaspora (12). Therefore, having defined the critical concept of the antihero along with the theoretical framework of the present study, it is worth noting that this research bridges the gap between postmodern diasporic war literature and the concept of the antihero in the context of war in the field of contemporary Anglophone Arab fiction.

In the light of the civil war in Lebanon, this study endeavors to highlight the explicit connection between the failure of the antihero and war. In *Beirut Hellfire Society*, Pavlov experiences traumatic events related to the civil war in Beirut that provoke his transformation into an antihero. Caruth (1995) wrote of trauma as a wound that carries "a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviors stemming from the event" (4). Pavlov's eventual metamorphosis into an existential antihero is revealed through his schizophrenic temper, particularly highlighted when he converses with the headless body of his decapitated dog. According to Gurung (2010) "the antiheroes' inability to mediate between the external society and the internal world and between the outer and the inner real self leads to the splitting of their personalities (15)". In Pavlov's case his failure to externalize his internal trauma culminates into deep loneliness, self-alienation, pathos, schizophrenia, self-degradation, loss of faith in humanity, and tendencies of grotesque hedonism.

Discussion

Hage's *Beirut Hellfire Society* is a war narrative in which the plotline traces the evolution and metamorphosis of the novel's existential antihero in relation to traumatic war experiences. The novel chronicles the quotidian experiences of war-torn Lebanese society during the civil war. Pavlov stands at the center of these events. He is an undertaker, a profession he inherited from his father. The antihero in this novel is set as an observer of death and the wrecking war in Lebanon. The reason Pavlov posits a focal position in this war narrative is to explain the existential crisis of the Arab postmodern man to reconcile with the outer world that is succumbed with loss of faith, despair, inhumanity, nihilism, wars, and restlessness. Gurung (2010) argues that "the traditional rites of initiation and quest and the existential ordeal culminate either in the isolation of the hero or in his defeat" (21). In view of this, the protagonist embraces alienation and positions himself as an outsider.

The civil war in Lebanon was initiated essentially because of sectarian issues and religious differences. It is prominent to note that the distinctiveness of the Lebanese society lies in its religious variety, for it encompasses a collection of eighteen officially recognized religious and sectarian groups. With this complex and divided society, Lebanon becomes a sectarian state par excellence. However, Murat Tinas (2017) notes that "the existence of different, if not contradictory, ideas of 'what Lebanon is' and 'what Lebanon should be' [led] these sectarian groups to search different and sometimes contradictory outcomes regarding both foreign and domestic affairs of Lebanon" (90). In consequence, between 1975 and 1990, Lebanon experienced one of the longest and bloodiest civil war. In fact, Florence Gaub (2015) argues that "the civil war erupted in 1975 because the Phalangists, a Christian militia, clashed with Palestinian factions over the latter's armed struggle against Israel from Lebanese territory. But the conflict changed rapidly into a fight over the Lebanese state and its political system" (1). The massacres of civil war that has lasted fifteen years, took the life of around 90.000 people, close to 20.000 people who have been kidnapped or disappeared, nearly 100.000 were injured, and close to a million of the Lebanese population experienced displacement (Sune 1). The war then continued because it had evolved beyond its alleged initial causes.

Moral and Religious Regression

In this novel, religious and moral breakdown in relation to the civil war in Lebanon is well highlighted. In fact, the novel can be seen as a dark satire of the Lebanese

civil war. First, because it highlights the absurdity of war; it refers to societal, moral, and religious decadency related to war. In addition, it also gives the reader insights into the psychological impacts of war on the contemporary Arab man. The title of the novel is in itself edifying as it refers to an elusive community that burns corpses into ashes in which Pavlov's father is one of the associates. The hellfire society is a group of members who hold defiance against the petty rulers that fuel conflicts in their Lebanese community. They are described as "hedonists, heathens, idolaters, infidels, *Kouffar*" (Hage 43) who live by *libertine* principles. The story takes place in Lebanon, Beirut, during the ravages of the civil war where "the undertakers, the father and the son named Pavlov, operat[e] during war times after the ceasefire [to] collect stray corpses" (Hage 3). They load the remains of the corpses that are "trapped, lost, ignored, [and] dejected" (Hage 5) in plastic bags. They maneuver in a house called the "society's mansion" (Ibid) in the mountains of Lebanon, a secluded area in the high summit.

The position that Pavlov holds in the society exposes a number of stories that display physical and mental chaos that war has caused in Lebanon. Being a member of the Hellfire Society, Pavlov's role is to find astray corpses to burn them. Each visitor sent by the society to Pavlov recounts a story in which regression of values and morals is the reason behind the visit. The stories of El-Marquis's *libertine* explorations, Jean Jacob's story about his homosexual son who has been shot and thrown with his lover into a dumpster, Salwa's intercourse in the cemetery and many other stories that all portray the regression of the Lebanese society during armed conflicts. During the war, El-Marquis affirms "morality looks banal in the presence of such a grand and total loss" (Hage 7). Indeed, Hage revisits the past to lament the bloody events in a city encumbered by religious quarrels where death has become the only way to freedom. Hence, the evocation of the past and its losses permits Hage through his war narratives as Najat Rahman (2009) puts it in her article entitled "Apocalyptic Narrative Recalls and the Human: Rawi Hage's *De Niro's Game*" to "form a new language for Arabic literature at a time when mass relocations, immigrations and emigration around the world are redefining national boundaries and national identity" (7).

In regards of the inter-religious conflicts, Pavlov's religious skepticism reveals a critical examination to religious tensions and issues that fueled the Lebanese civil war. In an interview with *Arts & Opinion*, Hage talks about the "tribal loyalties" that hindered religious coexistence in Lebanon and argues that his secularism "no longer relate[s] positively or negatively to people or groupings of people based on their religion or ethnicity" (2). He adds: "I much prefer to be in community with

people with whom I share common values and morals or ideology" (Ibid). In the novel, Hage's critical stance to the religious tensions is evident through Pavlov's preference to burning corpses into ashes rather than burying them. For him, the practice of burning corpses rather than burying them transcends the different religious rituals, and facilitates the transcendence of souls regardless of their beliefs.

In addition, Hage also criticizes external interventions that supposedly was meant to cease the bloody war in Lebanon. In Hage's attempt to lament international and regional interests to end the civil war, he refers to the French antique dealer who comes to Pavlov to buy antique acquisitions they collect. He says:

> The richness and historical layers of this city are its wealth and downfall. Let me help you liberate your people! Get rid of it all, all these artifacts that contribute to and justify tribal and religious affiliations . . . Bombs shall cease and flowers shall bloom once all these historical artifacts are sold and shipped to France . . . History is a curse. (Hage 52)

This passage clearly indicates that the culmination of the sectarian issue into a bloody war in Lebanon has soon developed to be a regional affair, which later led to international interventions to control the bloody hostility in Lebanon. Lebanon, thus, becomes trapped amidst regional and international interests at the cost of thousands of people's lives being taken away or destroyed. The hostility of war becoming both international and regional affected the Lebanese population dreadfully. In the novel, Pavlov feels infuriated in regards of this situation, yet he remains paralyzed to act against it. In view of this, in the same above-mentioned interview, Hage remarks:

> I began to see the civil war in its absurdity, not of two sides fighting for their rights and beliefs but two sides being manipulated by regional and not so regional powers whose interests had very little to do with anything either Christian or Muslim. Any number of foreign corporations were funding and funneling arms to both parties. (2)

Indeed, the foreign infiltration made the conflict more extensive and irresolvable, which in time further deepened mutual suspicions and enmities based on the differences in sectarian identities. Echoing this, the novel laments the absurdity of war that has put the Lebanese either to death or to internal and external diaspora. Furthermore, the passages prominently highlight the absurdity of war from which Pavlov's trauma emanates shaping his transformation into an antihero.

The Psychological Implications of War

Alternately, the focal of this research is set prominently on the psychological impact of the civil war in Lebanon. The armed conflict in the Lebanese society did not affect the social and religious structure of the Lebanese society solely; it had also a profound impact on individuals psychologically. The psychological impact of the war in Lebanon is thoroughly examined through tracing the evolution of the protagonist into an antihero protagonist. Pavlov, in this novel, is a strange character whose work revolves around corpses in a bizarre way. Pavlov burns the corpses instead of burying them. The protagonist in this novel is described as "the man whose name declared his preference for dogs over humans" (Hage 20). The name of the protagonist is ironically revealing as it shows the protagonist's preference to dogs over humans. It is, in fact, related to the Pavlovian theory and school of Behaviorism.

The Pavlovian theory indicates an experiment conducted on a dog. Andrew P. Johnson (2014) notes that Ivan Pavlov noticed that presenting meat powder to his dog caused it to salivate. During the conditioning, the meat powder was paired with a neutral stimulus. The neutral stimulus was a bell. The bell and the meat were then presented together many times. Each time, these paired stimuli produced the same response which was salivation. The bond between the bell and the meat power became strengthened so that eventually the bell by itself produced the same response, salivation. The salivation then became the conditioned response because the dog had to be conditioned to respond to the bell this way (2). In Pavlov's case, church bells which are associated to death is the stimulus; El-Marquis declares: "your father described how, over the next few weeks, every time the bells rang for a funeral the dog would appear at the door and you would feed the creature. That's when he began to call you Pavlov, isn't it?" (Hage 33) Throughout the novel, death and danger become the stimulus for Pavlov's behavioral change to a dog. He howls like dogs as a reaction to church bells each time they ring for a coming funeral, and grins like a dog when he is approached by danger. Evidently, Pavlov's kinship to dogs manifests his internal trauma to the overwhelming events around him. It also reveals his lack of social interactions, physical detachment, and aloofness.

Trauma and Antiheroism

It is important to note that Pavlov's trauma is the major reason behind his transformation into an existential antihero. Caruth (1995) defines trauma as "the confrontation with an event that, in its unexpectedness or horror, cannot be placed within the

schemes of prior knowledge…and thus continually returns, in its exactness, at a later time" (153). The antihero in this novel is clearly a victim of traumatizing events of the civil war in Lebanon. Pavlov's unstable psyche as an existential antiheroic character is displayed via his inability of affirmative action and indecisiveness. Pavlov's incapability to progress is first exemplified particularly when he chooses to follow up his late father's career of burning corpses to earn money for a living regardless of the ordeal this job brings him. It is evident when the Bohemian addresses Pavlov saying: "I know you, Pavlov. They say you belong to a secret society, but I know you are alone in this world. You enjoy the warmth of cadavers. You are torn between the spectacle and participating in it" (263). The only time Pavlov acts, his reaction comes in violence which condemns him one more time as unheroic; the Bohemian adds: "but you killed Faddoul, so I guess you're no longer just an observer. You are only half-delusional, and I admire you for that" (Ibid). Another instance that demonstrates Pavlov's *échec* is when he stays in Lebanon. His sister says: "you stay here among the dead, then. I am going back to the country, to a place where everything is always alive'. He responds cynically "nothing is alive forever" (27). Hence, instead of playing a part in the scheme of active life, he retreats to philosophy and literature. He is a reader, a laconic; El-Marquis sighs and says "your father said you're a reader, perhaps even a laconic, silent little scholar" (38). Pavlov is, thus, half dead and traumatized.

Alienation

In postmodern literature, deliberate alienation is a trait that characterizes the existential postmodern antihero. In this novel, Pavlov chooses estrangement. After the death of his father, Pavlov follows the bizarre career of his parent as a corpse burner. At the beginning, Pavlov questions the deranged job he has to perform: "it all made Pavlov wonder if his father might be a madman, a deranged heathen" (Hage 6). However, later, his profession defined who he is and what he is. In fact, Pavlov's alienation is connected to his profession which is associated to death. He is dehumanized and estranged. He is swallowed by his vocation and becomes kind of a cold robot-like that is unable to express any emotions or opinions or to keep any relationship. Gurung notes that "in the postmodern context…this alienation and separation becomes the central, inescapable fact of existence" (Hage 20). He is seen as an omen of death by his surroundings. It is noted that "upon seeing Pavlov's car, some of the men crossed themselves and began shouting to their driver. The driver looked in his rear-view mirror and accelerated to get away from the omen of death" (Hage 103). Indeed, since his early childhood, Pavlov had been a spectator to life's

cruelest acts of extinction; yet, his alienation and hysteria have intensified since the war has started in Lebanon.

During the intense period of conflict, Pavlov was the collector of dead corpses that lay astray in the barren streets. Lucidly, Pavlov's job as a corpse burner exposes the traumatic war experiences that influenced and shaped his deranged psyche. Pavlov is described as a loner; he rather enjoys the company of a dog named Rex as he sits "on the sofa and conversed with his dog. They both drank what was left from the bottle in his father's cupboard and Rex tried to howl with difficulty" (Hage 203). This delusional act reveals Pavlov's hysteria stemming from traumatic experiences of war, and mass death under his very own window. For Pavlov, existence is his exile and nothingness become his home; he "had become the custodian of the window of death, the sole observer above the cemetery road" (Hage 14). Accordingly, the intensity of the stories of death, nihilism and destruction that are related to war transforms Pavlov into a half dead, existential, traumatized, and hedonistic character. It also explains his transformation into an existential antihero. From his position as spectator of death, he ponders whether to put direct blame on killers, brutality of life, war or to blame rulers and deities.

Pavlov's retreat can be seen as an escape from the absurdity of the outer world. Gurung argues that in the postmodern age "the contemporary-self recoils from the world having discovered the absurdity of life" (18). In view of this, Pavlov feels being held captive in a world full of bloody agonizing desolation. His solitude succumbs only in the company of his dog Rex and the Lady of the Stairs that he nurses at his house to nurse her after she has lost her entire family in a bombardment at the cemetery. Pavlov's affectionate care for the madwoman he nurses at his house and for his dog Rex reveals his alleged attempt to act heroically. He helps out people who have been hurt in the bombardment day in the road of cemetery and offers to help the mad lady. He brings her water and food. The mad lady and his dog represent a comfort company for him: "the Lady of the Stairs, her silent affection, her gestures, her madness and caresses that had made him feel whole, and Rex the dog's wagging tail each morning made him briefly withdraw from his solitary existence to join the cycle of life-some cycle, any cycle" (Hage 132). They were solitary "at the musicality of the explosions" (Hage 126). Her company brings him consolation regardless of her silence. Soon later, however, the Lady of the Stairs eventually leaves as well. Pavlov's failure here resides in his inaction to persuade her to stay. He felt defeated by her departure: "he felt regret in his heart…her playfulness and laughter had made him happy" (Hage 130). This failure to romanticize highlights another antiheroic characteristic of Pavlov. He

contemplates in agony 'the woman is gone" (ibid). Her existence made him briefly withdraw from his introverted existence. Pavlov's regret stems from his inability to act against himself to keep the loved ones around him. In this regards, Gurung states "the heroes of contemporary fiction not only struggle against the world but also they struggle for and against themselves" (32). Gurung refers to the inner conflicts that contemporary antiheroes undergo in their attempts to overcome their paralysis and inability of action. This struggle causes eventually a personality split that signals the transformation of the hero of contemporary fiction into an antihero. In the novel, soon after, Pavlov's despair intensifies when he finds his dog decapitated in front of his door.

The Antiheroic Metamorphosis

Pavlov's external manifestation to his internal trauma is well demonstrated through his self degradation to a dog. It also exhibits his loss of faith in humanity. It is to be construed as a psychotic breakdown, and it signals his transformation to an existential antihero. Colin Wilson (2001) argues that "the Outsider…is a self-divided man" (58-59). This transformation reveals that Pavlov's traumatization has developed into a personality split that enables him to protect himself from both physical and psychological harm. The major instances in the novel that indicate Pavlov's behavioral metamorphosis into a dog occurs particularly when death or danger are announced. Indeed, in the context of trauma, Van Der Kolk and Van Der Hart (1994) mention that:

> the locus coeruleus of the brain which is the 'alarm bell'…properly goes off only under situations of threat, but which, in traumatized people, is liable to respond to any number of triggering conditions akin to the saliva in Pavlov's dogs…[leading] in the direction of 'emergency' and fight-or-flight responses (173).

In effect, Pavlov's traumatization and his conflicted psyche stem from his perpetuated confrontations with death, loss, and destruction. Pavlov observes his surrounding as a barren place arrant with "heads, thighs, shoes, blood. Death was everywhere" (Hage 71). Furthermore, in another passage, the narrator recounts "all that existed was killing and death, and from that moment on, Pavlov… realized that the ceremonies that passed under his window had no meaning… and that from early childhood he had been a spectator to life's cruelest acts of extinction" (Hage 72). In the novel, the narrator notes that Pavlov "had adopted the way of a dog and made a

point of never showing fear or hesitation in moments of pain or danger" (Hage 85). He also notes: "upon hearing the drumbeat of the brass band played for the youthful dead, Pavlov would salivate and feel the urge to shift his hips and stretch his back before padding out to the balcony" (Hage 57). Additionally, in another instant of a felt danger, and at the thought of the arrival of his brute uncle and cousins to his house, Pavlov "hunched his back like the conditioned animal he was, inclined his ear towards the noise and reached for his rifle" (Hage 168).

Pavlov's mental breakdown has intensified with the escalation of bloody events of war. Upon a bombardment near his house, he notes that "death was everywhere" (Hage 71). He adds:

> All that existed was killing and death, and from that moment on, Pavlov, who had all his life witnessed burials on this road but never mass murder, realized that the ceremonies that passed under his window had no meaning, that randomness was everything, and that from early childhood he had been a spectator to life's cruelest acts of extinction. (Hage 72)

The view of this grand massacre summarizes the absurdity of the world for Pavlov. He depicts the situation as follows:

> His head hurt, and for once he felt himself to be an imposter, who had stumbled upon a grand spectacle and forced his way in, a man who had left his seat in the audience and walked up on stage, interrupting a play, to the jeers of the spectators and the annoyance of the actors. Or was he more like a madman who, manifesto in hand, manages to release a few condemning words at the podium before being pounced upon and muffled by guards, and treated not as a rebel but as a fool. (Hage 75-76)

This passage demonstrates Pavlov's helplessness in front of the cruelest acts of extension in times of war. In line with this, Van Der Kolk and Van Der Hart (1994) note that "It is likely that psychological and physical immobilization indeed is… fundamental to the development of hypermnesia and dissociation" (175). Pavlov's immobilization exhibits both his failure as an antihero to rebel against the bloody massacres, and it also explains his transformation to a dog.

The depiction of the absurdity of war and the helplessness of Pavlov in front of its grand massacres is an act of lament against the act of killing for the sake of killing: "in this time of lawlessness, in this age of carelessness and hate, in this civil

war that opened windows of opportunity for the most impoverished, that elevated the deprived, the deranged, the meek with a yearning for vengeance and scores to settle" (Hage 80). He also mentions "villagers mistaken for birds and killed by urban hunters; and other inexplicable murders of passion, greed, machismo, idiocy, sexual bravado, domestic violence…in addition to heart attacks and old age and death multiplied a thousand-fold" (Hage 81). He criticizes how death and mediocrity have become normalized in times of war. Indeed, Pavlov's self regression to a dog is justified due to the unscrupulous cruelty of war that has caused him both physical and psychological harm. Thus, the association to dogs, and his transformation into an existential antihero can be analyzed as Pavlov's only means to freedom and to surviving war's trauma.

Psychic Transformation

Pavlov's psychic transformation is predominantly exhibited through instances of hallucinations, flashbacks, and haunting dreams. The traumatic memory of Pavlov seems to go back to his childhood; nonetheless, his trauma has intensified under the current conditions of war. Van Der Kolk and Van Der Hart state that "traumatic memory is evoked under particular conditions. It occurs automatically in situations which are reminiscent of the original traumatic situation" (163). Socially, the only liable relationship Pavlov has and he is capable to maintain is to his dog Rex. Clearly, the death of Rex has heightened Pavlov's hallucinations. He lost what represents to him a faithful company that people of his surrounding seem to be short of. After finding the decapitated corpse of Rex, Pavlov starts imagining "Rex the dog looking his way…he thought he saw Rex at his door. As he opened his door, he saw the shadow of a dog rushing up the stairs to settle on the balcony. So Pavlov joined Rex there" (Hage 154). He converses to the ghost of his dog. Later, the major purpose of Pavlov has become finding the head of his faithful dog to pay attribute to his soul. In so doing, the reader is exposed to the antihero's deranged psyche. He addresses the ghost dog saying "there they are, the hyena and Son of Mechanic. [courting] in the domain of the dead, oblivious to all those who have passed, all those who existed" (Hage 155). He also seems to be haunted by traumatic flashbacks and nightmares of death.

Van Der Kolk and Van Der Hart note that "one of the hallmarks of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is the intrusive reexperiencing of elements of the trauma in nightmares, flashbacks, or somatic reactions" (173). His thoughts are haunted by scenes of bloody torments, dead corpses, but mainly about "the night's bombing and the new day's inevitable spectacle-the repeated parades of wailing beneath his

window" (Hage 177). Furthermore, he dreadfully thinks about how "the road would flow …with accumulated tears and surfing wooden boxes" (ibid). He thought of the mad's lady dead brother; he also thought of how he enjoyed her silent company, "remembering her last glance towards the window made him want to weep" (Hage 177). As for the nightmares, Pavlov dreams of:

> Bells and he dreamed of the creature of death roaming the streets, reaching inside doors and windows, swinging his long cane. And he dreamed of any army of workers in assembly lines building wooden coffins and gravestones… and he saw headless dogs in heat fucking each other in long chains, and flashes of the decapitated priest trotting around…and he heard his mother's screams, and saw his father dancing with makeup brushes and bowties in his hands. (Hage 176-177)

He blames his agonies on "the location of his house, and the repetitive migrations of death beneath his window [that] had through the years engraved in him a love of tragic beauty" (Hage 16). Eventually, when Pavlov succeeds in collecting the whole parts of Rex's body, he heads to the hill house where he brings out the headless body of his dog "then he sat on the sofa and conversed with his dog. They both drank what was left from the bottle in his father's cupboard and Rex to howl with difficulty" (Hage 203). He then repositions the head on the body to put the whole composition of the corpse of his companion in the furnace. To Pavlov this departure left him in tears. In fact, in order to survive all these traumas, Pavlov becomes identified as a master of survival which is another trait of the postmodern antihero. Having his house situated at the center of death and destruction for living next to the cemetery, being exposed to traumatic events, and working as a corpse burner, Pavlov has become a master of survival. This type of an antihero can fall many times but still manage to continue the survival struggle. The major passages that reveal this trait is when Pavlov is exposed to violence or humiliation.

Hedonism

Hedonism is also another antiheroic feature that Pavlov is characterized with, particularly in relation to the theme of love and its metamorphosed definition in times of war. War in Lebanon has established a new definition of love. Loving and genuine intimacy have become seen as heroic acts in the midst of the cruelest acts of extinction. In the novel, characters and Pavlov himself seem to have lost the genuine meaning of love and humanitarian sympathy because of the brutality of

war. The inability of Pavlov to feel affection and love towards his surrounding and in particular towards the opposite sex is peculiarly justified in times of war which also provides explanation of his hedonistic nature and tendencies. When Pavlov observes his cousin and her lover, he describes their absurd act of penetration inside the cemetery as ironically a "heroic act… that transcends all the tears, music, pain and agony, which for years has paraded past our window… an act of future reproduction above past decay… the proximity of the cycle of birth and death have never been as united as they are in this moment" (Hage 155-156).

Another quotation that proves the distorted meaning of love during war is when El-Marquis says:

> The thrill of fucking in close proximity to bullets and bombs was, in my opinion, the most appropriate political act one can engage in. But our daring escalated…watching the bombs fall…war was always one step ahead us with its transgressions, profanity and cruelties… war always degraded [our bodies] more, and won…war far superior to and more courageous than anything we could achieve in our fucking encounters. (Hage 39)

These quotations demonstrate the damaged new perception of love and intimate connections which reflect the absurdity of the newly bizarre established humanitarian bonds in times of war. In Pavlov's case, it is important to note that his hedonistic tendencies, in fact, reflect his antiheroic nature. At the sight of death burials under his widow, Pavlov feels "a perverse privilege in watching the mourning daughters, sisters and mothers pass underneath his window" (Hage 16). The hedonistic tendency of Pavlov is also exemplified when in exchange of Pavlov's antiques, he asks the dealer to send his wife saying, "I want your wife, Marie, to come over with the payment, a pack of my favorite cigarettes and a tray of coffee in her hand" (Hage 52). Upon her arrival, Pavlov asks her "to howl like a dog if she and her husband wished to seal the deal" (Hage 54).

In another instance, Pavlov chooses to go to a prostitute instead of engaging in heroic acts or humanitarian *bénevolat* in times of war. He, thus, instead, goes to Nadja seeking hedonistic pleasure. He notes "sexual transgression became our way of dealing with the boredom that is widespread in our traditional society, with its omnipresent war, its meek religiosity" (Hage 38). Furthermore, he rejoices at the act of watching a dead corpse while "he and Nadja stood above the dead man and spontaneously held hands" (Hage 30). On the second time he went to Nadja's house, he had a sexual relationship stripped of any emotions. Amidst the act, she holds him

captive, which to Pavlov felt unpleasant. She then said "it was just a game. You take captivity too seriously. If anything, surrender will liberate you from the burden of yourself" (Hage 115). In fact, this passage reflects clearly Pavlov's repression. He feels captive not only in his existence, but also in the most liberating of acts. The only time Pavlov feels genuine affection is when he is in company of his dog Rex and the mad lady. The narrator notes "all that had bound him was affection for a lost madwoman and the company of a dog- and both were gone" (Hage 205). He was turned on in the company of the Lady of the Stairs "resurrection, Pavlov repeated, as he lay on his back panting, smiling with another erection under the weight of the cover" (Hage 127). These passages not only highlight Pavlov's sexual transgression, but most importantly his detachment which proves again his antiheroic nature.

Daunting Recovery

It is important to highlight Pavlov's wish for peace and recovery. It is revealed particularly when he wishes to escape from the horrors of Beirut. Pavlov compared the vast view of the mountains with the one from his balcony in Beirut. He thought: "My window view is morbid and limited. Maybe it was time to contemplate an escape from inherited sadness" (Hage 204). The end of the book illustrates that the freedom of Pavlov is granted only through his death where his body is consumed by the flames of the lit house along with the body of his dog Rex and his father's. Years later, Ingrid Rima's daughter came to revive the flames of fire. The closure of the novel might imply that religious tensions in Lebanon are not yet settled.

Conclusion

This research is an attempt to prove that the protagonist in Hage's *Beirut Hellfire Society* can be considered as the prototypical existential Arab antihero. He is a victim of the Lebanese war-torn society. The novel spots light on the absurdity of war. It refers to societal, moral, and religious decadency related to war. It also gives the reader insights on the psychological impacts of war on the contemporary Arab who falls into the pits of the breakdown of religious, social and moral values. Under the conditions of war, the antihero in this novel is transformed into an existential, hedonist, self-alienated character who is a highly adaptable master of survival. These traits make of him the prototypical contemporary Arab antihero. It is worth to highlight that this antiheroic protagonist represents just a small fragment of the complex and heterogeneous nature of the concept of antiheroism that includes a great variety of literary characters. It also confirms its predominating position in the Anglophone Arab fiction of the twenty-first century.

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Nationalism, Transnationalism and Sense of Belonging: *Burnt Shadows* as a Post 9/11 Cosmopolitan Critique of Terror

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Abstract Post 9/11 literature turns out to be a signifier for terror oriented discourses. Kamila Shamsie's novel *Burnt Shadows* (2009) critiques the US discourses on war on terror by highlighting the terror disseminated by a globalized world order and traces its germination in the past by historicizing aggressive nationalism of the superpowers. The terror is manifested through the state exigencies triggering extreme reactions in the name of freedom fighting and guerrilla warfare. This paper interprets Shamsie's vision of history and the linear development of terror from colonization onwards to World War II through post 9/11 war on terror. Shamsie discusses the 'others' point of view who have been the victim of holocaust, colonization of the Subcontinent and Soviet and American interventions in Afghanistan. The study concludes that the exploding globalization in the world nurtures terror networks and only the love for humanity based cosmopolitan vision can turn out to be a savior in post 9/11 transnational times.
Key words 9/11; terror; nationalism; transnationalism; cosmopolitan
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Introduction

September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Centre turned out to be an abrupt check on the utopian vision of a cosmopolitan world. The events signified "re-signification of older forms of European colonialism under the aegis of an 'American

empire'" (Hartnell 336). Thus it resuscitated the debates about the failure of multiculturalism in a global age. The American 9/11 novel was read through "postcolonial gaze" (Hartnell 336) especially by those who were the direct victims of post 9/11 American discourses i.e., Muslims and Pakistanis. As a result 9/11 inspired Pakistani diaspora novelists to take up the question of belonging - which community the diasporic Muslims belong to especially after being signified as terrorists after 9/11. Thus the post 9/11 Muslim writings grappled with the questions like how can one belong in a global transnational world overcoming chaotic experiences while conceding to the culture of the community they live in.

The post 9/11 creative engagement encompasses wide geography of the world to render voice to different global contexts. The Pakistani post 9/11 fiction delineates pendulating and discursive movement of their characters in different zones posing the question whether national and cultural ties can ever be superseded in favour of a cosmopolitan world. Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* (2009) can be interpreted as one of those texts that are 'literary encounters with the USA', borrowing Claudia Perner's term (Perner 238). This paper will debate the changing shape of the "ism" in cosmopolitanism through the lens of the characters' postcolonial and post 9/11 experiences as presented in *Burnt Shadows*.

Cosmopolitanism and Transnationalism

The term Cosmopolitanism can be traced back to the stoic philosophy and then to Kant's cosmopolitan historical view (Perner 238). However, it was in the late 1980s that it appeared in the form of 'ism' based on the socio-political-cultural interactions at a global level. Cosmopolitanism conveys a notion of 'shared responsibility and planetary interdependence' (Perner 239). According to Appiah, cosmopolitanism must take into account the fundamental differences and focus more on dialogue than a consensus. So it becomes a delineator of responsibility for a cosmopolitan - responsibility towards all others beyond blood relations or national citizenship. "The golden rule of cosmopolitanism is: *Homo sum: humani nil a me alienum puto*. 'I am human: nothing human is alien to me'" (Appiah 111). Claudia Perner defines a cosmopolitan as an individual who has the capacity to easily move "between nations and culture" (Perner 238) and geographical divisions or borders and with a flexible approach towards it. Mignolo defines cosmopolitanism as an act towards planetary conviviality (Mignolo 157). Dharwadker considers three factors as the main cause of the popularity of cosmopolitanism till 1995: (a) consolidation of nationalism (b) empowerment of immigrants and (c) globalization of capital and material production (1). Based on his contention, it can be inferred that globalization is part

of cosmopolitanism and acts as a trigger towards the new forms of cosmopolitanism, whereas the latter remains a holistic term.

The increasing connectedness of the world is creating a transnational world with some sense of shared responsibility which can be called cosmopolitan responsibility. Transnationalism is different from cosmopolitanism as it includes the first part of Perner's definition, that of easy mobility between nations and cultures and may not involve any sense of responsibility. Cosmopolitanism cannot be considered synonymous with transnational or transcultural although the term is used most often without outlining any clear difference from the aforementioned terms. The trans in both the terms may indicate movement, negotiation and positionality. Cosmopolitanism can be considered more holistic than transnationalism based on Perner's concept of flexible attitude towards transnationalism and Mignolo's concept of planetary conviviality.

From Postcolonial to Post 9/11 Cosmopolitanism

This paper studies how Shamsie connects postcolonial and post 9/11 world. As nationalism is a key component of postcolonialism, it is pertinent to investigate the role of nationalism in a cosmopolitan world. If a cosmopolitan individual like Hiroko is easy at moving anywhere in the world, what would be his/her stance about national ties or bonding. Does cosmopolitanism transcend national affiliations? Is it in contrast to/opposed to nationalism or does it provide a good balance of the two? If cultural individuality like food and clothes can be sustained anywhere in the world, what about the sustainability of the happenings in one's memory? Featherstone talks about a 'cosmopolitan memory' by contending that even if imagination and identification are abstract processes they are impacted by cosmopolitanism and individual perceptions turn into recollections which are cosmopolitan in scope. In this context, Featherstone considers 9/11 as a part of cosmopolitan memory. It became a part of cosmopolitan memory because of the enormous representation of the event through media (Featherstone 2).

Apparently cosmopolitanism draws a comparison to nationalism if it does not seem opposed to it; however, Brennan criticizes postcolonialism and cultural studies in service of propagandists (2) and recommends a cosmopolitan approach that should encompass national sensitivities (72). Similarly Robbins disregards the commonsensal opposition between cosmopolitanism and nationalism as illogical and emphasizes that cosmopolitanism that seems to be having a look from above must encompass transnational aspects by addressing discrete issues like coercion through exploring "full multivoiced complexity" (12). Vertovec and Cohen in their

introduction to *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism* argue that cosmopolitanism is an outlook and mode of experience that transcends the ostensibly outmoded nation-state model. It mediates between the universal and the particular, the global and the local, is culturally anti-essentialist, and represents a complex repertoire of identities, allegiances and interests (3). If cosmopolitanism encompasses all of the above, how a postcolonial subject attains a cosmopolitan vision will be discussed in this study through Hiroko's transformation.

Amanda Anderson divides cosmoplitanism into exclusionary and inclusionary aspects by considering the former as cosmic or abstract and the latter as more inclusive of intercultural problems with a sympathetic approach to resolve them as it is more egalitarian (Anderson 172). "From the vantage point of critical cosmopolitanism," all Eurocentered approaches "lack both the hermeneutical aim of cultural translation and the critical task of broadening the moral and political horizons of society" (Delanty 14). Delanty questions Eurocentric cosmopolitan tradition by subdividing it into civilizational, and analytical universalism as well as exceptionalism and conceptual Europeanism. She talks about cultural and congnitive univesalism of Asia by suggesting alternative cosmopolitanism through cosmopolitan liberalism. She recommends critical cosmopolitanism as an alternative that makes cultures learn from each other through encounters (11).

A cosmopolitan writer must imagine beyond national microcosms to represent global interconnectedness by moving beyond differences or 'us vs them' debates to shift paradigms and herald the beginning of an era where one must survive in spite of such petty differences (Schoene, 32). Perner on the other hand, considers national novels equally valuable and disregards a set of rules for cosmopolitan novels (251). My paper will contest Jameson's dated claim that all third world texts are national allegories (Jameson 69) as Burnt Shadows reflects a movement away from postcolonial writing back to post 9/11 writing back to the centre. Perner considers a cosmopolitan approach, the one wherein the individual is situated, and shaped through a connection to a global world - an inoutsider observing from a global perspective while retaining belonging (Perner 251).

It is pertinent to discuss the shift in theory in the works written after 9/11 particularly by those authors who have a postcolonial background e.g., Shamsie. Selden, Widdowson, and Brooker consider our era as a post theory era. Since the dominant theories of our era are no more about literary writings, it brings about an end of theory (267) era in literature, due to politicization of theory by issues like race, gender and sex. Their contention is that literature once used to be the centre of theories, which is not the case anymore. However, the very death is a reorientation

and not an apocalypse as new body of works is contributing to cosmopolitan theory for example Berthold Schoene's *The Cosmopolitan Novel* (2009), Katherine Stanton's Cosmopolitan Fictions: Ethics, Politics, and Global Change in the Works of Kazuo Ishiguro, Michael Ondaatje, Jamaica Kincaid, and J. M. Coetzee (2005) and Vinay Dharwadker's Cosmopolitan Geographies: New Locations in Literature and Culture (2001) bring literary cosmopolitanism at its focal point by bridging contemporary globalization and previously established literary theory. Schoene attaches cosmopolitanism to two 9/11s, first of 1989, when with the fall of Berlin Wall, the world felt an echo of togetherness; and the second that of 2001 when the attack on the twin towers jolted that togetherness (7).

Schoene considers post 9/11 cosmopolitanism an 'attitude', 'disposition', and 'strategy for resistance' (Shoene 5). He considers it a movement forward from traditional approach of internationalism towards an attitude of rendering significance to local and communal identities. According to him, the fall of Berlin Wall in 1989 conceived the idea cultivating it into the utopian cosmopolitanism if 1990s. 9/11 initiated the recasting of cosmopolitanism as another turning point by making it move forward from intercommunal conviviality in multicultural ethnically diverse societies to a new form which is more 'realist' by being rooted in contemporary times and challenges (Shoene 9).

Shoene not only considers cosmopolitanism in collusion with neo-imperial strategies of the US but also relates it to contemporary Britain's peculiar status between old Europe and the current US resulting in a new forms of fiction - cosmopolitan fiction with the scope of a creative imagination that keeps world as its setting, less home and specific territory oriented (Schoene 11-12). Thus cosmopolitan novel unlike national novel which upholds or deconstructs nationalist ideals, creates narrative trajectories that transgress geographical, cultural or even religious boundaries by making the world an imagined community instead of one nation and for this purpose using techniques that reflect the world as a "kaleidoscopic cellularity' (Luburić-Cvijanović & Muždeka 434). Shamsie creates this type of fiction, especially in the novel under analysis.

Post 9/11 Cosmopolitanism in Burnt Shadows

The aesthetic creativity allowed in fiction or any other literary genre renders it a scope which is far broader than any ism representation providing room for other forms of identification. *Shadows* represents identification by questioning the concept of nationhood and further delineating its practical repercussions through the development of Hiroko's identity. The novel bridges past, present and future by

proposing the idea of collective belonging. This collective belonging is considered post 9/11 cosmopolitanism in this study delineated by the novelist through the experience of the protagonist, Hiroko Tanaka.

Shadows encompasses the development of Pakistan as a nation-state since partition to post 9/11 era including significant markers like Zia era and Afghan war from an objective point of view. All this is presented through Hiroko's (a Japanese) life spanning over all these transition markers after she survived in WWII. However, through Hiroko, Shamsie simultaneously questions the notions of terrorism associated with nationhood and upholds human identity without belonging to a nation or believing in the concept of aggressive nationalism and wars. She differentiates a postcolonial existence from a post 9/11 one by segregating migrancies into privileged and non-privileged ones. Privileged and unprivileged migrations have always and particularly after 9/11 determined human choices and status.

Impact of Migrancies on Identity

Cara Cilano divides the migrancies in *Shadows* into two groups: privileged and unprivileged. Based on the status of migrancies, she traces the national affiliations of the characters in the novel (222). Using Cilano's division, this study relates the identity development of the characters with the nature of their migrancies. The scale of these migrancies ranges between positivity to acceptance to disregard and oppression. A privileged migrancy may be a luxury while an unprivileged one a desperate need. Shamsie explores how nationalism can turn into violent acts of brutal mass killing and migrancies can inform one with a cosmopolitan vision by rejecting this sort of nationalism. The major characters of the novel experience this at multivariate levels.

Konrad Weiss is a German who moves to Japan by choice to meet Hiroko who is his erstwhile teacher and now a beloved. His eight years stay at Japan turns his privileged migrancy into an unprivileged one due to the postwar challenges non-Allied countries faced in the Second World War. Before WWII even Japan had a cosmopolitan approach due to its openness towards Europe as is evident from Konrad's migration, accommodation and acceptance by the country. Similarly Konrad's half-sister Ilse has a cosmopolitan approach because she chooses to marry an Englishman named James Burton and moves to New Delhi with him since he is appointed there by the British government. What prompts Hiroko's migrancy is the atomic explosion and the death of Konrad, her father and her back seared by the bird shaped design of her kimono.

Cilano further interprets an important aspect of privileged migrancies, that is, the degree of divergence (223). The higher level of divergent attitude and independence of choice makes a migrancy more privileged. For example, the Britishers had a choice to move to and back from India and enjoy privileges during their stay. On the contrary, Hiroko moves out of desperation due to her traumatic experiences. On the other hand, Ilse who marries James makes a conscious choice of assimilation and Anglicizes herself. This helps her enjoy a privileged status of being the wife of an English Barrister in the colonized India. Her choice of such privileges makes her break away from her national belonging easily. James, being at the pinnacle of self-complacency, is a true representative of British colonialism. Ilse chooses to stay at home as a housewife and accompany James in his social circle. However, this compromise impacts her personality in an adverse manner making the same migrancy turn into an unprivileged one.

Less privileged migrancies in the novel bring characters closer to their national identity. For example, Sajjad who visits Turkey, after his marriage to Hiroko, to avoid Hindu-Muslim riots in a separating India, is denied entry to India being a Muslim with an assumption that he must have chosen to move out of India by choice. This makes him choose a national affiliation and resultantly he settles in Karachi, Pakistan. Sajjad too was attached to Delhi but the violence that takes place after partition results in his mother's death and makes him choose a Muhajir status in Karachi. By throwing light on Muhajir debate in post-partition Pakistan, Shamsie also highlights the divisions within a nation which may result in privileged or unprivileged migrancies. The first world countries enjoyed privileged migrancies both in post/colonial times and the third world unprivileged ones.

Sajjad's Identity Development

Sajjad's realization of master-slave relations between James Burton and himself develops identity consciousness in him. When he arranges Burtons & Hiroko to visit Qutb Minar and introduces its history to them, he is perplexed at the thought of explaining his history in a slave status to his colonizer masters. Like Changez in *The Reluctant Fundamentalism*, he gradually develops an ownership of his history. He bitterly realizes how his history was colonizers' 'picnic ground' (Shamsie 81). As the English never considered India as home, when they were leaving India, they were going home, Sajjad brainstormed (Shamsie 82). James Burton is never ready to acknowledge that any Indian should write in English as no English has ever tried to write in Urdu. Sajjad is baffled on his slave status, in getting denied entry back in India and this helps him achieve his Pakistani identity as a Muslim. Religion does

play a great role, however, it is not the case with Hiroko as her identity is constantly reshaped and she is not even influenced by her nationality. Shamsie as a post 9/11 writer portrays Pakistanis' background of Independence from the British colonizers but expands her vision to the world events of the past as well as the present. She creates a nexus between history-terror-nationalism. She makes various nationalities across borders interact as well as confront each other and translate cultures as per their understanding. This is her creative world formation that makes the novel achieve a cosmopolitan vision in a post 9/11 world.

Henry Burton's Identity Development

Henry Burton also known as Harry Burton, son of James and Ilse Burton, is flexible in his approach towards national identity as his childhood is spent in the Subcontinent from where he moves to the US and Afghanistan. In his teens, he had a strong affiliation with the Subcontinent which perturbed his parents who considered the option of sending him to England for schooling to check that influence. Inspite of his adaptability, when he moves to the US, he adapts to an American identity with great ease. However, Karachi still resonates in his mind which forces him to move to Islamabad for his CIA enterprises. Harry has a very positive impression about the US as he considers the US of 1949 as a multicultural society welcoming people from all around the world as well as facilitating them to be a part of her national fabric. Shamsie traces the cosmopolitan American dream from 1940s onwards. Harry assimilates his British identity into American identity. It is obvious by his justification of American racism as multiculturalism and a democratic system that helps multiple citizens of the world connect to each other. Cilano calls it "easy appropriation of American identity" (225) as Harry's affiliation to CIA is a source of excitement and his thrill-seeking self inspires him to become a military contractor after 2001. The privileged migrancies can make transnationalism exciting which may be demeaning for the unprivileged ones. For Harry, America has a cosmopolitan vision which is an indirect contrast to American aggressive nationalism. He comments on their acts in Afghanistan as "we make a desolation and call it peace" (Shamsie 284), as he is a witness to what America has done to Afghanistan before and after 9/11.

Raza's Identity Development

Raza Konrad Ashraf faces identity crisis because his migrancy is an unprivileged one and his sense of belonging a complicated one. Raza is a Pakistani-German-Indian as his name shows, with Japanese blood running inside his body from his

mother's side - a cosmopolitan being - with an ambiguous sense of belonging. He is multilingual and able to translate languages, however, the novel focuses on how Raza and his mother are able to translate cultures and to enable readers to translate this transformation. This is what makes the novel a post 9/11 cosmopolitan novel as Shoene has described a cosmopolitan novel as "creative world formation" stance both on part of the author and the reader (32).

Raza's travels in search of a sense of belonging and a stable identity are summed up by Cilano as "existential unsettledness" (226) which, I contend is a down side of transnationalism. This is because any individual needs a sense of belonging whether national, cultural, religious or communal which when let too loose results in waywardness. Too many belongings or identities if not resolved may create identity crisis which is obvious in Raza's case. However, a cosmopolitan ability to translate cultures while retaining one's roots can resolve this lack of stable core. "The more languages you learned…the more you found overlap" (Shamsie 258). Raza's learning of different languages in Dubai made him realize the overlap in languages. A post 9/11 cosmopolitan needs to excavate the sameness in cultures and humans.

In the postcolonial Pakistan of 1980s during the Zia regime, Raza is seen being influenced by the culture around when he asks his mother to wear the same sort of attire as other women in the neighbourhood do. This identity foreclosure represents his sense of belonging to Pakistan (national identity) and choice of dress as cultural identity. His parents are confused on his sense of national identity for Shamsie is often critical of Zia regime and Raza'a affiliation to the dominant norms of the times which are seen both with a sense of pity and as a cause of laughter. Due to his Japanese origin, Raza's misfit appearance in Pakistan triggers his identity crisis, however, the same provides him temporary adjustment in Afghanistan when he is impersonated as Raza Hazara by his fellow Afghans. This makes him more of a wanton boy than a cosmopolitan as moving to Afghanistan is a desperate choice. Over there, he strongly realizes the comforts he had been taking for granted after he witnesses brutal violence.

Hiroko's Cosmopolitan Identity

Hiroko is the main character who upholds cosmopolitanism as her vision rises above aggressive or parochial nationalism that provokes violent tactics to stay dominated or even safe. Condemned to move from place to place, she faces foreignness repetitively. According to Cilano, the only belonging she has is "foreignness" (227). She is least bothered to be considered a foreigner for a life time in Pakistan wherein

she has a home to live in. The sense of belonging to a nation is contradictory and therefore, insubstantial for her and the same thought makes her a mouthpiece of Shamsie. Even after Nagasaki bombing she moves to Tokyo to work as a translator for the Americans because she still did not blame anyone for the bombing. However, when she listens to an American saying that the bomb saved America, she quits the job for the first time realizing the nefarious aims attached with a sense of national belonging – that makes individuals fall below humanity. Shamsie questions whether in such a scenario one can remain human by staying outside national belonging or identity? Hiroko does not consider Nagasaki bombing a trauma only because she lost her father and fiancé or compatriots but because it was a trauma for large scale humanity.

After Sajjad's death, Hiroko moves to Abbotabad but the increasing tension between India and Pakistan precipitates her relocation to the US. She adjusts well in New York as she considered the city plural for foreignness, however, she considers post 9/11 polemics as shrunken national jingoism, limited in approach. This has been a historical phenomenon, Nazis demeaning Jews, Allies demeaning non Allies, USSR demeaning Afghans, US demeaning many in both pre and post 9/11 eras. Shamsie contextualizes her novel to render a universal picture of human sense of belonging and claims of being threatened by terror and the actuality of the spread of terror. An approach for the goodwill of all humans is considered a cosmopolitanism approach in this novel.

According to Gohar Karim Khan, *Shadows* represents the socio-political realities of various territorial settings by drawing continuous parallels between these settings, implying a 'unifying global resonance'. Thus it espouses 'alternative forms of existence and identification' (Khan 54). The characters' personal life is intertwined with transnational politics and nationalism. She considers Hiroko Tanaka a metaphor of transnationalism and shared belonging. However, she studies *Shadows* as a transnational text only. She defines transnationalism as an attitudinal phenomenon based on collaborations that link people beyond national borders which she considers artificial constructs. However, her contention remains limited to postcolonial theory as she presents it as a challenge to culture, geography and history. However, she maintains that *Shadows* questions the limited notions of terrorism and ideological violence resulting out of extremism due to national borders. The novel provides a nuanced and broader perspective in its capacity as a transnational text while interrogating the relationship between terrorism and nation according to her. This is done by linking geographies and histories of various nations and countries.

Ali Usman Saleem considers revisiting postcolonial while focusing on the contemporary political happenings as a paracolonial approach (113). According to him, *Shadows* "deconstructs, decenters and challenges" (Saleem 113) by acting as a counter narrative to the post 9/11 Western polemics. This study contends that Shamsie's linking of the past and the present and interpreting 9/11 terror through the help of WWII is a post 9/11 cosmopolitan approach. It argues that a post 9/11 cosmopolitanism moves beyond sheer critique of colonial experience or political critique of capitalism or celebration of hybridity for better adjustments in the West. It encompasses globalization, transnationalism with all its after effects like wars or clash of civilizations. However, the only response to any neo-imperialisms is through a love-for-humanity response. Post 9/11 cosmopolitan literature can be different from post 9/11 literature as it advocates a cosmopolitan sense of responsibility for all instead of promoting hate stories through presenting one-dimensional suffering. Zink (2010), for example, considers Islamic terrorism as presented in *Shadows* as a by-product of cultural globalization which is a reaction to the US policy of cultural homogenization/globalization in a post 9/11 world through geopolitics (45).

The transnational migrant is in a constant process of simultaneously belonging and unbelonging, acculturating as well as liberating oneself from hierarchical global structures. *Shadows* also throws light on this tension by presenting a pluralized version of nationalism while not out rightly rejecting it. Transnationalism is "inbetweenness" like the space of the diaspora. "Interstitial space" is crucial in the initiation of new strategies of belonging and identity formation. It facilitates collaboration and contestation; agreement and dissent (Boehmer 21). Boehmer refers to it as a site of "potentially productive inbetweenness" between the "first" and the "third" worlds (21). Ellen Berry considers it a resistance to closure and insistence on permanent openness. "Contact zone" is a usefully coined term by Mary Louise Pratt which is a transcultural space making people across cultures meet and interact in asymmetrical ways. Getting familiar with the unfamiliar and attempting to accommodate it facilitates people in the contact zone. This study contends that a post 9/11 contact zone is different from Bhabha's postcolonial third space or interstitial spaces (17) as it replaces colonizer-colonized binary with first world and third world binary. Therefore, Hiroko's inbetweenness subverts conventional notions of nationalism, and is powerful enough to blur the distinctions between foreign and familiar by accommodating to it, understanding its intricacies, appreciating its positivities and ignoring petty biases. She represents a new form of globalization by challenging nation specific normative understanding of nationalism

by presenting an altered territorial bearing that moves away from London, Paris or New York to Tokyo, Kabul, Delhi, Istanbul and Karachi. Equally, she is interested in the nationalist sentiments and practices that connect these otherwise distinct and separate nations, proposing nationalism as a global phenomenon experienced by everyone and in dire need of a cosmopolitan vision based on transnational experiences.

Globalization has further enhanced the shackles of capitalism and created heterogeneous cultural political and social groups. Post 9/11 world replaces capitalism with globalization debates whereby transnationalism is the major manifestation of globalization. Shamsie has experienced transnationalism herself as she lived across borders, languages and cultures. Shamsie being a diaspora is well aware of the predicament of being at home and away. She chooses Karachi, her home city for her first three novels because she is well versed with its subtexts, geography, passions, and varieties of lifestyles. However *Shadows* is set in Japan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. She broadens the horizon of this novel by moving away to a larger canvas. Her personal life decision to move to London was based on broadening the canvas of her experience and by distancing herself from Karachi with which she further strengthened her relationship. It also helped her envision her country from a different perspective, one she could never gain while staying inside. She believes that a writer should not commit to a physical presence at one particular place as moving away from home renders better capacity to reflect about one's country and nation. Thus her ties to her nation remain very strong. Similarly, Hiroko will always remain a Japanese even if she moves anywhere in the world, it is only that she is against any sort of terrorism be it state terrorism or guerrilla warfare. Thus cosmopolitanism does not eradicate one's sense of belonging. Zinck considers *Shadows* as a diaspora text which encompasses diaspora predicaments of movement, nostalgia and relocation and considers contemporary diaspora fiction intensifying the nostalgia to the extent of going back to one's homeland (45). "Contrary to earlier diasporic fiction celebrating resilience, resourcefulness, acculturation or hybridity … more recent diasporic works focus on the failure of relocation and the need to return to one's homeland" (Zink 54). The post 9/11 Pakistani fiction asserts the need of going back to one's homeland or redefining identities and loyalties in contrast to assimilation or acculturation as propagated by most of postcolonial fiction. So post 9/11 cosmopolitanism celebrates national, transnational and glocal belongings simultaneously while emphasizing global citizens' responsibility towards each other.

Shamsie's remarkable contribution is how she addresses current debates on global terror especially with reference to Pakistan that was being tagged as

a terrorist country and the Muslims who were labelled as terrorists. Therefore, two identifications exist, Pakistani and a Muslim. This is also sketched in her short story "Our Dead Your Dead" (2011), when the narrator Ayla breaks down the pattern of terrorism as she sees it: "America had 9/11; England had 7/7; India had 26/11; Pakistan has 24/7". A pertinent example is Shamsie's article in *The Guardian* published on 23 March 2012, titled "Kamila Shamsie on Pakistan, America and the Pitfalls of Plotting" in which she swivels the historical moments between America and Pakistan that have become common markers of terrorism. She alters the commencement of this relationship from the 1980s to 1958 when America provided Pakistan with one hundred F-86 planes in exchange for the use of Peshawar as a listening post. Shamsie explores the masquerade of terrorism either in the name of war or war on terror or fanaticism. She traces it back to the Second World War and the bombing on Japan not as a justification but as an act of terror. She stretches it to the post 9/11 American intervention in Afghanistan and considers Guantanmo Bay as an act of terror as well. Therefore, she decodes the American stance on 9/11, Muslims and Pakistan to present a cosmopolitan point of view. While digging out terrorism through international history and linking it to the present era, she also explores the sense of belonging and not belonging in Hiroko. So horizontically, the novel is spread over geographical division and vertically over historical development and contexts. The post 9/11 cosmopolitanism creates a nexus of time and space to uphold a human sense of responsibility towards each other beyond time, demarcations and ideologies. Shamsie represents historical examples of terrorism which were misrepresented for political motives by the hegemonic powers like the US and Europe, asserting their reemergence in the form of 9/11. She considers current terrorism as a demon of the past haunting nations again. To counter 9/11 media representation Shamsie focuses more on Nagasaki destruction to reflect the ubiquity of violence in history exposing bias in post 9/11 representations of political terrorism. When Hiroko comes across a poster "MISSING SINCE 9/11. IF YOU HAVE ANY INFORMATION ABOUT LUIS RIVERA PLEASE CALL…", Hiroko recalls Nagasaki train station walls "plastered with signs asking for news of missing people" and concluses: " In moments such as these it seemed entirely wrong to feel oneself living in a different history…" (Shamsie 274). Thus the text's trajectory becomes broader than postcolonial to become post 9/11 through a deconstruction of history and projecting each terrorist activity as a rupture in cosmopolitan vision.

Guantanamo Bay Criticized

One such rupture takes place when Raza Konrad Ashraf is imprisoned in Guantanamo Bay and, wondering about his bleak future, he asks himself how he achieved that status? The answer is that Raza's identity crisis is not a result of a series of personal events but that of the large scale political interventions. In fact he encounters his fate due to his multicultural ventures starting from Abdullah and ending with Kim. The large scale and endless enmeshing of an individual in post 9/11 politics propound that terrorism is not a regional and temporal and phenomenon, it is a global and a spatial one. Shamsie sketches it by making her readers move from Guntanamo Bay's darkness to the bright sky on the morning of August 9, 1945 which is about to be darkened forever. She compares the destruction of Japan's beauty to that of Iraq or Afghanistan. Time in her novel moves from present to past and vice versa. The enormity of terrorist events is presented through the lens of individuals eyes like Hiroko presenting Nagasaki bombing and its impact on humans. It stifles her love, her life, her country. She being in love finds the day sunny and bright when all of a sudden "the world goes white" (Shamsie 23) with the atomic explosion.

Shamsie indirectly draws a comparison between the enormity of destruction that resulted due to American atomic bombing on Japan and the few deaths in the attacks on the twin towers. If the US has 9/11, this was Japan's 9/8. Shamsie's imagery of the devastation in Nagasaki draws a parallel to ghastly scenarios witnessed after the terrorist bombing of the World Trade Centre: "Only melted rosaries remained," Hiroko describes, "of the people inside the Cathedral" (Shamsie 76); "[t]he next morning I went to the Valley; it was what the priest at the Urakami had spoken of when he taught me from the Bible—the Valley of Death. But there was no sign of any God there, no scent of mangoes...days—no, weeks—after the bomb and everything still smelt of burning" (Shamsie 77).

The Hibakushas, the survivors of the atomic explosion, had to face far reaching effects of the bomb till coming generations. Hiroko has to abort her first child due to a fear of mutation which may be caused by radiation. Even Raza's beloved expresses the same possibility and refuses to marry him. "Nagasaki. The bomb. No one will give their daughter to you in marriage unless they're desperate, Raza. You could be deformed. … I've seen the pictures. Of babies born in Nagasaki after the bomb" (Shamsie 189).

Shamsie also compares the bloodshed as a result of war on terror in Afghanistan and after Indo-Pak partition. The myth of justified "state terror" is

hence exploded to reveal its politically and economically motivated reality and is shown to be as, if not more, destructive than individual/group acts of terroristic violence. Abdullah recalls when he meets Hiroko in New York: "[f]irst they cut down the trees. Then they put landmines everywhere. Now ... cluster bombs" (Shamsie 311). The defacement of Afghanistan is a direct parallel to the destruction of the beauty of Japan decades ago. Abdullah still wants to live in that Afghanistan which has now been played havoc with by the Americans. This reminds Hiroko of the Japan before World War II.

Depiction of Afghans

Shamsie renders a human touch to Afghans as well. For example, Abdullah's hatred of the Soviets and his passion to drive the last Soviet out of Afghanistan and the picture of a dead soviet behind the truck he drives is a source of pride for him. Hiroko's impression of Abdullah changes when she meets him and she find him "a man who understood lost homelands and the impossibility of return" (Shamsie 313). So, she can relate her loss with him. Shamsie does not side with this but presents their sentiments neutrally by counterbalancing the hatred through presenting their hospitality, friendship and warmth. Raza's presence in the Pashtun inhabited districts of Karachi, while first resisted by Abdullah is soon after welcomed. After his initial reluctance to accept Raza as a friend, Abdullah embraces him as a "brother" by virtue of their alleged common enemy, the Soviets, and will henceforth willingly lay down his life for his "brother's" safety. This desire to protect Abdullah characterizes Mujahedeen's thoughts and actions more generally, working as they do within closely-knit and interconnected communities. There is sincerity at work here, which refuses to allow the reader to form undiluted reservations about Abdullah. His conversations with Raza, even when highlighting the assumptions about masculinity and violence in the construction of anti-Soviet nationalism, carry a certain lightness. The novel's punctuated visits to the Mujahedeen training camps make the readers imagine what develops a jihadist—the terrorist of dominant global discourse. Raza has a perverse fascination with the training camps. When he escapes them, for some time, he experiences guilt. Shamsie uses heaven and hell imagery to indicate the sincere emotions and firmness of the beliefs of men like Abdullah who commit their lives to the cause of jihad to save their land from becoming a hell, the foreign intervention has made it. Shamsie has undertaken research to convey a sympathetic image of the Mujahedeen both in Pakistan and Afghanistan while not ignoring Taliban's obsession with "fighting infidels and heretics" (Shamsie 320), their banning of sports, music and a healthy lifestyle.

Kim as an American Representative

Kim becomes Hiroko's foil as she fails to see the making of these Mujahedeens. Kim informs police about Abdullah's location because she believes in her training which guides her to eradicate a threat and declines the idea that anti-Muslim attitude is just a prejudice. In this way, she confirms the post 9/11 binaries of centre-periphery. Kim has a strong sense of nationalism and cannot bear the loss of her family. Hiroko on the other hand stands for unprivileged migrancies and can see the negative side of such a sentimental nationalism. She is able to transcend the static national identity as Hiroko tells Kim that such events are just a small part of the bigger picture of the spatial time. It is Kim who makes her realize "how nations can applaud when their governments drop a second nuclear bomb" (Shamsie 362). Hiroko realizes how the strong oppress the weak, through hegemony, globalization and wars. Media plays its role in establishing inaccurate beliefs like that of Kim's. All identity crises (the ones faced by the victims of 9/11 and the ones faced by Afghans in war on terror) result in pain but it is our choice to alleviate them either through positive vision or aggression.

Shadows as a post 9/11 text decodes terror with the help of media and popular discourses after 9/11 by sketching parallel forms of terrorism in the form of state terrorism of the US on Japan, communal terrorism during Indo-Pak partition, neo-imperial terror of the USSR and the US in Afghanistan and post 9/11 terror in Guantanamo Bay. Globalization itself produces terror and enmeshes the third world countries through the American dream and creating aggressive nationalism. Hiroko through her journey faces an identity crisis by finally opting for a cosmopolitan identity, upholding ethical behavior and global responsibility towards each other, while undermining any service to political interests in the name of state or nation or general goodwill. Last but not the least Hiroko and Raza's ability to translate languages symbolically makes the novel a *trans(l/n)ational* (transnational and translational) fiction. Hiroko successfully translates cultures and successfully achieves cosmopolitan identity whereas Raza becomes a victim of shattered identity crisis. Translation of cultures is a solace wherein transnsnationalism makes identity unstable, helps one rephrase national space, cultural rituals and domestic habitus. It re-forms identity that may bring global ethics to the fore and push global terror to the background.

Conclusion

Shadows writes back to the centre from the Indo-Pak Subcontinent soil, with a

history of colonization, rewriting the havocs that colonization played with the land now called India and Pakistan. The post 9/11 world with the clash of civilization moves beyond post partition/ post colonial era. The post 9/11 world has its tools for discourses and counter discourses i.e., media and state exigencies. The political agenda shapes terrorism for nefarious aims, ignoring human rights as in WWII and post 9/11 intervention in Afghanistan. Through the critique of a transnational ambiguity of belonging and a sense of responsibility, the novel promotes a cosmopolitan vision of shared human responsibility of respecting each-others' rights in an increasingly globalized world. The post 9/11cosmopolitan world must define itself by successful communication through translating cultures, borders, politics and discourses for upholding rights for fellow human beings beyond any ism. My study concludes that Pakistani fiction has moved beyond standardized postcolonial issues after 9/11 and promotes a post 9/11 cosmopolitan vision in an era where there is a need (a) to bridge gaps between global north and south, (b) to be spatial in approach by using discursive strategies like dialogism, deconstruction or critical analysis of discourse both by readers and writers, (c) to uphold humanity beyond political divisions of first or third worlds or clash of civilizations (d) retain national and regional values by translating cultures and sensitivities. The study recommends more research about a shift from postcolonialism to a post 9/11 cosmopolitanism.

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Historical Narratives, Fictional Biographies, and Biblical Allusions in Aleksandar Hemon's *The Lazarus Project* as a New Literary Hybrid

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Abstract The article proposes a new perception of *The Lazarus Project* (2008) by Aleksandar Hemon. Literary transformation of the past events in light of historical experience, their reinterpretation, and adoption appear within the novel in the forms of history representation and memory production. The author's position in the book is actualised through its structure with alternating chapters and realised in two conflicting identities: a historian who just records events, and a creator who builds up the conditioned reality of the characters' world. The analysis of the novel's structure displays the hybridity of narrative strategies in historical, fictional, and biblical dimensions. Including photography in literary hybridisation highlights a means through which the forms of the representation of the author's worldview get separated from existing practices and recombine with new ones. The conjunction of biography, photography, space and time frames in *The Lazarus Project* refers to a specific type of narration that underlines its transnational character. The article also deconstructs the examples of biblical allusions and as direct so indirect references to the Bible that can be a way of transcending historical barriers. Originality in research of Hemon's novel as a representative of migrant literature consists in revealing the influence of transcultural narratives of contemporary postcolonial fiction on the migrant identity. The application of an interdisciplinary approach intends to demonstrate the diversity of narratives in the book as an original piece of postmodern metafiction.

Key words history; narration; (auto)biography; reference; amalgam

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Introduction

Modern fiction at the change of millennia is characterised by particular attention to the world history *archive*, personalities, and historical circumstances; it trends to reinterpret and reconsider the past events (Huehls 138; Hatcher 4). The beginning of the twenty-first century has been marked by a surge of novels testifying, documenting, and narrating the past (Dijk 107). A special role in this revival of memory is played not even by prominent historical figures but ordinary people, written-in history, whose lives have been the groundwork of novels. Literary transformation of the past events through the prism of historical experience, as well as drawing parallels with the author's stories, appear to be the base on which the narratives of contemporary world literature are generated. Fiction plays a vital role in describing history and transmitting culture (Polack 8). As Dijk notes, "two of the major functions of literature are the representation of history and the production of memory" (107).

Sometimes in modern writings, the interplay of real (historical) and fictional events is so subtle that they are even difficult to be distinguished from each other. And appealing to the Bible as an inexhaustible source of ideas and themes for literature, witness to the power of stories (Jones 1) seems to be one of the means of transcending the ordinary. The Bible as a sacred text attracts writers of different cultures and worldviews. This testifies to the relevance of Holy Scripture for the interpretation of today's events.

Of great interest is tracing biblical allusions in a literary text, since the illumination of ways of their transformation, perception, and adoption by author's imagination can be one of the means of reconstructing the sacred history of the universe. However, the inclusion of spiritual themes in the pieces of modern literature is not always focused on the traditional glorification of the Creator or the unconditional acceptance of biblical events. Sometimes this serves to give a balanced view on religion, art, and human as an integral part of history. Biblical motifs appear to be a ground for introducing to a literary text the author's ideas as to the true causes of human existence. This perspective allows us to revise historical narratives and how

they are transformed in a literary text.

One of the most impressive books in that respect is *The Lazarus Project* which, however, has not yet been the subject of detailed literary discussions, although it ranks high in postmodern literature. The novel was published in 2008 and immediately encouraged the attention of literary critics and readers.

The Lazarus Project was written by Aleksandar Hemon, Bosnian-American fiction writer, essayist, and critic, who was born in Sarajevo in the former Yugoslavia in 1964, of Ukrainian descent on his father's side and Bosnian, of Serb background on his mother's side (Knight 85). He articulates relational forms of (reverse) mirroring between the United States and the former Yugoslavia (Luca 43). The transcultural background of Hemon's origin has influenced the vocabulary of his novel which is rich in the Ukrainian, Bosnian, and Croatian lexical items: *dobra nych, shittychino*, *politsyant*, *Čaršija*, *kafana*, *Isus Krist, Ne volim te više*, etc.

Hemon published *The Lazarus Project* on the 100th anniversary of the death of Lazarus Averbuch, a teenaged Jewish survivor of the Kishinev pogrom of 1903, who was shot in Chicago in 1908 (Canales 93). The novel is greatly based on the life and murder of that immigrant whose biography and even the name resonate with biblical motifs to take on specific forms in the literary dimension.

All the novels by Hemon are attractive to researchers since they can provide exploring the transformations of the genre at present by crossing national as well as aesthetic borders. His approach to fiction has been highly valuable for understanding these borders that have become increasingly fluid and unpredictable in the third millennium (Ward 197).

The double time frame is mirrored by *The Lazarus Project's* structure with alternating chapters (Vervaet 239): those in which a heterodiegetic narrator tells the story of Lazarus Averbuch, and those narrated by a first-person narrator Vladimir Brik who is the protagonist of the modern-day storyline. Hemon represents the events in the following temporal dimensions: 1903—the anti-Semitic Kishinev pogrom, Lazarus's early life; 1908—Lazarus's murder in Chicago and absurd investigation of the crime; 1992—Brik's and Rora's recollections about the Bosnian War and the events in Sarajevo; 2005—Brik and Rora's journey to Eastern Europe in search of materials for Brik's book. The plot of the novel brings together two distinct temporal frames and storylines: the past and the present.

The novel's literary space, affecting the different levels of the author's worldview (temporal, social, cultural, etc.), also seems to be a principal aspect of *The Lazarus Project*. Two cities in Hemon's book dominate the fictional geographies: Sarajevo and Chicago in which the author and his characters lived or

live. The space in such literature underlines its transnational character (Ung 56).

Though a story much akin to that of Hemon himself, the writer vehemently rejects the connection between himself and his narrator in numerous interviews, stresses that he counted on people seeing the differences, and has never thought that any of his books are autobiographical (Tseti par. 5). Hemon underlines: "The 'I' in my book is not me" (Boswell 257). Nevertheless, in our opinion, the writer's biography can be associated with some plotlines in the novel as the author's experience implicitly includes the historical one.

The storyline seems to be built up with the aid of the pictures of a Bosnian photographer Rora whose photos appear throughout the novel: Chicago skyline, a dog, speeding car, corpse propped up to look alive, classroom of schoolgirls, shadows of human bodies on the lonely alley, two boys' faces, etc. Each chapter is separated with these photos; there are twenty-three photographic reproductions instead of traditional chapter titles. As Weiner mentions, "The inclusion of photography within the narrative structure initiates a dual—verbal and visual—storyline and is indicative of a consciousness that embodies multiple perspectives, typical to the migrant" (39). *The Lazarus Project* is an exploration of photography as much as it is a story. The author discloses what distress photography can cause and what light it can bring.

In *The Lazarus Project*, the collaboration with Bosnian-Canadian visual artist Velibor Božović, who features his photographs, illustrates how the Bosnian War is remembered. Aykol calls this form of remembering diplopic. Appropriated from the medical term diplopia (double vision), diplopic remembering is posited as a recurring metaphor for how the past is recollected and reconstructed in the book (180). The historical photographs were borrowed from the Chicago Historical Society, most of them taken by photographers of the Chicago Daily News in 1908. They help readers navigate the text where the past and present, fact and fiction are conflated.

Adams clarifies the affiliation between autobiography and photography, so-called life writing and light writing, stressing autobiography as "a form of narrative characterised by a desire both to reveal and to conceal, an attempt of reconciling a life with a self" (15). He asserts that both biography and photography have a strong relationship to the world and that these forms of narration correspond to the way language works. Hybridisation of text and image emphasises the conjunction of verbal and visual narrative dimensions (Suwara 252).

The Lazarus Project's tensions between biography, autobiography, and photography emerge from what Hemon calls a "conditional Americanness" that

has overtaken the American Dream (Ward 185). In this context, Carpio emphasises that immigrant autobiographies have conventionally stressed redemption through suffering as the narrative analogue to acculturation (345).

A "project" refers to the origin of this word and is understood as a time- and resource-limited process aimed at achieving special objectives. In other words, *The Lazarus Project* is almost scientific research to find out and actualise the events that took place in Lazarus Averbuch's life. This book, however, does not provide answers to eternal questions and does not even encourage us to look for the answers in the Bible but forces us to ask them to ourselves.

The purpose of the study is to illuminate the ways of the hybridisation of historical, fictional, and biblical narratives in Aleksandar Hemon's *The Lazarus Project* as a soul of migrant literature.

Methodology

Research of migrant literature, including *The Lazarus Project*, is complicated by the influence of transcultural narratives of modern postcolonial fiction on the migrant identity. Comprehending different culture codes in the author's worldview, the experience of being a guest under certain circumstances, and what is more, historical memory of his people, which modify artistic adaption of reality, requires accurate approaches to studying this literary phenomenon. In this context, Vervaet draws attention to how the novel stresses "the way in which temporally and geographically divergent (hi)stories of dispossession circulate, converge, and intertwine with each other" (239).

The structure of Hemon's novel allows us to consider it as a postmodern narrative that employs various strategies including an altered view of history, emphasis on the manner in which space affects one's identity, and overall hybridity in both narration and characters (Stojanović 318). *The Lazarus Project* can be considered a kind of metafiction that focuses on the very process of narration, visualisation, and is characterised by references to other sources, including the Bible. This is actualised through the particular structuring of the text by the author and realised in traditional for metafiction conflicting identities: *a historian* who just records events, and *a creator* who builds up the conditioned reality of the characters' world.

The Lazarus Project can be defined as a hybrid of the historical and the subjective, the documentary and the imaginary (Dijk 107). This implies an interdisciplinary approach to studying historical narratives as a form of the presentation of historical reality. Historical narratives, on the one hand, are realistic

because they contain plausible utterances of actual nature; on the other hand, they are subjective since they are a product of the culture and language of a subject who knows in advance the final of historical communication, bringing together all the plotlines in a common focus. Therefore, we will consider historical narratives in the novel not so much as descriptions of the past that claim to be proper, but as specific constructs for defining and understanding historical reality included in the plot of *The Lazarus Project*.

Researchers emphasise the special role of place in migrant literature, the relationship between globalisation, place, and the author. Frank proposes a new reading mode of Hemon's novel that implicates an approach that is less a "reading for the plot" than a "reading for the place" (63). The *place* is understood as an intratextual element referring to local, specific, sensuous, and concrete.

In view of the foregoing considerations, it is expedient to apply the following research methods: historical-cultural, linguistic-stylistic analyses, bibliographical, hermeneutic, and phenomenological approaches.

Lazarus's Biographical Sketches in the Mirror of History

The novel begins with an epigraph from the Gospel according to John through which there is an indirect mention of the name of the novel's central character with reference to the biblical Lazarus: "And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth" (John 11.43). This name is derived from the Hebrew רזעלא (Eleazar) meaning "God is my help" (Barclay 92).

The first lines of the book look like Brik's thoughts about now completed the "Lazarus Project": "The time and place are the only things I am certain of"[1] (Hemon 10). From the first chapter, the reader dives into the past, days of tragical events in the history of the Jewish people, which are mentioned almost a hundred years later in a newspaper article found in the archive by a Bosnian immigrant, a failed writer Vladimir Brik. The author uses flashbacks for different reasons, such as to arouse readers' interest in the events, to hang an intrigue, to explain his main character, and add tension to the story. Brik discovers that the immigrant Lazarus Averbuch was killed by a police officer and buried in a cemetery for the homeless: "the body of Lazarus Averbuch is disposed of in the potter's field at Dunning. […] In the driving rainstorm, not unlike the beginning of a biblical deluge, the body, wrapped in cloth, was rolled into the grave, half-filled with water" (LP 53-54). That same night, his body has disappeared from the grave and the writer tries to find out what happened: the miracle of resurrection, provocation, or the desire of fanatics to play on his name

1 Hemon, Aleksandar. *The Lazarus Project*. Riverhead Books, 2008; hereafter abbreviated as LP.

for the popular effect since *Lazarus* is perceived as a charactonym. The first point is not a particularly pressing issue for him, as Brik is not especially religious, and the trip looks more a journey into his and his friend's pasts than a fact-finding mission.

Brik can be characterised as *a positive agnostic*: a negative agnostic does not know whether any Gods exist and a positive agnostic does not know whether any Gods exist and no one else does either (Pennycook et al. par. 19). Vladimir says to his wife: "God knows God is no friend of mine. But I envy people who believe in that crap. They don't worry about the meaning of life and things, whereas I do" (LP 39).

Readers learn about Lazarus Averbuch chiefly from his sister Olga's and friend Isador's recollections, in which he is a kind of eccentric and naive guy. Olga claims: "He was **a religious man**" (LP 30); "He was **always prone to fantasies** […] he was **a dreamer**. He had **no anger**, **no violence** in him. He would **never hurt anybody**" (LP 32). And Isador emphasises: "He wanted **to write**. He **wanted to meet girls**, **have some fun**. He wanted **to be liked**. He wanted **to be like everybody** else. He wanted **to buy you new shoes**" (LP 83). Hemon uses anaphora "to gain more emphasis to convey strong emotions" (Zhang 121). To describe Lazarus, the author takes simple sentences which have a single independent clause and express a complete thought (Kroeger 52). Olga and Isador avoid calling Lazarus by name, using the personal pronoun *he*, and it is a decisive step in the transition from the authorial to the figural domain. The personal pronoun facilities the transfer of the reader to the consciousness of the character or the reader's empathy with the character's situation to a greater extent than does the mentioning of the name (Stanzel 189). His teacher Mr. Brik describes Lazarus Averbuch as "a faithful and persevering student of a very good character" (LP 32). His boss Mr. Eichgreen remarks that young Averbuch "seemed fond of America" (LP 67). These characteristics create a positive image of Lazarus.

But William P. Miller, journalist for the Tribune, according to Chicago Police Chief George Shippy, characters Lazarus in the following manner: "a **cruel**, **straight mouth** with **thick lips** and **a pair of gray eyes** […] **cold** and **fierce**. There was a look about that **slim**, **swarthy** young man — clearly a Sicilian or a Jew — that could **send a shiver of distrust** into any honest man's heart" (LP 12). Describing Averbuch in negative lexical items indicates the contemptuousness of the police officer towards the killed boy. Shippy chose such a characteristic as defence since it the policeman who caused his death. Mentioning the nationality of the deceased demonstrates xenophobic sentiments which, according to historical records, prevailed in American society in the early twentieth century. Later we can read a con-

cise summary of Lazarus's appearance in the autopsy report:

> Body of a man […], 5 feet 7 inches tall, weighing about 125 pounds, somewhat undernourished. […] The cranium is of peculiar formation. The hair is dark, the skin is of dark complexion. The nose is not of pure Jewish type but has a Semitic cast. From other evidence, however, it is clear that the man was a Jew. No filling in the teeth. Hands well formed, indicating manual labour. In removing the skull cap, the skull was found to be exceptionally thin. […] The thin skull cap, the large mouth, the receding chin, the low forehead, the pronounced cheekbones and the oversized simian ears all indicate a well-marked type of degeneracy. (LP 43)

The description by a coroner corresponds to the photo of shot Lazarus, where the Police Chief postures next to him (LP 29). As a narrator, Hemon uses only a few words to describe Lazarus's appearance: a scrawny young man, soiled shoes, a swarthy face, his pants are still too big for him. From the beginning of the novel, the writer uses a long sentence to describe Averbuch's death and town people's reactions to his death. This beginning creates the severe tone of the story. Besides long and complex sentences, Hemon also uses short simple sentences, particularly in dialogues to make conversation effective and to show the character's personality in the story.

Cross-References *Saint Lazarus — Lazarus Averbuch* in Literary Interpretation

Having a fairly detailed description of Averbuch's appearance and character, there is just a little about his *prototype* known as Saint Lazarus, Lazarus of Bethany or Lazarus of the Four Days who is mentioned in the Gospel according to John in the New Testament: "Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany" (John 11.1). He lived in Bethany, about two miles southeast of Jerusalem, on the Mount of Olives: "Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off" (John 11.18).

One of the crucial biblical topics is the theme of resurrection. The first mention of Lazarus's resurrection from Hemon's book, but in metaphorical interpretation, is found in the text when Brik informs his wife of his creative intentions and gets her reaction: "She found my idea of a Lazarus who struggled to resurrect in America a tad pretentious" (LP 25). The journalist is familiar with Saint Lazarus's life and tells it to Rora, recreating the biblical story with a humorous undertone. Compare: "Well, Lazarus is dead and his sister is friends with **a certain Jesus Christ**, **the**

local prophet and **miracle worker**, so she asks him to do something about it" (LP 38)—"Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee" (John 11.21-22). Although it is not clear exactly what Martha asked Jesus for as she was later very surprised by Lazarus's *resurrection*: "Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days" (John 11.39); "So **Mr. Christ does his gimmick**, goes to the cave where the dead Lazarus is stashed away" (LP 38)—"Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it" (John 11.38); "He calls him forth and Lazarus rises from his death" (LP 38)—"he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth" (John 11.43); "And he that was dead came forth" (John 11.44); "And Mr. Christ becomes even **more famous***"* (LP 38)—"Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him" (John 11.45).

In the novel, evident allusions to the course of biblical events can be found: two days are mentioned in the context of Lazaruses' bodies. Compare: "Your brother's body was missing for almost two days. It seems he was disinterred shortly after the burial" (LP 93)—"When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was" (John 11.6). Hermann Taube points to the parallels in the real and biblical stories when he urges Olga to agree to bury another person under her brother's name: "There are Christians who would believe that their Bible story is about to be repeated; some of them are ready for the arrival of their Messiah in the shape of Mr. Christ. Such people look forward to the Apocalypse" (LP 93). Although Assistant Chief Schuettler's *best men* "found Lazarus's body, some organs were missing" (LP 93), and Jewish customs and common decency would not allow her to bury him incomplete. He is full of contempt and disrespect for the Christian faith through jeering *Mr. Christ* and using pleonasm *Messiah – Christ.*

Taube adds: "And I do not need to tell you what a crowd of excited Christians is capable of doing" (LP 93), but he does not explain human behaviour, the details can be found in the Bible: "Master, the Jews of late **sought to stone thee**" (John 11.8). The woman reacts strangely to the news that her brother's body has been found: "Olga has reached a point beyond disbelief—she suppresses a giggle" (LP 93). The author does not explain the behaviour of Lazarus's sister, he hangs an intrigue: Olga is convinced that the police did not even try to find her brother, or she believes in her brother's resurrection. Indeed, in Olga's memory, he has already "resurrected" twice: 1) after the pogrom—"rivulets of blood spreading away from

Lazarus's nose and eye sockets, across his cheeks and mouth, down to his neck. **He is dead**" (LP 102); 2) in Olga's sick mind, after her brother's real death—"She hears knocking on the door […]. She opens the door and there **he** is […]. **Where were you?** […] **Why do you play hide-and-seek with me?** She is in utter disbelief, and gets: You have no idea **what I've been through**" (LP 46). Hemon does not reveal what has happened, and this episode is perceived as the imagination of a sick woman who is going mad.

There is a kind of story that can be found in the Bible when the inhabitants got to know about Lazarus's death: "**hundreds** have come by to view Lazarus's body that afternoon" (LP 31)—"And **many of the Jews** came to Martha and Mary" (John 11.19). In the Scripture, we find an uncommon use of the term *Jew* with a neutral connotation, since John usually refers it to Jesus's enemies. It is worth noting that antisemitism in America in the early twentieth century is a real fact the author refers to. In those days, Jews were depicted as enemies of Christianity and members of the lower race. Henry Ford, who bought The Dearborn Independent, where the anti-Semitic articles were published, joined the persecution. The example above refers to the people of Jerusalem who knew the family of the deceased. Compare: "**The Jews** then which were with her in the house, and comforted her" (John 11.31); "When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and **the Jews** also weeping which came with her" (John 11.33); "Then **many of the Jews** which came to Mary, […] believed on him [Jesus]" (John 11.45).

Insanity and Fictional Reality in the Letters of Contrition

Hemon touches on the topic of madness, but it is interesting to consider and analyse the events which run through the entire novel. Lazarus Averbuch's name is perceived by some Jewish Chicagoans as a biblical anthroponym, so it is no wonder that after his death, "a demented woman had to be escorted out because she claimed the corpse opened his eyes and looked at her" (LP 31). Olga walks down the street after learning of her brother's death, and in front of her "there stands a small woman in a dirty white dress and mushroomlike hat […]. She speaks with a voice between a hiss and a whisper: — **He whom you love is ill**" (LP 73). Compare: "Lord, behold, **he whom thou lovest is sick**" (John 11.3); "But **this illness is not unto death**. It is **for the glory of God**, so that **the son of God may be glorified**" (LP 73)—"**This sickness is not unto death**, but **for the glory of God**, that **the Son of God might be glorified** thereby" (John 11.4). A psycho woman nearly quotes the Holy Scripture, she exclaims: "Unbind him and let him go" (LP 73) which refers to the Jews' funeral practices including washing corpses with water, wrapping them in linen

cloth, and sprinkling them with special incense to blunt the smell. The same words are spoken by Jesus: "Loose him, and let him go" (John 11.44). After Olga gives a mad woman a slap, the last stops and says: "Your brother will rise. […] Lazarus shall rise. Our Lord will be with us" (LP 73) and again the woman's words coincide with Christ's ones: "Thy brother shall rise again" (John 11.23). Perhaps these words affect Olga so much that she subconsciously begins to believe in her brother's resurrection and gets one step closer to an insane view of life.

The mentally composed letters to her mother seem to be a sign of mental disorder of the character who tries to solve the mystery of what really happened. A common thread running through the novel is these letters. Hemon shows them in italics, which occupy the readers' attention.

The First Letter. *"Dear Mother, Our Lazarus is asleep, but out of that sleep* ***we may not awake him"*** (LP 43). Olga uses the personal pronoun *we* with the meaning of generalisation, emphasising that people are not able to make the miracle. Instead, in the Bible we read: "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep" (John 11.11). The disciples did not understand Jesus, as they took his words too literally. Jesus used this metaphor to denote death the same way as it is in the Old Testament, where the word *cemetery* is used, which comes from the same root as the Greek word *to sleep*.

The Second Letter. "*Dear Mother, There is no good way to say this: Lazarus* ***is no more****"* (LP 43). Olga is afraid of telling her mother about Lazarus's death, so she uses the euphemism *be no more* instead of *died*. The manifestation of contrition sounds in the letter's body.

The Third Letter. "*Dear Mother, It seems we can never escape grief. We* ***have lost*** *Lazarus. What have we done to deserve so much suffering?"* (LP 43). Olga cannot accept the news about her brother's death, and that is why uses the less emotional word *lost* to speak about it.

The Fourth Letter. *"Dear Mother, Your last letter made us so happy. We're more than fine: I have a new job as a legal secretary and Lazarus is working for the Hebrew Voice as a reporter. He is contemplating getting married"* (LP 44). This mentally composed letter includes the largest list of events. It describes her brother's happy life, mentions his common wishes which would never come true.

The Fifth Letter. "*Dear Mother, Lazarus is dead, and I am mad. We're fine otherwise and think of you a lot*" (LP 44). Finally, Olga confesses to herself that her brother is dead; mourning him almost drives her crazy. This strong emotional connection can be explained by the fact that the Averbuch siblings fled their home without their parents in order to survive the anti-Jewish pogroms. From the stories

Averbuch's sister Olga tells, it is clear that Olga took over the mother-figure role for Lazarus. Hemon uses alliterated parallel constructions *is dead – am mad* which add rhyme and rhythm to the text.

The Sixth Letter. "*Dear Mother, I don't know how to begin"* (LP 46). This Olga's shortest letter hints she still does not dare to tell her mother about her brother's death.

The Seventh Letter. "*Dear Mother, This letter is coming* ***from a better world****: by the time you receive it, Lazarus and I* ***will be together waiting for you****"* (LP 63). The woman's contrition is shown by the use of *Lazarus and I* which indicates her inability to live in the world where she no longer has her brother. Metaphor ***from a better world*** emphasises the woman's faith in the existence of a fertile land where we feel safe and prosperous. Compare: "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it" (Rev. 21.23-24). The Future Continuous Tense in *Lazarus and I* ***will be together waiting for you*** points out Olga's desire to reunite with her family and her willingness to wait meaningfully for redintegration. We come across another mention of a heavenly place but in a sarcastic and ironic manner. Olga is interrogated at the police station and asks *politsyants* where her brother is, but does not know he is not alive more, when she asks where to take her and does not know that he is already dead: "'He is in a better place', Fitzpatrick says, and Fitzgerald chuckles" (LP 31).

Olga feels lonely after her brother's death: "She cannot remember her life before Lazarus's death; that life took place **in a different world**" (LP 92). Using *a different world* as opposed to *a better world* indicates that the previous life is not the dream one. It is just different due to self-perception and the existence of her brother in the world. To show Olga's suffering and contrition, the author uses zeugma. This stylistic device does not confuse the readers but inspires them to think harder as it is used to create a dramatic effect, add emotion, and produce shock value: "She **is coated in sweat and filth**, **the thick film of anger** and **humiliation**, of Lazarus's absence" (LP 92). Sister's suffering is described in the Bible as follows: "When Jesus therefore saw her weeping" (John 11.33). A more tragic image is hidden in Olga's comparison *nightmare* with *a frightened horse:* "The nightmare has assumed its own random direction, like a frightened horse" (LP 92). She looks like a helpless frightened girl who is one on one left with her tragedy.

The Eighth Letter. "*Dear Mother, Lazarus's funeral was beautiful. The rebbe spoke of his kindness, and there were hundreds of his friends, mountains of flowers"*

(LP 65). Olga tries to seek consolation in description of the imaginary interment of her brother. Oxymoron *beautiful funeral*, hyperbolas *hundreds of friends, mountains of flowers* add emotion to the statement. It seems interesting to find out about the mentioned friends in the so-called letter. We come across several mentions of **anarchist friends**, whom police officer Miller suspects of stealing Lazarus's body, as he informs Olga: "Last night […] your brother's body was not where it ought to be […]. It is obviously a flagrant desecration, a grievous sin. Perhaps your brother's **anarchist friends** […] *stole him from the grave"* (LP 84). To make the woman trust him, the police officer uses the adjectives *flagrant* and *grievous* to show his compassion. The construction *It is obviously* emphasises that such a perception of the event is common in this society. His attitude to the fact of the corpse's disappearance is just pragmatic, although "students must study. If they want to study they need **dead people**. **Dead people** are expensive. But there are free **dead people** in cemetery. Your friend Averbuch is **dead people**" (LP 54). Hemon uses epiphora and anaphora to create a greater emotional effect. The structure *Averbuch + is + dead people* is perceived as a generalisation of all the dead whose bodies are used by physicians for experiments. The police officer uses a common modal verb *must* to express obligation, which indicates that Miller sees nothing strange in such actions and accepts the statement as an indisputable rule.

On the first page of the novel, the name Isador is mentioned, but the reader is not explained who this character is. Only after Averbuch's death, we learn they were friends. The fact they were familiar is indicated by the Lazarus' reflection: "The trees here are watered by our blood, **Isador** would say, the streets paved with our bones; they eat our children for breakfast, then dump the leftovers in the garbage" (LP 11). The relative time denotation *Isador would say* forces the reader to plunge into the surrounding darkness and hopelessness, and also indicates that Isador's thoughts were not a secret to Lazarus. Hemon uses synecdoche: the character walks along Webster Street "where capitalists live" (LP 11) and realises that he lives in the world full of xenophobia and prejudice against immigrants.

The name Isador literally means *the gift of Isis*, and the main idea of God is freedom, but for such a gift to be effective, it must be accepted since "This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness comes from me, says the Lord" (Isaiah 54.17). Only at the end of the novel does Isador gain the desired freedom thanks to Olga. She agrees to act in a play "because without her the whole edifice of closure and unity would collapse" (LP 110). The woman is crying during the funeral, and it is not clear that Olga mourns because she has betrayed her brother, who would not be buried according to the Jewish people's tradition: "Tears

burst into her eyes, down her cheeks, a sob heaves out of her body. […] she begins ululating incessantly: Lazarus [repeated 33 times] as though the word could recall him into existence" (LP 111). Hemon uses repetition to add emotion to the message. Charactonym is used 33 times—a number that indicates Christ's age: "And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age" (Luke 3.23) and for three years he educated his disciples. The writer hints that it will only open at the end of the chapter: "WHAT STRENGTH IT takes **not to** break down, **not to** rave and wail, **not to** claw out Schuettler's serpentine eyes, **not to** push the rabbi into the grave, Rabbi Klopstock, who knows perfectly well what is in the coffin" (LP 110). Hemon capitalises the letters to emphasise the incredible effort a woman has to make to hide her secret pain she cannot reveal to anyone: "By distinguishing some units, parts of a sentence, and sometimes whole sentences, the author puts additional meanings into the context" (Bezrukov and Bohovyk 4). The parallel constructions' repetition *not to + infinitive* leads to the rhythm of the message and creates a sound effect of a chronometer.

The Ninth Letter. "*Dear Mother, You must forgive me for what I have done, but I chose life over death. God will take care of the dead. We have to take care of the living"* (LP 111). It is contrition in addressing the mother again: she was not able to protect Lazarus neither during his life nor after death. The woman chooses not her life. She continues to long for her brother and does not see the future, as "she cannot remember her life before Lazarus's death; that life took place in a different world" (LP 92). But Olga sets up the future for Isador who has been hidden in a coffin with Isaac Lubel's corpse: "THE CASKET LID is pried open; the corpse is lifted off Isador" (LP 111). The author capitalises words "to denote funeral objects, inducing the addressee's emotions because the reader takes in the cultural information throughout his/her life and responds to it accordingly and sometimes stereotypically" (Bezrukov and Bohovyk 6). A feeling of horror overwhelms the readers when they realise that there is an alive man under the corpse in the coffin. We see the place where Isador is with his eyes: "It is some kind of a cellar; it smells of clay and mold; it is hard to see into the dark corners" (LP 111). This is a kind of reminiscence of the biblical Lazarus's burial place: "It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it" (John 11.33). According to archaeological excavations, people were buried in natural caves in Jerusalem that were dark with mouldy clay walls. Finally, Isador and readers learn what Olga has already known: "The corpse is on the floor by the casket; his face is white as flour, splattered with dark spots, bloated like a bladder; his eyes are black patches—it takes a while for Isador to recognise Isaac Lubel [Olga's neighbour]" (LP 111). The view of the dead man resonates with the biblical

description "by this time he stinketh" (John 11.39), "he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes" (John 11.44). Isador avoids imprisoning by hiding in Isaac's coffin and perceives his "resurrection" like a miracle as he asks the police officers: "Am I dead?" (LP 111).

The Tenth Letter. "*Dear Mother, You will think me cruel and mad, but I cannot keep this inside me anymore. Lazarus has been slain like an animal for no reason at all and yet they call him an assassin. He—an assassin. There is no end to evil, it reaches us here too"* (LP 73). Olga calls herself *cruel* since she finally dares to tell the truth to her mother, but she understands that such news will not bring consolation to her or to her mother. And she names herself *mad*, since she does not believe in the inevitability of what has happened. The mention that the brother *was slain like an animal* is allusion to the rite of sacrifice the Jewish people had, where the lamb was defined by Jewish law as the Easter sacrifice. The figurative meaning of *sheep* and *flock* is enshrined in numerous figurative biblical contexts, creating a personalised symbolic name for the people of Israel who need the care of God. Extending the sentence with *for no reason at all* is allusion to Jesus who was sinless but took on the sins of the people: "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, **Behold the Lamb of God**, **which taketh away the sin of the world**" (John 1.29). But Olga is pushing to sacrifice her brother's body by Assistant Chief Schuettler to end the further anarchist attacks in Chicago: "Think of others, of their disrupted lives, he says. Imagine how they might feel. This is the time for sacrifice" (LP 33). The author uses epiphora they cal*l him an assassin. He – an assassin* as a means of adding emotions.

Hybrid Narratives of Historical and Biblical Storylines in Hemon's Theme

Olga's letters to her mother have prompted us to consider the detailed comparative analysis of the two characters' families. Vladimir Brik is the first to mention Lazarus Averbuch's and the biblical Lazarus's mothers: "And did the biblical Lazarus have a mother? What did she do when he was resurrected? Did he bid her good-bye before he returned to his undeath? Was he the same son to her undead as he was alive?" (LP 37). Hemon uses soliloquy to involve the character speaking his thoughts aloud. The monologue is shown in the form of questions the author leaves unanswered. The clarification can be found in the Bible: "Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of **Mary** and **her sister Martha**" (John 11.1). Little is known about Lazarus Averbuch's mother who was a sick woman as she "used to soak her varicose legs in a tub of hot water" (LP 12); she loved her little son as she "sang songs or recited nursery rhymes" (LP 24); she wrote letters to her matured son

to encourage and support him in his new place: "Don't despair […] but be brave and work hard. Know that we think of Olga and you, ceaselessly" (LP 32).

There is no mention of the biblical Lazarus's mother, but we read about his sisters: "Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of **Mary** and **her sister Martha**" (John 11.1).

Readers learn about Lazarus Averbuch's family from Olga's memoirs as to the pogrom of 1908, that is a historical fact: "No one moved: **Papa**'s face pressed against the floor in a puddle of blood; **Mother** lying on her side, […]; **Chaia** curled up, her knees to her chest […]; **Roza** on her back still" (LP 102). So, except for his older sister Olga, who actually took care of Lazarus Averbuch's mother, he also had sisters who died before his immigration to America.

The question is whether her character is the allusion to one from the Bible. We find a mention of Mary, the biblical Lazarus's sister in John: "It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and **wiped his feet with her hair**, whose brother Lazarus was sick" (John 11.2) and in the Gospel according to Luke: "And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner […] [who] began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet [Jesus's], and anointed them with the ointment" (Luke 7.37-38). The clergy note the two described Maries are different women but allusion of them to Olga is obvious.

Hemon describes Olga this way: "IT IS LATE MORNING when Olga limps into the Central Police Station, past a couple of policemen sniggering and exchanging lewd jokes about this disheveled tart, one shoe heel missing" (LP 62). Isador asks her: "Who is he? Is he your lover?" (LP 83). Even Lazarus, while travelling to Chicago, is not sure about his sister's moralities: "He **envisioned Isador** […] waiting for him **with Olga**. […] Or **perhaps she met someone else**; maybe she would wait for him **with her new man**, maybe even a real American goy" (LP 69). Olga, like Mary, is a sinner with a good heart: "**like the sister of the biblical Lazarus, she would go to any length to save her brother**" (LP 62).

There is allusion in Olga's behaviour. In the Bible, we find out that Mary is mourning her brother Lazarus: "sat still in the house" (Luke 11.20). After Olga learns that Lazarus is dead, she returns home: "The fire in the stove is still expiring with nauseating smoke" (LP 43). Both women are trying to survive their grief on their own. The author creates the hybrid of fiction and biblical characters.

Hemon uses a specific stylistic device of prosapodosis to connect the text with a refrain and takes the form of a rhetorical question: "Why does the Jewish day begin at sunset?" (LP 11, 43). In fact, there is the answer in the Bible: "Naming the light, Day, and the dark, Night. And **there was evening and there was morning,**

the first day" (Gen. 1.5). The biblical account of the first day of Creation is mentioned.

This is not the only technique to help the author connect the events as there are such coincidences: Lazarus and his sister Mary, Rora and his sister Azra, Lazarus and his sister Olga; a gung-ho reporter called Miller in the Bosnian War and the journalist Miller who writes up Lazarus's murder; the grant trustees the Schuettlers and Assistant Police Chief Schuettler; Brik is the name of one of the characters as well as one of Lazarus's teachers; Vladimir Brik lives in Chicago and the internet café in Kishinev is called Chicago. Similarities are flown from one chapter to another. In the beginning, the main characters' stories are represented one by one: each chapter is a story about one character but closer to the culmination events are interlaced with Vladimir Brik's life. The storyline is interrupted with the narrator's thoughts and flashbacks between the time of Lazarus's death and Brik's investigation of his life. In the last chapters, the life events are difficult to be separated from each character. Hemon seems to use the hybrid of the historical and biblical storylines in the presented theme.

What is the end of both Lazaruses' lives? After the resurrection, the biblical Lazarus lived 30 years more. While there is no further mention of Lazarus in the Bible, the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic traditions mention his later life accounts. Lazarus Averbuch was killed by the police when "he was about 20" (LP 43), and in spite of his disappeared body he failed to be resurrected. There are only dreams of a little Jewish boy, as the allusion to the Paradise: "I imagine my life to be big, so big that I cannot see the end of it. […] You will be in it, Mother and Father will be in it […]. I will be in it […]. I have a picture of it in my head. It's a field in bloom so deep you can swim in it. I can see it now, and I cannot see its end" (LP 117). The refrain is Lazarus's words about his *big life* with the family in the big world.

In addition to its biblical, spiritual context, Hemon's novel raises more pragmatic issues of the modern world. By bringing past and present events together, the book suggests how they can communicate in order to make existence bearable via debate and acknowledgement of precariousness and interdependency (Mihăilescu 50). *The Lazarus Project* joins other Eastern European contemporary fiction and suggests how Eastern European societies and the American cultural space need to be engaged in an honest dialogue of mutual recognition.

Conclusion

The representation of historical events in fiction includes various narrative strategies

which appear to be the result of the complex interaction of existing cultural codes and the author's experience. The combination of historical facts and fiction in *The Lazarus Project* displays the hybridity of the narratives which perfectly resonates with the novel's theme of fragmented migrant identity and transcultural visions of contemporary postcolonial fiction.

The affiliation between biography and photography in Hemon's novel allows us to consider the whole text as a complex metaphor characterised by a strong relationship to the world. The forms of narration correspond to the way language works while the conjunction of text and image emphasises verbal and visual realms of the author's story, transcending national and aesthetic barriers. This also makes readers be unsure whose story is being told due to the inclusion of stories about Lazarus in the chapters about Brik and the various linguistic parallels.

Finding a balance among religion, art, and human as an integral part of history takes place, in particular, through the inclusion of the biblical themes in the text, which can be the basis for expressing the author's ideas about the real causes of human existence. In this perspective, both historical narratives and their transformations in fiction are shown.

The novel is greatly based on the life and murder of a young Jewish immigrant to Chicago whose real story captures a "new" US citizen, a journalist from a Chicago newspaper, a hundred years after his death. This stresses not only that alienation for immigrants has meant falls and murder but also draws parallels between the xenophobic fear of anarchism and the status of immigrants in today's America.

The hybrid identity allows for the perpetuation of the local in the context of the global. A reflexive relationship between the different forms of reality representation in the historical, fictional, and biblical dimensions in Hemon's *The Lazarus Project* underlines the postmodern nature of the novel as a new literary hybrid.

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Epistolaryy Narrative Voice in Albanian Contemporary Novels

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Abstract Although the Epistolaryy literature played a fundamental role in the development of European novel, its tradition in Albania is very poor. The main reason is that Albanian literature used to have an ideological character; as a result of this, it refused intimate view of the characters' thoughts and feelings. Only after the 1990s, letters became an important literary device in Albanian contemporary novels. The most common form is the use of "interpolated" letters, which supply the narrative works with metaphysical subjectivity. This is due to the fact that letters, diaries, meditation, etc., are forms of personal communication and consequently reflect a deeper relationship of the Being with the self and with the world. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the features of letters in the novels written by Astrit Delvina, Elvira Dones, Bashkim Shehu, etc. The main method used in this paper is a comparative approach through which we aim to analyze the use of "interpolated letters" as a specific stylistic device, as well as a transition "tool" from modernist to postmodernist novel.

Key words Albanian contemporary literature; "interpolated letters"; metaphysical subjectivism; personal communication

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Introduction

Epistolaryy voice is usually found in letters, diaries, or other literary artefacts which are considered to be representative of private discourse. Although Janet Altman clearly states that letters are "the fundamental vehicles of Epistolaryy narrative" (Altman 13), the aim of this study is to also take into consideration the role of diaries, notes, meditation and remarks of the narrators in expressing trauma and suppression. Epistolary works are multi voiced narrations, or works without a narrator, because the meaning of the plot comes from the connection of letters. Letter-writers rarely introduce themselves and others. Furthermore, "Epistolaryy discourse is a fully fledged textual genre in its own right, as it is distinguishable from other types of discourse by specific pronominal and linguistic features (Altman 26), which render it a unique genre" (Dossena and Camiciotti 35), etc. The Epistolaryy voice supplies the text with distinguished features of metaphysics subjectivism. It happens because letters, diaries, mediation, etc., are all forms of personal communication and as a result linguistics elements tend to convey without any significant changes our real perception of the world (with no direct impact of Ego or Super Ego). Epistolary voice is not a usual phenomenon in Albanian literature. However there is a new trend of using personal communication in Albanian contemporary novels, such as; *In the time of the scream* by Visar Zhiti, *Mozart, with the delay* or the *Circle* by Bashkim Shehu, *Stars don't get dressed like that* by Elvira Dones, *Globe in the net* by Astrit Delvina, etc.

Letters between Private and Public Discourse

A really interesting novel which is mainly constructed through the interposition of the epistolary voice is *Mozart, with delay* by Bashkim Shehu. In fact it is completely difficult to understand the difference between the letters and the diary, because

Andrea's letters do not reach the recipient (and even do not intend to). However they have central position within the plot. First of all, they serve as the main method to define the characters (which are nominated by the narrator as central actants and peripheral ones). Andrea, is almost a shadow character, because he does not interact very often. He only seems to appear as a central actant when he starts portraying his immense love through writing letters. Altman admits "the letter form seems tailored for the love plot, with its emphasis on separation and reunion" (Altman 55).

Secondly, letters feed the text with lyrical and personal attributes, with poetic of love, a feeling which seems to overpass the overall gaming (which prevails in all other relations where the characters of the novel are involved). Thirdly, the process of transformation of the letters into diaries, inability of communication between lovers, the hiding process, etc., are all signs of a ferocious totalitarian system, which controls or impedes the happiness of human being. The letters written by Andrea, interfere and abruptly interrupt the narration.

The first one is inserted into narration without any prior information related to the character, his love story which was precipitously interrupted, the difficulties or impossibilities of reunion, etc. The confession is conveyed by anonymous voice, which is portrayed through the fulfilling emotion of love. Even the second letter, intentionally breaks the interior logic of narration. While the narration relates about the prearrangements of staging "School of love" opera, the second letter of Andrea is inserted in the plot, a letter which is written a year after. This is followed by a third letter written five years after (July 4, 1967). The last part of the third letter, gives some details related to the anonymous voice, which was completely unknown till then. Biographical information related to the character is given through an atypical method, which seem to be similiar to a didascalia which has the function of facilitating of the understanding of circumstances. After the third letter, Epistolaryy intersections fade away and letters are substituted with the characters meditation.

Referring the above chart, there is a new Epistolaryy story within the main plot, which brings into surface the tragic relationship between Andrea and Nina. This second story starts with Andrea's letter, goes on with Andrea's diary and it finishes with his meditation. The first letter starts with a promise, which is relevant to the future "I swear to you, my life, I will write to you every day." The vision of the future is unconsciously activated to the belovers, because they need to believe that their love story will be eternal. This letter, starts as the need of communication between two human beings who are in love, hence the articulation of love has a central meaning.

The second epistolary intersection has different features: First of all, it starts

Table 1: Letters and the Features of Epistolar Voice

The Letters of Andrea			
March 17, 1961	May 4, 1962 (midnight)	July 4, 1967	
"My life, I swear, I will write to you every day" Dear Nina, my life, you know, it seems like you are reading my lines right now, exactly in this moment, or as I have you, or I am with you, slightly whispering… (…) (…) A lot of things around me, are detached from the reality around them and they have become a completely different thing, millions of granules, what am I saying, milliards of them, which run away with the speed of light, and time and space which divide us disappear, they instantly merge harmonically in the creation of a world, where you and me are the only inhabitants… (Shehu *Moxart* 46)	**My love, my adorable Nina!** I have not written to you recently, please forgive me. Things are completely the same, nothing has happened, so you do not have to worry why I have not written. It is not a reason to be happy either, because it does not mean that I have started off. There is little to be happy, when things are completely the same. Quite the contrary. I am barely surpassing the reluctance to explain further, because I almost forgot that you will never read this lines, you will never hear my voice, from thousands of miles away. Do you hear me? I am talking to you. Because I can hardly stand without speaking with you, even though this would be dangerous. They continue to chase me. Or so it seems. (Shehu *Moxart* 79)	It is cold, Nina, it is freezing here. You do not need to be afraid by the things I have just told you, because all this madness which has dispersed, is nothing more that a death-rattle of this hateful and disgusting system. This is the end, so, Nina, my beloved one, the end is so near and very soon, we will be together again. (Shehu 85)	A black sadness has overcome me, something as a nightmare while I am completely awaken and it followed and suppressed me, it took my breath away, a substanceless effigy, dark fog, black jinnee, which stealthely put into my mind everything he dreamt off …(because those of embassy, did not find Nina, there in Leningrad, she would have been married and has changed her family name, or God forbid, she is not living any longer, she is dead, rest in peace (...) Here it comes the black jinnee, it mocks me again when it appears, I imagine her again and it immediately casts him away. So, I may think clearer. And I start mediating that … (Shehu *Moxart* 92)

with the implication of the past ("Please forgive me I have not written to you lately"). The displacement of the notion of time from the future to the past indicates the suspicion about the continuance of erotic idyll. Secondly, the relation between the Subject and the lover is amplified by the references which indicate the real danger of denaturalization of human who is under the suppression of totalitarian regime. ("They continue to follow me"). The later jeopardy seems to be irrelevant to be written in a love letter. The only explanation is that she will never read those lines. The above features, replenish the second intersection with a crossbreed figuration, which is between the letter and the diary. The third letter highlights the

references of the outside world. It also avoids the stereotypical beginning (**Dear**). Its main goal is not the expression of love (as in the first letter), neither the reflection of the relation between the individual and the totalitarian regime (as in the second "letter"), but the clarification of political relation between communist countries.

In certain ways, personal letters reveal the dialectic of events and relationships way more clearly than diaries do[1] (the breakup from ex-Soviet Union or the political flirt with China).The third intersection, totally avoids any possibility that the lover may read the letter, hence it may be considered as a typical diary page. In the last intersection, the date is missing, the stereotypical beginning of a letter is missing as well, it may be considered as a meditation of the character in his loneliness, unable to find his other-half.

As stated above, we may reach the conclusion that Epistolaryy intersections may function as an independent narrative line, which is inserted in the plot and highlights the text fragmentation.

Meditative Discourse and the Expression of Self

Meditative discourse is commonly used to enrich the text with the philosophical dimension. The latter does not aim to build metanarrative schemes, but to express personal point of view related to phenomena, people and occurrences. In the *Circle* written by Bashkim Shehu, meditative discourse comes from the reflective journey of the foreign observer, who writes his personal truth related to Albanian cultural world. His meditative discourse includes writings about homosexualism in Albanian art, the difference about the pyramid (the symbol of dictatorship) and financial pyramid schemes, the Albanian pragmatical Eros, etc. The personal explanations of the foreign observer tend to alienate and denaturalize the world, because they function as personal notes, which are taken by someone who may see and understand deeper an unknown reality because he does not have pre-determined stereotypical structures. The personal notes are really heterogeneous and they form a perfect model of syncretic montage. Each of them is autonomous and self-independent, increasing the internal chaos of the text.

As the French literature critic Réda Bensmaia stated: "The only thing which pieces together these philosophical wanderings is the voice, which alienates well known or even trivial objects, subjects and situations" (Bensmaia 76). The topics of these philosophical wanderings are really various, and they may include issues as the strange case of harmony between cats and dogs in Albania; the connection

1 Steven Stowe, Making Sense of Letters and Diaries, retrieved by http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/letters/letters.pdf

between the quantity of garbage and the quality of life, etc. Most of these intersections are totally independent and may be read and enjoyed as a story within a story. The fictional game is created through the illusion of the double narrators, the one using the first form (the one who writes notes about impressions from Albania) and the second the external one (who reads the impressions of the first narrator and tries to rewrite them), i.e. (unreadable writing, my note B.Sh.)" (Shehu, *Rrethi* 140). As Linda Kaufman suggests, Epistolaryy voices commonly blur "the lines between fiction and reality by including morsels of information that seem to be about [their] 'real [lives]'" (Kaufman 205).

The idea of incompleteness which sometimes comes from the first narrator (the inability of B.Sh to read the text) and sometimes as a central feature of the text itself makes the reader slow down the reading pace, due to the need of completing the textual units with the proper meaning.

Besides philosophical wanderings (they are apriori fed by changes, deformations, atypical formations) another element of personal discourse is the specific interpretations of cultural artifacts. For example, the new interpretation about the castle of Rozafa, tend to tear down the cultural ideology about the Albanian code of honor. The latter is considered as one of the most important feature of Albanian national psyche. The Epistolaryy voice tends to shatter the metanarration, through re-semantisation of the legend. This is done through the dissociation from the ethno-folkloric roots, which feed a false ethnical image.

Through the Epistolaryy voice, another myth is constructed; this one is very important to outline the national identity, the myth of the founding of the city or civilization. The meaningful leap (from the myth of the word of honour[1] to the myth of foundation) is especially important. Although Albanian word of honour is considered to be essential characteristics of national identity, it is in fact the attribute of societies led by ethical principles (sanctioned by the Kanun Code). Such societies are characterized neither by organization nor by sustainable development. Thus, even though the word of honour makes the core identity of the Albanian world, it must be admitted that this value functions on the ground of primitive societies (which are not organized by laws but by normative codes). However, reading the myth of Rozafa, through the city foundation point of view, opens another perspective in the outline of the Albanian cultural world according to a new ethno-folkloric image. The construction of castles is a sign of the new civilization that has just begun to arise. The early days of this civilization position the Albanian identity in the light of another paradigm: that of one of the earliest civilization in the region instead of

1 Besa (word of honor) in Albanian culture is supposed to be an important institution.

primitiveness (which world of honor suggests).

Trauma and Epistolaryy Body

"The Epistolaryy mode in fiction has long been associated with the expression of trauma experienced by women who are confined to a private, domestic and interior space. However, this mode, paradoxically, opens up this space because the sending of a letter to an addressee invites the letter's fictional recipient to act as witness to the letter writer's account of her painful experiences." (Bronwen Mairi Louw iii). One of the most dramatic novels written about Albanian women is *Stars do not get dressed like that* by Elvira Dones. It starts with an unusual "letter," written by a dead narrator. She is Lejla, a girl who was kidnapped, coerced to prostitution, and then tortured and killed. Her letter opens the Pandora's Box which reveals a chocking reality. Her letter does not deal with an individual trauma expressed in the private realm of the letter, but it also involves a collective history of feminine trauma in Albanian world. (Dones).

Myra Jehlen argues that: "what is peculiar to this genre is that it locates the problems of its society way much deeper inside the self" (Jehlen 75). The novel continues with the stories of other female characters, which suffer the same dramatic destiny, rape, coerce to prostitution, continuous violence, physical punishment, torture and even death. Through the transgressions of violent sexual relations, a stifling atmosphere is created. The text is full of explicit details from the sexual scenes, the "brutality" which create a sense of natural confession[1]. This sensation doubles the shock experienced during the reading. Such shattering scenes within the work intend to present the "deformities" of the male psyche in a society that the transition does not only happen on the political level, but also on the human one. The novel draws attention to the so-called "rape culture" in the Albanian context.[2] However, the novel in itself totally refuses to legitimize it. No wonder the sexual rape is associated with the verbal effort to break the individual's mind and soul.

1 The presence of the natural narration in the prose of Elvira Dones can not be ignored, because her field experience as a journalist is often confused with artificial confession.

2 Although Albanian literature does not have frequent works on such provocative topics, the Albanian worldview tends towards the extreme legitimization of this culture by blaming the sexually abused woman. On the one hand, she is seen as guilty of aggression, while on the other she has to live with the shame of the happening. For these two reasons, acts of sexual violence remain undeclared in a society that condemns the victims. The roots of this culture are found in societies that encourage male violence against women, in societies which legitimize "physical and emotional terrorism" against women and the ones where even women agree that sexual violence is an inevitable fact.

Thus women in the novel of Elvira Dones are raped, brutally mistreated, beaten, and humiliated. Male sexual prominence is highlighted through emotional words, which clearly evoke violent sexual assault.

It is important to emphasize that the discourse (in the socio-linguistic point of view) is defined as the relationship between the language and the real context. It means that gender stereotypes are linguistically manifested; the way which the relationship between men and women is projected in a particular social context is really important to understand the linguistic tension between them. This specific relationship in Dones' novel is neither balanced, nor healthy. The male stereotype bares the persecutor's sign, while the female is under the sign of the victim. The evocation of taboo words have a negative impact on the feminine psyche. These are signs of sexual dominance by men, who use the language as a tool for submission. Through the characterization of defemizations, it is intended the entire break of the soul, to turn the raped women into a "body" that is being trafficked. But on the contrary it does not happen like that. Their letters, diaries, notes, etc., imply the opposite, their soul is not wiped out, and they are real fighters and real survivors.

Diary as an Open Letter to Self

Diaries are considered to be personal forms which aim to embrace time and memories. Letters and diaries are given common shape by widely shared life events such as births, separations over time and distance, sickness and health, courtships and marriages, and deaths. "Diarists, too, are apt to take up their pen in the face of life transitions, mapping the course of the ordinary or, quite differently, reporting unusual events, such as a long journey or the coming of war. These latter "diaries of situation," as Steven Kagle calls them, sometimes end when the situation resolves (…). Although, they may not have thought about it this way as they wrote, they nonetheless were making for themselves a personal presence in the wider world of the written word typical of their time and place"(Kagle 3).

The diarist might not write about himself but he marks important events of national memory. The same happens in the novel "Circle" by Bashkim Shehu, in which the character writes about the changes of political climate in Albania. The concept of time in that novel is totally stretched, disposing some very important events in a single sentence.

> March 22, 1992: Communists left the power, thanks to the elections where the Democratic Party and its allies won two-thirds of the vote (...). April 9, 1992: Sali Berisha, leader of the Democratic Party, is elected President of the Repub-

> lic for a five-year term, while the DP increasingly tends to become a party-state … (Shehu, Roman 149)

The narrator voice goes from perceptions, meditations, and interpretations to judgment about events, phenomena and characters. This cognitive process is carried out through an illusory distance created by the positioning of the fictional narrator as a foreigner. His distance to the object or subject that is being analyzed makes his judgment more objective. This phenomenon has the function of "liberating the truth" from aesthetic of fiction, as Theodor Adorno states (Adorno Theory 152).

Another novel structured on diaries is *Globe in the net* (Globi në rrjetë) by Astrit Delvina. Most of the literary text seem to be similar (or sometimes identical) to the author's own life. But as Steve Stowes states: "Although some diaries may seem like autobiographies in their approach to time, contextualizing everything in terms of "I," it is well to remember that for all of their expressiveness, diaries do not, like autobiographies, look back on the past. Diaries draw their energy from the way the writer searches for meaning while in the edge of changing events and relationships which no one completely grasps." The diarist searches to give the mass of associations and trail of events meaning by finding a consistent voice, whereas the letter writer seeks continuity in the flow of letters, in the personal ties they represent as well as for the news that they bear." The central narration in the novel comes from the Epistolaryy voice that writes about the most important moments of his life. In his diary, as well, appear details about dramatic happenings with worldwide effects:

> A line of meridian (...) separates the world in two parts; Materialism and Idealism. Another line separates a country in two parts, (two Germanys, two Koreas, and ex-two Vietnams). A third one separates a city in two parts (Berlin), a fourth one separates a family in two parts (fathers and sons, bourgeois father and communist son) and a fifth one – most tragic and anxious of all is the one who separates a human in two parts! Self, separated in two entities. – Self-duplification and human dispersion. (Delvina 14)

Considering the dramatic events which are involved in self-writing process, we may notice a kind of internal tension, which "changes" the expected form of writing the diary. Arlon's diary lasts only 24 hours, and every hour is cautiously monitored, i.e. "4 and 48' Antila once said "When I don't see you nothing tastes the same" (Delvina 24). The form adopted by the writer allows him to double use the concept of time:

it is his past (his love story with Atila) and the present, which is strongly diffused in memories, meditation, etc. It seems that the time is stuck, the past (of the individual, country or the whole world) "inundates" the narration. Meanwhile the present is almost missing.

On one hand, there is a continuous persistence to grab every second of the present (it is a very intensive dairy, which aims at memorizing every hour of the day). On the other, when the homodiegetic narration starts writing, there is only one thing that is related to the present: a continuous anxiousness and fear for his lover, Antila, who has not arrived yet and God knows why she has not arrived yet. The concept of present is fading away, because the narrator needs to escape to his day, his life. He only needs his love and he is terrified from the idea that she might not manage to get back, due to something hideous which is lurking outside. The diary is used as a mean of relieving the internal anxiousness, which is very common phenomenon in totalitarian regime. It completely explains the tension of 24 hours, which are the last ones spent in freedom for Arlon. The net which has caught the entire globe, grabs his own freedom, his own life.

Conclusions

As a result it should be stated that the Epistolaryy discourse occupies a specific space between the public and the private. On one hand, letters, diaries, notes, meditations, etc., may shed light on individual perspectives of the narrator. On the other, they may reflect many aspects of socio-cultural or political life in a certain moment. Letters and diaries in Albanian contemporary literature are strongly related to trauma and suppression which are deeply rooted in the totalitarian regime. The Epistolaryy discourse brings into surface fear and anxiety, oppression and internal alienation of the human being, who needs letters and diaries to give his soul a voice.

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An Ethical Study of Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child*

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Abstract Toni Morrison's latest novel *God Help the Child* presents the ethical dilemma of a young black woman who is traumatized by her childhood experiences and undergoes transformation before accomplishing maturity and wisdom. Morrison demonstrates her ethical choice by juxtaposing issues of race and materialism and apposes two modes of relationships between characters in the novel: "conditional relationships" represented by Sweetness, Louis and Booker, which leads to Bride's spiritual dilemma and physical regression; "unconditional care", embodied by Steve, Evelyn and Rain, which brings Bride out of her dilemma and leads to the recovery of her body and her humanity. The present article aims to elaborate on ethical dilemma, ethical choice and ethical theme of the novel in the light of the theory of ethical literary criticism, in which Morrison's plotting and characterization will be analyzed in the context of colorism and materialism, and the theme of "natural love", as a healthier and more lasting relationship bonding based on empathy and mutual care, will be revealed.

Key words Toni Morrison; *God Help the Child;* ethical dilemma; ethical choice; ethical theme

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As an initiation novel, *God Help the Child* (2015) traces a cyclic growth of a contemporary black woman, Bride (born Lula Ann Bridewell), whose interpersonal relationships and love life have been complicated by the prevailing colorism and materialism in the world she lives. Previous studies of this novel are primarily scattered among feminism, myth-archetype, narrative strategies, psychoanalysis and

other theories. They have brought to the fore classic Morrisonian themes of identity, racism, sexism, childhood trauma, religion, *etc*. Yet there has been a regrettable critical silence on the ethical import of the novel. Few critics have studied the theme of love from ethical perspective, and fewer have connected it with the issues of race and materialism.

Given that *God Help the Child* highlights core issues such as ethical dilemma, ethical choice and ethical theme, it would appear germane to an in-depth analysis of ethical literary criticism. As professor Nie Zhenzhao says, "Ethical criticism.....not only judges the moral value of historical literature from the standpoint of current morality, but also emphasizes the return to the ethical scene to interpret literature and to find out the objective ethical causes of literature and ethical factors that lead to social events and the fates of characters and to make a moral evaluation from the historical point of view" (Nie, "Ethical" 14). *God Help the Child* is just such a historical novel full of ethical issues worthy of a thorough analysis.

In this article, the protagonist Bride's ethical dilemma will be discussed by juxtaposing her interpersonal relationships with her skin color and economic position in society. It argues that Bride's personal life is filled with conditional relationships: unnatural racial grouping, abnormal familial bonding, and materialized interpersonal relationships. Moreover, Bride's ethical choices from perjury to unconditional care will be analyzed by the change of her ethical context. Finally, Toni Morrison's ethical theme of "natural love" will be fully disclosed.

Ethical Dilemma: Conditional Relationships

Ethical dilemma refers to the contradictions and conflicts in literary texts that are difficult to resolve because of ethical confusion. It is exactly the reason that characters have different destinies and make various ethical choices. In *God Help the Child*, Bride's ethical dilemma stems from the dual character of her skin color. Morrison maintains that "In *God Help the Child*, color is both a curse and a blessing, a hammer and a golden ring" (Morrison, "Color…" 51). The author's comment explains the personal predicament that Bride finds herself in. In Bride's childhood, skin color is a "curse" for her. Because of her blackness, she is facing contempt from the black community and emotional withholding from her mother; thus, she chooses to commit perjury to win some favor from the people around her. In her adulthood, skin color seems to be a "blessing" for her because she could capitalize it to her advantage in the commercial world. However, she is dehumanized by the materialization of her appearance, which alienates her relationships with Booker, Sweetness, Sofia and Brooklyn, accordingly.

As a curse, Bride's skin color puts her into the ethical dilemma of unnatural communal and familial relationships. It is mainly because of colorism within the black community. Colorism is a term popularized by Alice Walker to describe "prejudicial or preferential treatment of same-race people based solely on their color" (Walker 290). It is a process of discrimination which light- skinned people of color of the same race show over their dark-skinned counterpart. In accepting the white value of skin privilege, the black community help create their ethical dilemma in which the black individual has become as oppressive as the white one. Thus, blacks of the younger generation are to be marginalized by their community and to become strangers at home, which is more dangerous than being oppressed by an external force.

In *God Help the Child,* unnatural communal bonding based on colorism is represented in the behavior of "passing for white" on the part of Bride's light-skinned relatives. As a constant motif in African American literature, "passing for white" refers to the behavior of some light-skinned blacks who pretend to be whites and identify themselves as such to the point of erasing their own identity as blacks, even breaking up family ties to group with the whites. Bride's great-grandmother "passed for white and never said another word to any one of her children" (Morrison, *God* 3). To light-skinned blacks like her, it is a way for them to "hold on to a little dignity" so that they will not have to suffer from racism as much as the blue-black fellowmen (Morrison, *God* 4). However, to the victims of colorism, the behavior of "passing for white" destroys their self-esteem and harms racial bonding.

Moreover, blacks' familial bonding also becomes conditional because of colorism, which means that it is based on the family members' ability to meet the norms of white supremacy. Unsurprisingly, in *God Help the Child*, skin privilege is an integral part of Bride's reality as an abused black girl in a nuclear family. Born a tar-black girl to high yellow parents, she is abandoned by her father Louis, who treats her as a stranger and an enemy; what is much worse, she is raised at an ashamed and bitter distance by her mother Sweetness, who "couldn't see past all that black to know who she was and just plain love her" (Morrison, *God* 43). Sweetness keeps on talking about how Bride's blackness "scares" her and white people. She refuses to let Bride call her "Mother" or "Mama" and withholds physical contact with her all the time. Sweetness's "conditional love" for Bride is sole because of Bride's lack of lighter skin.

Although Sweetness rationalizes that her careful and strict way of raising will tighten her daughter up against racism, her physical and emotional withholding harms Bride to a great extent. Bride's sense of self is deeply scarred by her parents,

resulting in the confusion of her ethical identity. Bearing Sweetness' teaching in mind, little Bride doesn't fight against her classmates who make fun of her at school: "So I let the name-calling, the bullying travel like poison, like lethal viruses through my veins, with no antibiotics available" (Morrison, *God* 57). She accepts racist treatment passively and "built up immunity so tough that not being a 'nigger girl' was all I needed to win" (Morrison, *God* 57). Therefore, deep down in Bride's mind she is always "a poor little black girl," the unwanted child of the family as well as the community.

Unnatural communal and familial bonding destroys Bride's humanity and leads to her childhood misdeed of testifying against an innocent person. At the age of six, Bride sees her mother's white landlord raping a white boy. She quickly learns that Sweetness is unwilling to compromise their living situation in a rental market hostile to black women. So, she obeys her mother's instruction blindly and keeps silent about the matter. Two years later, when the white woman teacher Sofia is accused of child molest, Bride becomes a false accuser and makes an ethical choice against Sofia. Deep down in her conscience, she wonders, "What if it was the landlord my forefinger was really pointing at in that courtroom? ..... Was I pointing at the idea of him? His nastiness or the curse he threw at me?" (Morrison, *God* 56) On the one hand, Bride's act serves as a compensation for her silence about the landlord's crime of child molest two years earlier. On the other hand, as a blue-black child who has never gotten any unconditional love from either the community or her family, Bride tells the terrible lie to win some attention from them. Indeed, she gets what she needs. More to her expectation, Sweetness even has her earlobes pierced and buys her a pair of golden earrings. It can be safely said that Bride gives in to the ethics of conditional relationships by selling her childhood innocence and honesty.

Even though Bride's skin color seems to become a blessing to her in adulthood, she is still confounded by the influence of conditional relationships. Her blackness is capitalized with the backdrop of prevailing cash nexus in a time of materialism and pop culture. As a twenty-something rising beauty in the materialistic society, Bride is advised by an industry friend to dress exclusively in white to emphasize her blackness: "Black sells. It's the hottest commodity in the civilized world" (Morrison, *God* 36), and "black is the new black" (Morrison, *God* 33). Now Bride can harness the social and economic value of her blackness and convert it to a kind of "glory" (Morrison, *God* 57). "Glorious" as they may seem, the desiring gazes Bride's blackness attracts fail to affirm her empathetic humanity or bring her interpersonal intimacy. Rather, the more successful she is, the less she cares about people; what is worse, her interpersonal relationships with people surrounding her are mainly based

on material wealth and worldly success.

In Bride's experiences of romantic relationships, men and women are attracted to each other because of externals. Bride says that "Every girl I know introduces her boyfriend as a lawyer or artist or club owner or broker or whatever. The job, not the guy, is what the girlfriend adores" (Morrison, *God* 62). Likewise, all of Bride's boyfriends are typecast: "would-be actors, rappers, professional athletes", and Bride knows clearly that they are either "players waiting for my crotch or my paycheck like an allowance" or men who "already having made it, treating me like a medal, a shiny testimony to their prowess" (Morrison, *God* 36). In her mind, none of these boyfriends is "giving, helpful---none interested in what I thought, just what I looked like" (Morrison, *God* 37). There is no genuine care or love in their relationships.

Bride's romantic relationship with "her guy" Booker is no exception. Her love for Booker focuses on externals. She describes her relationship with Booker as ".....he is one gorgeous man. I'm not so bad myself" (Morrison, *God* 10). It can be seen that Bride's measure of romantic relationships is taken in terms of vanity. Bride's "knowing" of Booker also stops at the level of the skin. As the text repeatedly stresses, Bride's "lack of interest in his personal life" is complete (Morrison, *God* 133). Similar to what her ex-boyfriends have done to her, she has no curiosity about what Booker thinks, feels or does either. For instance, Bride thinks the small rose tattooed on his left shoulder is an ugly scar, his only physical defect. However, it is in effect Booker's unique way of memorializing his dear brother and a gesture of identifying with his "twin" brother. It indicates that Bride holds no genuine care for the man she claims to love, and her "love" only stays at the shallow pleasure of Booker's accompany: "I never thought about that part of his life because what was important in our relationship, ... was the fun we had" (Morrison, *God* 61). Likewise, Booker reciprocates her love with equal shallowness and vanity. He falls in love with her for her stunning appearance and flawless personality and abruptly abandons her because of "finding out" her moral impurity. Their relationship is like "the fairy-tale castle" which "collapsed into the mud and sand on which its vanity was built" (Morrison, *God* 135).

In addition to romantic relationships, Bride is used to managing interpersonal relationships with other people in her life in terms of material bonding. For one thing, Bride keeps a distancing relationship with her mother after she becomes independent and successful. Except for sending money, she does not call or visit her mother in the nursing home. For another, Bride is reluctant to face her past misdeed of perjury against Sofia positively. She is unwilling to deal with the damage she has brought to Sofia wholeheartedly, reckoning that sending Sofia money and helping

her start a brand-new life is a kind of compensation. Moreover, Bride's friendship with her only close friend Brooklyn is shallow and fake. The both distrust and disapprove of each other.

Ethical Choice: Unconditional Care

As aforementioned, Morrison contends that Bride's skin color is both a hammer and a golden ring for her, but "neither the hammer nor the ring, helped make the character a sympathetic human being" (Morrison, "Color…" 51). Indeed, "Bride has been so focused on her own sufferings and successes that she has been incapable of empathy" (Wyatt 185). To confront Bride's lack of sympathy and emotional bonding, Morrison presents a new ethical choice that Bride makes while tracking Booker. After being abandoned by Booker, Bride aims to find out truth about their relationships, which therefore brings about her ethical transformation. She eventually learns to show unconditional care to others. Unconditional care emphasizes the responsibility, emotion, and mutual care between people and re-establishes the relationships between people through caring and concern. To Morrison, it is important for her protagonist Bride to "care deeply and to be human completely" (Morrison, "Price…" 53) because "Only caring unselfishly for somebody else would [she] accomplish true maturity" (Morrison, "Color…" 50).

Bride's ethical transformation begins with a renewed understanding of material wealth. It comes from the influence of the Steve family's hippie way of living. Compared with Bride's previous highly capitalistic life, "Here she was among people living the barest life," a simplistic and primitive mode of living she has never experienced before (Morrison, *God* 90). When Bride comments sarcastically on the Steves' poverty, Steve counters, "Money get you out of that Jaguar? Money save your ass?" (Morrison, *God* 91) Shamefully, Bride admits that indeed she does not "know anyway about good for its own sake, or love without things," for her previous life is filled with conditional relationships based on "things" (Morrison, *God* 92). The simplicity of living with the Steves nurtures a high sense of simplicity in Bride herself and brings her out of the trap of shallowness in the world of commercial success and emotional scarcity.

The Steve family not only renew Bride's understanding of material wealth but also greatly touch her by showing what "unconditional care" is. To Bride's surprise, they are "putting themselves out for her without hesitation, asking nothing in return", and "they simply tended her, fed her, arranged for her car to be towed for repair" (Morrison, *God* 90). It is too hard, too strange for Bride to understand the kind of "care" they offered—"free, without judgement or a passing interest in

who she was or where she was going" (Morrison, *God* 90). Bride cannot understand unconditional care because she has never been given one and has never shown others. It is under their influences that Bride starts to be engaged in open and in-depth communication with them and concentrate on showing cares to others, which preludes more healthy human relationships between her and others.

Bride's renewed understanding of material wealth and human relationships is followed by her ethical choice of unconditional care. A commitment to the ethics of caring is more than civilizing, ethical or humane, as Morrison has commented: "it's humanizing" (Morrison, "Price…" 51). It starts with a feeling of empathy: "From a relational perspective, human beings are seen as experiencing a primary need for connection and essential emotional joining. This need is served by empathy which in authentic relatedness is characterized by mutuality. Further, in relationships, one comes to experience clarity about one's own experience and the others', the capacity for creating meaningful action, an increased sense of vitality and capacity for further connection" (van Mens--Verhulse, et al. 137). Bride regains her humanity by showing unconditional care to Rain and Queen, two symbolic figures in her life. To Bride, the orphaned Rain is like herself in childhood and Queen is the loving mother she craves but never has. Building connections with these two persons is a crucial step in Bride's spiritual maturity.

Bride's empathy for Rain is a demonstration of her ethical transformation. When Bride listens to Evelyn talking about how they found Rain on the street, she empathizes with Rain's experience, "shuddering as though it were she herself in that alley" (Morrison, *God* 96). When being told by Rain that her mother threw her out, Bride exclaims, "Why? Why would she do that? Why would anybody do that to a child?" (Morrison, *God* 101) More deeply, she thinks, "How could anybody do that to a child, any child, and one's own?" (Morrison, *God* 102) Bride's habitual self-absorption is cut through by the extreme of maternal rejection recounted by Rain: "She experiences fellow feeling for another's suffering—and at a deep level, as the disturbance in her stomach indicates" (Wyatt 185). During the process of her ethical performance, Bride listens like a good mother who credits her daughter's story of suffering. She cares as a mother would care about what Rain has to go through, empathizing deeply that she has to "[fight] against the danger of tears for anyone other than herself" (Morrison, *God* 103), which testifies to the sincerity of her empathy.

Bride's unconditional care for Rain serves as a different ethical choice from the one she makes about Sofia. It is embodied in her act of saving Rain from the shotgun. By raising her arm to block the bullet for Rain, she puts her own life in

danger to save another human being's life. In some sense, it shows that she changes her previous ethical choice against Sofia into ethical responsibility by wounding her arm symbolically, for the arm was used to point her finger at Sofia at court in her childhood. At the beginning of the story, her money and gift to Sofia bring out the latter's anger and triggers her violent beating. This time, Bride's wholehearted repentance is eventually echoed by Sofia's inner thoughts: "When I tend to my patients... in my mind I am putting the black girl back together, healing her, thanking her" (Morrison, *God* 77). Sofia apologies in her mind for beating Bride, which indicates a far-reaching conciliation between the two.

Bride's unconditional care shown to a mother-like figure, Queen, is also significant in terms of her new ethical choice. As a third party, Queen functions as a bridge between Bride and Booker. It is she who offers Bride Booker's journals, through which Bride not only gets a full account of Booker's attachment to her but also gets over her wrongful understanding of her body and identity. Queen urges Bride to confront Booker with an open heart while helping Booker dispel his obsession with "pure love". Under her help, the two lovers finally confront each other and clarify their misunderstanding. Furthermore, Bride confesses her sin of committing perjury against Sofia for the first time in her life, which relieves her conscious burden. Later, Queen is hospitalized because of the fire and becomes a helpless patient. When Bride is taking care of her with Booker: "They worked together like a true couple, thinking not of themselves, but of helping somebody else" (Morrison, *God* 167). Their relationship becomes congenial, for their focus is on a third person they both love.

Bride's unconditional care for Queen triggers the recovery of her physical wholeness as well as humanity. Having conciliated with Booker, Bride receives Queen's gold earrings from Booker and is thrilled to find the return of tiny holes on her earlobes. The new pair of gold rings signifies her emotional connection with Queen, which is different from the pair she got in her childhood from Sweetness. At that time, Bride's negative ethical choice gave her the holes on her earlobes and the fake golden earrings, symbolizing the "conditional", "motherlike" love that Bride gets from her biological mother. Whereas this time, she wins trust and love from a mother-like figure for her confession of the previous sin, and most importantly, through unconditional care shown to others.

The unconditional care that a brand-new Bride performs to others is in sharp contrast with the materialized interpersonal relationships she used to manage, which shows Morrison's ethical judgement of humanistic care over material bonding. Bride's cathartic journeys help her to know more about herself and instill the ethics

of care and humanity in her heart. She now has every reason to look forward to a new kind of love—"a long life of intimacy" that she has been craving all along (Morrison, *God* 39).

Ethical Theme: Natural Love

Bride's experiences from the ethical dilemma of conditional relationships to the ethical choice of unconditional care highlight Morrison's advocating of "natural love." "Love" is a constant motif in Morrison's oeuvre: "Actually, I think, all the time that I write, I'm writing about love or its absence. ……I think that I still write about the same thing, which is how people relate to one another and miss it or hang on to it. ……or are tenacious about love. About love and how to survive" (Bakerman 60). To Morrison, love is a way of survival for her characters. In *God Help the Child*, natural love is an access for Bride to survive racialized and materialized relationships. Morrison makes her stance on the theme of natural love through plotting and characterization.

First of all, Morrison seriously critiques conditional relationships through the magical realist plotting of Bride's bodily devolution. Bride wakes up one day to find her ear lobes unpierced. Soon, her pubic hair vanishes, and her breasts have gone flat. Her body gradually degenerates to the state of an immature girl, who can only wear the clothes of little Rain. With all these changes in the body, Bride senses a strangely delayed menstrual period. As the parts of her body that signal contemporary norms of beauty and womanhood outright disappear, she undergoes a "crazed transformation back into a scared little black girl" (Morrison, *God* 142), devolving back to the self-pitied, poor little black girl who is not loved by anyone.

The radical alteration in Bride's body is the negative consequence of conditional love, a product of prevailing colorism and materialism. On the one hand, Bride's physical transformation is caused by Sweetness' conditional maternal love in her childhood. It reveals her desire to return to the state of a baby and being oneness with her mother so that she might enjoy unconditional care and natural love. On the other hand, because of conditional interpersonal relationships, it is still easy for Bride to feel like she is "melting away" or "erased" by others even in adulthood (Morrison, *God 38*). The breakdown of Bride's body begins when Bride is abandoned by Booker with the latter's words: "You not the woman I want" (Morrison, *God* 8). It indicates that Bride's materialized love life does not strengthen her in maturity or self-assurance. On the contrary, it weakens her confidence and self-esteem. Therefore, when faced with interpersonal crisis, her body devolves to the ugly little black girl who is not loved or admired by anyone.

Morrison's critique of unnatural love is further conveyed through the characterization of two figures, namely Queen's marital experiences and Booker's love for his dead brother Adam. Queen "knew from personal experience how hard loving was, how selfish and how easily sundered" (Morrison, *God* 158). To her, unnatural love is hard to last for long, and its selfishness harms people's relationships and sometimes destroys people's lives. In Queen's wisdom of love, "Youth being the excuse for that fortune-cookie love—until it wasn't, until it became pure adult stupidity" (Morrison, *God* 158). Young people's love is based on luck mostly, which becomes stupid when they are old. Queen's love is also shallow and naïve when she is young; therefore, her love has been abused by her ex-husbands for practical purposes: "American citizenship, U.S. passport, financial help, nursing care or a temporary home" (Morrison *God* 159). Thus, Queen becomes a victim of unnatural love: her children are taken away from her, leaving her in isolation in her senior years.

Booker's unnatural love is represented in his insistence on "love of purity," which cost him a harmonious family bonding and his romance with Bride. Morrison criticizes Booker's love for his favorite brother as being unnatural and conditional: "Except for Adam I don't know anything about love. Adam had no faults, was innocent, pure, easy to love. Had he lived, grown up to have flaws, human failings like deception, foolishness, and ignorance, would he be so easy to adore or be even worthy of adoration?" (Morrison, *God* 160) Therefore, Booker chastises himself that "What kind of love is it that requires an angel and only an angel for its commitment?" (Morrison, *God* 160) In Morrison's view, "love of purity" is not natural love; it is not love at all.

Moreover, Morrison depicts Bride's epiphany to natural love alongside the Steve family's emotional bonding, as apposed to Bride's former experience of being rejected by her community and family. While Sweetness' raising of Bride lacks natural love, Steve, Evelyn and Rain are well versed in the way of conducting themselves in positive relationships, which opens Bride's eyes to a loving family. When she listens to Steve and Evelyn sharing their love story, Bride can see "the light of pleasant memories shining in the looks they exchanged" (Morrison, *God* 91). Their romantic relationship is true and genuine, with reciprocating care and love for each other. When she hears Evelyn singing with Rain, she envies a lot—"How nice it would have been if mother and daughter could have sung together" (Morrison, *God* 87). In a certain sense, the Steve family serve as a moral model of natural love for Bride. "Moral model is.....a rational person, who moves people by virtue.....and continuously improves morality in ethical choices.....are equipped

with the ability to inspire people"(Nie *Introduction* 248). Steve, Evelyn and Rain not only save Bride's life but also bring self-consciousness out of Bride and lead her to an understanding of the true nature of love.

Last but not least, natural love helps Bride retrieve her physical beauty and survival of wholeness at the end of the story. She will welcome her newly bred child with Booker, whose arrival is about to open a new chapter in her life. The story ends with Morrison's clear exposition of the theme of natural love: Bride is offered by Booker "..... the hand she had craved all her life, the hand that did not need a lie to deserve it, the hand of trust and caring for—a combination that some call natural love" (Morrison, *God* 175). Natural love is composed of "trust and caring for" and provides "comfort, emotional security" for Bride (Morrison, *God* 79). It creates the "shine of happiness" in the "dreamy eyes" of Bride and Booker, like those of Steve and Evelyn when they are telling their love stories (Morrison, *God* 175). As Morrison has commented, we are living "in a world where we are all of us, in some measure, victims of something" (Bakerman 60). Bride is a victim of racism and materialism, with the former denying her worth as a human being and the latter objectizing her as a commodity. Both deprive her of her humanity and natural relationships with others. However, Bride manages to "survive whole" at last, because she is lucky enough to "have the emotional strength and/or support from family and friends" (Morrison *Bluest* IX), and the damage to her life is reduced and erased by the power of natural love.

Conclusion

In *God Help the Child*, Morrison clarifies her critique of Bride's lack of humanity resulting from colorism and materialism and puts forward her ethical view. Through apposing two different kinds of human relationships and making her ethical judgement, Morrison shows her ethical choice of natural love, the kind of love that children are most likely to receive from their caregivers.

For one thing, Bride's mother Sweetness rejects mother-daughter bonding in excuse of protecting her daughter from racism, which devastatingly hinders her daughter's self-identification. The surreal devolution of Bride's body into that of a little girl expresses a mix of temptation and resistance to remaining the "poor little black girl," a victim of her mother's cruel withholding of love. Thus, she wraps herself around memories of early trauma and hangs on to the identity of the traumatized child stuck in racism. The early teaching affects her adult life as well: she is used to dealing with all human relationships in conditional terms.

For another, the Steve family greatly influences Bride by showing her what

unconditional care is. The caring ethics shown by the Steve family reminds her that she can obtain emotional bonding and spiritual enrichment through genuine care and sincere love. Under their influences, Bride starts to concentrate the ethics of care on others and finally wins natural love from Booker and Queen.

All in all, Morrison reflects the urgency that one must overcome the ethical dilemma of conditional relationships to go forwards with unconditional care and natural love. Bride seems to have achieved the elusive aims of wholeness, self-admiration and communal care that Morrison's other young women characters—from Jadine in *Tar Baby*, to Nel in *Sula*, to Christine Cosy in *Love* —are still striving for.

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“I Do Not Own My People, I Own Slaves”: The Formation of Slave Owners’ Consciousness in Edward Jones’s *The Known World*

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Abstract The article deals with Edward P. Jones’s postmodern historical novel *The Known World*. The first part of the article concentrates on the revision of the official history of slavery. It is argued that the novel reconsiders the realities of the past through the narrator’s invention of facts. This symbiosis when history becomes fiction and fiction becomes history opens the possibility of filling the gaps that have been created by the grand historical narrative. In this particular novel, it is the invisibility of black slave holders in the dominant discourse of slavery. In the second part of the article, it has been argued that the novel correlates with recent criticism related to organic racial identity and with essentialist views about collective consciousness. The research then can be located in a broader paradigm of destabilizing the ideology of identity that privileged race, gender, and sexual orientation. The author pays particular attention to the technology of inventing the black slave owner’s consciousness. It is concluded that the black slave owners’ identities have been constructed through the interpretation of the raw material of the experience with a reference to the formulated practices and protocols of white slave owners. Although some of the slave owners understand that they are trapped into the ideology of slavery they cannot escape it. They become rather ambivalent about owning people of their race but still cannot resist the social structure. Being inserted into the ideology of slavery they must obey it.

Key words collective racial identity; the slave owner’s consciousness; Edward Jones; *The Known World;* a postmodern historical novel

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Introduction

Edward P. Jones's novel *The Known World* (2003) has initiated a new shift in the fictional discourse of slavery in the US. The realization of his endeavor correlates with a new sense of history and a new experience of historicity. The impossibility to capture the past in its totality, a denial of its fixity determined Jones's fictionalization of history. This approach to history reminds Jean Baudrillard's observation, "History is our lost referential, that is to say our myth" (Baudrillard 43). Frederick Jameson in his "The Historical Novel Today, or, Is It Still Possible?" sounds similar, "In the postmodern, where the original no longer exists and everything is an image, there can no longer be any question either of the accuracy or truth of representation or of any aesthetic of mimesis either" (Jameson 293). Taking as the main premise the impossibility of history, Jones chooses the strategy of producing fake facts and "post-truth" reality. The Oxford Dictionaries define "post-truth" as "relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion that appeals to emotions and personal belief" (qtd. in McIntyre 5). The aim of creating fake facts is not so much about lying as about showing indifference to what is considered to be true. McIntyre considers that in the era of post-truth feelings are more important than facts. Catherine Gallagher explains the nature of counterfacts and alternative histories, "The belief in the contingency of historical facts is an invitation to speculate about what might have happened instead, and the thought experiments we call counterfactual history accept that invitation by imagining alternative historical events" (Gallagher 1129). Further, she underlines that the distinction between fact and fiction becomes negligible when we deal with literary texts that rely on counterfactual.

Inventing Facts and Creating Archive

Edward Jones freely constructs and creates his version of the past of slavery as there is no archive for it. This simulacrum of history becomes history through producing

census and historical records, as well as historical places. Fiction does the work that history can not do. In an interview, Jones says: "The census records I made up for Manchester were, again, simply to make the reader feel that the town and the country and the people lived and breathed in central Virginia once upon a time before the country was 'swallowed up' by surrounding counties" (Jones 390). Accordingly, the novel starts with a bare statement that sounds like a historical record and datum: "In 1885 in Manchester County, Virginia there were thirty-four free black families, with a mother and father and one child or more, and eight of those free families owned slaves, and all eight knew one another's business. When the War between the States came, the number of slave-owning blacks in Manchester would be down to five, and one of those included an extremely morose man who, according to the U.S. census of 1860, legally owned his own wife and five children and three grandchildren" (Jones 7). This historical fact as well as many other data in the novel is the bare invention of the author. Meantime, it does not mean that black slave owners did not exist at all. As Catherine Gallagher claims, "the actual history and the invented counterfacts are closely interconnected in ways that preserve but also transform the facts" (Gallagher 1131). This symbiosis when history becomes fiction and fiction becomes history opens the possibility of filling the gaps that have been created by the grand historical narrative. In this particular novel, it is the invisibility of black slave holders in the dominant discourse of slavery. This lost history Jones is trying to verbalize.

As the narrative continues to unfold, the narrator provides us with historical places, numerous simulated US census, and other documents that function as authentic and therefore give the impression of the historical accuracy of the narration, its believability. Additionally, Jones specifies the year of each particular event and connects it to a broader "historical context" invented by him. For instance, the fire of 1912 in Manchester County, "when all the judicial records of the county were destroyed" (Jones 176); the year 1850, when "a delegate from Manchester had the law changed" and black slave owners were allowed to purchase slaves by themselves; and many others.

At times the narrator even confers his simulated historical facts by a hypothetical witness or a researcher like a University of Virginia historian or the Canadian pamphlet writer Anderson Frazier. Jones depicts the realities of the plantation life with such factographical accuracy that it is difficult to believe he has invented all the facts. For instance, the description of the institution of slave patrols (which was a reality of the system of slavery) is done with assurance and credibility: "But the idea (of the slave patrols—M. Sh.) would take root and grow with the

disappearance of Rita, the woman who became a kind of mother to Henry after Augustus Townsend bought his wife Mildred to freedom. Before the angel/man on the road and Rita's disappearance, Manchester County, Virginia, had not had much problem with the disappearance of slaves since 1837" (Jones 26).

If history and chronology are impossible in a postmodern world of simulacra then we can imagine them. Jones has created the locus of the county and town of Manchester, Virginia as well as the census records, but gave them the concreteness of truth and real facts. In the novel, a simulacrum of fact functions as a real historical fact, and the reader is engaged in the postmodern game called history. Jones invents his own history of the slavery era, where imagined events and places act as historical ones. The author's playing with the facts and milieu goes along the creation of a complex individuality of characters drawn from the epoch of slavery and historicizing them. *The Known World* is rich in characters that are described as real historical people. This is achieved with the help of a simulacrum of biography and biographical facts.

The omniscient narrator knows everything about Manchester Country, but how is it possible if the fire ruined all the documents. How does the narrator know about all the events he is sharing with a reader? Who knows the Known world? The only answer for this is the tapestry made by Alice Night, a former slave. The tapestry serves as a raw material that the narrator uses to reconstruct historical events. Calvin describes Alice's art to his sister Caldonia: "This one is about your home, Caldonia. It is your plantation, and again, it is what God sees when He looks down. There is nothing missing, not a cabin, not a bar, not a chicken, not a horse. Not a single person is missing. I suspect that if you were to count the blades of grass, the number would be correct as it was once when the creator of this work knew the world" (Jones 385). The tapestry preserves history and gives coherence to the fragmented stories that constitute the narrative.

The novel does not merely exploit the traumatic period of slavery in a linear array of causes followed by effects. The narration of the novel floats on different time zones, but fuzzy temporal orders are not constrained by remembering. It is worth mentioning that this shift from remembering to accounting makes Jones's narrative distinct from many African American writings of the second part of the twentieth century. He moves away from representing slave history through reliving or experiencing. In other words, he moves away from the strategy that W. B. Michaels defines as: "the conversion of history into memory", which helps the readers to make the historical past a part of their own experience. Instead Jones predominantly uses simulated factographical reports. Although the novel deals

with an unusual reality of the slave past (black slave owners), it is still indebted to slavery as a cornerstone stone of African American fiction, as its main metaphor. The fact of (re)making slave history situates Jones in the paradigm of melancholic historicism to some extent still dominating African American writing.

Thematic and enriched temporality goes beyond strict chronology. Jones accelerates time, gives it an incredible velocity. This helps him to unfold characters' lives according to a sort of organic temporality, in which a given moment is deeply connected with earlier or later moments. Temporal shifts are made with the help of the meager author's factual report. After the description of the death of a black slave owner Henry Townsend follows a dry factographical report about the future of some of this slave's children:

> Tessie would soon be six years old and being the child of her parents who she was, she listened and stopped skipping. Tessie would live to be ninety-seven years old, and the doll her father was making for her would be with her until her last hour. She and the doll, long missing the corn-silk hair Elias her father had put on it, would outlive two of her children, and the doll would outlive her. (Jones 67)

The narrative pattern of proleptic references, which ruins a linear narration, takes place throughout the novel when the narrator describes the future lives of the characters. Jones's abundant use of ellipsis, when the discourse time skips to a later part of not only a specified story time, but to the "historical reality" (invented by himself), makes us believe that we are reading about real historical persons. An omnipresent voice can penetrate the fates of characters and tell us like an oracle what would happen to them in the future. This authoritative voice and his reports create the illusion of the historical truth within the narration. The narrator refuses to make things timeless or achronic. Instead, he locates them in time and therefore records in the present a vanishing past, or better to say a fictionalized past. The polychrony of the novel is organized on the grounds of the temporal continuum that stretches between story time and discourse time.

The Identity of Slave Owners

The theme Jones (re)introduces, that is of black slave owners, correlates with the recent criticism of organic racial identity and essentialist views about collective consciousness. The novel can be located in a broader paradigm of destabilizing the ideology of identity that privileged race, gender, and sexual orientation. The main

agenda of identity politics—an attempt to construct and impose certain images and formal representations—has failed because people are marginalized or subordinated not only to these rigorous categories. As Adolf Reed argues, "The abstract and hermetic language of positionality, difference, and otherness fixes the interpretive lens at a point so remote from the way people live their lives and from themselves in the everyday world we all share—the world of seeking, working, worrying about a job, finding, and consuming healthcare, forming and maintaining personal attachments, paying bills, raising children, playing, fretting about the future, shopping for furniture, trying to make sense of current events—that it never confronts very mundane questions that expose the inadequacy of essentializing notions of identity" (Reed xvii). Nevertheless, for almost the whole twentieth century identity politics and cultural politics defined the fictional and critical discourse while, for example, class identity had been neglected.

Black community was formed as a community of oppressed individuals and as a community that resists oppressive outside forces. Therefore the focus has been shifted from internal to external dynamics. Mystification of black collectivity produced a homogeneous organic imaginary community of poor black people. In this context, denial or forgetting slavery leads to the disappearance or refusal of black identity. That is why the insistence on remembering slavery has become an imperative in the fictional works of black writers during the second part of the twentieth century. The invention and the following construction of monolithic African American collectivity in the twentieth century did not include the black middle class. The very mystification of black collectivity or the process of race-craft (Karen E. Fields, Barbara J. Fields) grounded on the idea and rhetoric of oppression and victimization did not allow the existence of black slave owners. Blacks did not belong to an economic class, but instead, they belonged "to a 'group' whose 'cultural and social characteristics' are a 'historical legacy'" (Michaels 31).

In *The Known World*, Edward Jones is rewriting the ideology of black collectivity through the way of inserting into it "people who owned their own people". Unlike Jessie Fauset, Nella Larsen, Rudolf Fisher, and Wallace Thurman, he is not writing about the urban middle class but starts with the formation of the first representatives of the black slave owners and their community. What is peculiar in this situation is the fact of the scrupulous description of the technology of inventing the black slave owner's consciousness.

Before we analyze this process, it worth considering the epistemic nature of collective identity from the post-positivist perspective that problematizes two main biases toward identity: essentialist and postmodernist (fabricated). Satya P. Mohanty

observes:

> The most basic questions about identity call for a more general reexamination of the relation between personal experience and public meanings—subjective choices and evaluations, on the one hand, and objective social location, on the other. (Mohanty 1)

The key issue in Mohanty's view of identity is personal experience (the variety of ways people process information) and its social interpretation. Personal feelings and emotions are the raw material for which society provides a particular interpretation.

The crucial and defining role in the construction of a black slave owner's identity belongs to a white slave owner who functions as an interpreter of feelings of the former. The white plantation owner William Robbins's desire to organize a black slave owner's community grows from his interests. Having two children, Dora and Louis, from his former slave, Philomena, Robbins is thinking about their future environment. They would not be accepted by the rich whites, so he is an organizer of their own community that includes free educated black slave owners. That is why Robbins is ready to pay for Henry's education: "He still wanted Henry in any world his black children would have to inhabit, but wrestling around with Moses had shown him how unprepared Henry was" (Jones 128).

Henry Townsend, the former slave of Robbins and the son of Augustus Townsend who bought himself out of slavery when he was twenty-two, owns thirteen women, eleven men, and nine children. He started his free life with one slave, Moses, whom he purchased from his former master. At that period of his life, his attitude toward Moses was not that of a master as his identity of a slave owner was in the process of formation. William Robbins makes sense of relations between a former slave and his property. One day, when he comes to visit his former groom and sees that Henry is working hard with Moses building the new house, he immediately urges Henry to recognize such friendship as illegitimate and unjustifiable.

"Henry," Robbins said, looking not at him but out to the other side of the road, "The law will protect you as a master to your slave, and it will not flinch when it protects you. That protection lasts from here"—and he pointed to an imaginary place in the road—"all the way to the death of that property"—and he pointed to a place a few feet from the first place. "But the law expects you to know what is master and what is slave. And it doesn't matter if you are not much more darker than your slave. The law is blind to that. You are the master and that is all the law

wants to know" (Jones 123).

In this case, Henry's emotions need to be adjusted to what is acceptable or unacceptable in the society of slave owners. He acknowledges the rules and standards of the white world and interprets his personal experience accordingly. His social location is organizing his experience. The cognitive structures which social agents implement in their practical knowledge of the social world are internalized, "embodied" social structures:

> The practical knowledge of the social world that is presupposed by 'reasonable' behaviour within it implements classificatory schemes (or 'forms of classification,' 'mental structures' or 'symbolic forms'—apart from their connotations, these expressions are virtually interchangeable), historical schemes of perception and appreciation which are the product of the objective division into classes (age groups, genders, social classes) and which function below the level of consciousness and discourse. Being the product of the incorporation of the fundamental structures of a society, these principles of division are common to all the agents of the society and make possible the production of a common, meaningful world, a common-sense world. (Bourdieu 466)

A new slave owner needs to internalize the structures of his new habitus. Belonging to a social formation of slave owners he needs to share their set of perceptual schemes or better to say their social mythology. Henry's subject construction, his shift from an individual to subject, is done through interpellation by the ideology of the plantation system.

Internalizing the social paradigms, practices, values, and ideologies of the slave owner, Henry puts himself in opposition to his father who doesn't support the idea of owning people. Once Henry told his parents that he bought the first slave Moses, they could not accept the fact: Augustus said quietly, "I promised myself when I got this little bit of land that I would never suffer a slaveowner to set foot on it. Never." He put his hand momentarily to his mouth and then tugged at his beard. "Of all human beins on God's earth I never once thought the first slaveowner I would tell to leave my place would be my own child. I never thought it would be you. Why did we ever buy you offa Robbins if you gon do this? Why trouble with ourselves with you being free, Henry? You could not have hurt me more if you had cut off my arms and my legs" (Jones 138).

Embodying the power of language, the last sentence in this quote makes readers not understand but rather feel how the fact that Henry owns people hurts his

parents. According to Paul de Man, this language of force or power "has the materiality of something that actually happens, that actually occurs" (de Man 134). By the way, this power of language, when we experience a text (see and feel) but do not understand it, is strongly represented in postcolonial literatures. Thus, it led to the concentration on the descriptions of trauma in postmodern historical novels and "our experiencing (rather than learning about) things that never actually happened to us" (Michaels 21). In this sense trauma and memory are re-described as history and the past is no more "the object of knowledge" (Michaels 188).

Henry has been constructed as a subject within plantation ideology, and he responds to his father: "I ain't done nothing that any white man wouldn't do. I ain't broke no law. I ain't. You listen here" (Jones 138). Although he has not failed to recognize his interpellation, his ideological recognition of the situation is described through his building of the house and the choice of the locus for it:

> When Henry, at twenty, bought his first piece of land from Robbins, he told his parents right off. The land was miles from where they lived but a short ride from Robbins's plantation, though it was not connected. By the time he died he would own all the land between him and Robbins so that there was nothing separating what they owned. (Jones 122)

Henry reshapes his values and interprets the world according to his new identity. In the novel, he is not the only representative of free blacks who own slaves. Jones writes about a community of black slave owners who belong to "the great ideological mystification" (Althusser), realized in political, ethical, legal, and even aesthetic practices. For example, the teacher Fern Elston who did not "pass", although she was white-skinned, owns "some Negroes." When Anderson Frazier, a white man from Canada, traveling in the South and writing pamphlets about "curiosities and oddities" of life there, tells Fern that owning a slave reminds him of owning the people in his own family. She responds:

> Well, Mr. Frazier, it is not the same as owning people in your own family. It is not the same at all… All of us do only what the law and God tell us we can do. None of us who believes in the law and God does more than that… I did not own my family, and you must not tell people that I did. I did not. We did not. We owned … We owned slaves. It was what was done, and so that is what we did. (Jones 108–109)

Although some of the slave owners understand that they are trapped into the ideology of slavery they cannot escape it. They become rather ambivalent about owning people of their race but still cannot resist the social structure. Being inserted into the ideology of slavery they must obey. Calvin, the brother of Henry Townsend's wife, feels uncomfortable being a slave owner, but is afraid of his mother:

> He and his mother had thirteen slaves to their names, but he was not a happy young man. Whenever he talked to her about freeing them, as he often did, Maude, his mother, would call them his legacy and say that people with all their facilities did not sell off their legacies… His father had died a slow death three years before, shriveling and drying up like a leaf in a rainless December, and Calvin always suspected that his mother had poisoned him because his father had been planning to free all their slaves—their legacy. (Jones 66)

Adding more details, Jones several times repeats special moments from Maude's life to describe the cruelest crime she committed, the murder of her husband, who wanted to free their slaves before his death. Possessing the false consciousness of the ideology of slavery, Maude even after that keeps the arsenic. She warns Caldonia after Henry's death: "I don't want you to be like your father, mired in so much grief he didn't know right from wrong" (Jones 180). For her as an interpellated subject of slavery right means following the rules and social structures of the plantation system. Maude's slave owner identity as well as other black slave owners has been constructed through the interpretation of the raw material of the experience with a reference to the constructed practices and protocols of white slave owners. As Satya Mohanty writes, "Our deepest personal experiences are socially constructed, mediated by visions and values that are 'political' in nature, that refer outward to the world beyond the individual" (Mohanty 3). The black slave owners read the world according to the strategies of the Significant Others.

The text also points to ambivalent feelings about owning people. Once Fern receives abolitionist pamphlets, her former pupils and then friends discuss the issue of slavery. Although they all cannot bear the idea of subjugation, still they speak as subjects of the plantation system. Fern states: "I realized all over again that if I were in bondage I would slash my master's throat on the first day. I wonder why they all have not risen up and done that" (Jones 288). Asked what side she would choose if there were a war between masters and slaves, the teacher answers: "I do not think I would fare very well as a dressmaker's apprentice. 'Yessum' and 'Yessuh' do not

come easily from my mouth. My hands, my body, they fear the dirt of the field" (Jones 289). They all depend on the economy of the slavery system, or as Maude said to Caldonia, "the legacy is your future" (Jones 180). Black slave owners make sense of their social reality with the help of the ideology of slavery. In this context Barbara and Karen Fields state:

> Ideology is the language of consciousness that suits the particular way in which people deal with their fellows. It is the interpretation in thought of the social relations through which they constantly create and recreate their collective being. (Fields 134)

They (black slave owners) feel what is appropriate to feel in their social milieu, although some of them deep in their souls resist owning people of their race, they are trapped by the ruling ideology. Moreover, they have to repeat and follow its rituals on a daily basis, because "an ideology must be constantly created and verified in social life; if it is not, it dies, even though it may seem to be safely embodied in a form that can be handed down" (Fields 137).

Conclusion

In conclusion, Edward P. Jones's novel *The Known World* represents an approach to history as fiction and imagination. He invents the past and moves away from narrative strategies of (re)memory or conjuring, developed by Toni Morrison, Gloria Naylor, and bell hooks. Jones introduces a new topic in African American writings -- black slave owners, which is effective for destabilizing and deconstructing of the idea of organic racial ideology. The formation the identity of the black slave owners is realized through their appropriation of the ideology of slavery. Although some of the black slave owners understand that they have been interpellated still they can not escape the ideological chimera. Through the repetition of daily practices of racial intolerance and prejudice, they contribute to the functioning of the racial ideology.

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Identity Politics on LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka's Stage: The Monolith of Culture and the Trope of Blackness as Vectors of Racial Otherness

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Abstract Culture is central in LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka's scheme of black identity construction. The concepts of culture and identity become substantial as Baraka's nationalism gains momentum. The playwright decisively engraves black identity in a larger cultural context and a broader racial history. This can be explained in terms of Baraka's espousal of an eclectic ideology that blends both culture and race. Culture and race transpire then to finally fuse. Consequently, Baraka moves in the direction of building identities that hinge on culture and declares blackness as intrinsic difference. The articulation of difference is comparable to the assertion of one's self as absolutely distinct. Such paradigmatic blackness comes to the fore as a result of white identitarian hegemony and racial supremacy. I shall take issue in this paper with black identity formation and its dependence on culture. The second part of this paper sheds light upon the trope of blackness as categorical difference closely related to the notion of race. This paper demonstrates the paramount significance of culture in the construction of black identity, and dispels the silence of the critical literature on matters relating to culture, difference, and identity in several plays written by Baraka during his various shifts of ideological position. It also argues for the importance of black culture and the positioning of blackness at the heart of identity politics.

Key words culture; identity; difference; sameness; blackness; race; membership

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Introduction

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, the black theatre stressed the importance of the stage as a platform of cultural enunciation and voicing of the existent dissimilarities between Western culture and black subculture. Olga Barrios, a notable theatre critic, points out that the black theatre of the 1960s "insisted on and praised the existence of another culture that had grown parallel to the Anglo-American: that of African Americans" (*Black Theater* 27). In a racially configured society where the culture of WASP-dom is predominant, black identity proclaims its differentness and distances itself from hegemonic framings. Victor Leo Walker II asserts that "Baraka attacks Euro-American cultural hegemony and advocates a separate African American social and cultural identity" (*Archetype* 239). Baraka's belief in black culture as a unified category gains strength and intensifies. Baraka is ultimately conscious of the status of the black culture as an 'other' culture. The fact remains that he considers the culture of black people as, in Homi K. Bhabha's phrase, "a body of difference" (*Location* 46).

Baraka's conversion to nationalism makes him view black culture as a monolith. It is no mere coincidence, then, that the dramatist bases black identity chiefly on shared cultural components and objectives. Baraka's version of cultural nationalism, it must be said, aims at constructing a distinct cultural identity. Here, it is worth noting that nationalism is tightly linked to identity. Defining the ties between the construct of nationalism, culture, and identity, Anthony D. Smith, a pioneer ethnographer, contends that nationalism is primarily concerned with issues of cultural identity (*Nationalism* 77). It remains equally true that race is also central to black nationalism. As Hazel Arnett Ervin puts it with regard to black nationalism and the construction of identity, "It [black nationalism] is also the

belief that black-identified people should collectively define themselves on the basis of race and adopt a politics that emphasizes pan-racial rather than global goals" (*Literary Criticism* 36). In Baraka's theatre, it transpires that culture is central in the construction of identity.

As Baraka's commitment to the nationalist cause grows stronger, he seems increasingly inclined to perceive black culture as tightly linked to black people. In *Blues People*, a book in which the dramatist theoretically muses on the construct of culture, Baraka writes: "The African cultures, the retention of some parts of these cultures in America, and the weight of the step culture produced the American Negro" (7). Besides, in "The Legacy of Malcolm X," a very informative essay where Baraka exposes his visions on various topics, he declares: "Black People are a race, a culture, a Nation" (Baraka, *Reader* 161-7). Noticeably, culture is frequently interpellated and constantly associated with the nation and nationhood. Baraka increasingly asserts that Blacks constitute a 'nation'—a nation with its proper culture. This nation-centred perspective makes culture become the principal provider of identity. Baraka's view of black culture corresponds with Edward Said's when the latter declares that "Culture is a source of identity" (XIII). This correspondence rests upon Said's and Baraka's views regarding historically subjugated people.

The dramatist primarily embeds black identity in shared cultural characteristics. In this context, a nationalist black culture is erected to ward off historic amnesia and deculturation in an effort to construct what Bhabha terms "liberatory, non-repressed identity" (62). Therefore, the assertion of black cultural distinctiveness becomes a necessity dictated by an emergent cultural identity. The cultural turns out to be a designator of the newly born black entity. Accordingly, it becomes legitimate for Blacks to lay the first bricks of a black entity with its idiosyncratic culture and identity. Culture, as Baraka regards it, is the epicenter of black being and the prime source of persistence. Thus, black culture becomes the bedrock upon which black religion, politics, art, folklore, and rituals are implanted. On another plane, when blackness (Baraka's consideration of African Americans as quintessentially black) is foregrounded it becomes eventually a catalyst for difference.

I shall take issue in this paper with identity formation and its reliance on culture. The latter, as I shall show, is pivotal in Baraka's project of identity construction. The category of culture, as I will explain, evolves as Baraka's nationalism grows firmer. The second part of this paper copes with the trope of blackness as difference. Identity, as I shall spell out, is synonymous with specificity, and blackness becomes the site of the articulation of black differentness. Will Kymlicka's and Charles Taylor's thoughts in the field of sociology and political

science will inform the discussion on issues of cultural membership and dominant social formations. The postcolonial perspective to which Homi Bhabha and Frantz Fanon adhere proves illuminating with regard to the question of difference and otherness and its connection to sameness. This paper posits the centrality of culture in the construction of black identity, and dispels the silence of criticism and paucity of critical attention to matters of culture, difference, and identity in the theatrical works of Amiri Baraka. Due to the disinterest of the critical literature as regards the problematization of identity and culture in the playwright's early to middle to late plays, this paper argues for the vitality of black culture and the placement of blackness in the heart of identity politics.

The Involvement of Culture in the Genesis of Black Identity: Implications and Manifestations

Generally speaking, the characters that people plays such as *Madheart* (1971), *A Black Mass* (1971), and, to a certain extent, *Experimental Death Unit # 1* (1971), endeavor to cultivate a sense of cultural cohesion and compatibility based on sameness and predicated on identicalness. Culture is then steered toward the territory of identity formation in an effort to deal with age-long cultural prejudice. Culture, in Baraka's playtexts, is coterminous with the development and construction of black identity. Noticeably, it is interpellated to chronicle and harbor that popular patrimony of black people. Obviously, culture plays a leading role of a defence mechanism against public attempts of suppression of the legacy of cultural prejudice. Culture definitely provides the source and mainstay necessary to perpetuate and undergird all the forms vital for survival. As a result, cultural identity becomes the ineluctable destiny of the black man.

The play *The Slave*[1] (1964) exposes the processual espousal of a cultural identity in the person of Walker Vessels. Described as militant drama, *The Slave* focuses on the black man (Walker) as a potential revolutionist. The aesthetics of the revolutionary act, the reality of racial splintering, and the construction

1 *The Slave* (1964) focuses on the black man (Walker) as a potential revolutionist. The aesthetics of the revolutionary act, the reality of racial splintering, and the construction of a novel identity form the major foci of the play. The setting of the play is a battleground of race war, and the play's action foregrounds Walker's encounter with his former white wife, Grace, and her husband, Easley, one of Walker's former liberal professors. The encounter takes place at the culmination of the fighting, when Walker returns to the Easleys' home to settle old scores. The encounter is replete with racial tensions and confrontations.

of a novel identity form the major foci of the play. The setting of the play is a battleground of race war, and the play's action foregrounds Walker's encounter with his former white wife, Grace, and her husband, Easley, one of Walker's former liberal professors. Apparently, there is no cultural grounds for the staged racial confrontation. Still, there is an intellectual basis as Walker is characterized as educated and lettered. The play displays Walker's interest in poetry and writing. The latter appears to be a cultural organizer and a political activist on the way to maturation. He represents that enthusiastic response to white dogmatism.

In certain identitarian respects, when Walker feels that he is bound to his people, he spontaneously closes ranks with Blacks to "change the complexion of tyranny"[1] What draws Walker to the black cause is the cruelty of oppression. That is why he blows up universities, bombards cities, and participates in general strikes. Walker, later on, corroborates to Easley that Blacks have historically been compromised. "The country twisted 'em'. The country had twisted them for so long,"[2] Walker answers Easley in a lengthy conversation. Increasingly, Walker identifies his fellow Blacks as a particular referential group oriented toward liberation. In *Black and White Racial Identity*, Janet E. Helms notes:

> Reference-group orientation refers to the extent to which one uses particular groups; for example, Blacks or Whites in this country, to guide one's feelings, thoughts, and behaviors. One's reference-group orientation is reflected in such things as value systems, organizational memberships, ideologies, and so on. (5)

This backs up Walker's new allegiances and increasing identification with other Blacks. In the play *A Black Mass*[3], the black characters voice their creed regarding knowledge, creation, and inventiveness. Through the dramatization of the myth of Jacub, Baraka assigns the lion's share to 'black' science and culture for the cultural revolution to flourish and take roots within the black community. The play's major characters are Nasafi, Tanzil, and Jacub. The setting is a testing ground where Nasafi and Tanzil are working on a new invention. Jacub finally creates a monster-like

1 Amiri Baraka, *Dutchman and the Slave* (New York: Morrow, 1964) 66.

2 Baraka, *The Slave*, 77.

3 The play *A Black Mass* (1971) is a dramatization of the myth of Jacub, and its central characters are Nasafi, Tanzil, and Jacub. The setting is a chemical laboratory where Nasafi and Tanzil are concocting an elixir to combat oppressive time and where Jacub is trying to create a living organism. Jacub finally creates a white monster. The three scientists discuss the futility of aimless knowledge and inhumane science.

creature. The three black inventers debate the sterility of absurd knowledge and the irrationality of preposterous science of the white culture. In Barakian terms, 'black' knowledge is the alternative and could constitute what Bhabha calls in *The Location of Culture* "the knowledge of cultural difference" (45).

The play's stage directions indicate that the black scientists are deliberating within a laboratory replete with book rarities, codices, and machines. This mirrors what Baraka calls the learnedness reflective of the black national culture. The scientists are identified as black, rejoicing over their inventiveness and exploratory talent. Nasafi refers to Jacub as black and full of human care.[1] This is an indication of the values of humanity and dignity embedded in black culture. Tanzil assumes that the black scientists are representative of humankind. Arguing with Jacub about rationality and humanist thought, Tanzil highlights that effete rationality produces "anti-humanity," "abstractions," and "opposites."[2] Tanzil's caveats to Jacub shows his profound concern about the conservation of black science and the perpetuation of the culture of pacifism. The rejection of whiteness (here it is perceived as otherness) is itself an incentive to safeguard one's cultural identity, draw demarcating boundaries, and secure one's territories.

Beneath the racial message of the play, there is certainly a cultural one that sustains a novel conception of cultural identity. At the outset of the play, Nasafi praises the strengths of black people. 'Black' science involves observation, experimentation, and speculation, which merits celebration. In this respect, black knowledge is the upholder of black cultural forms and symbols. Black science is one feature of the cultural identity—an identity that is culture-based, relying on the endowments of black people. Worthy of applause and pride are black artistic forms the way Nasafi puts it in the beginning of the play. Black intellectual production and technology are one of the cornerstones of black culture; they are highly effective tools in the cultural struggle to withstand cultural backwardness. Because it is the time of "nation time," the scientists are concerned with temporal lengthiness and linear procession in an effort to usher in what Bhabha labels "cultural temporalities" (3). What is sought is a temporal rupture to enhance cultural enunciation and signification, for the perceived current temporality seems laden with injustice and cultural harm. That is why the black scientists are preparing a beverage to vanquish time, and invert the old equation of cultural bias.

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1 Baraka, *A Black Mass* (London: Calder and Boyars LTD, 1971) 26.

2 Baraka, *Black Mass*, 26.

The play *Madheart*[1] can be defined in terms of Black Nationalism accompanied by the articulation of blackness and its emphasis on liberated awareness and cultural affirmation. The play revolves around the themes of cultural revival, racial uplift, and the redirection of the identitarian conductor. Its central characters are Black Man and Black Woman, and Sister and Mother. Devil Lady, Black Man's nemesis, stands for white cultural prejudice, racial bigotry, and Americentric values and norms. As staunch advocates of the black national cause, Black Man and Black Woman are the enforcers of imperial blackness, ethic elevation, and the burgeoning cultural renewal. In trying to defy the white 'thing', the play's protagonists vociferously articulate their refusal of imposed acculturation and forced homogenization emanating from the white culture of WASP' dom.

The exorcistic acts of Black Man's and Black Woman's counterdiscursive practice emphasize the obligation to mount a cultural platform to curb the cultural shock and the encroachment of prevailing white values. That the two protagonists join forces in that direction is undeniable, especially when Black Woman becomes the ally of Black Man. More specifically, this gesture signals that unity induces membership and connectivity. In this context, Kymlicka argues that "cultural membership is important in pursuing our essentialist interest in leading a good life, and so consideration of that membership is an important part of having equal consideration for the interests of each member of the community" (Kymlicka, *Liberalism* 165). Therefore, allegiance and loyalty to the group is of paramount urgency because it simply means consideration, respect, and pursuit of one's own interests.

Mother and Sister seem to lose that compass necessary for the re-entry into the cultural group. For, as Kymlicka puts it in his seminal article "Individual and Community Rights," the loss of cultural membership "is a profound harm that reduces one's very ability to make meaningful choices" (25). Cultural identity indicates those noble ends, choices, and interests to construct the creed, rules, and regulations of the group. From a cultural point of view, Devil Lady represents cultural aggression because she inculcates an image of baseness in Sister's image of herself. In this direction, Charles Taylor argues that "dominant groups tend to

1 The play *Madheart* (1971) revolves around the themes of the sexual allegiance and racial integrity of every black woman and man. Its central characters are Black Man and Black Woman, Sister and Mother, and Devil Lady. The latter is a symbol of whiteness and sexual dominance and lure. As black nationalists, Black Man and Black Woman engage in a fight to vanquish the myth of blond beauty, moral superiority, and cultural prestige. It is worth noting that the play lacks plot, like most of Baraka's agit-prop or nationalist plays.

entrench their hegemony by inculcating an image of inferiority in the subjugated" (66). Functioning both as 'cultural insiders', Black Man and Black Woman fight Devil Lady on cultural grounds as well as to supplant those images with positive appreciation of oneself.

Devil Lady stands for the oppressor/aggressor culture with its technology and empire of media and means of communications. Sister admits that she is victim of popular culture vehicled through newspapers, television, and billboards. American mass media are believed to inculcate hatred of the self and glorification of its ideals. "The aesthetics and popular culture of racist societies constantly reinforce the image of the Anglo-Saxon ideal in the minds of Blacks," Manning Marable argues, "creating the tragic and destructive phenomenon of self-hatred and cultural genocide" (9). Needless to say, this culture and these communication means disseminate a nightmarish model of white supremacy and idealism.

Black Woman self-consciously identifies both print and visual culture as barriers to the achievement of a true cultural identity conducive to an elevation above willed cultural expropriation. That is why she refers to the white culture as "White Magic" and she attributes the women's blindness to "The white fumes [that] strangle their senses" (Baraka, *Madheart* 64-68). Sister is an instance of "cultural mummification" that results in mummified thought and paralogia. "The cultural mummification," as Fanon argues, "leads to a mummification of individual thinking" (Fanon, *Racism* 44). Sister, in light of Fanon's statement, stands for the deadness of culture and congealment of individual reasoning.

According to Baraka, the black man, as a self-righteous man, sees the question of identity from an institutional standpoint. The codification of culture and its systematization require certain conduits and channels to ensure its dispersion. That is why the institutional aspect is primordial in the cultural struggle. Black Man's key institution is that of the "Black Arts," or as Baraka calls it, "a functioning black arts institution." (Baraka, *Reader* 375). It must be said that Black Man's pronouncement of the popular motto "black arts" comes after fierce antagonism with Devil Lady. The latter must be fought on a cultural basis. Hence, it transpires that the cultural struggle is as important as the physical combat; it is not only one-dimensional but multilateral and polymorphous. This struggle entails the arts, cultural forms, spirituality, music, and aesthetics. In this sense, the institution of the black arts functions as a safety valve, correcting and straightening paralogical thought and delusional thinking. It becomes itself an empowerment; an invigoration much needed in the quest for cultural identities.

The play *Experimental Death Unit # 1*[1] revolves around cultural and racial activism to ward off stereotypes of black inferiority and venality. Culture is interpellated in the struggle for the promotion of black identity construction. The three major characters are Duff and Loco, two white men, and a black debauchee named Woman. The latter tenders them her sexual favors. Overtly excited and enticed, both men consort and hang around with her. Leader, the guru of the squad, orders his comrades-in-arms to shoot them all. Baraka is intent on showing the inconsequence of the white aggressor culture and its oppressive frames and standards.

By exposing a black profligate before two white artists, the playwright emphasizes the deadlock of racial relations and the dilemma of social interactions and socialization. The official culture is thought to be enmeshed in the disruption of black culture and ruination of common ethics. It is this power of contagion that the play displays. Respectability and self-worth demand confrontation and defiance for the cultural revival to fructify. Cultural revolution requires unity, fortitude, and discipline; only these compact qualities can enhance the cultural renaissance and foster positive self-appraisal.

Woman symbolizes the cultural vacuity of part of the black intelligentsia. She is an undesirable, iconic image on which the dramatist's didacticism hinges, and she becomes an object of focus throughout the play. The dramatist implies that renewal can only start via identifying the corrupt/polluted subjects who represent backward-looking cultures. Dealing with the oppressors is tantamount to cultural suicide and demise. In this context, Owen Brady contends that Woman "negates a self-identity and cannot recognize the Leader [the black commander of the squad of executioners] as a force for change, a Black vector moving away from white Western culture" (Brady 59). When Leader asks Woman who she is, she naively responds, "Nobody, baby...nobody at all....Who are you?."[2] Woman's apparent negation of herself and her subsequent forfeiture of identity steadily guide her to the gallows.

Being an image through which Baraka transmits his cultural message, the

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1 The play *Experimental Death Unit # 1* (1971) is also racially militant in tone and content. Its unique scene depicts a broad avenue during a very probable black rebellion. The three central characters are Duff and Loco, two drug-addicted white men, and a black prostitute named Woman. While debating life, taste, and beauty, Woman offers them her services. Both men seem tantalized, and they engage with her. The action is stopped by the entry of a black squad. Leader, the head of the group, orders his soldiers to shoot them all.

2 Baraka, *Death Unit* (London: Calder and Boyars LTD, 1971) 18.

playwright addresses all black women, telling them that interaction and intercourse with non-blacks equal assimilation and result in decapitation. Here, dealing in carnal pleasures can stand for cultural deficiency and the consequent collapse which results in "merely whitening to fit the white soul's image. It is also for the black man, a weakening, through contact with a beatified decadence" (Baraka, *Home* 226). As shown above, it unquestionably appears that cultural elements and building blocks promote the creation of a distinct cultural identity. The latter is immensely embedded in distinctiveness. The notion of blackness thus enters center stage, and turns out to be an adjuvant of difference and an overt articulation of disparity.

The Trope of Blackness: The Pursuance of Difference as Absolute Otherness

The trope of blackness has been approached by various black critics, authors, and theatre practitioners. Henry Louis Gates has contended that Baraka, like many black playwrights and critics, has employed "blackness-as-theme to forward one argument or another for the amelioration of the Afro-American's social dilemma" (Gates 31). Kept under historical erasure and institutional discipline, blackness is brought to the fore to defy historical invisibility and willed silencing, and to convey its differentness. At the outset, it is of certain practicality to approach the question of blackness from a Fanonian injunction about the relationality existent between blacks and whites. In this direction, Frantz Fanon asserts in *Black Skin, White Masks* that "the real Other for the white man is and will continue to be the black man. And conversely" (Fanon 161). What can be inferred from Fanon's statement is that the relationship between the black man and the white one is ever dialectical. Simply put, this kind of connectedness becomes itself the site of the articulation of blackness as difference.

In a similar vein, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, in their examination of historical becoming, emphasize the centrality of difference. Both authors argue in favor of voicing one's particularity to preserve one's cultural characteristics and one's value system and become what one wants to become (Deleuze and Guattari 357). Similarly, Albert Memmi, commenting upon colonial people's claim of difference, asserts that the expression of one's difference is tantamount to an affirmation of oneself (Memmi 64-5). Likewise, Min-ha Trinh, writing about ontology and difference, contends that "[O]ur struggles over meanings are also our struggles over different modes of being: different identities" (Trinh 142).

The dramatist's advocacy of separatism paves the way for an embracement of an ideology based on the concept of blackness as essentiality. From 1965 up to 1974, the playwright has reclaimed his blackness, has retrieved his black identity,

and has consolidated his belief in their inherent qualities. It is interesting to highlight that Baraka in 1967 changed his name from LeRoi Jones to the Bantuized Muslim appellation Imamu (spiritual leader, later dropped) Ameer (afterwards Amiri, 'prince') Baraka (blessed), as a confirmation of his re-entry into blackness. This change of patronyms signals Baraka's (and, by extension, his characters') search for what Bhabha calls "an originary identity" (Bhabha 3). Again, this shift of appellations emanates from a deep-seated bitterness and recurrent disappointment vis-à-vis the state's renegations, laxness, and failures in handling the question of identities.

Baraka's adoption of what appears as a hard line marks a watershed in his career as a playwright committed to diagnose the current plight of persecutory practices and cultural nonrecognition. It is remarkable that the color code is almost always a vehicle of the Barakian thought. For the black man, as Baraka puts it, to grow up in America is "a maze of light and darkness" (Baraka, *Autobiography* 42). The color code, Baraka declares, "taught me early what America was" (Baraka 315). Commenting upon his name change, Baraka says that "the name change seemed fitting to me and not just the meaning of the name Blessed Prince, but the idea that I was now literally being changed into a blacker being. I was discarding my 'slave name' and embracing blackness" (Baraka 266-7). Further, Baraka outspokenly announces: "We had a blackness to us, to be sure. It was always in us, we had but to claim it. And it claimed us" (Baraka 319). The playwright's view of the world and his cultural stance lead him to cultivate a sense of the particularity of blackness. This seeming exception and singularity encompass the belief in, and the promotion of, differences that underlie the encounter between Blacks and Anglo-Saxon whites. In other words, the playwright's reclamation of blackness marks what Etienne Balibar terms the "right to difference" (Balibar 56).

The dramatist's conception of blackness as a core or kernel is blunt, and tends to be strategic in the long run in order to corroborate that sense of black difference. Once again, Baraka's seminal essay "The Legacy of Malcolm X" is illuminating for our discussion. Stressing black difference, Baraka proclaims: "We are different species. A species that is evolving to world power and philosophical domination of the world. The world will move the way Black People move!" (Baraka, *Reader* 166). Obviously, Baraka draws the ultimate line that separates Blacks and whites. Interestingly enough, it is once again race that motivates the drawing of boundaries. Worthy of note here, when discussing the existing differences between races of the globe, is Charles Darwin's remark as regards the outer color. As he puts it, "[O] f all the differences between the races of man, the colour of the skin is the most

conspicuous and one of the best marked" (Darwin 200). Ostensibly, Baraka's brand of difference pursues a definite color code.

The dramatist's plays serve as a mirror to his ideological shifts and intellectual apostasy. This current move means the reappropriation and elevation of the powers and resources of black people. In theatre, this means enactment of plays for Blacks and about Blacks. In *The Autobiography*, Baraka admits that BART/S's (Baraka's repertory theatre and school's) performances involve an "artification of certain aspects of history to make a recipe for 'blackness'" (253). Therefore, blackness is brought to the fore, or, better still, becomes stage-centred. It is cardinal to point out that blackness has been constructed through a long historical contact with whiteness (a Fanonian idea at basis). More importantly, the Barakian stage transmutes into an arena in which to perform the new politics of difference.

Identity, in this context, becomes synonymous with specificity. The feminist philosopher Judith Butler argues that, "what we expect from the term identity will be cultural specificity, and that on occasion we even expect identity and specificity to work interchangeably" (qtd. in Gilroy 98-9). Harold Cruse, the leading black cultural critic of the 1960s, points out that blacks constitute an entirely distinct separate bloc of the population. In *An Afro-American's Cultural View*, Cruse notes that "the American Negro cannot be understood culturally unless [s/]—he is seen as a member of a detached ethnic bloc of people of African descent reared for three hundred years in the unmotherly bosom of Western civilization" (49). Cruse determinedly confirms the specificity, ethnic and cultural, of black people.

As far as Baraka's plays are concerned, the urgency of the reclamation of one's blackness as different can be traced back to *The Slave*. This play is an outcry in the cultural and political wasteland of imposed homogenization and enforced assimilationism. Walker's withdrawal from the world of whites can be interpreted in two ways: on the one hand, he finally comes to the truth of difference, and, on the other, he realizes the American political platitude. Here, Walker understands identity both as sameness and difference; sameness that relates to shared properties (his daughters and soldiers), and difference with the Easleys as they are of different color and complexion. As Amy Gutmann puts it in "What's Morally Relevant about Racial Identity," "The color of Americans significantly affects their life chances and experiences, not for any essentialist reasons but for no less significant historical and social reasons, which no single individual is sufficiently powerful to change" (Gutmann 170). Blackness, this historical construction, requires collective individuals rather than lone ones to drastically alter its associated historical negative meanings.

Liberalism's obsessive denial of difference and its advocacy of universalist values compel Walker to reclaim what Katherine Fierlbeck terms "specific characteristics" (Fierlbeck 16). As an assimilationist ideology, liberalism is thought to negate difference and dismiss groups' or nationalities' particularities. The Easleys' disparagement of Walker's cause of liberation, their denigration of his black officers, their description of black militancy and mobilization as pure "insanity" and sheer bloodletting—all these indicate to what extent they despise the rights of others to withstand oppression. Easley and Grace believe that Walker and his people do not belong to the American polity, since they do not measure up to certain societal and civic norms. The result for Blacks, as Iris Marion Young puts it, is that "their difference is constructed as deviance and inferiority" (Young 116). Walker's reaction is to agitate for the assertion of his values and the reclamation of freedom and specificity. Discussing the dialectical relation between difference and sameness with relevance to political action, Lucius Outlaw contends that

> 'difference,' rather than similarity, has a significant basis of political mobilization. We are once again in an era in which 'difference' has been made a virtue and has become the basis of organized political struggle in sometimes stringent competition with an ideal of equality that presumes essential sameness. (Outlaw 140)

It is actually Walker's perception of political disadvantage, which motivates his bloody action for a reclamation of an identity that is lodged and moulded in difference.

In the play *A Black Mass*, the interplay between sameness and difference is foregrounded. Indeed, the black scientists cling to their similitude in opposition to the difference that Jacub intends to create. The relationship between sameness and difference is dialectical in nature. Jacub opposes the self to the other. He believes in a selfhood that is contingent upon alterity. He tells Nasafi that he will create a "man like ourselves, though different because it will be beyond the human imagination."[1] His obsession with difference may explain his hatred; hatred of the self, at least in Jacub's thinking, may bring about a radical alteration of one's sense of the self. Jacub, later on, confesses to Tanzil that he will create a "man like ourselves, yet separate from us. A neutral being."[2] In fact, what Jacub creates is sheer abomination perceived as difference.

1 Baraka, *A Black Mass* (London: Calder and Boyars LTD, 1971) 27.

2 Baraka, 27.

Unlike Jacub, the scientists comprehend sameness as difference: that is their common sameness before the detestable difference of the white Beast. The visible shared qualities of blackness are the converse of an appalling difference represented by the genocidal Beast. According to Tanzil and Nasafi, it is a killing callous difference. The scientists' attachment to their unadulterated sense of black selfhood prevents them from appreciating a crude version of difference—a difference lodged in perversion and distortion. As Paul Gilroy puts it in his book *Against Race*, "the signs of sameness have degenerated readily into emblems of supposedly essential or immutable difference" (Gilroy 101). Accordingly, the black scientists seem to perceive their difference as immutable and stable.

Therefore, the scientists may be seen as championing their blackness against the hideousness of the Beast. In pressing for a front among black scientists/artists, the dramatist underscores that the only real difference is black culture with its infinite sources and resources. Whatever the ambit of the contagion, vestiges of the black original culture still remain, defying intrusion and forced erasure. Tiila, in this instance, is a living example in this order of things. When Tiila was hurt, the stage directions indicate that she "laughs and weeps in deadly cross between white and black" (Baraka, *Black Mass* 32). Even though Tiila is seriously hurt, she holds on to her blackness, resisting obliteration. Blackness, as such, becomes a site of real voiced and articulated difference.

In the plays *Experimental Death Unit # 1* and *Madheart*, difference is located in the caution and reservation against mixing with whites. The refusal to mingle with non-blacks accounts for the conservation of a distinct and immaculate blackness. The black revolutionary youths of *Death Unit* intervene to bar a black prostitute from dealing with decadent men. In like manner, Black Man and Black Woman strive hard to turn Mother and Sister away from alien lure. In this sense, conservation of one's properties and values can be interpreted as an affirmation of one's particularity. While Mother and Sister opt for consorting with whites, Black Man and Black Woman choose to cut their bonds with the totalitarians of whiteness such as Devil Lady. We are actually in front of a case of endogamy. This is going to be confirmed later in the play when Black Man and Black Woman reunite. It is clear that both protagonists draw boundaries and distance themselves from the rest of the characters. In cultural terms, adherence to one's blackness is the guarantor of one's difference. Blackness turns out to be, in James Clifford's terms, a "boundary to be maintained" (Clifford 344).

Likewise, the black invigorators appear to demarcate the boundaries of the cultural and sexual territory. Blackness, essentially perceived as a category of

difference, necessitates this demarcation of frontiers for the sake of affirming the specificity of one's values. Endogamy remains a manifestation of this refusal to mix with the other. Hence, it becomes a strategic weapon in the conservation of one's difference. In this context, the black youths act upon an adverse situation which implicates the black body. As moral enforcers, they start from an assumption that the black seed is forbidden to outsiders. That is why sexual intercourse should remain exclusively among members of the same group to safeguard Blacks from dilution or worsening. This explains the pursuit of a different black identity that is basically untarnished and unsullied. The black squad draws a sketch of rising awareness directed toward the articulation of cultural maturation and growth.

From the aforementioned, culture targets the expression of one's conspicuous difference denied by what Baraka calls "the culture of inequity" (Baraka, "Multinational" 393). In this sense, "Cultural distinctiveness," Tejumola Olaniyan contends, "becomes fully fixed, complete, and unnegotiable" (Olaniyan 5). This is, indeed, the consequence of clinging to one's blackness as a catalyst of difference. The quest for one's blackness opens the gateway for an expansive articulation of authenticity and proclamation of one's Africanness. Blackness becomes expressive of originality, and Africa is revealed as an exotic continent that stimulates imagination and yields certain Afrocentric ideas.

Conclusion

In the last analysis, it is clear that the playwright predicates black identity on a shared culture and a common racial history. The substantiation of black cultural and racial difference becomes a must dictated by a firm belief in a completely disparate black identity. Culture becomes the orbit around which black people conjointly rotate, and the sphere toward which they gravitate. This move toward the espousal of a black identity predicated on blackness as difference rests upon the plight of age-long racial prejudice and long-standing cultural bias.

Baraka's racial vision of the world leads the latter to cultivate a sense of black particularity. This vision of black singularity encompasses a belief in, and promotion of, certain politico-cultural priorities and differences and multiple racioethnic distinctions. Baraka's understanding of blackness as an essence is categorical in an effort to affirm and consolidate that sense of black idiosyncrasy. By and large, Baraka's brand of difference increasingly pursues pure cultural lines to break free of the fetters imposed by the monoculture, and steadily goes along straight racial pathways.

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Re-examining the Role of Women in Medieval Literature: *Beowulf*, *Juliana,* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* as a Case Study

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Abstract This paper revisits some of the stereotypical readings of women's depictions in medieval literature as presented in *Beowulf*, Cynewulf's *Juliana,* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* in an attempt to provide a deeper understanding of these women's roles within the cultural and historical contexts of these literary works. To that end, a feminist reading of the female characters in the chosen texts, highlighting their strength, intelligence, and agency, is provided to challenge the popular images of medieval women which range from the helpless and subservient in warrior societies of Old English texts to the manipulative temptresses and evil shrews responsible for men's failings in Middle English texts.
Key words Anglo-Saxon women; women and comitatus; Medieval Romance; Medieval Poetry
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In the introduction to their book *New Readings on Women in Old English Literature,* Helen Damico and Alexandra Hennessey Olsen explain how the continued and increasing interest in the presentations of women in medieval writings parallels to some degree that of tracing women's presentations in other periods; an inquiry they believe generally grew out of the feminist social movements that started in America and Europe in the 1960s (3). Damico and Olsen point out that the concern

with women in medieval literature addresses writings in Middle English rather than writings in Old English or Anglo Saxon. This could have resulted from having to learn Old English, which constituted an obstacle for those interested in inspecting the field. Other reasons, such as the lack of named women writers of Old English Poetry, might have played a role in directing feminists towards Middle English texts, beside the general conception that Old English poetry deals primarily with warrior societies, thus "expounding a warrior ethos of interest only to men" (Damico and Olsen 4).

This, however, did not distract scholars from conducting studies that attempt at forming a somehow comprehensive view of the representations of women in medieval literature. Indeed, tracing the presentations of women in medieval literature, which comprises about 700 years of literary production divided between Old English and Middle English writings, is by no means a simple task, especially when Old English poems and lyrics are concerned. However, some general conceptions regarding women in both types of texts have become dominant over the years, and this paper aims at understanding some of these conceptions as presented in the chosen literary works and providing alternative readings that reflect a deeper understanding of these women's roles in light of the cultural and historical contexts of these literary works. The wide scope of literary production in the medieval era dictates limiting the study to some of the popular works which feature female characters in Old and Middle English texts, such as *Beowulf*, Cynewulf's *Juliana,* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.*

Women in Anglo-Saxon literature have usually been seen by nineteenth century critics as passive servants and victims of men and traditions in the warrior society (Damico and Olsen 13). Critics base this argument on depictions of women in *Beowulf,* the only surviving Old English epic. However, a more comprehensive reading of the text, especially as a poem representative of its time, reveals the important role the female characters in the text play from a social and aesthetic perspective. This can be achieved by taking a closer look at the traditions of the Anglo-Saxon warrior society as presented in the poem, such as the wergild and warriors' allegiance to their king as understood through the heroic code of 'comitatus'. Although comitatus is mainly concerned with warrior conduct, it is also perceived as an "institution," one that "made use of underlying cultural and social apparatus" (Evans 2) and which "can be seen as the common thread that … ran through and bound together the very fabric of Dark-Age Britain" (1). One of these social and cultural apparatuses was intertribal marriages as part of the "frith" or peace-weaving practice. Laura Maxwell explains that an interweaving of family

threads for the purposes of enlarging and securing tribal identity and allegiances for one king or leader formed an essential part of comitatus, and that "intermarriages among tribes were physical representations of intertribal treaties […] called frith, in which physical objects of value that represented the tribe were exchanged" (Maxwell).

As peace-weavers, Anglo-Saxon women played a significant role of maintaining peace between tribes, especially ones at war in warrior societies. An example of this can be seen in *Beowulf*, which features a number of female figures playing one of three main roles: the peace-weaver, the queen as a mead hall hostess, and the monster. Princess Freawaru, King Hrothgar's daughter, for example is engaged to the "gracious Ingled," a betrothal which "the guardian of the kingdom sees good in/ and hopes this woman will heal old wounds/ and grievous feuds" (*Beowulf*, lines 2027 – 2029). The political weight of the princess's marriage lies in its anticipated and hoped-for ability to bring peace between two warring tribes. To this end, one can argue that the importance of peace-weavers is equivalent to that of warriors in protecting their tribes and maintaining peace. The difficulties women had to go through in their mission as peace weavers can be seen in the example of Queen Hildeburh, who loses her brother, her son, and her husband in the intertribal wars between her people, the Danes, and her husband's tribe, the Frisians. Despite Hildeburh's initial success in maintaining peace for a while by bearing a child that represents the bond between the two tribes, eventually the peace is disrupted and she ends up mourning the loss of her family members as well as her failure as a peace-weaver and a peace-keeper (Andrade 20).

Although Hildeburh's mission does not fully succeed, Queen Wealtheow seems to be successfully carrying out her role as a "peace-pledge between the nations" (*Beowulf*, line 2017). While there is no clear reference to her background or what disputes she helped pacify, Wealtheow is depicted as the gracious queen of the Danes and a skilled hostess as she moves around the mead hall passing the cup to the glorious warriors:

> Wealhtheow came in,
> Hrothgar's queen, observing the courtesies.
> Adorned in her gold, she graciously saluted
> the men in the hall, then handed the cup
> first to Hrothgar, their homeland guardian,
> urging him to drink deep and enjoy it, (lines 612-617)

* * *

So the helming woman went on her rounds
queenly and dignified, decked out in rings,
offering the goblet to all ranks,
treating the household and the assembled troop,
until it was Beowulf's turn to take it from her hand.
With measured words she welcomed the Geat
and thanked God for granting her wish (lines 620-626)

The quoted lines highlight the role of the queen as a hostess, welcoming the Danish thanes and Beowulf, a warrior from another clan, into the mead hall. Although this passing of the mead has generally been interpreted negatively by critics as a mere act of servitude on the part of women, Byron Edgington points out that it is a highly ritualistic tradition that "bestow[ed] recognition on specific thanes, or men who had distinguished themselves in battle" according to their status, which renders women's role in this case a political one (Edington and Edington). This practice can also be seen as an implementation of comitatus among the members of the same tribe, since "the mead cup was served in order to mark the allegiance of each man in his turn to the king, whose mead hall they occupied" (Edgington and Edington). Looking at it this way, the passing of the mead as a queen's role is as powerful as that of the queen being the one who rewards warriors for their bravery with appreciation tokens of her choice, the way Wealtheow endows Beowulf with gifts after slaying Grendel (*Beowulf*, lines 1191-1220).

The queen's powerful presence in the hall, her participation in political decision making, and her command over the warriors can be detected in her speeches, some of which are quoted below as a good example for negating the conception of a queen's role as a mere entertainer or a servant passing drinks around. In the first speech, Wealtheow advises her husband Hrothgar to reconsider choosing Beowulf as an heir to the Danish throne as she believes that Hrothulf, Hrothgar's nephew, is a better fit, especially when it comes to the future of her sons. In the second speech, while celebrating Grendel's defeat, she addresses Beowulf and the rest of the warriors in the Mead Hall reminding them to be the men and warriors they are expected to be, ending her speech with a reminder of the importance of her request as their queen:

And now the word is that you [Hrothgar] want to adopt
This warrior [Beowulf] as a son. So, while you may,
Bask in your fortune, and then bequeath

Kingdom and nation to your kith and kin,
Before your decease. I am certain of Hrothulf.
He is noble and will use the young ones well.
He will not let you down. Should you die before him,
He will treat our children truly and fairly. (lines 1175 – 1183)

* * *

Here each comrade is true to the other,
Loyal to the lord, loving in spirit.
The thanes have one purpose, the people are ready:
Having drunk and pledged, *the ranks do as I bid.* (lines 1228 – 1230)

Despite being given less attention than Queen Wealtheow, Queen Hygd is also presented as the gracious wise hostess Wealhtheow is, passing the mead around the hall, and bestowing praise and gifts on deserving warriors. Her wisdom and sense of leadership is seen in her choosing Beowulf as a successor to her husband's throne instead of her own son whom she believed was not strong enough to protect the people and the land at the time of his father's death (*Beowulf,* lines 2369 – 2373). Choosing the Geats' best interest against all odds is another example of the political role of Anglo-Saxon queens in this poem. Hygd's grace and nobility of character are contrasted with Queen Modthryth; Hygd's foil and an example of the wickedness and monstrosity to be avoided by Anglo-Saxon women. It is worth noting that not much is known about Modthryth since the part of the manuscript in which her story appears was severely damaged, which does not really give the reader a chance to analyze her character or understand the reasons behind her violent actions. However, examples of her "terrible wrongs," such as torturing and killing "any retainer ever made bold/ to look her in the face" (lines 1933-1934), are emphasized in a way that sheds light on how different she is in comparison with the other queens in the poem:

Great queen Modthryth
perpetrated terrible wrongs. (lines 1932-1933)

* * *

[…] Even a queen
Outstanding in beauty must not overstep like that
A queen should weave peace, not punish the innocent
with loss of life for imagined insults. (lines 1940-1943)

Although the bard refers briefly to her "reformed" ways after marrying King Offa,

Modthryth's temper, violence, and tendency to shed blood are emphasized as unnatural and unacceptable for women, mirroring the violence of one of the three monsters Beowulf faces: Grendel's mother. The real nature of Grendel's mother is disputed, mainly due to the different translations of the original text. While some critics see her as a non-human monster which merely exists as another challenge that Beowulf has to face and successfully overcome in order to rise in ranks, others see her as a human being who is described in a way that emphasizes the "monstrosity" of her behavior in the eyes of the Anglo-Saxon society. In *Woman as Hero in Old English Literature,* Jane Chance argues that Grendel's mother is "rather oddly, described in human and social terms, and through words like *wīf* and *ides*, normally reserved for human women" with *ides* indicating the status of the woman as a lady of a high social rank or a queen (95). Chance also explains that masculine pronouns are used in reference to Grendel's mother in the Old English text, along with adjectives that translate as "monstrous woman," "a lady-monster woman," "warrior," "destroyer," and "[male] guardian" (95). The fact that the last three adjectives are masculine in Old English can be seen as an indication to her unfeminine strength and violence as a woman who seeks revenge and fights her own battles as an *aglæca,* a word which not only means "monster," but also translates as a "strong adversary" and a "fierce combatant" (95).

The problem with Grendel's mother seems to be that she "arrogates to herself the masculine role of the warrior or lord" in a way that "blurs the sexual and social categories of [gender] roles," all of which makes her "wretched or monstrous to an Anglo-Saxon audience" (Chance 97). Accordingly, this depiction shows her as an antitype of the previously discussed women and an inversion of the ideal Anglo-Saxon woman. While her actions are justified as those of a grieving mother avenging her son's death, unlike Mordthryth's actions, both women are seen as "strife-weavers" (Carr-Parker) who threaten the peace and stability of those around them, which in itself highlights the importance of the other women's role as peace-weavers and gracious hostesses implementing comitatus in their own ways.

The importance of abiding by the heroic and social codes of comitatus and peace-weaving as presented in *Beowulf* prevail across Old English texts. However, these concepts acquired new religious meanings with the spread of Christianity as they were utilized in ways that serve religious themes (Greenfield 109). Naturally, Jesus becomes the ultimate lord, and allegiance to him is expressed in his followers being devoted Christians who spread his message and protect fellow Christians. Accordingly, Christian saints become the new heroes in these texts, and their powers and strengths, unlike Beowulf's, are rather spiritual than physical, which gives room

for Christian female saints, like Juliana, to become the protagonists of such texts.

In two out of five Old English poems depicting lives of saints, Cynewulf introduces the Christian saint heroine in *Juliana* and *Elene*. Although *Juliana* is now regarded the only Old English work that renders the *passio* of a female saint into poetry in a way that distinguishes it from any other contemporary texts featuring female Christian saints (Fredrick 61), the practice of reading this poem allegorically has diminished the significance of Juliana's character and the overall value of the poem. Damico and Olsen explain how the allegorical reading of Old English texts as abstractions not only tends to reduce the significance of certain events and situations, but also reduces characters, both male and female, into mere types that lack any depth or individuality:

> Allegory reduces the person to a less-than-human figure who stands for something more than human. Elene is a "figure or type of the church", Juliana is "the initiator, embodiment, and new exemplar" of "central and potent Christian events"[79]. The result of such interpretations is to diminish the reader's engagement with what is essentially feminine in the flesh-and-blood heroine. (as qtd. in Damico and Olsen 13)

A closer reading of the text shows Cynewulf's depiction of Juliana as that of a full-fledged, warrior-like character in the Anglo-Saxon sense. Although Juliana's story is based on a Latin prose that appears in more than one place, as in the *Acta Sanctorum* and Bede's *Martyrologies* (Fredrick 61), Cynewulf's adaptation of it not only expands it, but also highlights the spiritual struggle of the heroine, which is considered the poetic and theological concern of the poem. In the Latin *Vita*, for example, Juliana is depicted as slightly deceitful at the beginning, as she first demands that her pagan suitor Eleusius becomes a prefect before she marries him, but then after he gains the prefecture she demands he converts to Christianity, which angers him and leads to her eventual imprisonment and death. Cynewulf presents a more straightforward Juliana by omitting the first request, and having her boldly tell Eleusius that she will never marry him if he does not become Christian:

> Condemning it all, Juliana spoke a word *amongst*
> *a multitude of men*: "I can say to you that you need not
> trouble yourself so greatly. If you adore and believe
> in the True God and exalt his praise, you would recognize
> the Comfort of Souls and I would immediately, without faltering,

be prepared to submit to your desire. Likewise I say to you,
if in fact you confide in an inferior god through devil-worship,
or call to heathen idols, *you cannot have me*
nor can you compel me to be your wedded wife.
Never will you, through your violent spite,
prepare so harsh pain of severe torments
hat you should turn me from these words." (emphasis added, lines 44b-57)

The quoted lines show how Juliana stands up to her father and Eleusius, the rich and powerful senator who also happens to be the emperor's friend, and fearlessly tells him that she is not afraid of what he could do to her for rejecting him, as her relationship with God is stronger and more important to her than anything he could promise her or threaten her with. In the parts to follow, Eleusius's anger and his fear of the emperor if he converts to Christianity culminate in him punishing her through physical torture, imprisonment, and eventually killing her. Cynewulf's portrayal of a darker, more sinister Eleusius in his adaptation is meant to show his character's "zeal in the service of devil-inspired idols," a zeal that matches and consequently contrasts with Juliana's "fervid Christianity" and unwavering faith (Greenfield 111).

Juliana's defiant spirit is never subdued throughout the poem, and can be seen in her withstanding all the torture she is subjected to, such as being hung by her hair from a tree and beaten for hours, and in her confrontation with the devil or the demon in prison. The scene in which the devil visits the imprisoned Juliana as an angel in disguise, in an attempt to get her to revoke Christianity, is another example of how Cynewulf expanded the story to emphasize Juliana's heroism. The devil's "quick collapse" and betrayal of his lord Satan once Juliana seizes him forms a "contrast to the saint's steadfastness in her faith under much greater duress" (Greenfield 112). Her patience is emphasized through the devil's lamentations as he realizes he has betrayed his lord, again shedding light on the strength and courage she managed to maintain through all her trials in a way that makes her worthy of becoming a martyr by the end of the poem.

Cynewulf's portrayal of this Christian female heroine goes beyond the mere representation of a type. Juliana is drawn as a strong, courageous, patient woman with a strong belief in God and Christ as her savior. In "Warring with Words: Cynewulf's Juliana," Jill Fredrick argues that Juliana is a warrior in the Anglo-Saxon sense and the seriousness of her predicament requires a presentation similar to that of an epic hero. He points out that the opening lines of Cynewulf's adaptation of Juliana are similar in nature to that of epics, especially *Beowulf*, as both poems

open with "Hwaet!" and the syntax of the first three lines of *Juliana* is similar to the epic statement in *Beowulf* : "Listen! We have heard..." (64). Cynewulf's use of language and descriptions of the emperor's destructive actions in a war-like scene, similar to that found in *The Battle of Maldon* for example, are seen as his way of creating a world more appealing to his audience (Fredrick 65) and one which fits the heroism of the protagonist. And while her battles, unlike Beowulf's, are mainly spiritual in nature, she engages in verbal battles, known as flyting, similar to those Beowulf and Unferth engage in. Juliana's flyting and long speeches defying her father and Eleusius initiate the action of the poem while her flyting with the devil which visits her in prison emphasizes her steadfastness and loyalty to Christ, her Lord. Her loyalty to Christ and her refusal to forsake him or her faith, especially in her battle with the devil, falls under the Germanic code of comitatus, which renders her an Anglo-Saxon warrior.

Moving from Old English poetry to the medieval romances brings attention to some new presentations of women which emerged as a result of the evident shift in themes, heroic codes, and social values of the romance as a genre that found its way into Middle English after the Norman Conquest of 1066 and the exposure to French literature. The subject matter of the romance as a genre is usually concerned with the chivalric adventures of knights, either set in or related to Camelot, Arthur's court, and the Knights of the Round Table. The knight's courageous and heroic deeds are usually motivated by his feelings for a lady as part of courtly love, which before turning into scandalous affairs and adulterous relationships was initially considered an ennobling force of idealized platonic love that inspired the knight's heroic actions in hopes of gaining his lady's love or favor (Schwartz). Serving the lady with the same obedience and loyalty the knight owes his lord, her husband, whether she knows of his love or not, brings attention to the ladies of the romance as subjects of praise and inspiration or motivation for the knights who seek to implement the chivalric code by honoring these women. However, with the changes in the nature of courtly love over the years and the dominant medieval Christian belief that women are the source of all sins, women in the romances came to be presented as wicked independent agents who are powerful enough to manipulate the action of the romance. An example of this can be seen in the women of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, which is considered one of the most popular romances of the Arthurian Legends.

Four women appear in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, a poem which depicts the adventures of a courageous Gawain on his way to fulfill his end of a beheading-game challenge that a mysterious Green Knight dares Arthur and

the Knights of the Round Table to take part in as he interrupts a New Year's Eve celebration in Camelot. These characters can be seen as examples of two popular images of women in the Fourteenth Century: the gracious lady deserving of a knight's servitude and worthy of being a source of guidance and inspiration, and the evil manipulative woman who tries to sabotage the knight's mission or deter him from abiding by the chivalric code. Apart from Queen Guinevere, who will be discussed shortly, Virgin Mary represents the first type of women in this poem, while Lady Bertilak and Morgan le Fay represent the second type.

Queen Guinevere only appears at the beginning of the poem, sitting next to Gawain in the feast held at Camelot and praised for her noble character and charm as the "the goodly" and "fair queen, without a flaw" (*Gawain*, line 81). While one can argue that Guinevere's depiction in this poem is rather passive and barely has any impact on Gawain, the fact that she is mentioned again towards the end of the poem when the Green Knight reveals his identity and explains how Morgan le Fay sent him to Camelot to frighten Guinevere prompts the reader to think about the relationship between these two women and how it initiated Gawain's quest. It is also important to remember that both Morgan and Guinevere appear in a number of Arthurian legends, the former is usually depicted as a villain, while the latter plays different roles from the gracious queen to the adulterous wife across the legends, which accordingly requires a deeper knowledge of the legends for a better understanding of these women's characters and relationship.

Guinevere's presence in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is overshadowed by the powerful presence of Virgin Mary, a clear example of Christianity's impact on the literature of the time and a testament to her important status in the Middle Ages as one "which would rival that of [Christ]" (Barberet as qtd. in Vigil 3). Gawain is depicted as Mary's knight as he prepares for his journey; her image is etched on the inside of his shield for protection and guidance, and the pentangle on the other side can be interpreted as a religious symbol representing the five joys of Mary or the five wounds of Christ integrated in the chivalric code at the time. Besides getting his strength from looking at Mary's image, he continuously prays for her and asks for her guidance and protection throughout his challenging journey to the Green Chapel of the Green Knight. His special relationship with Mary and his solid faith in her ability to provide him with the patience and courage he needs to survive the hardships of his journey is what gets him to Bertilak's castle, which he comes across after praying for her guidance in finding a place where he can attend Christmas mass. In this sense, Virgin Mary, a symbol of spiritual love, chastity, and faith, can be seen as the lady whose affection Gawain seeks and the one he tries to honor

by maintaining his Christian faith and abiding by the chivalric code of conduct, especially in Bertilak's castle.

Bertilak's castle, unknowingly to Gawain, is where his chivalry, courage, and faith are really put to test—a test administered by two women: Lady Bertilak and Morgan le Fay, the old lady living in the castle. Although Gawain does not have any direct interaction with Morgan, he eventually learns that she is Arthur's half-sister and a vengeful witch whose jealousy of Guinevere and desire to test Arthur's knights have started the whole quest. Consequently, he realizes that his real challenge is not in facing the Green Knight, but in his encounters with Lady Bertilak "who represents the traditional female archetypes of courtly love, disobedience, lust and death" (Arkin).

During his stay in the castle, Gawain is entrusted with the women as Bertilak goes hunting, on the condition that upon Brtilak's return both men have to exchange their winnings for the day over a period of three days. This is where Gawain's real challenge starts, as the seemingly gracious Lady Bertilak persistently tries to seduce him during her husband's absence. Although she is presented as a beautiful temptress whom Gawain can barely stand up to, Lady Bertilak is a smart woman whose power lies in her command of language and her ability to figure out Gawain's weakness in such a short period of time. Although he is known to be an eloquent speaker, Gawain's skill fails him with Lady Bertilak who, being a skilled speaker herself, gets him to become her knight on the first day, and shames him into granting her several kisses throughout the three days by emphasizing the importance of courtly love as one of the main ideals of chivalry. In her "Controlling the Feminine voice in *Cleanness* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*" Cindy Vitto describes Gawain's test as a "linguistic" one:

> Although Gawain believes his quest involves a physical challenge, the real contest is a linguistic one, and without doubt he loses [...] she always speaks at significantly greater length than does Gawain, and, except for the second morning, she initiates the conversation. (10-11)

In this sense, language is portrayed as a dangerous weapon which women can skillfully use to win their battles. By reminding him of the expected behavior of a knight, stressing the importance and significance of courtly love, and referring to his reputation as a knight, Lady Bertilak succeeds in conflicting Gawain's loyalties and shaking his moral values. Although he rejects the lady's sexual advances in the bedroom scenes as a way of honoring Bertilak's trust and the Christian ideal

of chastity, she still appeals to his knighthood in accepting her kisses first, and then accepting her love token on the third day: the magical green girdle that would protect him from the blows of the Green Knight. Gawain's fear of dying at the hands of the Green knight and his belief in the girdle's magical ability to protect him from death put his Christian faith to test. Interestingly, this is the only scene in which he does not pray for Mary or ask for her help in warding off the lady's attempts to seduce him, and while Lady Bertilak fails to take him down through sex and golden offerings, she eventually succeeds when she gets him to put his faith in magic instead of God, or Mary in this poem, which was considered a heretical act at the time. As he shifts his loyalty from Mary to Lady Bertilak, she easily convinces him to hide the girdle from her husband "for her sake" (*Gawain*, lines 1863-1864), which results in him breaking his pact with Bertilak—the pact that turns out to be the real challenge of the Green Knight. The Green Knight's challenge isn't really about Gawain physically surviving a beheading game; it is about him adhering to the chivalric codes of honesty and loyalty, which he broke by not telling Bertilak about the magical girdle.

To his dismay, when he discovers he was deceived by a woman, Gawain associates Lady Bertilak with the temptresses mentioned in the Bible, such as Eve, Delilah, and Bathsheba, in a speech that is known as the misogynistic part of the poem:

> But if a dullard should dote, deem it no wonder,
> And through the wiles of a woman be wooed into sorrow,
> For so was Adam by one, when the world began,
> And Solomon by many more, and Samson the mighty
> Delilah was his doom, and David thereafter
> Was beguiled by Bathsheba, and bore more distress:
> Now these were vexed by their devices –'twere a very joy
> Could one but learn to love, and believes them not. (lines 2414-2421)

Comparing Lady Bertilak to the biblical temptresses reinforces the dominant biblical archetype of women as the reason behind men's moral failings and accordingly behind the demise of chivalry at the time. Devotion to women instead of God, as presented in Gawain's actions, was viewed by the church as the main reason behind chivalry's decline in the fourteenth century as it continued to drift away from the religious ideals it sprang from only to be absorbed by the ideals of courtly love (Arkin). In this sense, as Maureen Fries puts it, Lady Bertilak "becomes

the ambivalent mirror in which the knight pictures his own potential for moral achievement or moral failure in terms of the male warrior ethos such literature was designed to glorify" (qtd. in Arkin). However, by prioritizing courtly love and Lady Bertilak over Mary and the chivalric ideals of honesty and loyalty he is supposed to keep with her husband, Gawain fails his test.

The other woman testing Gawain's faith and chivalry is Morgan le Fay, a powerful, vengeful sorceress, the reader is told, whose main goal is to disrupt Camelot's peace and challenge the Knights of the Round Table. Surprisingly, she does not have any lines of her own, and apart from a brief description of her ugliness in comparison to Lady Bertilak when Gawain first meets them at the palace, she is only mentioned towards the end of the poem when the Green Knight reveals that she is the "goddess" who orchestrated the whole quest with her magic. In "The Female Spell-caster in Middle English Romances: Heretical Outsider or Political Insider" Barbara Goodman points out that Morgan is one of six female spell-casters found in medieval English romances composed from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century. Interestingly, none of these spell-casters admit practicing witchcraft in any of the texts they are featured in or give any accounts explaining how they accomplished their goals through magic; their powers are always revealed by other characters who "accuse" them of being witches (Goodman 46), as can be seen in the following lines:

> Through the *might* of Morgan le Faye, *that lodges at my house*
> *By subtleties of science and sorceress' art*,
> The mistress of Merlin, she has *caught many a man* (emphasis added, lines 2446-2448)
>
> * * *
>
> Morgan the Goddess, she
> So styled by title true;
> *None holds so high degree*
> *That her arts cannot subdue*. (emphasis added, lines 2452 – 2455)
>
> * * *
>
> She *guided* me in this guise to your glorious hall, (emphasis added, lines 2456)
>
> * * *
>
> She *put this shape upon me* to puzzle your wits,
> To afflict the fair queen, and frighten her to death
> With awe of that elvish man that eerly spoke
> *with his head in his hand before the high table.*(emphasis added, lines 2459-2462)

According to Bertilak, Morgan is such a powerful witch who has "caught" many men through her spells, including himself, in a way that suggests that she is living in his castle against his will and that he was sent to Camelot, also against his will, as the scary immortal Green Knight who roamed the hall with his head in his hands after being beheaded. Although the reader does not see Morgan engage in any of these actions, it is understood that Bertilak and his wife act as her agents. Associating her with magic is enough to present her as a powerful evil woman who is capable of challenging Arthur and his knights, since practicing magic became associated with heresy during the fourteenth century and "witches were certainly believed to perform magic with the aid of demons, indeed via the supplication and worship of demons" (Bailey 962).

While the depiction of Morgan le Fay as the wicked witch lurking in the shadows with the sole aim of destroying Camelot is the most popular reading of her role in the Arthurian legends, fact remains that she is one of the legends' most ambiguous characters due to the inconsistencies of her presentation in the different works. In his "Masks of the Dark Goddess in Arthurian Literature: Origin and Evolution of Morgan le Fay" John Shearer looks into the original depiction of Morgan's character, which is inspired by Celtic oral tradition and Greek mythology, and the transformation this positive image of the healer undergoes mainly due to the rise of patriarchal Christianity and its impact on the cultural and literary ideals of the time (1150 – 1485). Shearer also explains that the different roles Morgan assumes, from a healer to Arthur's nemesis, can be understood as the different masks a deity wears in Celtic mythology in which gods and goddesses play different roles from one story to the other, "appearing as friend in one instant and as foe in the next" (9). Hence, contrary to the widely accepted interpretation of her role in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* as the evil trickster whose ultimate aim of the challenge is to humiliate Gawain and Arthur by extension, Shearer points out that Morgan's role can be seen as that of the "Oresteian Mother" who subjects Gawain to these difficulties "to reveal his strength of character" (33) and help him overcome his shortcomings. She is also referred to as the "Celtic Dark Goddess" whose healing powers are metaphorically manifested through the various tests she subjects Arthur and his knights to throughout the legends in order to "reveal hidden truths" so that the "corruption [of Camelot] can be combated and healing can begin to take place" (34).

Looking into the different presentations of Morgan le Fay in the Arthurian legends requires an independent study on its own. The same can be said of a comprehensive study of the varied roles and depictions of female characters across

medieval writings, especially Middle English literature, which witnessed a humble emergence of works written by women and dedicated to women, such as Marie de France's secular work on courtly love, Margery Kempe's religious autobiography *The Book of Margery Kempe*, and Chaucer's *The Legend of Good Women*. While the chosen works for this study are but a fragment of an abundance of works divided between Old and Middle English texts, their popularity has contributed in creating stereotypical images of medieval women that range from helpless and subservient to manipulative and evil shrews responsible for men's sins and shortcomings. In an attempt at providing a deeper understanding of these women's roles within the cultural and historical contexts of these works, this paper revisits these popular stereotypical readings and provides alternative ones that highlight the importance of the role of women in these texts by shedding light on their skills, motivations, and agency.

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Can the Subaltern Muslim Female Character "Speak" through Cross-Cultural Marriage? An Analysis of Four Novels

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Abstract This article will analyze four novels that deal with the subject of cross-cultural marriage. Two novels are written by Muslim authors: Leila Aboulela's *The Translator* (1999) and Safi Abdi's *A Mighty Collision of Two Worlds* (2002). While the other two novels are written by Western authors: Laura Fitzgerald's *Veil of Roses* (2007) and Nell Freudenberg's *The Newlyweds* (2013). The four novels revolve around a marriage between a Muslim female character and a Western male character. This selected corpus will be studied from the theoretical viewpoint of Gayatri Spivak's article "Can the Subaltern Speak?" More specifically, I will discuss three main points in this article. First, I will study whether the Muslim female characters in the novels "can speak" and "have voice" since they are considered as "the least powerful" group by Spivak. Second, I will find out if those Muslim female characters are seeking a cross-cultural relationship with a Western man in order to escape their patriarchal and oppressive societies. In other words, as Spivak expresses this, are "White men saving brown women from brown men?" Finally, I will analyze the issue of cross-cultural marriage, between Muslim female characters with someone who is culturally and religiously different, from a Western point of view. Spivak argues that those who recount the experience of the subalterns cannot fully understand what this group is going through because they are outside the group. In addition to Spivak's theory, I will adopt Edward Said's viewpoint of "Orientalism" in order to analyze the last point discussed in the article. According to Said, Orientalist scholars provide a distorted image of the Orient and Orientals. Orientals are presented as "inferiors" and are seen as the "others." Therefore, I will examine to what extent is the representation of the Muslim female experience by the Western authors accurate.

Key words Cross-cultural marriage; Gayatri Spivak; Edward Said; Leila Aboulela; Safi Abdi; Laura Fitzgerald; Nell Freudenberg.

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Introduction

Cross-cultural marriage has become more widespread with the increase of migration especially from third world countries to the West. This led to different encounters across cultures, religions, and races. Many writers, Arabs and Westerners, have focused on this subject in their literary works. This study will analyze four novels that revolve around cross-cultural marriage between a Muslim female character and a Western male character. Two novels are written by Muslim authors: Leila Aboulela's *The Translator* (1999) and Safi Abdi's *A Mighty Collision of Two Worlds* (2002). While the other two novels are written by Western authors: Laura Fitzgerald's *Veil of Roses* (2007) and Nell Freudenberg's *The Newlyweds* (2013).

The two Arab authors under study are: Leila Aboulela and Safi Abdi. Leila Aboulela is a Sudanese writer and the first winner of the Caine Prize for African Writing in 2000. Her novel *The Translator* (1999) was longlisted for the Orange Prize and the IMPAC Dublin Award and was chosen as a "Notable Book of the Year" by The New York Times in 2006, as stated by Albashir and Alkafi (33). The novel narrates the life of a Muslim Sudanese protagonist, Sammar, who falls in love with her Scottish employer. This cross-cultural relationship is forbidden according to the Islamic law; thus, she tries to suppress her feelings, and follows her religious teachings. In addition, Safi Abdi is a Somalian writer whose novel *A Mighty Collision of Two Worlds* is her first published work in the year 2002. As the title suggests, a collision occurs between Anisa, a Muslim from Rako Island, and Mike, a white American who has no particular religious belongings, during their cross-cultural marriage.

As for the Western authors, Laura Fitzgerald is an American author who lives with her family in Arizona. She is an author of four novels among which *Veil*

of Roses was published in 2007. The novel revolves around Tamila, an Iranian protagonist who has to find a husband in America in order to stay in the country. She must find an Iranian-born husband, but her friendship with an American man grows stronger. Moreover, Nell Freudenberg is an American author who was born in New York in 1975. She won many awards and wrote several novels and short stories. *The Newlyweds* is her third novel and was published in 2013. The story revolves around a young Bengali woman who had come to the United States to marry an American man she had met on the Internet.

I have chosen these four particular novels to work on because they meet the following criteria: they all deal with a cross-cultural marriage between a Muslim female character and a Western male character. In addition, all of the four novels are written by female authors: two of them are written by Arab Muslim authors and the other two by American authors.

This paper aims to focus on the Muslim female characters in the novels. First, it aims to examine whether these female characters "have voice," because they are considered as the least powerful group according to Gayatri Spivak. Second, it seeks to find out whether these female characters are seeking a marriage from a Westerner in order to escape their patriarchal societies. Finally, it tries to reveal how the protagonists' experiences are recounted from the Western authors' point of view.

Literature Review

Looking through books, journals, and internet resources to find information about the novels under study reveals an inconsiderable number of resources that analyze the novels. While no study was found on the novel *The Newly Wed*, two important studies have been done on the novel *Veil of Roses*: One by Pratama using the feminist approach, and the other by Prasetyaningsih using the individual psychological approach. Concerning *The Translator*, several studies have been found on the novel such as: Smyth, "To Love the Orientalist: Masculinity in Leila Aboulela's *The Translator*;" and Abulmaaty, "Alienation in Leila Aboulela's *The Translator,*" among several others. Moreover, few studies were found on *A Mighty Collision of Two Worlds*, the most important are the ones done by Nyongesa from a postcolonial approach.

The significance of this research lies in the contribution it offers to extant literature, manifested in applying Gayatri Spivak's concept of the "subaltern" and Edward Said's concept of "Orientalism" on the novels under study, which have not been analyzed yet from such viewpoints.

Research Questions

This article aims at inspecting and answering the following research questions:

1. Do the Muslim female characters in the novels have "voice," i.e. can they speak as they are considered as "the subalterns"?

2. Are the Muslim female characters in the novels seeking to escape their patriarchal societies by marrying Western men to save them?

3. To what extent is the representation of the Muslim female characters' experience from a Western author's point of view accurate?

Theoretical Framework

Gayatri Spivak and Edward Said's viewpoints will be used as a theoretical framework in this article. Spivak wrote her article "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in response to the Sati practice in which a South Asian woman, especially the Hindus, used to burn herself to death when her husband dies by sitting on top of his funeral pyre (Jain). This practice was abolished in 1987 although four cases were recorded between 2000 and 2015 (Jain). This affirms Spivak's argument when she said: "The women actually wanted to die" (Spivak).

In her article, Spivak (90) concludes that the "subaltern women" cannot speak because they are silenced or spoken for by those who are in power; i.e. the colonizer and men. And if they do speak, they are not being heard.

Moreover, Spivak (93) in her essay argues: "The abolition of this rite by the British has been generally understood as a case of 'white men saving brown women from brown men.' " This means that South Asian women are being oppressed by their husbands, fathers, or brothers; and seeking the help of white men is the only solution of escaping such oppression.

Furthermore, Ross (386) points to the fact that "the widows in the sati texts, all of which are written from a Western perspective, are portrayed as victims of an inhumane, religious, offence…" This point reflects Edward Said's concept of the Orientalist who distorts the image of the East and Eastern people by misrepresenting them. He states: "those representations of the Orient had very little to do with what I knew about my own background in life" (Jhally 3).

Methodology

The main theoretical issues that will be consulted to analyze the novels are: First, Spivak's point of a "woman's voice" will be applied to check whether the Muslim female characters are being heard or marginalized by their Eastern patriarchal

societies. In addition, Spivak's quote that states white men are saving brown women would be appropriate to investigate the goal of the cross-cultural marriage in the novels. In other words, it would be suitable to check whether the Muslim female "brown" characters are seeking to be saved by "white men." Finally, the issue of the Western misrepresentation of Eastern people will be employed in examining the extent to which the experiences of the Eastern characters as depicted by the Western authors is accurate.

A qualitative content analysis will be followed in this study in order to analyze the textual data which are derived from the utterances of the main characters in the novels. Thus, suitable data will be collected, analyzed, and interpreted to answer my research questions.

Analysis and Findings

Starting with the first point, concerning Spivak's viewpoint of woman's voice and being silenced by her society, it is noticed that in *The Translator* Sammar is not controlled by any patriarchal figure. Her father is not mentioned in the novel; her husband is dead; and her brother is the only male figure in her life, but she does not succumb to his opinions. For example, when her brother knows that she will quit her job in Aberdeen, he shouts: "You must never do that. Do you think jobs are lying about waiting for people to pick them up? Do you think you're going to find a job here?" (Aboulela 152). However, Sammar does not listen to her brother and insists on her resignation from her job as a translator at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland and on coming back to her home country, Sudan. Ironically, while no male authority appears in Sammar's life, it is observed that she is controlled by a female figure who is her aunt and her mother-in-law at the same time. She always interferes in Sammar's decisions, as the narrator states: "she [Sammar's aunt] was a woman who had an opinion on all things" (Aboulela 5). Sammar simply lets her aunt decides her way of life, as the narrator depicts her internal thoughts: "letting Mahasen decide what you should dress, how you should fix your hair. You were happy with that, content, waiting for the day you would take her only son away from her" (Aboulela 7). Not only is she letting her aunt decides her way of dress, but also her life's path. When Sammar had a marriage proposal after her husband's death, her aunt said: "An educated girl like you, you know English… you can support yourself and your son, you don't need marriage" (Aboulela 13). She added: "In the past, widows needed protection, life is different now" (Aboulela 13). Her aunt wants her to live in Aberdeen, work, and be responsible for herself and her son, and this is what Sammar had done.

While Sammar's aunt is the female authority behind Sammar's decisions, in Abdi's novel, Anisa's mother is the one behind her acts. Anisa seems obedient to her mother who decides her way of life. She opposes the opportunity offered to her daughter to travel to the United States as an exchange student, because she does not want her daughter to be lost in the Western culture. In addition, an arranged marriage was planned for Anisa at the beginning of the novel who was only fifteen years old. However, Anisa convinced her parents of her travel to the U.S. and off she flew to a new culture that opposed her own. In the beginning, she used to lie at her parents when she stopped practicing her religious teachings. She did not tell her family about her civil marriage and didn't want her American husband, Mike, to inform them either until he converts to Islam (Abdi 123). This reflects her fear of her family and her submissive position. Living in a different culture that values individual's choices made Anisa change and adapt to the host culture. She realized the importance of individuality and freedom of choice. She is no longer the subservient girl whose parents control her. She has her own "voice" now and can speak; she told her friend Faiza when she went back home for a visit: "I'm not the frightened Anisa they shipped off to America. I've learned quite a bit since, and one of the skills that I've picked up is how to say a simple no" (Abdi 81). Anisa simply rebels against her parents' decisions and against her cultural customs by refusing to marry in a traditional way.

When it comes to Amina in *The Newlyweds*, the protagonist seems to be under the control of her mother too. She told Amina not to have sex with her husband-to-be until the wedding is carried out officially according to the Islamic Sharia:

> She'd made Amina promise that she and George would wait to do *that* until after they'd had the ceremony at whichever Rochester mosque seemed most suitable. She had talked about the one thing Amina could lose that she would never be able to get back. (Freudenberger 29)

Amina's father, on the other hand, doesn't seem to be a patriarchal figure whose word must be followed. He is encouraging his daughter to marry a Western man through matchmaking websites and did not oblige her to marry a Bengali man in a traditional way (Freudenberger 13). As noticed so far, Amina has "voice" in her family, she is doing what she wants under the guidance of her mother but without being obliged on doing anything she does not like or approve of.

It is coincidental that the four authors under study employ a female figure in their novels to guide and control the female protagonists. In the *Veil of Roses*, it

is noticed too that the protagonist's eldest sister has a say in Tamila's actions and decisions as the following quote shows:

> I promised my sister I would not befriend any American men,…why do you let your sister tell you what to do?...she is only looking out for me. Bullshit, she's trying to control you. We don't think that way in my culture. She is my sister and she is thinking only for me. If I have a reputation that is tarnished, it will be very difficult for me to find a husband. (Fitzgerald 122)

As it is observed from the above quote, the protagonist views her sister's control over her as care and love. She is her eldest sister and she knows better what's right for her. She convinces herself and accepts such a domination as it is obvious in this quote: "He is right. I do let Maryam push me around. But she is my older sister, and she is only looking out for me" (Fitzgerald 149).

It is worth noting here that the image of the Iranian woman is depicted in the novel as one who does not have much freedom and who cannot act as she likes. There are cultural norms and customs that she should follow and obey as it is shown in the following quote:

> Nine-year-old girls in Iran do not shout gleefully on playgrounds, in public view of passerby. They do not draw attention to themselves; they do not go to school with boys. They do not swing their long red hair and expect with Ella's certainty that romantic love is in their future. And they do not, not, not sing of sitting in trees with boys, kissing, and producing babies. (Fitzgerald 2)

Not only that, but also when a woman gets married she "goes into her husband's family in a white gown and she leaves it only in a white shroud, in death. That is our culture. And that is our future, inescapable for most girls. Inescapable, it had begun to seem, even for me" (Fitzgerald 3). Looking at their future as inescapable explains the reason why Iranian women feel free when they travel abroad; "When the pilot announces we have left Iranian airspace, a cheer breaks out. Women on the flight…. yank off their headscarves and run their fingers through their hair. They have left Iran, and the future is theirs, to make of it what they will" (Fitzgerald 11). Leaving Iran and living in the United States for a while has taught Tamila how to stand for herself and "speak" in Gayatri's terms. She has the courage now to say "No" and to stop people from interfering in her life's decisions:

> Yes. I want you to stop running my life…I came to America for the freedoms it offers. One of those is the freedom to disagree with those in authority…. I think I should be able to marry whomever I decide to…I am a grown and university-educated woman. I have as many brains as Ardishir or any man. And where there are decisions to be made about my future, it is I who should make them. (Fitzgerald 148)

Moving to the second point of discussion in which Spivak thinks that white men are saving brown women from brown men; it is observed that this does not apply in *The Translator*. First of all, Sammar seems to love her late husband and this is manifested in the novel through flashbacks and through her constant memories of him. She wanted to see the streets where Tarig had ridden his bike, and where she had walked every day after school to see him (Aboulela 33). She needed to speak about everything related to Tarig; his bike, his room, his singing with imaginary microphones, guitars, and drums. She stayed faithful to him after his death by following the Sharia law: "Sammar had not worn make-up or perfume since Tarig died four years earlier. Four months and ten days, was the sharia's mourning period for a widow, the time that was for her alone…" (Aboulela 69). In addition, when Yasmin asked her if she is going to marry a non-Muslim, she answered: "Of course not, that would be against the sharia" (Aboulela 91). Sticking to her religious teachings made Sammar reject marriage to a non-Muslim Western man. In fact, she made him convert to Islam at the end of the novel in order to marry her. So, if Sammar was seeking a Western man to save her, she wouldn't have adhered to her religious and cultural norms.

Similarly, it is observed that Anisa, in *A Mighty Collision of Two Worlds*, experiences feelings of remorse for her transgression which is marrying a non-Muslim Western man. She is now conscious that faith is more important to her than her love for Mike: "I love Allah, and I love my faith. I just can't understand why I chose you over my faith. Ya Allah, what have I done? All these years of my life, where have I been? Ya Allah! Rescue me just this once!" (Abdi 118-119) This quote is evidence that Anisa was not looking for a Western man in order to save her from her society. In fact, she couldn't handle her husband's non-belief practices, and thus she returned to her home country and committed herself to her religious teachings.

While Sammar and Anisa were attached to their home country and at the end of the novel they went back home, Amina in *The Newlyweds* was finding a way to escape her country and the only way for her was to find an American husband: "of course, the easiest way to come to America is to find an American and get married"

(Freudenberger 25). In fact, Amina is interested in traveling abroad not for the sake of saving herself from her society, but rather to save her parents from poverty. In fact, her parents are encouraging her to become legally married to an American man. They are using their daughter as a way out to go to America. Her father said: "why should we spend so much money here in Dhaka when we are only waiting to come to America?" (Freudenberger 108). He is dreaming that once his daughter marries an American, she can get the green card that enables her to sponsor her parents:

> Only once she was married could she get the green card, and only once she had the green card could she apply for her citizenship. As a citizen, her father knew, she could sponsor her parents, and in his mind the sponsorship was the only thing keeping him and her mother from making the journey to America. (Freudenberger 41)

In addition, another reason that makes Amina seeks a Western husband is the fact that Bengali men view their women as incompetent, weak, and do not listen to their wives. This is what Amina admitted in the following quote:

> Fariq took the phone without asking and redialed the number, as if her difficulty might be the result of general female incompetence. She reminded herself that this characteristic in Bengali men was one of the things she'd left the country to escape… (Freudenberger 214- 215)….. And I bet he listens to you-not like Bengali husbands. (Freudenberger 238)

When it comes to Tamila, in *Veil of Roses*, it is observed that the main purpose of escaping her country, Iran, and finding a husband in America is that she is looking for the freedom and joy which her country has denied her as she admits in the following quote: "I must find a husband who will sponsor my application for residency… being married is a small price to pay if it means I can stay in the Land of Opportunities and raise my children, my daughters, in the freedom that would be denied them in Iran" (Fitzgerald 14).

Moreover, freedom is not the sole thing that Tamila is looking for in America; in fact, she is seeking a husband who respects his wife and is interested in her as a person, not just viewing her as a bearer of his children: "We're not in Iran, Masoud. This is why I left Iran. Because of men like you" (Fitzgerald 279).

Moving to the third point of discussion which concerns the extent to which the representation of the Muslim female experiences by Western authors is accurate, it

is noticed that there are a lot of utterances in *The Newlyweds* that reflect prejudiced ideas about Eastern countries and Eastern women as manifested in the following quote: "She asks that because you're from someplace else, George had said. She sees brown skin and all she can think of is housecleaning or baby-sitting" (Freudenberger 7). Western characters in the novel think that all Eastern women are housemaids, preserved, and ugly. "Eileen and Jessica hadn't really heard what she was saying, because they'd been so surprised to hear that there were beauty shops in Bangladesh at all" (Freudenberger 21). They thought that Bengali women are always covered under their chador and don't take care of their beauty. " 'But what about the women who cover their hair?' Eileen had asked, and Amina said she guessed that even those women enjoyed looking nice underneath the chador" (Freudenberger 21).

Not only do Western characters in the novel have a preconceived idea about Muslim women, but also about Islam. They see it as a religion that embraces many terrorists:

> She hadn't yet encountered anyone who blamed her for the September 11 attacks because she was a Muslim or because she came from a country that had once been part of Pakistan, but this was a misperception she'd anticipated and been prepared to correct. (Freudenberger 114)

Even Amina's husband thinks of Islam as the "other" religion despite the fact that he is going to convert to it in order to marry her. "She always felt slightly offended when George referred to Islam as 'her religion,'….. as if her faith were a wild animal whose behavior couldn't be reliably predicted" (Freudenberger 69).

Moreover, it is noticed that the Western characters haven't heard of the country Bangladesh at all, and they don't even know where it is located: "It was possible that this person couldn't spell "Bangladesh" or, like Lisa, had never even heard of it" (Freudenberger 66). Amina explained to them that "Bangladesh is not the Middle East….It is in South Asia" (Freudenberger 114). All the above mentioned evidence from the novel reflect Edward Said's concept of the Orientalist who distorts the image of the East and Eastern people by misrepresenting them. Not all Bengali women remain hidden under their chador and don't care about their beauty and not all of them are housewives. A lot of women have proven that they have a respected social status and rank in society. Many of them have become writers in addition to their work in other fields. Also, not all Muslims are terrorists, many of them are respectful members living in Western societies and following the rules of the host

society.

The same preconceived ideas about Eastern countries are repeated in the *Veil of Roses*, where the author depicts the image of Iran through the characters who think that Iran is a bad and oppressive country especially for women as depicted in the following quote: "What is I-ran like? Is it as bad as the news says it is?….it is not so good for womens" (Fitzgerald 58). The author also employs the protagonist herself to portray the image of Iranian women as oppressed, veiled, and subordinate. Tamila expresses her wish "to open a school for girls. I would teach them to think for themselves… they do not need to veil themselves from the world…. I would teach them it is okay for girls and boys to be friends" (Fitzgerald 74).

Moreover, the author uses offensive terms to describe hijab and Iranian customs. For example, Tamila said that she would gladly wear that "stupid" hijab forever if she could look at men in the eye without being afraid of her world coming to an end. In addition, one of the Western characters thinks that it is "stupid" to have direct official relationships with men without dating them (Fitzgerald 81), and this goes against Islamic Shariah.

In short, all of the above mentioned quotes in the two novels that are written by Western authors prove that there is a preconceived idea about Eastern countries and Eastern women that matches Said's viewpoint of the Orientalist.

Conclusion

This study has explored the subject of women's "voice" in four novels: Leila Aboulela's *The Translator* (1999), Safi Abdi's *A Mighty Collision of Two Worlds* (2002), Laura Fitzgerald's *Veil of Roses* (2007), and Nell Freudenberg's *The Newlyweds* (2013). Results show that: first, the female characters in the four novels "have voice" although they are controlled by a female authority whether she is their mother, aunt, or sister. However, Tamila, in the *Veil of Roses*, seems to be oppressed by her Iranian society and is deprived of freedom. Second, the Muslim female characters, Sammar and Anisa, did not marry a Western man in order to escape their patriarchal societies, because they were committed to their Islamic teachings and went back to their home country at the end of the novels. In contrast, Amina and Tamila sought American men to save them from poverty and to provide them the freedom they were missing in their countries. Third, the representation of the Muslim female characters' experiences by Western authors is not accurate as there are several preconceived and prejudiced ideas in the two novels by the Western authors that do not apply on Muslim women in general.

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"Take This Slave Wench Krsna to the House!"[1]: Exploring Feminine Subjectivity in the Indian Context through Draupadi-Dopdi

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Abstract We exist through our bodies and as the materiality of our existence becomes a certainty, so are the conflicting and contradictory experiences around the body. For a woman, the body becomes a site of conflict between authorial/patriarchal dictates and the possibilities of achieving agency within the confines or limitations of discursive power. In this essay, I will be presenting a "subjected story" of a hybrid construct — "Dopdi Kuru" emanating out of Vyasa's Draupadi Kuru and Mahasveta Devi's Dopdi Mejhen; trying to explore how sexual politics and gender associations participate out in feminist struggles around body politics in the India. The main thrust of this paper is to highlight how sexed bodies are produced through patriarchal interventions, and how bodies become the very agency through which women embody their lived experiences. This paper doesn't hold up the romantic illusions of auspiciousness and fulfillment circulating around a woman's body as part of the Indian thought process; rather forces us to witness the distressing spectacle of nudity and the violence of rape, that actually threatens a woman's body; experiences that ultimately lead her to question the very ethos of society and achieve embodiment in contradiction to the established expectations of femininity.
Key words Body; Draupadi; Dopdi; Embodiment; Rape.
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1 van Buitenen 58. Henceforth only page numbers mentioned for quotations from van Buitenen, trans. *The Mahabharata: Selections from the Sabha Parva and Udyoga Parva.*

Introduction

COVID 19; and one thing that singularly strikes me is the human effort to create a dialectics around this disease. We find almost everyone theorizing about the source of this ailment, trying to guess its probable cure, where not only our human experiences but also our community's concepts and beliefs are merged. As we start investigating the origin of this pandemic, or about any other social or personal issue, we see ourselves spinning out a *story*, or endorsing a particular version, felt and imagined as a part of the collective unconscious. Remembering Nietzsche we might say that the act of storytelling not only creates literature but also a performative space that generate an embodied life. Linguist Elionor Ochs and psychologist Lisa Capps felt that, "language is the greatest human resource for representing and structuring events in our lives. And no language practice has more impact in this direction than storytelling" (Capps & Ochs 13). Every culture has stories to tell, stories about its origin: stories about various customs and rituals that impress upon the human psyche. Stories spew out meanings and provide a representing and transforming space of human experiences and cultural episteme. Stories investigate into human geography and are representations of our individual and collective notions of the real —"It is not what 'really happened' but rather experiencers' theories of what happened that provide continuity between past, present, future and imagined lives" (Capps & Ochs 21). Stories are memory hordes that preserve the individual or collective consciousness to a particular event. Some may be laden with worn images or familiar incidents plucked again and again by the storyteller(s). These hackneyed renditions, built upon a known version, may be termed as the "official story" of that thing or incident. Yet some stories expose certain *obscured* enclaves or throw light to some *suppressed* pattern of thought and experience beneath the hegemonic mother story, not typically palatable to the popular imagination. Such stories—marked out by their new orientations—unravel and present what might be called with respect to a particular incident, a "subjected story." In this paper, I will be presenting a "subjected story," not of Vyasa's Draupadi Kuru and Mahasveta Devi's Dopdi Mejhen, topics that have already been explored by scholars over generations; but of "Dopdi Kuru," trying to explore how sexual politics and gender associations participate out in feminist struggles around body politics in the Indian subcontinent. This paper is not an interpretation but experimentation with a hybrid construct "Dopdi Kuru," signifying that it is Dopdi Mejhen who can be imagined raising the unsettling question—"Whom did you lose first, yourself or me?" (47) and flaunting her naked body as a spectacular ridicule of patriarchal authority and Dharma. The question raised is

not asked by an individual woman to her husband, rather it is a universal question that the second sex poses to us: in subjecting a woman to inhuman tortures whom we lose first—the woman who is treated as an animal or "us," who behaves like an animal? The paper explores authority, license, and subjugation and their correlation to marginalized-women bodies asserting that the female body is the focalspot of coercion in any society, where particular identity of the self is immaterial.

Who's *Mahabharata*?

The Mahabharata makes a spectacular claim: "What is here is nowhere else; what is not here is nowhere." Never has any work of literature been so confident about its authoritative status, but this two thousand years old Indian epic could be, as it knew itself to be an opus not defending a closed structure, but an evolving organism in a state of constant retellings encompassing every human experience and story teller, in the scope of its evolution. Its characters still parade on our psyche and its issues still find relevance in the thinking mind. It still speaks to us with a contemporary resonance which appears to many as a "literary un-thing" (Winternitz 272), incorporating the entire flow of human experience within its elastic pattern. Y.V.Vassilkov offers a more natural way of probing the issue of genre, by looking at the *Mahabharata* as anunbrokenchain of inclusion and integration which is to him the "uniqueness of this epic" (Vassilkov 225).

"This immense poem," Jean-Claude Carriere wrote in 1985, " which flows with the majesty of a great river, carries an inexhaustible richness which defies all structural, thematic, historical or psychological analysis…Layers of ramifications, sometimes contradictory, follow up on one another and are interwoven without losing the central theme. *That theme is a threat: we live in a time of destruction—everything points in the same direction*" (qtd. in Tharoor, loc 103).

In the face of such interpretations, where we can assume that this great epic has the potential to be all things to all men; I raise the question: Who's *Mahabharata* ? Looking at some of the issues cited in the epic we may conclude that the *Mahabharata* is what you can make of it, and from that perspective every individual can lay a claim to it or identify with any of the major or minor characters. My point is not to contest how the women characters have been marginalized in the seed story, rather to show that how the images and tropes in the seed story and its successive rendition by Mahasvata Devi creates a symbolically feminine body, whose story *Mahabharata* becomes. In this essay the symbolically feminine body fusing Draupadi with Dopdi creates a chronotope across time and space helping in the embodiment a post-colonial feminine self, which Anzaldua would have called "New

Mestiza," representing the nation's tortured body.

I use the notion of symbolically feminine from Moira Gaten's notion of imaginary body. Gatens applies the expression "imaginary" in a "loose but nevertheless technical sense to refer to those images, symbols, metaphors and representations which help construct various forms of subjectivity. In this sense, [she is] concerned with the (often unconscious) imaginaries of a specific culture: those ready-made images and symbols through which we make sense of social bodies and which determine, in part, their value, their status and what will be deemed their appropriate treatment" (Gatens viii). Significantly, these metaphors and tropes of a "symbolically feminine body" are not inert or fixed, but are transmogrifying and so, are provisional (Brown 29), and that gives me a scope to experiment with the notion of Dopdi Kuru, whose story *Mahabharata* is.

The Woman's Body in Society: Theoretical Framework

The woman's body and its emanation in physical/psychological as well as cultural/social domain is an essential point of inquiry to understand her position in Indian society. To unravel the complexities intrinsic in a multifaceted and fluid construct around the notion of the feminine self has been of growing interest in recent feminist scholarships in India.

Embodiment—the physical and mental understanding of being—is the state of possibility for us, connecting to other people and to the world. Fully capable or seriously incapacitated, it is through our physicality that we function as social beings. As Shildrick and Price points out, the concept of "being-in-the-world"—or more appropriately, becoming-in-the-world—is an expression of indissoluble bodily bias in which the "temporal and the spatial are fully operative" (Shildrick and Price 8). Moreover, the embodied subject is not an inaccessible, empirical self in relation to the world, out there, supposed as a detached entity. Contrarily, "it is the nature of the embodied subject to move into and be taken up by the world around her. Essences emerge through this intertwining, in the space between. They are enacted but always and only in relation to the world and to others" (Fielding 132). Bodies are produced across "all forms of community as a deeply-embedded social-relational category" (James qtd. in Cregan, 4).

Most interestingly the female body is viewed and produced as a contesting site of authorial power and resistance to that power. In both experiential terms, as well as in terms of an understanding and knowledge of their circumstance and the potential for struggle open to them, women in representing themselves, pay heightened attention to this aspect of their embodied selves. As Meenakshi Thapan points out:

> Resistancein fact is a double edged sword in women's lives, one with which they constantly articulate and exhibit their struggle but one which does not always enable complete success. Resistance, nonetheless, remains central to their lives whether or not it achieves social transformation. …This undeniable reality gives them a strength and dignity that is of their making, driven by their awareness and understanding, and therefore lies outside the domain of what is socially approved or normative behavior (xv).

This paper tries to project female bodies in resistance as a transgressive construct, for whom the grotesque representation of the self becomes an empowering device, destabilizing not only idealized notions about femininity; but also mocking and destroying patriarchy's pretension to the codes of chivalry. This paper shows the grotesque embodiment's potential to dismantle the overriding cultural codes.

Now I will move on to explicate my notion about the production of grotesque or deviant bodies. The body, as Mary Douglas views, is "always treated as an image of society" where "the bodily control is an expression of social control" (74). The conforming body never pose a threat to a society, whereas the grotesque body, which is "the open, protruding, extended, secreting body, the body of becoming, process and change" (Russo qtd. in Scura & Jones 5), constitutes a rebellion against social boundaries and regulations. In this classification of grotesque bodies, I also incorporate the nude bodies, which after being stripped or raped, refuse to be clothed and in that provide a spectacular resistance to the normative regulations of femininity.

For Foucault, the body is an over-determined site of power; its physiology and morphology shaped by histories and practices of containment and control. Punishment is never a process to reduce crimes but a means to exercise perpetual surveillance over the members of a society. Power acts upon bodies to coerce them into submission. Foucault writes:

> The body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs. This political investment of the body is bound up, in accordance with complex reciprocal relations of power and domination; but on the other hand, its constitution as labor power is possible only if it is caught up in a system of subjection. (qtd. in Haugaard 191)

Judith Butler's feels that in Foucault work, "power in his double valence of subordinating and producing remains unexplored" (Butler, *Psychic Life* 2). In order to resolve this lack Butler spins out a subversive politics which coalesces a theory of power with a theory of psychoanalysis. For Butler gendered subject is formulated through practice of subjection. The moment an individual is subject to gender norms or disciplining, she/he also emerges as a gendered subject. Foucault's account of *assujetissement* fails to show how the subject created in submission is not a determined subject, but one that can offer resistance to the very power structures that protract its continuation. Butler resolves this problem by defining gender in terms of performativity: if heterosexual gender norms have to be repeated in order to persist, then, they can be repeated differently. The notion of performativity is extremely crucial to the sociology of the body, as it helps in producing resisting bodies. In this essay I try to show how Draupadi's body in a post-colonial critical framework metamorphoses into Dopdi's body, where the body is a not only a site where regimes of patriarchal discourse and power are inscribed, but also a pre-given site of its own ostensible construction.

Starting from the Beginning: Draupadi's Question in *The Mahabharata*

The basic story of the epic is about a dynastic rivalry between the Pandava and Kaurava clans, and the focus of this essay is the Hall of Dicing in *Sabha Parva*, where irked by the opulence of the Pandavas, Duryodhana invites the Pandavas to the Game of Dicing, and through the guile of Shakunirobs them of all material prosperity. Yudhisthira in the grip of dice insensibly stakes his brothers, himself, and finally his wife Draupadi: "She is not too short or too tall, not too black or too red, and her eyes are red with love—I play you for her!" (44).

After Yudisthira stakes and loses Draupadi to the Kauravas, Duryodhana orders an usher to bring Draupadi, "The beloved wife whom the Pandavas honor" (45), into the hall as a slave to the Kauravas. When the usher informs her that, "Yudhisthira, crazed by the dicing game,/Has lost you to Duryodhana" (47), Draupadi, not missing a bit, quizzes him about the details of Yudhisthira's stake, and sends back the usher with a question for Yudhisthira: "Bharata, whom did you lose first, yourself or me?" (47). Draupadi's question becomes the ultimate riddle that throws the entire Kuru court in a state of confusion regarding its answer. And as the elders debate, Draupadi is dragged in the court by Duhsasana. She pleads with him, and yet there is resistance in her speech: "It is now my month! / This sole garment, man of slow with. You cannot take me to the hall, you churl!" (50) But Duhsasana, retorts

back: "Sure, you be in your month, Yajnasena's daughter, / Or wear a lone cloth, or go without one!/ You've been won at the game and been made a slave, / And one lechers with slaves as the fancy befalls!" (50). She is brought to the court and though already shamed demands the answer to her question from the Kuru elders.

Draupadi's question offers a resistance to unequal power relations. As she poses her question she is simultaneously accomplishing the meaning of her thought. It is not a translation of a meaning that she has already prepared in her mind, but rather her act of speaking becomes a performance that accomplishes the thought of resistance and its meaning for the self. Draupadi's question is her thought, a behavioral process, through which she expresses her felt and even imagined need to be protected. Her question overlaps with various subtle interpretations of Dharma, which are also felt and expressed through words or lack of it. In this contest Draupadi's question assumes meaning, only in telling it, not before.

Irawati Karve in *Yuganta* feels that Draupadi's question was a foolish one, in the sense that:

> The question Draupadi asked rested on a difficult and complicated legal point. Even Bhishma, who had often taken the part of the Pandavas in quarrels with Dhritarashtra and Duryodhana, was unable to give an answer, perhaps for fear of compromising Draupadi. What Draupadi was contending was that once Dharma had become a slave he had lost his freedom and had no right to claim anything as his own; a slave has nothing he can stake. Then how could Dharma stake her freedom? Although her argument seems plausible from one point of view, even a slave has a wife, and the fact of his slavery does not destroy his authority over her. Moreover, from the most ancient times, a slave had the right to accumulate certain property that was entirely his own. The question was thus a tangled one, involving the rights of a master over a slave and a slave over his wife (98-99).

Begging to disagree with Karve, I would like to state that her question actually punctuated the patriarchal assumption to power and authority. Through her question she momentarily achieves a stalemate situation and shakes the entire socio-philosophical framework of the Aryan society dependant on the notions of Dharma, as the embedded question she poses is really cosmic in intent. Rig-vedic society produced the concept of Shanatana Dharma to elucidate what it means to be a human being at any given point of time, in accordance to a reciprocal shaping that occurs among the notion of the self and the developing constitutions of conscience and

corporeal punishment. The way a culture establishes an understanding and convention of corporeal punishment influences—and is influenced by—the constitutions of conscience and selfhood. Draupadi's question goes way deeper—is Dharma really practicable where a man fails to respect the autonomy of a woman and barters her in a game of dice to be dragged and stripped in a court of men?

Dharma is essential into human existence as an attempt to fill a hole perceived to exist given the absence of absolute meaning for suffering. It distinguishes, in other words, an attempt to import into human experience proper meaning. But if we take the notion of Dharma to be just as a legal framework of society, and fail to read between the lines, then when faced with a difficult question like Draupadi's, we fumble for an answer. Though Irwati Karve is critical of Draupadi, yet her description is crucial, which I use to prove a point totally in contradiction to her view:

> Draupadi's question had put all of them in a dilemma. Bhishma hung his head. Dharma was ready to die of shame. Draupadi was standing there arguing about legal technicalities like a lady pundit when what was happening to her was so hideous that she should only have cried out for decency and pity in the name of the Kshatriya code. Had she done so perhaps things would not have gone so far? Allowing their own daughter-in-law to be dragged before a full assembly, dishonouring a bride of their own clan in the assembly of the men, was so against all human, unwritten law, that quibbling about legal distinctions at that point was the height of pretension (99-100).

Karve's *Yuganta*, comes at a time when to be mute and conforming was considered to be prudent for a woman, and that same opinion is pushed forward to analyze and criticize Draupadi. But being way ahead into feminism and gender, I fail to agree with Karve, and rather feel that Draupadi's question blasts the empty bulwarks of patriarchal Sanatana-Dharma. In *The Law Code of Manu,* the section on "Honouring Women," Chaper 3, ll 55, clearly states, "If they desire an abundance of good fortune, fathers, brothers, husbands, and brothers-in-law should revere their woman and provide them with adornments." Here we see a clear abrogation of this law code, and can howl and curse those who stake her (any woman), allow her (any woman) to be staked, drag her (any woman), and intellectualize on her state (any woman's pitiable state in society).

As the men debate on Draupadi's question, Karna snubs Vikarna, and twists Dharma to establish his point that Draupadi has been legally won, calls her a whore—"She submits to many men and assuredly is a whore!" (55); and then orders

Duhsasana to "Strip the clothes from Pandavas and Draupadi!" (55). As Draupadi's skirt is stripped, a new skirt is replaced every time. It is perhaps not strange that later redactors felt necessary to embroider the story in this magical frame of replacing skirts, maybe to preserve the sanctity of a blood line or to garb patriarchy bestiality towards women. But reality is something that can't be screened. And to view reality let's turn to Dopdi : "Name Dopdi Mejhen, age twenty-seven, husband Dulna Majhi (deceased), domicile Cherakhan, Bankrahjarh, information whether dead or alive and/or assistance in arrest, one hundred rupees…" (Spivak 392).[1]

"Draupadi" by Mahasveta Devi

This classic text by Maheswata Devi, translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, is an epitome of subaltern resistance, bearing a chilling testimony of Santhal Hool. But here I represent Dopdi, not as a political activist, but as doppelganger to Draupadi, breaking down the romantic illusion of the spectacle: "But when her skirt was being stripped off, lord of the people, another similar skirt appeared every time" (55), as presented in *The Mahabharata*, and exposing the raped and mutilated body of a woman. Draupadi's rape, screened from memory and comprehension, through the enigmatic description of a continuous flow of skirts, is not so hard to "explain" away, if one wanted to—and plenty still do, as a gesture of supernatural intervention. The method conjures up the history of rape's demonstration—which is to say rape's history of being effaced within representation. Dopdi taps into this history of effacement, and represents for us the "missing" rape and to rape's annoying ocular and ontological status in Indian culture.

Senanayak's order to the soldiers, "Make her. *Do the needful*" (401), almost mimics Karna's ordering Duhsasana, "Take this slave wench Krsna to the house!" (58), and then starts the real spectacle of brutality. It becomes immaterial whether it's Draupadi or Dopdi—class boundaries evaporate, time frame and location dissolves; only one predominant tendency emerges: brutalizing a woman if found in a disadvantageous position. Draupadi screeches like a "winged osprey" (59) and for Dopdi, "a billion moons pass" (401). Whether it's Draupadi in the camp, or Dopdi in the Kuru court, or whether we create a hybrid entity—Dopdi Kuru, it is immaterial. As long as a woman's body can be ravaged, as long as she can be stripped, and her nipples bitten, patriarchy will continue to do so.

To strip and rape a woman follows a much more complicated mindset on the part of patriarchy than mere summer seeming lust. A woman's body is obses-

1 Henceforth just page number mentioned for Spivak's translation of "Draupadi" by Mahasveta Devi.

sively objectified and physically persecuted, so that it may function as a fetish to alleviate the castration anxiety that threatens male hegemony. A man, out of a fear of losing his penis, creates or looks at naked women as images of sexual difference, to console himself that he is dominant, and in the heterosexual matrix he is the master and woman the object of domination, or the slave.

If Draupadi-Dopdi represents a homogenous feminine self, then Karna's dictatesto Draupadi, "Come in and serve us with your attention" (61), is a foreboding to the brutal rape to which Dopdi's body is inflicted to:

> Opening her eyes after a million light years, Draupadi, strangely enough, sees sky and moon. Slowly the bloodied nailheads shift from her brain. Trying to move, she feels her arms and legs still tied to four posts. Something sticky under her ass and waist. Her own blood. Only the gag has been removed. Incredible thirst. In case she says "water" she catches her lower lip in her teeth. She senses that her vagina is bleeding. How many came to make her? (401)

One of the ways to discipline female bodies is to make a carnival out of it, where men will feast upon it at their pressure and leisure. Rape gets inscribed on a woman's body as a cross-cultural language of male domination and humiliation:

> …crazed by his [Duryodhana] ascendency, he took his cloth and looked invitingly at Pancali [Draupadi]. Then smiling up at Radheya, and taunting Bhima, he [Duryodhana] exposed to Draupadi who was watching him his left thigh, soft like a banana tree… (62)

The description of insult in *The Mahabharata* is followed by the ravages on Dopdi's body:

> Shaming her, a tear trickles out of the corner of her eye. In the muddy moonlight she lowers her lightless eye, sees her breasts, and understands that, indeed, she's made up right. Her breasts are bitten raw, the nipples torn. How many? Four-five-six-seven—then Draupadi had passed out. (401)

The demonic Kauravas and their allies, salivating over Draupadi in the Kuru court, makes out to her,randomly, in the forests of Jharkhani:

> She turns her head, the guard leans on his bayonet and leers at her. Draupadi

> closes her eyes. She doesn't have to wait long. Again the process of making her begins. Goes on. The moon vomits a bit of light and goes to sleep. Only the dark remains. Acompelled spread-eagled still body. Active *pistons* of flesh rise and fall, rise and fall over it. (401)

Rape aids in the enunciation of a politics of feminist agency. Foucault's concept of power as a dynamic force offers insight into how the "sexed body," in particular, is the chief target of disciplinary power. The identity continuum, creating the hybrid entity of Dopdi Kuru, becomes a symbolic representation of Indian culture's tortured feminine body.

I represent Draupadi and Dopdi, not as two unique, isolated and fixed protagonists placed in two different narrative frames, but as a hybrid subject, incorporating multiple voices and negotiating multiple subjectivities. My focus is on the lived and communicative body of Draupadi and Dopdi and on lived experience as constitutive of the embodied self. By lived experience, I mean that experience which is not unique to one but experienced by both, giving birth to the sexed body of Dopdi Kuru, which leads to the articulation of their subjectivity based in the everyday social-historical locations.

Since *The Mahabharat* puts a screen to the travails of Draupadi, her state is best represented through Dopdi; in fact, after the rape, it's only the body of Dopdi Kuru that we are made to observe and feel uneasy about it: "Draupadi stands before him, naked. Thigh and pubic hair matted with dry blood. Two breasts, two wounds" (402).The proud and naked body is reminiscent of Kali, creating implications of cosmic significance, suggesting dissolution of patriarchy itself.

Most importantly the gait of Dopdi triggers the notion of the uncanny in our mind. The revival of the old and long familiar naked body of the woman, historically silenced within our culturecreates a positively traumatic sensation: "Draupadi pushes Senanayak with her two mangled breasts, and for the first time Senanayak is afraid to stand before an unarmed *target*, terribly afraid" (402).

Conclusion

The main objective of this paper is to highlight how sexed bodies are produced, and how bodies become the very agency through which women embody their lived experiences. Body is a location subject to disciplinary forces, and also a site of resistance with emancipatory possibilities. Women recognize the necessity of resistance through their bodies. In fact, acts of resistance are linked to the future tendencies towards change, though not instantaneously achieved. It is in the moment

of openness that there lies the possibility of change; in that, it is "both impossible to pass the border and necessary to transcend it" (Wang 46). It is at this point that "the edge is overrun, contradictory imperatives and opposite gestures from both sides are fully awakened and thereby bring pressure for an answer" (ibid.) The question raised by Draupadi in *The Mahabharatai,* that couldn't find a befitting answer in the Kuru court leading to her interim molestation, is effectively answered through another rhetorical question in Maheswata Devi's story: "You can strip me, but how can you clothe me again? Are you a man?" (402)

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