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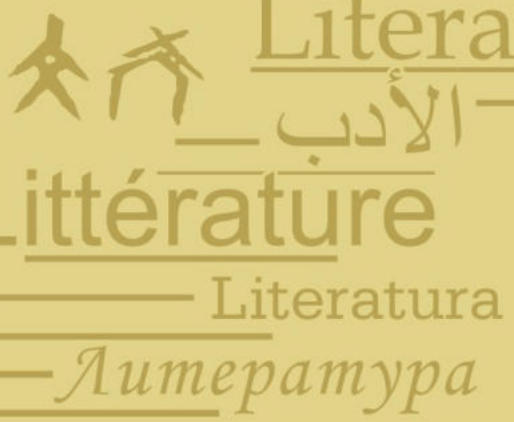

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Representation of Christmas in Childhood Memory Narratives: Reflecting and Revisiting the Past

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Abstract Political contexts of different epochs heavily influence the specificity of national, traditional, religious, and family festivities. Dramatic transformations of the festivity culture, which encompasses stable cultural-historical values and traditions as well as reveals the world perception of the society and family as its smallest social structure, were brought about in Latvia by the change of political power in 1940, they continued during the period of World War II and the Soviet era due to the impact of colonial policy implemented on the territory of Latvia. The aim of the paper is to study transformations of celebrating Christmas in childhood memory narratives by Latvian (Latgalian) writer Diāna Skaidrīte Varslavāne (b. 1932), which, permeated by WWII events and colonial trauma, reveal both individual / family history and the collective past.

Despite propagated atheism and targeted actions for elimination of religion during the Soviet era, Varslavāne's protagonist not only retains her religious beliefs, but continues celebrating religious holidays (including Christmas) privately. Christmas (the last family holiday) and Easter (the time her parents tragically die) in her autobiographical prose become a border line between the time "now"—full of psychological, emotional and physical pains—and radically opposite "then"—spent with her family and full of hopes and expectations. Due to the loss of the life fundamentals (parents, home), the heroine is striving to maintain her "self," her religiosity and spirituality, as it is only through them that she can hold a "conversation" with her tragically deceased parents and ensure the preservation of the ancestors' values and identity.

At conducting the research cultural-historical, biographical, comparative methods and content analysis were employed.

Keywords autobiographical narrative; memory; trauma; religious holidays; transformations.[1]

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Introduction

One of the goals of autobiographical literature is revealing human's inner world. Though, quite frequently, such literature describes a negative life experience, the narrative of this kind testifies to the human's true nature, which gets revealed when a protagonist faces both positive and negative emotions, success and failure (Roscan 143). Such type of narrative provides the author with the opportunity to share his or her life experience with other people and, what is especially vital, to stop keeping silence about pains and traumas experienced previously (Aouadi 202).

1 This research was supported by Daugavpils University (Latvia) research development grant No 14-95/2021/19 "Festivity Culture in the Colonial and Postcolonial Latvia: Celebration and Transformation."

The category of memory in autobiographical memory narratives reveal not only subjective world perception and individual or family history and recollections, but function as historical evidence that provides a panoramic overview of the shifts in public discourse, ideologies of society, political objectives, and cultural paradigms. Being a socially constructed notion (Halbwachs), collective memory "relates to important changes in the social fabric or to important threats to social cohesion and values" (Paez, Liu 107) and can be defined as "a system of meaning that allows groups to redefine who they are and where they are going" (Hirschberger 1441).

The memoirs of childhood and the past in Latvian literature, representing an important stratum of autobiographical writing, have always been significant for depicting the turning points in the history of the country and its people (national awakening, formation of individual and national self-awareness, WWII events, exile), as well as constructing and re-constructing their religious and cultural identity. The key texts of autobiographical childhood memory narratives in Latvian literature were written in the first half of the twentieth century by significant Latvian writers of the end of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century (Jānis Jaunsudrabiņš, Anna Brigadere, Ernests Birznieks-Upītis, Aspazija etc.)[1] who focused on the ascertainment of the national code (home, nature, fatherland, faith, education, work) (Rinkeviča; Kačāne), as well as placed the emphasis onto the distance between the past and the present by supplementing the plotline with the present viewpoint and author's position on the past (Rinkevica). The next obvious expression of autobiographical narratives is observed after the restoration of the independence of the country, since 1991, when self-expression was no more censored. These prose works to a greater extent focussed on oppression and subjection experienced as a result of WWII events and Soviet colonial policy, which might be the reason for trauma and a depressive state (Dobrenko, Shcherbenok); in addition, according to Sadiya Abubakar (2017), trauma is present in all forms of literature as it "surfaces as the shady part of all narratives that tell of a history, memoir, agonies and sorrows of the writer or about the subjects (characters) created" (119). The aim

1 Childood memory narratives *Baltā grāmata. Simts tēlojumu vārdos un līnijās* [The White Book. A Hundred Sketches in Words and Lines], 1914–1921 and *Zaļā grāmata* [The Green Book], 1950–1951 by Jaunsudrabiņš (1977–1962); trilogy: *Dievs, daba, darbs* [God, Nature, Labour], 1926; *Skarbos vējos* [In Harsh Winds], 1930; *Akmeņu sprostā* [In Stone Cage], 1933 by Brigadere (1861–1933); trilogy: *Pastariņa dienasgrāmata* [Pastariņš' Diary], 1922; *Pastariņš skolā* [Pastariņš at School], 1924; *Pastariņš dzīvē* [Pastariņš in Life], 1924 by Birznieks-Upītis (1871–1960); dilogy *Zila debess zelta mākoņos* [The Blue Sky in Golden Clouds] (*Zila debess* [The Blue Sky], 1924; *Zelta mākoņi* [Golden Clouds], 1928), by Aspazija (1865–1943) etc.

of this stream of autobiographical literature—trauma narratives—was to present authentic or semi-authentic personal experience (Verdins), enhance the understanding of social-political context of the individual and collective trauma and self-identification in the new circumstances when reconsideration of the shared past took place (Kaprāns), as well as to depict the impact of such a trauma (e.g. the Soviet massive deportations to Siberia etc.) on individual and collective identity (Birzniece; Ļaha; Meskova, Kupsane) as represented in the autobiographical book translated into 15 foreign languages *Ar balles kurpēm Sibīrijas sniegos* [With Dance Shoes in Siberian Snows] (2001) by Latvian politician, independence movement leader and writer Sandra Kalniete (b. 1952), the prose works *Pieci Pirksti* [Five Fingers] (2013) and *Paradīzes putni* [Birds of Paradise] (2018) by the winner of the Annual Latvian Literature Award in Best Work of Prose category (2014; 2019) Māra Zālīte (b. 1952), and many others.

According to Craps and Buelens (2008) "[c]olonial trauma […] is a collective experience, which means that its specificity cannot be recognized unless the object of trauma research shifts from the individual to larger social entities, such as communities or nations" (4). In addition, trauma experienced by communities and nations under the impact of colonial powers and included in autobiographical narratives is mainly marked by the concepts of tenacity and survival rather than convalescence (Saxena 181). Contextualization of the past events in a literary work allows evaluating colonization conditions and draw essential conclusions about their nature, consequences caused by them, psychological and mental impact on human [nation], including the imposed break with the tradition and a loss of daily or festive habits, rituals, customs, as well as about the ways of overcoming them: "[…] once a trauma and loss under colonial regime are contextualised and understood as a manifestation of oppressive politics and power equations, the conditions of colonialism can be addressed" (Saxena 183-184).

The research is aimed at investigating transformations of celebrating Christmas in childhood memory narratives depicting the events of WWII, Nazi and Soviet occupation–*Cilvēks spēlējas ar lāčiem* [Human Plays with Bears] (1975) and *Dzērvinīki* [Cold and Red Feet] (2001)—by Latvian (Latgalian) writer Diāna Skaidrīte Varslavāne (b. 1932). After the publication of her first long story in 1975, the writer's works were no longer published and for a wider circle of readers they appeared only after Latvia regained its independence; some manuscripts are still not available.

Historical and Cultural Context

The understanding of Latvian population about the preservation of national and

religious values, about identity, traditions, cultural heritage as well as about serious challenges their safeguarding pose due to the influence of historical and political events has been affected by radically different aspects of various regimes. An essential feature of the history of the twentieth century Latvian society is a repeated colonial and post-colonial experience, as well as the trauma of totalitarianism. In the result of WWI and on the basis of the principle of self-determination of nations, the independent state of Latvia was established in 1918, and in the postcolonial situation it developed as one of the most rapidly growing states in Europe, oriented towards restoration and protection of national identity and culture (Krūmiņš, Bleiere). In the result of geopolitical changes in 1940, Latvia was "actually liquidated and from an independent national state became a subordinate subject of the Soviet Union" (Mintaurs).

Colonialism, according to Jürgen Osterhammel (1997), is a system of domination and a sustained effort of controlling "from a geographically distant home a new political organization that had been created by invasion or settlement" (10-11). The identification of the Soviet power as a colonial power has been addressed in post-colonial criticism and theory by Violeta Kelertas (2006), Neil Lazarus (2012), Epp Annus (2012), Benedikts Kalnačs (2016) etc. who based their studies on David C. Moore's (2006) definition of the term "postcolonial" which was applied also to the former Soviet Regions—"the Baltic states, Central and Eastern Europe (including both former Soviet republics and independent 'East Bloc' states), the Caucasus, and Central Asia" (Moore 15). Colonialism is not only an enterprise of economic exploitation and political control, but foremost "a cultural project of control" (Dirks 3), thus, by reconstructing and transforming culture, colonialism becomes a cultural formation and, vice versa, culture—a colonial formation.

If the inter-war period (1918–1940) is characterized by strengthening Latvianness as a unifying foundation, at the same time preserving multiform expressions of ethnic minority cultures and their religious peculiarities, then during the Soviet colonial power, the primary focus is laid on belonging to the Soviet state, development of a civic ideology, giving up manifestations of national, religious and cultural identity. The Soviet colonial period (1940–1941; 1944/5–1991) brings about brutal changes in both the state administration structure and system of education and culture. The colonial policy of the USSR in Latvia was oriented towards the disruption of national identity, hence "the Latvian national self-confidence was considered a dangerous anti-Soviet manifestation" (Šteimans 60). One of the expressions of Soviet colonialism was the persecution of religious people, for whom atheism propagated by communists was not acceptable, and this marked a radical turning-point in

Latvian culture including festivity culture.

For Latvia, the colonial trauma largely coincided with mass traumatic WWII experience. During WWII, the German occupation (1941–1944/45) adopted the policy which, due to the influence of the trauma of the first Soviet occupation and deportations, aroused false hopes among the Latvian population that they might be supported in their attempt to restore independence, "[…] speaking about culture the Nazi pretended to be bearers of culture and demagogically promised the enslaved nations a wellbeing after their victory in war, so that to gain support from the population on the conquered territories" (Šteimans 76).

After the restoration of independence, the concepts of culture and cultural identity became significant again and were gradually employed as the research object in the framework of post-colonial discourse: "[…] attempts of Baltic scholars to integrate their efforts in the field of postcolonial studies can be seen as an attempt to contribute to this painful identity search" (Kalnačs 24).

Varslavāne's Prose in the Context of Traumatic Experience

Writer Varslavāne was born in the period of independent Latvia (August 30, 1932) in a Latgalian (south-eastern region of Latvia) town—Rēzekne. The idyll of the harmonious life of patriotically-minded and multi-religious (Catholic and Orthodox) family and the sense of a free citizen in an independent country were destroyed by the Soviet occupation in 1940, when by order of the new power parents were forced to live and work each in a different town while children had to attend school whose necessary attributes were "alien flags, incomprehensible words of the anthem […]" (Varslavāne, *Asmu zemes*… 9).

After the return to their native town and having avoided the 1941, June 14 deportation, the family worked and lived in the hope that Latvia's independence would be restored some day. During WWII, under the German occupation, both of her parents were killed in a Soviet air raid before her and the elder brother's very eyes, leaving the girl mentally and physically traumatized (head trauma and post-traumatic hearing difficulties):

> I have forgotten nothing! My memory brings back Stalag with Russian prisoners of war—just opposite to our small house, and their strange looks and laughter when I and my brother were standing there next to our dead mother… Days full of pain, and nights—well, everything, everything!"[1] (Varslavāne,

1 Here and henceforth all translations of the quotes from Latvian and Latgalian have been translated into English by the authors of the paper.

Dzērvinīki 5)

This tragic event of 1944, which fell on the eve of Easter, and last memorable happy event with parents, which fell on winter religious holidays, particularly Christmas, constitute polarities: in her childhood memories they became a border line between the time "now"—full of psychological, emotional and physical pains and radically opposite "then"—spent with her family and full of hopes and expectations. Having so suddenly and early lost her family, she also witnessed how the previously accepted values and traditions in state administration, education and culture were gradually undergoing crucial transformations.

Trauma has been a research object in different fields of studies (medicine, psychology, literature, culture, art) (Abubakar 120; Andermahr 1; Schönfelder 28, 43; Wood Anderson 6). In literary studies, nuances of depicting world wars, colonialism and decolonization, authoritarian regimes, genocide and global terrorism are investigated (Erll). By evaluating the impact of trauma on literature, psychological and cultural traumatic experience on the individual and the collective is revealed. Such studies explore "inexpressible in words" traumatic experience in autobiographical narratives that balance between the boundaries of imagination and reality, subjectivity and objectivity since the subject of trauma in literary narratives is simultaneously "personalized and contextualized, fictionalized and historicized, as well as psychologized and metaphorized [...]" (Schönfelder 29).

The term "trauma" is used to designate "a profoundly distressing, painful, or shocking experience that affects the individual so deeply as to cause a disruption in, injury to, or breach within the structures of the mind and the psyche and that, as a result, may have a persistent impact on an individual, especially regarding his or her relation to identity, memory, and the social environment" (Schönfelder 20-21). Trauma is a lost feeling of security in the result of violence and a situation when the individual's personal life story which had begun in a harmonious and orderly world is destroyed (Hernández 17).

In this peculiar way, readers are given the opportunity to have an insight into the colonial past and "become familiar with it": "Narrativization of trauma allows insight into specifics of the colonial past as a pathway to integration of the traumatic memory. This process of integration may also involve addressing the sensitive issue of complicity" (Visser 15). Authors, in turn, express their traumatic experience inflicted by the events in the past.

Currently many scientists maintain that no age group is protected against the influence and consequences of mental traumas (Dar et al.), including those caused

by colonialism, war events or terrorism (Bradford; Kidd; Lalonde; Waugh et al.). Publications assert that children endure such events inwardly and remember them for a long time since a traumatic stress provoked by such occurrences causes serious psychological aftereffects: "While it was previously believed that children did not understand or remember traumatic occurrences, there is now increasing awareness that children are very vulnerable to the stresses of war and terrorism" (Liu 3). The loss of parents, especially witnessing family members killed, as well as the loss of home during the aggressive attacks and moving to another household while being orphaned make children particularly vulnerable (Liu 4). Although both grown-ups and children display rather similar symptoms, children's reaction to tragic events considerably differs from that of grown-ups (Bulut 16).

This individual and collective traumatic experience was embodied by Varslavāne in her prose works—autobiographical long story *Cilvēks spēlējas ar lāčiem*[1] and in the long story *Dzērvinīki*[2], which due to the ban on publication in the Soviet period was issued only after the restoration of statehood in 2001 in the framework of post-colonial discourse. In the former memory prose work, the ten-year-old girl's, Skaidrīte Varkalne's, narrative depicts the period of German occupation in Septiņkalne [Rēzekne] from 1942 to 1944 when both of her parents tragically perished, representing also the flashbacks from the earlier time, i.e. the independent Latvia and the first year of the Soviet occupation; in the latter—a year on a Latgale farm as viewed by an eleven-year-old orphan living with her brother in a family of their relatives. The depictions of war and post-war events cover a broad spectrum of experiences and emotions—the girl's surprise, fear, despair, inner protest, mental and physical trauma. The girl's further experiences in Soviet Latvia are described in the autobiographical work "Timseņa ausa… Veļtejums Latgolys pēckara bārnim"[3] [Darkness Descended… Dedication to the Post-war Children of Latgale] published in the Latgalian literary almanac *Olūts* [The Source] depicting the writer's studies, daily duties (the mundane) and celebration of festivities (the festive) and their transformations (Varslavāne, "Timseņa ausa..." 1992, 1999). All of these prose works,

1 The story was written continuously during many decades, first published in the literary magazine *Karogs* [The Flag] in 1972 (Varslavāne). After its publishing in the book version the publishers were punished and the writer was banned from further publishing her works, "It was told so '[…] That crazy book should not have been published. Aren't there better themes?'" (Varslavāne, *Asmu zemes*… 35).

2 The story *Dzērvinīki* was written in 1977–1992.

3 The title is a reference to and the opposite of the title of the Latgalian folk song "Gaismeņa ausa" [Light Downed] emphasizing the onset of "darkness," i.e. collapse of moral, cultural and religious values. The work was written in in several stages: 1944, 1947, 1987–1990.

except the one published in the Soviet period, are written in a Latgalian dialect.

The events described in Varslāvane's texts are shown within the frame of both mundaneness and festivity; the transformations in holidays and festivities can be traced by making the contextual analysis of changes in power, i.e. the time "then" and "now."

Transformations of Christmas Celebration in Varslavāne's Autobiographical Prose Works

Christmas in Pre-Soviet Latgale: *Cilvēks spēlējas ar lāčiem*

Traditionally, Christmas has been perceived by families as a sacral moment imbued with emotions (Kovzele 103-104), and as such has been preserved in memories of the older generation, including the writer's childhood memories, "[…] in our family, we liked Christmas best of all, and how we celebrated it in our parental home we will never forget" (Varslavāne, *Dzērvinīki* 140). The representatives of different religious and denominational groups in Latgale, the region depicted by the writer, are characterized by a deep religiosity, "[…] in Eastern Latvia, where religious traditions were fundamental, the population has preserved the Christian faith" (Saleniece 203). Christmas like other religious holidays was, on the whole, celebrated according to Christian traditions; in Latgale, where the proportion of mixed families is especially great, Christmas was often marked twice—according to the Julian calendar and according to the Gregorian calendar. For Varslavāne's heroine, "our" god is "the generous Orthodox god" who "understands Latvian and Russian" [religious belonging of her mother and matrilineal grandfather], for her matrilineal grandmother this is "a boring Lutheran god," while for her father and his relatives it is "a furious Catholic" who "makes one stand on one's knees," confess and read the Bible in Polish and Latgalian (Varslavāne, *Dzērvinīki* 62).

Memories of Christmas as the last holiday spent together with her family come flooding back to the protagonist orphan Skaidrīte when she is looking back to her family's life under the difficult conditions of the German occupation and is comparing it with the life in independent Latvia, i.e. when after her parents' death she is playing and speaking with her teddy bears, revealing her traumatic experience to them or, vice versa, letting her teddy bears speak and tell their observations about the events of her life. The fact about her parents' death as well as the description of this tragic event through the girl's eyes is revealed to the reader only in the final chapters of the story, however, already the first lines of the story introduce teddy bears to us as both pupils of Skaidrīte (future teacher) and the prototype of a family

whom she cannot take leave of starting a new life in her relatives' home.[1] The use of a game as a multidimensional instrument of introspection in an autobiography allows the author to show the whole spectrum of young heroine's experiences and emotions, her seeking for answers to complicated questions by synthesizing the message of the "Bear family" with the author's viewpoint. The structure of the story resembles a cinema montage: the narrative is permeated by interludes (a talk between the Bear family and their "teacher" and a family member at the same time), and when the "cinema sequences" change, they seem to be sounding pauses that give relief. In the result of the interaction between such narrative forms the author deliberately broadens the potential of readers' perception.

The protagonist describes Christmas in free Latvia and during the German occupation as holidays celebrated in the space of home and in the circle of a sincere and loving family, at the table laid for a Christmas meal, with a decorated Christmas tree brought right from the forest and Christmas presents (also the dear teddy-bears) put secretly under it.

During the period of the German occupation, celebration of Christmas at school and in church together with German soldiers made the girl feel discontent, since memory brought back visions from quite a different past—"golden epoch," namely, the real, true Christmas celebration when their parents were speaking with children and their eyes were shining with joy:

> […] before war, mother too came to the forest, father decorated a fir tree with sparklers and lighted them. The sparkling needles and snowflakes were falling down. We tried to catch them, clapped our hands. Mammy's eyes glittered like stars. Alas! Then she laughed differently! (Varslavāne, *Cilvēks spēlējas*… 136)

In memories of protagonist's mother, Christmas was a charity time in independent Latvia, when donations were collected, children of poor families were visited and given gifts (Varslavāne, *Cilvēks spēlējas*… 125). The same religious discourse continues also under the Nazi German occupation, however before Christmas mass, presents are prepared at school for the German soldiers stationed in the town to keep their morale. The heroine participates in this activity, but the author describes her perplexity:

> They are drawing fir tree twigs, putting them on the parcels in which they

1 "Mother Bear […], Father Bear, the little ones—Brother and Sister, always sit in the middle…" (Varslavāne, *Cilvēks spēlējas*… 6).

> have inserted needle work and embroideries, cigarettes, cookies, sweets, even woollen mittens and socks. Presents are arranged with due diligence: the Germans like order. […] "What magnificent presents!" Skaidrīte thinks. "But if I offered to some small hand [children from Russia / prisoners of war] a piece of bread or mittens through a freight car window, what will they do with me?" Arrest me, shoot me?" The soldier who punished her might later receive a greeting card drawn by her…" (Varslavāne, *Cilvēks spēlējas*… 130-131)

The author devotes three chapters to a detailed description of the last family Christmas: "Svētku priekšvakarā" [On Christmas Eve], "Jūs, bērniņi, nāciet…" [O Come, Little Children…][1], "Ak, eglīte…" [O Christmas Tree…][2], choosing the titles of Christmas carols for two of them.

The story shows Christmas eve within the context of a binary opposition "now" and "then," marking the transformations of traditions by a subjective comparison of past and present events in the changing world, including the process of child's growing up and reaching maturity. If "now" Skaidrīte goes to the forest for a fir tree accompanied only by her father and brother, then "before" the period of getting ready for Christmas was an integral element of festivity: decorating fir trees and lighting sparklers in the forest, decorating Christmas tree at home, with her mother taking part in all these activities. Wishing to decorate a fir tree in the forest just as they have done it before, the girl reaches in her pocket and fishes some bright worsted wool and pieces of coloured paper out. The symbolic reverberations of family traditions hidden deep in the "memory pocket" simultaneously reveal colourfulness, lightness and serenity of her early childhood experiences. When the last Christmas attribute—Skaidrīte's favourite small copper bell—has been put on Christmas tree in the space of home, a farewell to her childhood is "rung in," and it will have neither parents nor Christmas, nor a small princess listening to fairy-tales told by her mother, "I hang it on a lower branch, touch it with my finger—ting! What a clear sound! My voice sounded like that in childhood, and I was called a Lark then" (Varslavāne, *Cilvēks spēlējas*… 139).

In the story, the symbol of a bell and semantics of ringing it are related to the

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1 The title of the German composer Johann Abraham Peter Schulz (1747–1800) and poet Christoph von Schmid's (1768–1854) Christmas song "Ihr Kinderlein kommet" [O Come, Little Children] (1811); Latvian translation by the poet and translator Jānis Ruģēns (1817–1876).

2 The title of Ernst Anschütz's Christmas song "O Tannenbaum" [O Christmas Tree] (1824) (based on the sixteenth century German folksong); Latvian translation by Ernests Dinsbergs (1816–1902), the nineteenth century Latvian pedagogue, poet, publicist, and translator (Jundze).

accentuation of transformations and to the relationship and distinction between the polarities, i.e. between the spiritual and the secular, the past and the present.

The mention of Christmas corals has a multi-dimensional meaning: it is a reference to both growth in the popularity of church Christmas traditions and services with Christmas corals in the nineteenth century, and to the influence of the German culture on Latvian cultural space in general. It is also a reference to the period of the movement of Young Latvians (1850s–1880s)[1] when an active process of Latvianizing the foreign cultural heritage, also texts of German songs, was started. However, in the story Christmas is described not only within the context of peaceful holiness, hopes and solemnity[2], but also within the context of the synthesis of a hidden tragedy of the past and the future. The subjective perception of the news about the death of the Latvian modern poetry and drama pioneer Aspazija (Elza Rozenberga; 1865–1943)[3], received not long before the beginning of the Advent time, symbolically reveals the destruction or end of the epoch of dreams, ideals and human entity cherished by a whole generation, including her parents, especially mother, because among the broad interests of the popular writer, the basic conditions for the creation and existence of the nation and state had also been a matter of concern for the poetess. Having realized the role and irreplaceable significance of Latvian literati and education and cultural figures Rainis' (Jānis Pliekšāns; 1865–1929)[4] and Aspazija's personalities, the importance of their social activity and creative work in parents' life (accentuation of collective memory), on Christmas, children make an attempt to restore hopes cherished by the parents' generation by joining in the discourse of this writer and social-political figure: reciting poems written by Aspazija ("Dzimtene" [Motherland], "Mazā sirmā kumeliņā" [On a Small Grey Horse], "Mēness

1 Young Latvians—mid-nineteenth century or First Latvian National Awakening movement of Latvian intellectuals. See more: Ijabs (2014).

2 "[…] we have put on our best clothes […]" (Varslavāne, *Cilvēks spēlējas*…147).

3 In her works, Aspazija depicted "not only woman's, but also Latvia's (Latvia—a woman / mother) longing for changes, her need for transformations and inner freedom which through the artefacts of world-scale or "alien" cultures open greater opportunities for understanding 'oneself' and 'one's own' individual self-confidence, as well as the future prospects of 'one's own' culture and social activities in the context of European innovative tendencies (Kacane 92). See more: Meškova (2003).

4 Rainis and Aspazija [husband and wife] are world level Latvian writers who have been crucially significant in the history of Latvian literature and culture and who have created many works full of rebellion spirit; in the result of the Sovietization during the Soviet era, their Latvian national discourse was deliberately transformed to fit into a frame of the Soviet-Latvian ideology (Zelče, "The Sovietization of Rainis…").

starus stīgo" [The Moon Beam Light] a. o.). In this way, the continuity of cultural heritage, traditions, intellectual wealth and previous generation's ideals seeking for the truth and free will is attested. The Christmas Day is shown by the author within the context of giving presents: along with giving practical utilitarian presents (e. g. a carbide lamp given by father), making semi-utilitarian (saffron bread, pies, butter cookies, ginger bread presented by her aunt) and non-utilitarian (a day-off given to her father as a gift to the family) gifts to children is also emphasized. A Christmas meal includes Latvian dishes (peas with bacon, roast pork, fruit salad), exotic fruits (lemon) and cognac. After a collective singing, lightening one tall white candle instead of many small ones on the Christmas tree and receiving Christmas presents placed round the bottom of the tree by Santa Claus, Christmas Day ends in emphasizing the category of memories: leafing through a family photo album, the protagonist realizes that photos of the family's last Christmas will be missing in the album, nevertheless the "photo of this eve" will remain in the memory album of their hearts (Varslavāne, *Cilvēks spēlējas*… 150).

Christmas in Soviet Latgale: *Dzērvinīki*

Although Christmas was not immediately eradicated from the calendar by the colonial power in 1940 (Simyan, Kačāne 183), as indicated in author's autobiographical description, one of the first childhood memories in the Soviet period revealing the collective past of Latvia was replacement of religious holidays with secular ones, "Instead of Christmas, the New Year [was] celebrated at school" (Varslavāne, *Asmu zemes*… 10).

The writer depicts the Soviet era as a destructive force which via the instrument of intellectual influence and ideological power (education institutions), as well as repressive methods, drastically transforms traditional values of the previous system. The content of school curricula was brought in line with aims of the totalitarian regime, but religion and church (also religious holidays), being dangerous phenomena for the Soviet power, were to be maximally transformed or destroyed: "The Soviet society based on the communist ideology, which rejects God and any religious manifestations, recognized as a norm atheistic world outlook with own conduct of society members including teachers" (Saleniece 197).

All the faithful, especially representatives of church, "were discredited and declared as enemies of the Soviet power, and the Churches were gradually remade to marionettes obedient to the Soviet regime" (Krūmiņa-Koņkova 141). In her prose writings, Varslavāne, too, shares her observations:

> Who doesn't know that school will always implement the policy of the government which has won in the country! (Varslavāne, *Dzērvinīki* 98)

> […] the headmaster read instructions that the Kremlin had forbidden pupils to be engaged in that… religious propaganda. And also mustn't take part in the Holy Mass. (Varslavāne, *Dzērvinīki* 136)

During the period of the Soviet occupation, all the religious rituals and holidays are actually forbidden, but the "taken-away" Christmas is purposefully replaced with the equivalent more suitable for the Soviet power—the New Year.

The New Year, though celebrated also in free Latvia, in the Soviet time acquires a different nuance: secular songs sung there in Russian and roles given to children and young people in plays favoured by the Soviet power are unknown and strange to them. Mechanisms of this kind functioned as effective tools of exerting influence, "[...] In the Soviet period, holidays used to be called 'a universal work of art' created with the involvement of numerous professional activity organizers, ideologists, public relation specialists, media employees and artists, and this 'work of art' was created on the territory of the whole vast Soviet state" (Zelče, "1940. gads…" 35-36). In time when all hearts in Latvian families desire to see the wonder of Jesus Christ birth, pupils are forced to spend long hours at school rehearsing a New Year performance, "[…] headmaster announced the dress rehearsal for the New Year performance just on Christmas" (Varslavāne, *Dzērvinīki* 138).

In the girl's memories, Christmas is the last holidays spent together with her family: having lost her parents, she also realizes the shared tragedy of the loss of family holidays marked as "ours" and "real." Within the context of non-acceptance of holidays imposed by the ideology of the Soviet power, she asks a rhetorical question if she will never have her own and real holidays (Varslavāne, *Dzērvinīki* 41). Thus, a traumatic experience is revealed by representing a parallelism "taken-away family / childhood—taken-away Christmas," both due to the Soviet colonial power: "Autobiographical memories relatively well keep explicitly negative emotional events, and this refers to both the event itself and its details" (Kaprāns, Zelče 24).

Varslavāne's protagonist who after her parents' death has converted from Orthodoxy (mother's religion) to Catholicism (father's religion) remains loyal to Christianity, since in the girl's subjective perception rejecting religion and religious holidays would mean the rejection of her own family and memories about it. This feeling is symbolically expressed by the teddy bears presented to her by her parents on their "own" Christmas, which still are with the protagonist in the time of the new

stage of her life impacted by political ideology and secularization. Prayers for her are a requiem to the souls of her parents and simultaneously a dialogue with them. Therefore, unlike many other of her peers, in the morning before going to school, the protagonist attends church, sings in a church choir and as soon as the Advent time begins, she lives in her "own" holiday atmosphere, while at school everything is done to get ready for the "alien" integrated New Year:

> Advent has come. The rosary will be recited, and getting ready for Child Jesus birth has begun. I am occupied to the bottom of my heart. But school is again getting ready for its own festivity—seeing the New Year in. And songs are different there, even a performance from "Zelta zirgs" [Golden Horse] by Rainis[1] […] I have to sing in that choir as well, and sing those Russian songs. About some "jolocka" [from Russian—a small fir tree / secular New Year tree][2] which was born in the forest, had grown there and was said to be very beautiful. And leverets and kittens in that song are not delighted about Child Jesus, but go to town to delight children! Just of their own accord, because the old year is exchanging with the new one. There is not a single word about the Holy Family. (Varslavāne, *Dzērvinīki* 135)

In the last year of WWII, along with traditions of religious holidays and festivities (Christmas, Easter, May singings, the Holy Virgin Mary's Ascension Day, Holy Communion, the Holy Mass a. o.), the traditional rituals of festivities and folklore customs were practiced as well, for example, fortune-telling on Christmas,

> We are a religious family and see the New Year in at church with the Holy Mass and the Communion. […] Now only frying, cooking, decorating a fir-tree. Then we try to find some lead buttons for a game of fortune-telling—to melt lead and pour it into cold water to make a shape that will shadow coming events. And if you try hard, the German coins can be melted as well. (Varslavāne, *Dzērvinīki* 145)

The description of girl's attitude to holidays and festivities testifies to the fact that part of Latvian religious community lived in two parallel worlds. People lived "on

1 See Footnote 3 on page 12.

2 A reference to the secularized Soviet New Year children's song *V lesu rodilas' jolochka* [In the Forest a Little Christmas Tree was Born], initially known as Russian Christmas song (1903; put to music in 1906).

two sides" (Varslavāne, *Dzērvinīki* 136) and, contrary to the allowed one (collective, party, atheistic), there existed the side undesirable for the Soviet power and hostile to its propaganda (national, religious, private):

> About this side of my life [prayers in church, singing in a church choir] I never talked with other girls at school […]. (Varslavāne, *Dzērvinīki* 135)

On the whole, "[…] guarding Latvian cultural identity under the unfavourable political and social conditions meant preservation of the ethnic status, resistance to the open and hidden Russification" (Kaprāns, Zelče 14), thus such a secret and risky way of life in the Soviet era ensured maintaining one's own national, ethnic, regional and religious identity and didn't allow the Soviet colonial power to reach its long-term goals, including cultural superiority.

Conclusion

In the result of a long-lasting collective trauma of the occupation and shared pain, which, according to Istrate (2012), "violated the national dignity" (in: Hanovs 139), Latvian literature of the turn of the twenty and twenty-first centuries focused on reconsideration and revisiting the past. Analogous with other post-war and post-colonial writers, Varslavāne depicts not only individual memory and her own traumatic experience, but also the collective traumatic past. In her childhood memory narratives, through the portrayal of the individual past in the context of the changes of the political power, the collective experience is exposed, also in relation to the preservation of cultural and religious identity. In Varslavāne's autobiographical stories, the illustrated transformations of celebrating religious holidays (including Christmas) report a political, social and cultural situation in the then Latvia, as well as represent the reaction of a local population, including children, to the events they have been witnesses to. One of such experiences of the heroine was related to socio-cultural deprivation and the realization of the loss: the loss of the parents, of the family home, and of cultural and religious traditions, on the one hand, and immense strivings to preserve such deeply individual aspects of one's life as spirituality and faith, which ensure communication with the ancestors, on the other.

Being an integral part of every nation's spiritual culture, holidays and festivities synthesize experience and perceptions of previous generations obtained during many centuries. Varslavāne's memory narratives not only emphasize the belief that participation in festivities and observation of religious holiday traditions ensure the succession of culture-significant information and passing it down from one gener-

ation to another, but also relieve confusion and trauma, i.e. contribute to human's emotional and mental survival by maintaining one's own spiritual "self."

Holidays and festivities encompass values, traditions and world vision characteristic of a specific socium which, depending on the current social and political conditions, might be preserved and passed down openly (celebration in the family, church, education institution, cultural centre, city square) or secretly (celebration mainly in the family and occasionally in the church), thus forcing to lead a double (i.e. public vs. secret) life. During the years of secularization, celebrating religious holidays was discouraged, which made a negative impact on Latvian festivity culture in general and determined the transformation of the paradigm and world perception throughout several generations until today. Thus, culture of festivities is not a statical phenomenon but rather a manifestation of the dynamics of traditional cultural forms and innovations, to a great extent affected by the approach, aims and landmarks of a political power.

The leitmotif used by Varslavāne in her childhood memory narratives, is the concept of "taken-away family / childhood—taken-away Christmas." Under the German occupation, Christmas is celebrated in the atmosphere of the conditions limited by war, full of tragic events and previously unknown experience, where the issue of love, being human, and of philanthropy is called into question. Christmas is represented as a family festivity; however, the emphasis is laid on the past, the category of memory and nostalgia, reflection on the pre-war period—"the golden era," as well as on subconscious awareness of the approaching tragedy.

Despite the ban imposed on celebrating religious and national holidays in the period of Soviet occupation, people continued preserving their national, ethnic and religious identity. The binary opposition "then—now," namely, things observed in free Latvia and those in the Soviet Latvia, is offered by the author in several variations. "Then" religious holidays (Christmas) were actively marked and celebrated in church, at school and, most importantly for the small girl, in the family with all due respect for the ancestors' traditions and different religious denominations. "Now," in the Soviet era, the space of the family for the maturing heroine is no longer limited to the space of home only, but has expanded to nature in general and church in particular because home is where the parents are. Just like the majority of population in Soviet Latvia, the heroine lives in two parallel worlds: along with the world imposed by the political power there is a different one related to the "family" (the world of memories, games, literature, religious songs and holidays), which is the source of strength and endurance in the time of chaos and tragic events.

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Picturesque Landscape and National Memory in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Buried Giant*

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Abstract Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Buried Giant* depicts the picturesque landscape composed of rural scenery and ruins, but beneath the surface of natural scenery lies a serious discussion about national memory. The rural scenery and historical ruins suggest an interaction between the picturesque and Edmund Burke's aesthetics of the beautiful and the sublime. However, the bird's-eye view creates a distance between the viewer and the landscape. Such a way of seeing foregrounds the tension between nature and human factors, making political discourse naturalized. Even so, the ruins reject the picturesque way of seeing due to their relationship with past memories. As the "lieux de mémoire," the abandoned monastery serves as a memory medium that restores the national memory. Thus, the national identity can be enhanced by the commemoration. There are two kinds of national memory embodied in the landscape. On the one hand, the depiction of rural scenery shows an attachment to the myth of "rural England". Yet the novel questions the harmony of the rural community by introducing georgics into pastoral writing. On the other hand, the Roman ruins embody the imperial memory in Britain, and the imperial discourse is challenged when the "barbarians" reverse the imperial gaze. By unearthing the national memory embedded in the landscape, Ishiguro reconstructs the national identity and makes "Britishness" tolerant and diverse.

Keywords picturesque; landscape; national memory; *The Buried Giant;* Kazuo Ishiguro

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Introduction

Landscape writing is a striking feature of Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Buried Giant*, for the novel is replete with detailed descriptions of the natural scenery. The opening of the novel begins with a landscape description, depicting how the cultivated rural areas, Roman relics and wilderness merge with each other. Almost every chapter includes descriptions of these three kinds of landscape. For example, chapter two focuses on the ruined Roman villa eroded by luxuriant vegetation, and especially mentions the oaks growing on the Great Plain. Chapter three describes the idyllic landscape of a Saxon village, depicting a stone bridge, working villagers and thatched cottages. Roman architecture, country scenery, oaks and cottages are all elements that commonly appear in picturesque landscape paintings. In addition to such common elements, *The Buried Giant* follows a three-plane composition when depicting the landscape, which echoes the picturesque aesthetics.

The term "picturesque" is first brought up by William Gilpin, who defines it as "that peculiar kind of beauty which is agreeable in a picture" (*An Essay Upon Prints* x). But one needs to follow a series of norms to reproduce or seek out the picturesque scenery, one of which can be reflected from the layout of the landscape. Picturesque aesthetics always adopt a three-plane form of foreground, middle, and background, with trees as side-screens framing the view. For instance, when depicting the picturesque views of the river Wye, Gilpin comments that the most beautiful scenery is "composed of four grand parts: the area, which is the river itself; the *two side-screens*, which are the opposite banks, and lead the perspective; and the most front-screen, which points out the winding of the river" (qtd. in Costelloe 143; emphasis original). The three-plane principle of the picturesque is echoed at the end of chapter three, when Axl and Wistan appreciate the rural scenery from a vantage point on a lookout platform. "Directly before them was a clear view along the valley floor; of the river curving gently as it followed the corridor out of view; of the expanses of marshland broken by patches of pond and lake further in the distance. There would have been elms and willows near the water, as well as dense woodland" (Ishiguro 92). The whole scene is composed of different sections, with the foreground of the valley floor, the middle view of the pond and lake, and the forest and woodland in the distance. Moreover, the landscape is framed by pine trees and mountains on both the left and right sides. Obviously, *The Buried Giant* coincides with picturesque aesthetics.

Till now, the picturesque landscape writing in *The Buried Giant* has been left unnoticed, as previous readings of the novel focus more on the political metaphor of

genocide or the relationship between the host and the foreigner[1]. For Ishiguro, *The Buried Giant* is a story about "historical memory or societal memory," because the novel investigates how "societies remember and forget particularly their dark secrets or the dark memories" ("The Persistence?"). To fully understand Ishiguro's memory concern, it is helpful to study the interaction of the picturesque landscape and the memory theme. The interaction would be analyzed by figuring out three questions: How does the novel echo picturesque aesthetics? How is the politics of memory concealed by the naturalized picturesque landscape? What kinds of national memory are embodied in landscape writing? Answers to these questions can reveal Ishiguro's reconstruction of national identity through his rewriting of national memory.

A Picturesque Landscape of Countryside and Ruins

Apart from the spatial composition of foreground, middle ground and background mentioned in the Introduction, the novel embodies a sublime tone as well as a beautiful tone. Both William Gilpin and Sir Uvedale Price cite Edmund Burke and engage in a dialogue with his aesthetic theory when illustrating the concept of the picturesque. For them, the picturesque is a mixture of beauty and sublimity characterized by variety, roughness and irregularity[2]. The picturesque landscape of *The Buried Giant* is made up of the pastoral countryside and historical ruins. The former one mostly reflects the picturesque development of the beautiful, while the latter, the sublime. That is, the novel's rural life is a representation of the picturesque country scenery, and the ruins add a decadent contrast to the idyllic landscape. Such organic composition reflects diversity, avoiding the neatness and orderliness of Capability Brown's gardens[3].

In *The Buried Giant*, peaceful rural scenery mainly conveys a beautiful tone of picturesque aesthetics. Burke's aesthetics place considerable value on subjective perception, for people may feel terror or awe in front of sublime things, while taking pleasure in the beautiful. This reflects an association between objects and the subject's feelings through various senses. Burke has listed a number of materials

1 See Elizabeth Burow-Flak, "Genocide, Memory, and the Difficulties of Forgiveness in Card's Ender Saga and Ishiguro's *The Buried Giant,*" *Renaissance* 71, no.4 (2019): 247-269; Matthew Vernon, and Margaret A. Miller, "Navigating Wonder: The Medieval Geographies of Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Buried Giant,*"*Arthurian* 28, no.4 (2018): 68-89.

2 See Uvedale Price, *An Essay on the Picturesque*.

3 Picturesque aesthetes do not appreciate the philosophy of Capability Brown (Lancelot Brown), whose gardens tend to use symmetry and full soft lines, presenting the quietness and orderliness of natural scenery. The picturesque aesthetics introduce broken grounds, rough tree trunks, collapsed churches, and the ragged poor into the landscape so as to add a sense of decadence.

that possess beauty, such as delicate flowers, smooth leaves, gentle streams and slopes, women with feminine qualities (like soft voices and tender skin) and so on. Therefore, beauty comes from smallness, delicacy and smoothness, emphasizing gradual variation instead of the "sudden variation" (Price 45) in picturesque aesthetics. As Price sums up, the idea of beauty is embodied in those "which are in a high degree expressive of youth, health and vigour, whether in animal or vegetable life; the chief of which qualities are smoothness and softness in the surface; fulness and undulation in the outline; symmetry in the parts; and clearness and freshness in the color" (qtd. in Hipple 205). Here is a beautiful rural scene depicted in the novel:

> Before long they came to a sunny courtyard. There were roaming geese, and the yard itself was bisected by an artificial stream—a shallow channel cut into the earth—along which the water trickled with urgency. At its broadest point the stream was forded by a simple little bridge of two flat rocks, and at that moment an older child was squatting on one of them, washing clothes. It was a scene that struck Axl as almost idyllic, and he would have paused to take it in further had Ivor not kept striding firmly on towards the low, heavily thatched building whose length ran the entire far edge of the yard. (84-85)

Although images like rambling geese, rushing water and children at work inject a dynamic force into the landscape, and the stone bridge also meets the criterion of picturesque roughness, the whole picture is obviously more in line with the notion of the beautiful. For one thing, geese with smooth feather, tranquil river and young kids are exactly carriers of beauty. For another, the layout of the courtyard is symmetrically distributed, with all the scenery materials blending harmoniously with each other.

However, ruins and relics add a sense of roughness and decadence to the beautiful, forming a diverse picturesque landscape when combined with the countryside. Compared with the vibrant elements like children, geese and streams in the countryside, ancient ruins no doubt accentuate a sense of decay. For instance, at the ruined villa on the Great Plain, Axl and Beatrice find the villa "disfigured by stagnant puddles, weeds and grass sprouting through the faded tiles" (39). Such decadence achieves a picturesque effect by replacing the dominant principle of beauty with some rough elements, for picturesque aesthetes believe the landscape

composed entirely of beauty is monotonous[1]. In a picturesque landscape painting, it is not hard to seek out rough elements. For example, the ground is always strewn with rubble, ruts and scattered shrubs. When it comes to human figures, picturesque aesthetes tend to emphasize wrinkles, muscular lines, messy hair or ragged clothes. Ancient abbey, Gothic cathedrals, old barns and thatched cottages are all common architectural elements associated with the picturesque taste. Similar elements and senses of decadence also permeate *The Buried Giant*.

Obviously, the ruins highlight the connection between the picturesque and the sublime. The ruins in the novel are closely related to the Roman Empire and its connotations, like war. Take the monastery as an example. The seemingly peaceful monastery was once a battleground where Saxons and Britons slaughtered each other. And the underground mausoleum is "surrounded by walls bearing traces of murals and Roman letters" (199), which shows the monastery is steeped in Roman culture. The ancient monastery conveys subliminal implications through its connection to war and the Roman empire, since the sublime is always related to the power which brings fear to people, like the power of kings or the destructive power of war. In addition, Burke points out that the color that can foreground sublimity is always dark and gloomy (75). Dark clouds, twilight, crows, ravens and even supernatural powers often appear in monastery scenes, reinforcing a frightening atmosphere. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the sublime is always accompanied by a variety of social emotions, one of which is sympathy. That is to say, one can perceive fear, helplessness and despair felt by others who are in danger, while feeling delight at the same time, since he is kept safe away from threat in reality. When Axl sees the bloody sacrifice cart in the wooden shack, he goes through the experience of the sublime. Feeling a chill on his spine, he "shares" the uneasiness when he knows the evil intention of the device. Yet at the same time, Axl idealistically thinks that "there may yet be some more gentle purpose" (171) when it comes to the cart. This means Axl, as a bystander, is reluctant to give up his peaceful aesthetics of the monastery from a distance.

Axl's way of seeing as a bystander exactly shows his detachment from the landscape he views. And his bird's-eye view is always highlighted, which reminds us that the landscape is always controlled or even constructed by the gazing subject. Axl's gazing at the landscape from a high position echoes the picturesque call for a perfect viewing spot when appreciating the scenery. For instance, Gilpin insists

1 Going after "natural wilderness", picturesque aesthetes try to integrate the rough side of nature into the landscape so as to provide a truer representation of nature. See Timothy M. Costelloe, *The British Aesthetic Tradition*, 138-139.

that before sketching, the traveler should take a view of nature, and the "first consideration is to get it in the best point of view" (*Three Essays* 63). That means distance is a key element when people seek out the picturesque landscape, for the distance may help the subject grasp a general knowledge of the scene. Focusing only on the general look and ignoring the details shows that the landscape is often idealized by the gazing subject[1]. Gazing at the Saxon village "from a distance and a certain height" (54), Axl can roughly see forty or more thatched roofs "laid out on the valley floor in two rough circles, one within the other" (54). However, when he places himself inside the Saxon village, Axl "was puzzled that a village which from a distance looked to be two orderly rings of houses could turn out to be such a chaotic labyrinth now they were walking through its narrow lanes" (57). The messy distribution of buildings and the roads in a confused criss-cross pattern can be experienced only when Axl gets nearer to the village, which exactly suggests that picturesque eyes tend to idealize the scenery viewed at a distance.

Such idealization means there is human manipulation behind the natural scenery. "Landscape" in the western tradition, as John Wylie generalizes, is "not only something we see, it is also a way of seeing things, a particular way of looking at and picturing the world around us" (7). In the same way, the countryside and ruins in the novel are not simply picturesque elements to be appreciated. Instead, power relations permeate the landscape. This will be the focus of the following section.

Politics of Memory Concealed by the Landscape

The landscape in *The Buried Giant* is always depicted from Axl's point of view, which means the landscape is always viewed. That indicates the landscape has been manipulated by humans. Therefore, there will never be any totally "natural" landscape, since the landscape always involves a conflict between human factors and natural scenery. Such a conflict highlights the tension between nature and culture within the picturesque discourse. For Gilpin, "nature is the archetype" (*Three Essays* 53), indicating "the highest praise for a painting was to say it resembled a painterly nature" (Birmingham 57). The best natural scenery, on the other hand,

1 One may think of how Claude Glass was used in the 18th century to learn about picturesque scenery. To see the view framed in the glass, users must turn back to the landscape and face the Claude Glass, a convex mirror. Because of the convex surface, the reflected landscape is zoomed out, allowing one to appreciate the overall beauty while missing out on many details. The idealization of scenery can also be reflected from various colored glass slides, assisting users to lay over tones on the landscape so as to achieve the effects of color transformations. See Malcolm Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760-1800* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1990).

must be in accordance with picturesque taste. That is, "the highest praise for nature was to say that it looked like a painting" (Birmingham 57). In other words, nature is always transformed into a graphic medium through certain human "improvement," and during this process, landscape painting has made cultural elements—like human conduction, social ideology and power relations—naturalized[1]. In *The Buried Giant*, the landscape of the tranquil village and the ancient monastery both naturalize complex power relations by focusing on "natural" objects like rural scenery. However, human manipulation, like the "improvement" embodied in picturesque aesthetics, conceals authentic social realities beneath the foregrounding of natural elements. What the observer intentionally eliminates is the flow of power relations. Then what political discourses have been naturalized by the picturesque landscape?

Despite evoking picturesque aesthetics, the ruins clearly demonstrate the naturalization of political discourses. The archetypal ruins in British culture are always "crumbling feudal castle, the transcendent and evocatively decaying medieval abbey or the heritage-preserved buildings of the Roman Coliseum or the Athenian Acropolis" (Murray 9). Such a mode of representation is repeated and consolidated by picturesque and subsequent Romantic landscape painting, and it is clear that Roman relics and the long-abandoned Saxon tower in *The Buried Giant* work very close to such an archetypal expression. Both picturesque and Romantic traditions are concerned with the power of nature: "nature breaks buildings and makes them ruins. Vegetation plays an essential role in the Romantic vision, for the life of plants kills the art of human beings" (Ginsberg 317). In the novel, ruins of human civilization often appear in contrast with vibrant natural vegetation, which strongly indicates that human civilization is vulnerable in the face of long-lasting nature. Sir Gawain has recapitulated many times the idea that the whole country is actually a burial ground. "[...] a fine green valley. A pleasant copse in the springtime. Dig its soil, and not far beneath the daisies and buttercups come the dead [...] Beneath our soil lie the remains of old slaughter" (200). We can detect from those words that wars, though they may have caused great casualties in the past history of mankind, are only a small part of the natural process. Yet Gawain's words remind readers that undercurrent power relations are hidden beneath the naturalized

1 For more comments on landscape's naturalization of cultural factors, see John Barrell, *The Dark Side of the Landscape: The Rural Poor in English Painting 1730-1840* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1980); Ann Birmingham, *Landscape and Ideology*; Denis Cosgrove, and Stephen Daniels, *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1988); W.J.T. Mitchell, *Landscape and Power* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 2002).

landscape.

It is exactly the ruins that reveal the political discourses concealed by the naturalized landscape. Ruins have their own discourses, "making the original invisible" and presenting "what is not meant to be seen" (Ginsberg 51). Readers, through Axl's memory and his perspective, form a typical aesthetic view of the Gothic monastery: an antique church haunted by supernatural elements, tainted with a note of mystery and terror, and decorated with picturesque withered trees and wild grass. However, by revealing the politics of memory, the ruins transcend the limits of picturesque aesthetics, getting nearer to John Ruskin's "noble picturesque." According to Ruskin, "surface picturesque" often derives a kind of aesthetic pleasure from the poor or the ruins, ignoring the sordid conditions those people or things are faced with. He once wrote in his diary that "I could not help feeling how many suffering people must pay for my picturesque subject, and my happy walk" (qtd. in Landow 232), for it is toiling figures that provide beholders with a picturesque taste. It is clear that Ruskin has a deep moral concern and refuses to regard people or things as purely aesthetic objects. Ginsberg also points out that, as a social symbol, "the ruin gives aesthetic expression to shared moral values" (109). Likewise, a strong sense of moral concern can be felt in *The Buried Giant*, from which one may discover how the politics of memory work in an unobtrusive way.

First, there is a political conspiracy on memory beneath the surface of the naturalized ruins. Memory shows certain "plasticity" (Assmann and Linda 3), the possibility of being transformed. This means memory can be constructed through selection, adjustment, reconstruction, simplification, and intentional or unintentional rejection. King Arthur turns "active forgetting" to natural "passive forgetting"[1] by manipulating people's memories, which makes people find their memories fading. Arthur's actions indicate that he rejects or even covers up the memory. Meanwhile, memory can be reshaped due to political changes, and this can be seen in the transformations of the city landscape, the renaming of roads, etc. It is the same with the monastery where Axl stays for the night: the monastery under the rule of Britons was once a Saxon fortress. Such conversion is one of the consequences of memory

1 Aleida Assmann first put forward the terms "active forgetting" and "passiveforgetting." "Active forgetting" means an intentional repression of cultural memory. Censorship, dumping and destroying materials and mental cultural products are some of its typical manifestations. "Passive forgetting" is the unintentional loss of certain memory caused by losing or neglecting it. Such a memory can be rediscovered through archaeological research and the reconstruction of archives. See Aleida Assmann, "Canon and Archive," in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, eds. Estrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co. KG, 2008), pp.97-98.

manipulation by the ruling class. On the other hand, ruins, because of their rupture and discontinuity, symbolize a past that cannot be wholly recovered—"signaling an abyss between past and present" (Assmann 292). Hence, the past history of the monastery as told by Wistan remains under question. Even Wistan himself says, "who knows what went on here in ancient days?" (229) Such uncertainty calls into question the current authority of Britons when casting doubt on Wistan's own discourse. "The problem with ruins is that their meaning cannot be controlled. They threaten to imprison us in the unguarded labyrinths of the past, and they also promise to open imaginary escapes" (Boym 83). Such inconsistency rejects a unified or single interpretation of ruins. Therefore, the ruins have the power to question the existing politics of memory.

Secondly, facing the memory conspiracy, the ruins play an important role in protecting and even restoring national memory. For Wistan, the ruined monastery plays the role of "lieux de mémoire," binding all the Saxons together with its rich connotations of a shared past. Pierre Nora believes memory plays a major role in the construction of national identity and social cohesion, and his "lieux de mémoire"[1] focuses on how societies use external props and different reminders to commemorate or remember the past. The giant's cairn on the mountain is supposed to "mark the site of some such tragedy long ago when young innocents were slaughtered in war" (313), serving as a sort of monument of commemoration. Compared with other sites on lower ground which are meant to commemorate a victory or a king, the giant's cairn, being forgotten in the remote place, suggests a collective repression or even rejection of certain memories. By contrast, the stone tower in the monastery serves as a "lieux de mémoire" that awakens the shared memory of Saxons. Even Edwin, who has little knowledge of the previous slaughter, begins to receive relating memories as a younger generation of Saxons, and he promises that he will eventually bear "a duty to hate all Britons" (353). Such a promise raises another related question about nationalism: Does nationalism imply fighting against common outsiders? Inheriting the long-repressed national memory of Saxons, Edwin also ponders whether his hatred against all the Britons includes Axl and Beatrice, "the gentle couple" (353) in his eyes. As a result, the novel leaves

1 One has to notice that "lieux de mémoire", though always translated as "site of memory" in English, is not confined to geographical places only. "Lieux de mémoire" also includes anniversaries, folk songs, celebrities, arts and crafts, written texts, common expressions, and so on. Astrid Erll generalizes, "any cultural phenomenon, whether material, social, or mental, which a society associates with its past and with national identity," is a site of memory. See Astrid Erll, *Memory in Culture*, trans. Sara B. Young (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p.25.

room for readers to consider how to consolidate national identity, and whether narrow nationalism against all "enemies" is appropriate in today's world.

The novel ends with an open ending without telling readers a definite personal/national fate, leaving readers with senses of suspense and uncertainty. Such an incomplete narrative form makes the story a fragmented ruin. Most of the ruins in the novel are caused by wars, which means that the novel regards the conflict between Britons and Saxons as a historical metaphor for the wars of the 20th century, such as the two world wars, the Yugoslav Civil War, the Rwandan Genocide, and so on. What attitude should nations adopt when faced with past memories? How to coexist peacefully with other nations? These are the moral issues raised by the novel, going beyond the aesthetic level.

National Memory Connoted by the Landscape

Besides concealing the politics of memory, the picturesque scenery also embodies the national memory shared by the British people. Therefore, Ishiguro reconstructs national identity by tracing back the national memory of the British people. What kinds of national memory are embodied in the landscape of rural areas and Roman ruins? And how does the national memory help to reconstruct today's national identity?

The idyllic landscape in the countryside reflects British historical attachment to rural myths, echoing the call for green "rural England." The novel revives the pastoral tradition by depicting the joy of villagers. Pastorals were initially written by city poets for urban audiences, exploiting "a tension between the town by the sea and the mountain country of the shepherd, between the life of the court and the life of the shepherd, between people and nature" (Gifford 15). Thus, "pastoral" shows a strong contrast between the city and the country. The binding relationship between country and nature, together with the contrast between the country and the city, have been recurring topics in British literature during different periods. In *The Country and the City*, Raymond Williams has also straightened out structures of feeling toward the city and the country in British literature, from which the sentimental attachment to "rural England" can be easily detected. Given that the word "country" not only refers to rural areas but also means "nation," it is not hard to imagine that "rural England" has become a national myth pursued in various periods. It seems that the idyllic depiction of rural life in *The Buried Giant* works in a similar way as a reinvention of the national myth, highlighting the stability of a rural community. Yet on the contrary, the novel subverts the ideal state of pastoral country life from two aspects.

Replacing pastoral expression with that of georgics is the first way to subvert the rural myth. With little effort, we can find out that the characters are toiling in fields and faced with harsh trails from nature. As William Empson notices, the pastoral is not written by shepherds, nor for shepherds[1]. Instead, it is manipulated by aristocracies out of their ideology. The pastoral emphasizes the cheerfulness and idleness of shepherds and the harmony of rural life. As is depicted in Virgil's *Elogues*, shepherds in pastoral do not need to work or till the land, for they always have a good harvest. But it is totally different in the georgic tradition. "Georgic is a mode that stresses the value of intensive and persistent labor against hardships and difficulties; that it differs from pastoral because it emphasizes work instead of ease" (Low 12). It is obvious that hard work is an indispensable scene in the novel when depicting rural life. Villagers are not required to work on Sundays, yet "the livestock had still to be cared for, and with so many other tasks waiting to be done, the pastor had accepted the impracticality of forbidding everything that might be construed as labour" (22). In addition to such labor, villagers are also faced with threats from nature. For instance, they have to fight against man-eating ogres, but there are many other things to worry about. People are more concerned with how to maintain their daily lives: "how to get food out of the hard ground; how not to run out of firewood; how to stop the sickness that could kill a dozen pigs in a single day and produce green rashes on the cheeks of children" (3-4). Such realistic writing breaks the ideology of the ruling class that endows rural life with leisure and ease.

Secondly, the alienation rooted among people becomes an unstable factor under the appearance of peaceful country life, thereby interrogating the social cohesion of the rural community. For a long time, the social order carried by the pastoral embodies an aristocratic way of seeing, which is "an idealisation of actual English country life and its social and economic relations" (Williams 26). The marginalization of Axl and Beatrice exactly reflects an inharmonious interpersonal relationship in the countryside. The couple live in the outer reaches of the warren, unable to share the warmth of the great fire burning in the middle part, and they are deprived of candles so that they can just spend their nights without any light. Their situation may have something to do with their status as lonely elderly people, for Axl faintly remembers that "perhaps there had been a time when they had lived closer to the fire; a time when they had lived with their children" (5). Also, considering the fact that neighbors always complain about their slowness at work, we may know that the young labor force is highly valued in the countryside. This further reflects that hard work is the basic tone of rural life. Sir Gawain, who roams on

1 See William Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral* (New York: New Directions, 1968).

his horseback here and there, forms a sharp contrast to those toiling country people. And it is not hard to imagine that much of the manual labour is in the service of the intellectual upper class. Such a division of labour indicates a total breakdown of the idealized rural community, where people connect with each other in trust.

In addition to the national rural myth, landscape writing also arouses the imperial memory of Great Britain by depicting Roman ruins. Britain shows great respect for Roman culture, and even compares the British Empire to the descendants of the Roman Empire. For example, Stanley Baldwin repeatedly stated that the formation of the British national character was inseparable from the conquest of Rome. He regarded Britain as "the youngest son" who would inherit the torch of the Roman Empire (Hingley 102). Britain also adopted a number of political measures similar to those of the Roman Empire, the most notorious of which was the control of immigrants. The Roman Empire called people outside itself "barbarians," and attempted to keep outsiders out of Rome in order to ensure the purity of blood. In the novel, Britons regard Saxons who do not believe in Christ as pagans, and always refer to them as "savages." Even the respectful elder, a Briton who acts as the leader of the Saxons, says that "I wonder at myself to live among such savages. Better dwell in a pit of rats" (86). Comparing Saxons to filthy rats obviously degrades them, which reflects the fact that colonists only regard colonial subjects as ignorant and uncivilized animals. Wistan also recalls his young days in the army as an "other" excluded by Britons. However, the power coming from the savages is so huge that it cannot be ignored, for Wistan, who was once the dominated, comes back and gazes at the landscape of Britons. Especially at the end of the novel, Wistan wishes Edwin, his successor, would stand high on the mountain, seeing "this place, the fallen knight and the broken she-dragon, all before his next steps" (350). Such an act of seeing the bloody battlefield from a vantage point straightforwardly demonstrates the power taken by the Saxons, and the subversive power of "barbarians." The gaze of barbarians means a revolt from colonial subjects against the imperial eyes, foreshadowing the fate that Saxons would eventually take over the lands of Britons.

By rewriting rural myth and imperial memory, Ishiguro reflects on the reconstruction of national identity. For one thing, the national image of "rural England" should not be condensed into a simple political discourse, or be regarded as an ideal myth without any conflicts. In the eyes of the common British people, "rural England" often means an idyllic life without any confrontations in daily life. However, by introducing georgics, Ishiguro challenges pastoral discourse and reveals the social alienation hidden beneath the harmonious appearance of the rural community. The author encourages people to be concerned about contradictions

within the country, and deal with practical issues such as urban-rural relations and interpersonal relations. Only by solving concrete problems can the vision of "rural England" be realized. For another thing, "barbarians" interrogates the mainstream discourse within the British nation, aiming to reconstruct "Britishness" which embodies all the nations in Britain. In *The Buried Giant*, the Britons call the Saxons "barbarians," which is contrary to the mainstream English discourse. In fact, the Saxons have long been regarded as the elite, whereas the Celts have been humiliated as "barbarians." By deconstructing the dominant center, Ishiguro suggests that "Britishness" does not center on "Englishness" but calls for diversity and tolerance.

Conclusion

Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Buried Giant* presents the interaction between landscape and memory, and the rural scenery and ruins form the landscape with strong characteristics of the picturesque aesthetics. On the one hand, the picturesque landscape covers up the politics of memory due to its naturalization of human factors. The ruins, on the other hand, reject the picturesque mode of perception by emphasizing historical discourses. As "lieux de mémoire," ruins can store and restore national memory, which in turn enhances national identity. The abandoned monastery brings back memories for the Saxons, but also warns against falling into the trap of xenophobic nationalism. Meanwhile, Ishiguro not only focuses on how societies remember their past memories, but retraces national memories connoted in the landscape as well. Through depiction of picturesque country scenery, Ishiguro revives the myth of "rural England," and reveals, at the same time, the alienation crisis lurking beneath the idealized rural myth by incorporating the georgic tradition into pastoral writing. The ruins, related to the Roman Empire, awaken the imperial memory in Britain. Just as "barbarians" revolt against Rome, Saxon "savages" in the novel counter the imperial gaze by gazing at the landscape of Britons. As a result, Ishiguro advocates for a more tolerant British identity that includes "others."

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Immigration, Inferiority Complex and Identity in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *The Thing Around Your Neck*

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Abstract This paper puts flesh on the bones of questions concerning identity deformation of Nigerian immigrants in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's collection of short stories *The Thing Around Your Neck (2009)*. Adichie tries to understand the drastic effects of immigration on those who are living on the crossroads of cultures. Indeed, African contemporary literature is preoccupied with immigration and identity that are among the most important formative experiences of our era. Therefore, using Adichie's short stories as a guide and a focal point, the paper attempts to analyze and examine the cultural mixture that shapes the identity of postcolonial African immigrants in the USA. The study attempts also to offer an inside insight into the complex and often sad reality of modern-day Nigerian immigrants, and how they are transformed into fragmented hybrid individuals torn between two worlds in their struggle for belongingness. Frantz Fanon's theory of inferiority complex, Homi Bhabha's concepts of hybridity and mimicry, Stuart Hall's cultural theories and others are quiet significant to show how postcolonial immigrant subjects define themselves according to the American cultural values giving way to a hybrid form of identity through a process of mimicry and self-alienation and inferiorization. The paper concludes that immigration causes characters' metamorphosis and depersonalization. It is like an initiation into a limbo territory where immigrants are adrift.

Keywords Immigration; identity; complex of inferiority; hybridity; mimicry

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Introduction

The rate of immigration from African countries to America has increased significantly during the last century. Mostly, these people leave their countries seeking better life conditions or escaping wars and turmoil. Thus, in this study, our focus is on the impact of displacement on the lives of those African immigrants who have left their countries for better living conditions and now are entangled in the hybridization of diasporic identity.

Among the variety of African immigrants, many Nigerians have left their countries to other parts of the world for numerous reasons notably the quest for better education, commerce, political asylum and other socio-economic factors. Indeed, many Nigerians believe that the European or North American countries are the most ideal places of the earth to live in (Oroskhan & Zohdi 302-03). The French author, Laurent Gaudé, describes immigration fantasies it in his novel *El Dorado (2006).* He states that Africans, similar to the Spanish Conquistadors, believe once they reach the Western lands, they will make wealth easily and realize their dreams as if they are in the mythical Latin city of *El Dorado* which is full of gold beyond imagination.

The "African Dream" thus leads people to construct this fantasy that life in a western country will be easier and filled with opportunity. Nearly always, such high expectations are never met and often a new set of problems becomes a reality for the migrants. Moreover, Hollywood films, the internet, television and popular culture have enhanced these perceptions encouraging immigrant to engage in a fruitless trek. Also, those Africans who have travelled to Western countries return home with a misleading impression of the foreign countries. They confirm the impression that there are better schools, abundance of good food and better housing. Undoubtedly, the social and material conditions of life in more developed countries are better than some African countries like Nigeria (Oroskhan & Zohdi 303). However, they should notably deal with external problems such as unemployment and unhomliness but also should cope with some inner problems like the syndromes of identity deformation.

Other African authors like Laila Laalami in her novel *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits (2005)* also attempts to capture the Moroccans journey of clandestine immigration in their quest of a new identity which is essentially located in the promised land beyond the border, and to wear that particular identity. Likewise, Boualem Sansal, the Franco-Algerian novelist, in his novel *Harrag*a (2007) presents immigrants burning their identity papers to seek asylum in Europe. The term '*Harrga'*

means 'to burn,' Algerian immigrants thus go on an existential journey to Europe without an identity trying to find meaning for their lives. However, the real image of these African immigrants living abroad is rarely examined vividly in literature. It is in recent fiction that there has been some attempt to explore the negative side of this ever beautiful image.

Therefore, in the selected short stories, "The Thing Around Your Neck," "The Arrangers of Marriage," and "Imitation," Adichie attempts to broaden our understanding of Nigerian immigrants identity formation and deformation. The stories present the nebulous hybrid nature of diasporic identity. Her stories are a vibrant testimony of immigrants' lives. She tries to put flesh on the bones of questions regarding postcolonial immigrant subjects developing an inferiority complex which leads them to define themselves according to the American cultural values giving way to a hybrid form of identity through a process of mimicry and self-alienation.

Therefore, new identity formations found their genesis during these cultural encounters. Immigration is indeed one of the most formative experiences of our century that shape identity. Both immigration and identity are regarded to be the chief preoccupation of most African writers. The immigrant experience is widespread, and it requires understanding as people struggle to maintain their sense of themselves and their values while adapting to new cultural environments.

Theoretical Background

"Identity is one of the false friends. We all think we know what the word means and go on trusting it, even when it is slyly starting to say the opposite" (Maalouf 09).

We shall use Adichie's short stories as a focal point and guide to understand the formation of immigrants' identity and the hybridization process on many levels. Identity is indeed a nebulous elastic term as Amin Maalouf puts in the epigraph above that deserves academic investigations.

Adichie's characters are torn between two cultures and belongings without any stable base for their identity. Consequently, it is shown how this cultural amalgamation has caused a hybrid identity. Indeed, over the past few decades and with the invasion of social and psychological theories and the domination of the so-called post-colonial criticism, there emerge many theories in the study of man's nebulous complex identity (Oroskhan & Zohdi 300). Among these notions one may refer to Homi Bhabha's mimicry, hybridity and Fanon's inferiority complex. Therefore, we shall use these concepts to analyze the post-colonial phenomenon of immigration. It goes without saying that there is much to be learned from the examination of immigration, culture and identity within literature itself.

First, with the rising tide of the migratory movements in a globalized era, Stuart Hall, the Jamaican-born British cultural theorist, argues that the post-modern immigrant has no fixed or stable identity since identity has become a "moveable feast" made of many components in a constant formation and transformation in relation to the ways we are portrayed, perceived and addressed in different cultural systems (Hall, *Minimal Selves* 46). As an immigrant, Hall sees identity as a socio-cultural product not a biological one.

Theoretically speaking, immigrants live on the crossroads of cultures torn between whether being assimilated and accepted in their host country or preserving their origin culture. Once they reach the United States, they exist in what Homi K. Bhabha, the Indian post-colonial theorist, calls 'Third Space.' That is to say, the term 'hybridity' has been most recently associated with the work of Bhabha, whose analysis of colonizer/colonized relations stresses their interdependence and the mutual construction of their subjectivities. Bhabha contends that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in a space that he calls the "Third Space of enunciation" (*The Location of Culture* 56). Further, Homi Bhabha brings the term hybridity and links it to the so-called "Third Space" where the one lives between two spaces and two different cultures which bring a person a merged identity. For him "The importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is "The third Space" which enables other positions to emerge" ("The Third Space" 212).

One of the most disputable terms in postcolonial context is hybridity which refers to the cultural exchange. According to Peter Barry, hybridity is "the situation whereby individuals and groups belong simultaneously to more than one culture" (198). By means hybridity stands in a situation where the one is caught between two different cultures, when the one leaves his/her native language, costumes, religion and goes to another. This can be applied to some African immigrants as we shall see who are culturally polyvalent.

The concept of hybridity is fundamentally associated with the emergence of post-colonial discourse and its critiques of cultural imperialism. It is characterized by the study of the effects of mixture (hybridity) upon identity and culture. The principal theorists of hybridity are Homi Bhabha, Néstor García Canclini, Stuart Hall, Gayatri Spivak, and Paul Gilroy, whose works respond to the multi-cultural awareness that emerged in the early 1990s.

Besides, mimicry is always present in the discourse of displacement and immigration. It has been always a crucial theme for many theorists and thinkers who view this concept as a fully imitation of others in various aspects. From a

postcolonial perspective, Ashcroft et al states, "mimicry therefore locates a crack in the certainty of colonial dominance, an uncertainty in its control of behaviour of the colonised" (155). By means the colonial discourse is the responsible for the imitation of the colonized to the colonizer, when the colonized wants to be exactly like the colonizer by adopting his cultural institutions, values, habits and assumptions; the result would be extremely "blurred copy" as the so-called mimicry. This can be applied also to African immigrants who tear their souls apart, change their names, language and so on in order to be accepted in the host country. Immigrants believe that the Western culture is superior, that is why they wear the western mask at the first encounter with the host culture, it is as if they are using camouflage technique as Lacan puts it:

> Mimicry reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called an itself that is behind. The effect of mimicry is camouflage.... It is not a question of harmonising with the background, but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled - exactly like the technique of camouflage practised in human warfare (Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man" 125).

Furthermore, in colonial and post-colonial contexts, mimicry is most commonly seen when members of a colonized society (say, Indians or Africans) imitate the language, dress, politics, or cultural attitude of their colonizers (say, the British or the French). In the context of immigration, mimicry is seen as an opportunistic pattern of behavior: one copies the person in power, because one hopes to have access to that same power oneself. Presumably, while copying the master, one has to intentionally suppress one's own cultural identity, though in some cases immigrants are left so confused by their cultural encounter with a dominant foreign culture that there may not be a clear pre-existing identity to suppress (Singh).

In addition to that, in 1952, Frantz Fanon published *Black Skin, White Masks*, which offers a potent philosophical, psychological, literary and political analysis of the deep effects of racism and colonialism on the experiences, lives, minds and relationships of black people and people of color. In his book, Fanon uses his personal experience of Caribbean immigrants in France to show how the relationship between colonized and colonizer is normalized as psychology, resulting in emotional damage to both (Custódio).

Perhaps most importantly, Fanon's opening gambit introduces the central concept that of the "zone of non-being" (02) The zone of non-being is the "hell" (Ibid), as Fanon puts it; it describes the psycho-existential dilemma the African

suffers from. In short, Fanon reflects on why he chooses to write *Black Skin, White Masks*. He argues we must ask what "the black man" wants (01). Fanon intends to comprehend the relationship between white and black people, and argues that both groups are trapped within their own racial identities. He argues that psychoanalysis is a useful tool for understanding the black experience, and that, through analysis, it is possible to "destroy" the enormous psychological complex that has developed as a result of colonialism (Seresin). All in all, a Fanonian approach is suitable to understand the inferiority complex of modern-day Nigerian immigrants.

"The Thing Around Your Neck"

Adichie first narrates in "The Thing Around Your Neck" the challenges that Akunna, a young lady, faces once she wins the visa lottery. The story portrays how the young lady is excited to live in the land of plenty opportunities, they told her: "right after you won the American visa lottery… In a month, you will have a big car. Soon, a big house. But don't buy a gun like those Americans" (115). Later, she is depicted being completely alone, aching but unable to tell her family what is happening to her. Adichie paints a sad picture of Nigerian female immigrants in the Eldorado. While Akunna tries to embrace her Igbo origin and traditions, her uncle forces her to adopt the westernized ways of life as her only option. But once again, the American Dream becomes a hurtful disappointment when she discovers that America is very different from her naïve view (Pereira 53).

The African dream gradually falls apart and Akunna starts feeling something hanging around her neck. Culture shock and the failure of getting integrated into the American society, the feeling of being the *Other* is choking her: "At night, something would wrap itself around your neck, something that very nearly choked you before you fell asleep" (119).

The symbolism of 'The Thing Around Your Neck,' signifies the battles faced by women to find a sense of belonging and an identity. Adichie is symbolizing the burden African women face when migrating to western nations. It also symbolizes what Bhabha call "unhomeliness." In his important essay insightfully entitled "The World and the Home" Homi Bhabha claims that "in the House of Fiction you can hear, today, the deep stirring "unhomely" (141). Fiction, for the most part, forms a compelling ground that sensitizes us to the melancholy voices and moving complaints of unhomely selves. It goes without saying, unhomeliness is an admittedly somewhat different from homelessness. The latter, one may say, has to do with the point of not owning a home to shelter you, whereas the first is not to sense at home despite the fact that in the lived reality you are at home (Gouffi & Kaid 555). In a

similar vein, Lois Tyson confirms that "being 'unhomed' is not the same as being homeless. To be unhomed is to feel not at home even in your own home because you are not at home in yourself: your cultural identity crisis has made you a psychological refugee, so to speak" (421). Bhabha goes further to argue: "to be unhomed is not to be homeless, nor can the unhomely be easily accommodated familiar division of social life into private and the public spheres" (141). Unhomeliness mark is starkly evident; an agony that pushes the unhomely immigrant to alienation, Akunna's feeling of being choked is caused by the failure to achieve a sense of belonging with her new American home. First, she first felt happy in the house of her uncle because they share the same culture, it sounds like home. But, the feeling of unhomeliness is worsened as she is sexually abused inside the same home. She left the home directly after that incident. Immigration is indeed a difficult experience for a young lady, identity and spaces in the story are deformed in the context of immigration. She realises that this man who is supposed to be her uncle is not offering her a home for free; she says "America was give-and-take" (116). Akunna adds:

> You laughed with your uncle and you felt at home in his house; his wife called you *nwanne,* sister, and his two school-age children called you Aunty. They spoke Igbo and ate *garri* for lunch and it was like home. Until your uncle came into the cramped basement where you slept with old boxes and cartons and pulled you forcefully to him, squeezing your buttocks, moaning… You locked yourself in the bathroom until he went back upstairs, and the next morning, you left… (Ibid).

Concerning racial hybridity, it is portrayed when Akunna gets to know a man in the restaurant who she believes to be different. He is white American, and his culture is different from hers, but they could start a relationship. But this relation does not last long despite the struggle, she says: "You knew by people's reactions that you two were abnormal" (125). One may see that Americanness is about whiteness, as it is the racist assumption of a shared white experience and supremacy. Hybrid relations between white Americans and black foreigners are perceived as something peculiar menacing the whiteness of America. Yet, this mixed race relationship is the only way that gives Akunna a feeling of belonging, it is only through a hybrid interracial encounter that "the thing that wrapped itself around [her] neck, that nearly choked [her] before [she] fell asleep, started to loosen, to let go" (Ibid).

Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* theorizes interracial sexuality, sexual desire, and the effects on racial identity. Fanon's theorizations return to one and the same

theme: interracial desire as a form of self-destruction in the desire to be white or to elevate one's social, political, and cultural status in proximity to whiteness. In that sense, all depictions of interracial sexuality (exclusively heterosexual) are for Fanon fundamentally pathological. The black woman who desires a white man suffers under the delusion that his body is a bridge to wealth and access. Mayotte Capécia's novel *I Am a Martinican Woman* (1948) guides Fanon's analysis and he takes her book to be exemplary of the black woman's psyche and of the limits of interracial desire (Drabinski "Frantz Fanon"). In the same vein, Akunna interracial relationship could be a bridge to get fully assimilated within the host country, but alas the society in the story perceived this relationship as something menacing and strange. In short, under American eyes, Akunna's interracial relationship is seen as a deformity.

"The Arrangers of Marriage"

The second selected short story "The Arrangers of Marriage" tells a story of Chinaza, a newly wedded young wife, who finds that her arranged marriage to a Nigerian medical student in America is not as she had dreamt. Her hopes begin to fall apart and dreams to wither away.

Chinaza, the protagonist, talks of her Aunty Ada who compares the fact of finding "ezigbo di! A doctor in America! It is like we won a lottery for you!" (171). This powerful comparison, especially the choice of the word "lottery," reveals the state of poverty of the place in which the speaker lives and the people's expectations to migrate to America to improve their standards of living.

Chinaza's husband, the main character Dave (Ofodile) epitomizes the deformed hybrid African who insists on penetrating the American society and American culture by sacrificing everything and abandoning his own culture. He believes that Americans are superior in everything, his complex of inferiority leads to the formation of a hybrid identity. He believes that the only way to fit in America is to *"*talk like Americans, eat like them, drink like them, use their words and erase any cultural differences*"* (172). Adichie presents characters changing their names altogether. Ofodile changes his name into Dave Bell and his wife's name from Chinaza into Agatha Bell to look more American, or as he says, "to be as mainstream as possible [and] not left by the roadside" (Ibid). Adichie thus presents hybrid deformed identities as something unavoidable. Dave forces Chinaza to go by her English name, Agatha, though she does not like it, "my English name is just something on my birth certificate. I have been Chinaza Okafor my whole life" (172).

This brings to mind our Algerian immigrants, a lot of them want to look more French or European rejecting their original names. *Abdelkader* turns into

Kader, *Zine el-dine* into *Zizou*, *Fatima* into *Fati* and so forth. Changing one's name is deformation par-excellence, a name is cultural marker, it carries culture and identity. James Ngugi, the Kenyan novelist, changed his name into Ngugi Wa Thiong'o which is purely African, he advocates the decolonization of the mind. For him, carrying the names that were imposed by the colonizer is like perpetuating colonialism. In the same line, post-colonial immigrants are portrayed as deformed and rootless characters, they are in Stuart Hall words the last colonials (*Familiar Stranger* 03), dark strangers and travellers in unfamiliar territories (153). Maria Gripe puts is as follows:

> Preferably you should have the right to be nameless until you find your own name. Names are not something that should be given out light-handedly. A name can be too light, but also too heavy for a person to carry. And it will always be a shackle. It can be dangerous temptation or it can create self-contempt. Your own name can turn into a myth which you fall victim of. It can split your character and determine your fate. (Bendicta 280)

From a post-colonial perspective, Adichie's focus on this matter suggests that names can be a heavy burden for people; this is due to the fact that a name is a vital part of one's identity; because it conveys enormous information about one's gender, culture, and even it gives a sense of uniqueness to one's personal identity. Elsdon Smith defines names as "one of the most permanent of possessions . . . [which] remain when everything else is lost; it is owned by those who possess nothing else" (Heynmann 385). In a matter of fact, names are a core segment of our identity since they carry a conceptual, cultural, and identical weight. Post colonial critics highlight the importance of labels as indicators of identity. In this matter, Albert Memmi declares that "another sign of the colonized's depersonalization is what one might call the mark of the plural. The colonized is never characterized in an individual manner; he is entitled only to drown in an anonymous collectivity ("They are this." "They are all the same")" (129). In fact, Camus' *L'Etranger (1942)* (*Stranger or Outsider*) was strongly criticized because of the unnamed Arab characters. Critics suggest that Camus denies the existence of an Algerian identity through the denial of names to his Arab characters, unlike the European ones who are granted the dignity of names. Indeed, even when the protagonist Meursault kills the Arab, readers would not feel that Meursault has murdered a man; he has done nothing wrong, for it was just an Arab. This sense of inhumanity is reinforced with voicelessness of Arabs who are painted as blocks of stones. Gordon Allport, an American psychologist and theo-

rist, emphasizes the importance of names and proposes that our names are the focal point around which we build a personal identity (Bendicta 275). Therefore, Adichie presents this bestowal of new names as the beginning of metamorphosis and depersonalization. One may call it also as an initiation into a limbo territory where immigrants are adrift.

Furthermore, linguistic hybridity and the deformation of language are clear in the story. Dave forcing his wife to mimic the western ways created a hybrid short story full with untranslated words in *Igbo* language. Adichie africanized and hybridized English language in her story; through her characterization, she expresses the migrant soul with a migrant style by making migrants speak different languages as a result of their hybridity. The result is a strange hodge-podge immigrant language with no linguistic elegance, natural rhythm or oral authenticity. Chinaza language in this context of immigration is a linguistic travesty. Besides, in "The Arrangers of Marriage," the new husband teaches American English to his new wife which he thinks is a sign of civilization:

> "Cookies. Americans call [biscuits] cookies." …
> "Yes, but [Consultant] is called Attending here, an Attending Physician."
> "*Biko*, don't they have a lift instead?" I asked. …
> "Speak English. There are people behind you," he whispered…
> "It's an elevator, not a lift. Americans say elevator." (174-176)

Three languages—British English, American English and Igbo—have been used here and they express the reality of a change in modern society in which people speak many languages. The social identity itself begins then to take on a hybrid nature and can create difficulties to non-hybrid readers. The latter may find it difficult to understand a hybrid text in which many languages are mixed with no glossary.

Yet, hybrid readers, such as the *Americanahs*, may enjoy such migrant literatures. Writing about migration literature, Combe has shown that such double belonging to two cultures and speaking two languages are a source of creation from the artist and express at the same time an identity that is schizophrenic and deformed (Kaboré 15). Bhabha quoted from Bakhtin to clarify such hybridity of language and culture that characterizes Adichie's characters:

> The…hybrid is not only double-voiced and double-accented…but is also double-languaged; for in it there are not only (and not even so much) two

> individual consciousnesses, two voices, two accents, as there are [doublings of] socio-linguistic, consciousnesses, two epochs…that come together and consciously fight it out on the territory of the utterance….It is the collision between differing points of view on the world that are embedded in these forms…such unconscious hybrids have been at the same time profoundly productive historically: they are pregnant with potential for new world views, with new 'internal forms' for perceiving the world in words. (cited in Bhabha, "Culture's In-between" 58)

Again, Chinaza is now on the crossroads of cultures and languages, she is in Bhabha's words in-between, she exists in the Third Space. The presence of the 'double-languagedness' in the story helps in the creation and generation of new world views as seen in the quote above. Chinaza is indeed at the initial stage of learning a language, to think in that language. This is the first stage of hybridization. Adichie's immigrant characters thus offer a clear view into the processes of identity formation illuminating Bhabha's notions of hybridity and the third space, they epitomize what happens in-between cultures.

The husband forces her to use some words instead of others, like "cookies" not "biscuits" and "elevator" instead of "lift," he warns her from cooking Nigerian food, instead he encourages her eating pizza. The wife describes her husband complex of inferiority vis-à-vis Nigerian food and culture as follows:

> The next day, he came back with a *Good Housekeeping All-American Cookbook*, thick as a Bible. "I don't want us to be known as the people who fill the building with smells of foreign food," he said. I took the cookbook, ran my hand over the cover, over the picture of something that looked like a flower but was probably food."I know you'll soon master how to cook American food". (179)

In short, the husband believes that mimicry is a necessity, his wife must do this to survive—at least until she has her green card Ofodile is not interested in hybridity—only in mimicry. And with it, as Bhabha says, he normalizes the 'colonial state' (*The Location of Culture* 123). Ofodile (Dave) does not want to be the Other; other immigrants, who refuse mimicry, are the Others—they are the ones who are inferior. He forces Chinaza into mimicry: she must be Agatha Bell, she must always speak American English. Chinaza says also: "He sounded different when he spoke to Americans: his *r* was over-pronounced and his *t* was under-pronounced. And he smiled, the eager smile of a person who wanted to be liked" (176). Indeed, in a pro-

cess of mimicry, the immigrants' complex of inferiority leads to the emergence of double, deformed and hybrid identities. Fanon questions the origin of immigrants' personality change? What is the source of this new way of being? The fact that the African who adopts a language different from that of the group into which he was born, changes his name, his culture and customs is evidence of a dislocation, a separation (14).

Pr Westermann says that the inferiority complex is particularly intensified among the most educated, who must struggle with it unceasingly. Their way of doing so, he adds, is frequently naive:

> The wearing of European clothes, whether rags or the most up-to-date style; using European furniture and European forms of social intercourse; adorning the Native language with European expressions; using bombastic phrases in speaking or writing a European language; all these contribute to a feeling of equality with the European and his achievements. (qtd in Fanon 15)

Indeed, Dave is an educated man yet his acts resemble one who has a deep complex of inferiority. Dave is proud and ready to wear the white mask as Fanon puts it; donning white masks over black skins resulting in a duality, and living in a schizophrenic atmosphere. He is like an 'oreo' cake in the American slang that describes this type of personality, white from the inside and black from the outside. Thus, the syndromes of inferiority occur in post-colonial immigrant groups both as a result of conscious moments of cultural suppression, or when the immigrant forces himself to 'assimilate' to new social patterns by destroying and condemning himself.

All in all, one may deduce that for Adichie, cultural hybridity is negative and has no assimilationist sense. Hybridization in Adichie's discourse of immigration means decline through the loss of identity. For her, hybrid identities are a result of globalization. She further clarifies it as the American neighbor talks to Chinaza about being adrift in a postmodern society that has no culture: "It smells really good. The problem with us here is we have no culture, no culture at all." She turned to my new husband, as if she wanted him to agree with her, but he simply smiled" (190).

"Imitation"

"Imitation" is set in Philadelphia and focuses on Nkem, a young married woman with two children. Nkem's husband, Obiora, a rich Nigerian businessman, moved them from Nigeria to the United States as a sign of status, and so that their children

could have American citizenship; however, he does not join them full time and only visits her and their two children two months a year. Nkem learns later through a friend that Obiora has moved his mistress into their home in Nigeria.

In "Imitation," the wife expects to rise from grass to grace, i.e., from poverty to riches. Nkem, the protagonist

> was pregnant when she first came to America with Obiora. (…) [they] live in a lovely suburb near Philadelphia, she told her friends in Lagos on the phone... Her neighbors on Cherrywood Lane, *all white and pale-haired and lean*, came over and introduced themselves, asked if she needed help with anything—getting a driver's license, a phone, a maintenance person. She did not mind that *her accent, her foreignness, made her seem helpless to them. She liked them and their lives.* (24: 2009)

Fanon, in his book *Black Skin White Masks*, describes this concept of Americanization or Europeanization of the Black African immigrants who become truly *évolué* and take their place in the metropolis. They are mesmerized by the Western culture, the complex of inferiority is intensified when the African encounters the western culture. The immigrant *evolué* like Nkem, desires not merely to be in the place of the White neighbors but compulsively seeks to look back and down on herself from that position. Nkem's admiration of her American neighbors lives, their whiteness and supremacy is exactly what Fanon describes in his book. These syndromes of inferiority are the legacy of colonialism and the direct results of living under the shadows of imperialism. Fanon anatomizes the colonial and post-colonial immigrant:

> Every colonized people—in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality—finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle. (09: 1986)

Besides, Obiora prefers Nkem's hair long, as "[it] is more graceful on a Big Man's wife" (40). He wants their children to be Americanized, so he enrolls them in schools in the U.S. and is proud of their "big-big" English, and that they are "Americanah" now acting like their American peers (38). Fanon again examines language, he argues that speaking a language is to take on a world, a culture. The Negro or the

black, who wants to be white, will be the whiter as he gains greater mastery of the cultural tool that language is (25). In the same line, Obiora believes that his children's mastery of American English is a sign of high social status. Ngugi also highlighted the issue of language adopted by immigrants as a self-imposed amnesia:

> Immigrants into new societies, especially those who are escaping their own histories, have been known to consciously and deliberately refuse to teach their children their own language, the language of the country and history from which they are in flight, so as to facilitate their assimilation into the country and culture of adoption. Erasure of memory is the condition of such assimilation—whether forced, induced, or willing—and the new language becomes a screen against the past that they do not want their children to face. (62)

Obiora is proud of his children growing up in hybridity, in a cultural mix between Nigerian and American, and equally wants his wife to form a hybrid identity. However, when it comes to his own life Obiora stays in Nigeria; a hybrid identity in America does not gain the same level of success and respect as mimicry does in Nigeria.

Fanon describes immigrants like Obiora, who while he is in Nigeria, is regarded as a demigod. Many immigrants, after staying of varying length in metropolis, go home to be deified. The most eloquent form of ambivalence is adopted toward them by the native, the one- who-never-crawled-out-of-his-hole, the *bitaco*. The African immigrant who has lived in the West for a length of time returns radically changed. To express it in genetic terms, his phenotype undergoes a definitive, an absolute mutation (10). In a word, when these African immigrants return to their homeland they are treated as superior, which encourages them to act in a haughty manner.

Furthermore, Nkem's American house is a hybrid, border and marginal space. A hybrid space since it is a house in a modern western context, that of America, but it accommodates African antiques as well Nigerian and American lifestyles exemplified by Nkem and her Nigerian maid on the one hand, and the Obiora children on the other one (Sharobeem 31). In addition to that, although she feels homesick, she cannot go back to Nigeria. She has to preserve her social position, "America has grown on her, snaked its roots under her skin" (37). Thus, she lives on the border; she neither belongs to America nor to Nigeria. She is a tormented immigrant living in a hybrid, deformed, marginal, border space.

Again, Adichie highlights the deformation of identity in relation to hair.

Nkem is informed of Obiora's infidelity as one of her American neighbors told her. She describes the girl in this way: "Her hair is short and curly—you know, those small tight curls" (22). After this, Nkem decides to cut her hair short just like her husband's mistress, but Obiora does not like it and asks her to let it grow back "You should grow it back. Long hair is more graceful on a Big Man's wife" (40). The hair incident indeed reveals the two-dimensional identity and personality split of Obiora. It is clear that Obiora behaves differently in America and Nigeria. When he is in Nigeria, he tries to look American and spends his time with a mistress whose hair is short and curly *à la Americana*. However, while he is in America, he wants his wife with a long hair. In short, Obiora's identity is ruined with mimicry and hybridity, he sounds schizophrenic.

Similarly to Nkem in "Imitation," Chinaza in "The Arrangers of Marriage" learns that Nia, their Afro-American neighbor, and Ofodile had sex before Chinaza married him; a clear indication of his hypocrisy and two-dimensional personality or identity. Ofodile married Chinaza because he wants a virgin wife from Nigeria as a traditional tribal marriage. But in America, he is different, he does not care about virginity, he is open-minded vis-à-vis sex before marriage. In the discourse of immigration, it is worth noting that hybrid identity and mimicry turn into a malady. A lot of African immigrants' characterization in literature indeed resembles the medical discourse about schizophrenia.

As a matter of fact, there are numerous psychiatric studies that provide tentative frameworks to highlight specific interactions between personality disorders, migration processes, and cultural factors. In other words, they examine the relationship between immigration and culture from a psychopathological perspective. Najjarkakhaki and Ghane for instance offer suggestions on how immigration processes could resemble several 'Personality Disorder' traits, how certain (latent) vulnerabilities could be manifested in a post-migratory context, and how pre-existing personality pathology could be aggravated. Additionally, they offer suggestions on how several cultural dimensions could resemble or mask personality pathology ("The Role of Migration").

In short, the African immigrant's mindset is worthy subject of academic investigation within the realm of literature. The psychology of Adichie's immigrant characters resembles psychiatric discourse of traditional studies like Fanon and new medical discourses as well.

Conclusion

To sum up, displacement and immigration are important formative experiences that

shape the lives of people. Literature is indeed a laboratory in which we can easily explore the impact of these experiences on identity. Indeed, the African fictive landscape and postcolonial thought have been preoccupied by the nebulous nature of identity, unlike Marxists who think that identity is not important.[1]

Adichie's selected stories portray the cultural encounters between the African, who believes he is inferior, with the West. The post-colonial African immigrant, through his journey, is always looking for his identity, because for centuries the colonizer devalued and effaced the colonized past, regarding his pre-colonial era as a pre-civilized limbo, or even as a historical void. The stories revealed that in the process of self-alienation and mimicry, hybrid and sometimes deformed identities emerge in the context of immigration.

In short, Adichie looks conservative when it comes to identity; she regards immigration, hybridity and displacement as loss. The intermingling, amalgamation and transformation of identities in the context of immigration are impure. Even if a character, like Akunna, who does not built defensive walls to protect her identity and does not feel threatened by diversity that are epitomized in her interracial relationship, fails at the end. Therefore, Adichie's selected short stories attempt to teach us about the dynamics of this new process of identity formation.

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1 For Marxists, the real struggle is a vertical clash between classes rather than an horizontal one between different allegiances, ethnicities and belongings.

skin-white-masks/

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The Disintegrated Identities in the Orient of the Post-war American Fiction: Paul Bowles' Character Dyar as an Example in *Let It Come Down*

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Abstract This paper discusses Bowles' philosophical accounts of the psychological destruction of the unwary American pilgrims who seek a new life in North Africa. In his novel, *Let It Come Down* (1952), he demonstrates innovative traits for dealing with the macabre and the cruel oriental landscape by presenting it as being responsible for the disintegration of his American heroes. The paper takes Bowles' character, Nelson Dyar from *Let It Come Down,* and analyzes it in terms of disintegrated identities in the orient of the Post-American war era. Indeed, Dyar, an American bank clerk, descends into the sordid underworld of Tangiers' dope inferno. By escaping from the monotony of his dead-end job in the States, Dyar; promised a job within a travel agency in Tangiers, hopes for a relocation which delivers him from the sense of dejection he had been suffering. Arriving in Tangiers, Dyar starts posing those recurrent questions of whether or not Tangiers is the right place to relocate and allow him to find meaning to his existence. By the end of the novel, Dyar, the reprenstntive of the modern West, has hammered his companion's head by a nail; he has finally destroyed the oriental other. The paper will show how the novel resists this and instead we cannot finally judge if Dyar is happy or unhappy since we are left only with the chilling weather and the endless rain.
Keywords disintegrated identities; post American war era; character Dyar; Paul Bowles; *Let It Come Down*.

Introduction

The post-war American novel has utilised the ideas of existentialism, especially those of French philosophers, including Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre. Indeed,

Bowles and Camus used the very same North African terrains to present their own philosophical ideologies. The aesthetic potential of these oriental settings is recognised by Bowles and Camus who were both writing in a transitional colonial era which had witnessed drastic changes to the predicted western discrimination between the concepts of us and them. Although such a colonial era follows World War II, Edward Said elucidates its impact in the pre-war philosophy of "Otherness," which is reflected in modern literature, when he states,

> Like the fascinating inverts of Proust's novel, Bloom testifies to a new presence within Europe, a presence rather strikingly described in terms of unmistakably taken from the exotic annals of overseas discovery, conquest and vision. "Only now instead of being out there, they are here, as troubling as the primitive rhythms of the Sacre du printemps or the African icons in Picasso's art. (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 188)

Said's argument suggests that "the new presence of the Orient and Orientals within Europe" finds a response within modern literature. "For post-war American fiction, power requires domination that could only be achieved through violence and destruction." In his study, "A Journey in Search of Bowles," Paul Metcalf argues that Bowles' writings represent that particular phase of the Moslem-Western conflict which in fact traces the socio-logical and historical impacts on both the cultures. Although he is a mid-twentieth century writer, Bowles reflects the very colonial aspects of nineteenth century imperialism whereby Arabs are merely represented as "exotic" or "mysterious" (Metcalf 36). What is intriguing is that Bowles, in the process of writing the Orient, still has in mind an image of western culture as being bloody and conflicting as ever.

In order to highlight this violent culture, Bowles presented a contrast to it by presenting Africa, its symbolic landscape, culture and people. In doing so, Bowles' writings represent two avant-garde movements of modernism; surrealism and existentialism, which serve as a response to Said's argument of the other. In his book, *Colonial Affairs: Bowles, Burroughs, and Chester Write Tangier*, Greg A. Mullins explains the way by which these two movements can be read as a response to Said's work. Mullin states that:

> Surrealism responds to this crisis by abandoning consciousness and by seeking to reconstruct transcendence through an unconscious connection between self and other, between the West and its others. Existentialism responds with the

> crisis of being with the other that is "resolved" through disavowal, through an attempt to banish the historicity of this crisis in a revitalized ontology of self-consciousness. (Mullins 26)

Bowles' Existentialist Approach

Bowles' discussions of existentialist themes are central in almost all of his works, and are made to manifest within his utilisation of American heroes moving towards an inexorable fatalism. Indeed, the use of these existentialist themes encompasses the similar spiritual and mental concerns of both American and French novelists, as Richard Lehan suggests in his study, "Existentialism in Recent American Fiction: The Demonic Quest." Lehan argues:

> The Americans are pre-occupied with the same problems and themes that fascinate and puzzle the French writers. Sartre, Camus, Bowles, Bellow, Wright, Ellison–all are concerned with meaning of identity in the modern world, the nature of good and evil, the possibility of fulfilment in the contemporary society, the source of values in a world without God, and the possibility and meaning of action in an ethical vacuum. The new American hero is similar to the French existential hero because he shares a common world and a similar view of the world. (Lehan 181)

Positioning his work as sharing the themes of these French philosophers, Bowles adopts Camus' ideas of the destructive powers of the universe and Sartre's theories of self-consciousness, and applies them to his American heroes. Moreover, within his presentation of loneliness and dislocation, Bowles is constantly occupied with the eternal search for human identity in a manner that reflects Friedrich Nietzsche's existential discussions upon the natural order of the universe. It seems that Bowles' perception of existence results in the formulation of different ideas of violence and nihilism, which challenge those very traditional ideologies that dominate the universe. Consequently, images of violence are vividly applied to Bowles' central characters as he emphasizes their disintegration whilst abroad in the Orient.

In his study, "Everyone Exists in Order to Be Entertaining: The Fiction of Paul Bowles" (1994), Michael Pinker draws the different contours of Bowles' complex vision of violence whereby human relations grow in a disturbing manner. Pinker emphasises Bowles' pleasure in violating certain susceptibilities, which uncompromisingly disrupt the everyday nature of human life. Indeed, Pinker tends

to emphasize that Bowles represents the endless violence of western culture by revisiting the alien terrains of the Orient and establishing the idea of destruction (Pinker 156-157). Indeed, Pinker's argument integrates Bowles' architectural metaphor of civilization as Bowles declared once to Jeffery Bailey:

> What you make for others is first of all what you make for yourself. If I'm persuaded that our life is predicted upon violence, that the entire structure of what we call civilization, the scaffolding that we've built up over the millennia, can collapse at any moment, then what I write is going to be affected by that assumption. The process of life presupposes violence, in the plant world the same as the animal world. But among the animals only man can conceptualize violence. Only man can *enjoy* the *idea* of destruction. (Bailey 80)

Bowles use of words like "scaffolding" and "built" suggest those elements are needed for structuring civilizations that are susceptible to collapse. Similar to this idea of destruction are the different variations of human isolation in which "everyone is isolated from everyone else. The concept of society is like a cushion to protect us from the knowledge of that isolation. A fiction that serves as an anesthetic" (Bailey 81). Indeed, Bowles' fiction is rife with images of isolation, especially Bowles' presentation of his central characters, who are at odds with the western culture and alien to the cultures they challenge and thus his fiction achieves a remarkable literary theme; the "alienation of the self from society [which] used to be, and in a sense remains, the basic assumption of the modern novel" (Hassan 320). As a result, Bowles' readers cannot tell the next stage of what happens as the Oriental cultures, Bowles represents, never stand as substantial; they are overwhelmed in a world of the writer's inner geography of disintegration and isolation especially when we know that the writer himself has a peculiar ideology of unhappiness.

Dyar's Ideology

Let it Come Down resembles that ideology as Dyar's mother at the very beginning of the novel advises her audacious son that "once you accept the fact that life isn't fun, you'll be much happier" (*LICD* 16). Developing this ideology coupled with the most recurrent theme of the American novel in the twentieth century; the horror of the imprisoned or isolated identity, Dyar is swept up with his life in Tangiers, attempting to establish his real identity in a world that merely recognises human beings as winners or losers. He is a born loser under the decadence of Tangiers, drawn to his oriental experiences that turn into a nightmare of corruption, drugs,

prostitution and scamming to get money. Indeed, Dyar is in search of his '"Being' [which] is the most universal and the emptiest of concepts. As such it resists every attempt at definition […] for every one uses it constantly and already understands what he means by it" (Heidegger 21).

The Orient, North Africa, is established as "exotic" in Bowles' fiction and it becomes clear that the dissolution happening to the western characters is due to the setting, which is indifferent to the natural order of human existence. The idea of Africa is presented in terms of difference: somewhere to find purpose, in Dyar's mind. Early in the novel, Dyar's purposeless, empty life is laid before us.

Role of Daisy and Hadija in Dyar's Life

Daisy highlights a major event in Dyar's life; the encounter with nothingness in this universe. As Dyar's palm and life are empty, so the setting of Africa is blank too constituting that "kind of empty space, offering minimal resistance to the realization of adventurous fantasies" (Mchale 54). Bowles takes the "emptiness" link even further, having Daisy de Valverde tell Dyar of the Greek myth of the mountain "Hesperides" to which "Hercules is supposed to have come to steal the golden apples" (*LICD* 33). This mythology represents exactly the fate of Dyar because the place is associated with death. The garden of apples is on a treacherous precipice of the earth near Atlas and it is here where Dyar has his first Oriental sexual experience with Hadija, an Arab courtesan, in which his sexuality becomes an integral part of the African landscape.

> The Garden of Hesperides. The golden apple, he thought, running his tongue over her smooth, fine teeth. Soon it was as if he were floating slightly above the water, out there in the strait, the wind caressing his face. The sound of the waves receded further and further. (*LICD* 101)

Dyar's Escape to Morocco

The myth continues, as Hercules made his way to Atlas, so Dyar is making his escape, to the Spanish Morocco later in the novel, sailing and climbing the mountains in order to forget what he has just done; robbing Wilcox, his friend and employer, of his money. The day after his arrival at the sanctuary arranged by Thami, his Moroccan companion, Dyar feels the fine weather approaching and thus he simultaneously feels himself becoming a part of the natural world. Dyar feels freed from his fears, which he has already left in Tangiers, yet his memory is still engaged with the ominous images of the chaotic Tangiers, in which there is no way to live apart from taking part in the contest in a world of predatory monsters based

on distrust; the distrust between western and African cultures, between Dyar and Wilcox and between Daisy de Valverde and Luic (her husband). Dyar does not trust anybody including himself.

Dyar and His Relationship with Other Characters

The only person that Dyar is obliged to trust is Thami, who mirrors his own disdain for both cultures; the European and the Moroccan "if he [Thami] damned the Europeans with one breath, he was bound to damn the Moroccans with the next" (*LICD* 40). Like Dyar, Thami tries to create his life by buying a boat after being estranged from his wealthy brothers who see him violate the traditions of "the upper-class Moslem world of Tangier" (*LICD* 36) due to his youthful heavy drinking. Consequently, Thami's identity is gradually shattered as he deviates from the norms of his Arab-Muslim background culture and follows the bogus greedy dreams of joining Dyar, in Western modernity. Thami anticipates intriguingly a strange yet a horrible world approaching him by his constant staying with Dyar in the Spanish Morocco as he imagines "his soul lay in darkness, without the blessing of Allah" (*LICD* 257). Indeed, Thami's anticipation of his death, as a result of the violent nature of the West, concatenates with Bowles' pre-supposed dehumanized depiction of the oriental natives, the Arabs and Berbers, who increase his antagonism. Formerly in the novel, a conversation between Eunice Goode, a notorious American lesbian, and Thami may offer a clue to Bowles' presumed antipathy.

By her conversation with Thami, she intends to reflect what Daisy de Valverde has formerly suggested, "The Americans are the nation of the future" (*LICD* 21). This pre-supposed discrepancy between the humans (Europeans) and the non-humans (Moroccans) mirrors the same notion of the innocent natives who are constantly objectified, owned and dehumanised under the yoke of western colonialism as Said puts it. The image of the simple natives continues in the novel as the lesbian Goode succeeds in forming a relationship with the immature Hadija; this relationship stands as a metaphor for the relation between the western civilisation and the primitive orient. Hadija functions on the simple sentimental level of the novel by benefiting from whatever she could find from the outsiders yet others dominate her social life, as she does not understand herself nor feels any security. Hadija's innocence, the immature orient, offers a long missing therapy to Goode, the western civilisation, for those past decades of corruption and melancholy happening to her.

Bowles' *Let It Come Down* and Shakespeare's *Macbeth*

The understanding of the title of the novel is significant to the understanding of the

novel itself. The title of the novel is taken from a passage in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* when Banquo, Macbeth's rival, gives a remark about the weather to be answered by one of the three murderers awaiting outside his home; the first murderer replying "Let it come down" (Shakespeare 87) stabbing him to death. Like Macbeth, Bowles's novel is essentially about establishing one's own identity, positing the existence of one's self-through oppressive actions. The title implies the endless rain that falls throughout the novel. The African settings; the sun, the wind, and the beach are all confrontations to the western civilisation by the alternative culture, and in a way, they are warnings to the unforeseen forces of this universe against the human beings. Dyar does not want these forces to affect him but he could not deny the outside reality traces him as he has stolen Wilcox's money. The liminal hanging door represents human reality itself and when Dyar wants to seal it the next night, he incidentally drives a nail into Thami's head. Consequently, Dyar is sealing himself in that little bottle of consciousness, achieving the notion of self-fulfilment through the destruction of oneself "his existence and everything in it were real, solid, undeniable […] He was conscious of the instantaneous raising of a great barrier that had not been there a moment before, and now suddenly was there, impenetrable and merciless" (*LICD*, 317-318). Dyar reflects Camus' philosophy that "the individualist cannot accept history as it is; he must destroy reality not collaborate with it, in order to affirm his own existence" (Camus, 1956, 288-289).

Bowles' Sympathies with Dyar

Bowles' sympathy with his hero is understood as Dyar represents the author's "self-alienation," which involves the idea of double separation; the separation from oneself and the separation from the essential nature that together encompass the ideas of the total loss of human nature (Schacht 100-101). Consequently, the loss of human nature entails that certain elements of horror and violence be introduced. In his book, *Rumours of Change: Essays of Five Decades,* Ihab Hassan argues that Bowles' fiction is characterised by a tendency towards violence and negation, displaying an extraordinary responsiveness to the status of human existence and the role of terror and negation on his central characters.

Dyar as a Victim and a Murderer

Dyar's victim-like role is undeniably verbalised from the beginning of the novel as he "was the only prey that evening" (*LICD* 11) to the cab drivers. His role represents broadly those ideas of victimization and alienation, which remain at the heart of Western literature for much of the twentieth century. Dyar himself recognises the fact that he is a victim yet he does not know exactly the very sinister correlation between his own innocence and his destructive powers that serve to

drive him mad by the end of the novel. Indeed, Dyar is a prisoner of his trap destiny, he lacks the ability to form his future, he faces struggle to lose himself, and above all he does not know "what's going to happen?" (*LICD* 179). At this phase of the novel, Dyar feels unable to make firm decisions and shares similarities with Bowles' character of a Western traveller in another work of the author, *Their Heads are Green* (1963), standing outside the ancient walls of an African town contemplating, with hesitation, the vast world of the Sahara Desert.

Let It Come Down and *Their Heads Are Green*

Both, *Let It Come Down* and *Their Heads are Green* represent the increasing metamorphosis of western figures in Africa during a series of reintegration processes controlled by the author's mental territory. The reintegration happening to Dyar can be divided into two stages, the first one occurs at the beginning of the novel when Dyar feels himself to be a victim and when he finally becomes a murderer. During his time in Tangiers, Dyar gradually becomes focused upon issues of personality, articulating those ontological themes central to the novel. Sometimes Dyar ascribes his inner experiences to the effect of the outer landscape; sometimes he can only understand his inner turmoil. When Dyar takes his first step in the new domain of willed activity, he has difficulty associating himself with his action, but he does have a definite hope, which he did not have before.

Tangier and its Landscape

The inner turmoil of Dyar is located in the liminal space of Tangiers, a city divided between Europe and Morocco and at the peak time of smuggling and some dubious financial transactions. Because it was a centre for so many people and religions, Tangiers developed a reputation of sexual activities and narcotics. Consequently, by drug addiction and sexual activities, the cultural and the social boundaries between the residents of the city were dissolved and various notions of identity, culture and sexuality were challenged. Consequently, Dyar's responsiveness to the landscape of the Spanish Morocco is negligent and inattentive, for him it is "a primitive place […] a wilderness whose few inhabitants lived in caves and talked in grunts or sign language" (*LICD* 252). The word "primitive" here belongs to those oriental people and landscape in which the western preys employ a kind of transcendence leading to self-destruction. For this reason, *Let it Come Down* is based on the author's vivid metaphors of successive schizophrenic episodes. Dyar's journey to the Spanish Morocco is itself an illusion especially when we know that Bowles himself contemplates this visionary experience upon one of his sea travels.

The negative physical domination of the Tangiers landscape in the novel runs

parallel with the psychological domination of narcotics, which becomes a mark of rebellious independence Bowles, to occupy a landscape by themselves in the novel. Their influence is destructively great as kif, the most popular form of narcotics in Morocco, may be considered as a major cause of dislocation, responsibility and social fear. In the novel, Daisy de Vaverde introduces narcotics to Dyar and it is not surprising.

Dyar's Drug Experience and Its Consequences

Dyar's experience of drugs coincides with his escape to the primitive world of the Spanish Morocco. Although *kif*, the most popular form of narcotics in Morocco, is a prime reason for the disintegration of Bowles' characters, Bowles denies its power to induce a murder as it "is simply the key which opens a door to some particular chamber of the brain that let whatever was in there out" (Stewart 116). The narcotic, according to Bowles does not supply the matter, but merely liberates whatever's it. Indeed, Bowles' self-denial is contradicted as Daisy de Vaverde tells Dyar that majoun (effectively like kif) is "the key to a forbidden way of thought" (*LICD* 225), which eventually includes the idea of violence and murder. The majoun, according to Dyar, is increasingly becoming a pleasure uniquely associated with the orient. It establishes that "quintessential oriental world of uncertainty, fluid dreams infinitely multiplying past resolution, definiteness, and materiality" (Said, 1994, 183). What is peculiar in the novel is that Dyar reacts mechanically to the majoun and the first act is proved in his lovemaking with Daisy as it is carried out not sentimentally but in terms of a pervading voluptuousness coupled with a tendency to eat, drink and sleep. His lovemaking experience as a result of the narcotics is peculiar as it renders him unable to perceive women as real creatures so he is left paralyzed "to form any kind of social bond–the essential step in the construction of an identity" (Patteson 50). This is clear as Daisy considers Dyar among those men who are accustomed to an ambiance of feminine adulation and who "are vulnerable and easily crushed, as spoiled children" (*LICD* 107). Consequently, Dyar's actions start to reject all the traditional ideas of value and the natural order of human beings yet even Dyar cannot apprehend himself. Bowles recurrently poses the question of the reality of existence within Dyar's own imaginative experiences: "The feeling of unreality was too strong in him, all around him. Sharp as a toothache, definite as the smell of ammonia, yet impalpable, unlocatable, a great smear across the lens of his consciousness" (*LICD*, p. 161)

Dyar Vs Meursault

"He was not thinking, but words came into his mind; they all formed questions, what am I doing here? Where am I getting? What's it all about? Why am I doing

this? What good is it? What's going to happen?" (*LICD* 161). The answer to these questions lies at Dyar's continuous rejection not only of the inevitable universal laws of human existence but of the Oriental orthodoxy of North Africa which reflects the same one suggested by Meursault, Camus' hero, in Albert Camus, *The Outsider* (1942) since both characters, Dyar and Meursault achieve nothing by their violence and rejection of the morality of the human existentialist position. They are in a constant struggle with the external world and with the moral codes of their societies yet they are witnessing the relation between man and his world (Adele 46-63). Indeed, Dyar and Meursault reach the same existentialist conclusion about the universal order of being.

> The whole of life does not equal to the sum of its parts. It equals any one of the parts; there is no sum […] Everything Dyar had ever thought or done had been thought or done not by him, but by a member of a great mass of beings who acted as they did only because they thought they were on their way from birth to death. He was no longer a member, having committed himself, he could expect no help from anyone. If a man was not on his way anywhere, if life was something else, entirely different, if life was a question of being, for a long continuous instant that was all one, then the best thing for him to do was to sit back and be, and whatever happened, he still was. Whatever a man thought, said or did, the fact of his being there remained unchanged. And death? He felt that someday, if he thought far enough, he would discover that death changed nothing, either. (*LICD* 194)

Dyar starts to feel at one with his own soul, he feels alive and thus reaches the summit of his consciousness aside from notions of nationality and other cultural signifiers. He is neither an American citizen nor a member of humanity but rather an irresponsible man lying on the beach. This scene of Dyar on the beach reflects exactly the beach scene within *The Outsider* where Meursault feels that the sea was in full view; it lay smooth as a mirror, and in the distance a big headland jutted out over its black reflection […] The beach was quite deserted now […] Heat was welling up from the rocks and one could hardly breathe (Camus 55-58). Dyar now is in full harmony with the outer world. He sees his life valuable because accepting this value means a man should accept death. Now Dyar's powers "come out of the earth, nothing which would not go back into it. He was an animated extension of the sun-baked earth itself. But this was not quite true" (*LICD* 276).

Both Dyar and Meursault share the same existential quest to realise their

identities through taking another's life. They are on a demonic mission to perceive the absurd nature of our physical world within their world of North Africa. They become the very destructive elements that have those primitivistic features of immersion within the evil and violence of this universe.

Bowles' Heroic Fatalism

Dyar's knowledge of the world and even Africa is limited and because of this, Bowles is able to formulate his narrative on the hero's fatalism "Dyar lay on his back across the seat in the stern of the boat, his hands beneath his head, looking up at the stars, vaguely wishing that at some time or another he had learned a little about astronomy" (*LICD* 245). This fatalism is continued as Dyar indulges in a complicated net of entangled visions and bizarre delusions before the murdering scene.

> The expedition through the magic room was hazardous. There was a fragile silence there which must be shattered. The fire, shedding its redness on Thami's mask like face, must not know he was stealing past. At each step he lifted his feet far off the floor into the air, like someone walking through a field of high wet grass. He saw the door ahead of him it was going to take endless hours to get down to the end. And a host of invisible people was lined up along its walls, but on the other side of the wall, mutely waiting for him to go by an impassive chorus, silent and without pity. The sides of his mind, indistinguishable from the walls of the corridor, were lined with words written in Arabic script. All the time, directly before his eyes was the knob less door sending out its whispered message. It was not sure; it could not be trusted. If it opened when he did not want it to open, by itself, all the horror of existence could crowd upon him. (*LICD* 307)

The image of the doorway in Bowles' work epitomises a recurrent feature within travel writing analysed in this paper. That is, they mark an in-between point at which things are both less defined and more open to convergence. The doorway in Bowles represents Bhabha's notion that the "[…] interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (Bhabha 4). Such intersterility is of importance to the travel-writing form with its overt relation to the geographical and ideological spaces in which differing peoples and cultures intervene with each other.

Unable to read the sides of his mind, Dyar tries to capture his gloomy past with a hint of a projected future under the influence of the kif, which attacks the inner geographical territories of him forming those hallucinating and mindless visions. The Arabic script signifies but cannot be read by him; therefore, it becomes language without meaning for the character. Working under both the perverted sexuality and the hatred of the brain, Dyar's visions are intended to be taken as philosophical and even spiritual quest for reality and such a quest renders him to enter another world; a world of fantasy, an excursion into the known that causes him to accidentally attempt to drive a masonry nail into Thami's head instead of a shacked-shut door. This is a very decisive event in the novel as it may represent what Michel Foucault in *Madness and Civilization* calls "a fall into a determinism following the great confinement" (Foucalut 78, 35) where we have the break out of the hero after a long time of struggling with the constrained inner-self that is charged with hatred and anger.

This is the outcome of Dyar's repressed powers. Such a complex state of a psychotic outcome can be better elucidated in R. D. Laing's book, *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness* when Laing argues:

> what is called psychosis is sometimes simply the sudden removal of the veil of the false self, which had been serving to maintain an outer behavioural normality that may, long ago, have failed to be any reflection of the state of affairs in the secret self. Then the self will pour out accusations of persecution at the hands of that person with whom the false self has been complying for years (Laing, *The Divided Self* 99).

It can be said that Dyar's psychotic aggression against the greed of Wilcox and Thami may be interpreted as his "accusations of persecutions." In other words, Wilcox and Thami are considered the inevitable external reality, which ceaselessly prepare Dyar to pour out after his inner self has been complying for years. Consequently, this internal rebellion of Dyar against himself as well as the essential nature of our existence reflects an important psychological fact remarked by Laing elsewhere as he states, "'*if our experience is destroyed, our behaviour will be destructive*. If our experience is destroyed, we have lost our own selves" (Laing, *The Politics* 24). For Dyar, Thami is a pursuer who should be killed and upon his killing Dyar experiences a kind of satisfaction "I've come back, he thought; his mouth, gullet, stomach ached with dryness. Thami has stayed behind. I'm the only survivor. That's the way I wanted it" (*LICD* 310). Such an end reflects Bowles'

intention that a dreadful conclusion could assert a degree of credibility to the story. Bowles argues,

> *Let It Come Down* was completely surface-built, down to the details of the decor, choice of symbolic materials on the walls, and so on. The whole thing was planned. It had to be. It was an adventure story, after all, in which the details had to be realistic. It's a completely unreal story and the entire book is constructed in order to lead to this impossible situation at the end. (Sawyer-Lauçanno 303)

The book's end encompasses Dyar's murder of Thami enclosed under the absurd reality of nothingness and this is summarised at the very end of the novel when the character ironically tries to lie to Daisy who comes to help him. Dyar lies in order to hide the murder that he has committed. "I don't know where Thami is, he said. He's been gone all day" (*LICD* 317). Indeed, Thami is murdered because Dyar wants to discover a meaning of the mystery of his existence in the world outside and because "the slaying of a different ego, an unconscious illusion of the splitting-off of a bad, culpable ego, satisfies the need in the hero to protect himself permanently from the pursuits of the self" (Rank 79). By unlocking the secret codes of his existence, Dyar symbolises the tragic consequences of the modern man in the twentieth century where there is little hope for escape because modern man demands too much of life and too much of himself' and consequently he cannot have all he refuses to reconcile himself to nothing.

Conclusion

At the end of the novel, Dyar hammers a nail into his companion's head, killing him in the process, significantly the use of the description "the other" (*LICD* 318) to refer to the Moroccan's corpse at this point, suggests a symbolic meaning inherent within the act. The character of Dyar, representative the West, has finally destroyed the oriental other, yet instead of describing Dyer's satisfaction with the act. The novel resists this and instead we cannot finally judge if Dyar is happy or unhappy since we are left only with the chilling weather and the endless rain. "The rain fell heavily and the wind had begun to blow again. He sat down in the liminal space of the doorway and began to wait. It was not yet completely dark (*LICD* 318). This is the end point of the western pilgrim's journey in Morocco; a journey of a detritus of a western civilisation driving its way to destruction which may not finally produce the realisation it predicts.

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The Unnaturalness as a Political Satire: Unnatural Narratology and Ian McEwan's *The Cockroach*

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Abstract By involving unnatural elements into the political satire, Ian McEwan's *The Cockroach* offers an uncanny experience of expressing trenchant criticism against Brexit. This article, in the conceptual system of unnatural narratology, first of all, attempts to examine the unnatural events by focusing on the human-cockroach transformation and the Reversalism. Secondly, it explores the unnatural acts of characters including the cabinet's metamorphosis, Jane Fish's mastery of politics and people's frenetic support. Thirdly, it tries to reveal the unnatural mind emerging in the protagonist, impossibly mixed with three original minds: a cockroach's mind, collective spirit and original human mind. Coupling unnatural techniques with political satire, McEwan depicts an anti-mimetic, anti-reality and nightmarish scenario originated from the metamorphosis, readily provoking a mockery of the turmoil and division that Brexit has given birth to. The unnaturalness not only generates defamiliarizing effects which directly challenges readers' cognition, but also amplifies McEwan's strong criticism against Brexit, propelling readers to reconsider Britain's decision.

Keywords Ian McEwan; *The Cockroach*; unnatural events; unnatural acts; unnatural minds

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Inspired by the UK's prolonged exit from the European Union, an increasing number of writers have resorted to fictional stories to offer more opportunities and perspectives to reconsider Brexit. Ian McEwan, one of the most prestigious writers

around the world, published *The Cockroach*, a novel political satire with which his prominent strength of unnatural narrative was integrated meanwhile. It starts with an inversion of Kafka's *Metamorphosis* that a cockroach wakes up to find himself taking over the body of Jim Sams, the Prime Minister of the country. With pieces of memory jigsaw gradually put together, he comes to realize that he and his ministers who are also taken over by cockroaches will accomplish an important mission—to implement Revervalism, the belief that the nation will thrive on the money flow reversal in the entire economic system, which is a metaphor for Brexit plunging people into turmoil and division. McEwan constructed such a fable to express his strong criticism against Brexit, utilizing the imaginative power of fiction to reflect the mess of the country.

The Cockroach is an avant-garde experiment of political satire. McEwan once said, "*The Cockroach* is a political satire in an old tradition" (McEwan 1). Actually, flavored with the unnatural elements to strengthen the sarcasm, *The Cockroach* is more than a modern take on old tradition. Satire has been defined as the ridicule of a subject to point out its faults (Beckson, Karl E., Karl Beckson 221). As Aaron Matz argued on satire's longstanding kinship with realism, satire must be realistic to persuade readers (Matz 3). Many of political satire novels establish the storyworld on the mimetic settings, utilizing satirical tools like exaggeration and parody with the intent of intensifying core conflicts and revealing inherent weaknesses. The miniature of reality in stories is the basis of traditional political satire as it immerses readers into the context, preparing them for the exaggeration and other satirical techniques. In contrast, with the metamorphosis and other unnatural elements namely "physically, logically, or humanly impossible scenarios or events" (Alber, et al. 2) in the story world, *The Cockroach* tells an impossible story, falling into the category of unnatural texts that "feature strikingly impossible or antimimetic elements" (Alber, et al. 1).

The creative mixture of unnaturalness and political satire aroused continuing controversy. Biwu Shang considers McEwan converts the difference between human and cockroach in external appearance to the opposition between two types of political and economic positions (Shang 95), which can let people have "some savage laughter in the dark" (Shang 107). Dandan Zhang emphasizes that reading the story through the perspective of unnatural narratives also invokes a reflection upon humanity and the difference between human and nonhuman (Zhang 144). Regarding *The Cockroach* as "the latest instalment in McEwan's imaginative scrambling of English social history and of reality itself", Leo Robson believes that it performs an impressive display of McEwan's strength of resorting to

unnatural narratives (Robson 1). However, *The Cockroach* received more doubt about the design of inversed metamorphosis as well as more questioning remarks on its aim of integrating unnaturalness into the criticism on realism. After raising a series of "unanswered but nagging" questions on transformation details, like "[h]ow does a cockroach remember the 1960s song?", Sam Leith points out that "the big problem is that it's not clear at all how the Brexit spoof meshes with the cockroach-turned-human premise" (Leith 1). Philip Hensher compares this inversion of Metamorphosis with Kafka's origin so as to argue that "it was a mistake to engage with *The Metamorphosis* because Kafka's engine just can't be run in reverse." Besides, Hensher questions whether it is necessary to lump together various unnatural elements: "if the novelist is asking his reader to believe one huge impossible thing, it's reckless to pile minor implausibilities on top" (Hensher 1). These negative voices demonstrate a limited understanding about how unnaturalness contributes to political sarcasm, which results from the mismatched analytical perspective.

To further discuss the creative political satire which incorporates unnaturalness into the construction of political satire, it is essential to adopt unnatural narrative as an analytical standpoint. Consequently, we can take an overall look at the influence of unnatural elements, updating current comments on *The Cockroach*. Following the recent scholarship on unnatural narratology, this paper is going to examine the unnatural events by focusing on the cockroach-minister transformation and the Reversalism proposal firstly. Secondly, it explores the unnatural acts of characters correlating with core unnatural events. Thirdly, it tries to reveal the unnatural mind emerging in the protagonist, mixed with three original minds as ingredients.

Unnatural Events in *The Cockroach*

To begin with, it is necessary to figure out what unnaturalness refer to. Jan Alber defines "unnatural" as "physically, logically, or humanly impossible scenarios or events." (Alber, Iversen, et al. 2). According to Brian Richardson, the fundamental criterion of unnatural narratives is the anti-mimetic nature that "violates mimetic conventions by providing wildly improbable or strikingly impossible events" (Richardson 67). To explore more about unnaturalness in unnatural texts, it is helpful to zoom in on unnatural elements, "the factors that cause different degrees of unnaturalness." Regarding from which perspective to analyze unnaturalness, Biwu Shang pointed out "how unnatural a narrative text is, its unnaturalness as well as unnatural elements contained can be on display at the story level and/or the discourse level" (Shang 175). Following this way, I am going to focus on the

unnaturalness of events at the story level contained in *The Cockroach*. Equally unnatural are two events, which are against the governing laws of physics and logic: the inversion of "The Metamorphosis," which can never take place in real world, lays a basic framework for the story world, generating absurd scenarios and ridiculous minds; the implementation of Reversalism, an ostensible economic engine in the storyworld yet a preposterous idea in real world, amplifies the unsettling strangeness and absurdity.

The unnaturalness is ingrained in the first event, the human-cockroach transformation of Jim Sams, the Prime Minster of the country. Its impossibility lies in both its violation against natural laws and its nonhuman narrator—a cockroach. In real world, it is not possible for a human being to be controlled by a cockroach. At the very beginning of the novella, Jim "woke from uneasy dreams to find himself transformed into a gigantic creature" (9). He then finds his limb, arms, feet, face and organs all change into unfamiliar forms, which he calls "a grotesque reversal" (10). In other word, a cockroach's mind has entered Jim's body, dominating his thoughts and behaviors. More interestingly, Jim is not an ordinary person. Instead, he is the Prime Minister of the country. When a cockroach, the most despised creature living in slum, succeeds in taking over the Prime Minister's body, the most powerful man representing the whole country, a sharp contrast emerges to amplify the impossibility of this event. The Prime Minister who is elected to work for people's will and interest now turns to serve the whole community of cockroaches. He then cajoles people into supporting Reversalism in order to overthrow humankind domination, which makes the whole story more impossible. If this event came true in real world, what horrible consequences a cockroach-controlled Prime Minister could bring about.

Moreover, the process and feelings of taking over a humankind body is narrated in a cockroach's perspective. It is impossible for a nonhuman creature to tell stories. Compared with Kafka's metamorphosis, it makes the transformation much more unfamiliar. Kafka's fable starts with a man's mind enclosed within a giant insect, generating the feelings of helpless entrapment and growing alienation from normal life. A narrator of human mind makes it much easier to stir imagination and raise empathy. In contrast, the nonhuman narrator adopted by McEwan stimulates much strangeness, which is revealed in the inherent conflict between his physical form and internal cognition of self-identity. In real world, a cockroach mind does not work the same way as human being, making it unlikely to decipher a cockroach's thoughts, emotions, judgements. McEwan grants cockroaches humanlike thinking mode—able to think, feel and judge for themselves. But the point is that despite

the external human form and internal humanlike mind, they still recognize their self-identity as cockroaches. When Jim examines every part of his new body, he is shocked to have four limbs, "feeling some nostalgia" for his own little legs (9). He finds it revolting to have "the organ, a slab of slippery meat, laying squat and wet in his mouth," which obviously refers to his tongue (9). He also simplifies his shirt as "his coloring," considering things he sees "oppressively colorful" (9). Seemingly, a little insect which happens to be a creature much more gigantic and powerful is supposed to be satisfied with the new form. However, Jim's expression, such as "consternation," "revolting" and "grotesque," demonstrates strong aversion to human body (10). Living as a marginalized group as depicted in Jim's memory, these cockroaches, dare to mock and contempt a far more "advanced" creature in charge of the world. Jim's discomfort in the new shell brings about defamiliarizing effects and his unexpected attitude towards human beings makes this impossible transformation more ridiculous.

The unnaturalness is also contained in the proposal of Reversalism, inversing the money flow in whole economic system, which operates completely against principles of economy. Reversalists led by the cockroach-controlled Prime Minister aim to invert the entire financial system to accelerate cash flow and stimulate consumption demand. In this way, diligent workers who are supposed to get paid in return have to compensate their employers for their job and get paid for what they buy from retailors. High negative rates are set for savings to force a citizen find a more expensive job in order to spend their cash. Considering its mechanism without concrete support from physical industry and steady source of cash flow, it is quite clear that the logic behind the so-called Reversalism is too fragile to convince anyone educated before. If such an insane economic biosphere were designed in real world, it would hardly win any trust owing to people's common sense in economy. But in the storyworld, such a ridiculous plan to overturn the economic structure has been approved and finally carried out. Many people are convinced by the Prime Minister's ostensible argument that the economy will be boosted by more demand under Reversalism. Its popularity is not achieved immediately but with a long accumulation. The Reversalist Party is reviewed as a group "with populist, anti-elitist message," distinguishing it from Clockwisers, the traditional parties (41). The past few years has witnessed a clear and rapid development of Reversalism: in Europe and the US, there have been a growing group of supporters attracted by its anti-mainstream proposal. And the Reversalists even won the approval of the American president, Archie Tupper, who is considered as Jim's same kind afterwards. However, our basic knowledge tells us it should not have become

a popular policy for its irrational mechanism. Thus, the triumph of a complete insaneness illustrates that some people lose their mind for plausible chances of economic revival, adding to its impossibility.

Considering the metamorphosis of the Prime Minister, the chief Brexit leader is particularly targeted by McEwan. As the most essential event in the story, the metamorphosis not only ridicules the current Prime Minister, but also forms the basis of later development. By depicting the implausible success of Reversalism, McEwan expresses sharp criticism about the essence of Brexit, and many people's blind support. The metamorphosis and Reversalism, as the core plot of the story, sets path for the unnatural acts by characters and includes the manifestations of hidden unnatural minds. The unnaturalness in the two events sets the tone for the storyworld.

Unnatural Acts in *The Cockroach*

After the Prime Minister undergoes a transformation and the Reversalism is vigorously promoted, how will other people react to the unnatural events? Do they behave in a sensible way? Do they correctly judge the metamorphosed Prime Minister and the illogical economic plan? Regrettably, the answer is negative, revealed by the whole cabinet's metamorphosis, Jane Fish's unlikely mastery of politics and people's frenetic support for Reversalism.

It is already horrible that a Prime Minister falls into the grim command of a cockroach. Even worse is that there is no one able to stop Jim from carrying out the scheme since the whole cabinet has been infested with cockroaches. Almost all of ministers are also completely controlled by a united group of cockroaches with the ultimate order of the collective spirit. More than merely crazy, it is absolutely threatening when the most powerful political authority is almost totally manipulated by cockroaches disguised in superficial human form. The metamorphosed cabinet can arbitrarily lead the whole country to any direction they want by taking advantage of exercising executive power. It also implies that the collective spirit is of high intelligence and good knowledge of Britain's politics. Only a Prime Minister in control is not able enough to change the country and holding a group of cabinet ministers in hand is vital for collective decision-making.

The collective spirit grants the metamorphosed cabinet extreme unity. The arduous seesaw game in politics has been changed into a once-for-all decision-making by the metamorphosed cabinet. A policy now can be hammered out within one round of meeting, going smoothly without disagreements and impediments. The scheme of promoting Reversalism representing the interests of cockroaches

is forcefully pushed forward and loyally carried out by cockroach-ministers. No one sitting in the cabinet cares about the country or the people. What a sarcastic scene that the cabinet's decision-making completely follows the cockroach's will, concentrating all resources into a policy to deteriorate the country! They are as solidary as cockroaches, as Jim's comments on his mates:

> "They are precisely his own. Bound by iron courage and the will to succeed. Inspired by an idea as pure and thrilling as blood and soil. Impelled towards a goal that lifted beyond mere reason to embrace a mystical sense of nation, of an understanding as simple and as simply good and true as religious faith" (35).

When the cabinet is totally manipulated by a collective spirit, especially a malicious one, it is likely to lead the whole country to follow a wrong track. The metaphor implicates McEwan's outrage at the cabinet full of Brexit hardliners that will continue to tear the country away.

Among the metamorphosed ministers, McEwan gives more attention to Jane Fish who is depicted as a typical politician. Although dominated by a cockroach, she is so sly and intelligent that her political performance stands out among her colleagues, making her a capable aide. No one knows how a cockroach grabs the key to a qualified politician. Adept at capturing latest heat topics, she flexibly adjusts her behaviors to cater to voters' tastes which have nothing to do with her real thoughts. She intends her image in political sketch to be always "pipe-smoking" to leave a deep impression on voters though she never smokes (94). She used to be a "passionate Clockwiser," but the rapidly increasing popularity of Reversalism immediately converts her to a firm Reversalist (95). Moreover, she has no bottom line of moral principles. On understanding Jim's implied intention to set Benedict up, she "confides" that she has "always" had doubts about him and in no time spins a fake story to frame Benedict for harassment and bullying (95). Without hesitation, she arms lies and deceit as a weapon to achieve further promotion. As a lackey, she is skillful at taking cues from her boss and making up artificial flattery, which is an essential characteristic of a canny politician. When cockroaches gather to celebrate the success of the scheme, Jane "calls out beloved slogans to Jim, overcome with emotion" (123). Such an outstanding metamorphosed minister zoomed in Jim's perspective reflects the familiar hypocrisy and immorality of politicians and the contrast between its essence as a cockroach and its performance as a qualified politician serves to highlight the satirical tone.

Unexpectedly, Reversalism receives frenetic support from people, leaving

readers confused. In the storyworld, the history of Reversalism shows that its popularity does make sense because there seems to be lack of normal people who are armed with basic knowledge and ability of judgements to spot clumsy deception. It has attracted a group of supporters among the working poor and the old of all classes despite its absurdities and lack of basic economic knowledge. According to the narrator, the reason why the poor favor Reversalism lies in their dissatisfaction with current inequalities of wealth and their desire to bring luxuries with cash subsidy. The old's reason for support is even more ridiculous, being "nostalgically drawn to what they understood to be a proposal to turn back the clock" (43). After the Reversalism was finally put into practice, the shop was stripped clean of goods, which is "a great boost" to the economy in some people's view (121). The poor and the old are also motivated by "nationalist zeal" presented in the Reversalists' promise to achieve a national revival by upending the existing order (43). The popularity of this absurd idea is not only owing to the idea itself but to the manipulation of public opinion. The existence of Jim's tough figure is to satisfy people's political tastes. The cockroaches who "were mindful of" this phenomenon try to establish a determined and fearless figure who fights against the conservatives for country revival, taking advantage of people's voting preference. Even as a cockroach, Jim's "antennae" are "finely attuned to public sentiment" (83). With signs of nationalists' recovery awaiting catalysts for further growth, he fans the flames. Following the route, Jim stands alone to welcome coffins in heavy rains, deliberately exacerbating the diplomatic conflict to stimulate people's resent to France. More people are magnetized and united by potent leadership and external threat, rallying for Jim and his Reversalism. The fanatical belief pandering to people's greed and ignorance reflects the McEwan's disagreement with these ordinary people who are blinded with their complaints about current society and are enticed by the promising future printed by Brexiters.

Rooted in the above-mentioned unnatural events, the unnatural acts of characters demonstrate abnormalities in characters' minds and behaviors, bringing out less normality and more strangeness which consequently adds to the impossibilities of the storyworld. Those ridiculous acts intentionally stir readers to consider those who are playing similar parts in promoting Brexit. Regarding the aim of designing these impossible acts, McEwan bitterly ridicules the newly appointed cabinet composed of Brexit hardliners by delineating the metamorphosed cabinet and the typical politician cockroach. He also criticizes politicians for maliciously manipulating public opinion and aggravating social division in the country.

Unnatural Minds in *The Cockroach*

Along with the metamorphosis, Jim Sams has undergone considerable changes, which are worthy of mention since the protagonist's transformation is highly related to the theme of the novella. Among these changes, the most notable one is Jim's metamorphosed mind: it has been profoundly transformed into a compound of three different minds after being taken over by the cockroach, challenging our natural notion of how consciousness works. The newly compound mind of Jim is no longer a mind that nature gives birth to but rather falls into the category of the unnatural minds, which "a presented consciousness that in its functions or realizations violates the rules governing the possible world it is part of in a way that resists naturalization or conventionalization" (Iversen 97). Stefan Iversen focused on metamorphosed minds, especially the outcome of human-animal transformation in Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* and Marie Darrieussecq's *Pig Tales*: a mind with the memory of the desires and beliefs of its former body as well as with new urges and experiences, brought forth by the new body. He found that the "double estrangement" results in uncanny effects of these narratives (Iversen 110).

Similarly, in *The Cockroach*, the metamorphosis brings about uncanny influences by giving birth to the impossible combination of three different minds in Jim's brain. Before the metamorphosis, Jim has undoubtedly one mind in his brain. The transformation penetrates a cockroach's mind into his brain as well as the collective spirit to recall an important mission namely the Reversalism. While the original human mind of Jim has been exiled to the cockroach's body, a basic component of human mind remains in Jim's brain by which the "new" Jim learns to master human behavioral patterns, getting accustomed to the role of a Prime Minister and social life. Thus, the combination in Jim's brain is mainly controlled by the cockroach mind and its collective spirit, influenced secondarily by the human mind.

The cockroach mind plays a primary role in Jim's brain, retaining his grotesque and eerie instincts to distinguish himself from normal human beings. When Jim woke up to find himself transformed into a four-leg mammal, he examines critically his new body including legs, mouth, eyes and flesh, "feeling some nostalgia" for his former appearance as an insect (9). A mosaic of memories reminds him of his life pattern as a cockroach: dashing to the gutter, eating a discarded slice of pizza, encountering delicious dung. As a member of the marginalized group in the community, little and powerless, he once lived in the darkness, struggling to feed himself in the rubbish bin, but he is now transformed into the Prime Minister

in charge of the whole country. Despite his reluctance to stay in a burdensome human body and his worries about whether he can get accustomed, he continuously reassures himself with his "proud cause", which reveals his pride for his population (22). Manipulated by the cockroach mind, Jim tends to maintain insect instincts within this humankind shell. He can hardly resist the temptation of some "delicious" food which is absolutely disgusting for real human beings. When recalling the warm and "faintly steaming" horse dung, he felt joyful to reach such fresh dung based on his judgements as a "connoisseur" in this field (14). He also bears the inhuman qualities of the insect, such as cruelty and indifference to lives. When handling the collision of a British illegal fishing boat with a French frigate, he takes a considerably hard line on French, which leads to a severe result: the foreign affair escalates into diplomatic crisis. The cockroach in a human shell succeeds in making his current social identity—the Prime Minister—revolting and barbarian. His figure is as grotesque as what Jim said to describe his metamorphosed cabinet, "[h]ow eerily they resemble humans" (35).

In addition to the cockroach's own original mind, the collective spirit plays a dispensable role in Jim's brain, guiding him to replace Prime Minister and promote Reversalism to deteriorate human society and flourish the cockroaches. The collective spirit results from cockroaches' implacable hatred against human beings. Before the transformation, it intentionally replaces the cockroach's own will when he is scaling the vertical granite wall of the kerb. It acknowledges that "the peculiar madness," Reversalism, can throw the general human population into chaos and poverty (126). In addition to the metamorphosed cabinet, the collective spirit not only takes advantage of people by cajoling them to support Reversalism, but also makes use of diplomatic affairs to press for its proposal. In this way, the collective spirit makes almost everything "tiny elements in a scheme of magnitude" (15). It demonstrates that the collective spirit is intelligent and ambitious, equipped with a comprehensive knowledge of human society. The exact inspirational prototype of the collective spirit is very clear. McEwan was outspoken about his comments on Brexiters: "a reckless, self-harming, ugly and alien spirit has entered the minds of certain politicians and newspaper proprietors. They lie to their supporters. They express contempt for judges and the rule and norms of law. They seem to want to achieve their ends by means of chaos" (McEwan 1).

Although the free will of Jim Sams, the original humankind, has been stripped off his brain, part of his human mind has been left over to assist the cockroach in fitting the new role. Jim inherits knowledges, judgements and habits from the remains of human mind. Accordingly, this metamorphosed Prime Minister knows

his previous habit of everyday coffee-drinking and how to react appropriately to his subordinate officers. It teaches him to learn how to run a cabinet and how to be a leader. When Jim is hosting a cabinet meeting, he takes control of the pace of speaking, "knowing enough to allow a short silence before saying" in order to arrest everyone's serious attention (55). Nonetheless, the remains of human mind operate objectively without any capability to change or affect Jim's decision. If not, he would object severely to Reversalism just as what he did previously as a determined Clockwiser and stop the crazy scheme from achieving final success.

Although Jim preserves his knowledges, judgements and habits as a human being, he is transformed into a cockroach with his own will controlled by the collective spirit and thinking mode reshaped by cockroaches. With three minds together emerging in his brain, it is unlikely for Jim Sams to assume ministerial responsibilities and lead a country to a bright future. Apparently, it can never happen to a Prime Minister in real world, but it is a striking metaphor for both the current Prime Minister Boris Johnson and the previous Theresa May. McEwan zooms in on the metamorphosed Prime Minister to voice bitter criticism against the primary Brexiters who are proposing radical changes to the country. His metaphor implies that political leaders who press for Brexit, the harmful and unreasonable proposal, are either genuinely stupid or particularly treacherous. By depicting the unnaturally transformed mind in Jim, he seems to mock Brexit leaders' chaotic and abnormal minds that stick with Brexit, telling readers that they are far less reliable than expected.

What is the aim of adopting unnatural techniques in a political satire? Brian Richardson mentions that "a primary value of anti-memetic strategies of narration is to draw attention to the way narratives are constructed and point to the desires that such constructions serve" (Alber, Nielsen, et al. 17). As what has been discussed above from three aspects, we follow the way McEwan constructs the unnatural texts which depict a nightmarish scenario originated from the metamorphosis, readily provoking a mockery of the turmoil and division that Brexit has resulted in. McEwan is a determined and outspoken Remainer. As he said in an interview regarding his motivation to write *The Cockroach*, "as the nation tears itself apart…a writer is bound to ask what he or she can do. There's only one answer: write...mockery might be a therapeutic response" (McEwan 1). McEwan's desires are already revealed in the intention of using unnatural elements since unnaturalness is a clear allusion to the abnormality of Brexiters' success. His bitter criticism against Brexit then goes through the scathing parody of British politics and society. Parody is a significant satirical device. Compared with conventional parodies,

unnatural representations seem to exaggerate narrative tension to and beyond the utmost, making narration more challenging than the worst situation readers can expect. In this way, he managed to encapsulate the sense of outrage at political deviousness and hypocrisy, worries about deeper social division and bewilderment about Britain's future into this creative political satire. The defamiliarizing effects directly challenges readers' cognition so that readers will feel McEwan's strong aversion to Brexit, starting to reconsider the comparison between storyworld and reality. Then to reconsider the Brexit itself, as McEwan wished.

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Ecocritical Comprehension of the Chornobyl Accident in Non-Fiction Works by Y. Shcherbak and R. P. Gale

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Abstract The article deals with a representation of the Chornobyl accident in non-fiction prose by the Ukrainian and American authors from the perspectives of ecocriticism. The literary devices of ecocritical discourse such as the frame of idyll, paratextual forms, the key metaphors are defined and analyzed in a documentary narrative "Chornobyl" (1987) by Yuriy Shcherbak and a not-fiction story "Chernobyl: The Final Warning" (1988, second ed. 2020) by Robert Peter Gale and Thomas Hauser. A depiction of environmental problems, relations between a man and nature, the elements of ecological consciousness etc. are studied in the documentary works about the Chornobyl tragedy, which were written by the Ukrainian and American authors shortly after the accident. Their texts represent the axiology of two different social systems—socialism and capitalism. It was also proved that a development the ecological consciousness and a liberation from colonial dependence are interrelated processes. A methodological basis of the research were the works from the field of ecocriticism (H. Fromm, D. Haraway, P.D. Murphy and other scholars). We came to the conclusion that in texts by Shcherbak and Gale, a key metaphor of ecological problems is an image of the final warning. The authors reveal its essence with the help of an idyllic worldview in a context of pastoral landscapes. In both texts an importance of understanding the interdependency between man and nature for the sake of avoiding further catastrophes was proved.

Keywords ecocriticism; Chornobyl (Chernobyl) accident; non-fiction prose; Yuriy Shcherbak; Robert Peter Gale

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Chornobyl is a mystery which we still ought to unravel.
Unread sign. Maybe it is an arcanum for the twenty-first century.
A challenge for it.
——Svetlana Alexievich

Introduction

The explosion at the Unit 4 of the Nuclear power plant at Chornobyl[1], Ukraine, on April 26, 1986, according to the United Nations, is considered to be the biggest nuclear catastrophe in the history of mankind (Shcherbak, *Chornobyl's Legacy*). Thereafter Chornobyl, "an obscure town in Soviet Ukraine—has become part of the world's lexicon" (Gale and Hauser, *Chernobyl*). For many times, its reasons and effects, influence on people and environment were the focus of representation and comprehension in literary and scholarly works. The author of "The Chernobyl Prayer" (1997) Svetlana Alexievich said in her Nobel lecture that she resisted writing about Chornobyl for a long time, because "didn't know how to write about it, what instrument to use, how to approach the subject" (Alexievich). Writing about global disasters, one "must give the truth as it is," and "(t)he witness must speak." That's why Alexievich started to "collect the everyday life of feelings, thoughts, and words. […] collect the life of my time" (ibid.) and became a creator of "the novels of voices." Among other literary non-fiction works about Chornobyl, the Ukrainian author Yuriy Shcherbak's documentary narrative "Chornobyl" (1987) receives a special attention by scholars. Polish scholar Pawel Sekula states that Shcherbak combines the documents, facts, narratives of eyewitnesses with his own thoughts and impressions, endowing the story with an artistic expressiveness. The work became one of the first literary and documentary receptions of Chornobyl events. Also, Sekula admits that Shcherbak was restricted by censorship in his narrative, "even in the conditions of a relatively liberal restructuring" (407).

A non-fiction story "Chernobyl: The Final Warning" (1988) by an American

1 In the article we use all Ukrainian names and toponyms in transliteration from the Ukrainian language (for example, Ch**o**rnobyl instead of Ch**e**rnobyl), except the cases when we quote the original or translated (and published) works in the English language

Dr. Robert Peter Gale, co-written with Thomas Hauser, represents a vision of an atomic catastrophe from a free of political censorship perspective, in a prospect of potential (un)safety of nuclear power industry. In a Foreword to the 2020 edition of a book, the authors admit with sadness that thirty-four years ago they had hoped that:

> the global cooperation in response to Chernobyl would herald a new era in securing the future of our planet. But this scenario hasn't emerged. Instead, we see a world that's falling apart rather than people uniting in common cause. (Gale and Hauser, *Chernobyl*)

Unfortunately, "the lessons of Chernobyl are more important now than ever before" (ibid.). The authors highlight that for "citizens in a democracy, it is our obligation to understand what is involved and to act upon these issues without self-deception, exaggeration, or demagoguery" (ibid.). It could be said that the problem is treated by the authors not even in a planetary but in a cosmic scale. From the first page of a work, they postulate the expressive eco-philosophical statements: "man is in and of nature, not above it" (ibid.); "splitting the atom, man has crossed a threshold that threatens us all. When environmental systems reach certain extremes, changes occur rapidly, unpredictably, and often without warning[1]" (Gale and Hauser, *Ostannie* (a) 145).

At the beginning of a story, the narrative is dramatized with a description of a sorrowful image of Mitinskoe Cemetery and dead patients from Hospital number 6 in Moscow—the first victims of Chornobyl. But the failure to save their lives demonstrated "how deadly nuclear power can be and how helpless the world is when radiation rages wild. In the end, we all live near Chernobyl" (Gale and Hauser, *Ostannie* (c) 167).

Tamara Hundorova states that in the post-Soviet Chernobyl discourse it was a transformation of a real event into the media event, a hot atomic explosion into the cold information explosion (414). The works by Shcherbak and Gale give us an opportunity to rethink Chornobyl catastrophe due to vivid impressions of eyewitnesses, who became the participants and mediators of an event in a context of contemporary environmental problems.

The different aspects of the Chornobyl accident are studied in fiction and

1 In 1989 a documentary story *Chernobyl: The Final Warning* by Gale and Hauser was published in Ukrainian translation in the magazine *Vsesvit*. In our article all quotations are taken from original text, published in 2020 (Kindle version).

documentary literature. The ecocritical issues are represented predominately in a context of broader problems, but even sporadic cases prove their importance and necessity to continue the research. In the article about the image of Chornobyl in fiction, Larissa Zaleska Onyshkevych rises a problem of contrasting the natural disasters and man-made catastrophes with the help of images of Atlantis and Guernica (29). She points out that in Chornobyl discourse the authors used to divide the things which caused by nature and a man, emphasizing a search for the guilty. She states that in Shcherbak's work an attention is paid to the conditions of living after a catastrophe, also the author seeks for reasons and those who responsible and descripts their vindication. Zaleska Onyshkevych says:

> … it seems as if everybody is guilty, although several definite persons are also pointed out. Drawing attention to the specific threats from numerous nuclear power plants in Ukraine and Belarus, in an extended sense the author speaks about a threat to whole mankind, which has the final warning: '…we came—to Chornobyl. We have come to a crisis of faith. We have come to the edge of precipice…' (ibid. 30)

A documentary prose is also actively studied nowadays by researchers. Kamila Gieba in the article "The Chernobyl zone in the Ukrainian and Belarusian context—On the example of reporter narrations" considered the journalistic reports to be valuable because they present the information of eyewitnesses and give an opportunity to define a place of reporter in described events. She defines that the Chornobyl accident has a transboundary character, and it could be treated in many aspects, particularly in anthropologic, natural, political, and geopolitical. She comprehends the image of nuclear reactor both as "a dark metonym for the fate of the Soviet Union" (Gieba 181) and as a core of worries about "the fate of future generations, extinctions of species and the damage to the environment" (ibid.).

The accounts and impressions of Chornobyl eyewitnesses are studied in different genres, also in poetry. The researchers state that poems have a unique quality to recapture a horror of the atomic destruction. Alison Miller and Cassandra Atherton are interested in studying the poems produced by Chernobylites or those which were derived from witness testimonies. According to them, an author of such "dark poetry" "confronts the anxiety of existentialism in the nuclear sublime and simultaneously resists the romanticisation of suffering and fetishisation of nuclear spectacle" (Miller and Atherton 16).

In the article "His own Chernobyl: The embodiment of radiation and the resis-

tance to nuclear extractivism in Nadine Gordimer's *Get a Life*," Vivek Santayana writes about the problems of nuclear energy in South Africa on a ground of the history of colonial extractivism and racial oppression. Rob Nixon's notion of "slow violence" is proved by the example of Paul Bannerman's life, the protagonist of Gordimer's novel. The logic of colonialism to the exploitation of the non-human ecosystem in the interest of capital is criticized (Santayana 15).

Film texts are a special subject for researching the theme of Chornobyl. Johanna Lindbladh compares seven films from Ukraine, Belorus and Russia, devoted to this tragedy. The results of the narratological analysis prove that Chornobyl accident is represented as an apocalyptic event, but influenced to a personal rebirth (political, emotional, sexual, religious, or existential) of many people. The narratives of these films are similarly structured rather according to a temporal pattern of *kairos* (an elusive and favorable moment; refers to the qualitative characteristics), than *chronos* (a continuality and natural course of events; quantitative characteristics). It means that an apocalyptic moment was defined as the supreme time to act (*kairos*), rather than the end in a historical chain of events (*chronos*). That's why the final scenes are marked with the absence of tragical feelings and finality (Lindbladh). Chornobyl is a sad and painful lesson for the mankind, but not the end of it.

Thom Davies deals with the visual materials, using photography as the means to study "hidden spaces of everyday life."With the help of visual (photographs) he researches the invisible (radiation, tragedy, memories) and its influence on people (primarily the communities near the Exclusion Zone), those who "call the nuclear landscape 'home'" (Davies 116).

Sarah Phillips writes about the symbols of Chornobyl as a set of resources, that produce memory and ever-present awareness for the mankind. The ethnographic research on the effects of the accident to rural and urban life of Ukrainian people let her states that "Ukrainian culture has become infused with Chernobyl's sixth sense. [...] Chernobyl is always present—in word, in thought, and in embodied action" (178). This "sixth sense" (a kind of a collective memory) was produced by Chernobyl and structures people's perceptions of the world. It is about "embodying an event whose effects are immeasurable and potentially terrifying" (179).

Inna Sukhenko in the article "Reconsidering 'The Chernobyl' narration within the contemporary tendencies of ecocritical writing" defines Chornobyl accident and post-Chornobyl literature, predominantly memoirs, as an important orienteer of Ukrainian ethnic consciousness in a process of comprehension of interaction between a Man and Nature. She considered the Chornobyl theme in Ukrainian literature to be one of the sharpest places of a struggle for creation the new cultural

identity, based on the highest moral principles, which could let us avoid "future Chernobyls" (13).

The aim of our article is to define and analyze the literary means of ecocritical discourse in non-fiction prose about Chornobyl as exemplified in the works by Shcherbak and Gale&Hauser. The novelty of the research refers to a comparative perspective the texts which represents of axiology of two different social systems—socialism and capitalism, on the ground of ecocritical interpretational field. Gale & Hauser's work deals with Dr. Gale's experiences on his trips to the Soviet Union (Moscow and Kyiv) with the primarily aim to provide the bone marrow transplantation to the first victims of Chornobyl accident. Doctor of Medicine in epidemiology Yuriy Shcherbak is a famous Ukrainian writer, screenwriter, scientist, environmental activist, politician, and diplomat—Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Ukraine to Israel (1992–1994), the USA (1994–1998), and Canada (2000–2004).

Searching the Literary Form: A Frame of Idyll

In a documentary narrative "Chornobyl" Shcherbak writes that the catastrophe needed its own forms of depicting: "all traditional literary forms, all subtleties and tricks of composition, all these seemed to me overwhelmingly far from the truth, artificial and needless things[1]" (Shcherbak, *Chornobyl* (a) 21). The desire to depict the accident as truly as possible made Shcherbak to add to his narrative the stories of eyewitnesses. This gave the narrative a character of documentary one. Personalized monologues of eyewitnesses recreate the timeline, reasons, and accident aftermath at the Chornobyl nuclear-power plant. They provide coverage to a personal and collective experience of participants in a moment of the accident and during a short period after it. It is estimated that the stories of witnesses can depict "the inexpressible and abject horror of nuclear destruction" (Miller and Atherton 2). Miller and Atherton's research is devoted to a study of Chernobylites stories in a context of accounts of Japanese atomic bomb survivors. By analogy, they call Ukrainian victims as "The Chernobyl hibakusha" (ibid.).

Shcherbak uses literary means for generalization of acquired experience, for instance the elements of idyl have a special significance in his work. A frame of idyll is a contrast (antithetic) outline for reader's reception of the first part of a documentary narrative "Chornobyl," which begins and ends with representation of an abstract idyllic landscape. According to Terry Gifford the idyllic worldview in literary texts is characterized by emphasizing fertility, resilience, beauty and unthreatened sustainability in nature. He states that in an idealized text the "complacent and

1 All translations from Ukrainian of Shcherbak's *Chornobyl* are ours.

comforting representations of nature that strategically omit any sense of elements that might be counter to this positive image" (Gifford). Ernst Robert Curtius defines minimum of inseparable elements of an ideal landscape—*locus amoenus*—a tree (or several ones), a meadow, a spring or brook; also, flowers and birdsong may be added. According to Curtius, in Late Antique literature (Libanius's works) there were six components of *locus amoenus*—such "charms of landscape" as springs, plants, orchards, gentle breeze, flowers, and birdsongs. In Medieval times this list was enlarged by description of fruit (211–228). The images of idyllic landscape serve the means of catastrophic discourse.

In his work Shcherbak represents the period when nature loses sustainability and becomes dangerous because of a technogenic catastrophe. The beauty of Ukrainian nature, depicted by author with the help of permanent images of flowering gardens and flooded rivers, is not self-sufficient anymore. A specificity of an ideal landscape in Shcherbak's story lies in the fact that it loses its ideality. The external features of the landscape seem to be as perfect as hundreds and thousands of years ago, but now it becomes deadly for every living being. A traditional description of fertile nature is an expression a harmonious and joyful reception of the world, but in a story about the catastrophe it becomes the mean of representation of traumatic experience:

> A danger in Chornobyl and around it was dissolved into the fragrant air, in the white-pink blossom of apple-trees and apricots, in a dust on the roads and streets, in a water of village wells, in the milk of cows, in fresh herbs of kitchen-gardens, in all idyllic spring nature. But where it was only spring one? (Shcherbak, *Chornobyl* (a) 20)

An idyllic beauty of environment which is expressed in snow-white blossoming of gardens and flood of rivers contrasts with perception of Chornobyl accident both as catastrophe and tragedy. In reception of Chornobyl tragedy, Tamara Hundorova defines the coexisting of two metaphors—"tragedy" and "catastrophe," detailed by different discourses (425). It could be seen that in the first part of Shcherbak's story the discourse of catastrophe is dominating, and in the second one prevails the discourse of tragedy.

Gale also uses the metaphor of idyll in a context of description of a tragic circumstance for the evacuees, and contrasts with a pastoral landscape:

> They had no homes, no possessions, only their lives. Hastily constructed

> camps lacked electricity and running water. People slept on the floor or several to a mattress. Most knew that in all probability they would never return home […]. Still, none of their hardship was evident from the air as we flew toward Chernobyl. It was quite peaceful and idyllic below. Another flock of birds flew beneath us. Nature, I realized, knew no artificial bounds. (Gale and Hauser, *Chernobyl*)

A story of Gale and Hauser is closer to the discourse of a tragedy. It represents the main eco-philosophical concepts of the final warning and death.

In the first part of his work, Shcherbak frequently uses apocalyptic symbolism. He writes not about dividing of the world but about its "split."According to him, witnesses associate the destructive mode of the accident with the model of war. By the words of Alexievich, in the newspapers the information about Chernobyl accident:

> was in military language: explosion, heroes, soldiers, evacuation … The KGB worked right at the station. They were looking for spies and saboteurs. Rumors circulated that the accident was planned by western intelligence services in order to undermine the socialist camp. (Alexievich)

On April 26, 1986, for many people the world one more time was divided into "before war" and "after war" periods, by analogy with "antebellum" and "postbellum," or "pre-war" and "post-war" in the history of nineteenth and twentieth centuries. An idyll of life before the accident is described by usage of synonymic rows. The rhythm of repetitions recreates the coherence and stability of existence: "a world before Chornobyl was calm, unhurried, self-confident, as if for years it was immersed in a half-sleepy, indulgent, all-permissive complacency" (Shcherbak, *Chornobyl* (a) 19). This description corelates with cozy atmosphere of childhood when all responsible decisions are made by somebody else but not a child. For a reason Shcherbak notes the important changes in psychology of all generation with the help of age-related lexis: "all of us recovered our sight rapidly and came of age for the whole epoch" (ibid.).

At the same time, the writer emphasizes not age-specific changes, but those which connected with the worldview of people. It needs a deep restructuring of thinking. An author gives us the keys both in text and in paratextual complex of a story, more specifically in a preface and epigraphs.

The first part of a story is ended by Shcherbak with a providing of a model

of happiness, a core of it is a classical topos of *locus amoenus* with traditional images of a river, grass, fragrances of a land. A narrator names it as "idyllic remembrance."And this name gives us an opportunity to reconstruct an idyllic landscape as the antithetic frame to discourse of catastrophe. A narrative of such discourse is presented in ascending order—from a model of catastrophe to a model of happiness. The landscape description depicts the mental balance and permanence of existence:

> I went on a bank of a small river Khorol, laid down on the grass, and closed my eyes partly. Near I heard the love piping of frogs, felt a freshness of grass and proximity of water. On the opponent bank the cows were mooing and waiting for the time they'll give their hot milk into the tin buckets. (Shcherbak, *Chornobyl* (b) 49)

Then, in a process of modeling, a narrator doesn't give any concrete characteristics to a description—the river loses its name, a single completed action is replaced by imperfect hypothetical action. A landscape turns to be a basis for the generalized utopian vision of a world:

> And suddenly I realized what the happiness is. It is a grass, on which one can lye without a fear of radiation. It is warm river, which you can have a swim in. It is the caws, whose milk one can drink securely. And a provincial small town, which live an untouched life. And a sanatorium, on the alley of which the vacationers slowly take a walk, buy tickets to the open-air cinema, and make friends—it is also a happiness. But not everybody understands this. (Shcherbak, *Chornobyl* (b) 49)

A paradigm of generalization is formed by several causes and based on the ground of features of sustainability, fertility, and absence of danger. Sustainability is provided by the fact that a town for a definite period of time is a place of prosperity. Shcherbak recalls a description of Myrhorod, written by Mykola (Nikolai) Gogol in nineteenth century:

> A wonderful town is Mirgorod! Haw many buildings are there with straw, rush, and even wooden roofs! On the right is a street, on the left a street, and fine fences everywhere. Over them twine hop-vines, upon them hang pots; from behind them the sunflowers show their sun-like heads, poppies blush, fat pumpkins peep; all is luxury itself! (ibid.; as transl. in Gogol)

It is an idealized description in which wellness, fertility and beauty is accented. The buildings as signs of material culture impress by their variety; the fence doesn't bend from a wind but after all is beautiful; the plants are presented in a period of flourishing; the fruit is ripe. The author points out that chosen locus remains constantly beautiful during long period of time: "It's been a long time ago! From what naïve and fair remoteness these words came. Yet in May of 1986, Myrhorod was wonderful" (Shcherbak, *Chornobyl* (b) 49). But now the foreground are safety and absence of prohibited actions: "It is wonderful because there was no radiation here, even a little increased. And nobody gives the advice to close the windows" (ibid.).

In a story "Chornobyl," a topos of prosperity is related associatively to the images of plant, which symbolize Ukrainianness—such as hop, sunflower, and pumpkin. Not only Myrhorod and Horol were small provincial towns on the bank of a river, but also Chornobyl and Prypyat.

"We All Live Near Chernobyl": The Ecological Components of Consciousness

An epigraph to Shcherbak's story—a quotation from the brothers Strugatsky's novel "Roadside Picnic" (1972)—is associated with such notions as "the Zone" and "stalker" from a primary literary source. A confirmation of semantics of the concepts and their further spread in a culture happened after Andrey Tarkovsky movie "Stalker" (1979), based upon the book by Strugatsky. Yet at the end of 70s of twentieth century the notions were known only by a narrow group of science fiction fans or those who interested in works by Tarkovsky. But after catastrophe on 26 April 1986, while Shcherbak was working on his non-fiction story, the mentioned words became known to almost everybody.

The epigraph could be understood as a manifesto of a model of existence in a technologically insecure world:

> That's all, the Zone! And immediately it gives me cold shivers … Every time the same feelings. I still don't know the reason: either the Zone meets me in such way, or my nerves of stalker were shot. […] A mind is an ability to use the forces of the world around without destroying it. (Shcherbak, *Chornobyl* (a) 19)

In a last sentence the attitude to the nature as supplier of resources become visible. For sure, it is not about a supremacy of men over nature, but at the same time it's not about a partnership and harmonious existence in ecosystem; the usage of

environment is declared. The epigraph to the first part is received as a focus of catastrophic discourse. An appeal to reason activates the rational perception and first of all it associates with a model of catastrophe.

The brothers Strugatsky's novel sounded as a warning but only within limits of fiction. In a documentary story "Chornobyl" a mode of narration has changed. In genre of non-fiction any text represents both as a real-life fact and as a phenomenon of the literary process. Narration is dramatized and associative semantics of the epigraph receives an efficient verbal expression: "Chornobyl explosion brings a mankind in a new phase of development of civilization, the possibility of which intuitively was guessed only by science-fiction writers" (Shcherbak, *Chornobyl* (a) 20).

Documentary narrative has details which not only lend credibility to event but also helps to recreate the chronological order and its "fast" comprehension forthwith. For example, after analyzing the representation in journalistic-speak an explosion of shuttle Challenger and Chornobyl accident, Mark and Carver state that the first event was discussed in much more detail (Mark and Carver).

In "Chornobyl" we read about several views on the matter of an accident, the reasons and chronological order of events, which at the beginning experts considered to be even theoretically impossible. In a second part of a story Shcherbak quotes excerpts from Arkadiy Uskov's diary, who was senior operation engineer at the reactor shop #1 of the first block at the Chornobyl nuclear-power plant. The author refers to his diary as to a document of a high importance. The written form of diary entries differs from oral monologues, which Shcherbak recorded on tapes. A writer notes, that during the process of transcription the oral stories he tried:

> to save a structure of the language, the special aspects of terminology or jargon, intonation of my partners in conversation, editing only if absolutely necessary. It seemed to me very important to save a documentary and nonfictional character of those confessions. I wanted the truth was preserved. (Shcherbak, *Chornobyl* (a) 22)

However, Shcherbak reduces and selects evidence according to his own vision of an accident.

A written narration of a diary was created by Uskov but represents his reception of an accident in different periods of time—in a critical moment and postfactum, that is, it contains the elements of comprehension. A first note records the message about an accident on 26 April 1986 at 3.55 a. m. and express the confusion

and absence of any concrete information. But in a note at 9.20 a. m. a conscious reception of an accident is represented. It characterized by a contrast of catastrophic discourse and image of a seemingly vital and abundant nature, what in general is attributed feature of Shcherbak's documentary story:

> Whereas above the ruins, above this awful invisible danger the generous spring sun is shining. The mind rejects to believe that the worst that ever happened. But it is a reality, a fact. (Shcherbak, *Chornobyl* (c) 19)

The motives of a natural world lost the usual signs, and this meaningfully marks a discourse of catastrophe. The changes in reception of the world around determine a physical and mental health of the narrator:

> Today our girls brought some lilac. They put it in the everyone's ward. The bunch is beautiful! I tried to take a smell; does it smell like a dish soap?! Maybe they decontaminated it with something? They said no. The lilac is real. That my nose refuses to work. The mucous membrane is burnt. (Shcherbak, *Chornobyl* (c) 22)

Unusual details show the irreversible loss of a natural harmony, fill the documentary narrative with apocalyptic pictures:

> He drove us through the Red Forest. The picture is quite fantastic. The pine trees were not rusty red, nor autumnal, nor burnt. The colour was fresh, the tint of yellow. A horrible scene. From top to bottom it was such colour (ibid.)

The idyllic landscapes of the first part of a work are replaced by scenery of ruins:

> It was a desolation of Chornobylian yards, covered with black fallen apples. There were piles of rubbish in the backyards of dormitories—discarded respirators, old things that 'indicate', smashed and ransacked cars with numbers painted on their sides, stacks of yellowed government papers—the remains of forever disappeared 'pre-war' life. And there is a portrait of Brezhnev, which rising high above one of such radioactive dump sites. (Shcherbak, *Chornobyl* (d) 78)

Shcherbak structures a grand-scale vision of a world, in which the accident hap-

pened, with the help of metaphoric images of the world behind a looking-glass, "a long and dangerous journey into antiworld," the last warning.

The metaphor of a last warning is a key for Shcherbak's story. One of the chapters has a name "The Final Warning."The author quotes Volodymyr Vernadsky's words from the letter to his wife from June 2, 1887 about "unknown terrible forces in different bodies" as the first warning to all mankind; and develops it in a context of relatively new concept of omnicide—a total destruction of the human race (Shcherbak, *Chornobyl* (b) 36–37). Shcherbak writes a lot about the origin of a new ecological factor, that relates to the Chornobyl catastrophe. At the same time, he proves in a convincing manner that a matter of industrial safety in general and nuclear-power plants in particular was of a high interest much earlier, since nineteenth century. But people prefer to do not hear such warnings and to choose inertial inaction rather than high level personal responsibility.

By the way, as an epigraph to a story "Chernobyl: the Final Warning" were taken the words of Bertrand Russell and Albert Einstein from their Manifesto (1955) about the consequences of a nuclear war: "[…] consider yourselves only as members of a biological species which has had a remarkable history, and whose disappearance none of us can desire" (Gale and Hauser, *Chernobyl*).

At a moment of an accident the average people know less or almost nothing about a potential danger of the nuclear-power plants for the environment. A discourse about a nuclear industry was featured with an acceptable and pleasant word combination "the peaceful atom."Before the Chornobyl accident a common man believed in a mind that able to manage the highly technological processes. Unfortunately, people still aren't ready to consider themselves as a part of nature and worry about a balance of the natural environment.

Shcherbak's work encourages the mankind to big changes in many spheres, particularly in ecology. In post-Chernobyl world a man must take into account a threat which "does't even have the taste, colour and smell, and only can be measured with special devices" (Shcherbak, *Chornobyl* (a) 20). For surviving, the mankind should rethink own attitude to the environment and start with developing of a new way of thinking.

Donna Haraway writes about the role of metaphors in a process of forming a new paradigm (2). Based on the ideas of Kuhn on paradigms and Mary Hesse concerning metaphor as an intrinsic part of science and its predictivity, Haraway considered the metaphor to be "the vital spirit of a paradigm (or perhaps its basic organizing relation)" (9). Miller and Atherton define that Chornobyl is entwined in "metaphors of abjection, loss, and chaos" (12). So, it is suggestive to investigate the

use of metaphor to direct research and its interpretation. A metaphor of "the final warning" is equally important for works by Shcherbak and Gale. Both authors believed that it would lead to a change of worldview paradigm of a mankind.

Chornobyl as a Stage of Emancipation from Colonial Dependence

The first part of Shcherbak's documentary narrative "Chornobyl" primarily was published in Russian language in 1987 in a literary magazine "Yunost."In Ukrainian translation it was published next year in a literary magazine "Vitchyzna." The second part was published in both issues almost simultaneously at the end of 1988. An author explained the reasons. Only magazine "Yunost" made a special request to write a book about Chornobyl accident. This Russian language issue was very popular and widely read magazine in the USSR and abroad—has an edition of 3,1 million copies. By the way, "Vitchyzna" had just 23 thousand copies. Shcherbak wanted to tell the world about "a real course of events and true dimensions of inational disaster" (Shcherbak, *Chornobyl* (a) 18) as soon as possible. But there is another reason, which was marked by colonial influence: "[…] a breaking mechanism, worked through the years of stagnation."In a foreword, Shcherbak articulates his assurance that it is doubtful that in Ukraine such work could be published. In a consciousness of citizens only Moscow as a center has a privilege to share or conceal any information.

Shcherbak explains it by the fact that the processes of transparency in Ukraine just started in spring 1986. At that time, the censored themes still exist. He writes about the power of government to control and regulate the information: "one thing was allowed in 'the centre', but the other was locally—in a much less degree and of worse quality" (ibid.). So, the discourse about Chornobyl tragedy represents the colonial dependence of Ukraine and proves the beginning of a process of liberation from it.

Almost synchronous with Shcherbak's work, a publication of a documentary story "Chernobyl: The Final Warning" of R. P. Gale and Th. Hauser in the Ukrainian translation in a magazine "Vsesvit" helped to clarify the details of the colonial dependence of Ukraine. In a Foreword to Gale's work, Shcherbak writes that the texts of American authors "expands our understanding of the events happened in the year of 1986" (Gale and Hauser, *Ostannie* (a) 145). A long-term vision of the events from a point of view of the Other helps to observe a common concern and some differences in reception. The texts of both documentary stories are connected with a narration of warning. Not coincidentally, while writing about ecological consciousness in Ukrainian, Sukhenko proves that a degree of awareness of environmental problems is higher in non-fiction literature than in fiction (Sukhenko).

Conclusion

The stories in a genre of non-fiction by Yuriy Shcherbak "Chornobyl" and by Robert Peter Gale and Thomas Hauser "Chernobyl: The Final Warning" represent a reception and comprehension of a global tragedy—the accident on Chornobyl Nuclear power plant. The authors of both texts are at the same time the witnesses and the narrators of stories. And this fact lends a special credence and frankness to the narratives. In Shcherbak's work, the modus of artistic merit is prevailed, it defines his individual style of writing. The author tries to portray the event as detailed as possible, seeks to comprehend its reasons and aftermath. He generalizes his own observations and reports of other witnesses. However, in Gale's narration a fixation of own impressions is prevalent. The parts written by Hauser emphasize a responsibility of a mankind for nuclear energy use.

A key metaphor of ecological problems in both texts is an image of final warning. Shcherbak and Gale reveal its essence with the help of an idyllic worldview in the context of pastoral landscapes. In both texts an importance of understanding the interdependency between man and nature for a sake to avoid further global catastrophes is proved. A development the ecological consciousness and a liberation from colonial dependence are treated as interrelated processes. However, many aspects of Shcherbak's and Gale's works need further research and are waiting for those who care about the lesson of Chornobyl and fate of mankind.

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From the Ministry of Truth to the Filter Bubble: Manipulation of Discourse in *1984* and *The Loudest Voice*

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Abstract In our current socio-political scenario, our perception of the world is influenced by the narratives of facts we consume, mainly from mass media. These narratives constitute a powerful tool in order to manipulate the public's vision of reality. Drawing upon mass communication theories, more specifically, Walter Lippmann's theory of stereotypes and the phenomenon of the "filter bubble," I will provide insight on how this manipulation of existing stereotypes is conducted by an authoritarian political system in George Orwell's masterpiece *1984* (1949), and by mass media in a democratic state in the American TV miniseries *The Loudest Voice in the Room* (2019), in an attempt to control the public's views on diverse political and social issues that are crucial to maintain the *status quo*. With this analysis, I will conclude that both works aim to raise awareness among citizens of the importance of developing critical thinking skills and questioning our existing stereotypes, as well as of maintaining our independence of thought.

Keywords stereotypes; manipulation; narrative; *1984*; *The Loudest Voice*

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Introduction

We live in the age of narrative. In our current society, the public sphere is defined by a massive amount of information, mainly in the form of narrative, which in

many cases overwhelms citizens. Furthermore, the public's perception of the world is not built anymore on events, but on what the people dominating the discourse[1] want us to believe is happening. Politicians control the narrative, they reinforce the narrative, they seize the narrative, they reshape the narrative. In May 2020, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, Isabel Díaz Ayuso, President of the Community of Madrid (Spain), declared: "Hemos sorprendido al mundo. No nos van a robar el relato de la salud ni de la sanidad. Lo que ustedes están pretendiendo es deshacer mi relato." ["We have surprised the world. Our account of health and our health service is not going to be stolen; what you are trying to do is to ruin my narrative" (My translation).] (Caballero par. 1).

Another example of politicians dominating narratives is former President Donald Trump's discourse on COVID-19, a disease he claimed did not exist when the first cases started to appear. What is more, with over 8 million Americans infected, President Trump continued rejecting the advice of his own medical experts, holding mass gatherings (some of them indoors) and avoiding mask use while claiming that there was no reason to worry, as cases were diminishing and there was a cure "right around the corner" (A&S Communications par. 4). In early October 2020, President Trump was diagnosed with COVID-19, along with his wife and several members of his cabinet. He had fallen victim to his own false narrative around the risks of the disease and the way to avoid getting infected.

As we can see in both cases the discourse directed to the public from the establishment domain no longer has the objective of conveying a coherent account of a concrete situation citizens are going through. What is fundamental nowadays in the public sphere is to create a narrative of the events that aligns with the interests of the correspondent political party. What is of utmost importance is that this narrative is first, inspirational, and convincing, and second, as far-reaching as possible, no matter how poorly coherent it is in relation to facts. To sum it up, we are living in a time in which the narrative prevails over facts.

In this vein, the widespread phenomenon of disinformation or fake news,[2] defined as "information that is false and deliberately created to harm a person, social

1 Discourse is used in this paper following the definition of Jünger Link: "an institutionally consolidated concept of speech inasmuch as it determines and consolidates action and thus already exercises power" (Link 60, qtd. in Jäger 32)

2 Fake news is not a recent phenomenon. As Martin Moore observes, "[t]he political, economic, and social motivations for creating fake or highly distorted news have existed since the invention of the printing press" (Moore 5). However, the difference between former instances of disinformation and the current phenomenon is mainly related to its wide and rapid dissemination (Moore 5), taking advantage of the modern means of communication.

group, organisation or country" (Carmi, Yates, Lockley & Pawluczuk par. 3*)*, has become a global concern (Bharali and Goswami 118). Furthermore, the fact that the public is either oblivious to this situation or in other cases incapable of checking to what extent the information they consume is real, is leading us to a society in which citizens tend to look for narratives with which they agree, or at least that espouse a worldview that resonates with our own, leaving little or no possible room for self-criticism and discrepancy and a subsequent loss of independent thought.[1]

Analysts and scholars researching on this issue have recently made George Orwell's *1984* (1949) their leitmotif, insisting on the timelessness and predictive power of the novel. Ironically, Harold Bloom wrote that *1984* threatened to become a period piece, such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (3). Quite the opposite, in this article I will argue that Orwell's novel sheds light on our current socio-political situation. In *1984,* as well as in his essay "Politics and the English Language," Orwell exposed that the control over discourse and language were key for totalitarian states to dominate the society they governed.

Among the topics that have been extensively studied in regard to Orwell's dystopian masterpiece, the analysis of language use and discourse as tools of power have become relevant in our time. In "Politics and the English Language," Orwell (1946) underlined that an accurate use of language was a fundamental factor in the process of political regeneration and critical thinking development. The relevance of the use of language in dominating citizens' worldview becomes explicit in *1984* with the creation of Newspeak, a simplified version of English that would impede citizens from expressing complex thought, becoming, therefore, much more easily controlled.

For the purpose of this article, however, I will focus on the significance of building a single coherent narrative that fits a concrete political agenda for states to manipulate their citizens' way of thinking. I will concentrate on Winston's function within the Ministry of Truth: rewrite history so that it is coherent with the new interests of the Party. It is in this context where the novel is extremely topical, due to the relevance of political narratives in our current socio-political scenario. I will

1 Peter Ellerton explains in this sense that

> [i]t is partly for this reason that the lies of politicians we don't agree with seem like howling inconsistencies—which we post on social media with wicked delight—while the lies of more agreeable politicians are just trifling matters, best overlooked or forgiven. [...] What's more, we actively fight to maintain our narratives in the face of information that could corrupt them. It is often easier to ignore facts, or look for reasons to discount them, than it is to remake our narrative. (Ellerton, *theConversation.com* par. 6, 10)

use Orwell's masterpiece as a basis to examine the same phenomenon in today's society, concretely the control of the narrative in the media as seen in *The Loudest Voice* (2019), an American TV miniseries—based on *The Loudest Voice in the Room*, by Gabriel Sherman—that depicts Roger Ailes as he creates and guides the rise of Fox News. Concretely, I will argue that seventy-six years later, the control of the narrative plays a similar role in our society as in the socio-political scenario described in *1984*, with global authoritarianism on the rise and the prevalence of manipulated narratives tearing at the fabric of democracy.

The proposed analysis of *1984* and *The Loudest Voice* will draw upon public opinion theories, specifically Walter Lippmann's theory of stereotypes, which sheds light upon narrative manipulation and its impact on the public. In addition, the concept of the "filter bubble", defined by tech entrepreneur and internet activist Eli Pariser as a state of intellectual isolation, will also be useful to understand the way in which internet users are being affected in their perception of reality by their use of search engines on the web and feeds on social media.

Narrative Manipulation through the Creation of Stereotypes

The docudrama film *The Social Dilemma* (2020) argues that our conception of the world is deeply influenced by the information we obtain from different sources from the Internet. Interestingly,

> Even two friends who are so close to each other, who have almost the exact same set of friends, they think, "you know," "I'm going to see the news feed on facebook. I'll see the exact same set of updates." But it is not like that at all. They see completely different worlds because they are based on these computers calculating what's perfect for each other. (55:55-56:11)

Therefore, no matter how similar these two imaginary people's profiles are, in the end they will acquire a different narrative of the same events and their idea of reality may differ as a consequence. In this line of thought, the journalist, and media critic Walter Lippmann states: "For almost no two experiences are exactly alike, not even of two children in the same household" (93). Lippmann observes that the media (nowadays we would say mass media) is the main source of information about events for the general public; its role in shaping people's opinion about what happens around them, therefore, becomes highly relevant. Lippmann develops the concept of 'stereotypes', defined as "shifting imitations, replicas, counterfeits, analogies, and distortions in individual minds" (105). It is important to note,

however, that in Lippmann's view stereotypes are not lies, but a "representation of the environment which is in lesser or greater degree made by man himself" (8). As a result, each person models their own reality, with their own conception of events, a vision which turns out to be easily manipulated.

Lippmann divides stereotypes into two categories: social and political. Social stereotypes are formed by what we are taught at educational institutions. Our stereotypes, therefore, will differ depending on the kind of institution we attend or on the teachers we encounter throughout our formal education. Equally important in this sense are the beliefs instilled in us in our family environment, or our social status. All of it together will constitute the foundations of our understanding of the world when we become adults (Lippmann 52).

Regarding political stereotypes, Lippmann argues that our political views are not ideas that pass from generation to generation, as if they were part of our genotype. Simply put, they are not "biological facts" (23). Accordingly, in the process of transmission of these specific stereotypes from parents to their progeny, our education at home becomes of utmost importance in order to adopt a particular political tendency rather than another. It is within the family environment where we learn how to behave, what to believe, being either more inclined to the left or the right politically speaking, being religious or not, etc. (93). At the end of the day, all these stereotypes will make us expect some sort of behaviour from our fellow citizens, as well as making us prone to reading some pieces of information rather than others. As a consequence, citizens always search for ideas that agree with their previously formed stereotypes. In Lippmann's words, "[o]ur stereotyped world is not necessarily the world we should like it to be. It is simply the kind of world we expect it to be. If events correspond there is a sense of familiarity, and we feel we are moving with the movement of events" (104).

In this line of thought, in its role of conveying the news to the public, mass media disseminates concrete stereotypes and in doing so, it influences people's perception of reality. Therefore, "the public perceptions are the "human response" to a picture—a stereotype—that individuals have acquired through mass media" (Valverde and Pérez-Escolar 103). In this sense, Lippmann affirms that "[t]he systems of stereotypes may be the core of our personal tradition, the defenses of our position in society" (95). This argument is directly related to the concept of the "filter bubble," introduced in 2011 by tech entrepreneur and internet activist Eli Pariser. As Bruns (2019) observes, the "filter bubble" is a persistent concept for which Pariser has failed to give a clear definition yet. Whereas Pariser's original conception was primarily applied to search results, nowadays "filter bubbles are more frequently

envisaged as disruptions to information flows in online and especially social media" (Bruns 2). What is more, this theory suggests that

> search engines and social media, together with their recommendation and personalisation algorithms, are centrally culpable for the societal and ideological polarisation experienced in many countries: we no longer encounter a balanced and healthy information diet, but only see information that targets our established interests and reinforces our existing worldviews (Bruns 1).

Following this concept, individuals tend to read those newspapers, join those social media groups, or listen to those radio stations which give them a vision of the events nearest to their worldview, to the stereotypes they have previously built. Tellingly, if the information conveyed differs from what we have previously envisaged (from our stereotypes), we will tend to think this has nothing to do with reality and we will feel deceived. In this sense, Lippmann observes "[n]o wonder, then, that any disturbance of the stereotypes seems like an attack upon the foundations of the universe" (95).

In addition to the public's tendency to accept as true facts those ideas that are closer to their stereotypes, we should also highlight how the public these days does not have the time or does not feel eager to make the effort to think critically, to question their own certainties. In other words, to reconsider that, maybe, the version of the facts that they are more inclined to assume as true might not be what really happened at all, as it may imply re-evaluating their stereotypes. Lippmann calls it "[t]he intolerable burden of thought" (73). He explains that this strain is considered as such "[...] when the conditions make it burdensome. It is no burden when the conditions are favorable" (73). That is to say, applying critical thinking becomes burdensome whenever the narration of the facts we face clashes with our conception of the world.

In this context, it is always easier for the man of today to listen to repetitive mantras, to pay attention just to the words in bold (as we can see today in online newspapers); words highlighted by journalists, reporters, or editors with their political agenda in mind. Hardly ever does the public read the entire piece of news, and therefore, they do not collect all the data necessary to be well informed (Lippmann 73).

In our current society, as Pariser argues, when we receive information through our social networks, it seems highly unlikely to find information that differs from our previously set understanding of the world. The fact is that each and every corner

of cyberspace is programmed by means of algorithms so that we are primarily fed the information we are more inclined to accept (Orlowski 59:41-1:00:02). In this vein, the concept of media and information or digital literacy has become significantly more important in our present socio-political scenario. In order to be responsible and critical in our everyday civic engagement, citizens need to question the information they consume. This includes the ability to understand and use information in different formats from a wide variety of sources, getting narratives which may entail discrepancy regarding our standpoint. It also means approaching news and feeds with an open mind in order to accept ideas that challenge our assumptions and realise that to some extent such information may help us get a perception of facts as accurate as possible. As a result, in this age of information distortions, it is fundamental to examine what kind of skills citizens need to develop their critical thinking and what actions need to be taken. Undoubtedly, as a society, we will not be able to acquire this critical view until we improve our information, media, and digital education. In this line, Lippmann argues:

> For while men are willing to admit that there are two sides to a "question," they do not believe that there are two sides to what they regard as a "fact." And they never do believe it until after long critical education, they are fully conscious of how second-hand and subjective is their apprehension of their social data. (126)

Therefore, it is not only a matter of being literate, in the sense of knowing how to read and write. Actually, as Carmi et al. observe, "there is a need to understand literacy as the skills and competencies in using multiple media via communication technologies and not just the 'written' word" (4). Nowadays, it is fundamental to discern whether or not we are being manipulated through the sometimes overwhelming flow of information we get from mass media. The number of illiterate individuals, digitally speaking, is massive and, as Lippmann argues, "numbers constitute power" (75). In order to face the challenges, the current age poses, it is crucial to see further than what we are liable to believe, "to see first and then define" (Lippmann 81); to discriminate real facts from fake news,[1] and to be able to verify

1 Following the Council of Europe, the term fake news includes two main types of information distortions: on the one hand, dis-information, defined as "information that is false and deliberately created to harm a person, social group, organization or country" *(Wardle and Derakhshan* par. 3*, qtd. in Carmi et al.)*; on the other hand, it also includes the concept of mis-information, defined as "information that is false, but not created with the intention of causing any harm." *(Wardle and Derakhshan* par. 3*, qtd. in Carmi et al.)*

the information we receive, so the public is not so easily manipulated.

Stereotype Creation and Information Manipulation in *1984* and *The Loudest Voice*

Having covered Walter Lippmann's theory of stereotypes together with the concept of the filter bubble as defined by Parisier, in this section, the process of creation and manipulation of stereotypes will be analysed, both in *1984* and *The Loudest Voice.* In these works, those in power—political in the first case and in the field of American cable news television channels in the latter—manipulate existing stereotypes in their respective societies in an attempt to control the public's views on diverse political and social issues that are crucial to reformulate or maintain the *status quo*.

Creation of stereotypes in *1984*

As individuals living in a concrete society and historical time, we allocate meaning to reality in the present, in the past and in the future for which we plan. Therefore, we create social and political stereotypes of reality which are the basis of individual and collective action. As Lippmann states, all these stereotypes are part of the citizens' shared social framework, due to the education received at home and at some other pillars of the educational system, such as schools or religious organizations. Therefore, stereotypes are not inherent to human beings, but apprehended throughout people's lives.

In both *1984* and *The Loudest Voice*, the social and political stereotypes built by the structures in power are key to maintaining the *status quo*. In Orwell's novel, the existent stereotypes revolve around the three main backbones of the totalitarian state: Doublethink, Newspeak and the mutability of the past, the sacred principles of Ingsoc. Ingsoc, that is to say, the Party in power in the authoritarian state depicted in *1984*, aims to modify people's stereotypes through the control of their minds. It simultaneously implies what in the beginning seems to be the formation of a new language, but in the end results in nothing else but a process of simplification and reduction in the lexis of the so-called Oldspeak, the language spoken until the appearance of the Party.

In this way, the population is expected to adhere to the Party's process of building new stereotypes, securing their citizens' support to every new political or social measure the Party wishes to implement, avoiding at the same time any objection. Ultimately, this will be achieved by altering every piece of written information related either to historical or geographical facts, or to literature itself:

> Books, also, were recalled and rewritten again and again, and were invariably reissued without any admission that any alteration had been made. Even the written instructions which Winston received [...] never stated or implied that an act of forgery was to be committed: always the reference was to slips, errors, misprints, or misquotations which it was necessary to put right in the interest of accuracy. (Orwell 47)

Hence, each and every document which could contradict the Party's current stereotypes is modified, in a fluctuating manner and with no apparent reason whatsoever.

All this master plan is carried out within one of the pillars of the Party, the Ministry of Truth and, specifically, the Records Department, in which Winston works. As someone who has known a different life, Winston questions the reason for all this inconsistency within the narrative of the past. He wonders on what grounds he recalls facts from a previous life that do not seem to have taken place, a life which seems not to resemble the present: "Everything had been different then. Even the names of the countries, and their shapes on the map, had been different" (Orwell 37).

In the view of the Party, the fact that Winston has these memories of contrasting stereotypes appears to be a failure, since a total control of every citizen's view of reality is expected. In this vein, Winston states:

> At this moment, for example, in 1984 (if it was 1984), Oceania was at war with Eurasia and in alliance with Eastasia. In no public or private utterance was it ever admitted that the three powers had at any time been grouped along different lines. [...] But that was merely a piece of furtive knowledge which he happened to possess because his memory was not satisfactorily under control. Officially the change of partners had never happened. The enemy of the moment represented absolute evil, and it followed that any past or future arrangement with him was impossible. (Orwell 39)

What is more, Winston illustrates how this control of reality, this doublethinking works. He is impressed by the way the total control over facts alters people's remembrances of the past. He appears to be the only one recalling the existence of previous stereotypes, even after scrutinising the place inquiring the eldest about precedent incidents and circumstances which could coincide with his memory of a past life. Winston becomes aware of how powerful the Party is, how dangerous it is for a few to hold control over the past, and as a consequence the present and the future:

> But where did that knowledge exist? Only in his own consciousness, which in any case must soon be annihilated. And if all others accepted the lie which the party imposed - if all records told the same tale - then the lie passed into history and became truth.'Who controls the past', ran the Party slogan, 'controls the future: who controls the present controls the past'. And yet the past, though of its nature alterable, never had been altered. Whatever was true now was true from everlasting to everlasting. It was simple. All that was needed was an unending series of victories over your memory. 'Reality control', they called it: in Newspeak, 'Doublethink'. (Orwell 40)

In this vein, Winston describes common social stereotypes in the times previous to the Party, stereotypes that are non-existent in the current society dominated by an authoritarian state:

> Tragedy, he perceived, belonged to the ancient time, to a time when there was still privacy, love and friendship, and when the members of a family stood by one another without needing to know the reason." [...] Such things, he saw, could not happen today. Today there were fear, hatred, and pain, but no dignity of emotion, no deep or complex sorrows. (Orwell 35)

Winston claims that back in the old times family members used to support each other, a reality no longer seems to be possible as children are educated by the Party in order to inform against all of those who act contrary to the Party's dictates, no matter whether these offenders are total strangers or belong to their very same family. In Winston's words:

> Nearly all children nowadays were horrible. What was worst of all was that by means of such organizations as the Spies they were systematically turned into ungovernable little savages, and yet this produced in them no tendency to rebel against the discipline of the Party. On the contrary, they adored the Party and everything connected with it. [...] All their ferocity was turned outwards, against the enemies of the State, against foreigners, traitors, saboteurs, thought-criminals. It was almost normal for people over thirty to be frightened of their own children. (Orwell 29)

Therefore, through the annotations of his diary, Winston is denouncing that the

Party's brainwashing is exerting a decisive effect: their manipulation of society through children's reeducation. As a matter of fact, in a relatively short period of time, the Party has accomplished its goal, modifying the stereotypes new generations form so they are more favourable to the Party's interests, and hence condemning to oblivion every single piece of information related with the past, familiar relationships or ancient customs. They have managed to impose a unique way of thinking for the whole population. In this sense, Maleuvre states:

> A single thought-system is a thought-system nonetheless. In truth, Orwell describes a society entirely devoured by ideology: everything in it is political, every thought, every emotion, every action, every twitch is either ideologically conformant or recusant, orthodox or heretical. *1984* depicts ideology triumphant: all life abides by the Party's dictum that reality is an idea, that it has no substance of its own apart from the Party's mind. [...] What the state says exists, is what exists: that is the natural drift, perhaps the political aim, of ideology. (39-40)

All this systematic manipulation is carried out through an extremely complicated process, in which understanding and using "doblethinking" is not easy, as it requires the usage of contradictory, binary opposites[1] as "true" and "lies," "democracy" and "totalitarianism," "remembering" and "forgetting." Yet, the Party performs it acutely and cleverly, with such astuteness that few citizens are aware of what is being generated with this "doublethinking":

> To know and not to know, to be conscious of complete truthfulness while telling carefully constructed lies, to hold simultaneously two opinions which cancelled out, knowing them to be contradictory and believing in both of them, to use logic against logic, to repudiate morality while laying claim to it, to believe that democracy was impossible and that the Party was the guardian of democracy, to forget whatever it was necessary to forget, then to draw it back to memory again at the moment it was needed, and then promptly to forget it again: and above all, to apply the same process to the process itself. That was the ultimate subtlety: consciously to induce unconsciousness, and then, once again, to become unconscious of the act of hypnosis you had just performed. Even to understand the word 'doublethinking' involved the use of

1 According to Yoon, in the authoritarian system dramatised by Orwell in *1984,* any idea that is contradictory in itself is acceptable (129).

> doublethinking. (Orwell 40-41)

Be that as it may, the Party realises that "doublethinking" by itself is not enough. As important as the creation of new stereotypes is, the Party has concluded that not only does the vision of reality need to be changed, but also the way to name it. Winston witnesses the creation of a new language, Newspeak, in which "doublethink" is not the only new word created; there are many more, such as "thoughtcrime" or "minitrue." Actually, Newspeak represents a process of semantic and lexical simplification of English in order to control the train of thought of the inhabitants of Oceania by degrading speech and making it impossible to express complex thought (Xhinaku & Pema 29). Tellingly, Syme, one of Winston's colleagues in the Department of Records, states:

> You think, I dare say, that our chief job is inventing new words. But not a bit of it! We're destroying words - scores of them, hundreds of them, every day. We're cutting the language down to the bone. The Eleventh Edition won't contain a single word that will become obsolete before the year 2050! (Orwell 59)

By means of this mutilation of language the Party establishes just a limited number of words with which the population can express a predetermined set of stereotypes that have already been predicted by the *status quo* with the purpose to restrict the thinking process. In this vein, Syme clarifies to Winston:

> Don't you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought? In the end we shall make thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it. Every concept that can ever be needed, will be expressed by exactly one word, with its meaning rigidly defined and all its subsidiary meaning rubbed out and forgotten. (Orwell 60)

For if there are no words to utter displeasure, to complain about unfair rules and regulations, to fight against laws which are discriminatory, to commit "thoughtcrime," as they existed in Oldspeak, then citizens will remain obedient at home and at their place of work, not even considering any kind of abuse against them is being perpetrated. In connection with this, Wien notes that

> Mainly, we could argue that by disassociating alternate discourse and alternate versions of society from the citizens, the system in *1984* has created what

> Foucault would call "docile" bodies. These 'bodies' would do anything the system demands, precisely in the way the system desires it. In this way, they are no longer individuals with free will, but rather subjects of the system that work to ensure its continued hegemony and social control. (42)

With that control, Symes proclaims: "The whole climate of thought will be different. In fact, there will be no thought, as we understand it now. Orthodoxy means not thinking—not needing to think. Orthodoxy is unconsciousness" (Orwell 61). As a result, a deliberate manipulation of the individual's mind is obtained: "It's merely a question of self-discipline, reality-control. The Revolution will be complete when the language is perfect. Newspeak is Ingsoc and Ingsoc is Newspeak" (Orwell 61).

Finally, once "doublethink" and Newspeak are totally instilled into people's minds, the "mutability of the past" materialises with no effort. This is Winston's biggest preoccupation, the power of the Party to manipulate the past and how to provide proof of that mutable past, how to find another citizen with these same memories.[1] In Winston's words to Julia:

> Do you realize that the past, starting from yesterday, has been actually abolished? If it survives anywhere, it's in a few solid objects with no words attached to them, like that lump of glass there. Already we know almost literally nothing about the Revolution and the years before the Revolution. Every record has been destroyed or falsified, every book has been rewritten, every picture has been repainted, every statue and street and building has been renamed, every date has been altered. And that process is continuing day by day and minute by minute. History has stopped. Nothing exists except an endless present in which the Party is always right. I know, of course, that the past is falsified, but it would never be possible for me to prove it, even when I did the falsification myself. After the thing is done, no evidence ever remains. The only evidence is inside my own mind, and I don't know with any certainty that any other human being shares my memories. (Orwell 178)

In this respect, following Foucault, Tyner states that:

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1 In connection with lost memories, Xhinaku and Pema state that "[s]uch attempts to erase the personal and the collective memory of the people in order to implant in them instead the Party's phoney version of a fabricated past, constitute yet another building block of the total, absolutely controlled society in Oceania" (29).

> For Foucault, power is intimately associated with the production of knowledge. As clearly articulated in *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1979: 27) asserts that power produces knowledge; that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations. [...] Power, thus, is best conceptualized as a force, or a flow." (139)

With former stereotypes consigned to oblivion, no more alteration of historical facts is needed, no more adaptation of literary works, novels, or poetry, in order to contain the new language, the new events, as both, citizens and the Party, concur regarding the existing stereotypes. Following Xhinaku and Pema, "[s]ocial reality has become one homogenous indivisible whole that is fully controlled by the state" (32). The Party's goal is therefore completed.

Manipulation of Stereotypes in *The Loudest Voice*

As analysed in *1984*, the party in control of the political power creates stereotypes that align with its interests so that Oceania's population becomes a homogenous society with a unique worldview. These narrative manipulation tactics are similarly employed by mass media in the TV mini-series *The Loudest Voice* to undermine the US democratic political system and convey to the public views of reality that lead citizens to become a homogeneous whole as well whose opinions align with the agenda of those in power. In this case, the manipulation of the narrative is carried out by the media, concretely by TV programmes broadcast on Fox News. The mini-series depicts Roger Ailes as he creates and guides the rise of Fox News, a cable TV channel that belongs to News Corp, property of Rupert Murdoch. Ailes is an experienced and extremely sharp market analyst who perfectly reads the disconnection between part of the American society and the media in a concrete historical time, the decade of the 1990s, as well as the business opportunity that represents:

> For the last 50 years, the left side of politics in this country has attempted to control the narrative of news. They force fed America with a big government nanny state agenda. And you know what that creates? That creates opportunity. If we're gonna beat CNN, MSNBC, CNBC, we have to have a bond of loyalty. Loyalty to each other, and loyalty to the mission. The mission is to sell to the

> forgotten American that their voice can and will be heard in our Democracy. ("1995" 44:45-45:34)

In the process of creating the new cable channel, Ailes insists on the importance of that bond of loyalty, which will be developed if their audience, those conservative forgotten Americans, can see themselves in a mirror that reflects their opinions and values, that is, their previously formed social and political stereotypes: "We'll get them a vision of the world the way it really is, and the way they want it to be. You know what happens? We reclaim the real America. We challenge the existing agenda and we become the loudest voice" ("1995" 45:37-46:00).

Ironically, whereas he defines himself as "a newsman, first and foremost" ("1995" 11:08) and states that Fox News' first aim is to be objective ("1995" 11:20) (on the screen when first on air we can see the motto: "Fox News. Fair and balanced"), all his decisions are made with a single premise in mind: manipulating his audience's stereotypes. With this purpose in mind, he chooses hosts for the different programs not based on their career as journalists, but on two main features: first, women who are attractive and willing to show their legs: "I like legs. Anybody else like legs?" ("1995" 37:14-37:17). His second option is men with whom the average conservative American citizen can relate. So, contrary to his publicly declared objectiveness, internally his message to his employees is that the key for success is "[g]iving the people what they want, even if they don't know they want it" ("1995" 1:10-1:16). Actually, in a clear attempt to manipulate the public, reinforcing their previous stereotypes without caring whether or not the information conveyed is true, Ailes categorically states: "People don't wanna be informed. They want to believe they are informed" ("1995" 30:50-30:53). This is his main mantra throughout the seven episodes of the mini-series.

Interestingly, in *1984* together with training the citizens' memory, the repetition of the three main slogans of the Party-"War is Peace; Freedom is Slavery; Ignorance is Strength" (Orwell 6)-is the principal technique to control the public's view of reality. This is the main communicative tactic used by Ailes in *The Loudest Voice*. In Ailes' experienced view, repeating messages is the perfect way for the audience to make them part of their ideological schemata, of their social and political stereotypes.

Concerning social stereotypes, in *The Loudest Voice* Roger and Beth Ailes' main aim is to reinforce previously formed ideas of the sector of the American society they address: white, religious and conservative citizens; that is to say, what, in their view, a good American should be, and as an extension, what the USA should

be. Those are the people who are considered to be the real Americans, and those citizens are the ones to whom Fox News' message is directed. No other people, no one who does not consider the flag, family, and God the pillars of their existence should be reckoned as American citizens.

This is made clear in episode 4, "2009," in which Roger and his wife buy *Putnam County News and Recorder*, the local newspaper in Garrison, NY, the town where they live. In this episode, Garrison acts as a synecdoche of the whole country, since, as Roger Ailes states, "Garrison is a microcosm of America" ("2009" 6:56). What is more, Garrison represents a "microcosm" that Ailes intends to use in order "to rebuild America from the ground up" ("2009" 7:05-7:07) in the wake of Obama's first term as President of the USA. The Ailes's hire Joe Lindsley to be the editor-in-chief of *Putnam* due to his strong conservative and religious leanings. Ailes makes him live in his house, makes him dress as he does and feel like part of the family. Most importantly, Ailes gives him his book, *You are the Message*, in order to indoctrinate him, reinforcing his previous stereotypes -the same Ailes intends to do with the rest of conservative Americans through his cable TV channel, Fox News. His objective in doing so is that Lindsley becomes even more conservative than he already is, more religious, unquestionably more American. The editorial line of *Putnam* pursues the defence of those same values, and its main aim is to instil them in the citizens of Garrison. In this sense, Ailes explains to Lindsley that "the people living there [Garrison], [are] liberal, balding hippies. Let's just say, you know, they need to be educated" ("2009" 6:27-6:34). Hence, if they achieve their goal of re-education and imposition of determined stereotypes in a small town, it could also be done in the whole country, gaining, as a result, control over it.

Regarding political stereotypes, numerous are the examples that could be analysed. I will focus on two significant cases. First, in episode three, "2008," with the presidential election looming, Ailes becomes obsessed with Obama and views him as an enemy of American people. In this context, Ailes uses Fox News, already the number one TV cable channel in the country, to smudge Obama's election campaign. Following his strategy of continuously repeating slogans, Ailes decides to use Obama's second name, Hussein, every time the candidate is mentioned on air, in his aim to portray him as someone suspicious, foreign, fearsome ("2008" 16:36). David Axlerod, Obama's campaign manager, meets with Ailes and warns him: "You are stirring up racial hysteria. Fanning conspiracy theories. Calling Obama some kind of Muslim Manchurian candidate" ("2008" 24:09-24:14). Ailes simply answers: "We are reporting the news. Both sides of the story. [...] Don't be so dramatic. If your candidate doesn't like his coverage, tell him he can come on Fox"

("2008" 24:15:24:20).

The second example takes place in episode 2, "2001," which covers the terrorist attacks on September 11 and their immediate socio-political repercussions. Ailes' principal intention is to carry out a double process of manipulation: handling the narrative of the events and guiding American public opinion concerning the country's foreign policy at that historical moment:[1] "I tell you, those dirt bugs, they've got no damn idea what they started. They are gonna get obliterated, crushed. We are gonna turn their fucking cave houses into sand. And Fox News, we've got a big job ahead of us" ("2001" 13:45-14:03).[2] In addition, Ailes sees the attacks as a business opportunity to exploit, turning Fox News into the most viewed cable channel. Even though Murdoch observes this is no time for politics, Ailes insists: "this is way past politics, it's war. [...] This is our time" ("2001" 14:06-14:09).

Ailes' aim is that American citizens align with his views on the events: "This is a war between good and evil, and we...we are not gonna be afraid to call it exactly that. And we should never be afraid of patriotism" ("2001" 25:47-25:58). And as a symbol of such a feeling of patriotism, the American flag needs to achieve growing prominence: "Now, I want all of you to start wearing one of these [pins of the American flag]. You step into a building; you wear a flag. You go on air; you wear a flag" ("2001" 26:00-26:12). In this transformed stereotype of what to be an American is, patriotism equals showing the flag publicly. As analysed before in Orwell's masterpiece, the strategy of repeating messages becomes once again

1 Following its political agenda, Fox News ignored some fundamental facts concerning previous American foreign policy, as Herman points out:

> Following 9/11, the Taliban government was declared to be monstrous and intolerable, even apart from its sheltering bin Laden, and this was the general view in the mainstream media. But here again, it would be hard to find mainstream news reports or commentary recounting these facts: that the Taliban and al Qaeda had been organized and supported by the United States and its allies Saudi Arabia and Pakistan in the 1980s to fight Soviet forces in Afghanistan, and that the United States had backed the Taliban's assumption of power in 1996 because that faction brought "stability" and might make possible the construction of an oil pipeline through Afghanistan. (120)

2 In connection with these same historical facts, Ricks argues what would have been Orwell's standpoint, one quite distant from Ailes':

> Of course, the American government acted in those lethal and intrusive ways in response to the 9/11 attacks. Orwell probably would have roundly denounced those assaults as well as the panicky response of the U.S. government. His guiding light was freedom of conscience—both from government control and from extremists, whether religious or ideological. As he put it, "If liberty means anything at all, it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear" (81).

central in the recent USA socio-political context. Ailes orders that their main slogan, "America at war," be continuously on the screen: "Let's do it like we do sports scores. Keep it moving like it is a Wall Street ticker tape. Update after update" ("2001" 05:04-05:28).

Conclusion

Discourse manipulation and its consequences has become increasingly prominent in today's society due to the constant interaction individuals have with each other through social media. As explained in this paper, the main companies in mass media exert a fundamental influence over the information their users get, leading people to follow just those groups who share their point of view, and fostering, therefore, what Pariser calls "filter bubbles." This is a phenomenon that directly connects with what Lippmann defines as the "burden of thought," that is, the difficulty for human beings to apply critical thinking whenever the narration of the facts clashes with our conception of the world. Much on the contrary, being in contact with all the scopes of reality, being able to dissent from the given narration of events, makes the individual a well-informed, responsible citizen. For that, being digitally and media literacy is key in order to decide what is real and what is false. In addition, in Orwell's view, the analysis of audiovisual and literary works is fundamental, as we can live as free human beings as long as we keep literature alive:

> When Oldspeak had been once and for all superseded, the last link with the past would have been severed. History had already been rewritten, but fragments of the literature of the past survived here and there, imperfectly censored, and so long as one retained one's knowledge of Oldspeak it was possible to read them. (391)

The analysis of the manipulation of stereotypes and discourse in *1984* and *The Loudest Voice* informs on the necessity of fostering societal resilience of manipulated narratives of events and encouraging independence of thought. In this vein, Wien (2012) notes the power of both journalistic and literary texts in helping citizens become actors of change in societies:

> To use Richardson's words regarding journalists, he or she needs to be both "a subject who is produced by society" and "a subject who acts to support or change that society" (29). Journalistic discourse, argues Richardson, is one active element in bringing about such change through shaping understandings,

> influencing audience attitudes and beliefs (particularly through their reinforcement), and transforming the consciousness of those who read and consume it (ibid.). Arguably, we could say this holds true for any discursive practice, including the discourse found in literary texts (28).

It is undoubtful, then, that citizens must overcome that burden of thought in order to fight the manipulation of the narratives that we consume as information. We must become critical, unorthodox individuals, concerned with the information we receive and eager to question our existing stereotypes and abandon our comfort zone, our information bubble. The following years would therefore seem crucial in order to accomplish this objective, which seems essential so as to be human beings able to make informed decisions. Eventually, if we manage to do so, the public will not be taken for granted on the subject of the veracity of facts.

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A Literary Depiction of Honor Killing

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Abstract Women are considered to be the vessel for retaining the family's honor. They are tortured and killed to ensure that the honor is retained. Through this paper I would like to highlight the various issues pertaining to this concept of "honor killing" which is many a times disguised as "honor suicide" by the family involved in this heinous work. Literature as a platform for evoking mass awareness will again help in popularizing this issue by a detailed study of texts like *Burned Alive* by Souad, *Betrayed* by Latifa Ali and Richard Shears and *In The Name of Honor* by Mukhtar Mai. That honor killing is not just a statistical data but entails a much grave ethos with it will be highlighted in this paper. Another important aspect of this paper is to draw attention to these autobiographies for raising social consciousness among the masses including the role played by patriarchy and the extent to which Islam is actually responsible for it, if at all. A detailed peek into the genesis and palliative means of honor killing will also be undertaken.

Keywords women; honor killing; honor suicide; autobiographies; Patriarchy; Islam; social consciousness.

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Introduction

A loving father or a doting brother helping the little girl to take her first steps, dandling her on their knee, making her laugh with silly jokes and tricks and so on is a common sight that we all are accustomed to seeing. But imagine this same loving father or the doting brother suddenly change their affection towards the girl and during one nightmarish reality, advance towards the girl with a gun, knife, rope or even petrol to put an end to her life. Imagine the constant fear with which the girl lives her life. Her murderer is not somebody unknown to her but someone whom she has known all her life, one with whom she is connected emotionally. Her crime does not need to be proved. It can be based on an assumed love affair that she can even be killed. The justification given by her murderers is "HONOR." For the sake of retaining the honor of the family, she loses her life.

Is honor then so superficial that it gets tainted if a girl simply gazes at a boy or talks to him? Is it only the girl's sole responsibility of retaining the honor of the family? What about murder then? Isn't murder a more heinous crime than a simple innocent look at somebody of the opposite sex? What about domestic violence that a girl is regularly subjected to? Or has patriarchy so blinded itself that every action of a girl holds her accountable to a life of extreme agony? All these are issues that need to be thought about and this paper is just an earnest effort to move us from the comfort of our existence and peek into the literature highlighting them. One thing is very clear that there is no "honor" involved in these murders, and that calling them "honor killings" denigrates the sufferer and derogates the ruthlessness of these crimes.

The narratives depict violations of human rights and confront readers with "emotional, often overwhelming, accounts of dehumanization, brutal and violent physical harm, and exploitation" (Smith and Watson 133). These incidents need a platform to be heard as "their scenes of witness entwine the narrator, the story, and the listener/reader in an ethical call to empathic identification and accountability, recognition, and oftentimes action" (Smith, and Watson 134). Schaffer and Smith in Human Rights and Narrated Lives: The Ethics of Recognition (2004) explain what happens when people connect through life narratives:

> As people meet and tell stories, or read stories across cultures, they begin to voice, recognize, and bear witness to a diversity of values, experiences, and ways of imagining a just social world of responding to injustice, inequality, and human suffering. (Schaffer and Smith 1)

Honor Killing and Patriarchy

> I am a girl. A girl must walk fast, head down, as if counting the number of steps she's taking. She may never stray from her path or look up, for if a man catches her eye, the whole village labels her a *charmuta*. If a married neighbor woman, or an old woman, or just anybody sees her out without her mother or her older sister, without her sheep, her bundle of hay or her load of figs, they say, "*Charmuta.*" A girl must be married before she can raise her eyes and look straight ahead, or go into a shop, or pluck her eyebrows and wear jewellery. My mother was married at fourteen. If a girl is still unmarried by that age, the village begins to make fun of her. But a girl must wait her turn in the family to be married. The eldest daughter first, then the others. (Souad 9)

These are the opening lines of Souad's novel *Burned Alive.* This sums up the position of a woman in a tiny village somewhere in the West Bank. The condition of the women seems deplorable as she is held accountable for everything that happens to her. The pride of a man's honor is dependent on the women. So, the man tries his level best to keep the woman in a subservient position by asserting his authority and controlling her sexual desire as he is convinced that she has no control over her sexual passion. The authority of the man is unlimited as he is the lord of the family and asserted the male prerogative of superiority. This sense of superiority enables the man to do anything that he wants to. Souad mentions how she was badly beaten by her father even for a minor fault of picking a green tomato. Bashing the women is an everyday affair:

> I shouldn't say 'I didn't have the right,' because rights do not exist in my country for women. There are customs, that's all. If your father points to a corner of the room and tells you to stay in that corner for the rest of your life, you won't move from there until you die. If your father places an olive in a plate and tells you that today that's all you'll have to eat, you only eat that olive. It is difficult to get out of this role of consenting slave. As a female you're born into it. For all of your childhood, you are taught to be obedient to

> men—by father, mother, brother, and then by your husband. (Souad 79)

The same thought is highlighted by Mukhtar Mai in her memoir, *In The Name of Honor*, when she mentions:

> Half the women of our country are the victims of violence.… They're either forced into marriage, or raped, or used as objects of exchange among men. It doesn't matter what the women think, because they're not supposed to think at all! They're not allowed to learn to read and write, to find out how the world around them works. That's why illiterate women cannot defend themselves: they know nothing about their rights, and words are put into their mouths to sabotage their revolt. (Mai 46)

This highlights the subservient position of women in a place that is ruled by patriarchy. The hypocrisy of the society comes to the forefront when on the one hand women are considered to be fragile creatures requiring protection while on the other, they are deemed as evil creatures from whom the society needs to be protected. Mukhtar Mai has denigrated this strongly:

> What is more serious is that women are the ones exchanged as merchandise to help resolve conflicts and exact punishment. And the punishment is always the same. When sexuality is taboo, when a man's honor in Pakistani society is centered in women, the only solution he can find to settle all scores is compulsory marriage or rape. (Mai 109)

Women are considered the "repository of family honor" (Peratis 5). Patriarchal tribal tradition, thus, puts the onus on the man to protect and control the woman. If he fails to do so, his honor is at stake and can only be redeemed by the death of the woman, a self-administered justice that he believes in. This is termed as "honor killing" where a woman is put to death by a close male family member for any real or assumed "immoral or shameful" acts (Baker 164-184). She might be killed if she does not bleed on her wedding night, if she is spotted talking with an unrelated man behind a fence, or if she is seen leaving a stranger's car. "A woman can be targeted by her family for a variety of reasons, including: refusing to enter in to an arranged marriage, being the victim of a sexual assault, seeking a diverse- even from an abusive husband or committing adultery" (Rout 18). Sexual assault or rape is also considered to be the fault of the woman. As Amnesty International statement notes:

> The regime of honor is unforgiving: women on whom suspicion has fallen are not given an opportunity to defend themselves, and family members have no socially acceptable alternative but to remove the stain on their honor by attacking the woman. (Shora 287)

There is an Arabic expression which says, "A man's honor lies between the legs of a woman" (Hauser 146). Even Sharif Kanaana, professor of anthropology at Birzeit University states that:

> What the men of the family, clan, or tribe seek control of in a patrilineal society is reproductive power. Women for the tribe were considered a factory for making men. The honor killing is not a means to control sexual power or behavior. What's behind it is the issue of fertility, or reproductive power. (Moghissi 126)

Kandiyoti claims that in an Islamic society, femininity is a position that is already assigned but masculinity is something that needs to be achieved and retained. Any misbehavior on the part of the woman can tarnish their manliness. A man's manhood is at stake if he is not able to rectify this error. Hence, he resorts to violence to boost his hurt ego and once again assert his superiority using his physical prowess. This kind of exposition of honor is rooted in the concept of objectifying women as the honor of the family is bestowed on her body. Significantly, manliness and shame are complementary qualities in relation to honor. The women, thus, must have shame if the manliness of the men is not to be dishonored. Violence for the sake of honor occurs in patriarchal societies where priority is given to the man and family. As Fadia Faqir articulates, "The use of violence to maintain privilege is not a neoteric phenomenon, rather it is historically entrenched, and has turned gradually into the systemic and global destruction of women, with the institutionalization of patriarchy over the centuries" (Faqir 65-82). Violence against women has become customary by involving family, society, culture and religion. It has "stemmed from the patriarchal and patrilineal society's interest in maintaining strict control over designated familial power structures" (Stacy 42). Honor crimes are collectively carried out as it is planned by several family members. The murderer commits the murder primarily because he has been asked to do so. They are often public, an aspect "integral to their social functions, which include influencing the conduct of other women" (United Nations 33). Souad mentions:

> Assad was violent like my father. He was a murderer, but in my village that word has no meaning when a woman is killed. It is the duty of the brother, the brother-in-law or the uncle to preserve the family's honor. If the father or mother says to her son, "Your sister has sinned, you must kill her," he does it for the sake of honor and because it is the law. (Souad 48)

Tradition becomes the law. Historically, in some Arab countries under Ottoman rule, a killer would "sprinkle his victim's blood on his clothes and parade through the streets displaying the bloody murder weapon… to increase his honor, thereby attracting community respect rather than condemnation for taking a life" (Kressel 143). Hence, many people do not even recognise that it is a crime. Women, as well, feel that it is a norm and a regular part of family life. Souad mentions:

> We accept beating as natural. No thought of rebellion occurs to us. We know how to cry, hide, lie if necessary to avoid the stick, but to rebel? Never. This is because there is no other place for us to live than in the house of our father or husband. Living alone is inconceivable. (Souad 91)

Even Kate Millet persuasively has opined the same notion when she mentions this vicious cycle:

> We are not accustomed to associate patriarchy with force. So perfect is its system of socialization, so complete the general assent to its values, so long and so universally has it prevailed in human society, that it scarcely seems to require violent implementation ... and yet ... control in patriarchal societies would be imperfect, even inoperable, unless it had the rule of force to rely upon, both in emergencies and as a never-present instrument of intimidation. (Millet 44-45)

Victims of honor killing are buried alive, burned, shot, strangulated, transpierced, and even stoned to death. The UN has estimated that 5,000 women are murdered by family members each year in "honor killings" but according to women's advocacy groups the figure is much higher and could be around 20,000, four times more. Almost a thousand honor killings occur every year in Pakistan alone. This is primarily because there is a huge impediment involving the reporting of these crimes and therefore official statistics are grossly underreported. Latifa Ali narrates

similar incidents:

> Three teenage girls who tried to defy centuries-old traditions by announcing they intended to marry men of their choice were driven into a remote area of Baluchistan and gunned down. While they were not fatally shot, they were thrown, bleeding, into a ditch and then buried alive. Two elderly women who tried to rescue them met with the same fate.
>
> Shortly after reports of that appalling incident reached the West came another tragic story from Pakistan. A girl forced into marriage at the age of nine to a man aged 45, went to court in the Punjabi city of Sahiwal to seek-and win-an annulment. She was now aged 17 and had spent eight years of her childhood as an enslaved wife and mother. As she left the court building she was surrounded by a group of men employed by her parents and shot dead. (Ali 256)

Latifa Ali in her autobiography, *Betrayed*, has mentioned the incident of her cousin who was killed by her own father and husband by pouring gasoline over her and burning her alive. The reality of her husband being into an adulterous relationship was never brought forth but the fact that she talked to men was a crime as it deemed her to be an "easy woman." Honor killing seemed to be a never-ending trend as she mentions the family history of the murdered cousin:

> Her grandmother and her mother had been killed for the same reasons. Reputation. Family pride. Honor. Her crime was that she had stopped to talk to a group of men as she went to a well to fetch water. Idle gossip, rumour-and your life could be destroyed. (Ali 37)

Notwithstanding the issues of class, racial or religious groups, women have always been deemed as the property of the males. The fate of the property is decided by the owner. This has in turn rated women as a commodity meant for the purpose of transactions:

> Whatever the pretext- divorce, supposed adultery, or a settling of accounts among men-women pay the heaviest price. They may be given as compensation for an offense or raped as a form of reprisal by their husbands' enemies. Sometimes, all it takes is for two men to quarrel about something, and one of them will take revenge on the other's wife. The common practice

> in our villages is for men to take justice into their own hands, invoking the principle of "an eye for an eye." It is always a question of honor, and they may do as they please: cut off a woman's nose, burn a sister, rape a neighbor's wife. (Mai 66)

As Puri observes that the three statuses open for women are: that of some man's virgin daughter; another man's pious wife; and the self-sacrificing mother of sons. Women learn that any deviation from rules can trigger violence against them. Mukhtar Mai has also opined the same:

> A woman here has nothing solid to stand on. When she lives with her parents, she does what they want. Once she has joined her husband's household, she follows his orders. When her children are grown, her sons take over, and she belongs to them in the same way. (Mai 78)

This is the kind of "normal" lifestyle that society implants into the psyche of the people to veil their idiosyncratic notion of "honor." Souad, thus, mentions:

> Many girls are beaten, mistreated, strangled, burned, killed. It's normal for us. My mother wanted to poison me to "finish" my brother-in-law's work, and for her this was a normal part of her world. That's what normal life is for women there. You're beaten up, it's normal, you're burned, it's normal, you're mistreated, it's normal. The cow and the sheep as, my father used to say, are worth more than the women. If you don't want to die, you'd better keep quiet, obey, grovel, be a virgin when you're married, and bear sons….If I had lived there, I would have become "normal" like my mother, who suffocated her own children. Maybe I would have killed my daughters. I might have let one burn to death. (Souad 285)

Any kind of sexual assault on women like rape or incest is the fault of the woman and the typical patriarchal society does not discredit men for violating the honor of the woman. It is nothing but the re-victimization of the victim. Women conform to the patriarchal rules probably because the authority exerted by men requires the complete submission of women. Therefore, the gang rape of Mukhtar Mai is a clear example of what was stated as "honor justice." Her autobiography, *In The Name of Honor*, foregrounds a situation of a woman of the peasant Gujar caste in the village of Meerwala. She was gang raped by a powerful local clan known as

the Mastoi. Her rape was primarily a decision taken by the councillors of the Jirga as a punishment for certain indiscretions that were rumoured to be committed by her brother. The reason that was given by her father for selecting her among her other sisters was strange : "Your husband has granted you a divorce, you have no children, you teach the Koran. You are a respectable woman" (Mai 2).

The raped woman becomes a living corpse, a final nail in the already doomed existence that she was subjected to in the hands of the society:

> I, Mukhtaran Bibi, eldest daughter of my father, Ghulam Farid Jat, lose all consciousness of myself, but I will never forget the faces of those animals. For them, a woman is simply an object of possession, honor, or revenge. They marry or rape them according to their conception of tribal pride. They know that a woman humiliated in that way has no other recourse except suicide. They don't even need to use their weapons. Rape kills her. Rape is the ultimate weapon: it shames the other clan forever. (Mai 10)

As Jasam observes, women's compliance and consent are the basis of classic patriarchies. Yasmeen Hassan, author of *The Haven Becomes Hell: A Study of Domestic Violence in Pakistan,* has highlighted the same opinion: "The concepts of women as property and honor are so deeply entrenched in the social, political and economic fabric of Pakistan that the government, for the most part, ignores the daily occurrences of women being killed and maimed by their families" (Hassan 72). Even Amy Logan, who has spent ten years researching about honor killing and has authored a novel titled *The Seven Perfumes of Sacrifice*, is of the opinion that honor violence is first and foremost about cultures who view and treat women as property or inferior. This is a human rights issue—women's rights are human rights. Culture is no excuse for abuse. It's time for all communities in which honor violence occurs, regardless of religion, to start having an honest conversation about it.

The onus of honor killing is not only limited to the men of the patriarchal society. The culpability of the women in this society cannot be negated. The patriarchal society has trained a woman to assess stuffs from a man's perspective. According to a study conducted by Glazer and Abu-Ras, women also play indirect role in promotion of honor killing as they gossip and cast aspersion on the character of the victims which instigate relatives of the victims who resort to killing the victims to redeem the honor of the family. This is a way by which violence against women has been endorsed by both men and women for sustaining the social order in accordance with the laws laid down by patriarchy. Sangari also opines that women

play a dominant role in using this so-called corrective measure as their multilayered identities are rooted in class, caste, and familial notions of status. By accepting these ideologies, the women define their position in society, try to justify their sense of self-worth and ensure economic benefits as they are dependent on the men in their family. Therefore, these rules have set older women against young, rich women against poor, and women associated with grooms against women related to brides. Souad in her autobiography, *Burned Alive*, mentions how her mother had been an accomplice in the murder of her elder sister, Hanan, by her elder brother, Assad. She narrates the incident thus:

> When my parents came home, my mother spoke to Assad. I saw her crying, but I know now she was just pretending: I've come to understand how things happen in my land. I know why they kill girls and how it happens. It is decided at a family meeting and on the fatal day the parents are never present. Only the one who has been chosen to do the killing is with the intended victim. My mother wasn't really crying. She knew why my brother had strangled my sister. If not, why had she gone out that day with my father and Noura? (Souad 46)

In a similar manner was Souad's murder planned by her family, but here the murder was commissioned to her brother-in-law, Hussein. This kind of culture prioritizes honor above the gift of life. Souad's crime was that she had got into a sexual liaison with a man and had got pregnant.

> In my country, a man who has taken a girl's virginity is not guilty, she was willing. And, even worse, she asked for it, provoked the man because she was a whore without honor. I had no defense. My naïveté, my love for him, his promise of marriage, even his first request to my father, nothing counts for anything. In our culture, a man who has self-respect doesn't marry the girl he has deflowered. (Souad 150)

Girls usually know that it's important for them to be a virgin for their future husbands as a blood-stained handkerchief would enhance the pride and prestige of the groom and his family. This tradition has continued for many generations without even recognising that many virgins too do not bleed on their first night. Marital bliss is dependent on the blood-stained handkerchief. Her purity and efficiency as a capable wife depend on this petty thing otherwise she has to live with the constant fear of being thrown out of her in-laws' house or usurped by a second wife. Latifa

Ali narrates how she was fooled into a pre-marital sexual encounter with her betrothed who later had denounced her:

> How skilfully Mikael had taken advantage of me. There was no doubt in my mind that he had not been a virgin. He knew exactly what he was doing. But the male would not be blamed. In Kurdish society I was to learn, it was the woman who would be seen to have done wrong by leading him on. Sex before marriage was haram (totally forbidden) and it was always the woman who was the sinner. (Ali 35)

A similar incident had happened to a girl named Pela. Nobody had bothered to hear her stance: "She was inspected after her death and found to have been killed needlessly. She was still a virgin. Even suspicion was enough to bring about her "honor killing." What a misnomer such deaths were. They were murder, as plain as that" (Ali 242). Only by questioning and confronting these patriarchal mentalities can susceptibility of women to this type of violence be reduced. But what can be seen instead is a rising trend in a different form of societal rectification that is termed as "honor suicide." In this process the families force the girls to commit suicide to restore their family honor and avoiding the danger of sending the male relative to jail. This also helps them to conform to the secular legal code and maintain tradition as well. In Turkey, with a change in the penal code where perpetrators of honor killings are given life sentences, families have opted for an alternative path of "forcing their daughters to commit suicide" or killing them "and disguising the deaths as suicides" (Bilefsky). More than half of the honor killings of women that came to the attention of the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women were made to look like suicides by self-immolation.

Jean Sasson has mentioned that if any member of a family is accidentally killed, the concerned family will receive "blood money." "In Saudi, presently, the payment can be anywhere between 120,000 to 300,000 Saudi riyals ($45,000-80,000) but it automatically becomes half if the person killed is a woman. Besides this the Shari'a states that a murder can be settled by a succession of killings out of vengeance that might keep continuing for generations. Or the victim's family might even murder the murderer" (Sasson 284). Thus, highlighting how petty the worth of a person's life is. Vengeance is justified by the Shari'a, therefore, honor killing becomes a trivial everyday issue. Recknagel has opined that "in countries where they continue to have mitigating circumstances or offenses that allow for the offenders to be pardoned, there is no deterrent and it sends a message to society that

it is ok to kill the women of their families if they breach their honor" (Recknagel).

Ruthlessness of mankind reaches a peak when these murders take place. Latifa Ali's cousin Etab was killed based on a specious rumour of having an affair in the absence of her husband. The manner of her death brings shudders to the ones who hear it: "Like a cave woman, she was dragged by her hair from the vehicle by her father and petrol was poured over her as she knelt in fear. Her father struck a match and threw it on her and as her screams rang out, he bought out a gun and fired a number of bullets into her body" (Ali 183).

The list of this kind of incidents is endless. It's a woe that despite being such a major issue, awareness is still so little. Husseini believes the reason why these killings have received little to no attention lies behind the fact that "they are all too often disguised as a traditional or cultural practice which has to be respected and accepted by everyone" (Husseini 22). Judith Butler's *Precarious Life* (2004) tries to comprehend "what counts as a livable life and a grievable death" (xiv-xv). A girl who is born in such a society is not considered human and so it becomes convenient to efface her. As Butler puts it: "there have been no lives, and no losses; there has been no common bodily condition" (Butler 36), and therefore, she is not counted as a human. When a life is not grievable because it is not human, it becomes "already the unburied, if not the unburiable" (Butler 34).

Honor Killing and Islam

Matthew A. Goldstein has noted that honor killings were encouraged in ancient Rome, where male family members who did not take action against the female adulterers in their families were "actively persecuted." Roman law also made it permissible for a husband to kill his wife if he caught her in adultery, but not vice versa. (Goldstein 28-37). Latifa Ali mentions:

> If adultery by the wife was concerned it could be quickly settled with a bullet in her head and if it was adultery by the husband and he wanted to start a new life with another woman, the deserted wife's family would have to receive compensation. That way, any shame would be "bought off." Thus, emphasizing the concept of considering the woman as a property. (Ali 70)

In Europe, the practice of honor killing started during medieval period. In the Arab countries, brutal murder of women was common during early days of ignorance. In Pakistan, it is believed that the Arab settlers brought the tradition of burying girl child.

There is a prevalent opinion that honor killings are sanctioned by Islam. Aysan Sev'er and Gokçeçiçek Yurdukul report in their research that family members of victims of honor killings "and the actual killers invoke a cultural understanding of honor rather than a religious one" when justifying honor killings and conclude that "any connection between Islam and this heinous crime is by no means clear or direct" (Sev'er &Yurdukul 978). Culture and religion have become so synonymously intertwined that many cultural acts are wrongly interpreted to be religious. If honor killing is solely an Islamic practice then how come it is practiced by people following other religions as well. The phenomenon is in any case a global one. According to Stephanie Nebehay, such killings "have been reported in Bangladesh, Britain, Brazil, Ecuador, Egypt, India, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Pakistan, Morocco, Sweden, Turkey and Uganda" (Nebehay). Afghanistan, where the practice is condoned under the rule of the fundamentalist Taliban movement, can be added to the list, along with Iraq and Iran. "If you go to an Afghan village and ask a woman who has not been to school and has no education about her Islamic rights, she would probably tell you about all the traditional rules that she has followed and that her mother, her grandmother and aunties have always followed. Information about Islamic rights and the law of the country is very limited" (Kargar 184). This is the basic reason behind considering honor killing as Islamic as people are not aware of their rights.

The ambiguity is primarily created by the imams who consider themselves as the supreme interpreter of the Qur'an. Although not Islamic, yet we find a tacit acceptance of honor killing in the Muslim world and by Islamic clerics. Sheikh 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Khayyat, a former Jordanian minister of religious affairs (*awqaf*), issued a *fatwa* (Islamic religious ruling) stating that sharia does not grant a wife the right to murder her husband if he is into an adulterous relationship. This, as Khayyat explained, is not an offence against the family's honor but against the couple's marital life, and the utmost thing that the wife can do is to file for divorce. Another Jordanian law-maker, 'Abd al-Baqi Qammu, explained: "Whether we like it or not, women are not equal to men in Islam. Adulterous women are much worse than adulterous men, because women determine the lineage" (Feldner 41-50).

Rand Abdel-Qadar was killed by her father in Basra, Iraq, when she was seventeen years old. She was ostensibly thought to have fallen in love with a British soldier who was deployed there. The local officials opined that, "Not much can be done when we have an honor killing case. You are in a Muslim society and women should live under religious laws" (Mojab 138). Leyla Pervizat states that religious leaders unequivocally "denounce the practice" of honor killings and quotes a

conservative Muslim tribal leader saying, "This is honor, what has that got to do with the Qur'an?" however this imam continued with the statement that "men's honor comes before the [Qur'an]" (Mojab 138).

The Qur'an says: "Husbands should take good care of their wives, with [the bounties] God has given to some more than others and with what they spend out of their own money. Righteous wives are devout and guard what God would have them guard in their husbands' absence. If you fear high handedness from your wives, remind them [of the teachings of God], then ignore them when you go to bed, then hit them…" (Qur'an 4:34.).

Once it was told that women have become emboldened towards their husbands the prophet Muhammad gave permission to beat them. On Egyptian television during a 2010 talk show, a Muslim cleric, Sa'd Arafat, reviewed the rules for beating one's wife. He began by saying, "Allah honored wives by installing the punishment of beating" (Arafat).

Honor killings were practiced much before Islam and are not consistent with the Qur'an. Many people follow their religious beliefs based on the hadith and numerous commentaries which involved the rapid Islamisation of a variety of different populations whose "cultures, customs, and institutions" were integrated into Islamic cultural and religious practices (Ahmed 81). Some of these customs, such as a strongly patriarchal social structure and honor-based value system, became so interwoven with Islamic religious traditions that they are frequently viewed as central elements of Islam despite the fact that they were not established in the Qur'an (Ahmed 86). Many Muslims believe men are favored over women in Islam and explicitly equate "God with husbands" to the extent that they believe "ingratitude to a husband is like ingratitude to God" (Barlas 108). From this premise, it is clear why many Muslims attach religious significance to male honor and consider women who disobey their husbands or fathers to have committed a religious as well as social crime. Honor killings are thus considered religiously sanctioned in traditional communities because a woman who had damaged her family's honor is also guilty of dishonoring God. But the truth largely remains what has been stated by Sheikh Atiyyah Saqr, former head of the al-Azhar University Fatwa Committee:

> Like all other religions, Islam strictly prohibits murder and killing without legal justification. Allah, Most High, says, "Whoso slayeth a believer of set purpose, his reward is Hell for ever. Allah is wroth against him and He hath cursed him and prepared for him an awful doom." (An-Nisa': 93) The so-called "honor killing" is based on ignorance and disregard of morals and laws, which cannot

be abolished except by disciplinary punishments. (Kroslak)

Latifa Ali has stated: "How wrong it had been, not only to kill one so young and lovely, but to take a life when the Koran makes it clear that it is wrong to kill something we have not created. No-one can show themselves to be greater than God, the Muslim Holy Book teaches" (Ali 37).

Resurrection of the Dead

So, are anger and retribution emotions exclusively meant for men? What should be thought about is the issue that if men consider women to be the vessel retaining their honor then why do they try to kill or rape their honor? What are the constraints in the path of a woman that forbids her to avenge her wrong? "I could buy a gun myself, or some acid that I could throw into their eyes to blind them. I could … but I am only a woman, and we have no money. We haven't the right to have any! Men have the monopoly on vengeance, which passes through violence inflicted upon women" (Mai 19).

After Souad's horrendous experience she preferred death over her suffering and humiliation. Her situation accentuates the torture meted out to women because of the simple reason that they are women. The site of violence is the body of the woman. Girls like Souad can attain salvation when humanitarian organisations take extraordinary pains to assist them. In case of Souad, Jacqueline acted as her messiah. She represented an organisation called Terre des Hommes, directed by Edmond Kaiser. Their work is done in collaboration with the International Red Cross and other organisations. Jacqueline had a really hard time in convincing the doctor to help her shift Souad to a better hospital. But things could not proceed without the permission of her family who wanted her dead. She persuaded her family with the lie that Souad was about to die and it was in the best of their interest if she died in a different place far away from her family. Thus, after a lot of legal hassles and a few stops here and there, Souad attained liberation in Geneva, Switzerland.

In Geneva, after her nursing, Jacqueline helped her to be adopted by her foster parents. With the passing of years, she got married and had kids. Her life, like her body, was cured. But what remained behind were the eternal scars like her irreparable memory of the incident that had led to those scars, not to forget the trauma as well. She is now working with an organisation called Surgir that works internationally to help women who are victims of various kinds of atrocities. The progress might be slow but steady. Her efforts and victory can be summed up in the following lines:

> Little by little, the authorities are recognizing these acts as criminal. Statistics are published in the reports of the Human Rights Commission in Pakistan…. In recent years, authorities like the late King Hussein of Jordan and the late King Hassan of Morocco have declared themselves openly against honor crimes, which they have said "are not crimes of honor but of dishonor." (Souad 299)

Latifa Ali's liberators were the American soldiers who were posted in Dohuk, Iraq. They took the onus of her relocation by devising arrangements with the Australian Embassy, making them understand her situation. The Australian Embassy then provided her with the emergency travel documents as her original ones were confiscated by her mother. Despite various obstacles created by many officials, she was finally able to be on her way home to Sydney, after 1093 days. Their good work confirms our lost faith in humanity.

Mukhtar Mai opts for the legal institution to seek justice for the wrong administered to her. But it required a great determination to realise that one had to fight for justice against all odds. The orthodox conviction is that the woman who has been shamed should either commit suicide or bury herself alive. But Mukhtar Mai decided to confront: "So, in order to fight, it seems that I must lose everything: my reputation, my honor, everything that was once my life. But that's not important. I want justice" (Mai 50).

The local police officers try their level best by threatening Mukhtar and putting words into her mouth to concoct a different story to save the influential accused men. Luckily for her, the judge and the press had helped her achieve vindication by sentencing the accused to death penalty. But luck doesn't favour a woman and on 3 March 2005 the verdict of the Lahore High Court released five of the accused and sentenced one to life imprisonment. With the aid of various organisations, she travels abroad to spread awareness regarding the issues related to the violence that is meted out to women. On 15 June 2005, Parvez Musharraf, the then prime minister of Pakistan, put her name on the Exit-Control List to bar her from leaving the country. On 21 April 2011, the Supreme Court also voiced the Lahore High Court's judgment. Hina Jilani, one of the founders of AGHS Legal Aid Cell, argues cases in the supreme courts in both Lahore and Islamabad, blames the president for protecting and influencing criminal investigations against the accused. According to her: "If the condition of women is improving a little, that doesn't have anything to do with the authorities. Any progress is due in large measure to civil society and to organizations supporting women's rights. Such people have risked their lives to

attain their goals! For years, we have been the targets of serious threats and constant pressure" (Mai 140).

Conclusion

In conclusion, I do strongly believe that these novels can change the cultural values and traditions in societies that give so much of importance to honor-based crimes. The modern novel is viewed as "well suited to the exploration of social ideas and social protest". (Johnson and Johnson vii) So, the phoenix will surely rise again from its own pyre. Similarly, the fire used to burn the woman will purge the woman of all the sins that she has committed. Her sins like her skin will melt down and there will be a new aura in her demeanor. The aura will not be to please others, but it will be the one that will give her a new identity that is solely her own and is not dependent on any man in her life. Her sins of being a naïve, uneducated, agreeable, docile lady will also be burned off. What fills her now is outrage and the desire to have justice, the virulence against patriarchy. "Before, I had lived in absolute submission; now, my rebellion will be equally relentless" (Mai 31).

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Surviving Homophobia, Resisting Heteronormativity: India and Himanjali Sankar's *Talking of Muskaan*

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Abstract This paper critically engages in exploring the normalising mechanisms of heteronormativity and the impending homophobia that recurs in Himanjali Sankar's *Talking of Muskaan* (2014). Sex, sexuality and gender have always been a subject of much debate. Homosexuality, as a possible form of sexuality, has never been accepted rather individuals who indulged in such "nefarious" acts were ostracised, shamed, and even killed. The dominant heteronormative culture and assertion of heterosexuality in spaces—both geographic and social space exclude as well as negate the presence of alternative sexualities. From being a sin to a pathological abnormality, homosexuality or any other queer expression remain under the watchful eyes of society. As a result, queer individuals reside in the extreme edge of marginalisation cobwebbed with fear, panic, anxiety, identity crisis and self-alienation. However, with recent critical approaches and advancements in the field of gender, sexuality and study of identity, the fluidity of our being has gained new insights and paved new doors for further discussion. Worthy of being mentioned, Judith Butler's notion of gender performativity and Michel Foucault's linking of sexuality to power and knowledge, notably, revolutionised the field of Gender and Sexuality Studies. Following Butler and Foucault, the paper will study the construction of the homophobic discourse and the psychological affects of normalising heterosexuality and gender roles. Apart from this, the paper examines how bullying and shame serve as passive yet penetrating weapons of the heterosexual society towards non-conforming individuals. Therefore, the paper endeavours to shed light on the survival strategies, as evident in the novel, while offering critical insights into the plight of queer individuals in India today.

Keywords heteronormativity; homophobia; homosexuality; queer; *Talking of*

Muskaan; India

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Introduction

While India, as a land of diversity and remarkable histories, has come a long way along with recent scientific and technological advancements yet the status of homosexuality, also keeping in mind the case of marginalized alternative sexualities, remains a matter of concern and immediate attention. The major problem regarding homosexuality and its unacceptability, in the Indian context, lies in the shifts of narratives, influenced largely by religion and politics, that inevitably fail to uncover India's homosexual history and undeniable presence. In this context, *Same-Sex Love in India: A Literary History* (2000) by two notable scholars, Ruth Vanita and Saleem Kidwai, trace the uncharted history of alternative sexualities in ancient, medieval and modern times, depicting and uncovering its presence. Nevertheless with the coming of new critical approaches, understanding and recognition in the field of gender and sexualities along with resisting voices from homosexuals resulted in the proliferation of discourses about homosexuality, and literatures that openly dealt with homosexuality. However, it is pertinent to note that literature dealing with homosexuality and more precisely with lesbian issues in India are marginal as compared to the larger domain of English literature. Following this line of argument, the present paper attempts a queer reading of Himanjali Sankar's *Talking of Muskaan* (2014) and endeavors to portray both the rigid homophobic as well as changing societal attitude towards people of same-sex in the novel as well as in the present times. The ongoing meta-narrative which situates heterosexuality as the natural while discarding other forms of sexualities demand critical intervention in

understanding the mechanisms and agencies of such heteronormative construct. The following paper seeks to identifying the heterosexual agencies and reading critically the penetrative functioning of heterosexuality which further establishes itself as the standard form, also, norm of sexuality. One of the purposes of the paper is also to bring forth the argument of sexuality as being a fluid entity and not something which is given as the essentialists argue. It is a truth which most Indians would agree that they are homophobic, yet the paper tends to show homophobia, largely, as a result of the ever-present, thriving heterosexuality. In addition, the paper attempts to fill in the misunderstanding gap towards homosexuality as a disease or an import of the Western civilization while emphasizing on the much needed support and recognition to alternative sexualities. Before delving further into the argument, the paper, no doubt, is a case for homosexuality, its cause and recognition yet "queer" as an all-inclusive umbrella term will be used interchangeably for both homosexuality and lesbianism.

Undoing Norms

In any given society, "norms" have always worked to build and shape subjects accordingly, adhering to a certain set of fixed functions. The "norms" predominate our lives, dictate us and construct ourselves as human beings. To state further, normalising norms and situating ourselves within the cobweb of norms make us, what Louis Althusser propounded, "interpellated" creatures. While norms have become an intrinsic part of our lives, its overarching seriousness has devastating effects on our understanding of sex, gender, and sexuality. The twentieth century marked a significant upsurge in negotiating and deconstructing such construction of norms. In this regard, Michel Foucault may be considered as a pioneer whose groundbreaking works such as *History of Sexuality*, *Madness and Civilisation*, *Archaeology of Knowledge,* et cetera have made consequential and critical interventions to explore how "norms" and institutional mechanisms function to constitute and construct subjects.

Traditionally, sexuality is viewed as a natural feature of human life, an innate mechanism or system. On the contrary, Foucault is of the view that sexuality does not merely mean the natural expression of some inner desire or drive. Foucault argues that our perception or belief of sexuality as a natural feature or phenomenon and a fact of our human lives are nothing but a formulation; a constructed category of experience which has less to do with our biological roots but more with our historical, social and cultural origins (Spargo 12). Though he did not rule out the biological dimension to sexuality, his focus was more on the active and crucial role

of institutions and how an idea of sexuality was formed or constructed through discourses. The same was echoed by Judith Butler, who was heavily influenced by the works of Foucault. Her views on the man/woman binary and the construction of gender norms through incessant performances of gender roles is a critical and insightful revelation. Judith Butler accentuates this in *Undoing Gender* (2004) by saying,

> If gender is a kind of a doing, an incessant activity performed, in part, without one's knowing and without one's willing, it is not for that reason automatic or mechanical. On the contrary, it is a practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint. Moreover, one does not "do" one's gender alone. One is always "doing" with or for another, even if the other is only imaginary. What I call my "own" gender appears perhaps at times as something that I author or, indeed, own. But the terms that make up one's own gender are, from the start, outside oneself, beyond oneself in a sociality that has no single author (and that radically contests the notion of authorship itself). (1)

Taking cues from deconstruction, she rejects and questions the essentialist approach of defining gender and sexuality based on specific acts and performances. In another essay titled "Imitation and Gender Insubordination" (1993), Butler discusses at length to what it means to be a "homosexual," the politics around this term, and the loopholes of categorising ourselves in an identity. Butler finds it problematic to identify oneself as a lesbian. The affirmation of such identity categories, she believes, "tend to be instruments of regulatory regimes" (308), which proliferates the continuation of heterosexuality discourse and homophobia. Such categorisation encloses one's sexuality within a very limited circle of expression and negates the fluidity of a being. While talking about sexual identity, she argues that heterosexual identity, which is considered as "natural" and "authentic," signifies nothing but a string of performances repeatedly performed, thereby making one heterosexual. Butler further opines that sexual categories like gender categories are agents/mechanisms of repressive discourse that validates heterosexuality as the norm (309). One of the most striking claims of Butler is her take on gender as well as sexuality of being a performative constituent, and which can be repeatedly enacted to make it authentic; the norm.

Therefore, this is where queer intervenes—the breaker of norms. As a fluid and uncategorised entity, queer challenges the natural/norm concept and questions the ever-penetrative heterosexuality/heteronormativity. However, strikingly, in an essay

titled "Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities" (1991), Teresa de Lauretis provides three significant critical insights to queer. To paraphrase de Lauretis, queer is the denial of the benchmark of heterosexuality as the norm for all sexuality; it is also an awareness or attentiveness to gender, capable of interrogating all the said assumptions that homosexuality, gay and lesbian studies are a single, homogenous object, and queer is also a determined force to show how race crucially shapes and forms sexual subjectivities in not one but multiple ways. These threefold critiques under the umbrella of queer theory identify ways "to recast or reinvent the terms of our sexualities, to construct another discursive horizon, another way of thinking the sexual" (4).

Talking of Muskaan and Internalised Homophobia/Heteronormativity

Talking of Muskaan (2014) by Himanjali Sankar depicts the story of a teenage girl named Muskaan, who happens to be a "misfit," a "non-conforming" individual. As a homosexual, she struggles to cope with the inevitable heterosexual/heteronormative surroundings. She finds herself amidst the "Sisyphean" task of asserting her "self." While the novel highlights the homophobic attitude towards Muskaan and her survival strategy, yet fluidity of sexuality and "naturalisation" of the hetero-patriarchal mindset are also explored through the other characters in the novel. Talking about heterosexuality, human society has always validated heterosexual relations as an "innate" and "natural" phenomenon. Any deviation from this standard form of sexuality is taken as a sin; an abnormal creature who needs to be punished and "straightened." As Jimmie Manning in *Heterosexuality* (2009), rightly points out, "Heterosexuality is so successfully established as normal and natural in everyday communication that the notion of homosexuality does not really exist in the minds of most people, especially as a sexual orientation for oneself" (3).

The story unfolds as a "normal" beginning with the news of Muskaan being hospitalised for her unsuccessful attempt to suicide. Her school friends seem worried and had no idea about what evil spirit has caught hold of Muskaan. However, every one of them, all these hetero-patriarchal institutions—friends, school, family, society were against Muskaan and her non-conforming behavior. A society where heteronormativity is the norm, any form of deviance is seen as "unnatural." Noted critics Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner reiterates the same,

> Heteronormativity is more than ideology, or prejudice, or phobia against gays and lesbians; it is produced in almost every aspect of the forms and arrangements of social life: nationality, the state, and the law; commerce;

> medicine; and education; as well as in the conventions and affects of narrativity, romance, and other protected spaces of culture. ("Sex in Public" 554-555)

Therefore, Muskaan's attempt to suicide reflects the failure of her friends, the school, and society in accepting Muskaan and her choices. It is crucial to note that only if her school and her friends have been accepting, Muskaan would be a "normal" girl like others. This failure on their side is best revealed when Mrs. Jagganathan, the Principal, says to her friends, "I'm waiting for her parents to call me. You are her best friends. We need to understand what was bothering Muskaan. And help her" (Sankar 5).

As the novel proceeds, the first section, "Five Months Earlier," shuffles back in time to the moment where Muskaan and her friends were hanging out together. This section begins with the gang of girls doing "normal" girly things. The group is keen to perform waxing on the bodies of Muskaan and her friend Srinjini; those who have never removed their body hairs. The normalising of waxing as a necessary element for girls, along with the idea of gender performativity and Muskaan's struggle as a non-conforming individual, reflect the hetero-patriarchal mindset as well as the lurking heteronormativity. The "straightening" of the "misfit" Muskaan was about to begin, and Aaliya, her close friend, says, "Stop being macho girl, Muskaan. Give up. Today the makeover begins" (Sankar 14). These instances reveal how several acts are meant for one gender, and performances of those acts make one a man/woman. In this regard, Simone de Beauvoir, in her magnum opus *The Second Sex* (1997) rightly pointed out, "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman" (283). While everyone in the group was excited about this "sacred event," Muskaan felt uncomfortable. At one point, Muskaan confesses, "Don't expect me to act all excited. I'm here because of you guys. I'm not all gung ho about this" (Sankar 15). For all her friends, waxing their body makes them attractive. This is best highlighted when Divya compliments Srinjini's waxing and reckons how her boyfriend Imran would be amazed to see her. Such constructed "norms" act as agents of gender and sexuality roles in society. Muskaan struggles to survive with her own choice within her friends and society. When she decides to leave without waxing, her friends gang up on her, trying their best to "normalise" Muskaan. Finally, Muskaan leaves this "role assigning" ritual, and Srinjini declares, "Something is seriously wrong with her" (Sankar 19).

In a heteronormative society, family plays a crucial role in validating heterosexuality, labeling non-conforming individuals and homosexuals as

"abnormal" and a severe threat to the heterosexual institution. During the waxing incident, Divya reveals that it was Muskaan's mother who wanted Muskaan waxed. Her mother has always been insisting her to "wax your legs, wear a bra, check out that cute guy" (Sankar 18). According to Butler, such impulses construct our gender and sexual identity. She argues that heterosexual identity, which is considered as "natural" and "authentic," is nothing but a string of performances repeatedly performed, thereby making one heterosexual (Abelove et al. 314-316). Talking about family and heteronormativity, Prateek and his family is the prototype for the heteropatriarchal system that lies buried deep inside us. Several instances in the novel highlight how Prateek's "Tauji" and his dad are the ever-lurking patriarch that does not want any deviant individual/act to threaten the proud structure of hetero-patriarchy. This homophobic attitude is very much reflected in Prateek's actions and his views regarding Muskaan. He finds her weird, out of sorts, and an embarrassment to the society. In *The Trouble With Normal* (1999), Michael Warner critically situates the family in inititating heteronormative world views to a certain extent:

> Almost all children grow up in families that think of themselves and all their members as heterosexual, and for some children this produces a profound and nameless estrangement, a sense of inner secrets and hidden shame. No amount of adult "acceptance" or progress in civil rights is likely to eliminate this experience of queerness for many children and adolescents. Later in life, they will be told that they are "closeted," as though they have been telling lies. They bear a special burden of disclosure. (8)

One of the prominent inclusions in the novel is the Supreme Court's verdict on homosexuality as an offense and unlawful act in the year 2013. It is to be noted that Section 377 of the IPC had already been decriminalised in the year 2009 by the Delhi High Court. The novel captures the 2013 verdict and portrays the attitude of the society regarding homosexuality. The homophobic culture is clearly mirrored through the celebration of the coming back of Section 377. Prateek is "glad about the Supreme Court ruling," and his parents feel that "in spite of the rogue elements our country was still on the right track" (Sankar 121). As homosexuals, Section 377 was a curse, whereas, for the society (heterosexuals), it was a celebration of "normality." A society, which is largely heterosexual and believes in man/woman binary, is not at all concerned with such laws. Subhojoy's sister exposes the heterosexual hypocrisy and attitude towards such law and homosexuals only for

their personal gains. According to him, his sister wanted to know more about the news only because she had a debate about Section 377. It is revealed that even his father was disinterested in watching the news. Subhojoy reckons,

> Tonight my sister wanted to watch the news. She explained about Section 377 to my father. Since she is doing sociology in college she said the debate around 377 was relevant for her. My father laughed and said all these things do not touch our lives, homosexuality and the laws on it. But he watched with my sister, and I joined them after finishing my homework. I thought about Muskaan. I hoped she was not watching this. (Sankar 126)

However, Aaliya's mother felt terrible and considered this judgement as "a black day for Indian democracy" (Sankar 131). While being a part of the society, she accepted the homosexuals as equal beings who had every right to decide whom they love. This attitude of sympathy is later interrogated by Aaliya, which brings forth several questions about being straight and living in an elevated space as compared to the tormented non-conforming individuals. Aaliya retorts,

> Ma belonged. So did Dad. They were so entrenched in it all. And it is elegant and nice to ask interesting questions when you belonged. But if you didn't? Then did you rave and rant at society? Or did you just wish you belonged? (Sankar 135)

On a serious note, the institutions of heterosexuality and heteronormativity have already caught minds in the cobweb of the homophobic discourse. The immortal claim that man-woman relationship is the norm and any other deviance from sexual, as well as gender roles, is a crime that has been cemented deep into the societal structure. Family, society, and laws validate this argument to a more considerable extent, whereby non-conforming individuals are always shamed. All these mechanisms result in Aaliya calling Muskaan a criminal blatantly, which eventually leads to Muskaan attempting suicide.

In the present scenario, on September 6, 2018, in the Navtej Singh Johar Judgement, Section 377 has been decriminalized by a five-judge bench of the Supreme Court of India. However, the much enduring question of whether the decriminalization has done any good or if the societal attitude towards homosexuality or queer individuals has changed remains. While the answer to this question varies yet most of the queer individuals emphasize on the sense of

unbelongingness they experience in the society till date. Numerous reports of suicides, even after the historic decriminalization, of such queer individuals provide a clear picture of the deeply buried homophobia and detestment towards queer community. In the novel, Muskaan's attempt to suicide is not caused by a single event but the life-long incessant bullying, public shaming and unacceptability of her "being." Anirudh G, a notable social worker and human rights activist claims:

> One of the things that the Section 377 judgement has done unfortunately, is that it has fragmented the queer movement. Because it was something that the various identities within the queer community could rally behind. Now that the law has been read down, people, who are on the more privileged end, don't want to engage in any of the fights on gender and sexuality. (Narrain 2019)

Therefore, the striking down of Section 377, as the authors would argue, does not open up ways to liberate one's sexuality or gender expressions but entangles it in a more heteronormative structure that allows regulation and confinement.

Coming Out

In "Imitation and Gender Insubordination" (1993) Judith Butler situates the idea of "coming out" in a critical position. It is crucial to understand that "coming out" remains, for the so-called deviant individuals, a significant political as well as social step or achievement. On the contrary, Butler is critical of this very concept and notes that there are risks involved in it. She questions whether those individuals who have come out are free of any subjection or oppression and finally in the clear. Butler opines,

> Conventionally, one comes out of the closet (and yet, how often it is the case that we are "outted" when we are young and without resources?); so we are out of the closet, but into what? What new unbounded spatiality? The room, the den, the attic, the basement, the house, the bar, the university, some new enclosure whose door, like Kafka's door, produces the expectation of fresh air and a light of illumination that never arrives? (309)

Section II, "An Attempt at Understanding," unfolds the "coming out" of Muskaan's homosexuality to her best friend, Aaliya. While Muskaan has always been seen as a weird, strange, and odd girl by her friends, Aaliya seems the only friend who happens to understand her. As an "unnatural" being, Muskaan appears to be

struggling hard to survive in this heteronormative society. She is seen continuously trying to make her close ones understand how one may not like waxing or a person from the opposite sex. According to Muskaan, her friends and family were the heteronormative agents, and they went after her "like a pack of howling hyenas." (Sankar 40)

The "treehouse kiss" between Muskaan and Aaliya is one of the most defining moments in the novel. After they had shared the kiss, both Muskaan and Aaliya were happily sitting together, holding hands. While moments later, Aaliya was shocked that they had kissed and panicked. However, this moment of romance elated Muskaan's feelings, and she declares to a puzzled Aaliya, "But I've known forever that I'm gay, if that's what you're referring to" (Sankar 38). The aftermath of the "treehouse kiss" also brings out serious and critical aspects regarding the "naturalisation" of heterosexuality as the "norm." Aaliya seems to be the quintessential heterosexual mind, declaring after the "treehouse" incident—"I'm not gay. I shut my eyes and tried to think of all the good looking boys I knew. I slowly untangled my fingers from Muskaan's" (Sankar 38). Having said this, Aaliya seems to be in an ambivalent point. In this in-between space, she continuously makes herself aware of her heterosexual identity, yet she likes Muskaan and the kiss. *Talking of Muskaan* (2014) is more about talking of Aaliya and her coming to terms with recognising her sexuality. If one looks closely at Aaliya, she seems to be in a state of denial. Her feelings and attraction towards Muskaan is something that she unconsciously talks about while trying to assert her heterosexuality. It is to be noted that many non-identified homosexual individuals live in this state of denial about their own sexuality because society has never accepted any other "norm" other than heterosexuality. The dominant heteronormative culture and assertion of heterosexuality in spaces—both geographic and social space exclude as well as negate the presence of alternative sexualities. Also, there have been a large number of homosexual individuals who have to lead double lives in the form of a heterosexual relationship. The "ever-penetrating heteronormativity" has forced homosexual individuals to live with heterosexual partners to escape societal disgust and shame.

Muskaan's "coming out" does not place herself in a better position but drags her deep into the center of the "homosexual panic." As a result of the societal disgust and shame, she experiences existential angst and suffering while continually living in suffocation. She reiterates, "It's like I'm…underwater all the time… without my oxygen tank. And all of you are on the boat having a party" (Sankar 40). No sooner had her news of being a homosexual is known to everyone, Muskaan becomes the scapegoat for the heterosexual society. Of "coming out," Butler in

"Imitation and Gender Insubordination" (1993) posits some critically interesting takeaways. According to Butler, the very essence of this "coming out" is unclear to her and further questions if this act solidifies their sexuality and make them known to the unknown. What Butler asserts is how the "coming out" of Muskaan as a lesbian, binds her sexuality into that fixed understanding of that term, thereby making the society more divided into homo/heterosexual binary. Butler critically points out that individuals who "come out" become the locus of a new identity, closeted again by the set of new definitions labeled on them. "Being out" invites more stereotypes of that identity and also act as mechanisms/agents to maintain this fixed concept of the closet. Butler claims that to be a "lesbian" and to "come out" is "simply catastrophic" (311). However, Butler does not legislate against the use of the term "lesbian" or "gay" but the authoritative and "regulatory regimes" associated with the term (309). Nevertheless, despite the limitations, these category errors, she believes, may be used as political imperatives to rally and represent their plight, and the oppressed political constituency.

Same-sex relations or individuals who are non-conforming, as the society labels, have always been an ever-present subject of discussion in a "heteronormative" society. However, their life, fate, and freedom have never been a free space but for bullying and lynching. In the whole course of the story, Muskaan seems to be incessantly resisting all the normalising mechanisms which heteronormative institutions have to offer. What compelled Muskaan to attempt suicide is the same heteronormative society, and their stifling behavior and bullying ways toward non-conforming individuals. It is to be noted that suicides seem to be the last and an easy way out to all their psychological affects, emotional traumas, and shame that the society thrust upon them due to their non-conforming behaviours. The last section, "Afterwards," brings out mixed reactions from individuals who have been close to Muskaan. Subhojoy and Aaliya are the only ones who stay and care for Muskaan. On the other hand, Prateek and his family, the hetero-patriarchal construct, bring out the heterosexual hypocrisy in society. With the fear of being under the scanner as a possible reason for Muskaan's suicide attempt, Prateek and his parents decide to come with a bouquet. It is pertinent to note that queer individuals reside in the extreme edge of marginalisation cobwebbed with fear, panic, anxiety, identity crisis and self-alienation. Prateek narrates their dishonest intentions with great delight and pride. He says,

> Tauji told Papa we should go to the hospital with flowers. In case something happened to Muskaan, god forbid, there might be problems later. You never

> knew what sort of people her parents were. They could slap a case on us. Papa told Mummy and me to get ready. We bought this really big bouquet of flowers from the hospital flower shop. Mummy was trying to select a smaller bouquet. (Sankar 149)

All these instances reveal their lack of empathy or any sign of remorse. Prateek was the one who bullied Muskaan in front of the whole class and one of the primary reasons for her anxiety and self-hate. No doubt, he had come to the hospital with flowers to see Muskaan, yet his hetero-patriarchal mindset remained unaltered. When it was declared that Muskaan had come out of danger, Aaliya, Subhojoy, and Prateek were the ones who went to see Muskaan. Aaliya was the happiest one to see Muskaan come to her senses, who did not bother to do anything but kiss Muskaan again. Prateek accentuates,

> The three of us stood inside the dimly lit room, staring at Muskaan lying in the hospital bed. And then that weirdo, Aaliya, did the strangest thing. She went up to Muskaan and what did she do? She kissed her on the lips. Yes, really. Right on the lips. I quickly looked away but I had seen. What was wrong with her? Is she homo too or what? (Sankar 151)

Prateek's questioning of the kiss and the overall tone in his statement reveals the heterosexual preference and the homophobic panic. In a heteronormative world view, any gender or sexual deviance is seen as a threat to society and its heterosexual hierarchy.

Moreover, *Talking of Muskaan* (2014) may be said as the story of Aaliya's "coming of age." Aaliya seems to be the resurrected individual who realises her "self" and rejects the societal thrust of identity. As a heterosexual, she has always tried to assert her heterosexual behavior in her surroundings consciously. In the end, Aaliya reveals her love and affection for Muskaan with a kiss. If we look closely, Aaliya has always liked Muskaan, the first "treehouse kiss" that they shared was very much present in her mind. She enjoyed it, yet she frowned, realising that the two of them had kissed; a societal taboo. After their first kiss, when everything was settled, they shared a beautiful moment, free from any shame or disgust. Aaliya recalls,

> I was glad Muskaan was sounding happy again, not all angsty and angry and railing against us. I leaned my head on her shoulder. Muskaan and I had always been special—since kindergarten…Muskaan put her arm around my shoulders.

> I wondered if she would try to kiss me again. It was weird. I felt wicked and wonderful all of a sudden. Like, really, who cared. I loved Muskaan more than any other friend. Always have. It was all right. Love is strange. It just happened. And it was something awesome. It couldn't be wrong. Ever. By definition, love meant everything that was right with our world. I felt sure of that and I felt good. So did Muskaan, for sure. (Sankar 41)

This revelation reflects Aaliya's love and feelings for Muskaan, which goes beyond the heterosexual "norms." She felt the same relief and happiness while kissing Muskaan in the hospital. Aaliya says,

> I did fouetté turns in the corridor. Doing four to five together is tough. But I did it easily. I was feeling giddy and hysterical with relief. Perhaps that's how one should feel while doing fouetté turns. (Sankar 153)

Aaliya's personal development and her refusal to adhere to heteronormativity, allows herself to uncover the constructed "norms" and heterosexuality. Towards the end of the novel, we encounter Aaliya instilled with a new spirit full of life, and for the very first time, she remains sure of what she is doing and how she feels.

Conclusion

As evidently exemplified in the novel, heterosexuality, heteronormativity and the resultant homophobia runs deep in all institutions of society, be it school, family, religion, government or legal affairs, and therefore, alternative sexualities suffer terribly. No doubt the decriminalization of laws such as Section 377 is a landmark and historic judgement yet social and civil union of same-sex couples or same-sex marriage in India continues to remain in a chaotic and undeniable situation as the Indian Government fail to recognise such marriages. The Government in this regard argues that decriminalization of same-sex do not imply or give the "right of being recognised in a marriage under Indian personal laws" (Rangnekar 2021). Taking all these into consideration, the recurring question, therefore, persists as to what equality and fundamental rights to everyone, as mentioned in the Indian Constitution, justify and mean, and what holds in the fate of individuals like Muskaan and Aaaliya in the future.

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Shakespeare as an Icon of Peace and Human Coexistence in Mahmoud Darwish's Shakespearean Appropriations

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Abstract This essay examines the conceptualization of pacificism in William Shakespeare's oeuvre through Mahmoud Darwish's lens. The Arab Palestinian Bard shares Shakespeare condemnation of war and glorification of humanistic values of peace and toleration. In many of his poems, Darwish shows admiration and identification with Shakespeare as a humanist poet, belonging to the Arab culture. Dawish's appropriation of Shakespeare includes several references to Shakespeare as an icon of peace and a "comrade," in Loomba's and Orkin's terminology. Even though Shakespeare's position to pacificism is controversial among modern scholars, Darwish views the British Bard as a pacifist and anti-war icon. This study bridges the gap left in modern scholarship, which either focuses on analyzing Dawrish's poetry from a postcolonial vantage or refers to Shakespeare in Darwish's poetry in passing, overlooking the Darwishian perception of Shakespeare's pacificism. For Darwish, Shakespeare is a symbol of peace and a means of coexistence. Darwish's employment of Shakespeare, on one hand, varies between direct appropriations, as manifested in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* (1600), *Romeo and Juliet* (1597), and *Hamlet* (1603), and, on the other, implicit appropriations, as revealed in Shakespeare's *3 Henry VI* (1595) and *Troilus and Cressida* (1601–02). Darwish revisits Shakespeare's oeuvre to philosophize on peace, war, and love.

Keywords Shakespeare; Appropriation; Mahmoud Darwish; Comparative Literature; Peace

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Introduction

This study aims at demonstrating how Mahmoud Darwish recreates William Shakespeare as a poet of peace rather than terror. Darwish's fascination with Shakespeare as a humanist poet is clear when he defends Shakespeare against accusations of militarism. In one interview with Darwish, the Palestinian poet refused to compare the former Israeli Prime Minister, Menachem Begin, as suggested by the interviewer, to Shakespeare's Macbeth: "Begin laisa Mākbith" ("Begin is not Macbeth"; my trans.; 104).[1] Darwish believed that Begin did not only commit war crimes against the Palestinians, but also he would become one day an enemy to all Jews ("Al-Shahādah" 104). Darwish's exoneration of Macbeth, a Machiavellian usurper, of villainy reflects Darwish's idealization of Shakespeare as a humanist and pacifist. This essay sheds light on the luminous aspects of peace and anti-war sentiments in Shakespeare and Darwish, showing the unique influence of Shakespeare on Darwish's formation of humanistic pacificism.

Modern scholarship has addressed the significance of *al-Tanāṣ* (intertextuality) in the poetry of Mahmoud Darwish in terms of references to the Holy Qur'an, religious figures like Jesus Christ, legend, history and historical figures, folklore,

1 See Mahmoud Darwish, "Al-Shahādah al-ʾOla" [the first testimony], interview by Sherbill Dager. *Mahmoud Darwish: Ḥāṣir Ḥiṣārak: Ḥiwarāt wa Shahadāt*, edited by Mohammad Shaheen (Beirut: al-Muʾsasah al-ʿArabiyya lil Dirasāt wal Nashir, 2019), pp. 93–109.

and literary figures.[1] Most scholars overlook *al-Tanāṣ* in the poetry of Darwish with Shakespeare in a detailed discussion. This essay, however, does not aim at showing only the cases of Dawrish's appropriation of Shakespeare, but it seeks to show cases of commonality between the two Bards in demystifying legendary wars, such as the Trojan War, as an example of the futility of wars in general. Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* (1601–02) might have been a main influence on Darwish's condemnation of wars in general and the Trojan War in particular, as expressed in his poem "Sayaʾtī Barābira ʾĀkharūn" (Other Barbarians will Come). Moreover, Shakespeare's *3 Henry VI* (1595) might have inspired Darwish to depict the chaos of war-times, having a soldier shooting his brother to death thinking falsely that he kills the enemy, as shown in his poem "Bunduqiyya wa Kafan" (A Gun and a Shroud). Such tragic scenes of family members murdering are intensified in Shakespeare's *3 Henry VI*, having a soldier killing his father and another soldier murdering his son by mistake in time of war. According to Julie Sanders, appropriation unlike adaptation entails indirect relocations and borrowings from other texts: "But the appropriated text or texts are not always as clearly signalled or acknowledged as in the adaptive process. They may occur in a far less straightforward context than is evident in making a film version of a canonical play" (26). Darwish's implicit appropriations of Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* and *3 Henry VI* are examples of the "far less straightforward context," in Sanders's terminology. This essay shows that the origin of Darwish's disillusion of wars is Shakespearean.

Love is endangered during the time of war, as shown by Darwish's appropriations

1 See for instance Murdiyya Zāriʿ Zurdīni, "Ẓāhirat al-Tanāṣ fi Lugat Mahmoud Darwish al-Shiʿriyya" [the phenomenon of intertexuality in the poetic language of Mahmoud Darwish], *Al-Tur āth al-ʾDabi*, vol. 1, no. 3, 1968, pp. 79–100; Ali Naẓari and Yūnis Walīʾi, "ʾIstidʿāʾ Shakhṣiyyat al-Shuʿarāʾ fi Shiʿr Mahmoud Darwish" [invoking poets in the poetry of Mahmoud Darwish], *Dirasāt al-ʾAdab al-Muʿāsir*, vol. 4, no. 15, 1971, pp. 21–42; Hassan Al-Banddāri, et al., "Al-Tanāṣ fi al-Shiʿr al-Filastīni al-Muʿāṣir" [intertexuality in the contemporary Palestinian poetry], *Journal of Al Azhar University–Gaza for Humanities*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2009, pp. 241–302; Mohammad Al-sultān, "Al-Rumūz al-Tārīkhiyya wa al-Dīniyya wa al-ʾAustūriyya fi Shiʿr Mahmoud Darwish" [the historical, religious, and mythical symbols in the poetry of Mahmoud Darwish], *Al-Aqsa University Journal for Humanities*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2010, pp. 1–36; Nader Qasem, "Tajaliyyāt al-Tanāṣ al-Dīni wa Jamāliyyātuh fi Jiddāriyyat Mahmoud Darwish" [the aesthetic manifestations in the religious intertextuality in *Jiddāriyyat* Mahmoud Darwish], *Majalat al-ʿUlūm al-Insāniyya*, no. 24, 2014, pp. 239–69; Ahmad Rahahleh, "Tajaliyyāt al-Tanāṣ fi Diwān Mahmoud Darwish al-ʾKhīr lā ʾOrīd li Hādhiheh al Qaṣīdah ʾAn Tantahī" [intertextual manifestations in the last collection of Mahmoud Darwish entitled *I Don't Want This Poem to End*], *Dirasat*, vol. 42, no. 2, 2015, pp. 463–73.

of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1597) in his poem "Kāna Yanqusunā Ḥādir" (We Were without a Present) and prose work *Fī Ḥaḍrat al-Ghiyāb* (*In the Presence of Absence*). Dalya Cohen-Mor refers to the contrast between, on the one hand, the love of Darwish and his Jewish beloved, Rītā, and, on the other, Romeo and Juliet in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*: "While the tendency to compare Darwish and Rita to Romeo and Juliet is irresistible, there is a sharp contrast between these two couples: neither Darwish nor Rita was prepared to sacrifice everything for each other" (79). For Cohen-Mor, Darwish prioritizes his love for Palestine over his love to Rita (68). The failure of the incarnation of *Romeo and Juliet* in Dawrish's poetry or the "contrast," as observed by Cohen-Mor, can be seen as another example of Dawrish's idealization of Shakespeare's dramatization of love, as will be discussed. Furthermore, just as Darwish exonerates Macbeth of villainy, he defends Shakespeare's dramatization of Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* (1600), showing the humanistic aspects of the Jew figure (Shylock), as expressed in his long poem "Ḥālat Ḥiṣār" (*State of Siege*).[1] Even though modern scholarship has not resolved the controversy about Shakespeare's pacificism and anti-Jewish delineations, Darwish stands as an admirer of Shakespeare, defending him against accusations of militarism and anti-Semitism, as also will be explained later. Finally, Darwish identifies himself with Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1603) to signify the state of madness and irresolution during wartime, as expressed in one interview with him and in his prose work *Dha:kira li-1-Nisya:n* (*Memory for Forgetfulness*). Darwish recreates Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *Hamlet* in a new context of an anticipated peace between the Palestinians and Israeli Jews. Sanders explains that "appropriation frequently affects a more decisive journey away from the informing source into a wholly new cultural product and domain" (26). Darwish accompanies Shakespeare on a new "journey" to exile, humanistic coexistence, and peace.

Pacificism in Shakespeare

Modern scholars like Steven Marx, Theodor Meron, and Robert S. White argue that Shakespeare's plays call for peace or pacificism and condemn wars. Marx shows that Shakespeare between 1599-1603 developed "from a partisan of war to a partisan of peace" (50). Such transformation was influenced by the change of politics of Queen Elizabeth I during her last years and the accession of James I. After the triumph of Elizabethan England over the Armada, Queen Elizabeth

1 In their study, "Modern Literature: Common Themes and Intersections," *The Routledge Handbook of Muslim–Jewish Relations*, edited by Josef Meri (New York: Routledge, 2016), Masha Itzhaki and Sobhi Boustani refer briefly to Darwish's sympathy with Shylock (144–45).

was no longer interested in pursuing more wars, especially when she refused to give a further support for new wars against Catholic France: "A few years later, Shakespeare, like the queen, seems to have shifted ground and to have adopted some controlled ambivalence toward Essex's bellicosity in particular and toward the problem of war in general" (Marx 64). The execution of Essex in 1601 by Queen Elizabeth I marked the end of Elizabethan England's tendency to pursue more wars. The accession of James I to the English throne brought new aspirations to peace, as emphasized in his first speech to the Parliament:

> I found the state embarked in a great and tedious war and only by my arrival here and by the Peace in my person is now amity kept where war was before, which is no small blessing to a Christian Commonwealth, for by Peace abroad with their neighbors the towns flourish, the merchants become rich, the trade doth increase and the people of all sorts of the land enjoy free liberty to exercise themselves in their severall vocations without peril or disturbance. (qtd. in Marx 57–58)

Unlike Marx, Theodor Meron seems to be more defender of Shakespeare, claiming that Shakespeare's characters condemn wars and applaud peace through the use of irony: "Irony and sarcasm are deployed to advocate prior resort to diplomatic negotiations and peaceful settlement, oppose aggressive and unjust wars, criticize self-serving and hypocritical assertions of just war, highlight the futility of war, and emphasize its inevitable cruelty and cost" (7). For Meron, Shakespeare resorts to the medieval codes of chivalry such as mercy and honor to discourage wars, being "fully aware of the decline of chivalry in his lifetime" (22). Shakespeare reshapes the Christian and pre-Christian heroes to behave according to the chivalric codes. For example, Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* deviates from Homer's *Iliad*, showing a greater dramatization of chivalry: "To be sure, chivalric or humanitarian values play a lesser role in the *Iliad* than in Shakespeare" (64). Meron shows that Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* satirizes Homer's version of the Trojan war: "In *Troilus*, war was reduced from the epic to the satiric, and from chivalric to the simply bloody and chaotic" (46).

Robert S. White explains that Shakespeare's "radical ambiguity" contributes to Shakespeare's philosophical engagement with the Renaissance framing of the concept of peace, as defined by the advocates of pacificism, such as Erasmus and Sir Thomas More: "It is my argument that Shakespeare is both a symptom of this phenomenon, reflecting the element of pacifism already existing in his society and

intellectual tradition, and a further cause of the process of popularisation" (142). Shakespeare's genius displays exceptional ability to form a dramatic "dialectic" of war and peace, showing pro-war and anti-war characters in the same play: "despite the apparently overwhelming naturalisation and glorification of war in his plays, there are opposing voices who challenge war from a variety of broadly pacifist standpoints, and that this operates right from the beginning of his dramaturgical career" (143).

Shakespeare in the Arab World

Shakespeare has been incorporated in the Arab world since the nineteenth century through different forms of renderings in adaptation, translation, and appropriation.[1] In her book *Hamlet's Arab Journey: Shakespeare's Prince and Nasser's Ghost* (2011), Margaret Litvin elucidates that Shakespeare has resided in the Arab world through different means of artistic transportations and penetrated into the Arab literature via various languages: "Arab audiences came to know Shakespeare through a kaleidoscopic array of performances, texts, and criticism from many directions: not just the 'original' British source culture but also French, Italian, American, Soviet, and Eastern European literary and dramatic traditions" (2). Shakespeare has been "Arabized" and "indigenized" to address Arab local concerns related to politics and art.[2] Graham Holderness explains that Arab writers have different reformulations of Shakespeare: "Received in the Middle East as a great icon of classical theatre, Shakespeare is there for writers to admire, emulate, imitate or challenge" (1). Mahmoud Al-Shetawi explains that Arab poets show fascination with Shakespeare as "a world heritage who belongs to Arabs as much as he belongs to the English-Speaking world" ("Shakespeare in Arabic Poetry" 15).

Arab poets such as Hafiz Ibrahim (1817–1932) viewed Shakespeare as a symbol of humanistic values rather than colonialism. During the British colonialism to Egypt in 1916, Hafiz Ibrahim was appointed as a representative of Arab poets to write in the commemoration of the tercentenary Shakespeare's death, which was held at Cairo University in 1916, presenting a poem entitled, "Dhikra Shiksbīr"

1 See Mahmoud Al-Shetawi, "*Hamlet* in Arabic," *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, vol. 20, no. 1, 1999, p. 44.

2 I am borrowing the term "Arabization" from Ferial J. Ghazoul, "The Arabization of *Othello*," *Comparative Literature*, vol. 50, no. 1, 1998, pp. 1–31. Also, the term "indigenized" has been taken from Craig Dionne and Parmita Kapadia, eds. *Native Shakespeares: Indigenous Appropriations on a Global Stage* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2008).

(To the Memory of Shakespeare).[1] Ibrahim, who was called "the poet of the Nile," celebrates the greatness of Shakespeare as an epitome of peace: "O, the remembrance of Shakespeare appears to us like a herald of peace who is smiling" (qtd. in Al-Shetawi, "Shakespeare in Arabic Poetry" 5). Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin reveal that intellectuals of colonial/postcolonial contexts have various positions to Shakespeare:

> Sometimes they mimicked their colonial masters and echoed their praise of Shakespeare; at other times they challenged the cultural authority of both Shakespeare and colonial regimes by turning to their own bards as sources of alternative wisdom and beauty. In yet other instances, they appropriated Shakespeare as their comrade in anti-colonial arms by offering new interpretations and adaptations of his work. (2)

Even though Al-Shetawi does not analyze the influence of Shakespeare on the poetry of Mahmoud Darwish, it is clear that Darwish just like Ibrahim and Ahmad Shawqi looks at Shakespeare as a "comrade," in Loomba's and Orkin's terminology, of humanism and pacificism.

Darwish's Appropriations of Shakespeare

Darwish employs Shakespeare in three levels of appropriation. Firstly, a direct reference to Shakespeare as a genius and exemplary poet; secondly, a direct appropriation of Shakespeare's plays, such as *The Merchant of Venice* (1600), *Romeo and Juliet* (1597), and *Hamlet* (1603); thirdly, an implied appropriation of Shakespeare's perceptions of the futility of wars in general and the Trojan war in particular, as reflected in Shakespeare's *3 Henry VI* (1595) and *Troilus and Cressida* (1601–02).

In his poem "Bait al-Qaṣīd" (The Essence of the Poem), Darwish perceives Shakespeare as a source of inspiration and a great model for mimicry: "I walk among the verses of Homer, al-Mutanabbi and Shakespeare, and / stumble like a trainee waiter at a royal feast" (*A River* 120). Darwish shows humility towards great poets like Shakespeare: "A great poet is one who makes me small when I write, and great when I read" (*A River* 119). In his poem "Lā Taʿtadhir ʿAmā Faʿalt" (Don't Apologize for What You've Done), Darwish refers to his possession of Shakespeare's works in his room since they provide him with self-confidence

1 See Mahmoud Al-Shetawi, "Shakespeare in Arabic Poetry: An Intercultural Study," *Abhath Al-Yarmouk*, vol. 22, no. 1, 2004, p. 4.

and humanistic knowledge: "Father's picture / The Encyclopedia of Countries / Shakespeare" (*The Butterfly's* 189). The speaker, who makes a soliloquy with himself, seems detached from outer world and hesitant of his real existence. Whenever he looks at Shakespeare and his father's picture, he reclaims his memories and existence. In his poem "Faras lil Gharīb: ʾla Shāʿir ʿIrāqi" (A Horse for the Stranger: For an Iraqi Poet), Darwish appropriates Shakespeare to condemn the Iraqi War, which led to the death of many Iraqi people and transformed Iraq to "Ṣaḥrāʾ" (desert):

> A desert for sound, a desert for silence, a desert for the eternal absurdity and for the tablets of scriptures, for schoolbooks, for prophets, scientists and for Shakespeare a desert, for those searching for God in the human. Here the last Arab writes: I am the Arab who never was I am the Arab who never was. (*If I were Another* 97)

Darwish also elegizes the effects of Iraqi War on humanistic arts, showing that poetry is no longer able to find muse and inspiration in wartime: "There is no room left in the land for the poem, my friend / but is there room left, in the poem, for the land after Iraq?" (*If I were Another* 94). Darwish laments the loss of the land, peace, innocent people, and Shakespeare. For the Palestinian poet, Shakespeare shares Darwish and Arabs their agonies and local concerns.

In his prose work *Dha:kira li-1-Nisya:n* (*Memory for Forgetfulness*), which appeared in 1986 to reflect upon the Israeli siege on Beirut from 14 June to 23 August, 1982 (Muhawi xxiv), Darwish philosophizes the humanistic ideals of peace and love through the means of Shakespeare. Darwish reminisces his love to a Jewish woman and devotion to Shakespeare during the time of war and siege, inviting Arabs and Jews to transcend political limitations and be united as humans:

> She said, "A little. But you haven't told me if you love Jews or hate them." I said, "I don't know, and I don't want to know. But I do know I like the plays of Euripides and Shakespeare. I like fried fish, boiled potatoes, the music of Mozart, and the city of Haifa. I like grapes, intelligent conversation, autumn, and Picasso's blue period. And I like wine, and the ambiguity of mature poetry. As for Jews, they're not a question of love or hate." (*Memory* 124–25)

For Darwish, the Arab-Jew encounter is not to be judged by matters of love or hate because wars lead them to forget their shared humanity and common love

of Shakespeare. War deprives the Palestinian and Jewish lovers the chance of physical encounters that may last several hours and days in peace time: "There's no time except for quick love and a longing for transient eternity. No time for love in a war from which we can't steal anything beyond sucking up the sources of life itself" (*Memory* 129). Like Shakespeare in his sonnets, Darwish promises his Jewish beloved to be commemorated in his poetry: "You will be sung in my poetry" (*Memory* 131). For Shakespeare and Darwish, poetry challenges the authority of wars and death and prospers the chances of romantic mystifications.

Darwish like many Arab writers has a recourse in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* to reflect on the agonies of lovers.[1] Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* was first adapted and translated into Arabic in the late nineteenth century (Khoury 52). According to Sameh F. Hanna, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* was the first Shakespearean play to be translated into Arabic since the early Arab translators were more interested in translating tragedies more than comedies or histories (31; 49). The first Arabic translation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* was by Najīb Ḥaddād as *Shuhadāʾ al-Gharām* (*The Martyrs of Love*) around 1890 (Bayer, "*The Martyrs*" 6). In his poem, "Kāna Yanqusunā Ḥādir" (We Were without a Present), the speaker addresses his beloved that war and exile cause the tragedy of their love, reminding her of Shakespeare's *Rome and Juliet*:

> In a while we'll return to our tomorrow, left behind,
> there, where we were young and first in love,
> like Romeo and Juliet learning the language of Shakespeare.
> Butterflies fluttered out of sleep, as if they were
> the spirits of a swift peace, giving us two stars,
> but killing us in the struggle over a name
> between two windows.
> Let us go, then, and be kind. (*Unfortunately* 102–3)

Darwish's appropriation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* can be seen as another

1 For example, the Syrian novelist Samar Attar recreates new Arab Juliet character, who is subversive to gender marginalization (see Ghazoul, "The Arabization of *Othello,*" pp. 22–3; Hussein A. Alhawamdeh, "She is no Desdemona A Syrian Woman in Samar Attar's Shakespearean Subversions," *Middle Eastern Literatures*, vol. 21, no. 2–3, 2018, pp. 160–63). Hussein A. Alhawamdeh, in his article "'Shakespeare Had the Passion of an Arab': The Appropriation of Shakespeare in Fadia Faqir's *Willow Trees Don't Weep*," *Critical Survey*, vol. 30, no. 4 (2018), refers to Arab women writers' subversive reformulations of Shakespeare's female characters (Juliet, Desdemona, and Innogen), transforming them from submission to empowerment (3).

idealization of the Shakespearean perception of love. For Darwish, the present time no longer suits pure love or Shakespeare because it is tainted with wars and politics. The Palestinian poet/ lover bemoans his harsh reality, where there is no space for peace for the fulfillment of love:

> We did not have time to grow old together,
> to walk wearily to the cinema,
> to witness the end of Athens' war with its neighbors
> and the banquet of peace between Rome and Carthage. (*Unfortunately* 101–2)

The speaker/lover laments the lasting war between Athens, which symbolizes the State of Israel, and Arabs, as noted by Cohen-Mor (69). Even though Darwish's Jewish beloved, Rītā, is not mentioned in this poem, the poem alludes to the tragic end of the love story between Darwish and Rītā.

In his prose work *Fī Ḥaḍrat al-Ghiyāb* (*In the Presence of Absence*), Darwish declares that he fails to incarnate Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*: "I do not want to see Romeo and Juliet, or Qays and Layla grow old before me. Love has an expiration date, just like life, canned food, and medicine" (*In the Presence* 88). For Cohen-Mor, the Palestinian lover and the Jewish beloved deviate from the Shakespearean concept of love vs. sacrifice: "neither Darwish nor Rita was prepared to sacrifice everything for each other" (79). I think Darwish defends the age of Shakespeare as utopian and idealistic, creating a dichotomy between the Shakespearean delineation of love and the current Palestinian situation, where there is no time for spiritual love. The Palestinian lover suffers from exile, occupation, and oppression more than family feuds, as in Shakespeare's play.

In Darwish's thinking, while love in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is immortal, it is temporal in the Palestinian context. For Paul N. Siegel, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* mixes the tenets of both passionate love and the religion of love "that Love is an all-powerful god" (373). In Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo glorifies Juliet with religious titles such as "saint" (1.5.100) and "angel" (2.1.68), while Juliet describes him as "good pilgrim" (1.5.94). For Romeo, love means challenge and power: "With love's light wings did I o'erperch these walls, / For stony limits cannot hold love out" (2.1.108–9). In Shakespeare's play, love triumphs over parental conflicts and achieves immortality. At the end of the play, the Prince informs the quarrelsome fathers, Montague and Capulet, that the everlasting love of Romeo and Juliet should end family feuds and achieve "peace": "A glooming peace this morning with it bring. / The sun for sorrow will not show his

head" (5.3.304–5).

The Palestinian Romeo (Darwish) looks at love and exile from a realistic point of view. In Shakespeare's play, exile for Romeo is despicable because it sets him apart from Juliet and predicts their death. Hearing the news of his exile by the orders of the Prince of Verona for murdering Tyblat, Romeo opts for death rather than exile: "Ha, banishment? Be merciful, say 'death' / For exile hath more terror in his look, / Much more than death. Do not say 'banishment'" (3.3.12–14). For Romeo, exile means estrangement from Juliet: "'Tis torture, and not mercy. Heaven is here / Where Juliet lives" (3.3.29–30). Betty Prohodsky comments on Shakespeare's handling of the concept of exile in *Romeo and Juliet*: "The use of exile in this play also does not involve any moral problem or an individual's love of country; instead, it concentrates upon the passion and sensuality of the two young lovers." (20). For Darwish, Shakespeare's Romeo, as a utopian lover, may baulk at standing the harsh reality of the Palestinians and prefers exile over land's occupation and oppression. In his poem "Kāna Yanqusunā Ḥādir" (We Were without a Present), the speaker informs his Jewish beloved that their love will not flourish during wartime, accepting the hard reality of departure: "Let us go together on our separate paths" (*Unfortunately* 101). The Palestinian lover apprises his Jewish beloved that he cannot perform miracles to sustain their love or to change the reality of occupation: "Who am I to give you back the Sun and Moon of the past?" (*Unfortunately* 102). While Shakespeare's Romeo cannot control his anger towards exile, the Palestinian Romeo is clam enough to declare that exile is their new destiny:

> Soon we shall have another present.
> If you look behind you, there is only exile:
> your bedroom, the willows in the garden,
> the river behind the buildings of glass,
> and the cafe of our trysts.
> All of them, all, are preparing to go into exile. (*Unfortunately* 101)

Unlike Shakespeare's Romeo, the Palestinian Romeo resorts to philosophy to alleviate the agonies of exile and to find a metaphysical reunion of the lovers in moments of physical departure and separation: "Let us go as we are, separately and as one. / Nothing causes us pain" (*Unfortunately* 101). For Shakespeare's Romeo, even philosophy fails to compensate for his love in exile: "Unless philosophy can make Juliet, / Displant a town, reverse a prince's doom, / It helps not, it prevails not. Talk no more" (3.3.58–60). However, the Palestinian lover finds Shakespeare as a

good companion on his way for exile.

In his poem "Ḥālat Ḥiṣār" (*State of Siege*), Darwish appropriates Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* to reflect upon his humanistic approach towards the Jew figure, Shylock. Arab writers revisualize Shakespeare's controversial delineation of the Jew character Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* in order to condemn Zionism, the Balfour Declaration in 1917, and the phenomenon of usury in the Arab world.[1] Mark Bayer shows how both Arabs and Israelis utilize Shakespeare's dramatization of Shylock to address local politics of victimization: "both Israelis and Palestinians can (and do) claim legitimate historical grievances and both understand themselves as victims of various forms of European colonial oppression" ("*The Merchant*" 468). For Bayer, while the Israelis perceive Shylock as an allegorical victim of Nazism, Arabs identify Shylock with Zionism. The theatrical performance of Khalīl Mutrān's translation of Shakespeare's play first appeared at Cairo in 1922 after five years of the Balfour Declaration in 1917, ushering a new Arab interest in resorting to Shakespeare's Shylock to warn against the British and Zionist colonial project in Palestine and the Arab region (Bayer, "*The Merchant*" 473). Al-Shetawi explains that the Arab literary repertoire before the Balfour Declaration lacks "any significant representation of the Jews," leading many Arab writers to borrow archetypal models of the Jews from Western literature ("*The Merchant*" 16). However, Bayer and Al-Shetawi overlook Darwish's unique model of idealizing the British Bard, transforming Shakespeare's Shylock from an anti-Jew archetype to an emblem of peace and humanistic coexistence. The Arab poet Maysoon Awni, who dedicated a poem entitled, "Maḥmūd Darwīsh" (Mahmoud Darwish), in the memory of the Palestinian Bard, ignores the Darwishian perception and appropriation of Shakespeare's Shylock by persisting the use of Shylock as an incarnation of Zionism: "Shiksbīr, ʾAlam tasmaʿ bi Shiksbīr, sayyukhbirakʿn jadek, wa ghadruh bi tājir al-bunduqiyya / ʾInahu shabīh safālatikum, wa yumathel jashaʿkum, faʾntum lā tashbaʿūn" ("Shakespeare, have you ever heard of Shakespeare? He will inform you about your grandfather Shylock and his deception to the Merchant of Venice. He [Shylock], who is similar to your baseness, represents your greed. You never get

1 See Salih J. Altoma, "The Image of the Jew in Modern Arabic Literature 1900–1947," *Al-ʿArabiyya*, vol. 11, no. 1/2, 1978, pp. 60–73; Mahmoud Al-Shetawi, "*The Merchant of Venice* in Arabic," *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, vol. 15, no. 1, 1994, pp. 15–28; Mark Bayer, "'The Merchant of Venice', the Arab-Israeli Conflict, and the Perils of Shakespearean Appropriation," *Comparative Drama*, vol. 41, no. 4, 2007, pp. 465–92; Hussein A. Alhawamdeh and Ismail S. Almazaidah, "Shakespeare in the Arab Jordanian Consciousness: Shylock in the Poetry of ʿArār (Mustafa Wahbi Al-Tal)," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol. 40, no. 4, 2018, pp. 319–35.

satisfied"; my trans.).

For Darwish, Shylock is an allegorical representation of ordinary Israelis, who are manipulated by the politics of war by their conflicting parties. Darwish wrote his long poem "Ḥālat Ḥiṣār" (*State of Siege*) during the Israeli siege on the West Bank town Rāmallah and Yāsir ʾArafāt's compound for more than five months, starting from the end of 2001.[1] In the poem, the speaker, who suffers from the pains of the siege and loneliness, reminds a "*quasi-Orientalist*" that they share humanity despite all of the Orientalist's false misrepresentations of the Arabs: "If you were not you and I were not I / We might be friends / even agreeing to our need for a certain stupidity" (*State of Siege* 135). The speaker is self-confident of his humanity despite all accusations of "stupidity" and ignorance of "new technology" (*State of Siege* 135). Once more, Darwish recalls Shakespeare in moments of the painful siege, emphasizing the humanity of Shylock in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*: "For hath not the stupid one '*hear, bread,* / *and eyes full of tears*,' like the Jew / in *The Merchant of Venice*?" (*State of Siege* 135). The resonance of the Jewish Shylock in Darwish's poem indicates that Shylock shares the Palestinians the harsh experience of oppression and exclusion of the siege. The speaker informs the "*quasi-Orientalist*" that Shylock just as all Palestinians has the same human senses of hearing, tasting, and crying. In Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, Shylock reminds the Venetians of the humanity of the Jews:

> Hath not a
> Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses,
> affections, passions; fed with the same food, hurt with the
> same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the
> same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and
> summer as a Christian is? If you prick us do we not bleed? If
> you tickle us do we not laugh? If you poison us do we not die?
> And if you wrong us shall we not revenge? (3.1.49–56)

Darwish philosophizes the brutal experience of the siege, evoking Shylock to speak allegorically on the behalf of the besieged Palestinians and to defend the Palestinian cause. The Palestinian Shylock like Darwish emphasizes the need of prioritizing the values of justice, equality, and peace over wars and oppression.

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1 For more information about the Israeli siege, see Chris McGreal, "US Forces Israel to Lift Siege of Arafat," *The Guardian*, 30 September 2002. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/sep/30/israel

In a Shylock-like eloquence, the Palestinian speaker addresses one Israeli guard, urging him to seek humanistic commonalties with the besieged Palestinians and to sympathize with their plight:

> You might find there's
> an accidental likeness between you and me:
> you have a mother,
> I have a mother.
> We have one rain and one moon. (*State of Siege* 129).

The Palestinian speaker, associating himself with Shakespeare's Shylock, revives the memory of victimization of the Jews by the Nazi system and warns the Israeli soldier not to play the role of the killer or to believe in the dogma of the "rifle" because Palestinians just like Jews have one human origin and similar "passions," in Shylock's word:

> *To a killer*:
> if you had looked into the face of your victim
> and thought carefully,
> you might have remembered your mother in the Gas Chamber,
> and freed yourself from the rifle's prejudice
> and changed your mind. (*State of Siege* 43)

The Palestinian speaker, who incarnates the victimized Shylock, resorts to Shakespeare's wisdom as a means of resisting the Israeli siege on the city of Rāmallah.

Darwish's identification with Shakespeare's Shylock is similar to Shakespeare's association with the Jew figure. Kenneth Gross illuminates that Shylock stands as a "covert double for Shakespeare": "Shylock's singularity translates Shakespeare's singularity, which includes his chameleon-like capacity for disguise and his fascination with extremes of ambiguity, his ability to transmute pain and pleasure, his skill in marrying the general and the particular, and his ruthless way with audiences" (x). Darwish's "singularity," echoing Shylock's and Shakespeare's, enables the Palestinian poet to empower the Jewish character (Shylock) to speak on behalf of the Palestinian cause. Shakespeare's Shylock is "repositioned,"[1] in

1 I am borrowing the term "repositioned" from Thomas Cartelli, *Repositioning Shakespeare: National Formations, Postcolonial Appropriations* (London: Routledge, 1999).

Thomas Cartelli's terminology, as a Palestinian Shylock, who calls for peace and reconciliation. For Darwish, peace can be achieved only when the victimizer acknowledges and regrets his sins committed against the victimized people: "Peace, when the stronger apologizes to the weaker, / who are weaker only in weaponry" (*State of Siege* 175). Peace can be obtained only when the Israelis ignore the politics of the "sword" and seek commonalities of coexistence with the Palestinians: "Peace, the victory of natural beauty over swords– / iron shattered by dewdrops" (*State of Siege* 175).

Darwish makes direct references to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1603) to reflect upon the state of Palestinians' and Jews' hesitation and irresolution in making peace. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* first appeared in the Arab world in the Arabic translation by Tanius ʿAbdoh and was staged in Cairo around 1893 (Al-Shetawi, "*Hamlet*" 44). Litvin explains that Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in the Arab world is "cited more often than any other Shakespeare play (*Julius Caesar* and *The Merchant of Venice* are distant seconds) and probably more than any other literary text at all" (15). For Litvin, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* has been appropriated by Arab writers of different ideological affiliations, including "religious as well as secular figures; by liberals, nationalists, and Islamists; by critics who write in obscure journals; and by cultural authorities" (15).

In his prose work *Dha:kira li-l-Nisya:n* (*Memory for Forgetfulness*), Darwish appropriates Shakespeare's *Hamlet* to indicate the state of madness of the besieged Lebanese and Palestinians in Beirut: "Nothing is left for us except the weapon of madness. To be, or not to be. To be, or to be. Not to be, or not to be. Nothing is left except madness" (*Memory* 118). Even though Litvin does not analyze the significance of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in the poetry of Mahmoud Darwish, she identifies four thematic patterns of Arab writers' appropriations of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: "nonbeing versus being, madness versus wholeness, sleep versus waking, and talk versus action" (16). Darwish's appropriation of *Hamlet* can be categorized within the second pattern of "madness," as defined by Litvin. Darwish perceives the trauma of the Israeli siege on Beirut as the cause of the state of "madness" of the Palestinians and Lebanese since no action was made whether by Israelis or the world to end the agonies of the besieged people. The state of Hamlet's no action designates not only the Israelis but also the whole world that peace between the Palestinians and Jews should not be procrastinated anymore. Darwish warns the Jews and Palestinians against the transformation to Hamlet's madness in case no serious efforts are taken by both sides to prioritize the philosophy of peace rather than war as the only means of survival and coexistence.

In an interview with Darwish by the Israeli Helit Yeshurun, Darwish identifies himself with Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Abu 'Abdallah al-Saghīr (c. 1460–1533), who was the last Muslim ruler of Granada:

> I identified myself with the man who was the Hamlet of Andalusia. He doesn't know [what to do]: To fight or not to fight? So his mother recited the famous poem: "You cry like a woman over a kingdom that you did not defend." She knew that he would lose, and pushed him to fight. That is exactly what is happening now. Truth doesn't have only one face. No historian can judge him. His fear, hesitation, and defeat are understandable. There were those who said to him: Kill yourself. Be valiant. So between being valiant and being pragmatic, this man became the Arab Hamlet. And every generation curses him. Granada was finished. All of Arabic culture ended there. So how does a man respond to such a trial? He saves himself. They allowed him to flee. They promised him a small kingdom, but they betrayed him. ("Exile" 68)

Abu 'Abdallah al-Saghīr, who was known as Boabdil in Europe, opted for peace rather than war with the Catholic Monarchs Isabella I of Castile and Ferdinand II of Aragon, to whom he surrendered the keys of the Muslim city of Granada in 1492, as was rumored, in a humiliating way by trying to kiss the hand of Ferdinand's hand (Drayson 62). Boabdil's character remains controversial in history, being viewed simultaneously as a traitor to the glorious history of the Islamic Al-Andalus, which lasted for seven centuries, or as a pragmatic diplomat. Because the Granadan Muslims were left alone against the powerful artillery of the Spanish army, surrender for Boabdil became an inevitable fact to secure the lives of not only Granadan Muslims but also Granadan Jews (Drayson 105–7).

Boabdil, who could not wage war against the Catholic monarchs to protect Granada, transformed to "the Hamlet of Andalusia" in Darwish's perception. Darwish, indentifying himself with Boabdil and Hamlet, is afraid of accusations of treason, hesitation, and surrender. The double parallel to Boabdil and Hamlet signifies Darwish's/Boabdil's intention of saving not only Arab Palestinians/ Granadan Muslims but also Israeli Jews/ Granadan Jews from the atrocity of war. For Darwish, while peace relates to logic and survival, war leads to ghostly ends. However, Darwish leaves his legacy to be judged by new generations, reminding the Arab Palestinians and Israeli Jews of their shared history of victimization by the expulsion from Al-Andalus and by the Arab Muslims' defense of Granadan Jews. Darwish, sympathizing with Boabdil's and Hamlet's agonies of irresolution and

weakness, transforms them to icons of peace.

Darwish shares Shakespeare the theme of the futility of wars in general and the Trojan war in particular. In his poem "Sayaʾtī Barābira ʾĀkharūn" (Other Barbarians will Come), Darwish satirizes the worthless cause of the Trojan war in Homer's *Illiad* as a war for the "emperor's wife" (*Unfortunately* 20). The speaker grieves the death of a large number of soldiers for the sake of bringing Helen back to the emperor's "bedroom": "From his bedroom he will launch a military / assault to return his bedmate to his bed. Why should we be concerned? / What do fifty thousand victims have to do with this brief marriage?" (*Unfortunately* 20). In Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, Hector opposes the Trojans' purposeless sacrifice to die for the sake of Helen: "If we have lost so many tenths of ours / To guard a thing not ours—nor worth to us" (2.2.20–1). Hector believes that it is against "moral laws" to keep a married woman away from her husband, opting for sending Helen back rather than waging a meaningless war: "As it is known she is, these moral laws / Of nature and of nations speak aloud / To have her back returned" (2.2.183–85). Meron explains that Shakespeare deviates from Homer's justification of the "failure of peace" between the Greeks and Trojans: "In Homer, the malice of the gods frustrates the settlement; in Shakespeare, it is the foolishness of men" (69). In other words, Shakespeare looks at wars as a man-made absurdity away from any divine orientation. In this context, Darwish's conceptualization of the Trojan war is closer to Shakespeare than Homer, indicating the possibility of Darwish's reading of Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*.

In his poem "Bunduqiyya wa Kafan" (A Gun and a Shroud), Darwish depicts a tragic story of a "security man," who shoots his brother to death by mistake, thinking that he has killed "his imaginary enemy" (*A River* 41). When the man goes home, he "found the house crowded with mourners and smiled because he thought they thought he had been martyred" (*A River* 41). Ironically, the dreams of heroism and martyrdom of the "security man" turn to be a tragic illusion when the crowd "informed him that he had killed his brother" (*A River* 41). The "security man," despising his gun, decides to "sell it to buy a shroud" for his dead brother (*A River* 41). For Darwish, wars are nothing but an elusive ambition of victory over other human beings, who may be one's relatives or family members. For Darwish, the absence of peace leads to destructive wars and losses, as shown in the tragic story of the "security man," who "was seeking his own private war since he hadn't found a peace to defend" (*A River* 41). Peace restores natural human coexistence and fosters survival and prosperity.

Shakespeare's play *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York and the Good*

King Henry the Sixth (*3 Henry VI*) (1595) dramatizes the fatal effects of war on the state and subjects. One soldier slays another man "hand to hand" (2.5.56) in the battle, hoping to plunder his "store of crowns" (2.5.57). To his surprise, the soldier is shocked to perceive that he has killed his father by mistake:

> Who's this? O God! It is my father's face
> Whom in this conflict I, unwares, have killed.
> O, heavy times, begetting such events!
> From London by the King was I pressed forth;
> My father, being the Earl of Warwick's man,
> Came on the part of York, pressed by his master;
> And I, who at his hands received my life,
> Have by my hands of life bereaved him.
> Pardon me, God, I knew not what I did;
> And pardon, father, for I knew not thee.
> My tears shall wipe away these bloody marks,
> And no more words till they have flowed their fill. (2.5.61–72)

King Henry VI, who stands as an observer to the calamities of war, pities the tragic scene of patricide: "O piteous spectacle! O bloody times!" (2.5.73). A second soldier kills another man in a fight, desiring to loot his "gold" (2.5.80). Again, the second soldier finds out that he has committed the crime of filicide against his only son in a state of ignorance:

> But let me see: is this our foeman's face?
> Ah, no, no, no—it is mine only son!
> Ah, boy, if any life be left in thee,
> Throw up thine eye! [Weeping] See, see, what showers arise,
> Blown with the windy tempest of my heart,
> Upon thy wounds, that kills mine eye and heart!
> O, pity, God, this miserable age!
> What stratagems, how fell, how butcherly,
> Erroneous, mutinous, and unnatural,
> This deadly quarrel daily doth beget!
> O boy, thy father gave thee life too soon,
> And hath bereft thee of thy life too late! (2.5.82–93)

Just as the soldier in Darwish's poem sells the gun to buy a shroud for his dead brother, the second soldier decides to dedicate his "arms" as a shroud for his dead son: "These arms of mine shall be / thy winding sheet" (2.5.113–14). For King Henry VI and the speaker in Darwish's poem, no one achieves victory in wars except losses. King Henry VI philosophizes the elusive victory in wars: "Yet neither conqueror nor conquered. / So is the equal poise of this fell war" (2.5.11–12). The speaker in Darwish's poem declares likewise that "Nobody will ever defeat me, or be defeated by me" (*A River* 41). The resonance of Shakespeare's anti-war delineations in *3 Henry VI* indicates also the familiarity of Darwish with Shakespeare's play.

Conclusion

Darwish's appropriations of Shakespeare can be categorized into three basic patterns: Firstly, a direct reference to Shakespeare as a symbol of peace and reconciliation; secondly, a direct appropriation of Shakespeare's plays, such as *The Merchant of Venice*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Hamlet*; thirdly, an implied appropriation of Shakespeare's plays *Troilus and Cressida* and *3 Henry VI*, as examples of anti-war sentiment in general and the Trojan war in particular. The Darwishian mystification of Shakespeare renders him as an admirer and defender of the British Bard. Even though Shakespeare's position to wars is controversial among modern scholars, Dawrish stands in a clear position towards Shakespeare as a universal phenomenon that transcends political and regional limitations. Through Shakespeare, Darwish offers new aspirations of peace and coexistence among the Israelis and Palestinians since there is no victory in wars. Darwish's appropriation of Shakespeare is like an invitation to read the British Bard as an icon of peace or a "comrade," in Loomba's and Orkin's terminology.

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Appropriating *Hamlet* in Arabic: Youths, Revolutions and Socio-cultural Criticism

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Abstract This paper examines Jawad Al-Assadi's and Zaid Khalil Mustapha's representation of the generational clash in perceiving the future of the Arab world. In *Forget Hamlet* (2000) and *Hamlet Ba'da Ḥyn* [*Hamlet a While After*, my translation] (2018) both playwrights show how Arab youth revolt against old governments that keep limiting their visions of a democratic state. The blind Laertes in Al-Assadi's play represents the spirit of revolution in his words and condemnation of Saddam's Iraq. In Mustapha's play, Ophelia is a young actress who represents the voice of a young Arab woman who keeps accentuating the importance of change. This paper shows the Arab youth's journey of self-assertion in the MENA region and their struggle against the old government that radically represents the opposite of their value system.

Keywords Youth; Arab Spring; Ophelia; Laertes; generational conflict.

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Introduction

Over the past decade, the Arab world has witnessed a massive change in its internal structure that eventually led to overthrowing major political leaders in the MENA region. Even if these changes might have taken action from 2010 onward by what is now termed the Arab Spring, the representation of the political, social and cultural

malaise of the region began from the 1970s, the decade that started with Nasser's death and the population's concern that the "fear that even the more sincere effort could not bring unity to the Arab world" (Litvin, *Hamlet's Arab Journey* 147).

This article projects the representation as well as the role of Arab youth in forging a transformation to the MENA region. We argue that William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* offers a proper intellectual space for Arab writers to reflect on the generational clash between two different worldviews of the next step to creating a new aura for the Arab world. As a case in point, we shall put the representation of Laertes in Jawad Al-Assadi's *Forget Hamlet* (2000) and Ophelia in Zaid Khalil Mustapha's *Hamlet Ba'da Ḥyn* [*Hamlet, A While After]* (2018) at the core of this paper to investigate their journeys of self-assertion while highlighting the generational clash in terms of ideas and beliefs between the old system of government and the youth's new vision of a new Arab order.

Recent critical research dwells on the appropriateness of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* to the modern and contemporary context. Martin Scofield writes that Shakespeare's text opens new possibilities of rewriting and interpretation (5). The puzzling characterization of Hamlet, he affirms, and the themes the play treats relate to the "fragmented modern life" (6). Geraldo U. de Sousa investigates the way Shakespeare's texts assemble different cultures of the world. The cross-cultural encounter, for the critic, is characterized by "distortion, caricature, exaggeration, and a profound sense of accentuated cultural difference" (3). Thomas Cartelli argues that writers from Third World societies tend to use "confrontational appropriation" to Shakespeare's original text by attributing a new social and political agency (17). Michael Scott argues that the twentieth century has shown that writers/dramatists do not have complete authority over their works especially in terms of their reception which unleashed a phase of consistent interpretations of Shakespeare's tragedy (2-3).

The universal themes developed by Shakespeare transcend both time and place. Playwrights from different parts of the globe appropriate his ideas to reflect their countries' cultural and socio-political concerns. Arab writers, whether at home or in diaspora, created an "Arab *Hamlet* Tradition" that rewrites Shakespeare's tragedy in the light of the tragic situation the Arab world faces from 1970s till nowadays. As Awad and Dubbati succinctly put it, "*Hamlet* has always had a strong presence in contemporary Arab literary and cultural productions" (3).

Graham Holderness argues that the Arab world's encounter with Shakespeare was in the nineteenth's century (142). Furthermore, he states that the appropriations of *Hamlet* in the Arab world had two distinctive phases: those of praise (1950s-1960s) and others of attack namely from 1970s onward as some represent

Hamlet the hero while others attack the passive role of Hamlet the intellectual (143). Localizing the appropriation of Shakespeare in Third World societies, Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin argue that "reinterpreting" Shakespeare became a means of providing an interpretation of the present world (3).

Mahmoud Al-Shetawi argues that Shakespeare's appropriation has always been a subject of research, however, his appropriation in the Arab world was not thoroughly investigated (*Arabic Adaptations of Shakespeare and Postcolonial Theory* 8). He writes that appropriating Shakespeare in Arabic relates to three "positions": imitating the Bard and paying him homage, revising Shakespeare's text to write back to colonization, most importantly, using Shakespeare to condemn governments and criticize the intellectuals who fail to aid the country and its people to grow (Ibid. 9). Elsewhere, Al-Shetawi writes that *Hamlet* appeals to Arab theatergoers more than other plays due to supernatural elements that relate to Arabic folklore, revenge and lastly madness (*Hamlet in Arabic* 44). Al-Shetawi concludes that Arab adaptations of Shakespeare are "adapted to suit the conditions of local Arab theaters and native cultures" (Ibid. 48).

Another researcher who has made a breakthrough investigating the Arab *Hamlet* tradition is Margaret Litvin. Litvin in *Hamlet's Arab Journey* points to the parallel between Gamal Abdel-Nasser and Hamlet. She illustrates that the theatre became a tool to appeal to audiences' emotions while addressing political matters on stage and criticize the "regime" (147). However, after Nasser's death, they came to realize that achieving Pan- Arabism and "justice" in the Arab world is harder than it has ever been and "would kill the hero who attempted it" (147-148).

Arab Youth in the MENA Region

Since this article focuses on the role of youth and their journeys towards self-assertion in the MENA region, it is significant to offer a glimpse on the field of youth studies. Mark Cieslik and Donald Simpson argue that young people of the contemporary society are caught up in a state of "injustice and disillusionment" which makes them consistently "challenging" the government" (xiv). Moreover, they state that the revolts happening in the Arab world and the manifestations led by young people are mainly done due to "lack of freedom" in their countries' authoritarian regime. The critics insist, furthermore, that the post-modern society makes young people in a consistent search for their identities. Youth labour markets offer little possibilities for youth to achieve themselves in a consumerist society which eventually leaves them in a "cycle of dissatisfaction with the self" (xvii).

In defining youth, Cieslik and Simpson describe it as an "interstitial

phenomenon- existing 'in between' the dependency of childhood and the autonomy of adulthood" (Ibid. 3). This definition serves the purpose of this article as both Laertes and Ophelia are caught up between assumed dependency from the father figure on the one hand, and an independency to achieve themselves outside father dominance on the other. Cieslik and Simpson argue that the "transition" from one phase to another, i.e. from childhood to adulthood is marked by a series of factors, namely: employment and education (Ibid. 3).

The present article focuses on the significance of *Hamlet* in terms of the demographic appeal to the Arab world. In the past twenty years, there has been an increase in the number of young people. According to the Arab Development portal "with 115 million adolescents and youth the region is endowed with key resources for advancing its social and economic development." Despite this, it appears that local Arab governments are not able to equip themselves to innovate new ways through which satisfaction of all ages is achieved. Hesham Youssef maintains that even after five years from the start of the revolutions, these young people "still stand fragmented" thinking that their revolution was "hijacked" by the new generation under power that fails to "satisfy" their dreams and "ambitions" (Ibid.16).

Mulderig comments that the revolutions that the Arab world has witnessed over the past decade, should be examined closely as "an expression of a powerful socio-cultural frustration: the inability of youth to achieve adulthood, held back by governments and markets that stall youth engagement" (3). Silveira states that the Arab youth's inability to access jobs and education, adds to their failure to contribute to "the working community and often lacking future prospects" (18). Luhrmann argues that Libyan youth believe that their elders possess "too much power" which renders the concept of "transition" in youth studies a period of "waithood" as the revolution against Gadafi's regime did not reach its desired objectives (32).

Another political analyst, Nur Laiq, writes that Arab youth in their revolutions have been able to found a "repertoire of resistance" which fuel both political as well as civic action (Ibid. 70). Sawani argues that the Arab Spring represents a revisitation of the ideals of Pan-Arabism of the 1950s and 1960s in which Arabs are reunited in their "broad demands for social and political rights" (383).

Delving in the history of the MENA region, it is no surprise to see the in-depth frustration of youth over decades. After the region suffered extreme cases of colonization and imperialism, it became a "penetrated system" prone to external intervention (Hinnebusch 3). Here, the very structure of the region gained a superficial independence, while being at the same time dependent on "core states" to survive its challenges with "small economies" (Ibid.). Again, Hinnebusch argues

that political regimes in the MENA are prone to excessive "threats at home than abroad" for the simple fact that the MENA follows the "low state formation" which takes leaders of paramount importance (Ibid. 7).

These challenges have resulted an increasing level of wars either civil ones or external which affected the growth of youth's identity, thus their self-assertion in a natural pattern. More than physical damage (death, dismemberment, injuries), youth suffer psychologically from a troubled identity being raised in a war prone area that roams in insecurity. This lack of peace in their country of origin adds to their frustration and inability to assert who they are as individuals since they cannot possibly fulfill their needs and interests.

Consequently, youth in early 2011, launched a series of protests for reformation through organized labor unions, strikes, and non-violent protests in North Africa, Egypt and Jordan (Laipson 5). Laipson writes that youth dissatisfaction is a result of: first, the unfulfilled promises of the regimes towards the population either in providing civil services or maintaining safety, secondly, the distrust in government policies, and lastly, the restrictions on reforms in press that made it impossible for youth to tolerate the regime (Ibid.5).

Nabil Lahlou's *Ophelia is Not Dead* (1968) is one of the texts that highlight the socio-economic malaise of Morocco, and by analogy, that of Arab countries. For Khalid Amine, Lahlou describes the traumatic experience of postcolonial Morocco by "the impasse" to designate the characters' state of "stagnation and futility" (57). Mamdouh Adwan's *Hamlet Wakes Up Late* (1976) is another example from Syria that voices the cruelty of the Arab regime. While Bedjaoui and Abu Amrieh argue that Adwan's text voices the "hypocrisy" of Arab regimes (88), Litvin maintains that Adwan's text "alludes" to the contemporary political sphere after the loss of the six-day war with Israel (*Hamlet's Arab Journey*, 180). While everyone in the state is filled with corruption, Hamlet is an alcoholic, unable to see the truth of the "rotten" state of Denmark (Ibid).

F. Georgy Gause III argues that the stability of the oppressive authoritarian regime in the time from 1970s to 2010 was helped by a series of institutions mainly the military which put an end to every attempt of revolution (13). We believe that the political values held by the old generation are those of dictatorship rather than democracy. Even if some countries pretend to be democratic, most of them end up being authoritative, aiming at maintaining their rule while oppressing revolutions. In several cases seen over decades even now, after the Arab Spring, some systems still follow the same pattern of functioning that the younger generation already overthrow earlier. This intensifies the argument that achieving democracy in the

MENA region is one of the biggest challenges for the younger generation as they fight against an entire structure of beliefs and values that oppose the ideals they fight for.

Al-Assadi's Laertes: a Replica of Iraq's Repressed Revolution:

After the revolution of 1960s in Iraq, Saddam Hussein's path into the government started to take place. Being a significant member of the Ba'th Party, which controlled the entire country, his reign seemed to be inescapable. By 1976, Saddam Hussein was the head of the security service. Iraq back then roamed in an atmosphere of "fear" as a series of executions and kidnapping were held (Arnold 45). For Arnold, 1970s Iraq was a place where "men vanished, and their friends were too frightened to inquire what had happened to them; people arrested on trivial charges 'committed suicide' in prison; former officials were mysteriously assassinated; politicians disappeared" (quoted in Arnold 45).

Saddam's period was characterized by terror and fear as most Iraqis feared the leader's "boasts and threats" (Arnold 72). Saddam's attempt to disorient his people from rebellion fell short. The end of the Operation Storm saw the rise of a "rebellion" against Saddam's authority (Ibid. 74). An eyewitness describes the situation in Karbala as: "With makeshift weapons and our bodies, we began to confront the Iraqi soldiers who had entered the town […] years of anger within me came pouring out" (quoted in Arnold 76). The depth of the Iraqis' frustration against the leader's authoritative system was their only weapon to create change and regain their stolen lives after being oppressed for decades.

Jawad Al-Assadi is an Iraqi theatre director, playwright, theatre researcher and poet. He was born in Karbala in 1947 and lived most of his life in exile from his country (from 1976) especially after Saddam Hussein became a president. His life and education in Eastern Europe earned him a PhD in theatre studies. His coming back to Iraq in 2003 was not that successful which led him once again to leave the country and establish his theatre in Beirut. As a writer, he is known for his collaborations with several Arabic theatres as he attempts to renovate the vision of Arabic theatre and encourage freedom of expression (Joubin 4).

Al-Assadi's *Forget Hamlet* (2000) was first staged under another title *Ophelia's Window* in 1994 in Cairo. The play displays the country in a state of fear after the old king's death. While the regime finds its way into tyranny, Hamlet remains passive to act against corruption. Claudius, as a representative of dictatorship, orders the torture of Laertes, death of Hamlet and seduces Ophelia. For Al-Shetawi, the play connotes how humans can become "victim of crime unless we stand up to

stop it" (*Hamlet in Arabic* 48). He argues that Ophelia "has witnessed the crime, but keeps silent out of fear. Ironically, she will see the liquidation of Hamlet and also her brother through the same window, and she cannot escape death herself" (Ibid). In his commentary on the play, Al-Assadi insists that his intention behind writing *Forget Hamlet* is to bring focus on other characters in the play.

This reminds us of Linda Hutcheon's *Theory of Adaptation* in which she argues that an adaptation is a "palimpsestuous" creation that is related to other works or texts (6). She writes: "An adaptation, like the work it adapts, is always framed in a context […] it does not exist in a vacuum" (142). As a statement, this coincides with our belief that in the Arabic contemporary rewriting of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Laertes and Ophelia as secondary characters are more appealing to Arab youth than Hamlet himself. Considering the fact that Hamlet already has the advantage of being inherently part of the system as a prince, Laertes represents the voice of the oppressed Iraqis whose freedom of expression has been chained by Saddam's dictatorship.

For Al-Assadi, *Forget Hamlet* "pull[s] the curtain from some characters suffering the edge of madness and open[s] the door of the text to their desires and their rancor, postponed in the face of Claudius, the state barbarian" (Carlson and Litvin, *Four Arab Hamlet Plays* 223). For Margaret Litvin, even if Al-Assadi's Claudius epitomizes Saddam Hussein, the text's purpose is larger as it reflects "the psychological reality of dictatorship" known all over the world (Ibid. 227).

Al-Assadi's play starts with a state of disillusionment and fragmentation. He describes the situation by "an atmosphere of mirrors and masks. All the dramatis personae seem lost; their facial expressions indicate confusion and anticipation" (Carlson and Litvin, *Four Arab Hamlet Plays* 231). Allegorically, this environment entails the Iraqis' fear of Saddam's regime as it is previously explained. The first reference to Laertes in the text describes him as "the blind man" who "stumbles and falls" and is helped by Ophelia, Hamlet and Horatio.

One may convincingly argue that Al-Assadi's allegory in the display of the blind man refers to the fact that the blind Laertes is the one who is able to depict the chaotic situation of the country. As if Al-Assadi insists that blindness is not in the eyes but in the lack of consciousness and the unawareness of the socio-economic malaise the country faces under Saddam's regime.

Here, we would like to suggest, that Laertes represents the voice of Iraqis who have been oppressed by the old governments represented by Claudius and Polonius. This generational clash between the old authoritarian regime and the new trend of democracy practiced by youth is illustrated in the tension between these characters.

Laertes's political commentaries on the country and his vicious attacks on the authoritarian regime distinguish him from other young characters as Hamlet and Horatio as an effective participant in spreading awareness in the country.

We believe that Laertes's fear as a young political activist is not only from Claudius, i.e. Saddam, but also from Hamlet himself who is a part of the authority. He clearly tells Hamlet not to take advantage of his blindness and seduce his sister to which Hamlet responds that Laertes's inability to see the light enables him to dance with his sister in day light. Laertes then, asks Horatio to be a witness of this incident and the latter silences him. It appears, therefore, that Laertes's fight against the old government is not only political but also psychological as his inability to defend his sister doubles his loss as her protector and an ineffective contributor to society.

Laertes seems to be the political activist Al-Assadi created to denounce the misdeeds of Saddam's regime. For Litvin, Laertes "takes on Hamlet's function as court dissident, exposing the regime's corruption and meeting a sinister end" (*Hamlet's Arab Journey*, 208-209). For Geert Hofstede, the expectation of dependence of the older generation from the younger one is the very base upon which large power distance groups are built (32). He defines power distance as "*the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power to be distributed unequally"* (Ibid, italics in original). Laertes accuses his father of being so hateful and conspiring against him. Polonius, from his part, affirms his son's madness. Laertes tells Polonius of his will to live and be buried abroad rather than living in "walls of treachery" (235).

This, we propose, is a direct attack on Saddam's regime that made Iraq a prison for all Iraqis. Deploying some factors as propaganda and teaching children to "glorify" Saddam (Arnold 84), young Iraqis were not able to speak freely because it would eventually lead to their deaths. Evidently, Laertes's words indicate Polonius's absolute faith in the old government's authoritarian regime. As a servant of Claudius/Saddam's rule, Polonius wants to maintain the reign of the leader even if it costs him the death of his child.

Ophelia's statement later in the play affirms this suggestion as she tells Polonius "you sent your son to die and now you're planning to sell me too, just to satisfy the king" (Carlson and Litvin, *Four Arab Hamlet Plays* 266). To Hofstede, young people are mentally trained by their societies to behave as expected by the older generation, any deviation from what is awaited is not seen as a norm thus is rejected. In accordance, any behavior that shows signs of individualism is not tolerated while collectivism is. In this respective sense, the norm is set by the

"parental authority" in collective societies (32). Laertes's spirit of political activism can be a sign of individualism that would indeed enlighten other youth to revolt. For Polonius, even the thought of individualism and independence is pure madness.

This is evident in his attempt to silence Laertes because of his unconformity to the norms set by the father authority. Laertes's sense of consciousness of the socio-political malaise of Iraq as a young Arab makes him transcend the period of childhood and dependency to a journey of independent identity assertion as a rebel in the state. Claudius's desire to silence Laertes was out of fear that this sense of activism would trigger a youth uprising that later on is symbolized in Ophelia too. Therefore, the old generation aimed at silencing Laertes in order to preserve the country's status quo.

Laertes's journey of self-assertion in politics as well as social life seems to be quite challenging. After the death of the old king, he accentuates his feelings of insecurity in the kingdom. He directly comments on the corruption of the state and affirms that it was a result he already expected from a country that runs behind personal gains and preservation of dictatorship. He says: "take me away! Drive me, or my bitterness will explode!" (Carlson and Litvin, *Four Arab Hamlet Plays* 237) as a sign of an intrinsic rejection of the regime. He refuses to leave the country before showing Claudius's murder of the "just king" and severely criticizes Hamlet for not being able to take a clear decision regarding the entire situation (Ibid. 242).

Laertes's revolutionary stance towards Claudius is severe especially in the day of his coronation. He applauds "we attend your celebration and your coronation only to bear witness to your guillotine" (Ibid. 244). The freedom of Laertes is put into question after he challenged Claudius to "cut off [his] head" to which the king's army complies and is taken offstage which is the last scene in which he appeared as a character.

Laertes's revolutionary spirit was passed to Ophelia after his detention as she clearly renounces her father after he described Laertes as an "unsound man" (Ibid. 252). For Hofstede, in large power distance communities, some basic features are shown and "expected" from the young to the old and these include obedience, respect, and dependence (Ibid. 32). Ophelia's rejection and her lack of respect to her father's principles puts her in an independent revolutionary stance against her father as she identifies herself with her brother Laertes in saying "we'll renounce you" (Ibid. 252). Indeed, this motivates us to say that Laertes as a political activist was able to insert certain values in the people that stimulate their consciousness towards rejecting the corrupt regime.

The notion that proves this argument stems from her rejection to Hamlet as

a passive participant in revealing the corruption of the regime and advises him to "get [himself] to a monastery" (Ibid. 255). The letter sent by Laertes shows that he is being tortured among other people as he writes "the death of sense and the freedom of appearance" (Ibid. 256). Kenan Makiya argues that the severe practices of criminality in Iraq are for the sake of maintaining fear in the country (quoted in Arnold 98).

The end of the play is mesmerizing as Laertes's ghost appears from the fog and slaughters Claudius. The scene is described as a battle between Laertes and Claudius which we interpret as a clash of generations. Al-Assadi's reading of the revolution in Iraq entails the death of Saddam Hussein by Laertes who after slaughtering Claudius "sits on the throne as though it were a sculpture of a human body" (Ibid. 278). This connotes that the difficulty of Laertes's mission symbolized in his blindness finely saw the light by justice prevailing in Iraq. We argue that Laertes's ghost is a symbol of the masse's revolution that had enough of Saddam's dictatorship. Al-Assadi's reading of the fall of Saddam's dictatorship is a historical fact as the Iraqi leader was executed in 2006.

Mustapha's Ophelia: The Arab Woman's Revolutionary Voice

Mohamed Bouazizi's decision to burn himself in protest against the injustice of the corrupt Tunisian political and social system of Ben Ali's government at the early beginnings of 2011 is a point of departure in youth uprisings in the MENA region. The fire he lit in himself represents the fire burning inside Arab youth who had enough of being humiliated, frustrated and lost. This act was followed by a series of youth uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Syria. Mark L. Haas and David W. Lesch argue that the aftermath of the Arab Spring's revolutions varies according to a number of factors, namely the military's stance towards it (4). They also insist on the idea that even after revolutions, democracy is not an evident result.

Julia Clancy-Smith's reading of the Tunisian uprising led her to conclude that the revolution of 2011 had its roots in the "economic crash" of 2008 in which Ben-Ali's "shameless corruption" and lack of employment possibilities resulted a "culture of suicide" of frustrated Tunisian youth (Ibid.16). Bruce K. Rutherford argues that Mubarak's government by 2010 fell short to satisfy the population's needs as an increase in political and economic tensions put the country under pressure as citizens with small salaries suffered an increase in food prices by thirty seven percent (Ibid. 38).

For Rutherford, Egyptian youth's uprising holds features of "liberal democracy" that dates back to nineteenth century free Egypt in 1920s (Ibid. 46).

Some of these features include the call for a civil state that is neither influenced by the army nor religion, elections of representatives, distribution of state power, freedom of speech and the right to create assemblies (Ibid.).Libya's revolution, however, is completely different from this one as Gadafi's army attacked civilians in protests.

Deeb argues that the failure of Gadafi regime's "social paradigm" increased Libyans' will for a reformation (66). The same critic argues that the educated youth's request for a better life affirms the generational difference in views from their parents as the inside corruption affirmed that the country's richness "was concentrated at the top and that [those in power] were being prevented from sharing in it" (68).

Zaid Khalil Mustapha's *Hamlet Ba'da Ḥyn* [*Hamlet a While After*, my translation] (2018) is an appropriation of Adwan's *Hamlet Wakes Up Late* rather than Shakespeare's *Hamlet.* We argue that the generational clash in the play extends textual evidence to reach a clash between playwrights. To Harold Bloom, this entails a theory of intra-poetic influence in which the young poet (ephebe) "misreads" his precursor's work (5). The relation between Mustapha and Adwan implies the six revisionary ratios in Bloom's theory as the ephebe attempts to "correct" the precursor's text (Ibid.). Indeed, Mustapha "swerves" from Adwan's original appropriation to "complete" his precursor's work believing that the latter "failed to go far" in his representation of the generational clash between young Arabs and their elders (Ibid. 14). As a young poet, he "revises" Adwan's appropriation to update the struggle of Arab youth against dictatorship.

The play is written and directed by its playwright; and performed in 2020 by the Jordanian On-stage Troupe group. In this text, Mustapha emphasizes the importance of the theatre to achieve political awakening. Instead of taking Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as a point of departure, the playwright's inspiration was from an already appropriated text in the Arab *Hamlet* tradition. This reading takes us to appropriate Litvin's comment on the emergence of the Arab *Hamlet* tradition to state that Arabic appropriations of *Hamlet* "engage with a whole tradition of Hamlet appropriations […] rather, it draws on what I would like to call a 'global kaleidoscope' of sources and models" (*Vanishing Intertexts* 75).

Mustapha's focus on the character of Ophelia is interesting. In a Skype meeting for the Comparative Reading course at the University of Jordan, the playwright insists that his focus on Ophelia's character reflects the central role of the female agent in the making of revolution. In this play, Mustapha tries to bring a "re-consideration to the theatre, as it is related to the reality of people and the formation

of their culture, for art is the most capable of stimulating people's motivation towards change and breaking traditions" (Al'arabi Aljadid). The text also addresses the notion of "liberating art and culture from government" (Ibid). In an interview, he argues that the portrayal of Hamlet as a theatre director relates to the importance of theatre and the struggle of Jordanian artists from lack of means (Sāmiḥ 2018). He carries on by stating the importance of having faith in art which is his real interpretation of Hamlet's soliloquy.

Ophelia in Mustapha's play is an actress. This choice of role reflects on both her importance as a female as well as the significance of the theatre in fostering awareness. The strength of Ophelia's character resonates with her ability to decide her own steps instead of having them decided for her. Naila Kabeer argues "one way of thinking about power is in terms of the *ability to make choices*" thus "*empowerment entails change*" (13). Indeed, Ophelia's rebellious character is fully shown in act three in which she puts a clear difference between her life story and a *Thousand and One Nights.* This distinction can be read as the playwright's message to draw a line between reality and fantasy. While the story of Shahrayar is merely exotic, Ophelia refuses to be compared to her for she lives in reality and aims to initiate a change in real life.

Mustapha's display of Ophelia's as a powerful actress stems from the strength she has in decision making. From the very beginning of the play, she is a determined character who is not easily manipulated by authority, she rather attacks it and remains loyal to the will of the masses. Her allegiance to truth and justice empowers her presence as an actress, and thus, a representative of youth values in the MENA region. Musa Shteiwi argues that Arab women participated both physically and mentality in the Arab Spring revolutions (27). By using media, female contributors as Asmaa Mahfouz, Fatiha Al-Saidi, and Tawakul Karman, were able to mobilize groups and fight side by side with men to attain liberation (Ibid.).

It is significant to state that while the previous play shows a challenging journey of self-assertion for Laertes, Ophelia's journey is more assertive and this can be related to the fact that Mustapha's play is written in 2018, i.e. post Arab Spring. The significance of this detail relates perhaps to the success of some Arab Spring revolutions that open new possibilities for Arab youth to insert their values after overthrowing old regimes as those in Tunisia and Egypt.

In her reading of "empowerment" as a concept Kabeer writes: "Agency represents the processes by which choices are made and put into effect" (14). Ophelia's agency in the play hovers from being an ability to make choice and an exercise of ability on other characters. Her ability to choose not to conform to

the old generation's principles, as represented by Polonius, already makes her an empowered character in Kabeer's terms. For Badran, the youth uprisings in 2011 are inherently feminist as they call for both freedom and equality: "it announces itself from deep within the Revolution, which aims to resurrect the fundamental principles and rights of citizens and human beings" (2).

Ophelia proposes that Hamlet inserts modifications to the first scenes which we believe connotes the irrelevance of Shakespeare's content to Ophelia's vision as a young Arab woman who fights for social, cultural as well as political emancipation. Her exercise of power over Hamlet again conforms to Kabeer's term of "power over" (Ibid.). However, instead of being a negative term as Kabeer suggests, Ophelia's display of "power over" is for inserting a spirit of revolution inside Hamlet. Furthermore, the importance of writing is highly significant to Ophelia. This again entails the female mobilizations through social media in the Arab Spring. She repeats the word "write" roughly six times in one scene which is an indication of the importance of documentation in the process of change.

The clash between the old and young generation is highly present in Mustapha's play. In Act Four, when Claudius and Polonius discuss Hamlet's preparation for the play, they refer to Ophelia as an actress who helps him in the play and they are in love with one another. Claudius asks Polonius who the actress is and is amazed by the fact that she is Polonius's daughter. Polonius wants to live in his own fantasy; he wants to keep in his mind the image of the innocent, gullible and obedient Ophelia who does not have a voice and whose life is oriented by the men she knew in her life, namely Polonius and Laertes. As a representative of the older generation, he refuses to accept his daughter's vision of rebellion. Polonius pretends to have lost his daughter in the sea rather than admitting her betrayal and opposition of his authoritarian principles.

Hence, Arab women fight on two levels: their voices inside their small culture particularly the household and on a global scale in terms of politics. Kimberle Crenshaw writes that in terms of political reform, "women of color are both marginalized physically and culturally within dominant societies" (1250).The very notion of intersectionality is relevant in the sense that the fight of women of color in white societies is the same as the fight of Arab women in a patriarchal Arab society.

In Act Five, Mustapha shifts the utterance of the soliloquy of existence "to be or not to be" from Hamlet to Ophelia. The shift in the soliloquy from the male to the female is a hint about the significance of females in the making of change in society. Moghadam writes that Algerian revolutionary women while rarely "searched" by the French military "carried bombs" (82). Mustapha's text pays homage to iconic

revolutionary females: Djamila Bouhired, Djamila Bouazza, Hassiba Ben Bouali, Dalal Mughrabi and others who proved that the Arab female contradicts all the Western stereotypes and are indeed subjects of their own revolution. Ophelia's strength lies in her awareness of the situation she lives in and her will not to live another day with regret. One of the most important assets she uses is the appeal to people's hearts to make them aware of the crucial decision that must be made.

Gertrude tries to redirect Ophelia from the path she was heading to. Ophelia tells the queen that she is not conspiring against the nation, rather she aims at "buying the children's future with awareness" (my translation 13). Despite the fact that Gertrude and Ophelia are both females, their perceptions are completely different. Ophelia, thus, appears to fight on three levels: her fight to implant her identity in the family, her fight against patriarchy, and finally, her fight against the old generation's authority exemplified in both Polonius and Gertrude. Indeed, while Gertrude thinks of personal gains and her success by marrying the king and letting away her sorrows, Ophelia is a political and social activist who thinks of the well-being of the generation rather than her own sake.

Furthermore, not only does Ophelia appear to speak for the population, but she also comments on the failure of the Arabs to stand with the Palestinian question. Mustapha's critique of the Israeli-Arab alliances refers to the identity crisis that happened to the Arabs after the loss of the 1967 war with Israel which destroyed all hopes of achieving Pan-Arabism. For the playwright, the solution to restore the Arab identity is to defend Palestine from the "dull guest" instead of welcoming it with open arms. If we consider the Arab nation as the body referred to in the play, and reflecting on the Palestinian cause precisely, one may assume that treason done to Palestine and Palestinian by the Arabs is hinted to by Mustapha in order to reflect the difficulty of the struggle to restore what happened to the Arab nation.

In the last act, Ophelia seems aware of the reality of people in the kingdom. She is neither disappointed nor amazed by the loss of friendship, or the fading of people's laughter. She professes the idea of death as an expectation of Hamlet's fate. Notwithstanding, the ending, pessimistic as it is, reflects Ophelia's awareness and consciousness of her sociopolitical, historical and cultural surroundings. Indeed, Mustapha's Ophelia breaks away from Shakespeare's submissive and ignorant Ophelia.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that Al-Assadi's *Forget Hamlet* and Mustapha's *Hamlet Ba'da Hyn (Hamlet a While After)*, recontextualize Shakespeare's *Hamlet* to reflect

the socio-political malaise of the MENA region. Namely, both texts re-read the Bard's tragedy in the light of the tragic situation of youth in the Arab world. The struggle of Arab youth, either men or women, cannot be read in the light of the Arab Spring only, but it is rather a result of decades of accumulation. The struggle for self-assertion for Arab youth, represented by both Ophelia and Laertes, seems to be quite challenging as the old generation keeps valuing authoritarian principles over the right of youth to live by democratic principles. Despite the challenges that Arab youth face, they were able, through their revolutions, to make their voices heard of the chaotic situation by asserting specific values.

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