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Interpretation of Ethical Literary Criticism in Hu Shih's *The Suchness Island*

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Abstract This paper discusses the only full-length novel by Hu Shih, *The Suchness Island*, and its implication of literary ethics. This paper argues that Hu reveals the evils of various superstitions and idolatry practiced in the name of tradition, while addressing the necessity of overcoming superstition to enlighten the people. In this respect, *The Suchness Island* should be viewed as having literary ethical implications that triggered an awakening in society to reform many of their customs.

Keywords Ethical Literary Criticism; Hu Shih, vernacular Chinese novel; *Jingye Xunbao*; *The Suchness Island*; superstition; social reform

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Introduction

If one is asked to choose one of the most pioneering intellectuals in China's modern and contemporary intellectual history, Hu Shih's (胡适, 1891-1962) name would be on the top of the list. On the border between tradition and modernity, and China and the West, Hu clearly established his academic, ideological, and cultural identity. As is well known, Hu also laid the foundation of his studies in a family of scholars from his childhood. Considering Hu's background, Cai Yuanpei (蔡元培, 1868–1940) writes: "Hu was born in a family of Hu passing down their Han studies (汉学:

1 This work is written by developing the idea presented at the 2023 Forum on Ethical Literary Criticism: Theory and Practice held in Zhejiang University (Hangzhou, China November 10-12, 2023).

Sinology) for generations, who had the gene for the studies. Although he entered the modern school at a young age, he could teach himself Han studies, and he continues to do so" (Hu 193). Because of his multi-faceted background, Hu was a rational pragmatist who based his ideas on the Western ideology and scientific methodology he had learned while studying in the United States. Hu was a progressive liberal who dreamed of the modernization and westernization of China despite its history. In this regard, a prominent Chinese scholar Ji Xianlin (季羡林 , 1911-2009) says, "In the last hundred years' history of academics, ideas, culture, literature, and even the education, Hu was the significant figure. Despite contradictions and controversy surrounding him, he is worthy of studying and should be studied" (Ibid. 1).

From these views, we can recognize that Hu was an intellectual with a broad spectrum of ideas that was brought about by his times, culture, and studies. Because of this breadth of perspectives Hu encapsulates, Hu's works are still important and meaningful. In other words, research topics related to Hu are still open and multifaceted, and many approaches are possible because there are a variety of critical issues that need to be addressed that require additional research. In this reason, this paper focused on Hu's early vernacular Chinese novel, *The Suchness Island* 真如岛 .

Firstly, Hu focused on theories and ideological research rather than literary creation. Nevertheless, Hu advocated vernacular Chinese and created a literary work in vernacular Chinese in the early days of Chinese New Literature. *A Collection of Attempting Modern Language Poem* 尝试集 (1920) and *When a Girt Marries* 终身大事 (1919) are his representative works, the Korean academic community have taken interest in. As is well known, Hu insisted on the creation of a new literature, that is, a living literature with a living language. The creation of a new literature was the most important first step to promote new ideas and culture. However, it should be noted that before the beginning of the new literature, Hu published his novel in vernacular Chinese in his early teens. At that time, he created a total of five novels, including *The Suchness Island*, which is the subject of this paper, *East Rickshaw Puller* 东洋车夫 (1908), *Husband of love* 爱情之夫 (1908), *The Student's Hard Life* 苦学生 (1908), and *My Rickshaw and Rickshaw Puller* 我的车和我的车夫 (1919). These novels are included in *The Complete Collection of Hu Shih* 胡适全集 . Although there are not many works, the value of creativity is considerable since they are his earliest literary achievements, published even before *A Collection of Attempting Modern Language Poem* and *When a Girl Marries*.

Secondly, the researcher selected *The Suchness Island* because it is necessary to understand Hu's early vernacular Chinese novels to gain insight into his other

work. *The Suchness Island* is his serial novel in *Jingye Xunbao* 竞业旬报 published by the Jingye Society 竞业学会 while he was attending Chinese public school 中国公学 in Shanghai. Unlike his other vernacular Chinese novels released in *Jingye Xunbao* at the time, *The Suchness Island* is a long-form novel, which consists of 11 chapters. At the same time, it is necessary to pay attention to Hu's problem of consciousness that appears in *The Suchness Island* as it is allows us to understand the changes in Hu's ethical concepts.

Thirdly, previous Hu studies have mainly focused on individualism, liberalism, and vernacular literary theory. However, this tendency shows the narrowness of research topics regarding Hu. To broaden the scope of research to fully understand the depth of Hu's cultural beliefs, it is also necessary to delve into the text. As mentioned above, the activities related to *Jingye Xunbao* in his early years provide important clues to understand the source of Hu's thought. However, there is not a single research paper in the Korean academy that professionally discusses Hu's early activities and his vernacular Chinese novels. Hu tried to modernize China by dismantling feudalist ideas and breaking traditional superstitions through a critical perspective and the scientific method. During this time of transition between tradition and modernization, it is no exaggeration to say that Hu's move was a literary ethical and daring attempt to sway society to his beliefs.

Thus, with these things in mind, this paper intends to become an entry point for analysis and research on *The Suchness Island.* By interpreting Hu's historical context and his activities during his attendance in Chinese public school and *Jingye Xunbao*, this paper seeks to allow other researchers access to a broader understanding of the Chinese author. Second, under the premise of the above, this paper highlights Hu's thoughts about *The Suchness Island* to discover the implications of the literary ethics.

A Stage of Literary Experimentation: Hu Shih and *Jingye Xunbao*

In discussing Hu's ideological background and career, the most frequently mentioned element is the pragmatic philosophy of his teacher John Dewey (1859-1952). However, beyond his American education, we should pay attention to the activities of the Jingye Society, which Hu participated in his early days. While the former supported to build the theoretical basis for the development of Hu's thought, the latter influenced the empirical basis for the formation of his thought. In this regard, Hu once said, "The editorial work in *Jingye Xunbao* made it possible to use the current spoken language as a means of creative writing. Through using clear language and reasonable order, I could construct thought in accordance with

formalities even at a young age" (Hu 1). He once said that the activities at the Jingye Society were the starting point of his thought and showed him the direction he should go (Hu 75). As such, through Hu's own recollection, it can be proved that the activities at Jingye Society had a great influence on young Hu's life and thoughts. In short, on account of his early experiences and a solid theoretical foundation set by his teacher John Dewey, Hu had an ideological direction for his thoughts.

It is necessary to look into the characteristics of the Jingye Society in order to see exactly how it influence the young Hu. The society was a revolutionary organization founded by Chinese public school students. Such a revolutionary organization was formed because of the enthusiasm of its members for national salvation. To understand this background, we must examine how it developed within the context of the Chinese public school. Chinese public school was the first private school in China established by Chinese students in 1906 who had been living in Japan. It was a different institution in that it was an international and nationwide school that represented students from 13 provinces.

What is noteworthy is the reason for these Chinese students who had been residing in Japan to return home and establish the Chinese public school. Chinese students in general at the time played an important role in delivering Western studies and culture to China through their studies in Japan. However, amid the anti-Qing movement, the Qing government felt threatened by the political activities of international students. At the request of the Qing, the Japanese government-imposed restrictions on the behavior of Chinese students through regulation on November 2, 1905. Various protests were staged: students boycotted classes, experienced temporary expulsion, and some students returned to China. In fact, about 2,000 students returned to China immediately following the imposition of regulation of Chinese student behavior. International students, who no longer saw Chinese government support, raised money and established the Chinese public school. Moreover, some more progressive students organized the Jingye Society within the school.

The Jingye Society began under the radical slogans of revolution to eradicate the various ills they believed were deeply rooted in society at the time (Ma 210). The main activity of the Jingye Society was publishing a magazine in vernacular Chinese, and thus *Jingye Xunbao* was created. Its first issue appeared in Shanghai on October 28, 1906, and the magazine was headed by Fu Xiongxiang 傅熊湘 (1882-1930), Zhang Danqin 张丹斧 (1868-1937), Wu Tieqiu 吴铁秋 (1875-1963), and Hu. Hu also served as a chief editor of *Jingye Xunbao* from the 24th to 40th issue (~1909.1.22). Xie Qiaozhuang 谢诮庄， Ding Honghai 丁洪海 , Liu Fuji 刘复基

(1885-1911), and Jiang Yiwu 蒋翊武 (1884-1913) also served as editors. The first chief editor, Fu Xiongxiang, established four goals for the publication: "Promoting education, advocating the will of the people, improving society, and insisting on autonomy" (Hu 69). These were the main functions of *Jingye Xunbao*. Thus, the magazine includes not only editorials, but also academic texts on geography, natural science, biographies, military; novels; translations; discourse collections 谈话集 ; miscellaneous songs 杂俎 ; ballads 歌谣 ; and other types of writings. In short, the emergence of *Jingye Xunbao* allowed the spread of new knowledge and revolutionary ideas to everyone regardless of age or class.

Hu became a member of the Jingye Society on the recommendation of the former president of the group, Zhong Wenhui 钟文恢 , but Hu did not participate in actual revolutionary movements and activities. Instead, he concentrated on the editing and publication aspects of *Jingye Xunbao* (Hu 67). Hu published an article titled *Geography* under the pen name of Qizishengsheng 期自胜生 for the first issue of *Jingye Xunbao* (June 11, 1909). At that time, Hu published more than 40 articles under various pen names such as Tie'er 铁儿 , Shih Zhi 适之 , and Xing 骓 . *Geography* is instructive because it is Hu's first literary text, and it reveals Hu's passionate aspiration for Western learning. After the publication of *Geography,* Hu speeded up his output in vernacular Chinese, showing the breadth of his talent by publishing articles in various formats including editorials, columns, biographies, and discourses. Despite Hu's extraordinary passion for editing, publishing, and writing, *Jingye Xunbao's* publication came to an end with its 41st issue on February 1, 1909. However, this turned out to be an opportune event in that it allowed Hu to freely express his thoughts and ideas since he was no longer bound by the topics that *Jingye Xunbao* covered. Yet, those very same topics laid the foundation for Hu to grow as an original thinker. Therefore, *Jingye Xunbao*'s influence on Hu was significant.

In most of his articles in *Jingye Xunbao,* Hu revealed an atheistic stance on modernity because he criticized pre-modern culture—especially religion and superstition—prevalent in Chinese society. In fact, as is implied in *The Suchness Island*, Hu completely denied the existence of gods and ghosts in several places, and he denounced all kinds of superstitious behavior, and these denials can specifically be seen in *Story Collection of No Ghost* 无鬼丛话 and *On Destroying God* 论毁除神 . *Story Collection of No Ghost* was published under the pen name of Shih Zhi 适之 in the 25th edition of *Jingye Xunbao*, and *On Destroying God* was published under the pen name of Tie'er 铁儿 in its 28th edition. Hu's atheism implied that only science and reason could save people from the bondage of religion and

superstition, which were both outdated and deeply entrenched in Chinese society. His position was quite consistent with the direction pursued by *Jingye Xunbao*, which was a catalyst for young intellectuals who were eager for reformation and revolution. In this respect, Hu's *The Suchness Island* can be seen as a literary ethical attempt to break superstition and change society through human reason and science.

Enlightenment and Breaking Superstition: The Literary Ethical Implications of *The Suchness Island*

Hu's *The Suchness Island* is a serial vernacular Chinese novel he wrote at the age of 15, he started to serialize the story under the pen name of Xijiang 希 彊 from the 3rd issue of *Jingye Xunbao* (1909.6). According to Hu himself, he initially planned to serialize a total of 40 chapters, but he had to end it at the 11th chapter because *Jingye Xunbao* (1909.6) was no longer being published. Unfortunately, the reason for his choice of serializing *The Suchness Island* is not mentioned in any sources, including Hu's autobiography. Yet, it is possible to surmise that Hu was also influenced by the creative tendencies of literature in the Late Qing Dynasty and early Republic of China 清末民初 , but this assumption is not well-founded enough to include in our discussion of the literary ethical implications of *The Suchness Island.*

As mentioned earlier, to properly discuss the literary ethical implications of *The Suchness Island*, the main idea of this paper, it is necessary to review its form, style, and main contents, in that particular order. First of all, in terms of the form and style of the novel, *The Suchness Island* adopts the system of the chapter novel 章回体 . That means it is written in vernacular Chinese with each chapter bearing a title, and it ends with a narrative intervention to lead to the next story. Unfortunately, because it was an unfinished work, it is hard to determine the true extent of its literary value. However, *The Suchness Island* attempts to play with the possibility that vernacular Chinese could replace the literary style. It also can be seen as a transitional creation, reflecting the atmosphere and culture of China at that time. This suggestion is based on how Hu established his academic, philosophic, and theoretical systems through his tenure studying in the United States. To give one example, when Hu returned from the United States, he defined traditional literature written in old texts as dead literature, and the new literature written in vernacular Chinese as a living literature, and he applied himself to writing about and researching the history of literature, through a Western, scientific, and positivist lens. In brief, this means that Hu did not limit the Vernacular Movement 白话文运动 (1917-1919) to literary creation, but expanded it to include the history of literature. Therefore, I refer to *The Suchness*

Island as the result of an earlier trial to see if vernacular Chinese can replace older literary forms.

The story embodies the consistent theme of breaking superstition and awakening the people under the banner of modernization. Hu discusses the reality of ancient customs prevalent in Chinese society at the time, such as the barbaric practice of early marriages to near relations, blind faith in the yin 阴 and yang 阳 , the Five Elements theory 五行 , fortune, destiny, and karma through reincarnation. The main contents of each chapter are discussed below.

Chapter 1: Yu Shanren gets sick from suspiciousness, and Sun Shaowu dispels it by reasoning（第一回：虞善仁疑心致疾，孙绍武正论祛迷）. The main characters of the work, Yu Shanren 虞善仁 and Sun Shaowu 孙绍武 appear. Yu is Sun's maternal uncle, and he symbolizes the old generation that blindly believe in superstitions. Sun represents the new generation that is exposed to new teachings and open to the changes in the world. One day, while Yu is sick in bed for no reason, Sun thought that all of Yu's symptoms are caused by mental illness, and advises him not to blindly believe in superstitions.

Chapter 2: Yu asks the blind fortune-teller about marriage, and he draws divination sticks before the idol for a decision（第二回：议婚事问道盲人，求神签决心土偶）. Yu is concerned about getting his daughter Huihua 蕙华 married. He wants his nephew Sun to be his son-in-law, so he calls a fortune-teller to see if the two fit together. However, contrary to his expectations, the fortune-teller determines they are not compatible, so Yu is disheartened. He goes to the temple again and prays in front of the Bodhisattva, and tries to draw the fortune-telling paper, but he is disappointed again due to the bad luck on it.

Chapter 3: Sun breaks down superstition by commenting on backward customs, and his friend Guo exhorts his father to stop trying to establish an auspicious date through divination（第三回： 辟愚顽闲论薄俗，佔时日几谏高堂）. Sun returns home and is embarrassed to know that Yu wants to have him as his son-in-law. First of all, he is a man with great ambition for the future, so he does not take marriage seriously. Not only that, he cannot understand why Yu wants him to marry his daughter since they are cousins.

Chapter 4: Yu looks for a blessed burial place everywhere with his belief in geomancy, and Sun goes to visit relatives living far away while worrying about his future career（第四回： 信堪舆广求福地，忧身世远探至亲）. Yu's servant arrives to visit Sun. The servant conveys Yu's words that he needs

Sun's help because of the geomancy problem, and Sun goes to Yu's house. In the past, Yu was not able to carry out Sun's maternal grandparents' funeral due to geomancy. However, since Yu is an elder member of his family and a stubborn person by nature, Sun feels uncomfortable with his uncle but helpless. Unable to give up his desire to study, Sun decides to go to Huizhou 徽州, where his uncle-in-law Cheng Yi 程义 lives.

Chapter 5: Sun hears someone tirelessly dissuading another from gambling, and he watches an opium store catch fire（第五回： 逆旅谆谆戒蒲博，炎威烈烈火烟间）. Sun spends a night at an inn and overhears a conversation from the next room. Two people, a man and his father-in-law, are discussing gambling. The man gambles, but his father-in-law scolds him about it. Out of curiosity, Sun listens to their conversation unconsciously. Then suddenly there is a fire in the inn, and it turns out that the fire started from the opium house in the inn.

Chapter 6: Sun is welcomed with hospitality and sincerity by his relatives, but a religious rite is performed that contains superstition（第六回： 殷殷情谊厚待至亲，重重迷信声张善会）. Sun arrives in Huizhou and goes to his uncle's house. On the same day of his arrival, a banquet is held at the temple, and Sun takes his brother-in-law Hu Nao 胡瑙 and his nephews to the banquet together. They watch people bow and kneel in front of the Bodhisattva statue; Sun again witnesses superstition and idolatry prevalent throughout society.

Chapter 7: A shrew breaks into the Bodhisattvas and destroys all the idols, and her family foolishly seek an elixir from a religious rite（第七回：掃群魔泼妇力诛菩萨，施善会痴人妄想仙方）. A woman with a knife suddenly breaks into the temple where the banquet is being held and cuts off the Bodhisattva's head. Sun hears the tragic story from Hu Nao, the wife of Hu Qiqing 胡启庆 and a distant relative of Hu Nao. Her husband and his two brothers get dysentery and are between life and death, and, to make matters worse, the doctor also dies of an acute fever. Hopelessly, the woman comes to the temple to pray for her family, and she even offers all the money she had, but unfortunately all of them die in the end.

Chapter 8: An evil man is believed to have been punished by heavenly fire, and the man of insight gives an edifying speech against superstition（第八回： 天火炎炎奸人褫魄，高谈侃侃志士箴愚）; Chapter 9: A renowned sage is introduced during a conversation, and a past wise man is remembered in the lines of a few ci poems（第九回： 一席话绍介名贤，几首词迢怀往哲）. The stories of Chapter 8 and 9 are about karma, a topic of conversation for Hu

Nao and Sun. Hu, who is extremely superstitious, explains the logic of karma to Sun, but Sun does not listen and reemphasizes his atheistic position. After discovering Sun's disposition, Hu introduces him to a scholar named Hu Jinxi 胡近溪 . Hu Jinxi, like Sun, has modern ideas who is wary of superstition. Sun talks openly with Hu Jinxi, who has the same tendencies as him.

Chapter 10: A sinner named Meiqing betrays his friend, and Jinxi gives sharp criticism about ethics（第十回： 名教罪人美卿负友，伦常针砭近溪放 言）. While Sun and Hu are having a long conversation, Hu's friend Lan Xian 兰仙 suddenly visits him. After Lan Xian left, Hu tells Lan Xian's story to Sun.

Chapter 11: Ambiguous language confuse society and misguide people, and the harsh but needed advice destroys customs, which causes grief（第十一回：模棱语惑世诬民，药石言伤时疾俗）. Cheng tells the story of his cousin's experience to Sun, who has return to Huizhou, and to Zheng Guoshi 郑国士 , the tutor of his nephews. Cheng's cousin, who does not believe in divination, is shocked when the fortune-telling that he got out of curiosity turns out to be true. Because of this experience, he believes to believe in divination. After hearing the story, Zheng provides his own theory about shamanism, saying that this is nothing more than vain superstition. Cheng is deeply moved by Zheng's words, realizing his own ignorance.

In addition, *The Suchness Island* was serialized from 1906 to 1909, which was a transitional period rife with great changes—not only in the literary world, as mentioned above, but also in terms of political world. If one looks closely at the characters and plot of each chapter of *The Suchness Island*, it reflects the transitional landscape of Chinese society at the time. In other words, the changing face of China as a whole during this period was directly an influence on the creation of *The Suchness Island,* and this historical circumstance affected the form of the novel. Therefore, *The Suchness Island* can be seen as an inevitable result of history. In this regard, this chapter intends to discuss the literary ethical implications of the work by selecting and analyzing the passages that best reflect the main theme of *The Suchness Island*.

Uncle's illness could have been nothing serious if he had not been bewitched by the fortune-teller. He believes that he was to die within this year, and his fear of death has grown even greater since he got ill this time. One should know that 'suspiciousness' has everything to do with the cause of the disease.

> The more suspicious he is, the more serious the disease will turn ... When it comes to the cause and effect, it's really hard to say ... Every cause yields an effect. For instance, eating causes satiety, drinking causes drunkenness ... But when you eat, it's the food that gives satiety; when you grow a melon, it's the melon that produces new melons; and when you grow beans, it's the beans that produce new beans. There's no human power that works as a dominator. If a man has done evil things, what he did will naturally incur bad consequences. People name it karma and believe that Heaven sees. But it's not Heaven that effects the retribution. If 'Heaven' has such a power, why wouldn't He make everyone in the world a good person? (Hu 503-530)[1]

The core of the above passage is the confrontation between superstition and causation. The passage clearly reflects Hu's stance and perspective, which clearly show that superstition is an inaccurate view of the causation. This view stems from the author's childhood experiences. According to Hu's autobiography, his mother also had a deep belief in superstitions, just like many other Chinese people at the time. Hu had to follow his mother around while she burned incense and prayed for the well-being of his family in a shrine. It is said that superstition was a vague fear to young Hu, but due to his critical personality, he became an atheist at the age of eleven. His belief system began with Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200)'s *Xiaoxue* 小学. According to Hu, he got to know Si Maguang 司马光 (1019-1086)'s materialism in *Xiaoxue*. After learning about it, he started reading Si Maguang's *Zizhitongjian* 资治通鉴 in earnest, and he discovered the doctrine of the mortality of the soul 神灭论 of Fanzhen 范缜 (450-515). According to Hu's retrospective, he had doubts about the afterlife through *Xiaoxue*, and the vague fear he once had of superstition as a whole vanished through Si Maguang's *Zizhitongjian*. With the doctrine of the mortality of the soul of Fanzhen, Hu no longer believed in the existence of ghosts (Hu 44-45). Additionally, Hu regarded superstition and causationism as evil factors that hindered the state and society. As is well known, causationism is one of the core

1 此处中文原文为：“ 舅父这病，本来是狠不要紧的，只因舅父的心上，已经着了那算命先生的迷，时常恐怕今年要死，如今害了这病，那怕死的心，自然是格外重了。须知道那‘疑心’和这病根狠有关系，疑心越重，病也越重……这因果二字，狠难说的……有了一个因，必收一个果。譬如吃饭自然会饱，吃酒自然会醉。……但是吃饭是饭的作用生出饱来，种瓜是瓜的作用生出新瓜来，种豆便是豆的作用生出新豆来，其中並沒有什么人为之主宰。譬如有一个人，作了许多伤阴骘的事，他所做的事，自然而然的会生出一个恶报来，我们看见了，便叫他做报应，说这是某人行恶事的现报，说这真是天有眼睛了，其实这并不是‘天’的作用。‘天’要是真有这么大的能力，何不把天下的人个个都成了善人呢？”

ideas of Buddhism, and it is not an exaggeration to say that it occupied an absolute position in Chinese folk beliefs at the time. Hu criticized the belief that evil was increasing in the world, an idea that was a result of causationism. He also blamed people for attempting to find solutions via causationism. In particular, he strongly emphasized the rejection of superstition and the elimination of folk beliefs, as he regarded groups that made idols and forced people to worship them as social evils (Hu 63-65).

In short, the influences from *Xiaoxue*, *Zizhitongjian*, the doctrine of the mortality of the soul of Fanzhen, and Hu's academic experiences in his early days, allowed Hu to organically connect each chapter of *The Suchness Island*. Furthermore, these build the theoretical background that supports Hu's atheism. Once this is understood, an examination of the last chapter of *The Suchness Island* is telling:

> It's a shame that we Chinese people always refuse to think. We are contented with following other's leads and agreeing on everything we are told. From my perspective, the reason why we've become such a benighted country is that we are reluctant to think. Cheng Yichuan once said, "learning originates from thinking". Such a short phrase can be regarded as reputed words for many years ... Cheng Yi replied, "Mr. Zheng. I totally agree with you. We have all made the mistake of being reluctant to think. Even those who stand on the altar should think so as to trick people. It is thus clear that thinking is indispensable for everything, big or small." Mr. Zheng nodded to agree. (Hu 541)[1]

The paragraph above is a conversation between Cheng and Zheng. Cheng reveals his theory of the origins of learning, while at the same time deeply reflecting on his own foolishness when he propagated false rumors and baseless superstitions and followed a herd mentality. We should note that the conversation is deeply rooted in Hu family's progressive academic background. As is well known, Hu's hometown, Huizhou in Anhui Province, had a long tradition of Confucianism. Through his father's education, Hu learned the value of the empirical tradition. This laid the groundwork for Hu to become a pioneer intellectual who led China's modernization

1 此处中文原文为："只可怜我们中国人总不肯想，只晓得随波逐流，随声附和，国民愚到这步田地，照我的眼光看来，这都是不肯思想之故。所以程伊川说：'学原于思'这区区四个字，简直是千古至言。……程义说道：'郑先生，你这话真正不错，我们都是犯了这种不肯思想的毛病。即如乩坛上的人，他若是不肯深思默想，他怎能哄得人呢？可见凡事无论大小，总要思想的。' 郑先生点头称是。"

and a pragmatic thinker who emphasized critical attitudes and scientific methods (Hu 131).

Hu got the major themes to *The Suchness Island* from his childhood experiences. From the characters of the work to the plot and content of each chapter, this work was written based on Hu's autobiographical experiences. Although the characters in *The Suchness Island* are fictional characters, they are based on real people, including Hu's family and relatives. In particular, Sun, the main character of the work, is a person who reflects Hu's own thoughts and points of view. Sun's experiences are akin to Hu's autobiographical experiences, so much so that the boundary between fiction and reality is not clearly distinguished. However, this work is neither a retrospective of his childhood, nor a reflection of his past. In this respect, the literary ethical implications of *The Suchness Island* derived in this paper is as follows. First, *The Suchness Island* was incomplete due to the closure of *Jingye Xunbao*, but this work is the only full-length novel among the vernacular Chinese novels that Hu published in *Jingye Xunbao* in that period. A 15-year-old boy's attempt to create a serial novel with a strong reformative and revolutionary character says just how much China was searching for change during this period of its history. Second, Hu described the behavior of the people of Huizhou who believed in superstitions in a bold style and straightforward way.[1] What Hu ultimately wanted to say in *The Suchness Island* was evident: the evils of various superstitions and idolatry practiced in the name of tradition was holding society from advancing. The issue of magical thinking needed to be addressed in order to overcome superstition and enlighten the people. For this reason, it can be categorized as a pioneer creation, one that triggered the awakening of a nation. It is significant that it embodies Hu's ethical resistance to the feudal ethics that pervaded Chinese life and the social problems that resulted. In this regard, the creation of *The Suchness Island* is remarkably significant in that it was an ethical challenges and resistance from Hu to China.

Conclusion

Among the early works of Hu, *The Suchness Island* is a serial vernacular Chinese novel he wrote at the age of 15. Unfortunately, *The Suchness Island* did not follow Hu's original plan because it is unfinished, so it is hard to say what its complete value as a work of art is. However, it is worth noting that this work provides important clues to understand the source of Hu's thought. Based on this, I argue that literary ethical implications of Hu's *The Suchness Island* in two main aspects.

1 See Gong, Xuanwu. "Hu Shih 45 years ago." *Taipei Central Daily* 17 December 1952.

The first reason for its importance is the fact that it gives more information about a popular author. It is not an exaggeration to say that admission to the Chinese public school and joining the Jingye Society, especially becoming an editor of *Jingye Xunbao*, are the most important experiences of Hu's early days. Unlike the other members of the Jingye Society who jumped into the revolutionary movement, Hu devoted all his energy to editing, publishing, and writing *Jingye Xunbao*. In spite of his young age at the time, Hu published numerous writings in *Jingye Xunbao*, revealing his radical and critical tendencies. Based on science and reason, Hu's awareness of the problems of society, which he saw were the conventions and superstitions, needed to be addressed in a way the Chinese people could understand, but also be in line with the direction pursued by *Jingye Xunbao.* The novel, *The Suchness Island*, helped accomplish those goals. Through the above discussion, in this paper, it is possible to obtain the result that *Jingye Xunbao* was a place for experiment in which Hu could freely write his own words without any specific form or style, and therefore his thoughts could be relayed to society in their own language.

Second, *The Suchness Island*, which Hu started serializing in 1906, is a novel that captured some of Hu's autobiographical experience. In particular, the main character, Sun is a stand-in for Hu, since they are both young intellectuals who were educated upon new ideas and a desire to give up outdated practices. In this work, Hu revealed the what he saw as a problematic legacy of the past but was prevalent in current Chinese society: superstition, child marriage, idolatry, and causality. To remove those obsolete beliefs and practices, Hu needed to fictionalize the problematic aspects of those social ills so his audience would be encouraged to break away from all superstitions, old customs, and feudal behaviors. This paper appreciates the message behind *The Suchness Island* and the changes in Hu's ethical concepts, a boy who took the first step toward a new ideology and a new culture.

Through this study, it is possible to grasp the source of Hu's thought through his activities and the characteristics of his early writings. Moreover, through the work *The Suchness Island*, it is possible to discover the meaning behind the literary ethical implications of Hu's early vernacular Chinese novel. If we take *The Suchness Island* as a starting point, then we can proceed study of Hu's early vernacular Chinese novels and his Chinese new poetry during the May Fourth movement from viewpoint of literary ethical.

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The Ethical Choice of the Father-Daughter Conflict in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

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Abstract This study employs ethical literary criticism to uncover the social and natural ethics manifested in the conflict between the paternal figure (Egeus) and his daughter (Hermia) in Shakespeare's comedy, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Furthermore, it examines the ethical choice made by Hermia. It argues that the conflict between Egeus and Hermia serves as a manifestation of social ethics. The father-daughter conflict prompts readers to contemplate the social and natural ethics that were prominent throughout the Renaissance era. Hermia's ethical choice reflects her emotional needs, rebellious spirit, and Shakespeare's progressive ideas regarding ethics. It also serves as a demonstration of ethical wisdom. This study provides a thought-provoking example of ethical choices.

Keywords *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; father-daughter conflict; ethical choice; ethical literary criticism

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Introduction

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) emerged as a preeminent dramatist whose works delve into the intricacies of father-daughter relationships. During Shakespeare's

era, familial bonds held significant sway within the societal framework. The father-daughter relationship allowed Shakespeare to explore daughters' challenges in a patriarchal society. Thus, the theme of the father-daughter dynamic is prominently featured in "twenty-one of Shakespeare's plays" (Dreher 1). Although *A Midsummer Night's Dream* ostensibly gravitates towards themes of love, fantasy, and romantic entanglements, it astutely incorporates the element of father-daughter conflict. In this comedic masterpiece, Egeus desires to bestow his daughter, Hermia, in matrimony upon Demetrius. However, Hermia, intimately acquainted with her friend Helena's affection for Demetrius and harboring her love for Lysander, rebels against this prescribed union. Even in the face of her father's accusatory stance and resorting to legal coercion via the Duke of Athens, Hermia remains relentless and fearless. In pursuing marital autonomy, she boldly defies her father's wishes and the legal strictures of Athens, ultimately choosing to elope with Lysander.

While Hawley (2010) has delved into the ethical dimensions of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the inquiries have been predominantly confined to the lens of traditional ethics. Nevertheless, a recent shift towards interdisciplinary exploration in analyzing Shakespearean works has emerged. For instance, Deng Jianbo, Arbaayah Ali Termizi, and Manimangai Mani (2023) utilize Bowen family systems theory to scrutinize the father-daughter relationship in Shakespeare's *King Lear*, arguing that the factors contributing to the dysfunctional nature of this relationship include "the levels of differentiation of the self of Lear, Goneril, Cordelia, and Regan, the projection of Lear's anxieties and unresolved conflicts onto his daughters, and the chronic anxiety stemming from societal regression" (185). Additionally, Zhang Baike and Tian Junwu expound on the metaphors of diseases, ethical transgressions in historical writing, and political ethics depicted in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* through the lens of ethical literary criticism. They state that although Shakespeare's ethical adaptation of Plutarch's historical work may be questionable, the diseases and deformities attributed to Caesar in the play reflect the prevailing historical consciousness of the British people during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These depictions serve as metaphors for the "body politic and the demythologization of Caesar" (Zhang and Tian 99), ultimately conveying Shakespeare's ethical stance. Furthermore, Luo and Wang (2022) explore the intricate connection between the sense of power, the upper structure, and Macbeth's ethical choices. They posit that Macbeth's ethical downfall and moral failure stem from his spinx factors: his insatiable lust for power and his misguided selection of an ethical path. These deficiencies, coupled with the upper structure he endeavors to construct, mold his ethical values and judgment. The authors assert that the pivotal

elements determining his inevitable fate lie in "his controlling of his spinx factors" (Luo and Wang 288).

Although scholarly investigations have explored Shakespeare's plays through the lens of ethical literary criticism, a notable dearth of focused analyses specifically addressing *A Midsummer Night's Dream* remains. Prior examinations of this play have predominantly scrutinized its ethical aspects through the prism of conventional ethical perspectives. Hence, a compelling need arises to reevaluate the father-daughter conflict within the comedy from an innovative standpoint. Such an approach seeks to unveil the profound significance of this conflict, thereby offering readers a compelling exemplar of ethical choices in literary works. Consequently, this article meticulously examines the parent-child ethics inherent in the father-daughter conflict in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, distilling profound ethical implications. In contrast to preceding studies, this article strongly emphasizes the ethical dimension within the play, scrutinizing the societal and cultural significance reflected in the father-daughter conflict through the lens of social ethics. It not only elucidates the natural desires of Hermia and Egeus but also sheds light on the ethical conflicts inherent in their positions. Furthermore, the article endeavors to trace the historical context in which the play unfolds, focusing on the ethical choices made by Hermia as a central ethical theme. The article probes her ultimate ethical choices by dissecting the ethical dilemmas confronting Hermia due to her multiple ethical identities, delving into the profound ethical meanings encapsulated within them.

Commentaries on the Comedy and the Theory

Presently, the exploration of ethical themes in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* predominantly relies on conventional ethical frameworks. In his scholarly contribution entitled "Midsummer Night's Dream: Relating Ethics to Mutuality," Hawley (2010) explores ethical conflicts within this comedic masterpiece. Hawley explores the ethical dilemmas and investigates relational resolutions within *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Proposing that Shakespeare's play underscores the necessity of resolving ethical disputes through interpersonal relationships, Hawley contends that the fantastical "fairy world" of King Oberon disrupts human affairs, leading to ethical confusion. The author states, "Hegel's dialectic, Jean-Luc Nancy's transfiguring, and Martin Buber's relational perspectives take up Shakespeare's premise of treating ontology and ethics as facets of the same movement" (Hawley 159). As Hegel maintains that any (unavoidable) alienation has to be overcome, it also demonstrates "Nancy's and Buber's symbolic consecration of ethical being as

mutuality" (Hawley 159). The emerging moral relationship dampens the "unethical acquisitiveness" of Helena and Demetrius (Hawley 163). While acknowledging that the lovers within the play do not resolve every ethical dilemma arising from the financial, "political and social conflicts" depicted, Hawley contends that their renewed desires nonetheless "extend relational ethics to the world of the play" and resonate with contemporary audiences (Hawley 163). By drawing on the philosophical views of Hegel, Buber, and Nancy, Hawley provides a nuanced understanding of the play's themes and characters, demonstrating their connection to broader philosophical concepts. Importantly, Hawley underscores the enduring relevance of Shakespeare's work in contemporary ethical and philosophical discussions. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the author's primary focus centres on the philosophical and ethical aspects of the play, with less exploration of its literary and historical contexts. While Hawley (2010) has thoroughly examined the ethical disputes within *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the ethical choice of the father-daughter conflict in this comedy have not been subjected to investigation. Furthermore, the author predominantly adopts the research methods of traditional ethics, rather than embracing an interdisciplinary approach.

Nie Zhenzhao, a distinguished literary theorist, recognizes the importance of interdisciplinary research within literary studies. Against economic globalization and the swift advancement of high technology, the trajectory of literary studies has gravitated towards interdisciplinary development, marking a prominent contemporary trend (Ren Jie 736) [1]. To comply with this trend, Nie advocates for ethical literary criticism. This theory combines literature, ethics, morality, sociology, history, psychology, linguistics, brain science, and natural sciences. It creates a new theoretical paradigm with interdisciplinary knowledge attributes by organically integrating the different knowledge elements (Nie et al. 89) [2]. As espoused by Nie, ethical literary criticism is a critical theory that is employed to examine, assess, and interpret "the ethical nature and function of literary works" through the lens of ethics ("Ethical Literary Criticism: A Basic Theory" 189). Unlike moral criticism, ethical literary criticism refrains from adjudicating a literary work based on contemporary

1 Translated by the authors of this paper. Original text is available in Ren Jie, "Interdisciplinary Studies and the Construction of Discourse System of Ethical Literary Criticism," *Forum for World Literature Studies* 5 (2022): 735-744.

2 Translated by the authors of this paper. Original text is available in Nie Zhenzhao et al., "Conversations on the Ethical Literary Criticism and the Frontier of Interdisciplinary Studies of Literature," *Journal of Central China Normal University (Humanities and Social Sciences)* 2 (2022): 79-105.

moral standards. Instead, it accentuates a commitment to "historicism," advocating for examining a work's ethical values within its historical or chronological context. The primary objective of ethical literary criticism is to discern the ethical causes that give rise to literature and shape its characters and events. It endeavors to illuminate the ethical dilemmas surrounding events, individuals, and their conduct, providing an ethical judgment. In contrast to conventional ethical critics who often analyzed literature through the lens of "their personal ethical and moral principles" or, at best, those of their contemporaries, Nie contends that such an approach renders their critique unreliable and distorts both the objectives and methodologies of literary analysis. Instead, Nie suggests that ethical critics should concentrate on elucidating the ethical value inherent in literature, utilizing their moral principles as frameworks. Unfortunately, historical ethical critics used literary analysis to validate their morality rather than engaging in a genuine investigation. In contrast, ethical literary criticism places a heightened emphasis on "objectivity and historicism" compared to traditional ethical criticism, considering "the contemporary value of literature as its historical value rediscovered" (Nie Zhenzhao, "Value Choices and Theoretical Construction" 85).

The core concept and theoretical cornerstone of ethical literary criticism is ethical selection, a focal point underscored by Nie (2021). This perspective attributes the cognitive differentiation between humans and animals to ethical selection. Nie contends that ethical selection is crucial in bestowing human beings with rationality and moral awareness, ultimately transforming them into "ethical beings" ("Ethical Literary Criticism: Sphinx Factor and Ethical Selection" 386). Within the realm of literature, ethical choice often constructs or deconstructs identity, and ethical identity determines or influences ethical choice. For example, Hamlet grapples with an ethical dilemma surrounding the imperative to avenge his father's death yet finds himself unable to make a definitive ethical choice. According to Nie, this predicament is intricately tied to Hamlet's evolving ethical identity, which undergoes significant transformations upon his mother's marriage to Claudius. Nie argued that Hamlet assumes the role of Claudius's stepson and prince to a certain degree. The recently acquired ethical identities engender him a sense of hesitation regarding seeking retribution, as he must navigate "the ethical taboo of patricide and regicide" (Nie Zhenzhao, "Towards an Ethical Literary Criticism" 94).

Nie (2015) analyzed ethical dilemmas, ethical knots, and ethical identities in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. However, the scrutiny of ethical choices within the context of the father-daughter conflict in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has been conspicuously absent from scholarly discourse. Consequently, building upon

Nie's (2015) groundwork, the present study endeavors to leverage ethical literary criticism as a conceptual framework to investigate social and natural ethics in the father-daughter conflict and Hermia's ethical choice in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Father-Daughter Conflict and Social Ethics

The father-daughter relationship is pivotal in the intricate fabric of familial structure, embodying a dynamic interplay of tradition and disruption, conflict, and reconciliation. Patriarchy, as a social system, emphasizes the dominance of men in the realms of family, politics, and society while positioning women at a relatively lower rung in terms of social status and power, which manifests within the family unit where men traditionally hold a perceived superiority, wielding decision-making authority, particularly in domestic affairs. Fathers are emblematic of authoritative figures, exercising control over pivotal aspects such as their daughters' matrimonial prospects. However, for daughters, the patriarchal system can become a form of restraint and oppression, igniting within them a desire for rebellion in pursuit of personal freedom and rights. Consequently, daughters frequently navigate a nuanced relationship with their fathers, characterized by a complex interplay of respect and defiance. Simultaneously, an inherent desire for paternal protection exists juxtaposed with a longing for liberation from imposed constraints. The intensity of this opposition varies with changes in social circumstances. During periods of relative societal stability, daughters may be more inclined to heed their father's counsel. Conversely, daughters may rebel to counter paternal authority in eras marked by moral decay or social upheaval.

The play *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by William Shakespeare was probably composed in 1594 or 1595, with its initial publication in 1600 (Wells et al. 575)[1]. In Shakespearean England, the aristocratic family structure was inherently patriarchal. Parent-child relationships were typically distant and formal, characterized by a lack of emotional connection, and controlled exclusively by "paternal authoritarianism" (Boose 325). Egeus, like many fathers of his time, is portrayed as obsessed with preserving his dominance over Hermia, even at the cost of her well-being. The depiction of Egeus exemplifies the prevailing ethos of paternal authority, which permeated the aristocratic family structure in Shakespearean England. This portrayal underscores the paternal role extending beyond mere guidance to encompass a resolute exertion of control, symbolic of the broader societal norms governing parent-child relationships in that era.

1 See Stanley Wells et al., eds., *The Complete Oxford Shakespeare*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987.

In the Elizabethan era, daughters often faced a dilemma regarding marriage: either they surrender to their father's authority or follow their personal preference. Under normal circumstances, daughters have almost no autonomy in marriage and must obey their father's arrangements for significant marriage matters. As Cook says: "those in authority—parents or guardians of minor children and masters of servants—had to give formal consent to the marriage of their charges" (69). In this context of the times, Shakespeare portrayed an authoritarian father, Egeus, who interfered with his daughter's marriage in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. However, Shakespeare "may have been the exploration in extreme circumstances of the notion of a right to autonomy in matrimonial choice" (Sokol 149). Therefore, Shakespeare created the authoritarian father in the play and the daughter who challenges patriarchy and pursues freedom of love. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the daughter Hermia completely ignores her father's authority, rebels against her father, and eventually marries her true lover, Lysander.

A Midsummer Night's Dream elucidates the ethical conflict between the freedom of romantic choice and paternal authority. The opening scene of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* introduces us to the central conflict of the play—the struggle between Egeus, a father, and his daughter, Hermia. In Act One, Scene One, Egeus is depicted as a dominant and authoritative figure who exercises control over his daughter Hermia. He "possesses his daughter and commands her to marry Demetrius" (Szakolczai 9-10). However, Hermia vehemently opposes this arrangement, asserting her stand and refusing to marry Demetrius, the man her father favors. Her defiance leads to her being brought before Theseus, the Duke of Athens, for judgment. Theseus, in his counsel, emphasizes the societal expectation that children should regard their fathers as god-like figures with absolute authority. Egeus, in turn, insists on his right to make decisions on behalf of his daughter, declaring, "As she is mine, I may dispose of her"[1](1.1. 42) and goes on to transfer his rights over Hermia to Demetrius: "And she is mine, and all my right of her/ I do estate unto Demetrius" (1.1.97-98). These words and actions reflect the "official ideology" of the time (Cook 98-99). Dreher (1986) notes that Egeus's language in the play indicates the degree to which he views Hermia as a possession, transferring her as if she were a piece of property. His possessive love is evident through the "first-person possessive pronouns" he uses, emphasizing his right and control over her (Dreher 49).

1 Citations of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are from William Shakespeare, "A Midsummer Night's Dream," *The Oxford Shakespeare Comedies*, edited by Stanley Wells et al., New York: Oxford UP, 1987, 575-600.

Theseus's addition to Egeus's demands underscores the cultural psychology underpinning this rigid societal system. Theseus advises Hermia that she should unquestioningly obey her father, portraying fathers as the ultimate authorities who shape their children's lives, much like a sculptor molding a figure in wax:

> What say you, Hermia? Be advised, fair maid.
> To you your father should be as a god,
> One that composed your beauties, yea, and one
> To whom you are but as a form in wax,
> By him imprinted, and within his power
> To leave the figure or disfigure it. (1.1.46-51)

Theseus' warning is a stark reminder to Hermia that challenging her father's authority is futile in a society where children are perceived as passive and malleable. In contrast, fathers possess god-like power to shape or even harm their offspring. Hermia expresses her confusion and fear of "the possible outcomes of her disobedience" (Szakolczai 10). However, within the play's narrative, this oppressive and regressive view of Athens is swiftly replaced by a more progressive and enlightened perspective. When her father invokes "the ancient privilege of Athens," Hermia seeks clarification about her position, challenging the assumptions underlying this tradition (Gleckman 24). Her inquiry into the potential consequences of refusing to marry Demetrius indicates her refusal to conform to societal expectations.

The opening scene of the play serves as a satirical commentary on patriarchy and the harm it inflicts upon women. In their pursuit of arranging suitable marriages for their children, parents often assume they have more experience and the responsibility to make decisions. Egeus' insistence on Hermia's marriage to Demetrius is driven by his desire to maintain his patriarchal authority, and he acts irrationally, prioritizing this authority over his daughter's well-being. Stephanie Chamberlain's article, "Law of the Father," supports this perspective, emphasizing that Egeus disregards his daughter's wishes to uphold the "ancient privilege of Athens," the law of the father that compels this confrontation before the Duke's court (34). Zitouni et al. (2020) hold that in this scene, Shakespeare not only ridicules Egeus' irrational conduct but also takes a feminist stance, highlighting the harm inflicted by "the laws of a patriarchal system" (121). Kurian (2016) also asserts the concept of "patriarchal parental control" is reinforced and normalized through the relationship between Egeus and Hermia, with the endorsement of

Theseus (9). Moreover, Olson (1957) believes Egeus sees his role as a guardian who has the authority to make decisions on behalf of his daughter. Theseus upholds this position, emphasizing that children must obey their fathers. The Athenian law is possibly "the law of hierarchy which Plutarch's Theseus introduced" (Olson 103-104).

The father-daughter conflict in the comedy serves as a representation of the prevailing societal standards and expectations surrounding marriage during Shakespeare's era. This depiction highlights the influence of patriarchal authority, wherein parents frequently exerted control over their children's decisions regarding marriage. In the eyes of contemporary viewers, Egeus may be perceived as unduly dictatorial, compelling his daughter to make a difficult choice between romantic love and dutiful adherence to familial expectations. Therefore, analyzing the historical backdrop encompassing Renaissance marriage customs is imperative. Marriage had a distinct purpose during the Renaissance that diverged from the contemporary perception of a personal romantic relationship. The primary purpose of this practice was to foster the union of two families, establish economic benefits, and forge significant political connections. Marriage served as an economic imperative for ordinary people, including peasants, artisans, and laborers, since it facilitated cooperation and allocating tasks across diverse occupational domains. In this context, parental consent is pivotal in a child's decision-making process regarding their job path, religious vocation, or choice of marital union. Parents were obliged to "provide for their children's future" (Dreher 24). However, the seemingly triumphant portrayal of male dominance and paternal authority is immediately challenged by the character of Hermia. She resists her father's insistence on an arranged marriage and questions his belief in his "ancient privilege" to make decisions about her life (Loomba 182). This resistance highlights the tension between traditional patriarchal values and the evolving agency of daughters in matters of love and marriage.

Therefore, a fierce conflict between the father and the rebellious daughter is portrayed in the play. This conflict leads to the rupture of the father-daughter relationship and tears apart the fragile bonds of traditional ethics. Egeus, a stubborn father who clings to traditional ethics, is cut from the same cloth as those fathers in conventional households, tending to exercise authority in controlling his daughter's actions. This traditional patriarchal ideology has long dominated social structures. However, with the rise of the Renaissance movement, this authority based on submission is no longer as steadfast. Nevertheless, Egeus remains stubborn, holding onto his patriarchal mindset of controlling his daughter's behavior with an

authoritative stance, which is the fundamental reason for the conflict between him and his daughter.

Father-Daughter Conflict and Natural Ethics

A doctrine of nature forms the basis of Shakespeare's conception of life. Shakespeare revealed many of the results of his research into the mysteries of nature. His works offer a philosophy of ethics, art, and politics. In Elizabethan contexts, the term "nature" encompasses several basic meanings. It refers to a person's inherent characteristics and deficiencies, including character, physical body, and mental functions. It also contains human feelings, instincts, and emotions. From an ethical vantage point, it suggests individuals should align their actions with the natural order, emphasizing the significance of moderation and avoiding excess, particularly in areas like lust, as part of "a broad moral law" (Knowlton 719-723).

The opening scene of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* provides a symbolic exploration of the evolution of erotic desire within the context of changing societal norms. In the "pre-classical Athens" setting, it can be observed that sensual urges were subjected to the dominance of "patriarchal imperatives" (Gleckman 24). Montrose (1996) argues that the play reflects the dialectical tension surrounding the concept of marriage in English Protestant culture. It simultaneously portrays authoritarian and misogynistic aspects, reflecting the emphasis on masculine authority over women. However, it also reveals the multiple and potentially contradictory ideological positions surrounding early modern Protestant marriage, marked by debates about equality versus hierarchy in domestic life (Montrose 110-113)[1]. In this context, Protestantism allowed for an expanded role of eroticism within marriage, emphasizing the importance of sexual satisfaction within the marital relationship. While reformers like Luther and Calvin acknowledged the naturalness of sexual desire, they also urged moderation and discipline, even within marriage. The idea of "due benevolence" pertained to fulfilling one's spouse's sexual needs, promoting a restrained and passionate love between couples (Gleckman 27-28). In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Egeus perceives his daughter's attraction to Lysander as a form of magic that pulls her away from his chosen suitor. However, "the magic Egeus perceives is actually Hermia's awakening eroticism" (Gleckman 25).

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shakespeare portrays the ethical conflicts between Hermia and Egeus. To begin with, Hermia is not just Egeus' daughter but

1 See Louis Montrose, *The Purpose of Playing: Shakespeare and the Cultural Politics of the Elizabethan Theater*, Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1996.

also Helena's close companion. Helena's impassioned accusation against Hermia, likening their past relationship to a "double cherry, seeming parted, / But yet an union in partition" (3.2.210-211), has led many critics to draw a sharp contrast between the harmonious equality of female bonds and the dominance and violence associated with heterosexual relationships. This dichotomy has fueled arguments equating "heteroeroticism with female subjugation and homoeroticism with female empowerment" (Sanchez 502). Helena's portrayal as the "imperial vot'ress" (2.1.163) who avoids Cupid's influence and walks in "maiden meditation, fancy-free," (2.1.164) underscores this perspective. While this interpretation sheds light on alternatives to traditional "heteronormative marriage," it also risks overlooking the complex and sometimes contradictory nature of women's desires and emotions (Sanchez 502). Helena's nostalgic depiction of her past closeness with Hermia further emphasizes the idealization of same-sex relationships as havens of purity and innocence, free from the perceived lust and domination associated with heteroeroticism:

> We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,
> Have our needles created both one flower,
> Both on one ampler, sitting on one cushion,
> Both warbling of one song, both in one key,
> As if our hands, our sides, voices, and minds
> Had been incorporate. So we grew together,
> Like to a double cherry: seeming parted,
> But yet an union in partition,
> Two lovely berries moulded on one stem.
> So, with two seeming bodies but one heart,
> Two of the first—like coats in heraldry,
> Due but to one and crowned with one crest.
> And will you rend our ancient love asunder,
> To join with men in scorning your poor friend?
> It is not friendly, 'tis not maidenly.
> Our sex as well as I may chide you for it. (3.2.203-219)

Hermia and Helena have attended school since early childhood, forging a close relationship. When Helena perceives Hermia's mocking, she interprets it as an act of betrayal. Sanchez (2012) points out that Helena's emphasis on their unity and identity suggests a fantasy of perfect harmony, with even their "sides" blending into

one, suggesting sexual connotations that were understandable to contemporaries (502-503).

Additionally, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Egeus is the father of Hermia and the one who loves Demetrius. The joke made by Lysander in the initial act, wherein he proposes that Demetrius should wed Hermia's father, Egeus, rather than Hermia, suggests a possible homosexual relationship between the two men. This jest challenges the notion of Demetrius's "certain right" to Hermia based on parental approval, as Lysander argues that Egeus seems to "have more love for Demetrius than for his own daughter" (Derrin 430-431). This episode reflects the complexity of romantic relationships within the societal constraints of the time. According to Chamberlian (2011), Egeus is in love with Demetrius, and his passion for Demetrius overrides "his responsibility to Hermia" (34). David Schalkwyk (2008) argues that Egeus "wants to give his daughter to Demetrius because he loves him" (71). Homosexuality, a taboo during Shakespeare's era, becomes a hint in the play. Nie's conception of natural ethics, as expounded in his scrutiny of taboos and ethical orders, furnishes a robust framework for examining *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In the context of the play, written at a time when heterosexual marriage was prevalent in Britain, the concept of taboo is central to the formation of the ethical order. According to Nie (2021):

> Taboo is the foundation and guarantee of the ancient ethical order. Taboo is the origin of morality—in the progress of human civilization, we have gone through the transformation of taboos into morality. Taboos presently play a role in morality. The formation and change of the ethical order of human society are institutionally premised on taboos. (Nie Zhenzhao, "Ethical Literary Criticism: A Basic Theory" 192)

Nie (2021) underscores the significance of taboo in shaping the ancient ethical order, elucidating its role in the establishment of morality and the formation of ethical order. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the prevailing attitudes toward heterosexual marriage can be construed as embodying the taboo of homosexuality. Shakespearean comedies have often been viewed through the lens of restraining libidinal impulses, especially female sexuality, by channeling them into stable and socially acceptable matrimonial engagements. Scholars such as Frye and Olson have highlighted the role of comedy in adapting Eros to the moral fabric of society,

ultimately culminating in well-ordered marriages (181; 99)[1], which aligns with Nie's perspective on the transformative nature of taboos. As argued by Sanchez, "patriarchal power and heterosexual marriage" are seen as safeguards against the perceived chaos of women's desires and emotions (501). In this context, adherence to traditional values, including heterosexual marriage, coincides with the institutional framework of taboos that shape the ethical order. Thus, the comedy depicts the evolving ethical considerations influenced by taboos and their transformative journey into contemporary morality.

The ethical conflicts manifesting in the interactions between Hermia and Egeus are intrinsically tied to their shifting ethical identities. Egeus navigates the dual roles of being Hermia's father and Demetrius's lover while Hermia grapples with her identity as Egeus's daughter, Lysander's lover, and Helena's partner. These shifting ethical identities contribute to ethical confusion.

The Ethical Choice of Hermia

What is the ethical choice? The ethical choice is each specific choice that makes up the entire ethical selection of humankind. As posited by Nie (2020), ethical selection refers to the process humans must undergo to acquire their humanity after the formation of human nature through natural selection. This process involves the choices humans make to be moral individuals, and it requires education and learning to accomplish (Nie, "Value Choices and Theoretical Construction in Ethical Literary Criticism" 73) [2]. Moreover, Yang (2022) elucidates that following the phase of natural selection, human beings must go through a process of moral perfection, that is, the step of ethical selection. Natural selection is the choice of the form of man, the choice of man as a new species; ethical selection is the choice of the nature of man, the choice of how to be a moral man (420)[3].

In Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Hermia assumes multiple ethical identities, encompassing her roles as Egeus's daughter, Lysander's lover, and Helena's romantic partner. As a daughter within the societal confines of the Renaissance, Hermia is forced to choose between ethics and nature. Irrespective

1 See Northrop Frye, *The Anatomy of Criticism*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957; Paul A. Olson, "A Midsummer Night's Dream and the Meaning of Court Marriage," *ELH* 2 (1957): 99.

2 Translated by the authors of this paper. Original text is available in Nie Zhenzhao, "Value Choices and Theoretical Construction in Ethical Literary Criticism," *Social Sciences in China* 10 (2020): 71-93.

3 Translated by the authors of this paper. Original text is available in Yang Gexin, "From Ethical Selection to Scientific Selection: The Theoretical Logic of Ethical Literary Criticism," *Interdisciplinary Studies of Literature* 3 (2022): 416-425.

of the ethical environment in which women lived throughout history, Hermia consistently bears the ethical responsibilities intrinsic to her identity as a daughter. Therefore, she cannot openly defy her father. Hermia, deeply influenced by the traditional moral values prevalent in the Renaissance era, internalizes the notion of paternal authority. Her daughterly ethical identity compels her to align her actions with her father's wishes, perceiving him as an authoritative figure. In the ethical milieu of the time, Hermia had no choice but to comply with her father's commands. In her era's ethical environment, Hermia encounters an irreconcilable conflict between her identity as a daughter and that of a lover. In response, she opts to elope with her beloved Lysander. This choice underscores Hermia's status as a morally conscientious individual, as she adheres steadfastly to fundamental ethical precepts. Hermia's ethical choices, reflective of ethical wisdom, align with Nie Zhenzhao's insights into the essence of ethical wisdom and its correlation with ethical choices:

> Firstly, ethical wisdom helps people make rational ethical choices in complex ethical environments with various ethical identities and severe ethical conflicts. Secondly, ethical wisdom requires sticking to historically solid ethical moral principles and norms, breaking free from old ones, and advocating for new ones that reflect societal evolution. Finally, ethical wisdom often operates through moral intuition, where individuals internalize certain ethical moral principles as part of their self-awareness, enabling them to express ethical wisdom through moral intuition in ethical choices. Moral intuition guides the creative processes of the authors and the ethical choices of the characters. Moral intuition unites reason and sensibility, manifesting accumulated concepts in specific settings and making choices by perception rather than extensive rational deliberation [1]. (Nie et al. 103)

Su Hui (2022) further enriches our understanding by emphasizing that writers reflect dynamic changes in notions of good and evil during periods of social transformation through three types of characters and their ethical choices: the first type is the rebels, pioneers, and innovators. They have advanced thinking and choose to rebel and fight against the old moral principles and norms when there is a sharp conflict between the old and the new ethics, which is an essential manifestation of the ethical wisdom

1 Translated by the authors of this paper. Original text is available in Nie Zhenzhao et al., "Conversations on the Ethical Literary Criticism and the Frontier of Interdisciplinary Studies of Literature," *Journal of Central China Normal University (Humanities and Social Sciences)* 2 (2022): 79-105.

of human beings. The second is the defender of the old system and morality. Writers often expose and criticize these characters' conservative and backward ethical and moral views and regard them as representatives of the evil forces that prevent the heroes from pursuing their ideals. The third is the characters caught in ethical dilemmas during social transformation. They cannot make correct value judgments on good and evil, leading to self-loss and even evil choices. Among the above three types of characters, the writer gives his ethical wisdom to the first type of characters so that the ethical choices they make during the period of social transformation fully reflect the foresight and ethical wisdom; the latter two types of characters do not have ethical wisdom, but the writer demonstrates the value judgment and ethical wisdom through the shaping of the characters and their destinies and the arrangement of the end, reflecting the writer's foresight in the development trend of the history of the society (Nie et al. 104)[1].

Hermia, a character created by Shakespeare in his comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, demonstrates ethical choices by defying irrational rules and traditional beliefs to pursue love with intelligence and wisdom. Ultimately, she overcomes the challenges and achieves success. Shakespeare invented Hermia as a rebel, pioneer, and innovator and endowed her with his ethical wisdom, causing her ethical choices at this time of societal change to demonstrate both foresight and ethical wisdom.

Conclusion

The father-daughter relationship in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* reflects the societal dynamics of Shakespearean England, highlighting the conflict between traditional patriarchal values and daughters seeking autonomy in love and marriage. The father-daughter conflict ruptures traditional ethics, with Egeus representing a stubborn adherence to outdated norms amid societal changes in the Renaissance era. The ethical conflicts in Hermia and Egeus arise from their shifting ethical identities, contributing to ethical confusion. Shakespeare describes Hermia as the daughter of Egeus, Lysander's lover and Helena's partner, leaving her entangled in an ethical dilemma. The ethical choices made by Hermia contribute to the development of the conflict between her and her father while also exemplifying ethical wisdom. Thus, this comedy offers a good example of ethical choices.

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1 Translated by the authors of this paper. Original text is available in Nie Zhenzhao et al., "Conversations on the Ethical Literary Criticism and the Frontier of Interdisciplinary Studies of Literature," *Journal of Central China Normal University (Humanities and Social Sciences)* 2 (2022): 79-105.

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A Maternal Narrative and Beyond: An Ethical Reading of Home Consciousness in J .M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron*

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Abstract In Coetzee's oeuvre, *Age of Iron* literally, and perhaps most explicitly, exhibits the idea of home in a maternal narrative with regard to both the narrative itself and the influence of Coetzee's authorship. By calling it a maternal narrative, this essay premises the argument not only on the fact that the story is told by a mother to her self-exiled daughter, but also on the recurring moments of motherhood, the prominent absence of a husband-like figure and the implication of the children's filial duty. Besides the fictional parent/child bond, there is also another narrative thread, the ethics of alterity. The novelist prepares a dual approach to alterity, with one part Vercueil while the other the black people, for readers to appreciate Mrs Curren's wrestling with her ethical predicament as a liberal humanism, namely, her sympathy with the blacks and complicity with apartheid. All these narrative techniques All these narrative techniques are used to effectively integrate the novelist's emotions, particularly his connection to liberalism in South Africa and his mother Vera, with the historical, ethical, and political context of the novel. This essay will try to test this assumption and dig out the influence of Coetzee's authorship behind these tensions.

Keywords a maternal narrative; ethical predicament; home consciousness; alterity; authorship

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In Coetzee's oeuvre, *Age of Iron (AI* for short herrefater*)* literally, and perhaps most explicitly, exhibits the idea of home in a maternal narrative with regard to both the narrative itself and the influence of Coetzee's authorship. By calling it a maternal narrative, I premise my argument not only on the fact that the story is told by a mother to her self-exiled daughter, but also on the recurring moments of motherhood, the prominent absence of a husband-like figure and the implication of the filial duty of the children. Meanwhile, the fictional parent/child bond serves as a channel to integrate the stream of personal feeling with the historical tide, ethically and politically. Differently put, the narrative transcends, as always, the personal losses and gains when dealing with the family issue by involving itself in, and placing a heavy weight on, different kinds of alterity within a highly political context. I will try to test this assumption in my following reading and dig out the influence of Coetzee's authorship behind these tensions.

Introduction

A maternal narrative, as the term indicates, should primarily attend to the parent/child relation, and there is actually no lack of discussions on familial bonds in Coetzee's fiction. Paola Splendore contends that the distorted relationship between parents and children in Coetzee' s fiction acts as "a sub-text"(150), which lies under the surface of the narrative without explicit and full development. Her argument that Coetzee makes the ethical and political dimension of the familial relationship outweigh its familial bond is convincing enough, but she tries to attribute the generational conflicts in *AI* to "the failure of parental responsibility" (152). Similarly, in order to back up his argument on the idea of hospitality in Coetzee's oeuvre, Mike Marais remarks that when the protagonists in Coetzee's works seek to find "the lost child", a recurring "self-reflexive metaphor for the invisible" arises, in which "s/he bears a parental responsibility for the child"(xiv).

Gillian Dooley also has a chapter-length analysis of the relationship between parents and children in Coetzee's oeuvre in her book. By noting that Coetzee shows more interest in "the intergenerational bond" in his fiction instead of family ties (152), Dooley conducts a systematic and close reading of the texts from *Dusklands* to *Summertime* and takes issue with some of Splendore's points of view. One problem in Splendore's argument, according to Dooley, is that she categorizes all the family bonds in Coetzee's works as a 'sub-text', since three novels, *Foe*, *AI* and *The Master of Petersburg* "explicitly concern a parent who has lost a child in some way"(157). Dooley is surely correct in highlighting the blunt exposure of family feelings in these novels, but she, like other critics at that time, seems reluctant to

relate the narrative intensity to Coetzee's authorship.

In this regard, the study is much consolidated by Sue Kossew with her interesting essay on the parental punctum in Coetzee's novels, especially in *The Childhood of Jesus*.[1] Before moving on to the issue of language in this Jesus novel, Kossew observes that Coetzee's novels abound with strikingly touching and emotionally-rich but, in Barthes's words, "piercing" and "wounding", familial moments. Her analysis of the interrelation between the parental punctum and Coetzee's fictional autobiographies can be deemed an attempt to bridge the gap between Coetzee' s life and his writings in respect of the influences of Coetzee's parents on his authorship. This relationship has been thoroughly explored by Daivd Attwell in his recent book, where he makes full use of Coetzee's drafts to conduct a genetic analysis of the influence of Vera, Coetzee's mother, and Jack, the father, on the novelist's authorship.[2]

Familial Bond and Authorship

As the introduction shows, by developing the intricacy of the literary familial bond, critics reach a consensus that the family unit, arguably the most prominent field where the idea of home is practised and enacted, is dysfunctional in Coetzee's works: none of the protagonists seems to deserve a complete family.[3] The fictional characters include not only the lost child but also the widowed parent. The dysfunction can always be ascribed to, and, in reverse, manifest the dynamics of, the ethical and political dimension interweaved with the familial bond. This explains, albeit partly, why it is so hard to resist the temptation of attending closely to the familial phenomenon in his works. Nevertheless, there is a tendency to generalize the feature of the familial bond in Coetzee's fiction. Take parental responsibility for example. It is true that some of the works, such as *Foe*, *The Master of Petersburg* and *Disgrace*, are profoundly concerned with parental responsibility, as what Paola Splendore and Mike Marais argue respectively, but the judgement will be problematic

1 The punctum is a term derived from Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida* and refers to, simply speaking, the piercing and wounding effect caused by some photos on people's emotions. See Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida : Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard, New York: Hill and Wang, 1982.

2 As for the role of Coetzee's father in his creative process, see David Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, pp.177-186.

3 Sue Kossew clearly traces the distorted parent/child relation in Coetzee's oeuvre from *Dusklands* to The *Childhood of Jesus*. See "J.M. Coetzee and the Parental Punctum." In *J.M. Coetzee's the Childhood of Jesus: The Ethics of Ideas and Things*, edited by Jennifer Rutherford and Anthony Uhlmann, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017.pp.153-155.

when it comes to *AI*.

AI is a story about Mrs Curren, a single mother, who, upon being told that her breast cancer has reached an advanced and fatal stage after it spreads to the bone, writes a long letter to the absent daughter about her craving for familial care, her encounter with an unexpected derelict, Vercueil, and the township people, Florence's extended family, and John. There are, thus, at least two narrative lines: the family ethics and the ethics of alterity (to which I will return later).[1] As far as the family ethics is concerned, as I see it, it has more to do with filial duty than parental responsibility; that is to say, the tension that leads Mrs Curren to reminiscence about the childhood of her daughter, of herself, and of her mother lies in the filial duty of the younger generation. If there are any parental responsibilities in the novel, we should take the conflict of different attitudes to the young generation's response to apartheid, either self-exile or militant fight, into consideration.

If what I refer to as the dysfunctional family is also prone to generalization, in the following sections I will narrow down the topic and argue how the pervasive fictional motherhood is associated with the novelist's attachment to his mother, Vera.[2] Furthermore, it is because of the authorship's influence, or specifically speaking, the "historical guilt" of Vera's political standpoint (Attwell, *Life of Writing* 168), that the novel develops its second narrative line.

Motherhood

Although the distorted parent/child relationship is well discussed, one phenomenon that has received little critical attention is Mrs Curren's memory of the intimacy between herself and her daughter, which resurfaces frequently in the novel. My point of departure in approaching motherhood is, since Mrs Curren's clinging to these happy memories sounds most intriguing to me, to explore the interaction between these episodes and the novelist's authorship. Actually, at the beginning of the novel, upon hearing the tragic news of her terminal disease, Mrs. Curren trudges to the "empty house"(Coetzee, *AI* 4), though accompanied by a mysterious vagrant, Vercueil, who intrudes into her life (I will come back to this below), and outspokenly expresses her yearning for her daughter and the real meaning of home: "we bear children in order to be mothered by them. Home truths, a mother's truth: from now on to the end that is all you will hear from me. So: how I longed for you!"

1 By referring to it as the ethics of alterity, I am deeply informed by Derek Attridge's insightful reading of Coetzee, especially that of *AI*. See Derek Attridge, *J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004, pp. 91-112.

2 Attwell's analysis also indicates that the representation of Mrs Curren arises directly from Coetzee's engagement with the memory of Vera. See Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 161-176.

(5). This straightforward monologue, as we can see, extends across the narrative (50, 66, 72, 117, 127). Furthermore, Mrs Curren is frequently overwhelmed by scenes from her family life (minimizing the role of a father here), such as waking the daughter up in the mornings of the school day (5, 52), and rushing to the emergency department in the hospital when the daughter slices her thumb in the bread machine (57). All of these moments contribute to the novelist's endeavour of depicting the mother's longing for the daughter, but one will wonder why, if it is claimed that the dysfunctional family unit lies all over his oeuvre, Coetzee highlights these happy memories in *AI*. One reason, one may argue, is out of the necessity of the fictional plot, but, if we take Coetzee's authorship into account, the question may not as simple as it appears at first sight.

The dedication of the novel could be a good and first clue to the puzzlement. Since *AI* is one of the few to carry a dedication,[1] it is understandable that Gillian Dooley, partly based on this reminder, asserts that "*AI* was written in the shadow of personal bereavement and is dedicated to Coetzee's mother, father, and son"(162). Coetzee began to write a draft later developing into *AI* one year later than the time when Vera died in 1985, so the shadow, as Attwell advances, should mainly be attributed to the death of Vera; differently put, the novel was written for his mother so that it would revolve around the maternal narrative. Attwell's genetic criticism illuminatingly reminds us of the influence of Vera on the creative process of *AI*,[2] which I fully endorse.

The influence can be traced back to Coetzee's attachment to his mother which developed during his early age and continued to haunt him in his later life. The emotionally charged Nobel banquet acceptance speech, as one of the noticeable examples, stunningly betrays this feeling.[3] However, it was Vera's death that became a direct trigger for Coetzee to begin this novel since it "revived the problem of historical guilt" (Attwell, *Life of Writing* 168). One may feel that this point of departure is quite ironic since it seems to contradict Coetzee's deep love for Vera, but the problem he addresses in the novel is the tension between love and shame over Vera's attitudes towards Africa and Africans (which I will turn to later). This tension serves as a foundation for the development of the narrative.

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1 Kannemeyer notes that the other works with a dedication include *Waiting for the Barbarians* and the collected edition of Coetzee's fictional memoirs. See J.C. Kannemeyer, *J.M. Coetzee: A Life in Writing*, translated by Michiel Heyns. London: Scribe Publications, 2013,p. 443.

2 See Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, 167-176.

3 Both David Attwell and Sue Kossew have embraced the tribute the banquet speech paid to Coetzee's mother. See ibid., 161-162. Kossew, "J.M. Coetzee and the Parental Punctum," 149-150.

What I want to emphasize here is that this foundation is inseparable from the explicit family bond on the surface of the narrative. Because the novelist, during his writing, "circled back repeatedly to the contradiction between love and ethical misgiving, as if the novel would have to be a family row in some sense" (Attwell, *Life of Writing* 169), it is not fanciful to claim that the intensity of Coetzee's love for his mother has been translated into the personal feeling in the narrative expressed by the dying mother towards the self-exiled daughter. The motherhood is, thus, not "a sub-text" in the narrative (150), as Paola Splendore puts it, but a prequel, because the earlier draft began with the letters from a son to a departed mother.

I do not intend to establish any linear causality between these sequences and Coetzee's attachment to his mother or, more broadly, between Coetzee's writing and his life, because that is what the novelist objects to. Not only Mrs Curren's learned knowledge in classical literature is transplanted from the novelist himself,[1] but also she is a more liberal figure than Vera was. Coetzee is a strong advocate for and adherence to impersonality, which, for him, is "a point of *arrival*" and "the result of a progressive writing-out of the self" (Attwell, "Reading" 375 emphasis original). Therefore, politically speaking, Coetzee is closer to his fictional creation than to his mother. The account of these fictional family intimacies is motivated by, rather than merely replicating, the novelist's attachment to his mother. The traces of Coetzee's wrestling with the maternal bond run through the novel, which enables us to witness its variations in several impersonalized ways. As Kannemeyer claims, the reader could "deduce a longing for the dead mother" (443).

Correspondingly, Mrs Curren's remembering her mother's childhood would make sense since it corresponds to, among many other things, the aforementioned happy moments and subsequently becomes integral to the maternal narrative. When our protagonist drives Vercueil along Boyes Drive to appreciate the scenery over Muizenberg, she tells the derelict the story of her mother's childhood (Coetzee, *AI* 15). It is about Mrs Curren's mother who recalls, during the family's journey from Uniondale to Plettenberg Bay for their Christmas at the seaside, the nights she spends with her family at the ox-wagon in the open air. The episode gives the readers a vivid account of the mother's worry about an accident caused by the uncontrolled wagon and the rolling stars, which is actually the fantasy of a carefree child. Mrs Curren, after witnessing the violence and Bheki's corpse in the Guguletu

1 The European canons, including Tolstoy, Shakespeare, Hawthorne, Zola and Bach, etc., constantly appear in Mrs Curren's narrative. For a detailed discussion, see María J. López, "Miguel De Cervantes and J.M. Coetzee: An Unacknowledged Paternity," *Journal of Literary Studies* ,vol. 29, no. 4, 2013, pp. 80-97.

township, reiterates the significance of the story to her, "I have held on to that story all my life. … it is there that I come from, it is there that I begin" (110). Both Kannemeyer and Attwell have analysed how the biographical materials evolved into the above final version, so there is little point in turning over the soil again. Nevertheless, there is another popular interpretation which regards the reiteration as, in Dominic Head's words, "the acceptance of the story of childhood insecurity" and, further, "an acceptance of complicity" with the dying colonial system (*J. M. Coetzee* 135). This view, to me, overemphasizes the political dimension of the novel and consequently takes less notice of the familial bond embedded in the story. Head casts a bright light on the mode of Mrs Curren's confession, but it is too hasty to make a political inference here and attribute the recollection of these memories to her reluctance in relinquishing the "entrenched ideas" of liberalism—most typically about childhood (130), in spite of the political orientation gradually conveyed as the narrative develops.

Mrs Curren herself clarifies the reason why she attaches so much importance to the memory of her mother: "For if she did not give me life, no one did. I cling not just to the memory of her but to her herself, to her body, to my birth from her body into the world. In blood and milk I drank her body and came to life" (Coetzee *AI* 101). The blood-tie underscored in the impulse is indubitably a feeling translated from the novelist's longing for his mother.[1] In the passages following this clarification, Mrs Curren delves into the memory of a family photo taken in her childhood. Head, by the same token, though conceding that the moment implies "a sense of lamentation for the loss of childhood innocence" and partly contributes to "the novel's elegiac tone", considers it as a reflection of Mrs Curren's wrestling with the idea of the childhood which is further related with "her political progression" (Head, *J. M. Coetzee* 136). Again, I will not deny the connection between the episodes with Mrs Curren's ethical and political awakening, but it is more existential and personal than political and confessional, which will subsequently strike a sharp contrast with the dysfunction of her nuclear family.

The following scene is another example of family moments which bear more relation to the authorship than to the confessional dimension. Mrs Curren, shortly after recounting her mother's childhood memory along Boyes Drive, speaks out her love for the country directly: "These seas, these mountains: I want to burn them upon my sight so deeply that, no matter where I go, they will always be before me. I am hungry with love of this world" (Coetzee, *AI* 16). The gush of the emotion is of

1 Sue Kossew also holds a similar view when discussing this moment. See Kossew, "J.M. Coetzee and the Parental Punctum," 155.

little relevance to Mrs Curren's complicity with, and confession about, the colonial order and the apartheid system; instead, it is "existential, and unrelated to unresolved questions of political morality" (Attwell, *Life of Writing* 172). As Kannemeyer puts it, "These words are reminiscent of Coetzee's own declaration of love for the meagre landscape of the Karoo and the rude beauty of the Cape Peninsula" (379).

As a maternal narrative, *AI* also features the absence of a husband-like figure. The novel makes little mention of Mrs Curren's husband except for some slight references to his situation. In their initial conversations, Mrs Curren tells Vercueil: "My husband and I parted a long time ago. … He is dead now" (Coetzee, *AI* 10). Then after experiencing the violence in Guguletu and driving home with the shattered windscreen, Mrs Curren bemoans the fact that she is engulfed by coldness and loneliness: "sixteen years since I shared a bed with man or boy. Sixteen years alone" (99). To be a single mother means to deprive the daughter of the paternal care in her daily life. This echoes fatherless Michael K in *Life & Times of Michael K* and widowed Susan Barton in *Foe*, where there is also a lack of a fully-fledged paternal figure.[1] If the recurring memories of the maternal narrative are transposed from Coetzee's longing for his mother, it will be true to say that the absence of a paternal figure is also associated with the authorship. The exaggerated rift between the father and the son staged in *Boyhood* is the dimension of alienation in his ambiguous attitude to home, which minimizes the paternal role in the novel written within that period. Though the following novels, such as The *Master of Petersburg* and *Disgrace* pay consistent heed to fatherhood, it has more to do with Coetzee's feeling towards his children, rather than the feeling from the novelist to his parents. The gap between the father and the son in *Boyhood* could not be healed until *Summertime*, which is deemed "a restoration" of this relationship (Attwell, *Life of Writing* 186).

The lack of a paternal figure also has its significance at the narrative level: it makes Mrs Curren more vulnerable and exposes her to the outside world, since the protective role is traditionally, albeit stereotypically, assumed by men. Even though there is an imaginary paternal figure, he fails to fulfil what he is supposed to do: "'Father, can't you see I'm burning?' implored the child, standing at his father's bedside. But his father, sleeping on, dreaming, did not see" (Coetzee *AI* 101). Though Coetzee, referencing Freud's dream of the burning child, depicted

1 Dooley pays attention to the phenomenon, but she infers that, based on the relative neglect of the paternal characters in Coetzee's fiction from the 1980s to the1990s, the resentment disclosed in *Boyhood* may be due more to "the preoccupation of the author at the time of writing than with the actual attitudes of his younger self." See Dooley, *J.M. Coetzee and the Power of Narrative*, New York: Cambria Press, 2010, p.157.

Mrs Curren's inner life after she witnesses the burning amphitheatre and Bheki's corpse in an abandoned hall, the novelist did not confine himself to a Freudian interpretation of the dream, namely, to regard it as a wish-fulfilment to prolong the "life" of the dead child in the father's dream.[1] Rather, Coetzee might want to express "the Lacanian Real", as Slavoj Žižek observes, "the reality of the child's reproach to his father" (45).[2] It corresponds to what Mrs Curren says later: "That is the reason—I bring it forward now for you to see—why I cling so tightly to the memory of my mother" and then she immerses herself in recollecting the memory of her mother and the family photo (Coetzee, *AI* 101).

Given all these personal considerations in the maternal discourse, Mrs Curren reiterates the importance of children to mothers, such as, by giving birth to and raising a child, a mother prolongs her own life. When Florence and Bheki are looking for the injured John at Groote Schuur, she addresses Vercueil in the car,

> I don't know whether you have children. I don't even know whether it is the same for a man. But when you bear a child from your own body you give your life to that child. Above all to the first child, the firstborn. Your life is no longer with you, it is no longer yours, it is with the child. That is why we do not really die: we simply pass on our life, the life that was for a while in us, and are left behind. (Coetzee, *AI* 69)

Ironically, the absence of the daughter, especially at this critical stage, paralyzes the value of bearing younger generations. That is why Mrs Curren, in the latter part of the novel, uses harsh words to blame her daughter: "Is this an accusation? No, but it is a reproach, a heartfelt reproach" (127). Several sentences later, the reprimand re-emerges: "Is this an accusation? Yes. *J'accuse*. I accuse you of abandoning me" (127).[3] These words are the plainest expressions conveyed by an abandoned

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1 See Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams (Second Part) and on Dreams*, ed. James Strachey, 24 vols., vol. 5, The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Lodon: Hogarth Press, 1953, p. 510.

2 There are also some allegorical interpretations of this reference. See Gallagher, *A Story of South Africa*, 205. Jane Poyner, *J.M. Coetzee and the Idea of the Public Intellectual*, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2006, pp.124-125.

3 We should not ignore the term, *J'accuse*, before Mrs Curren's emotionally-charged monologue. The reference to Emile Zola's *J'Accuse* is one of several literary allusions in the fiction, which clearly indicates a much broader political context. See, Craig Smith, "Flinging Accusations into the Teeth of the Wind: J.M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron* and Emile Zola's *J'accuse*," *English Studies in Africa: A Journal of the Humanities* ,vol. 56, no. 2, 2013, pp.14-24.

mother, who is left alone to cope with the personal tragedy and national chaos. As Jane Poyner puts it, this blame is out of the "anguish of a neglected mother"(Poyner 119). The anguish is in ironic contrast to the happy moments in the novel, which manifests Mrs Curren's failure to rejuvenate the family ethics—"I cannot live without a child. I cannot die without a child" (Coetzee, *AI* 127).

So what happens to the daughter? Why is she absent? Does she share the same family ethics with Mrs Curren? This is one of the most intense ethical conflicts in the narrative: the mother's strong yearning for her daughter and the daughter's absence. However, the daughter clears out of South Africa and settles down in America because of her resentment of the apartheid regime. In Mrs Curren's words, "she had simply had enough. She went away" (69) and "she will come back when they [the apartheid governors] are hanging by their heels from the lamp-posts" (68). Recalling the moment when she sees her daughter off at the airport, Mrs Curren says: "you shook the dust of this country from your feet" (127). The daughter's decisive determination to flee from South Africa diminishes the filial duty she should fulfil in her mother's advanced years; that is to say, her resentment of the apartheid regime is the top priority in her decision-making, where she may have little thought of the prospect that the mother will be left alone in her final days.

I do not mean to draw an inference of, and then find fault with, the daughter's callousness from this discussion. Nevertheless, it is Mrs Curren who refuses the idea (suggested by Vercueil) of telling her daughter the truth on the phone and calling her back; instead, she insists on trying to make her daughter read the posthumous letter, which can also be thought of protecting her daughter in a maternal way. Until now, to describe *AI* in this manner is to underscore the texture of motherhood, but this tension is one of ways in which the narrative goes beyond the personal struggle. To put it the other way round, the political dimension finds its way into the family ethics.

The informed reader will detect the intertextuality between the daughter's escape from South Africa with Coetzee's own case described both in the interview and his fictional autobiography. Shortly after the publication of *AI*, Coetzee states in *Doubling the Point* in a third-person perspective, "he departs South Africa, very much in the spirit of shaking the dust of the country from his feet" (393). Then in *Youth*, which came out over ten years later, the protagonist, sitting in the reading room of the British Museum, contemplates whether he can "[shake] the dust of the ugly new South Africa from his feet" (137). It is more interesting to look at the young generation's reaction when they hear from their mothers. Though regarding the letter as the daughter's "inheritance…coming from this country" (28), Mrs

Curren thinks, if she flies Vercueil to America to deliver it in person, then her daughter may murmur to herself with a sense of irritation, "I do not need this, … this is what I came here to get away from, why does it have to follow me?"(178). In a similar manner, the fictional Coetzee from *Youth* also views the weekly letters sent from his mother as an annoying reminder of his connection with South Africa (98).

The episodes in which the younger generation free themselves from their home country, either in the narrative or in real life, show the youth's alienation from South Africa. It also echoes what the novelist observes in the "Jerusalem Prize Acceptance Speech". Before discussing how colonialism and apartheid corrupt literature, Coetzee firstly analyses such influences on people's inner life:

> The deformed and stunted relations between human beings that were created under colonialism and exacerbated under what is loosely called apartheid have their psychic representation in a deformed and stunted inner life. (Coetzee, *Doubling the Point* 98)

The "deformed and stunted inner life" leads to, and accounts for, the young generation exiling itself from the problematic political discourse. It is not difficult to find other examples in South African literature to attest this direct consequence. In *The Conservationist* and *Burger's Daughter,* Gordimer tells the reader why her two protagonists, Mehring and Rosa Burger, respectively, escape South Africa due to the distorted human relationships under the apartheid regime. The disillusionment of Mehring, a wealthy white industrialist and dilettante farmer, in possessing the land without recognizing the legal rights of, and the equality with, the blacks forces him to leave the country, which displays the complicity of the white liberal with apartheid. Rosa Burger, who, despite being a descendant of political activists, is also a white liberal, temporarily goes into exile in France because, upon seeing an old black man mercilessly thrashing his donkey, she is aware of her inadequacy in the anti-apartheid struggle. It is from these flights that Gordimer registered the impotence of liberalism and thus she adopted, as we could see, a more radical attitude to the apartheid government, both in her life and her writing.[1]

In this regard, though never declaring support for any political party, Coetzee also demonstrates the failure of liberalism, especially in his writings before the

1 As a member of the political party ANC (African National Congress) in South Africa, Gordimer adheres to the principle that the essential gesture of a writer is a "revolutionary" one. See Nadine Gordimer, *The Essential Gesture: Writing, Politics, and Places*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988, p. 296.

official demise of apartheid.[1] The novelist not only criticises Alan Paton and his "politics of innocence" displayed in *Cry, the Beloved Country* (Coetzee *Stranger Shores* 263), but also puts the issue on the table in *AI*. Thus, Coetzee's description of the daughter's exile, besides the familial dimension, also indicates the inability of liberal ways to cope with the problem.

However, different from Gordimer's attempt to evoke a Marxist orientation and advocate revolutionary solutions to deconstruct the idea of home in her writing, Coetzee responds to the issue in a more ethical way where he invests, thematizes and performs different modes of alterity in juxtaposition with an interrogation of the idea of home. To readers who are either involved in or deeply concerned with the struggle against apartheid, Gordimer's writing is, of course, an encouraging call to arms while Coetzee's work is more like a ruthless interrogation of conscience with its pessimistic but penetrating intensity. This interrogation involves an adaptation of the inheritance of a European literary heritage in the South African context as well as technical narrative innovations.[2] In relation to *AI*, it is through Mrs Curren's responses to alterity and her subsequent ethical awakening, without doing away with the connection with motherhood, that the narrative gains this intensity.

Beyond Motherhood: out of the Ethical Predicament

Let me move on to the other narrative thread, namely, the ethics of alterity, which, according to Derek Attridge, refers to the assumption that "the fullest acceptance of the responsibility to and for the other may indeed be to trust the other"(103-104). Attridge's engagement with the issue of alterity is quite thought-provoking, but I would like to add two more points related to this discussion. To begin with, it seems that Mrs Curren is, before this responsibility is brought into being, not prepared to

1 For a general discussion of Coetzee's challenge to the liberal tradition in South African writing, see Peter Blair, "The Liberal Tradition in Fiction," in *The Cambridge History of South African Literature*, ed. David Attwell and Derek Attridge, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 488-89.

2 The debates about the relation between Coetzee's writing and liberalism have never been rare in criticism. In his review of *Doubling the Point* and David Attwell's *J.M. Coetzee and the Politics of Writing*, Jean-Philippe Wade prejudicially attributes Coetzee's ineffective modernist attempt to, among others, resist the liberal tradition of South African literature to the novelist's own liberalism. In his reply, Attwell perceptively points out the flaws in Wade's accusation and underscores Coetzee's endeavour to demonstrate the political, historical and ethical tensions with his narrative experimentalism. See Jean-Philippe Wade, "Doubling Back on J.M. Coetzee," *English in Africa* vol.21, no. 1/2,1994, pp.191-121. David Attwell, "The Naked Truth': A Response to Jean-Philippe Wade," ibid. vol.22, no. 2,1995, pp.89-97.

welcome the vagrant, so there is a subtle change of her attitude to Vercueil, where her ethical predicament is enacted. Secondly, the home consciousness inherent in the narrative enables us to explain the change, which furthermore makes the narrative circle back to, among others, the maternal narrative.

With just a glimpse of the implication of his name,[1] his incomprehensibility (on most occasions we could only read Mrs Curren's monologues with little access to what is going on in Vercueil's mind) and his disfigured hand, we can recognize that Vercueil's explicit otherness is analogous to the tortured barbarian girl, the slow-minded Michael K, and the tongueless Friday in Coetzee's other novels. However, this alterity does not necessitate Mrs Curren's "responsibility to and for the other". Mrs Curren is repulsed by Vercueil, at least at the beginning of the story, in many different ways. Vercueil's intrusion into Mrs Curren's life is unexpected, as we could tell from the very beginning, which is further confirmed by Mrs Curren's opinions on Vercueil—"[a] man who came without being invited" (Coetzee *AI* 165). Our protagonist does not welcome the unexpected guest at first, so her account of this man begins with strong derogatory connotations. In Mrs Curren's eyes, Vercueil is 'an insect' (12), 'a ragged stranger' (13), and a thief who steals an obedient dog from a good family (17). She also raises some eyebrows at Vercueil's hygiene and his sluggishness.[2] These depreciative labels, though one may argue that these descriptions are attributed to Vercueil's otherness, suggest, to me, something stronger: Mrs Curren's repugnance for him.

Then it is rather abrupt and even confusing for readers when Mrs Curren, just after introducing the basic information about her family to Vercueil, springs the question of whether Vercueil can, after her death, send the letter she is writing (actually the novel itself) to her absent daughter. Attridge is correct to attribute the imprudence to the story itself, since it "happens to someone who accepts it, without

1 A few critics points out that "verkul" in Afrikaans means "to cheat" while "verskuil" means "to hide or conceal", which the name of Vercueil is assumed to originate from. See Head, *J. M. Coetzee*, p.140. David Attwell, "Dialogue' and 'Fulfilment' in J.M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron*," in *Writing South Africa: Literature, Apartheid, and Democracy, 1970-1995*, ed. Derek Attridge and Rosemary Jolly ,Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p.176. Poyner, *J.M. Coetzee and the Paradox of Postcolonial Authorship*. p.116. Many names in the novel have the implication of alterity. John and Florence may be the fake names which are only used by the white people, as Mrs Curren says: "Perhaps I alone in all the world called her Florence. Called her by an alias. Now I was on ground where people were revealed in their true names" (93).

2 Mrs Curren makes lucid complaints or scolding on Vercueil: "the worst of the smell comes from his shoes and feet" (17); "you are wasting your life" (7) and "in the South Africa of the future everyone will have to work, including you [Vercueil]" (65).

calculation, without forethought"(Attridge 103), while my point is that, if we would do justice to this case, the idea of home inherent in this retired lecturer in Classics and, more broadly, in the narrative, must be considered.

Home consciousness entails an attempt to interrogate and reconstruct, whether it succeeds or not, the idea of home both literally and liberally. In terms of Mrs Curren, as one who is burdened with a fatal disease, a dysfunctional family and an apartheid–riven society, her wish to manipulate the interrogation and reconstruction is much stronger and more explicit than other characters in the novel. The coincidental arrival of Vercueil is the very option Coetzee arranged for his protagonist to deal with. It is by this option, then, that the alterity becomes, in Attridge's words, "a product of the identical constituting act that has produced the self/same which perceives it as other"(99). To put it the other way round, Vercueil is an essential part of Mrs Curren's world, primarily including her reflections on the daily routine and ethical values she is used to.

Then we can see that Mrs Curren's attitude to Vercueil changes from repugnance to, among others, reliance, to secure comfort and companionship. If the idea of home collapses in the dimension of the maternal narrative, one of the ways that Mrs Curren tries to reconstruct it is to trust Vercueil both as a messenger and a nominal family member. As López puts it, "If Mrs Curren's act of hospitality towards Vercueil is absolute and radical, it is because she has welcomed him as one welcomes a child"(274). Home consciousness underpins, thus, the ethical thinking around alterity in the novel.

There is a recognizable lucidity about Vercueil's substitutability in Mrs Curren's family life. Differently put, Vercueil interchangeably plays the role of Mrs Curren's daughter and her husband. Our protagonist is desperate to talk with her daughter: "There is no one I am ready to speak to except you and the fat man in the picture, the fat man in heaven; and neither of you will, I think, call" (Coetzee *AI* 22). The secular liberal does not believe in God and just awaits the long-expected call to soothe her loneliness. In their journey to look for the injured John in the hospital, Vercueil's response to Mrs Curren's talking about her absent daughter transiently relieves this solitude: "He was learning to talk to me, [h]e was learning to lead me on, I felt an urge to interrupt: 'It is such a pleasure!'"(69). Mrs Curren also invites Vercueil to sleep with her in a platonic way and thinks that they are a couple. In this way, "the absence of a family is… reinvented through surrogate relationships" (Splendore 150). Mrs Curren compares their relationship to a familial one, symbolizing that Vercueil is on his way to becoming a nominal member in Mrs Curren's concept of family.

> "I don't see what you need me for," he [Vercueil] said.
> "It is hard to be alone all the time. That's all. I didn't choose you, but you are the one who is here, and that will have to do. You arrived. It's like having a child. You can't choose the child. It just arrives." (Coetzee, *AI* 65)

Coetzee prepared a dual approach to alterity for readers to appreciate Mrs Curren's wrestling with her ethical predicament. One part is, of course, Vercueil while the other should be the black people, including Florence's extended family and John. However, these two parts are different from each other, which, as Attridge critically observes, are revealed in the "hostility between the township people and Vercueil"(106). In addition to their physical and vocal conflicts, the distinction also lies in, narratologically speaking, the ways in which they play out the otherness. To put it differently, what marks the significance of alterity in the form of the black people from that of Vercueil lies in the historical and political tensions indicated in a series of encounters between the dying lady and the township community.[1] It is in this sense that "the alterity is given a social intensity" (Attwell, "'Dialogue' and 'Fulfilment' " 168).

The sequence manifesting the hostility between the two modes of alterity, despite being engaged with the parent/child relation, is indicative of this social intensity. Mrs Curren feels irritated when seeing the physical attack on Vercueil initiated by the township boys, Bheki and John, who successively seek sanctuary in her house. Though the brawl is finally stopped with Florence's help, Mrs Curren later tries to challenge Florence's pride in, and indulgence of, the children's aggressive behaviour. However, Florence rebuts this preaching: "It is the whites who made them so cruel" (Coetzee, *AI* 45). Though the debate alludes, in Splendore's words, to "the failure of parental responsibility" (considering the blame Mrs Curren lays on Florence's acquiescence in the children's violence), the focus should be on the militant and rebellious young blacks under apartheid, who are "children of iron" in this ruthless "age of iron" (46). And then Mrs Curren compares her self-exiled daughter who settles down in a secure environment, and her own childhood when brainwashed by nationalist patriotism:

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1 I will not deny the allegorical meaning in Mrs Curren's relation to Vercueil, but I would like to pay attention to the difference in their focuses. The political implication of their relation can be found in the following example. When Mrs. Curren and Vercueil sit together in the car while they are looking for the wounded black boy in the Groote Schuur hospital, Mrs. Curren compares her gradual adaptation to Vercueil's smell with her relation with South Africa: 'Is this how I feel toward South Africa: not loving it but habituated to its bad smell?' (64)

> My only child is thousands of miles away, safe;…Did we not have Voortrekkers, generation after generation of Voortrekkers, grim-faced, tight-lipped Afrikaner children, marching, singing their patriotic hymns, saluting their flag, vowing to die for their fatherland?... How fortunate you [the daughter] are to have put all this behind you. (46-47)

The comradeship popular among the black community, according to Mrs Curren, bears a striking resemblance to Afrikaner nationalism dominant in her own childhood. In addition to the mother/daughter relation distorted by apartheid, this debate once more makes Mrs Curren's craving for her daughter transcend the private relationship and gain obvious ideological implications. The ethics of alterity in the form of the township people and the family ethics have integrated into one penetrating thread to expose Mrs Curren's ethical predicament.

The debate between Mrs Curren and the township people continues as the narrative proceeds. When finding John has escaped from the hospital with his injured head, Mrs Curren argues over the phone with Mr Thabane, the ex-schoolteacher, about comradeship as advocated by the township people. In her mind, John's case is not alone but stands for "the rising generation" to answer calls for sacrifice in the name of the truth and justice (74). It alludes to a slogan, namely "freedom or death", which also plainly appears in Mrs Curren's reflection on this debate with Mr Thabane (149). The slogan draws our attention to a special period in South African history, that is, the State of Emergency (SOE).[1]

As Coetzee tells us at the end of the story, the narrative was set during the period from 1986 to 1989,[2] a time when South Africa was in a second SOE in the

1 Dominic Head also gives a brief introduction to this general background. See Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to J.M. Coetzee*, p.67.

2 There is another palpable clue to indicate the period the story writes about. On their way to finding out where Bheki is upon hearing the news that there is some violence in Guguletu, Mr Thabane tells Mrs. Curren: "I was born in 1943 … I'm forty-three." (92). Thus, the time should be the year of 1986.

1980s.[1] As a draconian tool of the apartheid government, SOE was targeted at the widespread insurrection of the black people to counter the social chaos and disorder caused by their resistance. The chaos began with violence in townships where black people lived and extended to the school boycott in some parts of South Africa in 1985. The first period of SOE in South Africa ended with a short-lived lifting of the policy from March to June in 1986, but it was then extended to cover the whole country and remained in force until 1990 when the new president F.W. de Klerk came to office. Under SOE, the security police were granted extraordinary powers to detain and kill any suspects without resorting to the legal process, meanwhile, the coverage of the violence and SOE in the media was accordingly blocked.

It would make sense, then, that in the novel the township youth's attitudes and behaviours foreground their more militant actions to fight against the apartheid government, instead of Vercueil. Bheki is found to be involved in battles with the w*itdoeke*, "a conservative black vigilante group known by the white strips of cloth that they wear to identify themselves" (Coetzee, *AI* 83). When Mrs Curren drives Florence and Mrs Thabane to look for Bheki in Guguletu, she experiences for herself the dreadful violence in the township: the burning shacks, the gunfire and the corpse of Bheki in a deserted building. John is later suspected of smuggling weapons and shot to death in the servant's quarters of Mrs Curren's backyard. All of these moments contribute to, and cannot be separated from, the social intensity of alterity.

To describe *AI* in this way is to highlight its political and realistic dimension, so a question arises: how does it lay bare Mrs Curren's ethical predicament? As noted previously, when remarking that she may not live long enough to see the horrendous scene of children throwing petrol on, and laughing at, a burning woman, Mrs Curren is reminded of the root of the indifference and callousness, namely, the whites' guilt. However, there is still a long way to go before Mrs Curren, as a white woman, recognizes this complicity. As we could see from the narrative, there is a sense of in-betweenness in Mrs Curren's responses to apartheid and to the black youth, and it is here that her ethical predicament lies, in addition to the change in her attitude to Vercueil. Mrs Curren is cognizant of the social chaos and inequality

1 There is another SOE in South African history in the 1960s following the Sharpeville massacre. At that time, Coetzee was in London. The second SOE was also triggered by something related to the Sharpeville massacre; or, specifically speaking, it was on the Sharpeville day that police killed twenty people who were in a funeral procession. It soon spurred school boycotts and clashes between the police and the black, especially the young. Then the president P.W. Botha declared a SOE. See Nigel Worden, *The Making of Modern South Africa: Conquest, Apartheid, Democracy*, fifth ed, Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2011, p.139.

caused by the implementation of apartheid, but it seems that she still set her hopes on justice prevailing over apartheid. The dying lady, upon the shattering of her illusion, initially holds the view that she may not be relevant, before she realizes her complicity with apartheid and makes a series of subsequent confessions.

It is worth elaborating on Mrs Curren's ambivalent attitude towards apartheid. On the one hand, she is modestly aware of the rampant social chaos within the apartheid regime. That is why she refuses to watch TV and read newspapers, which are no more than propaganda instruments for the authorities to whitewash their governance and policies. Thus what dominates the media are a staging of "the parade of politicians" (Coetzee, *AI* 25), glossing over the social disorder (36) and presenting "a land of smiling neighbours" (49). The ban on public access to this information in the media is just a direct reflection of the policy implemented during the second stage of 1980 SOE.

On the other hand, this awareness is compromised by the trust she puts in apartheid though she does not support the authorities. What she has experienced is reminiscent of friendliness and peacefulness before the chaos: "In my day, I thought, policemen spoke respectfully to ladies. In my day children did not set fire to schools" (48). After Bheki and John are seriously injured during their attempt to escape on a bike from a chasing police van, Mrs Curren insists that she lay a charge against the police and, more broadly, the "men in power", for their intentional or unintentional dangerous action (60). Florence does not agree with Mrs Curren's proposal and later Bheki also despises Mrs Curren's trust in the police. The police refuse to investigate the case since Mrs Curren is not one of the "parties directly affected" (77).

All in all, it is Mrs Curren's liberal humanism makes her inhabit such a position, which reduces her into a morally exiled state, albeit she is physically in South Africa. Vercueil, upon hearing Mrs Curren speaking of the reason of her daughter's absence, defines her daughter as an exile, but Mrs Curren denies the interpretation right away, saying: "she [her daughter] is not an exile, but I am" (69). To claim that she is an exile is to admit her in-betweenness, which her ethical predicament rests on.

The problem is also staged in her attitudes to the township youth, especially John. Though annoyed by John's trespassing on her property and his subsequent rebellious behaviours, Mrs Curren exerts herself to help him after seeing the bicycle accident (55-63). When she and Vercueil pay a visit to the hospitalized John, Mrs Curren feels quite upset by, and expresses her dislike of, the "stupid, obstructive, intractable" boy: "I look into my heart and nowhere do I find any trace of feeling for

him" (71). In the next scene, when the unrecovered John, who is unaware of Bheki's death in Guguletu, returns to Mrs Curren's house to look for him, Mrs Curren again admits that the boy "is not lovable" and she "want[s] him to go away and leave me [Mrs Curren] alone" (124). Paradoxically, when the police come to arrest and then kill John in her house, she desperately tries but fails to protect him from danger (138-142).

While the above moments suggest Mrs Curren's in-betweenness, they conversely challenge, shake and subvert her liberal humanism. On their way to Guguletu to look for Bheki, it is the first time Mrs Curren has been confronted with so much violence. Mrs Curren is appalled at, and scared of, "this looming world of rage and violence" (89), so what she wants is to go home. When questioned by Mr Thabane if she knows where these people whose homes are burned out should go, Mrs Curren realizes that this is "my business, their business, everyone's business" (90) and later reiterates that it is not "a personal thing" (114).

After Bheki's death, Mrs Curren begins to reflect on the relationship between individual responsibility and collective guilt. When Vercueil closely follows Mrs Curren one morning in the house, she takes all her confusion and disgrace out on him: "But why should I bear the blame? Why should I be expected to rise above my times? Is it my doing that my times have been so shameful? Why should it be left to me, old and sick and full of pain, to lift myself unaided out of this pit of disgrace?" (107) Mrs Curren raises the issue of why she, as a dying individual, should inherit the guilt of colonialism and apartheid, because in her mind the ones who should be blamed are those "who have created these times" (107). Then she accuses those who have spoiled her life "in the way that a rat or a cockroach spoils food without even eating it, simply by walking over it and sniffing it and performing its bodily functions on it" (107). Again, Mrs Curren relates her personal life to the national situation and that is why her terminal disease is inclined to be interpreted as an allegory of the national fate, so to speak, the ending of the apartheid regime.

John's death is the last straw for Mrs Curren's liberal humanism. From then on, the narrative begins to enter into a totally confessional mode about complicity. She meditates,

> A crime was committed long ago. How long ago? I do not know. But longer ago than 1916, certainly. So long ago that I was born into it. It is part of my inheritance. It is part of me, I am part of it. (149)

In her opinion, she, as a white descendant, has to pay the price not only "in shame; in a life of shame and a shameful death, unlamented, in an obscure corner" (ibid),

but also with a recognition of the impotence of her liberal humanism:

> What I did not know, what I did not know… was that the price was even higher. … It had something to do with honour, with the notion I clung to through thick and thin, from my education, from my reading, that in his soul the honourable man can suffer no harm. (150)

This confessional mode is to some extent a reflection of Coetzee's shame over Vera's attitude towards South Africa and South Africans. In a series of dialogues with the psychotherapist Arabella Kurtz, Coetzee reflects the "puzzling moral material" provided by the family in his childhood when Afrikaner nationalism was dominant in South Africa,

> I think most immediately of my mother, whose relations with other human beings at a personal level were (I thought) morally admirable but who was nevertheless a supporter, if not of apartheid as a social system, then certainly of the people who ran the country. (Coetzee and Kurtz 110)

Since apartheid is notorious for its institutionalized racial discrimination and segregation, its supporters advocated inequality between human beings. What puzzled Coetzee is the incompatibility between Vera's amiability with people around her and her siding with "the people who ran the country". Vera's in-betweenness provokes the novelist to contemplate, as Attwell notes, "the problem of historical guilt" after her death (*Life of Writing* 168). It is reasonable, then, that in addition to the maternal discourse, *AI* will develop around another narrative thread, that of "historical guilt". As Kossew puts it, "his [Coetzee's] combination of moral ambivalence and emotional intensity in relation to mothers has left a subtle but discernible and affecting trace in his fiction" (154). Thus, as my argument tries to demonstrate, Mrs Curren's ethical predicament is consistent with the novelist's attachment to his mother, one of the most intense feelings in the idea of home, and what inches its way into the narrative is an impersonalized representation of Vera's moral ambivalence.

Conclusion

Coetzee's engagement with the representation of the dysfunctional family in his oeuvre, and especially with that of motherhood in *AI*, invites a maternal reading of home consciousness in this novel. The novel originates from Coetzee's deepest

feeling with his mother, Vera, as the previous argument demonstrates, but a more personal motivation and origin of the novels does not entail a traditional family drama. Coetzee's literary taste and intellectual pursuits (instead of merely representing his personal life in the novel) lie in introducing the flow of his bereavement and family crises into an ethical and political current, to eventually merge with the historical tide. It is one of the striking features of Coetzee's writing that his novels originate from, and revolve around, a single line of his personal relation with the issue of home, but end with a more complicated net woven by biographical, national, ethical and political factors.

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Tales from Nanyang: Folk Beliefs and Women's Fate in Lee Yoke Kim's Fiction

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Abstract The novel *Yimeng Zhi Bei*《遗梦之北》written by Lee Yoke Kim (Li Yijun), a Malaysian Chinese writer, was nominated as one of the top ten Chinese novels in 2012 by the Yazhou Zhoukan journal [Asia Weekly][1]. Set in a small town in Malaysia, the story gives a lucid account of the living environment of the Chinese who immigrated to Nanyang, and keeps record of the folk beliefs and living practices among the people of that era. The novel follows the fate of several generations of women from the Ye family, describing their internal worlds, their sorrows and joys, and how they pursue a profound level of spirituality in life. This paper explores the deep impact of polytheism and the notion of predestination,

1 Lee Yoke Kim was born in Penang, Malaysia, and is originally from Wenchang, Hainan Province. She is currently the Vice President of the Malaysian Chinese Writers' Association and writes mainly fiction and prose. She has won the first Malaysian Outstanding Young Writers Award (马来西亚优秀青年作家奖), the Shuangfu (双福) Novel Excellence Award, and the first prize in the first Singapore Fang Xiu (方修) Literature Award for prose. She has published several books, among them the novels [Spring and Autumn on the Move]《春秋流转》, [The Three Sections of the Mirror]《镜花三段》, [North of Lost Dreams]《遗梦之北》; the short story collections [Pining Lovers]《痴男怨女》, [Collected Writings of Li Yijun]《李忆君文集》, [The Beach of Dream Sea]《梦海之滩》, [Woman])《女人》; and the prose collections [Hardships of Passed Days]《去日苦多》, [Heedless] 《漫不经心》, [City People]《城市人》, [Until the End of Time]《地老天荒》, [Gallant Years]《岁月风流》, [The Earth's Red Dust]《大地红尘》, [Times of Sound]《年华有声》, [Falling in Love With A River]《爱上一条河》, and others. In 2012, she was awarded the 12th Malaysian Chinese Literature Award (马来西亚华文文学奖).

situating the mysteries and realities of the novel's female protagonists' lives in the context of the history of Chinese women in Nanyang.

Keywords Lee Yoke Kim; Li Yijun; *Yimeng Zhi Bei*; Malaysian Chinese Literature; Mahua literature; Chinese diaspora; folk beliefs; women's fate.

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Introduction

Malaysian Chinese (Mahua 马华) literature has mainly been known for a couple of famous writers, such as Li Yong Ping 李永平 and Chang Kuei Hsing 张贵兴 who have been based in Taiwan for several decades. However, these writers are not originally from West Malaysia but from East Malaysia (Sarawak), which is why there have been academic debates about whether their work should be counted as Mahua literature (Chai 2018). More recently, female-authored Mahua literature has gained increasing attention in Malaysia and internationally. The translation of Li Zi Shu's novel Gaobie de niandai 《告别的年代》 into English under the title *The Age of Goodbyes* (Li 2022) marked an important milestone. This paper shall focus on another accomplished female Mahua writer named Lee Yoke Kim (Li Yijun 李忆君) and her full-length novel *Yimeng Zhi Bei* [North of Lost Dreams]. In 2012, the novel, which portrays the characteristics of social customs in Nanyang,[1] was in the top ten selection of Chinese novels by the journal Yazhou Zhoukan [Asia Weekly] (Sinchew 2013).

Against the background of a marriage alignment between the Jin and the Ye family, two Chinese families who settled in Nanyang, *Yimeng Zhi Bei* revisits the history of British colonialism, the competition between the Kuomintang and the

1 Nanyang (南洋), sometimes translated as 'South Seas', is a Chinese term that refers to South East Asia, especially the region of today's Singapore and Malaysia.

Communist Party in Malaya, the Japanese Invasion, the history of the Malayan Communist Party, the implementation of the New Village policy,[1] and Malaysia's transition to independence in 1957. Covering Malaysia's history from the 1930s to the 1970s, the novel deals with social changes over four decades and how, during this time, the local Chinese's customs and thinking changed.

The Ye family's business starts to go downhill after the second generation's breaking up of the family. All three Ye brothers get divorced from their wives, and by doing so, fulfil the common saying that it is the fate of Chinese families that their "wealth does not last for three generations." The Ye family's third generation, especially the family's women, who do not have the protection of the family, begin to integrate into the local life. This is highlighted by various common scenes of life in the background of the novel, such as Chinese schools, temples, dumpling wrapping at the Dragon Boat Festival, the Chinese New Year Festival, bus and ferries rides, playing *majiang* (麻将), and buying *zihua* (买字花).[2]

In this novel, Lee consciously expands the historical background of the story, based on the memories of her childhood. The scenes, which can be described as a panorama of the Chinese community's life in Malaysia, are rich and delicate, and are characterised by a collective feeling of distress about the great historical changes and life being beyond grasp.

Relevant previous research on *Yimeng Zhi Bei* includes Ma Feng (2017), who argues that in the novel hallucinations and dreams are often interspersed, creating a mysterious and peculiar atmosphere with both real and unreal situations, which he refers to as "dream narrative" (梦幻叙事) (Ma). This dream narrative, according to Ma, runs throughout and frames the whole story. Comparing it to the dream narrative in *Dream of the Red Chamber* (红 楼 梦), Ma argues that the "dream" symbolism in *Yimeng Zhi Bei* is both a metaphor for individual fate and of an entire ethnic group (Ma 2017, 47).

The present paper shall extend the study of the meaning of individual and collective fate by investigating how the destiny of three generations of women in

1 The New Village policy was part of a resettlement program by the British colonial government, who wanted to decrease communist influence. The resettlement program was part of the so-called Briggs Plan, a strategic military plan drawn up by Sir Harold Briggs. By 1953, up to half a million squatters, most of them ethnic Chinese, had been moved to so-called New Villages (Lee 2013, 1981).

2 *Majiang*, a Chinese tile-based game, is more commonly known by its Cantonese pronunciation *mahjong*, *mah-jong*, or *mah-jongg*. However, this paper uses Hanyu Pinyin (汉 语 拼 音) as a general standard for the romanisation of Chinese characters. *Zihua* (literally: lucky draw) refers to a gambling game that used to be common among Chinese communities.

the novel is related to the unique concepts of folk belief prevalent in the Malaysian Chinese society. Regarding literary representations not only as closely embedded in their historical and socio-cultural context but also offering alternative insights into history, it aims to draw a connection between the female protagonists' experiences and women's role in the Malaysian Chinese community, which underwent drastic changes in the four decades spanned by the novel. The detailed realist descriptions of religious practices and rituals as well as the female protagonists' lived experiences make the novel especially valuable for such a project. Thus, the paper offers important new data on the connection between the history of the Chinese diaspora in Malaysia's late colonial and early post-colonial era, practices of Malaysian Chinese folk religion, and the lived realities of Malaysian Chinese women within these processes.

From China to the South Seas

The centre of the story is in Kulim, a town situated in the northern part of Malaysia in today's Kedah state. Thus, the meaning of the term "north" in the novel's title [The North of Lost Dreams] is twofold. First, from the perspective of Southeast Asia, Yunnan Province in China lies to the north of the Malay Peninsula; second, from the perspective of the Malay Peninsula, the location where the story is set (Kulim) lies to the north of the capital city of Kuala Lumpur. However, the characters' activities reach beyond Kulim, including Thailand and other towns on the Malay Peninsula, such as Hualing, Penang, Muar, Malacca, and Kuala Lumpur.

The two protagonists of the novel, Ye Shuijing and Ye Shuiling, are cousins. Their great-grandfather (Jin Shawan), originally a practising lama from Zhongdian, China,[1] became a divine sorcerer, making a living by casting spells and interpreting curses after falling in love with a girl. As a consequence, he is cursed and hunted by other Buddhist schools of thought for breaking his vows. Thus, he brings his wife and his daughter (Jin Qingke) south. They travel along the border of Central Burma and through Thailand, settling on the northern edge of the Malay Peninsula at Padang Besar (Malay for "vast fields"). Later they move to Sungai Petani (Malay for "river of farming") and finally settle in a small town called Kulim,[2] where they live in seclusion, running a grocery shop, and leading a mundane life.

After settling in Kulim, Jin Shawan still feels the curse of his enemies haunting him and his descendants. In order to break his ties with the country of origin, he

1 Zhongdian (中甸), which is located in China's Yunnan province became famous by the name Shangri-La (香格里拉) (Yang 2018, 190).

2 Kulim is also the name of a tree (Kulim tree, scientific name: *scorodocarpus borneensis*).

arranges a marriage for his daughter Qingke with Ye Anping, the son of a local merchant named Ye, hoping that his daughter's secular marriage will dispel the misfortune he carries. The Jin couple indeed lives to an old age. When they pass away, they leave their only daughter a string of Buddhist beads made from red sandalwood.

At that time, Jin Qingke is 33 years old, already has three sons and two daughters, and is living a married life in the Ye family. Just after Jin Shawan's death, Qingke senses that she has inherited her father's energy. She experiences a mysterious force that opens her mind's eye and gives her the ability to foresee future blessings and disasters, causing her to live in a state of unexplainable fear and helplessness. The first disaster comes when her 11-year-old daughter Ye Xiaoxiu, who has suddenly gone mad, jumps into a river and dies. This is the first time Qingke faces the cruel ordeal of her destiny. She fights through her grief to raise her remaining children to adulthood until they get married and have their own children. Her husband Ye Anping passes away before her. When she has already reached an old age, she starts looking beyond the mundane world by setting up a Buddhist temple at home, chanting sutras, and praying to the Buddha all day long. She barely leaves her house anymore and does not interfere in the lives of her children and grandchildren. When her three sons split up, have affairs, divorce, and fail in business, she just watches indifferently.

Three generations of the Ye family's women inherit the mysterious power of their maternal ancestors' Tantric religion. They have the gift to foresee the destiny of family members, which is continuously fulfilled. This causes them distress because they are not able to prevent any of these events in their lifetime. However, they try to change their destiny and free themselves from the curse of predestination, which is one of the themes the novel addresses.

Ye Huaiqiu, the only daughter of Jin Qingke, autonomously chooses to marry Cheng Yingkun, a car driver, and lives an ordinary and uncomplicated life in the city. After old Mrs. Ye has reached a high age and starts to make sincere offerings to Buddha, the family's psychic ability suddenly shifts to Ye Huaiqiu, who at the time has a premonition that her husband will be killed in a car accident. Old Mrs. Ye has a good idea of the misfortune that will befall Ye Huaiqiu, but there is nothing she can do about it. She can only ask someone to send Huaiqiu the family's Buddhist sandalwood beads, hoping that they will help her get through this difficult time in her life. However, Huaiqiu fails to dissuade her husband from driving out to deliver goods, and when the news of his tragic death in a car accident reaches her, she begins to question the gods that she has always worshipped. Unable to cope with

the mental pressure, she finally goes insane, and lives out her last days in a mental hospital, cutting off her perception. This is how the women of the Ye family's second generation try to resist their predestination, each of them in their own way. Although their resistance may appear faint and powerless, these women's actions are brave and heroical.

After Huaiqiu having gone insane, the family's divine sense is once again handed down to the next generation. This time, it is passed to Ye Shuiling in the third generation. Shuiling has inherited the traits and wisdom of old Mrs. Ye and is fully aware of her mission. Having experienced the divorce of her parents and the unexpected death of her first love, she has been thinking about her life and destiny at a young age already. Later she rejects the love of a boy from the same village, studies Buddhism, and decides to become a nun. She aims at returning to the religious realm, thereby redeeming herself for her ancestors' sins, hoping that the family's destiny will end in her own generation. At the same time, Ye Shuijing, also a woman of the family's third generation, is adopted by her paternal aunts Ye Huaiqiu and Long Yueqiu, as well as a maternal aunt after her parents' divorce. In the end, Shuijing manages to leave her resentment towards her mother behind in the north. She heads south to Kuala Lumpur to reunite with her mother, start a new life, and realise new life goals and dreams.

Folk Religion and the Malaysian Chinese Diaspora

In the novel, Jitong (e.g. Chen Bo) and Lingmei mediums (e.g. Aunt Lian Hua), fortune tellers (e.g. Ah Liang), and card reader fortune tellers (Indian) are the mediums of communication between humans on the one hand and the gods and ghosts on the other.[1] They can use their own bodies to bridge the gap between the mundane world and the realm of the gods. As a result, it is common for temple shrines to have consultation functions such as bamboo sticks fortune telling (求签), divination (卜卦), mediumship (起乩), rice asking (问米), and drawing charms (画符). When the inhabitants are faced with a difficult situation in their lives or feel uncertain about the future, they let the gods decide their course. They trust the gods' instructions and believe that disobeying them will bring misfortune.

This is in line with recent research that has pointed out the significance of Chinese folk religious practices among the Chinese diaspora in Malaysia up to this day. As Tan Chee Beng notes, the term "Chinese folk religion," which is also referred to as "Chinese popular religion" refers to "the complex of Chinese beliefs and practices involving the worship of ancestors, deities and ghosts, in contrast to

1 *Jitong and Lingmei* are different kinds or spiritual mediums in Chinese folk religion.

Buddhism and Taoist Religion" (Tan 2). Overall the Chinese in Malaysia, according to Tan "have been free to practise their traditional religion" (Tan 2018, 1), thus various Chinese folk religious practices survived and some of them (further) developed locally (Tan 2018, 4–5). Eric Cohen points out that in "[c]ontrary to classic modernisation theories, spirit mediumship cults proliferated with economic development and growing prosperity in mainland Southeast Asia" (Cohen 94). In Malaysia, Chinese (mostly Hokkien mediumship) practices are most common (Cohen 91). Accordingly, Daniel P.S. Goh argues that Chinese religion in Malaysia should not be regarded under the concept of tradition versus modernity, as the range of phenomena "described under the rubric of Chinese religion" exceeds "the dichotomous imagination of 'modernisation'" by far (Goh 107–108).

The concept of a Chinese diaspora has led to controversial debates for various reasons. For instance, Wang Gungwu highlights that there is not one single Chinese diaspora, but many different Chinese diasporas (Wang 170), and Shih Shu-mei argued that "diaspora has an end date" and everybody "should be given a chance to become a local" (Shih 45). In the case of the history of the Malaysian Chinese community and their religious practices, the concept has proven useful, as it helps to frame the connection between the community's past and present. As Letty Chen points out, diasporic communities are closely shaped by the memories of previous generations which are inherited to following generations as "postmemory" or "prosthetic" memory, which manifest as nostalgia, longing, search for identity etc. (Chen 53).

Throughout their history, ranging from drifting to settling, the Chinese diasporic community in Nanyang has experienced repeated challenges, setbacks, and fears. However, over the time of several generations, its members have found confidence through the worship of multiple gods, sustaining them in their hardships and in facing the unknown in these foreign lands. Coming from different provinces in China, they retained the customs and beliefs of their hometowns as a central component of their lives. Thanks to the tolerance of the local people, who have allowed and respected worshipping multiple gods, the various faiths have been able to coexist peacefully to this day.

In such a multi-ethnic and multi-deity environment, the local people of Kulim believe in a wide range of folk legends, which not only explain disasters and misfortunes, but are also an important precondition for ethnic groups living together in peace. The majority of Chinese living in Kulim are Hakka and Hokkien people. But there are also Teochew, Guangxi, Cantonese, and Yunnanese people. The local people make their living from farming and are intermixed with Indians,

Malays, Thais, and local natives. In addition to Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Christianity, Catholicism, and Islam, the Chinese also worship Hindu gods, Siamese gods, and local Malay gods. Furthermore, there are various temples and shrines scattered in all corners of the town such as the temple of the goddess Guanyin (观音庙), the temple of the Great Uncle Gong (大伯公庙, Datuk Gong), the temple of the Three Dharma Masters (三法师公坛), the temple of the Maoshan Masters (茅山师公坛), the temple of the Three Ching Masters (三清师公坛), the temple of the Nezha's Three Crown Princes (哪吒三太子坛), and others. But there are even more deities worshipped in these temples, such as Guan Gong (关公), Sun Dasheng (孙大圣), Jigong (济公) and Mazu (妈祖). The temples also accommodate Nichiren Buddhism (日莲正宗), Yi Guan Dao (一贯道), the True Buddha School (真佛宗), and Tantric Buddhism (密宗). Some of the gods have their roots in multiple religions. For instance, Great Uncle Gong, who is widely worshipped by Malaysian Chinese, originally was a merger of a Malay and a Chinese *shen* (Chinese for god/spirit) (Chin and Lee 385–286).

In the area known locally as 'North Malaysia' (north of the Malay Peninsula), there is a widespread belief in spirits and peoples' lives are embedded in a strong religious atmosphere. The author portrays the spiritual life of the New Village and small-town people living in a multi-religious environment from multiple angles—both in terms of the transmission of traditions and the integration of local beliefs. The novel is set in a small town full of superstition and an uncanny atmosphere, where people link the strange events and misfortunes that occur in the town to the gods, explaining all the phenomena in a rousing and fanciful manner.

In the novel, the people of the small town are accustomed to trying to make sense of all kinds of misfortunes and calamities that occur in their daily lives to be able to sleep soundly and live peacefully. They interpret mysterious or anti-rational signs as punishments or hints, turning them into a persistent insistence on life. For instance, the third chapter begins with a frog fight in early May 1969, followed by an ethnic clash on May 13 in the same month. In hindsight, the villagers see the frog fight as a warning that something unfortunate is bound to happen if left unattended. One could even say that they have a spirit of exploration with bold assumptions, not avoiding the gods but rather approaching them with a devotion. This kind of spirituality formed a life norm among the entire community, a common shared destiny.

The religious beliefs of the inhabitants of both the novel's New Village and the small town originate from their ancestors. In their world, the dogmas and instructions of the gods are far superior to the laws and ordinances of the mundane

world. The gods are regarded as invisible overseers and the inhabitants believe that even if they manage to escape the law, they could not manage to escape the final judgement of the gods. They also believe that the gods' blessing of the pious is tantamount to a code of conduct for themselves. They are convinced that it is an unquestionable law that where there is a cause, there is a consequence, and that those who commit trespasses will be punished. It is also due to this understanding that the people of the town have their own standards of right and wrong and do not judge based on worldly ideas.

Whenever the New Village residents have doubts about their lives, they feel that the most practical way to deal with the issue is to worship and ask the gods. They hope that they can ask the goddess Guanyin, the Goddess of Fortune, the Goddess of the Three Princes, or the God of Good Fortune, commonly known as Great Uncle Gong, to see how to avoid bad luck. These miracles, which mysteriously seem to exist, make the villagers feel that the blessings from the gods are close at hand, and that all the doubts that haunt them are immediately resolved through the instructions of the gods. Notwithstanding whether the gods' instructions are good or bad, they are convinced that this is 'fate'. And since it is decreed by fate, no one can change the outcome, and no one can be saved.

Thus, in the novel, we see all kinds of religious places, temples, and shrines in all corners of the New Village. but also psychics (通灵的), rice askers (问米的), sciomantics (扶乩的), prophecy tellers (预言的), fortune tellers (算命的), poker card readers (算扑克牌的), and medicinal magic figure drawers (画符药方的). The fact that all religions have their own place reflects the fact that on the Malayan (later Malaysian) soil, there is a mixture of religions, beliefs, and cultures, which intersect with each other, creating a special ecology in which everyone has different views and ideas about faith, yet peacefully living in the same land. When the protagonists face difficult questions in life, their different ideas of faith lead them down different paths, yet sometimes, they would turn to the gods of other ethnicities.

The villagers believe that the gods also punish Daoist practitioners with evil intentions. For example, in the case of Chen Bo, the master of the Jigong altar, who usually helps people to get rid of calamities and prevent them from danger but is unable to remove his own family's bad luck. His two daughters die of illness and his two sons have a motorbike accident at a bend in the road that leads into the New Village, and both meet a violent death on the spot. The deaths of the Chen sons and daughters are so strange that people cannot help but speculate based on all the signs that the family's successive tragedies must be linked to the frog fight in front of the

temple. However, this does not seem to suffice to explain the four Chen children's bad luck. When they cannot find the cause, an inexplicable fear rises in their hearts, and they have a vague feeling that the events are related to the cycle of karma of the people involved. Thus, following the suggestion of the rice asker, Aunt Lian Hua, they trace the root of the matter. The vague clues attribute the entire blame for the bad karma to Chen Bo. In order to make a living, he did not shy away from faking his powers as a medium, only pretending to be in contact with the supernatural world to cheat people for their money. Thus, the gods brought punishment to his family.

Aunt Lian Hua, has a community altar in her home, dedicated to some great gods such as Guanyin, Buddha, Jigong, and Nezha. She provides sciomantic (planchette writing) services to communicate with the gods, and advises Ye Shuijing to worship the gods often to receive their blessings. Ah Lian, a mute girl, is Aunt Lian Hua's niece. She is a devout believer and very close to Aunt Lian Hua, who treats her like her own child. She even prepares her to be her successor. Ah Lian is in love with Shuijing's second cousin An Xiang, a young man with a literary and artistic talent, a gentle temperament, and a friendly attitude. One day, the kind-hearted Ah Lian is raped and murdered, and her body is dumped by the roadside. What kind of heavenly justice is this? The person grieving the most is Aunt Lian Hua, who has lost a descendant who would have died for her. Full of hatred, she wants to dress Ah Lian in red, enter the hall with her, and let her turn into a powerful ghost in order to take revenge on the person who killed her. It is only after the crowd discourages her that she gives up this plan. If Chen Bo suffered bad luck because of his false mediumship, then didn't Aunt Ah Lian's deliberate act of leading the villagers to expose him also deviate from the proper path of a Daoist and bring misfortune to her own family? According to the notion of karma, which people of the community believe in, Daoist practitioners are not excluded and will also be punished for deviating from the path.

The people of the town are most interested in finding out about the accuracy of the gods of various temples. Thus, they will travel thousands of miles to a certain place to ask the gods there about their fortune. In the first chapter of the novel, in which the Ye brothers split from the family, Wang Li'e, the third daughter-in-law, chats with her sister-in-law, Ye Huaiyun, who says: "The Ye family is doomed, no one can save it." She is referring to the fact that she had asked a fortune teller at a temple in Kulim about her husband Mingbin's fortune many years ago. The fortune teller said that the family was going to split up. People believed in fate in the sense that one's destiny was predetermined, and that the gods' function was not only to

make choices for them, but also to explain their karma and destiny to them. Long Yueqiu recalls that many years ago, she had asked for her fortune at the Guanyin temple in Penang, and the lottery ticket said: "The leaves of the Wutong tree have fallen, and there is no one to depend on." The person who interpreted the sign said that when the leaves of the Wutong tree fall, the family would eventually fall apart, and the husband would abandon his wife and children. She took these words to heart, and they provided a basis for what happened afterwards. The novel also mentions the Yishan, a public tomb, which is located next to a Great Uncle Gong temple. Every year, on the 15th day of the seventh month of the lunar calendar, the Hungry Ghost festival (Yulanpen festival) is celebrated there,[1] and on the eighth day of the Mid-Autumn Festival, a performance is staged to thank the gods and comfort the spirits. This illustrates the inseparable relationship between the town's inhabitants and its traditional customs.

A Supernatural Gift and Curse of a Family's Women

The phenomenon of "yin and yang" eyes, which is believed to allow people to see things that are not seen by normal people, to foresee the future, and to communicate with the spiritual world, often runs in a family, or the given person has ancestors who were mediums or psychics. In the novel, the ability is inherited only by the family's women. Old Mrs. Ye, Ye Xiaoxiu, Ye Huaiyun, and Ye Shuiling all possess this ability. They can see psychic phenomena and foresee the future. The eleven-year-old Ye Xiaoxiu is too young to understand what she is sensing and probably so frightened by what she sees that she jumps into the river, which is regarded by others as 'sudden madness'. Old Mrs. Ye is aware of the bad fortunes of her family members, but she cannot reveal the secret, nor can she prevent such misfortunes from happening in the future. Consequently, people are bewildered by her abilities.

Ye Huaiyun takes over her mother's supernatural powers. When she receives the call that her husband, Yingkun has died in a car accident, she breaks down and cries out in a frenzy: "I told you a long time ago, Yingkun. I told you not to go, but you just didn't listen to me. What should I have told you in order for you to believe me? I had a premonition of what was going to happen. I could even see how it was going to happen. Would you have believed me if I told you this?" However, what was going to happen was going to happen anyway. Ye Huaiyun cannot accept the misfortune that has happened. Losing her senses, she turns to the statue of the

1 The Yulanpen festival (盂兰盆节), also known as Zhongyuan festival (中元节) or "Ghost Festival," takes place on the fifteenth day of the seventh lunar month and is dedicated to the wandering hungry ghosts (Tan 2018, 83–84).

goddess Guanyin on the altar and says: "Why didn't you bless me? Why didn't you save me? I offered you incense every day. I kowtowed to you, and I begged you every day. I begged you to save me, because otherwise I would have definitely gone crazy. Seeing all those things, how can I be a human being? But now Yingkun is already dead. You must have forgotten me; forgotten how sincerely I offered you incense and bowed down to you every day. You don't even remember me, do you?" From these words, we thus learn the secret of the women of the Ye family: Huaiyun can see spiritual things and could foresee that her husband would lose his life in a car accident. However, she can neither stop it, nor can she speak of it, because no one would have believed her. In fact, when Mrs. Ye hears that Huaiyun is pregnant at an advanced age, she also has a premonition. She is worried a lot, but apart from giving Huaiyun the Buddhist beads, which she considers to be her lifeblood, in the hope that they can avoid this calamity, she cannot do anything. In the end, Huaiyun is unable to overcome this, and she cannot accept the fate she has to face. Thus, she throws the family statue of Guanyin to the ground, cursing the heavens and complaining that she did not receive the gods' blessings despite worshipping them day and night.

The phenomenon of Ye Shuiling of the Ye family's third generation possessing special powers is described in Chapter 2 through Ye Shuijing's perspective. When Shuijing talks to her cousin Shuiling, Shuijing often feels that Shuiling is in a trance, often gazing into a certain direction, and when Shuijing tries to follow her gaze, she cannot see anything in particular that would warrant such an intense gaze. The only time Shuiling is sure that her cousin is acting strangely is one night when they are travelling home on the ferry between Penang and the North Sea. Shuijing is half leaning over the railing of the ferry looking down when Shuiling suddenly grabs her shoulder and says in an almost shouting voice: "You want to die, don't you?" Shuiling's eyes are frozen somewhere unfocused, and she looks as if she is experiencing a déjà vu. Then Shuijing sees "the sea breeze blowing, and Shuiling's long hair dancing in the wind, like a thousand wisps of willow fluttering. Suddenly Shuijing sensed a wave of sadness, a sadness that seemed to be caused by Shuiling, yet at the same time seemed to be caused by herself. She gazed at Shuiling's figure and at this moment, Shuiling resembled a solitary ghost. A nightmarish and eerie atmosphere pervaded around her. Shuijing felt as if she had fallen into a confused dream (…)" (Lee 301, transl. by the authors). At this point in the novel, there is no doubt that Shuiling, like Huaiyun, is another member of the family with an exceptional gift, the ability to see a world that others cannot see. However, her nature is similar to that of Old Mrs. Ye, who does not speak out during her lifetime.

Shuiling buries her secrets deeply and does not reveal them easily. Only someone as sensitive as Shuijing can detect that Shuiling possesses some mysterious ability.

Although several generations of women in the Ye family have "yin and yang eyes" and precognitive abilities, only Huaiyun draws attention to herself by exposing her psychic abilities, which she cannot control when faced with bad luck. Consequently, she lets the community know that she can receive hints from another world. This kind of ability is referred to as "sensitive constitution." The author grew up in an environment in which she often heard about this phenomenon from friends and relatives in casual conversations. However, since it was not possible to explain this, and since such supernormal capabilities were regarded as ominous and unlucky, and were consequently often avoided as an anomaly, people did not readily admit these capabilities. The fact that the author ascribes this phenomenon to three generations of women in the novel makes it all the clearer that folk beliefs and legends have a profound impact on women's lives, sometimes more than they can bear.

The female characters in the novel appear like real women because of their ordinariness: their conversations are as cordial and chatty as normal neighbours, and the details of their lives are described very vividly. After the decline of the Ye family the rats leave the sinking ship.[1] The women who have married into the family leave, have no more connection with the Ye family's past wealth and prosperity, and return to their roles as common people. All of the Ye family's women experience hardships, some of them go mad, some become nuns to search for enlightenment, and some return to an ordinary life. In a new era, they slowly recall the family's past and link it up with the future.

The fact that only women inherit the supernatural power, which is, at the same time a curse, hints to the historical discrimination of women in patriarchal societies, in which women's abilities are often being regarded as a lack rather than a strength. The following section shall draw a connection between the fate of the Ye family's women and the history of Malaysian Chinese women.

Women's Role in an Age of Transition

Three generations of blood-related women experience different eras of Malaysia history, thereby witnessing the transformation of Malaysia from a British colony to an independent nation state in 1957. The transition to independence goes hand in

1 树倒猢狲散, literally 'When the tree drops the monkeys on it scatter' is an idiom that expresses that the opportunists disperse when an influential person loses their power. In English a similar idiom is 'the rats leave the sinking ship'.

hand with Malaysian Chinese women's social position in different eras. The destiny of the women of the first generation (pre-independence era) is fully depending on men, which means they are relying on their husbands and have no agency over their lives. In the second generation, although they do not have the opportunity to receive a new-style education yet, the women are able to make some of their own choices in life. By the third generation, women generally receive a new-style education. Consequently, they become more self-conscious and decide over the course of their own future. This transition from obedience, to calling certain norms into question, to self-determination corresponds with the novel's main theme—the transition from a nostalgic feeling (lost dreams) towards searching for dreams. This searching for dreams can be read as the rise of an anti-hegemonial consciousness, that is anti-colonialist on the one hand, and fighting for women's rights on the other.

The increasing awareness of women's rights after the country's independence is, thus, no coincidence. As Cecilia Ng points out, in Malaysia "nationalist movements against foreign domination simultaneously spawned debates about women's roles in the workplace, their right to formal education and their participation in political organisations" (Ng 17). However, it is to be noted that interpreting these movements as "feminist" is contested in this context, as feminism is often regarded as a Western concept, which does not fit the context of East and Southeast Asian countries. However, Ng develops the concept of a "Malaysian feminism", defining its characteristics. She detects four phases of Malaysian feminism: anti-colonial struggles; post-independence consociationalism; developmentalism and the rise of identity politics; and its post-*Reformasi* realignment. Each phase, according to Ng et al. has a "dominant feminist consciousness and strategy for mobilisation, although some types of feminism can straddle various phases" (Ng 10).

Karen Teoh (2014) argues that women's education played a crucial role in the emergence of women's rights. Besides, the debate on "who represented 'true' overseas Chinese womanhood and cultural status" she argues "often eclipsed questions and fears about the emancipatory or modernising effects of female education." Correspondingly, processes of modernisation in colonial Malaya in the early twentieth century "placed formal female education in the spotlight." As a consequence, women's education became a symbol of progress and "an arena for contestation over the role of women in empire and nation." By the mid-twentieth century, Chinese women in Malaya "had the option of paid and socially respectable work outside the home" (Teoh 2014).

Lee Yoke Kim manages to condense the centuries-old vicissitudes of two families, the Jin and Ye, into this novel, using the life paths of the two families'

women as a point of reference. Furthermore, these women's destinies are put at the centre of the Malaysian Chinese community's history of drifting across the ocean from China to Nanyang, and then settling and taking roots. Retaining a strong sense of local religion and folk beliefs, the novel presents the unique social landscape of "cultural Malaysia" as experienced by the author while growing up. These details of the life of the people in a small town, such as the worship of the gods and the festivals, are common memories of many Chinese Malaysians.

There is a string of sandalwood Buddha beads that runs through the entire novel, from the beginning to the end, and links the relationship of four generations of women's destiny. The Buddha beads are originally a family heirloom of Jin Qingke's father, Jin Shawan, and are given to Jin Qingke (Old Mrs. Ye) by Old Mrs. Jin to keep after the death of Mr. Jin. Old Mrs. Ye gives the Buddha beads to Ye Huaiyun when she is pregnant at an advanced age. Ye Huaiyun later returns them to Old Mrs. Ye, who in turn passes them on to Ye Shuiling, who then passes them on to Ye Shuijing after she becomes a nun. In the following, we shall elaborate on the meaning of these Buddhist beads.

The Buddhist beads seem to represent a legacy of the Jin and the Ye family. At the same time, they are a talisman, or a family symbol, which can protect the spiritual women in the family from bad luck. The beads appear at different points in time, all at the end of an era. In each generation, the women have diverging interpretations of their destiny and make different choices. It is rumoured by outsiders that the decline of the Ye family is the result of their ancestors' curse. Besides, it is assumed that the fact that Jin Shawan, formerly a lama, returned to laity and got married, planted a sinful karma that would not be ended by himself but would be repaid by future generations. The beads seem to be a token of magical power. In their shelter, Jin Qingke enters a state of deep meditation (*chan*),[1] and withdraws from the secular world. Even when her youngest daughter goes mad, jumps into a river, and dies, her three sons get divorced, and her granddaughter becomes destitute and homeless, she can still bear the pain and remain silent until her life comes to an end. Sensing her daughter Huaiyun's impending distress at an advanced age, she gives her the Buddha beads in the hope that she will be able to avoid bad luck. However, Huaiyun does not understand and returns the pearls to her mother, after which her husband dies in a car accident. After her husband's death, Huaiyun goes mad. The beads are then passed on to Ye Shuiling, who is able to cultivate her spirituality and eventually decides to become a nun, finding a way of life in which she no longer needs the protection of the Buddha beads. With the beads

1 In English *chan* (禅) is better known by its Japanese term *zen*.

in her possession, Ye Shuijing leaves home to start a new life in Kuala Lumpur. Thus, the end of the novel does not seem like the end, but like the beginning of a story.

The storyline of *Yimeng Zhi Bei* flows smoothly, and as the narrative moves forward along with the time, it also diverges at different points in the story. The recollections and flashbacks in the storyline allow the content of the story to string together the conditions and evolution of folklore in Malaysia society, making the narrative's branches and knots more abundant. The characters that are most written about and best portrayed in the novel are the female protagonists. Some of these women have an ordinary fate and common personalities. For instance, Long Yueqiu, the eldest daughter-in-law of the Ye family, who is portrayed as having a bold and straightforward character, and whose identity after divorce turns from being a young house lady to being the owner of a canteen without losing her kind-hearted nature. Or Shuijing's mute friend, Ah Lian, who has an exquisite mind, is gifted in understanding others, and has a talent for writing. Ye Shuijing is the central character in the second half of the novel. She is abandoned by her family as a child, in consequence grows up as a foster child, and develops a sentimental personality. Shuijing's aunt, the wife of her mother's oldest brother, is a woman who liked to gossip and nag. At the same time, she has the gentleness and kindness of a loving mother, as it is common in the neighbourhood.

Concluding Remarks

As the novel portrays the coming of age of several generations of Malaysian Chinese women, the Buddhist beads may be read as an allegory for the knowledge and wisdom passed down from generation to generation of women, helping them go through hardships and turmoil. The story starts unfolding from the Ye family's ancestral home when the family's influence and prosperity are at its height and Ye Shuijing is still an innocent and unaffected child. At the end of the story, Shuijing is already 22 years old, has experienced the divorce of her parents, has grown up as a foster child, and has experienced her aunt going mad and her cousin becoming a nun. Finally, she decides to go south to reunite with her birth mother. The novel's end leaves much room for readers to ponder on the question whether Shuijing will continue to carry the fate of the Ye family or whether she will cut ties with her family's history once she arrives in the south in Kuala Lumpur, leaving the hardships she has experienced behind in the north.

These questions resonate with the uncertainty about the social and political role of Malaysian (Chinese) women in the near future. Although women's rights

have consistently and significantly improved over the past few decades, gender inequality and other inequalities continue to exist, as in most societies globally. *Yimeng Zhi Bei* interweaves Chinese immigrant families' history and a multicultural environment—an environment in which various gods and ghosts coexist. It also presents a blueprint for future generations of Malaysians to actively contribute to a harmonious and inclusive coexistence regardless of people's gender, ethnicity, or religious practices.

In her afterword, the author states that she grew up in an environment full of ghosts and spirits, and that she heard many magical stories from her elders from a young age. These fabulous tales were an important inspiration for her writing. In *Yimeng Zhi Bei*, the author draws on her own memories, describing what she heard and saw while growing up. Many of the local people are labourers, most of them poorly educated, but they have a great respect for the gods and spirits—in the popular consciousness, both ghosts and gods are regarded as deities. Everyday life is inextricably linked to the instructions of the gods. No matter if it is a marriage, a funeral, a long trip, a school trip, a move, a renovation, sickness, a quarrel, or even the naming of a new-born child, the gods are always consulted to ask for peace and guidance.

In contrast to other historical novels by Malaysian Chinese authors, such as Tash Aw's *The Harmony Silk Factory*, which deals with Malaysia's history of communism through the perspective of a young man's memories of his father, who used to be a member of the Malayan Communist Party (Fan 2013), *Yimeng Zhi Bei* focuses on the spiritual world and destiny of the family's women as an entry point into historical events. These women are born into the Ye family innately possessing a predestination, having no choice but to inherit the unfinished mission of their forefathers. They must experience the most ordinary sorrows and joys of life and use their wisdom to explore life's deeper spiritual dimensions. *Yimeng Zhi Bei* can be understood as a story that "explores the dream of the soul." This dream is vague, concealing various mysteries and unknowns. Whenever the women of the Ye family look back, they fall into a state of confusion. The entire novel attempts to unfold the 'story' of several generations of the Ye family's life in a small town.

Thus, *Yimeng Zhi Bei* is a novel that concerns the transition from the past to the present. On the surface, the novel tells the story of a family's fate. However, on a deeper layer, it is the history of "searching for dreams" not only on an individual, but also on a collective level. The dreamland bridges the destiny of several generations of women and the stories that surround them. Through their special ability of foreseeing the future, the Ye family's women actively engage in working

through some of their family's and the entire community's suppressed dreams and (post)memories. The rich descriptions of the beliefs and religious practices in northern Malaysia serve as an entry point into the history of the Malaysian Chinese community and their position in a country that has undergone immense transformations in the second half of the twentieth century.

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The Single and Multiple Melodies: A Comparative Reading of Traditional and Contemporary Feminist Writing

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Abstract This article juxtaposes traditional and contemporary East African feminist narratives with reference to Nuruddin Farah's *From a Crooked Rib* and Nadifa Mohamed's *Orchard of Lost Souls.* Most feminist narratives in East Africa directly confront patriarchal traditions with the least sensitivity to the masculine audience's reaction. The writers adopt the Western strand of feminism that largely upholds gender stereotyping of the masculine gender and presentation of feminine gender as the innocent victims of patriarchy. A new generation of feminist writers however, refrain from the focus on patriarchy and express their subjects through multiple voices that turn their novels into great dialogues. This analytical study was carried out on novels by writers from East Africa to interrogate modes of narration by pioneer and contemporary feminists. Five novels by East African novelists were purposively sampled. In spite of most of the writers expressing feminist subjects, Nuruddin Farah's *From a Crooked Rib* and Nadifa Mohamed's *Orchard of Lost Souls* demonstrated the supposed diversity in the narrative mode. The study adopted the narrative analysis qualitative design. Data from secondary sources enabled the theoretical comprehension and qualitative analysis of primary texts. The study proceeded through close textual reading of the primary and secondary texts while Mikhail Bakhtin's monologism and dialogism formed the theoretical basis of interpretation. It was found that most pioneer feminist writers adopted the

monologic mode to impose feminist ideology while contemporary writers present the feminist voice as one of the many voices in conversation with other voices in the novel.

Keywords Dialogism; Feminist Narratives; Interweaving Melodies; Nadifa Mohamed; Somalia Literature

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Introduction

Literary writers in East Africa grapple with many issues that prompt them to adopt a confrontational style to defend the marginalised groups such as women and prisoners of conscience. Many pioneer literary writers in East Africa such as Nurrudin Farah and Ngugi wa Thiong'o have been directly involved in social and political issues of their nations, which turns their literary works into media of expressing certain ideological standpoints. The magnitude of human rights violations and gender disparities calls on writers to take sides in existing conversations. The constant 'otherisation' of women and girls in education, politics and marriage creates a sense of urgency for the intellectuals to speak for the oppressed groups to castigate the so called obsolete traditions. These traditions include wife inheritance, female genital mutilation, gender based violence, early marriage, political and economic corruption.

Although the civil rights movement in East Africa plays an essential role in the fight against these violations, the literary writer has joined the fray to document these experiences for educative purposes. While writers such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o (*Petals of Blood*); Francis Imbuga (*Betrayal in the City*); Nuruddin Farah (*Close Sesame*); John Ruganda (*Shreds of Tenderness*); Abulrazack Gurnah (*Memory of*

Departure); Wahome Mutahi (*Three Days on the Cross*) and Gael Faye (*Small Country*) mostly focus on political issues, a number of writers seek to address gender disparities. These include Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye (*Coming to Birth*); Margaret Ogola (*The River and the Source*); Said Herzi ("Against the Pleasure Principle"); Fatmata Contenth ("Letter to my Sisters"); Ole Kulet (*Blossoms of the Savannah*); David Mulwa (*Inheritance*) and Nurrudin Farah (*From a Crooked Rib)*. Most of these writers approach violation of women's rights through direct denunciation and gender stereotyping of the masculine gender.

This is possibly why Meriem observes that Farah is "interested in those who are denied rights, male or female" (84). According to Meriem, Farah directly contributes to the feminist conversation through creation of female characters that strive for equality with the masculine gender. The Western feminist script that forms the groundwork some of Farah's works tends to portray male characters as oppressive to female characters. However, contemporary writers on gender issues take an oblique mode that refrains from direct confrontation with the masculine gender. This study juxtaposes traditional and contemporary East African feminist narratives with reference to Nuruddin Farah's *From a Crooked Rib* and Nadifa Mohamed's *Orchard of Lost Souls.* The major assumption of the study is that there are varying modes of expression among feminist writers in East Africa to combat obsolete traditions in different communities. The study establishes a better mode of expression between monologism and dialogism to enable effective fight for gender equality.

Farah's *From a Crooked Rib* is a story of a girl's struggle against patriarchy ingrained within Somali culture. Raised as an orphan by her grandfather, Ebla tolerates his cruel treatment until he gives her out in marriage to, Giumaleh, an elderly man of forty-eight. Ebla decides to flee the countryside to her cousin, Gheddi who lives in a small town called Belet Wene. In spite of her hopes to escape patriarchal domination, her life with Gheddi is a repeat of what she had experienced at her grandfather's home because besides Gheddi's arrogance towards her, he gives her in marriage to an ailing broker in exchange for money to invest in his business. Ebla flees with a young man called Awill to Mogadicio where she expects him to marry her honourably. Awill however, betrays her by beating and forcibly breaking her virginity on the first night in his room. When he leaves for Italy for further training in his career, Awill starts illicit affairs with other women. Ebla resorts to vengeance by marrying another man (Tiffo) secretly. Although he is married with children of Ebla's age, Tiffo expects total faithfulness from her. Awill announces his coming and Ebla tells Tiffo that she is married to Awill. In the ensuing row, Ebla

asserts her equality with men owing to her ability to have multiple relationships the way men in her society do.

Nadifa Mohammed's *Orchard of Lost Souls* is a story of Kawsar, Deqo and Filsan at the genesis of an armed conflict that results in the collapse of the Somalia state. The three women are subdued and dominated by violence that emanates from men that have warped the whole society in aggressive militarilisation. Kawsar, a widow, whose husband Farah was frustrated and demoted for opposing the president's aggressive policies, is detained for saving Deqo from assault. She is tortured and spends most of her life on the sickbed. The episodic plot reverts to Filsan, described as "daughter of man" because her father's aggressiveness could not permit her to live with a man. He compels Filsan to avoid every man such that her nature completely transforms into masculine. When Kawsar is detained, Filsan (then a policewoman) beats her with truncheons until she loses consciousness. Dominated by male aggressiveness, Filsan has to act tough; she even shoots and kills innocent elders in the attack in Western Somalia so as to gain fame and stature. Like many other aggressive persons in the police and army, Filsan focuses on the performance of masculinity at the expense of her social life. Her estranged mother confesses that she has taken her father's aggressive nature and would attract neither love nor marriage. Filsan starts realising that her father's domination has drained any traces of humanity from her and resolves to reverse the situation. She falls in love with Roble, his senior and just as her heart starts experiencing love, Roble is killed by rebels when they make a daring attack on their land cruiser on the way back to the camp. During his treatment, Filsan sees the bitter fruit of aggression: students being bled dry in the military hospital, Nurto (the fleeing refuge girl Filsan had arrested in suspicion of working with rebels) lying dead among other thirty corpses. Filsan concludes that her desire to act like a man has only made her "to be nothing more than death's handmaids" (204). She deserts the army and as the soldiers pursue her, she bumps into Deqo, the vagrant who leads her to Kawsar's home (where Deqo puts up). Filsan apologises to Kawsar and as restitution carries her on a wheelbarrow overnight. They come across a lorry and Kawsar pays for their transit to a refugee camp in Ethiopia.

Literature Review

The focus of this literature review is analysis of critical works on the primary texts to locate the gap of this study. Contemporary feminist critics appraise writers in the canon as having successfully demonstrated the flipside of patriarchy for a better society. Okonkwo (1984) has argued that Farah is one of the few authors that have

"done the greatest justice to female existence in his writing" (217) through creation of characters that embody the plight of Somali women. While Okonkwo considers all feminist writers under a single mode of expression, this study postulates a possibility of these writers coming in different shades to address the phenomenal subject—gender disparities.

Furthermore, critics have appraised Western feminist writers for their dealing a final blow to patriarchal propensities in most East African communities. Dowden opines that Farah's *From a Crooked Rib* "is a dazzling spark of light in the dark tunnel of silencing women" (3). Somali culture is this dark tunnel that keeps women in the abyss that endangers their lives for ages. Whereas Dowden's study delimits feminist writing within the traditional mode of narration, this study incorporates another mode of narrative aesthetic that adopts multiple voices.

Literary critics have also considered feminist writers in East Africa as champions of the rights of girls in the contemporary society. Ifeoma observes "Farah exposes the problems of gender discrimination and inequality that characterize the Somalia cultural milieu. She contends that Farah demonstrates how girls are treated unfairly and are not given equal rights with boys (117). Despite both Ifeoma's and the present study taking a feminist analysis, the latter juxtaposes modes of narration of pioneer and contemporary East African feminist writers.

Literary scholars have associated Nadifa Mohamed's *Orchard of Lost Souls* with the feminist canon. Tembo avers that Nadifa Mohamed "employs agency as a discursive technique for negotiating female identities and dismantling oppressive structures" in the novel (2). In Tembo's perspective, Mohamed's major aim is to attack patriarchal traditions in the Somali society. The present study contends that besides gender disparities, Mohamed employs multiple voices to address other issues in the Somali society.

Critics have read Mohamed's *Orchard of Lost Souls* as an example of how patriarchal cultures use war to accentuate gender disparities. Graham-Bertolini contends that most patriarchal societies take advantage of war to allot women peripheral roles to maintain patriarchal dominance (45). The contentious tone against patriarchal voices in Graham-Bertolini's thesis demonstrates her Western feminist voice, which she associates with *Orchard of Lost Souls.* This study contends that the novel presents multiple conversations to address diverse issues affecting the Somali society.

Theoretical Framework

Literary scholars have underscored the need for the novel to be a representation of

multiple voices rather than a single voice that pervades a text. In his critique of the single voice, Mikhail Bakhtin (1984) writes:

> Monologism, at its extreme, denies the existence outside itself of another consciousness with equal rights and equal responsibilities, another I with equal rights (thou). With a monologic approach (in its extreme or pure form) another person remains wholly and merely an object of consciousness, and not another consciousness. No response is expected from it that could change everything in the world of my consciousness. Monologue is finalized and deaf to the other's response, does not expect it and does not acknowledge in it any decisive force. Monologue manages without the other, and therefore to some degree materializes all reality. Monologue pretends to be the ultimate word. It closes down the represented world, represented person. (292-293)

In other words, all characters in a monologic novel conform to the dominant ideology and those opposed to it are mere targets (object consciousness) of which vices are described to the reader without being given a chance to account for their behaviour. If they are perceived by the authorial voice as villains, they are condemned with finality because the "monologue is finalized and deaf to the other response" in such a novel. Expounding on Bakhtin's perspective, Lodge observes that a polyphonic novel exhibits a "variety of conflicting ideological positions… without being placed and judged by an authoritative authorial voice" (86). The authorial voice and main characters will have different perspectives without the attempt to punish characters who disagree with the author's views. Robinson refers to this authorial control as monologism, where "single thought discourse […] one transcendental perspective or consciousness integrates the entire field, ideologies, and values and desires that are deemed significant. Anything irrelevant to this perspective is deemed superfluous or irrelevant in general" (2) In monologism, the writer is so much in control of the text and its subjects that characters with diverse viewpoints are stigmatized and punished. However, according to Atwell "[t]here is a true sense in which writing is dialogic: a matter of awakening the counter voices in oneself and embarking upon speech with them" (65). The work of art therefore becomes a conference of divergent voices including the authorial voice. This is probably the model that some contemporary East African writers have adopted contrary to monologic discourse of pioneer writers. This study explores monologic and dialogic modes of narration in Feminist East African writers with reference to Mohamed's *Orchard of Lost Souls* and Farah's *From a Crooked.*

Material and Methods

We carried out this analytical study on East African feminist novels by pioneer and contemporary writers to interrogate the modes of expression. A total of five feminist narratives were sampled: Marjorie's *Coming to Birth,* Nurrudin Farah's *From a Crooked Rib*, and *Gifts*, Mohamed's *Orchard of Lost Souls* and Faye's *Small Country.* In spite of most of the writers and texts expressing the pertinent gender issues, Farah's *From a Crooked Rib* and Nadifa Mohamed's *Orchard of Lost Souls* palpably exhibited the different modes of narration

The study adopted the narrative analysis qualitative design. Data from secondary sources enabled the theoretical comprehension and qualitative analysis of primary texts. In narrative analysis, the research participants interpret their own lives through the narratives and then, the researcher interprets the construction of that narrative (May 10). The two writers in this study have interpreted their experiences through narratives, and the researchers analyse them. We conducted close textual reading of stories and reviewed journals that we selected depending on their pertinent contribution to monologic and dialogic modes.

Inclusion criteria

1. Gender of the writers
2. East African literature (for relevance)
3. Feminist literature
4. Indirect or direct reference to monologism and dialogism
5. Year of publication

Exclusion criteria

1. Non –East African literature
2. Absence of feminist subjects
3. Purely modernist works

Data Analysis and Interpretation

A study of the tenets of monologism and dialogism guided the researchers in analysis of the effect of using single and divergent voices in the two literary texts. The texts, Farah's *From a Crooked Rib* and Mohamed's *Orchard of Lost Souls* took different trajectories of expression with different effects on the readers. It was apparent that under monologic mode of expression, the Western feminist literary

canon pervaded the characters and themes; in the dialogic mode of expression, different canons and subjects were evident.

Discussion and Results

After data analysis, it was evident that Farah and Mohamed differ in the mode of expression of issues affecting women in the Somali society in particular and Africa in general. The discussion will begin with Farah's s homophonic representation and then shift focus to Mahamed's polyphonic model of expression. Farah, like most pioneer feminist writers, adopts a monologic model to represent issues affecting women. As Ondinye observes in the literature review, Farah ignores other voices such as postcolonial feminism to "expose gender discrimination and inequality" (117) in the Somali society through the Western feminist strand. He therefore takes the trajectory of radical voices that describe men as enemies of women, "the exploiter and oppressor" (Frank 14). Indeed the story of Ebla shows the plight of the Somali girl from childhood to adulthood.

Ebla exhibits a lot of ignorance because Farah suggests that her society does not associate women with knowledge and intellect. The religion she believes in is just learnt by heart; the narrator says, "[s]he could not read and write her name. She only knew the *suras,* which she uttered when saying her prayers. She learnt by heart hearing them repeated many times by various people" (9). Her ignorance is compounded by her visit to Belet Wene, an urban centre where her cousin Gheddi lives. When people talk about the police, she wonders "who are they? Is it the name of a tribe?" (30) She asks the same question with regards to "government" (30) and struggles to understand the meaning of "office" (31). When Aowrolla, her cousin's wife asks her the date, she is not aware at all. Later after she marries Awill and he informs her that he is going to Italy for three months, Ebla can only understand the concept through the image of milking. In her perspective, Awill will spend in Italy "[o]ne hundred and eighty milking instances" because "a day is two milking instances" (50). The reference to "milking" gives a hint into the kind of graft girls are reserved and therefore interpret their world through that experience. The emphasis on Ebla with regards to ignorance echoes Bakhtin's assertion that monologic works are "[f]inalized and deaf to the other response" (292) because in spite of her brother being ignorant, the narrator just mentions it and reverts to Ebla. For example on her brother's visit to Mogadicio, he ignorantly condemns all city dwellers as wicked unbelievers that ought to be shot and refuses to go to school (54). This is a postcolonial feminist voice that rejects generalisations that all men are knowledgeable and favoured, but the narrator refuses to recognize it and reverts to

the radical feminist voice.

Farah directly endorses the radical feminist claim that the man is the norm and the woman is the other. According to Western feminist voices such as De Beauvoir: "[w]oman is a relative being. She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her… She is the incidental, the inessential, as opposed to the essential. He is the subject, he is absolute—she is the Other" (15-16). The narrator uses Ebla to bring this out when he says, "[s]he loathed discrimination between sexes, the idea that boys lift up the prestige of the family and keep the family's name alive. Even a moron male cost twice as much as two women in terms of blood compensation" (10). A family that has boys is more respected than a family with girls and someone who kills a woman pays less in fines than the one who kills a male. The narrator adds that even prized animals are assigned masculine pronouns. For example Aowralla refers to a cow as "his" and the narrator adds, "[i]n Somalia a cow is spoken of as 'he' and not 'she' or 'it' (17). The woman is indeed "inessential" as De Beauvoir asserts because she is of less value in Ebla's community. They even believe that girls' "urine stank more awfully than that of boys"(27).

The othering also manifests through the odd jobs and maltreatment reserved for women and girls; at her cousin's home, Ebla is forced to milk cows, cook, and assist the cousin, Gheddi carry heavy loads (29). In return, she receives insults instead of compliments. For example when she says she does not know the route home, Gheddi blurts, "[l]ift the thing first you fool" (29). This expletive shows that women in this community are viewed by men as fools in spite of the sacrifices they make. Indeed only Ebla succeeds to ferry the contraband goods home, but her cousin blames her for being arrested by police. He says, "[s]he is an ominous person; if she were not with us, we could not have been caught" (33). As De Beauvoir suggests, Ebla and Aowralla become the *other* because Gheddi turns all the anger meant for the police against them. He commands Ebla to get out of his sight and when his wife Aowralla tries to comment on the ordeal, he blurts, "I will hit you if you say another word" (29). This episode is an attempt by the writer to maintain the radical feminist voice that portrays women as victims and men as oppressors (Adjei 49). Farah uses many passages that portray women as victims of male oppressors.

The widow who lives in Gheddi's neighborhood declares that women are just commodities. She tells Ebla, "[t]hat is what we women are—just like cattle, properties of someone or other, your parents or your husband" (35). The writer therefore suggests that like any other material properties, women and girls are exposed to abuse. This is why Ebla's cousin gives her to the broker, Dirir in exchange for money (37). The writer underscores this to show the oppression of

women:

> From experience she knew that girls were materials, just like objects or items on the shelf of a shop. They were sold and bought as shepherds sold their goats at market places […] to a shopkeeper, what was the difference between a girl and his goods? Nothing, absolutely nothing. (37)

In the character of Ebla, Farah underscores the feminist view that girls are commodified by patriarchal societies. Gheddi does not see Ebla as a human person, but just like his stock at the shop and livestock on his farm. Going by Nnamaeka (2004), Farah becomes one of the radical feminist writers that present African women as "problems to be solved" (57). For Nnaemeka, the description of African women as sex objects, properties and victims of men is an attempt of Western feminists to objectify African women. As a property, Ebla is not permitted to propose or choose a husband. As much she wants to propose to Awill, she realizes that "people don't think highly of a girl who asks a man to marry her" (37). Ebla therefore has to wait for Awill to propose.

As Namaeka, suggests with regard to Western Feminism, the African woman in Farah's *From a Crooked Rib* "is a problem to be solved" because she has many complaints against society. Ebla raises complaints throughout the novel; that only sons are counted although daughters also take nine months in the mother's womb (37), the world is a man's because women are sold and bought like camels (37); men are allowed to smoke, but women who smoke are called harlots (42); even if a woman is beaten by a man, she is not permitted to resist (42); boys can have premarital sex, they can pay for sex from prostitutes (like Awill), but if a girl has premarital sex her "relations either shot her or knifed her to death" (43). For Ebla, marriage is the man's sphere of influence and so she can short change them to kill each other (53). According to Robson (2011), a novel such as *From a Crooked Rib* is monologic because a "single thought discourse […] one transcendental perspective or consciousness integrates the entire field, ideologies, and values and desires that are deemed significant. Anything irrelevant to this perspective is deemed superfluous or irrelevant in general" (2). The perspective to be lauded and accepted is radical feminism, in which women must be portrayed as victims and men as oppressors. Therefore any male character who tries to be loving or progressive has to become irrelevant by being recreated into an arrogant, dictatorial, immoral and foolish person.

In spite of Ebla's grandfather taking responsibility to raise Ebla, he remains a

villain throughout the novel. Despite his age, Ebla does not have any affection for him because, "[h]e was a man—just like any other man. What was the difference? His wife (her grandmother) must have suffered his brutal manhandling" (44). This is generalisation stemming from grandfather's decision to give Ebla in marriage to Giumeh. Giving Ebla to Giumeh is a cultural practice that grandfather has seen other men do, which may have nothing to do with his treatment of his wife. Mohanty (1984) urged feminist writers to consider context to gain insight into certain practices (338). Farah ignores context in the portrayal of certain practices in his attempt to castigate patriarchy.

Awill is another character who has to be recreated into a villain to suit the feminist voice in spite of his formal education and contribution to saving Ebla from forced marriage. His first sexual encounter with Ebla portrays him as immoral. He becomes violent by boxing the helpless girl and then proceeding to rape her. The narrator interrupts in a flashback to show how Awill has been paying a brothel visits to buy sex (43). With regards to the first night with Ebla, she says, "Awill was a bad example of the male sex. He acted more like a donkey as far as the satisfaction of his animal desires were concerned. Copulation is a means of getting children […] but this is not the only thing that a man shares with woman" (45). Awill is therefore portrayed as a sex maniac and pervert. He is obsessed with sex just like a donkey is and this is why he sleeps with an adult female student. When he gets a scholarship to study in Italy, he falls in love with another woman and sends his colleague Jama a half-naked picture of his Italian lover (52). Ebla feels betrayed when she sees the picture and Asha, her landlady, advises her to marry another man, Tiffo.

Ebla ends up with two husbands to embody the dominant radical feminist voice that aims at equality for both men and women. If Awill and Tiffo can have multiple partners then Ebla should do the same. Ebla tells Tiffo, "[m]y other husband's name is Awill, you have another wife and I have another husband. We are even; you are a man and I am a woman, so we are equal. You need me and I need you. We are equal" (61). This assertion is a direct recitation of the feminist claim to equality between masculine and feminine gender. Tiffo is throughout the novel portrayed as foolish and ugly. According to Adjei, radical feminist writers represent men as physically grotesque images (49) and this is why Tiffo is described as "short…fat" and a "fool" (54). Asha is not concerned about how Awill will react when he returns to find Tiffo in his house because "marriage is a man's trouble. They will jump at each other's throats and nobody will dare touch you" (53). By using Asha, Farah makes a direct affront to patriarchy, which is the main target of radical feminism. Male characters are not given an opportunity to account for their behavior. Tiffo

for instance is in a hostile marriage relationship (55), but rather than giving the audience the root cause of the conflict, Farah simply condemns him as foolish and immoral.

Mohamed's *Orchard of Lost souls* on the other hand presents multiple voices, which give the reader a balanced assessment of issues affecting the society. Pertinent voices that compete for the reader's attention through characterization are hegemonic masculinity, protest masculinity, Western feminism, postcolonialism, postcolonial feminism and Marxism, which turn *Orchard of Lost Souls* into a polyphonic novel. According to Bakhtin, a polyphonic novel is "broken down into disparate philosophical stances, each defended by one or another character. Among these also feature, but far from first place, the philosophical views of the author [sic] himself" (5). Characters such as Filsan, General Haruun, Kawsar, and the female prostitutes represent different voices or philosophical standpoints that interweave into a melody.

To begin with, the novel has a Marxist background as the ruling elite are perceived as bourgeoisie class by the masses. The character, President overthrows the democratic regime behind the mask of a socialist revolution. He establishes a ruling council typical of socialist dictatorships of the 1960s, but after a few years in power, the masses form a movement to overthrow him as a bourgeoisie. The rebels make determined assaults such that as the novel ends, the ruling class is losing its grip on power. Women characters are generally seen as alienated proletariat that suffer the brunt of a brutal bourgeoisie class.

Secondly, General Haruun represents protest masculinities that form the largest proportion of men in Mohamed's *Orchard of Lost Souls*. According to Connell, protest masculinities are victims of low self-esteem whose preoccupation is "fucking and fighting" (167). Mohamed suggests that having been dominated by colonial oppression, Somali men have low self-esteem, which is displaced through constant violence. The reference to colonial oppression is a postcolonial concept that Fanon (1961) refers to. He writes, "[c]olonialism destroys national culture. It disrupts the cultural life of a conquered people, cultural obliteration is enabled by negation of national reality, banishment of natives, their customs and systematically enslaving of men and women. These have powerful psychological effects on people " (168). This is a replica of most male characters in Mohamed's *Orchard of Lost Souls* that adopt violence and sexual promiscuity in an attempt to find a lost manhood. Connell associates protest masculinities with men from subordinated classes (165), because they lack the resources to practise hegemonic masculinity. The latter in this context is a preserve of colonialists who take advantage of their economic strength

to conquer African nations. According to McClintock, "[t]he very act of exploring new land and then subjugating it during colonial times was often imagined in sexual terms" (23), which establishes a nexus between postcolonialism and masculinities.

General Haruun therefore spends his life on violence and sex with female junior army officers without any thought of getting married. As the novel begins, Haruun leads a military parade to celebrate Independence Day in an episode coloured with lewdness and violence. The narrator says:

> It is now eighteen years exactly since the President's rise to power after a military coup, and the celebrations in Mogadishu show the system at its best, everyone working together to create something beautiful. The Military-Governor of the North Western region, General Haruun, will be the President's avatar in Hargeisa and has arranged the military parade with a flyover to start and finish the day […] She has lined her eyes discreetly with kohl and pressed colour onto her lips with her fingers. She looks herself but a little better, a touch more feminine; she has resisted playing these games until now, but if the other female soldiers get noticed this way, maybe she can too. (12)

The military coup in this passage symbolizes the "fighting" that Connell points out as symptom of protest masculinity. Haruun is described as a military governor, to imply that the position he has stems from violent take over. Filsan is described as having a sexy appearance to draw the attention of General Haruun because he has always noticed other female soldiers by their sexy appearances. Today he notices Filsan and in spite of the fact that he knows her father, he does not betroth and make arrangements to marry her as Somali culture dictates. He invites her to Oriental Hotel and seems to be more interested in her femininity than anything else. Filsan says that "even in her uniform, the men see nothing other than breasts and a hole" (29). Haruun orders her to take off her hat and seduces her with the promise of anything she wants. The narrator says, "[h]e pushes his hand up her thigh and against her crotch. 'You're a virgin, aren't you? A clean girl,' he whispers in her ear" (30). Filsan resists his advances saying her father will not like it. Haruun opens the car's door and growls, "[y]ou cunt, make your way home" (31). His obsession with sex and the violence he exhibits categorizes him as a perpetrator of protest masculinity.

Mohamed suggests that the militarisation of Somalia is violence that stems from low esteem typical of protest masculinities. Unable to perform their masculinity, men from former colonized nations resort to violence and sex. The

soldier motif in the *Orchard of Lost souls* clearly illustrates this performance of masculinity. There are many passages in the novel that underscore the militarisation, violence and obsession with sex among soldiers. During the independence celebrations, the narrator says, "[s]oldiers came first, their legs snicking like scissors, then heavy older policemen and women in their blue uniforms, then civilians in their work clothes […] the soldiers (all men) are young, powerful, unified" (17-18). In Connell's perspective, the male soldiers in their poverty find these military drills and shows as an opportunity to reclaim their wounded masculinity. Indeed when they receive an order to restore peace, they handle citizens brutally. It is profoundly shocking how they treat the school children; the soldiers beat them with truncheons and Deqo "is slapped in the mouth while pleading to let the children go" (43). In the cell, the police also express their sexual lust to confirm Connell's association of protest masculinities with promiscuity (165). To begin with, most of the people in the remand are women and girls. This suggests that they may have rejected the police's advances. Secondly, the police take advantage of their presence in the cell to harass them sexually, for example Deqo (a female vagrant) observes, "a red beret reaches for her. He is like a figure in a bad dream, silent, cruel and persistent. She squeals in pain as his vice-like hands grasp her ankle, another hand moves to her thigh and he yanks her out (45). The policeman's attempts to touch Dego's thighs demonstrates his lustful intentions. Another policeman with "flies half done up" slaps the back of Deqo's legs. When the government declares curfew, the police flock the streets of Hergeisa to buy sex from prostitutes (59). According to Shumka et al. men with a wounded self-esteem buy sex as a masculinizing practice (3).

Like Farah in *From a Crooked Rib*, Mohamed also employs the Western feminist voice in which men are depicted as oppressors and women as victims of the oppression. There are passages that take Adjei's claims that feminist writers present men as physically grotesque images and cruel. The president is described as a "giant, a god who watches over them, who can dissolve into pieces and hear and see all that they do. The young nomadic boy who knew how to hobble a camel and ease a tick out of a sheep has become a deity" (19). From the Islamic cultural context in which Mohamed hails, being compared to a deity is blasphemous and therefore the worst vice in the society. This passage depicts two voices: Western feminism and hegemonic masculinity. According to Williams, divergent voices in the contemporary polyphonic novel occur on the same page, which deals a blow to monologic criticism of such novels (2). The Western feminist voice is evident when the president oversees highhanded administration that has no respect for women and girls. His governors, such as Haruun take advantage of their positions to harass

female soldiers, but the regime does not take any legal action. The president's soldiers oppress women, for example during the war with rebels, he orders school children (mostly girls) to be bled dry (197) to facilitate treatment of wounded soldiers. Another voice in the passage is hegemonic masculinity, which according to Shefer and Keith is 'predominantly associated with a man's capacity to exercise power and control, within the realm of heterosexuality" (38). McVittie et.al add that any man that aspires to embody hegemonic masculinity should be aggressive, competitive, restrain vulnerable emotions, be tough, strong, successful and most notably, heterosexual (120). The president is admired by many men and women because he rose from a herdsboy to attain the highest status through aggression, toughness and strength. He is heterosexual and maintains a marriage relationship. Unlike Haruun who is single, the president is married to two wives and when Filsan "heroically" kills elders in the west, her colleagues suggest that as a promotion, she should be made the president's third wife (156). His aggression and toughness are evident when the narrator says the president got his position through a coup, imprisonment of the prime minister, abolishment of parliament and constitution (123).

The character Filsan is also used by Mohamed to depict feminism and hegemonic masculinity. On one hand the author uses Filsan to show the feminist insistence on equality between masculine and feminine gender. After Filsan's military incursion and murdering of elders in the West of Somalia, he gives an interview in which he praises her father and the commentator remarks, "[n]ever let it be said that a woman is weaker than a man, we have lionesses in Somalia ready to jump to our defences . This means women can defend the nation just like men" (158). On the other hand, the narrator appeals to masculinities as another voice, in the same episode because it is clear how male domination turns Filsan into a man. Her father is protest masculinity− his violence could not permit him to maintain a heterosexual relationship with the mother. In the same way, he would assault and adjure her not to have relationships with the opposite sex (153). As a result, Filsan is masculine and exhibits the qualities typical of hegemonic masculinity: aggressive, not vulnerable to emotions, tough, strong competitive (McVittie et.al, p. 120). When she discovers that the elders in Salahley, West Somalia do not recognize her as leader, she grabs one by the arm and butts in their conversation, "[i]t is me you need to speak with" (145). Moreover, unlike normal women with capacity to love, Filsan is incapable. For example, she thinks:

She detests what women become when men enter their lives. Love seems to

> make fools of women infinitely more than it does men; in university the girls let their boyfriends copy their homework and sat morosely in the canteen deciphering the merest comment or act, cheapening and changing themselves, throwing away their futures to marry men who would become little more than taxi drivers. Filsan suspects that she is too rational to truly love someone; it embarrasses her just to see canoodling couples. (164-165)

As much as it looks like a serious philosophy of life, it demonstrates the "invulnerability to emotions" she has imbibed from her father. For example, when her mother criticises her, she responds in a point-by-point version that a man would. She says, "[y]ou married *Aabbo* out of your own volition; you decided to leave him for another man; you have done nothing with your life but live off one husband after another; you should not be surprised that I take after my father when you are the one who left me to him […]" (164). Indeed her mother realizes Filsan's masculinity and comments that "his hostage looks at me exactly the way he did…she doesn't look like a marrying kind, face like a shoe" (165). In her low moments, Filsan realizes this and blames her father for her failure in her social life. After turning down Haruun's advances, Filsan is overcome with depressions and says, "[h]er father had locked her away, told her she wouldn't regret the decisions he made for her …but instead she lives the celibate, sterile, quiet existence of a nun, growing nothing but grey hairs" (138). This passage confirms that though she is masculine, her inability to have a heterosexual relationship brings her under protest masculinity of which low esteem is exhibited through violence, particularly the murder of innocent elders at Sahaley.

Furthermore, through the character of Filsan and Farah (Kawsar's husband), Mohamed also incorporates postcolonial feminism by inverting generalisations typical of radical feminism. According to Mohanty and Nnaemeka, generalisations such as men are oppressors and women are victims of oppression become unreasonable without consideration of context. Except in her childhood, Filsan is not a victim of male oppression−she is an oppressor of fellow women, and men. When Kawsar, one of the heroines, is arrested for protecting Deqo from the police, Filsan tortures Kawsar for saying "her sons went to heaven" (35). Kawsar remembers Filsan's torture:

> The blows come one after the other. The first to her ear as loud as a wave hitting a rock, then to her temple, cheek, neck. For a moment they stop as Kawsar clutches Officer Adan Ali's hands in hers but after a few heartbeats

> they resume. A swirl of sound and sight engulfs her until a punch to the chest knocks her from the chair onto the cement floor. Landing on her hip, Kawsar hears a crack beneath her and then feels a river of pain swelling up from her stomach to her throat, obstructing her breath. Resting her weight on one hand, she lifts an open palm to the soldier. "Please stop!" she cries. (35)

Filsan has no pity for an old widow, such as Kawsar whose only daughter, Hodan committed suicide after leaving school. In this episode, Mohamed confirms Mohanty's contention that radical feminists should consider context before making generalisations that women are victims of oppression. In a culture in which aggression is admired as the pinnacle of success, even women can imbibe it and behave worse than men. On the contrary, Farah, Kawsar's late husband was a very caring and loving man such that Kawsar still misses him. When the president overthrows the democratic government and replaces parliament with a supreme council, "Farah had been one of the few to voice his opposition; he called the new leaders 'cuckoos' and cut off contact with friends who said they preferred military rule to the chaos of democracy" (123). Farah was demoted and frustrated in his career because of his love for the Somali society. When the military junta incorporates women such as Filsan to start oppressing women and men (after Farah's death), Kawsar confesses that her loving husband was right (123). As she battles with the pain of a broken hip, Kawsar remains with fond memories of her husband. She sees his ghost in a dream just before Filsan appears to carry her on a wheelbarrow to safety as restitution for her past wrongs.

Finally, it was evident that the monologic aspects of expression in Farah's *From a Crooked Rib* underscore gender stereotyping of male characters while dialogic mode eradicates these stereotypes in Mohamed's *Orchard of Lost Souls.* From the above analyses, there is hardly an exemplary male character in Farah's *From a Crooked Rib*: Ebla's grandfather is a greedy old man who intends to sell her to a forty-eight-year-old villager, Ghedi is an arrogant, greedy and suspicious cousin who plans to sell Ebla; Awill is a sexually immoral husband while Tiffo is an idiot. In *Orchard of Lost Souls* Mohamed gives a balanced presentation of male characters: there is Farah, Kawsar's husband whose loving and caring nature leaves Kawsar with wonderful memories years after his departure. In as much as Roble is hostile to the rebels, he treats Filsan well and for the first time she aspires to get married before death deals her a blow when Roble dies. Mohamed then presents violent and oppressive male characters such as Filsan's father who assaults and locks her up to destroy her interest in the opposite sex. Haruun is another callous

man with sexist attitudes towards women, and can perceive nothing in them other than "breasts" and private parts (29). Besides gender issues, Mohamed expresses other voices such as Marxism, and masculinities through the president, the soldiers and rebels in the society.

Conclusion

This article set out to investigate monologism and dialogism in pioneer and contemporary feminist writers in East African prose fiction. The study proceeded by comparison of Farah's *From a Crooked Rib* and Mohamed's *The Orchard of Lost Souls.* The foregoing discussion leads us to the conclusion that most pioneer feminist writers adopt monologic aesthetic mode because they refuse to recognise other voices and compel characters to submit to a single ideology. Western feminism permeates Farah's work and characters with divergent voices are either punished or eradicated. The direct attack on patriarchy may not go down well with some male readers. The character Ebla remains a victim of male oppressors and directly attacks the so called "obsolete" traditions that cause untold suffering to women and girls. All male characters such as Awill, Tiffo, the grandfather and Gheddi have to be callous and immoral to adhere to the Western feminist script. Contemporary feminist writers on the other hand adopt multiple philosophical standpoints through different characters, which creates arguments or interweaving of melodies. This approach is quite oblique and patriarchy stands out as just one of the issues that affect women. The portrayal of some male characters as caring and some female characters as oppressive gives a realistic interpretation of life. The characters such as Filsan, Farah, Kawsar, Haruun and the president therefore represent different voices including masculinities, postcolonial feminism and Western feminism (sometimes on the same page) to give the work broader assessment of issues.

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Metaphors of Chaos: A Posthuman Appraisal of Violence in Contemporary Nigerian Poetry

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Abstract Recent developments such as the escalation of violence and terrorism around the globe projects man as having put himself in deep crisis. Humanism appears to be under serious threat as the traits of superior intelligence and moral rectitude which distinguish man from other animals seem not to matter any longer. In this article, I identify extreme violent acts as notably overlooked dimensions of posthuman crisis. Regarding their manifestation in poetry as posthuman metaphors of chaos, I discuss their deployment by some Nigerian poets in portraying the spate of violence and terrorism in Nigeria in recent times. Drawing theoretical inference from Posthumanism, the paper discusses the poems in the context of contemporary violent eruptions in Nigeria and how some poets have imaginatively recreated such bizarre socio-political occurrences. It regards these violent incidences as part of the emergent posthuman ethos that reflects a near global failure of human relationships--a kind of posthuman inhumanity.

Keywords Posthuman Inhumanity; Contemporary Nigerian Poetry; Electoral violence; Boko Haram Terrorism; Farmers/herders clashes

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Introduction

Violent conflicts have escalated in recent times around the globe. Nigeria is witnessing pockets of violent activities and ethnic/religion-based crises since the

return to civilian rule on May 29 1999 after many years of military misrule. As David and Manu (2015) observe, "Nigeria's conflict problems became exacerbated with the recommencement of democratic rule in May 1999. Nigerian polity since this development have been experiencing various dimension(sic) of violent conflicts, and crimes ranging from intra-communal, inter-community, indigenes/ settler conflicts, farmer/herdsmen conflicts, ethno-religious, militancy kidnapping, area boys/gang groups […]" (5). According to them, contemporary Nigeria is fraught with increasing rate of violence among which are rise in inter-ethnic and religion-centered violence which have led to the emergence of virulent terrorist groups like Boko Haram which has terrorized North-eastern and North-central regions of Nigeria since 2009. These violent incidences have led to colossal loss of human lives and property. In the face of the foregoing, it is expedient to inquire the extent to which Nigerian writers; especially poets have reacted to these aberrational social situations.

According to the *Cambridge Dictionary*, a metaphor is "an expression, often found in literature that describes person or object by referring to something that is considered to have similar characteristics to that person or object." It relates an object or a thing to another in a way that the sense realised from such comparison helps in manifesting meaning clearly. That is why Sanders agrees that "all theories of metaphor agree that it proceeds by relating one thing to another" (1). Metaphor is a veritable medium of expression especially in the literary domain where the high point is the application of imaginative reasoning and thinking. Such tendency warrants Lakoff and Johnson to see metaphoric use of language as the heart of most poetic engagements because it is "a novel or linguistic expression where one or more words for a concept are used outside of its normal conventional meaning to express a similar concept" (3). In such circumstances, the knowledge of a thing or object is linked to another unrelated but familiar object. Metaphors of chaos as used in this paper encapsulates the variegated forms of imagery, symbols and language structures which Nigerian poets have applied to depict the various shades of social, political and economic upheavals that have characterized the Nigerian society in recent times. According to Orhero, poets writing under this seemingly ubiquitous expression, "contemporary Nigerian poetry," "cover the writings of poets who started writing from the 1990s and 21st century poets" (16). This means that it is the contemporaneity or the currency of issues on which a poet writes, that determines the poet's inclusion as a contemporary poet.

This article is structured into four segments. The introductory part foregrounds the work by giving an overview of the key ideas espoused in the paper. The second

segment first highlights the meaning of Posthumanism as a philosophy, after which it explains Posthuman Inhumanity, the literary framework applied in the study. Next is an exposition on some metaphoric representations of 'Posthuman Inhumanity' in Contemporary Nigerian Poetry. This is followed by a concluding segment. The poets whose works are discussed in this paper include Tanure Ojaide, Joe Ushie, Idris Amali, Richard Inya, Igba Ogbole, Muhammad Kaigama Alwali Kazir, Mohammed Auwal Ibrahim, Iquo Diana Abasi-Eke, Tusi Umanah, Success Akpojotor, Melody Thahila Kuku and Rex Mayo Ubini. The guiding parameters for selection are their artistic (poetic) craft, immediacy or currency of subject matter and direct relationship or link to any form of violence.

Conceptual Framework

Posthumanism is the main conceptual framework applied in this study with special reference to Posthuman Inhumanity. As noted by Ranisch, Ihab Hassan, a postmodern philosopher, coined the term "Post-humanism" in 1977 when he said that "[W]e need to understand that five hundred years of humanism may be coming to an end, as humanism transforms itself into something that we must helplessly call posthumanism" (Qtd. in Ranisch, 2014 13). Hassan in the excerpt above forecasts that humanism may be coming to an end and it is being replaced by post-humanism. Posthumanism implies that there is "humanism" which is the "state of being human." In the words of Badmington,

> the human being occupies a natural and eternal place at the very centre of things, where it is distinguished absolutely from machines, animals, and other inhuman entities, where it shares with other human beings a unique essence; where it is the origin of meaning and the sovereign subject of history; and where it behaves and believes according to something called 'human nature.' ("Posthumanism," *Routledge Companion...* 374)

"Human nature" is characterised by humanism, a view which according to Jasen et al, implies "the idea of man as the unique being; that is 'the universalist posture of the idea of 'Man' as the alleged 'measure of all things'" (224). Man by this, is placed at the pedestal of noble deeds as well as in a position that is superior to other animals. But casting doubts on man's ability to retain the above human essences in recent decades, Susen in a most recent essay argues that:

> The human has become a question mark, indicating that it has become an

> increasingly contentious task to determine who and what counts—and by implication, who and what does not count—as 'human.' Just as one may be required to prove one's 'humanity' when accessing a particular website by confirming that one is not a robot, one may be expected to present evidence of one's humanity when confronted with a number of behavioural choices by validating that one's decision making process are guided by cognitively sound and morally justifiable consideration. (1)

The underlining point in Susen's statement is that the ability to undertake rational thinking and apply moral principles is the prime characteristic that differentiates humans from animals and machines. Man is thereby given the aura of human or humanism and this can be contrasted with posthuman or posthumanism. According to Ferrando, "posthumanism is a philosophy which provides a suitable way of departure to think in relational and multi-layered ways, expanding the focus to the non-human realm in post dualistic, post-hierarchical modes, thus allowing one to envision posthuman futures which will radically stretch the boundaries of human imagination" (30). It means a domain of knowledge through which various inquiries can be made on the human subject; its actions, essences and imaginative powers. It is a philosophy deployed in describing and discussing numerous "array of phenomena ranging from academic discipline and artistic movements to political advocacy campaigns and the development of commercial technologies" (Sapenko 244). Also "defined as post-human and as post-anthropocentricism" (Ferrando 29), posthumanism is a plethora of views that question the rationality behind the notion that humanity is the centre point of planetary existence as it has become increasingly difficult to determine what actually constitutes human. It "refers to a systematic attempt to challenge humanist assumptions underlying the construction of the 'human'" (Susen 2), as it questions almost every aspect of the human entity which includes man's relationship with other humans, other animals, other species and even some technological products like machines. As Hauskeller points out, "posthumanists generally refuse to see humans as a superior species in the natural order [or that which is] ontologically distinct from animals on the one hand, and machines on the other" (4). Agreeing with this, Braidotti (2013) states that posthumanist views "rest on the assumption of the historical decline of Humanism but goes further in exploring alternatives, without sinking into the rhetoric of the crises of Man" (37). Substantiating this in another paper, she avers that "the turn to post-humanism is a response to growing public awareness of fast-moving technological advances and also of contemporary political developments linked

to the limitations of economic globalization, the risks associated with the 'war on terror' and global security issues" (Braidotti 13). She relates posthumanism to series of ricocheting events in current global dispensation and it is from such perspective that we draw the theoretical principle of Posthuman Inhumanity that is applied in this paper.

The word "inhuman" means to exhibit characteristics detrimental to; not like or not related to human beings. As Chukhrov notes, "the concept of in-human presupposes alternative agencies, and presences parallel to human existence" (339). Inhuman exudes the meaning of "being contrary to or against human existence." It "is that which escapes rationalization, that which has no meaning or reason for existence. It is just there-senseless, brute existence...regardless of whether organic or artificially produced" (Kolozva 200). The inhuman has no reasonable basis for its immanence; it is an action that betrays human motives and is bereft of conscionable rationale or lacks proper reasoning and explanation. "Posthuman Inhumanity" is an expression specifically generated for this paper to distinguish a kind of posthumanism that is entirely negative or inhumane. As a new framework generated to expand the general understanding of posthumanism as a critical endeavour, this paper projects the spate of violence consistently ravaging the world in the present times as forms of posthuman inhumanity. As negative posthuman acts, violent acts are manifestations that are beyond human rationalization as there are hardly no cogent or requited reasons to justify their eruption because they are not only senseless but portray humans as beasts and destroy the human essence.

This is in consonance with Braidotti's exhortation that she takes "the posthuman predicament as an opportunity to empower the pursuit of alternative schemes of thought, knowledge and self-representation. The posthuman condition urges us to think critically and creatively about who, and what we are actually in the process of becoming" (12). Most discussions so far, on posthumanism, are dominated by scholars whose notions point to it as a positive development with little or no attempt made to highlight its negative dimensions such as violent acts and other inhuman machinations. This underscores our rationale for advancing the new conceptual framework of Posthuman Inhumanity. The motive is to expand both the understanding and repertoire of posthumanism by giving perhaps a new angle to its interpretation and analysis. Efforts in this paper are geared towards pursuing an 'alternative scheme of thought' that is characterized by 'critical and creative thinking' as suggested by Braidotti above. This new perspective, projects a new form of critical posthumanism which sees violence as an indisputable aspect of human existence and therefore should indubitably constitute an aspect of posthuman

discourse. This is hinged on the fact that it seems that the only language common to the globe at the moment is killing and destruction. Mbembe has this in mind when he asserts that "this new moment is one of global mobility. An important feature of the age of global mobility is that military operations and the exercise of the right to kill are no longer the sole monopoly of states, and the 'regular army' is no longer the unique modality of carrying out these functions" (31). Then illustrating this scenario with Africa, he states that:

> Many African states can no longer claim a monopoly on violence and on the means of coercion within their territory. Nor can they claim a monopoly on territorial boundaries. Coercion itself has become a market commodity. Military manpower is bought and sold on a market in which the identity of suppliers and purchasers means almost nothing. Urban militias, private armies, armies of regional lords, private security firms, and state armies all claim the right to exercise violence or to kill. (32)

Also regarded as Posthuman inhumane, the new framework sees violent acts as part of posthuman indignities. This trend is a remarkable departure from the plethora of perspectives on posthumanism which view it ordinarily as forms of positive human development and technological-advancement. Rather, the sense in which posthumanism is considered in this paper is that which sees it as a negative aspect of human transformation.

By posthuman inhumanity, we mean that humans seem to be fast losing their once celebrated human essences and instincts. They seem to have gotten to a situation where they now act like beasts, destroying, devouring, maiming and killing one another with gusto. Posthuman inhumanity, as used in this paper, portrays the crises that are at the centre of all social and political upheavals ricocheting around the globe at the moment. This is in line with Mambrol's observation that "posthuman, by way of contrast, emerges from a recognition that 'Man' is not the privileged and protected centre, because humans are no longer and perhaps never were—utterly distinct from animals, machines, and other forms of the 'inhuman [...']" (1). This indicates a situation where humans seem utterly incapable of controlling their fate or working harmoniously towards a peaceful, purposeful, prosperous and violent-free world. Such critical discussion based on posthuman inhumanity is a critical foray into the situation where humans seem to have outgrown the natural human essences and have therefore embraced bestial and animalistic thoughts and tendencies in form of violent behaviours. In a bid to resolve the puzzle that has arisen from current

global dispensation where humans are eliciting behviours that are bereft of seminal human attributes, thinking and considerations, posthuman inhumanity as deployed in this essay, spearheads the quest to interrogate the ways some Nigerian poets have portrayed some posthuman ethos like acts of violence, in their works. It is a hermeneutic analysis of posthuman metaphors of violence as portrayed in the works of some contemporary Nigerian poets. By this, it examines the ways these poets have portrayed humans as those behaving as if they have crossed the Rubicon of the human epoch into a post human era. Applied in this form, the essay identifies some marked breakdown in human relationships in Nigeria and the macabre incidents and events they have triggered as they are artistically captured by some Nigerian poets.

Posthuman Metaphors of Chaos in Contemporary Nigerian Poetry

The artistic recreation and ingenious portrayal of violent incidences that reflect posthuman inhumanity in poetry is what this paper regards as posthuman metaphors of chaos. They involve the application of imagistic emblems and linguistic repertoires that are redolent with violent human orchestrations. One notable Nigerian poet who has been quite consistent and productive in deploying poetry to explore the current vagaries of contemporary Nigerian society is Joe Ushie. In his most recent poetry collection, *Yawns and Belches* (2018*)* that is strongly symbolic of the Nigerian society, he portrays electoral violence which has been a negative feature of elections and electioneering in Nigeria. In a poem entitled "Ballot Season," Ushie recreates the violent scenarios that dominate political activities in Nigeria.

> Now is our harvest season, the ballot season
> When the air-bound bird barges into us who
> Yawn our yearnings all-ways below the cloud
> In this season of return to roots, of re-membering. (*Yawns* 28)

In the poem, Ushie's poet personae recounts the celebratory mood of some electorates who 'ballot season' has offered a one-time opportunity to retaliate the neglect of "a self-insulated" politician who like "the air-bound bird" would now stoop and swoop on them to obtain votes. To repay the politician for his heart-wrenching neglect, which to them is a kind of violence, the electorates prepare to take violent actions against him for they regard the politician's misrepresentation as an affront. They rally round to unleash a kind of violence on him:

This is the time to give the king a sharp cut on the head
Now that his bushy head is in the barber's grip
Before he soars back into oblivion, high above the clouds
[...]
When will we realize that in our vote is our trap, and in our
Voice the sling to make the air-bound bird earth bound. (*Yawns...* 28)

The whole poem is structured with violent imagery and coercive diction. The politician has been inhuman to the electorates by absconding since they voted for him and now that another round of electioneering has come, he has come to seek for their votes again, and to repay him, the people are spoiling for revenge. Metaphorically portrayed as a "king," the politician is poised to be given a cut on the head, since his bushy head is in the electorate's grip. One is forced to conjure the picture of a king who is forcefully held down to be given a hair cut or an air-bound bird which has been entrapped by votes amassed to forcefully bring it earth-bound.

Similarly, another poet who deploys metaphors of disorder to depict the vestiges of human cantankerousness and animalistic violence that has infiltrated Nigeria's social fabric in recent times is Richard Inya. Regarded as one of the strong voices that are coming up in the Nigeria's literary firmament, Inya in his collection *Katakata* (2013) which is onomatopoeic of discordance, upheaval, mayhem and fracas illustrates what Rik Betrand refers to as "the turmoil in a nation and the struggles endured by the people" (*Katakata* 3). In the short eponymous opening poem with the title "Katakata (i)," the poet personae paints a sombre picture of a weak and poor mother whose multitude of children are about to shoot to death.

In our benevolent home
Lies our graceful mother
On a mat of gun-powder
Her one hundred and seventy million
Or more or less children
Train nozzles of machine-guns
To her head, speaking strange words;
The tongues they once spoke
That burnt part of her gown,
Leaving our mother half-naked.
Would you not join to save her?
Now, her lifeline is a precarious lot. (*Katakata*, 13)

The tempo in the poem is palpable while the imagery is that of uncaring attitude, war and despoliation. The shambolic, precarious, half-naked, graceful mother in the poem above is metaphorical of Nigeria with her approximately one hundred and seventy million people who through their numerous discordant activities such as militancy, insurgency, terrorism, violent agitations, electoral, ethnic and religious violence, are aiming the nozzles of their machine-guns on her head, ready to blow it off, thus disintegrating the nation. The poet personae further recalls that a part of the gown worn by this mother of trigger-happy children had once been burnt by 'the tongues' the children spoke. This reminds one of the Nigeria-Biafra War fought from 1967 to 1970, which is seriously believed to have been caused by ethnic mistrust among Nigerians. The life of Nigeria as a nation if fraught with so many upheavals (negative posthuman behaviours) and that is why the poet also remarks that the woman in the poem is lying on a mat of gun-powder; meaning that the violence can degenerate into a full blown war if nothing is done to abate it.

Though, the above poem is full of posthuman violent imagery, they cannot be compared to the ones in another poem "Electoral Fire," where posthuman act of electoral violence is frontally reflected. In the poem, Inya through a poet personae, who is afraid of electoral violence recounts a typical electoral violent scene witnessed:

Mad scattering and escape
In score of directions
Inciting and scathing talks
Blow electoral fumes
Fanning reactionary roles
Heads roll, blood flow
Glass domes come down
Charred buildings and cars
Stand and stare, as bodies
Litter the main streets
With undying fire... (*Katakata* 31)

Nigeria's electoral season is a volatile moment when many forms of violence are perpetrated with blood freely flowing on the streets and many people killed or maimed. It is as if during elections, Nigerians throw their humanity to the winds and pick the inhuman elements to go about their electioneering. This makes the elections

to be quite violent, thus depicting so much negative posthuman traits.

Nigerian poets have also reacted in various ways to the issue of violent extremism which has become a recurring manifestation of the posthuman era. Chief among them is Idris Amali, who in his poem "Peace Forgotten," looks at the world as a terror-infested domain where violence is rising exponentially and crisis and physical combats are celebrated instead of being condemned:

> As our world has harvested peace forgotten
> And we pride our clenched fists
> And fibrous muscles
> With bold faces (*Back Again* 22)

Having reaped forgotten peace, which invariably translates to violence, people have embraced violence—"And as cannons of threats and rhetorics transform/Into cannons of smoke and fireworks at dusk/Silent destruction takes its stead/With men maddened by actions of war" (*Back Again...*22). However, amidst this frenzy of crises, Amali's poet speaker makes a startling observation:

> I saw no one near nor afar
> To direct the hose of fountain
> Against engulfing flames
> Except children
> Children who know no roots and rhythms of war
> Except to be costumed
> In costly robes of war:
> Inflated wombs (*Back Again* 22)

The mental picture evoked in the lines above is both palpable and horrific. The violence— "engulfing flames," visited on the people is so enormous and no attempt is made to douse it— "direct the hose of fountain," rather children are portrayed as those exacerbating the crises by actively participating in it by becoming willing tools in the hands of those stoking the war. The poet in the lines alludes to the sinister practice of recruiting children as suicide-bombers-"costumed in costly robes of war." From the recruitment of child-terrorists, Amali's poet speaker in another poem "Pounding Gwange (Maiduguri) to Rubbish" gives an eye-witness account of a typical terrorist attack in Maiduguri neighbourhood. Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state, north-eastern Nigeria, is the epicentre of Boko Haram terrorism in

Nigeria. Painting a picture of a pathetic melee, the poet speaker recounts: "We know something is in the offing/And the sound comes in / Shaking the entire earth on which we stand /....Convoy of cars with red hazard lights / Head for our stand.... / Now we can venture out of our doors / To listen to this distant music of gun battles" (*Effega* 62). Giving a cinematographic narration of the attack, the poet speaker goes on:

> The last one sounds like cluster bombs
> The next kaka ko! Kaka kaka gbuum!
> The next gbuum!
> [...]
> Rumours of vehicular movements take over
> And rumours of war and products
> Of Kpa! Kpa! Kpa!
> Guum! and gbuum!
> As the city rose in fear (*Effega* 63).

This is a cinematographic invocation of the various sounds perceived during a terrorist attack: from the cracking of guns to the shelling of bombs and mortars. Compare it with this near semblance of thought in this poetic scene created by Mohammed Auwal Ibrahim in his poem "In Borno" where he recounts the horrible and harrowing experiences people in Borno state grapple with in the hands of insurgents:

> Like snake,
> We rolled on our stomachs
> To escape from running bullets
> Above our heads
> From cockcrow to sunset.
> ...
> Like ball
> Men heads fell rolling on ground
> Kissing sand
> In those days.
> Like water
> Blood is seen in streets
> House by house

Making many orphans
Widows and childless (*ANA Review 2019* 115)

The comparison in the above lines is implicit. In Borno state which is the epicentre of terrorist attacks by Boko Haram in Nigeria, people crawl like snakes 'from cockcrow to sunset' to escape raining bullets. In the same vein, heads are constantly decapitated to kiss the sand while blood is flowing into houses as children are rendered orphans and men and women are rendered childless beings. These are the resultant effects of the orgy of bloodletting perpetrated by the Boko Haram insurgents in north-eastern Nigeria. Such scenario clearly depicts humans as behaving as though they are animals! Till date, Boko Haram still attacks various parts of Borno State and in a recent attack at the town of Auno by the outskirts of Maiduguri, the insurgents carried out a heartless act where a suckling child was taken away from her mother and thrown into a raging fire. According to a newspaper reporter Ashaolu, the lawmaker representing that constituency in Nigeria's House of Representatives, Mohammed Usman, relayed the information to the members of the House this way: "Mr Speaker, the baby was crying when Boko Haram wanted to take the mother. The baby held the wrapper of the mother. When the terrorists saw that the child will be a problem to them, they snatched the child and threw the child inside the fire" (https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.newsbreak.ng/travellers-massacre-boko-haram-threw-baby-into-fire-to-abduct-mother-borno-lawmaker/%3famp 1). Having thrown her child into the fire, they still abducted the woman. These corroborate the thoughts espoused in Umanah Tusi's poem entitled "Merchants of Death," which sees humans as creatures who have inordinately transformed to purveyors of deaths:

Merchants of death in human forms
Some are still, huge and fierce
Others slim, short with stone-like hearts
All they do from dawn to dusk
Is to think of a way to maim and kill
They take delight in shedding blood! (*ANA Review 2019* 66)

This coheres with the assertion by Valera that "the posthuman is characterized as something radically new, which clearly exceeds the human frontiers, so much as to no longer have the appearance of the *homo sapiens* species" (483). Such incidents cast a noticeable slur on the humanity of the members of the Boko Haram sect and

one is forced to wonder whether they are still human beings or beasts in human physique.

The rise of Boko Haram insurgents is not traceable to any particular cause but rather it is a result of the internal political, social, economic and to some extent religious factors (Akokegh 47). However, Babalola quotes Chothia (2012) to have said that "Ustaz Mohamed Yusuf, a charismatic Muslim cleric, founded Boko Haram in 2002 in Maiduguri, the capital city of Borno state in north-eastern Nigeria and that the sect's philosophy is rooted in the practice of orthodox Islam, and the group's official name in Arabic, *Jama'atu Ahlissanah lidda'awati wal Jihad* translates to 'people committed to the propagation of the Prophet's teachings and Jihad'" (15).

The emergence of Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria in 2009 introduced a terrorist dimension to the Nigerian criminal space as series of bombings, raids and kidnapping have been carried out by the sect. Boko Haram is an Islamic movement which strongly opposes man-made laws but seeks to abolish the secular system of government and establish Sharia Law in Nigeria. The movement whose name in Hausa is "Boko Haram" translates as "Western education is sacrilege or sin." The ideology of the sect is based on its total hatred for western concepts, structures, education and ideals thus Boko Haram which means that western education is forbidden. The philosophy of the sect which is rooted in orthodox Islam abhors Western education and the civil service (Oviasogie 25). In July 26 2009, Boko Haram members attacked and destroyed Dutsen Tanshi police station in Bauchi. Over the next four days, they launched attacks in the town of Maiduguri, Lamisulu and Gamboru where government establishments like prisons, police stations and barracks, primary schools and Directorate of Employment offices in Yobe, Borno and Adamawa states were destroyed (Forest 62). The Nigeria Army was deployed to quell this wind of insurrection. This led to the arrest of many members of the Boko Haram sect. Mohammed Yusuf, their leader and his father in-law, Baa Fugu were among those arrested and paraded in humiliating fashion outside the police station. As Forest further notes:

> Yusuf along with his father in-law Baa Fugu and other sect members—were publicly executed on 30 July 2009 outside the police station in Maiduguri. Police claimed that they died after an intense gun battle with officers on duty, but video clips that later emerged showed that they were executed in cold blood. This alleged act of extra-judicial killing of their leader and his father-in-law highly incensed and radicalized the sect. This brief period marked a

> turning point for Boko Haram, whose new leaders—Imam Shekau considered as the spiritual leader and operational commander with Kabiru Sokoto and Sheik Abu Muhammed made the sect to be more radical and extremist.... the death of Yusuf served to amplify pre-existing animosities towards government. (63-64)

With this, the sect became quite ruthless and it is not only a militant group but the most devastating and ruthless in Nigeria's history. (Aro 1). Members of the sect have been quite virulent and vicious in their attacks and they have inflicted and keep inflicting heavy human and material damage on the Nigerian state.

In a poem entitled "Boko Haram," Melody Tahila Kuku describes the heart-rending aftermath of Boko Haram's raids which are becoming quite a regular occurrence:

> Blood, fresh red blood
> Everyday I smell it.
> Foul stench of humans
> Slaughtered like cattles (sic)
> And we accept it
> It's part of our lives now,
> What can we do?
> I hear men say.
> (https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/book-haram/1)

To Nigerians, Boko Haram is an infectious curse, spreading death all over the country, that is why the poet persona is poising to fight back to destroy the terrorists. "Let my blood match their blood,/My anger, theirs,/My zeal for my country/With their zeal for madness" ("Boko Haram," 3). The persona sues for retaliation and summons for equal force to neutralize the destructive powers of Boko Haram. In another poem "Boko Haram Tufiakwa!," Rex Mayor Ubini invokes acerbic curses on Boko Haram, to show how it is manifestly detested and abhorred:

> Let no snail rent you
> A shell for hide out
> Till you bring back our maidens!
> Let no ant-hill rent you
> A cave for hide out

Till you bring back our maidens!
(https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/book-haram/ 1)

The poet prays that no creature should assist Boko Haram with a hiding place until the group returns the maidens. The 'maidens' here is an allusion to 'Chibok Girls." As Omilusi explains, "in [April] 2014, no fewer than 276 schoolgirls were abducted in Borno [state] by the Boko Haram sect that has ravaged the region since 2009. The audacious kidnapping brought the insurgency to world attention, triggering global outrage that galvanised support from many local and international actors. The failure of Nigeria's former government to act to free the girls sparked a global Bring Back Our Girls movement" (1). Though some of the girls were later released by the insurgents, some are still being held captives by the insurgents till date and the poet's voice in the poem invokes virulent curses to visit Boko Haram unless it releases the abducted maidens. These are marked acts of man's inhumanity to man; acts depicting posthuman inhumanity.

The abduction of Chibok Girls is central in the discourse about the Boko Haram terrorism in north-eastern Nigeria as it marked the peak of their terroristic machinations. Though the incident attracted global attention it constitutes the preoccupation of some poets in Nigeria. In a poem "Colours from Chibok," Success Akpojotor sees the carting away of young vibrant school girls by the Boko Haram terrorists as the zenith of their affront on the Nigerian state. Couching her ideas in highly symbolic and metaphoric lines, the poet chronicles the dastardly action thus:

Their maroon bowl reached its brim,
filled with black haemoglobin
scooped from the red-letter Nyanya ritual
and carting away into the green Sambisa
two-ten white Chibok virgins...
(http://www.poetsreadingnews.com2017/09/colours-from-chibok-poetry-success- akpojotor/ 1)

The first line "Their maroon bowl reached its brim" refers to the atrocities of the Boko Haram sect. It sees it as having reached its highest point with the abduction of the Chibok girls—"the Chibok virgins." Before then, they had detonated a suicide bomb in a motor-park in Nyanya, a town at the outskirts of Abuja which maimed and killed so many people. The poet metaphorically refers to this inhuman act as the 'red-letter Nyanya ritual'. Furthermore, suicide bombing of civilians is a regular

fighting tactics of the Boko Haram terrorists, so it is has become their ritual. The 'two-ten white Chibok virgins" depict the number that was abducted. The same line of thought is shared by Iquo Diana Abasi Eke in her poem "Centenary Condolences" where she mourns for Nigeria as the country celebrates the hundred years of the amalgamation of its northern and southern protectorates by the colonialists in 1914. Amidst the rendition of this threnody, she infuses the unpalatable tale of the Chibok Girls' debacle:

> A thousand tears for your daughters,
> never to return whole; or sane
> A hundred tears for dusk time games
> Never again to be enjoyed
> After the dance into captivity....
> (https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.legit.ng/822128-chaos-herdsmen-attack-imo-enugu-still-bleeding-poets-react-with-condolences.html 1)

She mourns the Chibok girls who will no more return as virgins as they left, nor will they participate in evening games as they used to observe in their dormitories, having danced into captivity—been abducted. The same trend of thought is expressed by Martin Akpan in the poem "Invaded Innocence" where he shows a kind of frantic revulsion for the innocence of the Chibok girls which were squelched by the insurgents: "Ripped, raped, and whacked:/You have lost your virginity;/ Your innocence is forever gone,/O haemorrhaging Chibok" (*ANA Review,* 2019 84). However, another poet, Muhammad Kaigama Auwal Kazir gives a graphic imaginative account of the cruel suddenness of the Chibok abduction:

> In your night gowns, in your monthly flows
> You left your beds untouched, the taps running
> Your dinner uneaten, your exams unfinished
> ("Chibok 269" *ANA Review,* 2018 59)

The pictorial imagery (metaphors) in the lines are exceedingly heart-rending and touching. They explain the depth of the unforeseen disruption which became the fate of the Chibok girls. It takes only the inhuman to perpetrate such uncanny act of swooping at some innocent school girls and abducting them. From the above, none of the schoolgirls ever envisaged that their life would take such a dangerously circuitous turn that evening. As reports had it, they were all going about their normal

duties in their dormitories when Boko Haram insurgents invaded their school and forcefully kidnapped them.

A dimension of posthuman inhumanity or bestial acts of violence that has also captured the attention of Nigerian poets is the clashes between Fulani herdsmen and native farmers. The Fulani are pastoralists whose ancestral home is traceable to Futa Toro in Senegal. They usually live a nomadic life, herding their "cattle, goats and sheep across the dry hinterland of their domain, keeping somewhat separate from the local agricultural populations" (Anter 1). The Fulani has a history of political and religious conquest and this has enthroned them as the ruling class in most parts of northern Nigeria. Most Fulani live a pastoral life; they traverse several villages in Nigeria in search of greener pastures for their cattle, sheep and goats. There is the elite Fulani who most times, are the real owners of the livestock that the nomadic Fulani rear across different regions of the country. In recent times, the crises between farmers and the Fulani herdsmen have taken a frightening dimension as fighting erupts incessantly in various parts of Nigeria with many lives lost and property destroyed. In a report on *The New York Times* on the crises, Akinwotu writes: "Many parts of the country have been affected by the conflicts, including in the north, where Muslims constitute most of the farmers. But much of the recent surge in violence has taken place in the Middle Belt, where the herders are typically ethnic Fulani and Muslim, and the farmers are mostly Christians" (1). This has given an ethnic and religious twist to the conflict, thereby creating much tension in the land.

Among the poets who have spared some thoughts for the Herdsmen/Farmers conflict is Tanure Ojaide. In his poem entitled "Herdsmen" a mother puts a call across to her son that their community is under siege by herdsmen. The poet's choice of words is unmistakeably indicative of the son's vile-hatred for the herdsmen who he refers to as "butcher herdsmen." And heeding the mother's call, he reels out some counter measures the community will take to confront the menace:

> When blood overflows the land
> The youths battle the intruders
> No group has monopoly of slaughtering
> let the attacked shoot at their attackers!
> [...]
> Reinforce the spirited youths of the land
> to roast the herdsmen and their cows! (*The Questioner* 155)

The excerpt above is full of violent metaphors of attack: "blood overflows the land," "youths battle the intruders," "monopoly of slaughtering" "shoot at their attackers," "reinforce the spirited youth," "to roast the herdsmen...." Such attitude has continuously fuelled the fires of the crises for as soon as they "roast the herdsmen and their cows," other herdsmen will avenge their death and the circle of killing and destruction continues.

The same thing applies to Richard Inya who reflecting on herdsmen/farmers clashes in a poem entitled "Mass Burial," gives a panoramic portrayal of the situation where Nigerians are witnessing incessant moments of mass burial occasioned by farmers/herdsmen clashes. The poem begins with a stanza that depicts a scene of numerous deaths that is causing massive sorrowing and weeping.

A rain of nails
Falls on the coffins
Of the fallen
And we are vessels
Sailing on a sea of tears. (*This is not a Poem* 61)

So many imagistic materials are used to objectify the assuaging number of deaths and the accompanying spasm of weeping. From the "rain of nails" that "fall on coffins" to "vessels sailing on a sea of tears" the magnitude of death and mourning is highly escalated. Then the reason for the mourning and weeping is crafted in lines that are effervescently luminous in thoughts and imagery:

Cows are trains
Who stand in their way?
Cows swallow souls
And graze wildly on graveyards. (*This is not a Poem* 62)

The metaphor of cows turning to trains that crush human lives is not only livid but astonishing; the same thing applies to their transformation into destructive giants that whack human souls. Then the sense of cows grazing "wildly on graveyards" signifies a kind of irreverent destructive frenzy with which the killings are carried out. Cows in this instance is symbolic of their herders who have gone wild and are destroying anything that stands on their way especially farmers who oppose the wanton destruction of their crops by their cattle.

Conclusion

From the discussions so far, it is evident that the spirit of posthuman inhumanity manifested in the form of metaphors of chaos largely pervades most contemporary Nigerian poetic engagements. In such instances, humans are clearly portrayed as destroyers of the lives of other fellow human beings, thus, strengthening the position of post-human analysts that in the modern world, man seems to have been divested of his human ethos. From the artistic representations of the violence that manifests during electioneering and ballot casting to that which periodically erupts among various ethnic nationalities, from the violence orchestrated by terrorists and extremist groups like Boko Haram to those sparked-off by clashes between armed herdsmen and farmers. The portrayal of violent occurrences in recent Nigerian poetic engagements through the deployment of metaphors of force and disorder as discussed in this paper, indicates that humans may have passed the "human era" and are now living in an "after-human"—posthuman times, where most of their thoughts, decision and actions are no longer controlled by sound and morally justifiable judgments. The paper therefore gives new meaning to the understanding of posthumanism by identifying extreme violent acts as veritable negative dimensions of posthuman ethos. It sees those exhibitions of violent machinations as forms of posthuman indignities. Regarding forceful behavioural manifestations as the bane of the modern man, the paper identifies the stark portrayal of posthuman inhumanity by Nigerian poets, through glowing metaphors of chaos, as a warning that humanity may be heading to a state of self-destruct or utter annihilation unless something drastic is done!

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Reimagining Nature and Identity: A Postcolonial Ecocritical Exploration of Rice in Four Asian Poetry

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Abstract This study explores the representation of food and crops in literature, focusing on the thematic importance of rice as a staple food in Asian countries. Rice cultivation in Asia has a long history that is intertwined with the legacy of Western colonialism, which disrupted traditional practices and exploited workers. Despite the disruptions caused by colonialism, rice remains an integral part of Asian culture, as reflected in myths, folklore, and legends. Recent studies in postcolonial ecocriticism have offered insights into the interaction between humans, nature, and the environment, taking into account the ecological crises caused by colonialism and its legacy. In this study, four rice-themed poems from Indonesia, Korea, and Vietnam are examined to explore rice's cultural and spiritual values in the context of current global challenges. The research data were collected from printed sources and online platforms using "poems about rice" as the keywords. The result shows that rice has great socio-cultural importance in Asia, where it is revered as a sacred symbol and cultural memory beyond its commercial worth imposed by Western colonizers. Each poet represents a different country in East and Southeast Asia, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the significance of rice in Asian literature.

Keywords Asian literature; postcolonial ecocriticism; representation of rice

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Introduction

Representation of food and crops in literature has been a recurring theme for centuries. The importance of food in the continuation of human civilization cannot be understated, and its thematic significance can be seen in literature since ancient times. From the biblical episode of the Israelite exodus, sustained by *manna* from heaven to contemporary novels such as Laura Esquivel's *Like Water for Chocolate* (1992), Joanne Harris' *Chocolat* (1999), and Durian Sukegawa's *Sweet Bean Paste* (2013), food has been used as a literary motif as well as a symbol representing various societal and cultural issues (Coghlan; Piatti-Farnell and Brien). Literature, and humanities, in general, have always been concerned with social relations and with a larger web and connection, in which the act of eating food is intricately woven within a mode of production upon certain societal/cultural values. As Goldstein emphasized,

> The broader attitudes about the political, social, and cultural issues surrounding the questions of eating, often alludes toward the mechanism of inclusion and exclusion. Literature's fascination with the conceptual and literal boundaries of

> eating relations cannot be overstated. The boundaries may be drawn in a variety of ways - along lines of religion, class, race, sex, and gender, but also using myriad other demarcations that echo other boundaries in a given text. (47-48)

In summary, the representation of crops in literature is a complex and multifaceted topic, encompassing a wide range of dimensions such as cultural, environmental, societal, and economic. The significance of food and crops in literary works underlines their crucial role in human life and illustrates further insight into the aspect of human-nature coexistence and relationship.

Similarly, the thematic importance of rice as a staple food in Asian countries is profound. Asia produced more than 90 % of all grown rice worldwide (Sharma). Rice is seen as a geopolitical commodity in most Asian countries, with political stability directly tied to food security and the availability of rice at reasonable costs. The revitalization of the domestic rice sector and efforts to achieve food security through food self-sufficiency demonstrate the importance of rice for many countries in the region (Timmer 12-13). During the COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, food security risks have increased in Asia and the Pacific. Difficulties in the domestic and international food supply chains during the pandemic times had a great impact on the availability and accessibility of food including rice (Kim et al.). Asian countries can be proud because they have a dynamic rice farming system, resulted in different methods and innovations used in rice cultivation, such as System of Rice Intensification (SRI) and Seed Film Cultivation (SFC). Rice, unlike other types of crops which are not water resistant, is suitable for growing in wet environments throughout Asia, resulting in the tens of thousands of locally adapted rice varieties. Despite the recent disruptions in rice production and consumption, the high degree of dependence on rice cultivation distinguishes Asia from the rest of the world. This phenomenon is historically connected with this region's recent history of Western colonization and its legacy.

It is impossible to separate the history of Western colonialism from the history of rice cultivation in Asia. Population increase stimulated agricultural development throughout the colonial era, and rice production became an important commodity (Booth 61-63). In response, the European powers established plantations in Southeast Asia to meet the growing demand for rice. The Dutch established rice plantations in Java, Indonesia, while the British did the same in Burma (now Myanmar) and Malaysia. Western colonialism had a significant impact on rice cultivation, leading to the displacement of traditional practices, exploitation of labor, and loss of cultural heritage. These plantations relied heavily on forced labor,

and the workers, who were often indentured or enslaved, were subjected to grueling working conditions and suffered from exploitation and abuse. Moreover, the control of land by imperial powers, as Said (7) posits, transforms the traditional production of rice production based on subservience and sustainability in which farmers were forced to grow only cash crops such as tea, opium, and coffee instead of rice.

Even within the disruption caused by colonialism, rice remains as a crop with socio-cultural significance, treated with reverence by Asian society, beyond the monetary and economic values imposed by Western colonizers. More than just a staple food, rice is an essential and sacred symbol for people in the Asian region. In almost all Asian languages, separate terms describe each phase of cultivation and the type of rice harvested. Japanese language, for example, differentiated between *gohan* or *meshi* for cooked rice, while uncooked rice is called *kome/okome* and newly harvested rice as called *shinma* (Ohnuki-Tierney 6). In Burmese, *Htamin Sar* can be interpreted as either "to eat a meal" or "to eat rice," similarly *an com* in Vietnamese is used in a similar way (Hiên et al.) There are countless other metaphors within Asian languages which interpolate the significance of rice in Asian culture. In contrast, the term "paddy" in English also refers to "rice," including the process of cultivating and processing it from the paddy field to the grocery store, kitchen, and eventually dining table.

The socio-cultural importance of rice as an integral part of Asian people's lives is evident in myths, folklore, legends, and other literary works. Various stories about rice in Indonesia are inseparable from the diversity of ethnicities and cultures. The fairy tale about rice in Java is often associated with Dewi Sri's charity. But there is a narrative from Bali Island about Mr. Poleng, an old farmer who is willing to share his ration of rice for lunch with cattle and other farm animals. Lord Indra made Poleng a servant of heaven after witnessing his generosity (Zidni via McDonald 28-31). In the Philippines, there is also a story of Agmay, a little girl who assists her father in repaying all of his debts. Agmay planted and collected golden grains, specifically rice, unintentionally, which later became a source of family income (Sharma 4). Furthermore, the story of rice from Malaysia begins with the sacrifice of Kinomulok, the daughter of Tok, the tribal chief of the village of Kadazandusun, which was originally fertile but became arid because it was blocked by a rock that grew bigger and bigger every day. The brave woman stood in front of the rock and let her body be struck by lightning and shattered into pieces. Kinomulok's blood turned into rice, her teeth turned into corn, and her flesh became cucumbers, each of which grew many times over. The rock no longer grows and is now known as Mount Kinabalu (Ng Kok Keong via McDonald 46-48). Rice is seen as a means

of satisfying both human physical requirements and a symbol of wisdom and good acts, all of which are important components of traditional Asian cultures in the three mythological illustrations above. As a result, authors from Asian roots frequently employ rice as a motif. However, it should also be noted that not all studies demonstrate the significance of rice in Asian civilization; some merely use rice to highlight the setting of a region, while others say that rice is only addressed briefly (Coroza; Eugenio; Laksmitarukmi).

Recently, eco-critical studies of rice stories in poetry, novels, and short stories with Asian backgrounds have begun to emerge (Sangkhaphanthanon; Ryan; Diaz; Payne et al.). Their studies align with the recent development of literary critical theory, postcolonial ecocriticism. Broadly speaking, postcolonial ecocriticism can be defined as an interdisciplinary field that explores the relationship between humans, nature and the environment as they are shaped by colonialism and its legacies (Indriyanto 124-25). It draws attention to the ways in which colonialism has disrupted the traditional relationship between humans and culture, and how this erasure of indigenous outlook has contributed to the ecological crises of the present. Through examination of the historical background and the ongoing neo-colonial exploitation on the environment and human society, postcolonial ecocriticism interpolates a more equitable and sustainable relationship between people and the natural world. Banerjee writes,

> Postcolonial ecocriticism exposed the anthropocentrism, the human-centeredness of many of these depictions, and it went on to point the alternative ways of being in the world. In such corrective fashion, ecocriticism form the very beginning had global concern; If indeed the impending doom of planet earth was to be averted, political as well as global activism had to be global in scope. (Banerjee 195)

In line with the insights from postcolonial ecocriticism, this current study examines whether the cultural and spiritual values of rice have relevance and dynamics with the current global challenges, including the destruction of the natural and social environment. It will look at 4 (four) rice-themed poetry with cultural origins from four Asian countries: Indonesia, Korea (America), and Vietnam. Except for “Padi yang Tak Berputik” [Paddy with No Pistils], which is accessible in printed form published by *International Literary Magazine Homagi*, research data was acquired from pages on the internet by entering the keywords “poems about rice.” Each poet is from a diverse East and Southeast Asian country. The table of poems to look at is

presented below.

Table 1. Poems for Analysis

Title of Poem	Author	Source
Spoonful of Rice	Hi-Dong Chai	https://www.poetrysoup.com/poems_poets/best/120291/hi-dong_chai
The Poem I Can't Yet Name	Nguyễn Phan Quế Mai	https://poetryandplaces.com/2020/10/07/nguyen-phan-que-mai-the-poem-i-cant-yet-name/
Padi Tumbuh Tanpa Suara	Eka Budianta	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PjsZjWpg5xM
Padi yang Tak Berputik	Ni Wayan Kristina	International Literary Magazine Homagi #8, July 2022, p. 42.

Within the framework of postcolonial ecocriticism, the analysis of the four poems employs a qualitative-interpretative method to delve into the intricate layers of meaning embedded within the texts. This approach allows for a comprehensive exploration of the poems' language, imagery, structure, and literal as well as metaphorical elements, all of which contribute to the construction of their postcolonial and ecocritical themes. Drawing on the insights of postcolonial ecocriticism, this study unravels the underlying power dynamics, historical implications, and cultural nuances that inform the poems. This involves examining the relationships between human and non-human entities, the exploration of environmental issues, and the interplay of identity, memory, and nostalgia in the postcolonial context.

Under the postcolonial ecocriticism paradigm, the historicity of Asian writers highlights the relevance of the historical context in which these writers emerged, as well as the influence of colonialism on their writings. Examining the authors' backgrounds, including their experiences of colonization, displacement, and encounters with environmental issues, enables a deeper interpretation of their works and reveals the interplay between power dynamics, cultural nuances, and environmental concerns in the Asian postcolonial context.

Hi-Dong Chai left his home country Seoul, Korea, at the age of 16 to study in the United States, where he earned his Ph.D. in electrical engineering and subsequently worked for IBM for over two decades. As a child in Seoul, Hi-Dong Chai saw the tragedies of World War II and the Korean War as a kid. He wrote a poem about his father, a Christian preacher who refused to abandon his beliefs. He was tortured, imprisoned, and eventually murdered. Hi-Dong Chai's brother, who had

joined the military to help defend the country, was also killed. Now in America, Hi-Dong Chai opted to spend the remainder of his life as a writer after retiring from San Jose State University as a professor in 2002. He wants to share his thoughts, emotions, and life experiences with the rest of the world. His 2013 book *Shattered by the Wars*: *But Sustained by Love* is about his family's plight during World War II under Japanese occupation and the Korean War. This acclaimed memoir won a number of awards, such as 2015 SPR contest in non-fiction.

Next, the writer of "The Poem I Can't Yet Name," Nguyễn Phan Quế Mai, was born in 1973 in a rural town in North Vietnam. Quế Mai moved to South Vietnam with her family when she was six years old. Having returned to Vietnam in 1997 after her study in Australia, she joined a number of international organizations, including the United Nations, to promote sustainable development in the country. She was fascinated by the long-term effects of war by spending a lot of time working with war veterans and victims. The poet, who finished her master's degree and pursued her Ph.D. studies, has won several awards, including the Capital's Literature & Arts Award and the Hà Ni Writers Association's Poetry of the Year 2010 Award. She was also designated one of the top modern Vietnamese poets by the *Los Angeles Review of Books*. Poetry and Places is one of the websites where the poetry under study may be found. As the name implies, this world poetry website shares the experience of exploring the earth through poetry, with the motto "Sharing our travel adventures and celebrating our planet...through poetry."[1]

Meanwhile, the International Literary Magazine Homagi has published Ni Wayan Kristina's poem, "Padi Tanpa Putik" [Paddy with No Pistils] (2022). The poet was born on February 1, 1991, in Pupuan, Bali, Indonesia, and has published several poems in internet media. She won the AIS (Asqa Imagination School) Poetry Writing Competition in 2021. Kristina was awarded the Indonesian COMPETER (Community Pena Terbang) Award the following year.

Another Indonesian poet Eka Budianta, who was born on February 1, 1956, has been widely published since he was in his early 20s. Along with co-founding the Pustaka Sastra Foundation, he published more than 40 volumes, ranging from collections of poetry to short stories, and supported the rise of emerging authors and poets. He received a Satupena Award for fiction in 2022 in recognition of his commitment to the literary community. On May 2, 2021, "Rice Grows Without a Voice" was read aloud for the first time at the Taman Siswa Webinar. Eka Budianta then performed this poem once more on August 18, 2022 at the Poetry Reading and Independence Speech event that Hati Pena TV had planned.

1 see "Nguyễn Phan Quế Mai, The Poem I Can't Yet Name" 1

Rice as Sanctity and Nostalgia: Ecopoetic Reminiscence and Reflections

Employing postcolonial ecocriticism, the exploration of symbols in poetry takes on a deeper significance, reflecting the interwoven of cultural memory, sanctity, and nostalgia. The four poets in question employ the symbol of rice in diverse ways, each interpreting it as a representation of its sacred nature. Rooted in Asian cultures, the whiteness of rice is imbued with profound symbolism, embodying the image of divinity and purity (Knecht 10). Moreover, symbolism of rice echoes the theme of nostalgia, rootedness within a sense of place disrupted by acts of ecological destruction.

Ecological Restoration: Rediscovering the Sacred in Postcolonial Landscapes

Literary imagination of postcolonial writers deeply intertwined with the lived experiences of a place, offering an alternative epistemology of the land that recognizes the sanctity of nature, particularly rice in Asian cultures as a central tenet. Postcolonial ecocriticism reads texts through a politically engaged lens for their repre- sentation of ecology, past, present, and looking forward to the future (80). Through the exploration of poems such as "The Poem I Can't Yet Name," "Paddy with No Pistils," and "Rice Grows Without a Voice," the current study delves into the intricate relationship between spirituality, cultural heritage, and the sustenance provided by the land. The poets' reflections highlight the diverse meanings attached to rice, encompassing love, sacrifice, tenacity, hard work, and compassion. By examining these narratives, we gain insight into the multifaceted dimensions of rice as a symbol and its significance in the restoration of postcolonial ecosystems. Moreover, these poems advocate for a nuanced exploration of environmental concerns within a postcolonial framework, emphasizing the importance of reclaiming indigenous knowledge systems and practices as integral components of ecological restoration efforts.

In "The Poem I Can't Yet Name," to begin with, rice is associated with sanctity. Through the narrative of the poet's pilgrimage to her grandmother's grave, rice assumes a central role as an offering, accompanied by incense sticks firmly planted in a bowl of rice. The rice-eating shown in the poem is a postcolonial gesture, echoing Goldstein's point cited earlier about literature's concern in the conceptual and practical boundaries of eating interactions (Goldstein 47). Indeed, Vietnamese culture attributes spiritual strength to rice, considering it an essential element in various celebrations that fosters emotional resilience in times of both joy and sorrow (Hiên et al.). The use of rice as a symbol in this context underscores the deep-rooted

connection between spirituality, cultural heritage, and the sustenance provided by the land. This line of argumentation echoes Alex and Deborah's opinion concerning how "the natural and cultural entity attains a sacred quality, anthropomorphized as protector of the agricultural land, people, and their beliefs and ethics towards ecology (425)."

Food production and consumption are intricately linked to humanity's spiritual nature. In "Paddy with No Pistils," the mournful song of rice attests to its metaphorical embodiment of life. Pollination is difficult due to the loss of female reproductive organs, notably the pistil, as a result of the destructive impact of a lengthy drought. The cultural value of rice farming is emphasized in this poem, which pays attention to the labor-intensive techniques and traditions connected with cultivating rice, the Balinese's crucial crop. The poem reveals how rice, symbolizing both nourishment and resilience, serves as a powerful metaphor that shapes how peeople perceive postcolonial landscapes.

In the poem "Rice Grows Without a Voice," the symbol of rice acquires sanctity by alluding to the inherent nobility of human nature. Budianta begins his three-stanza-poem poem with the lines "Rice grows silently/ Like your love for your country," and speaks about the pioneers of education in Indonesia whose friendship gave birth to the first national school called "Taman Siswa" [Students' Garden]: "Rice grows silently/ Such is eternal friendship/ Cipto Mangunkusumo - Douwes Dekker/ And Suwardi Suryaningrat/ Enhancing the spirit of Taman Siswa" (Budianta). The message here is that growing rice means growing people. The second stanza describes nowadays' noisy but pointless relationship: "I miss friendship in this century/A softly blazing fire/ Not on Facebook or Instagram" (Budianta). The bygone mutual friendship stands in sharp contrast to the banal, loud, and sometimes misleading ways of communication that are pervasive in modern culture. Rice becomes a symbolic anchor in this context, reflecting the everlasting ideals of stillness, honesty, and connection with nature. Here, rice is synonymous with spirit, in this case, the spirit shared by the early Indonesian educators and intellectuals in Budianta's, "Rice Grows Without a Voice." This poem depicts full, hefty rice bending as "a growth for the spirit of Taman Siswa" (Budianta, 2022). Rice represents the soul of those who strive quietly to set an example and inspire the country. Budianta's poem differs from the other three poems due to the usage of the rice metaphor.

Recognizing the sacredness of nature, particularly the significance of rice in Asian cultures as a central tenet, the literary imagination of postcolonial writers deeply intertwines with the lived experiences of a place. Through these four

poems, the diverse aspects of the rice symbol are vividly highlighted. While traditionally symbolizing the essence of life, rice also encompasses contextually specific interpretations, becoming a symbol of love, sacrifice, tenacity, hard work, and compassion. Reflecting the diverse experiences and cultural memories of those involved in cultivating and consuming this staple grain, the poets illuminate the transformative power of cultural memory in shaping one's understanding of the world. Moreover, they advocate for a nuanced exploration of postcolonial environmental concerns, inviting readers to reevaluate human-nature relationships within the framework of cultural diversity and ecological sustainability.

Resonating with the Land: Nostalgia and Cultural Memory

The exploration of nostalgia in these four poems unveils the symbolic power of rice as a conduit for deep yearning and cultural memory. Each poem delves into a different aspect of nostalgia, drawing upon the lived experiences of war, family sacrifice, and the impact of environmental changes. Nostalgia has both a sweet and bitter face. In his study of letters sent by British troops to his family during World War I, Roper (441-42) found a number of functions of nostalgia. Nostalgia can give brief reassurance and help in escaping from routine, diverting unacceptable concerns, surviving, and living in solitude. In addition, nostalgia may be used to communicate with the loved ones. The four poems examined here all include aspects of nostalgia in varying degrees and depths.

The poet sees a spoonful of rice as a heartbreaking remembrance of a mother's sacrifice in "Spoonful of Rice," creating a sense of ancestral connection and familial devotion. Rice's importance goes beyond its culinary worth to serve as a testament of parental love and commitment. Hi-Dong Chai's "Spoonful of Rice" was first published on the PoetrySoup website in 2019 before being reprinted in a poetry anthology of the same name. PoetrySoup is an online repository of poetry of many styles and subjects from across the world. Aside from conveying the narrative of a woman who makes sacrifices for her children, "Spoonful of Rice" depicts the narrator's traumatic past as a result of war tearing his family apart. "This is a universal story of mothers' sacrifice for their children, whether material, emotional, or intellectual," the poet wrote. (https://www.poetrysoup.com/poems_poets/best/120291/hi-dong_chai). The narrator describes poverty and food scarcity during the war:

Mother and I were left alone
In an island as refugees

Without anyone supporting us (Hi-Dong Chai)

They are starving. When the narrator's mother arrived with some food, he ate barely three spoonsful of rice before discovering that his mother had not eaten. From the kitchen wall gap, he watched his mother scavenge the last few grains of rice and lick the spoon many times. He hurried away, full of guilt, wanting to perish in the water so his mother wouldn't have to feed him. He was discouraged as the narrative continues:

She has already lost
Many of her loved ones
Without me
She will not go on living (Hi-Dong Chai)

Similar to "Spoonful of Rice," hunger from war causes anguish in "The Poem I Can't Yet Name." The narrator lifted a bowl of rice as an homage while kneeling before the grave of a grandma she had never met. Many people died in the 1945 famine, and their graves were never discovered. The poet describes her father's grief as "eating bitter rice" since he could not discover where his mother had been buried for many years. The poet writes,

After sixty-four years, my father and I stood
in front of my grandmother's grave.
I heard my father call "Mum," for the first time;
the rice field behind his back trembled. (Quế Mai)

Like Hi-Dong Chai's poem, Quế Mai's ouvre brings the reader to the bitter nostalgia of war. This type of elegiac writing style is related to the nostalgia conveyed by each author. This nostalgia reflects the lasting effects of colonialism and war on human interactions with the environment. The absence of formal structure allows for a fluid expression of complex emotions associated with memories of war.

Rice becomes a powerful metaphor for the poets, transporting them to bittersweet recollections of the past. The poems lament the loss of natural landscapes and disrupted relationships between humans and the environment, highlighting the entanglement of environmental degradation with colonial histories. Even within the disruption caused by war and destruction, the epistemological conception of place, or 'sense of place' (Indriyanto, "Reconciling Locality and Globalization through

Sense of Planet in Kiana Davenport's the House of Many Gods" 5) is emphasized through livid nostalgia echoing a distant memory of past situation. In the last line, rice fields represent both the physical landscape and the cultural practices associated with rice cultivation. The existence of rice field connects the sense of place and cultural memory to the everyday experiences and rituals of the community, yet it was trembling, echoing the traumatic experience of armed conflicts.

Both "Spoonful of Rice" and "The Poem I Can't Yet Name" above are written in free verse. They exhibit similarities to American contemporary poetry in terms of their use of short lines and a conversational tone. This connection can be traced back to the influence of French Symbolist poets on American writers like T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and William Carlos Williams, who popularized free verse after World War I. (Abrams and Harpham 129) While Hi-Dong Chai employs visual imagery (Mother scavenging leftover rice grains), Quế Mai focuses on auditory aspects, particularly through the grandmother's lullaby in her poetry. These techniques enhance the nostalgic tone present in both poems, enables the readers to experience *qualia* (what it is like) as if they were physically presents in that event (Weik von Mossner 79). Notably, Quế Mai's work highlights the significance of rice, which holds a central position in the Asian (Vietnamese) narrative. A recent study reveals that rice-related words and phrases in Vietnamese language intersect with various aspects of social, political, and economic life, underscoring its crucial role in shaping the nation's identity (Tham). This connection between American contemporary poetry and the poems of Hi-Dong Chai and Quế Mai highlights the cross-cultural influence of literary traditions. In contrast to Western worldviews, such connection emphasizes the symbolism of rice as a vehicle for telling personal stories, cultural memory, and broader societal ties in Vietnam.

Meanwhile, "Paddy with No Pistils" is the only pastoral elegy type of poetry explored in this study. The image of rice that thrives becomes nostalgic. As drought arrives, nature cries. The poet describes retreating water, sad birds, lonely cows, snails with empty tummies, leeches spitting blood, and so on. There is a setback here. There is no water for the rice to grow in. This paddy plant is limp in a land crowded with buildings. Imagery of loss is clear: "The snails are stumbling on an empty stomach,"; "Leeches vomit blood with rage/ Seeds planted in an inch of land/ ruins of luxury building construction"; and "The drops of water are gone/ unable to quench thirst" (Kristina). In the end, the rice with no pistils falls to the ground. The personification of rice as "throws its body" is reinforced by the two concluding lines "on dry land/ that never gets wet" (Kristina). "Paddy with No Pistils" thus serves as cultural memory that the poet seeks to recall. Rice is central in this poem. Rice and

other creations cannot live on that arid area. This poem, as an elegy, emphasizes a vital point: water, which is critically required for irrigating rice fields in Bali, can no longer be found.

Nostalgia is very evident in the last stanza of "Rice Grows Without a Voice." The poet longs for the rice that grows in silence, as well as the companionship he saw among Indonesia's education forefathers: "I miss rice growing in the absence of sound/ When words become weapons/ Caring is a pillar of brotherhood" (Budianta). Different from the three previous poems, rice functions here symbolically. Eka Budianta invites readers to reminisce about the beautiful friendship of the fathers of the nation who were concerned with education. They are like paddies that continue to enliven the soul while becoming fuller and more bowed. They are "a fire that burns silently" (Budianta). These paddies grow silently, not noisy like the generation that grew up with social media.

To conclude, in these four poems, the symbol of rice emerges as a compelling channel for conveying a deep nostalgia for the past. Rice becomes a physical link to ancestral customs and beloved memories as the poets examine their ethnic identities and the vast fabric of their ancestry. A spoonful of rice becomes an emotional recollection of a mother's sacrificial love, bringing them to a time when they were warm and nourished. Pilgrimages to grandmother's graves with rice as a ceremonial sacrifice create a sense of desire for ancestral links and the spiritual strength found in cultural rituals. The regret over rice without pistils evokes the longing for a period when nature's harmony was unbroken. In the midst of fast societal changes and mundane communication, the rice symbol reappears as a beacon of authenticity, luring people back to a simpler, peaceful existence. Nostalgia runs through these poems, filling the rice symbol with a strong feeling of longing and a desire to regain cultural memory's richness. By considering the socio-political and environmental conditions that shaped the perspectives and experiences of the Asian writers in question, this study allows for a nuanced exploration of their postcolonial and ecocritical themes.

Conclusion

The importance of food and crops in literary works demonstrates their significant place in human life and provides insight into the aspect of human-nature coexistence. This study has shown that paddy or rice is identifiable in the four Asian poems, i.e., "Spoonful of Rice," "The Poem I Can't Yet Name," "Paddy with No Pistils," and "Rice Grows Without a Voice" through each poet's background be they Asian or diasporic Asian writers writing outside their own country. They all take the

theme of rice because emotionally and culturally they are close to this plant-based food source.

This study also shows that female authors pay special attention to rice cultivation. If Nguyễn Phan Quế Mai's narrative is set in the past, when their ancestors battled to plant rice, Ni Wayan Kristina's story is set in the present, when nature is deteriorating and rice is becoming more difficult to cultivate. Meanwhile, the two male poets employ rice as a metaphor to bring up the subject of social-emotional degeneration. For Hi-Dong Chai, war has never brought any good. War leads to loss, poverty, hatred, and other forms of suffering. Eka Budianta longs for the nobility of human dignity that grows like rice when it is full, rather than the behavior of the internet users today, who are loud but pointless.

The four poets examine rice poems through the lens of postcolonial ecocriticism, highlighting the intersection of their transnational experiences and national identities. Ni Wayan Kristina and Eka Budianta incorporate rich Indonesian imagery into their poems, while Hi-Dong Chai explores the symbolism of rice rooted in his ancestral Korean culture. Nguyễn Phan Quế Mai draws inspiration from Vietnam's rich cultural heritage. Each poet's portrayal of rice unveils its profound cultural significance, underscoring its role in sanctity, heritage, and identity as postcolonial subjects. The diverse representations and contextual meanings of rice in Asian poetry showcase its enduring status as a cultural symbol, an invaluable source of inspiration. Evaluating Asian "rice" poetry provides insight into the varied features of rice as a symbol and its role in the restoration of postcolonial ecosystems. They highlight the various connotations of rice, which include persistence, sacrifice, and compassion. The poems examined show how rice, which represents both food and resilience, acts as a potent metaphor that influences people's perspective of postcolonial landscapes. Furthermore, the descriptions of rice in these four poems exemplify the authors' affirmations of Asian distinctiveness and identity. In engaging with the ecological and postcolonial dimensions of rice, these poets contribute to the discourse on postcolonial ecocriticism, challenging dominant Western-centric narratives and asserting their agency in the face of colonial legacies.

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Becoming-Motherless in Vicente Rafael's *Motherless Tongues: The Insurgency of Language amid Wars of Translation*

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Abstract In this research, I reconstruct Vicente Rafael's theorization of 'motherless tongues' in *Motherless Tongues: The Insurgency of Language amid Wars of Translation* using the Deleuzian-Guattarian principle of becoming-minoritarian. I explicate Rafael's theory of motherless tongues as an exemplification of 'becoming-motherless' through the distinction between translation as *war* and translation as *play*. Motherless tongues depicts how translation radicalizes language against the arborescent relations and hegemonic knowledge-formations authored by the U.S. Empire. To nuance this theory, I present some concretizations of becoming-motherless cited in the book, namely, the principles of *Filipinized English*, *Vernacular Accents,* and the *Tagalog Slang*. Lastly, I examine whether motherless tongues can overcome its metropolitan or academic configurations to assume an ethico-political stance. Hopefully, these tensions and new frontiers may lead us to a more fluid, inclusive, and critical understanding of becoming-Filipino today.

Keywords motherless Tongues; becoming-motherless; translation as war; translation as play; U.S. Empire

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Introduction

Vicente Rafael's life genealogy backbones the entire *Motherless Tongues: The Insurgency of Language amid Wars of Translation*. His childhood is constitutive of a nuanced linguistic landscape that shapes his critical imagination. His mother tongue is reconfigured as an other's tongue—a tongue that does not belong to him. English is neither his primary nor secondary language since it serves as both. Meaning to say, English is his language only because it originates from and belongs to someone else (Rafael, *Motherless Tongues* 2). This linguistic nomadism resembles Deleuze and Guattari's notion of "becoming-Greek." Becoming-Greek entails a creative process wherein one becomes a Greek philosopher in a time when becoming Greek is already an impossibility; hence, a becoming a nomad or a becoming neither Greek nor non-Greek.[1]

Becoming-Greek is a variant of the principle of becoming-minoritarian. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari theorize the principle of "becoming-minoritarian" as a principle operating between majoritarian and minoritarian politics. Becoming-minoritarian "emancipates the subaltern concepts and entities from the molar line's territorializing characteristic and the molecular line's highly polymorphous appearance. Additionally, becoming-minoritarian abrades the minoritarian to the majoritarian to extinguish the latter's rigid fortifications and structures and the former's subaltern frontiers. Similarly, it differentializes the minoritarian and the majoritarian through interminable deterritorialization" (Reyes 137).

Through becoming-minoritarian, the striated and smooth spaces undergo immanent re-combination. Every time one space is transmuted into another, both retain something in its nature. When something is retained, there exists between the rigid striated and the fuzzy smooth spaces. Although the sea originally symbolizes smooth space, it can also be illustrated as a preliminary effort to striate the land with fixed routes, constant directions, and relative movements (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 387). In the past, the U.S.A. and Spain, for example, were known for cunningly optimizing the State apparatus' power to striate the sea and airspace as they navigated various seas across the globe as a preface to their territorial expansions. Unpredictably, their fleets in being produce results beyond the conventional or determined boundaries of the striated sea. One of the consequences is the molecular transformations in people's linguistic practices that allow them to

1 For a comprehensive discussion of becoming-Greek, see Rodolphe Gasché. *Geophilosophy: On Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's What is Philosophy?*. Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2014, xi.

explore and employ different societal codifications critically. During the American colonization of the Philippines, the hegemonic instrumentalization of translation and the English language likewise portrays the relativization of the striated State apparatus that further crafted smooth spaces. Inevitably, it has ignited nationalist discourses and struggles and more importantly, has produced linguistic subversions that challenged the colonial grain. These forms of becoming-minoritarian dynamically move between segments and thresholds toward unmapped destinations.

Nomadic thinking appeals to becoming-minoritarian by virtue of its capability of fashioning lines of becoming that dismantles striated spaces or arborescent structures, such as the State apparatus and contemporary capitalism. Becoming-minoritarian maintains an ethics of prudence or moderation because it resembles a rhizomatic line between the line of rigid segments and the line of absolute deterritorialization.[1] Practically, the said middle existence assumes the role of being a "little alcoholic, a little crazy, a little suicidal, a little guerilla" (Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense* 157-158) just adequate to expand the crack.

Deleuze and Guattari cite Franz Kafka's writings as a lucid epitome of becoming-minoritarian in literature. Although a Czech, his use of a major language (German) immanently subverts the German language and culture, which further results in the crafting of novel identities and lines of becoming: "It is not a question of speaking a language as if one was a foreigner, it is a question of being a foreigner to one's own language" (Deleuze and Parnet *Dialogues* 59). Like Jose Rizal's *El Filibusterismo* and *Noli Me Tangere*, Kafka's writings disturbed the equilibrium of the German tradition, which prompted "the deterritorialization of the German population itself, an oppressive minority cut off from the masses" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka* 16).

As a neocolony of the United States of America, furthermore, English assumed a hegemonic value in the Filipinos' lives. Paradoxically, in an archipelago of vernacular languages, a second language (English) learned in schools bridged the inter-subjective gap among Filipinos. Consequently, the usage of the Spanish language everywhere vanished. At this point, it is vital to note that these languages are secondary-languages-turned-primary and, as such, have overridden the vernacular. During the American colonization era, both the Spanish and the vernacular languages were equated with the church and oligarchy, as well as with illiteracy and mediocrity, respectively. However, the imposition of the verbal utilization of English encountered a creative tension with regional linguistic

1 See Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnett, *Dialogues II*, translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. London: Athlone Press, 1987, 138.

cultures. As a result, English was Filipinized, spoken in various vernacular accents, and revolutionized through the Tagalog Slang.

My primary objective in this article is to reconstruct Vicente Rafael's theorization of "motherless tongues" in *Motherless Tongues: The Insurgency of Language amid Wars of Translation* using the Deleuzo-Guattarian principle of becoming-minoritarian. To nuance this theory, I present some concretizations of becoming-motherless, namely, the principles of Filipinized English, Vernacular Accents, and the Tagalog Slang. The novel possibilities and tensions that these forms of becoming-minoritarian may hopefully engender a more protean, conjunctive, and self-reflexive theorization of becoming-Filipino today.

The Becoming-Motherless of Language via Translation

In the 1960s, this cultural interplay was also participated by some gay languages incorporated into popular culture and further consolidated with some vernaculars that pushed the limits of the Spanish and English languages. Therefore, "motherless tongues" entails the non-existence of a singular mother tongue. As such, talking about a particular tongue is identical to perceiving it as an assemblage of inter- and intra-linguistic mother tongues conditioned by cultural, economic, and political circumstances.

Motherless tongues negates the existence of a universal tongue. In this vein, speaking is always characterized by plurality. In Rafael's words:

> Whatever I happen to be speaking at the moment is always comingled and contaminated with a whole train of other languages[…]. Whenever I speak or write in what seems to be coherent English, it is only because I have managed to momentarily repress this history of linguistic pluralism. It is a repression that amounts to an act of translation, transforming a train of possible expressions into a grammatically correct and stylistically recognizable discourse. For to inhabit a multiple mother tongues means that speaking any one language entails translating not only across different languages but also within the same language insofar as they are spoken in different ways in different contexts. (*Motherless Tongues* 5)

Like the Deleuzo-Guattarian theorization of desiring-machines,, motherless tongues does not presuppose a "first" or an overarching principle regulating hierarchical relations. Echoing Guattari in *Chaosophy*, "the fact that the machine is motherless does not speak for a cerebral father, but for a collective full body, the machinic

agency on which the machine sets up its connections and produces its ruptures" (96-97).

Further, inter- and intralingual translation defines the condition of speaking any language in the Philippines and in other countries (Rafael, *Motherless Tongues* 4). One's language is thus one that is already of and from the other.[1] The utterance of English is an event of linguistic multiplicity. It presupposes a social, assemblagic, open-ended, and dialogical *I*. In fact, it would be unimaginable to perceive language without any relation to a subject—the one who speaks (I) and is spoken to (You). As Emile Benveniste explains in *Problems in General Linguistics*, "Language is possible only because each speaker sets himself up as a subject by referring to himself as "I" in his discourse. Because of this, 'I' posits another person" (224-225). In short, one's identity is derived from external relations and difference, i.e., "drifting, and detouring, always intermediate and interconnected: always addressing, addressed by, and becoming, in turn, a *you*" (Rafael, *Motherless Tongues* 6). The subject/person is a by-product of the critico-reciprocal relationship between these two pronouns, including a multiplicity of other factors. In this vein, the *I* emerges as a subject-in-transition towards becoming-other.

Language is inconceivable without the production of subjectivity and unusable without translation. Like Kafka's minoritarian literatures, it is crucial to know what happens when a Filipino utters the language of the colonial regime (English) while talking to an American public-school teacher: "Does my language continue to speak? What happens to the *I* that says across languages? […]. And what of the native tongue, if there is one? […]. How does it continue to speak in the face and space of another language?" (Rafael, *Motherless Tongues* 7) Using the lens of becoming-minoritarian, the translative relation between the *I* and y*ou* also involves other things and operations that neither belong to them. Rafael calls this the *It* or the very impersonal force of language which underwrites subjectivity-formation and yet stands outside and before it: "The very possibility of transforming and translating I into you and vice versa is thus predicated on this it. Yet it remains fundamentally foreign and untranslatable into the dialogical domain of the person. Exceeding dialogical recognition, it is nonetheless the agency that generates the discursive agents of such recognition" (Rafael, *Motherless Tongues* 204). However, the said minoritarian principle is basically foreign and without linguistic equivalent to the dialogical realm of the subject. Although it eludes dialogical recognition, Rafael emphasizes that the *it* serves as the agency that spawns the agents of such

1 See Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other or, The Prosthesis of Origin*, translated by Patrick Mensah. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998, 21.

recognition. Of course, language precedes subjects and communicative relations. However, despite its precedence, language only becomes communicative or historicized via translation's operative functions and effects, i.e., when personal pronouns are utilized. Likewise, the dialogical relation between the *I* and *you* issues from an impersonal force—the *it* middle principle that, despite exceeding translation, underwrites its effects.

Furthermore, the art of translation is inextricably linked with the "linguistic predicaments of postcolonial nostalgia and nationalist anxieties over authority and authorship" (Rafael, *Motherless Tongues* 204). Translation's critical engagement with these factors increases its complexities in relation to the antagonistic bearing of vernacular theorization of freedom, the creative play of slang under neocolonial predicaments, the triumphalist discourse of the masses craving for social justice, etc. (Rafael, *Motherless Tongues* 9).

Although translation was weaponized by the U.S. Empire, minstranslations and untranslatability exist in the interstitial spaces of the linguistic exchange between the colonizer and the colonized—events that can be understood as expressions becoming-minoritarian. In this manner, the histories of translation are incomplete if the narratives of the totalizing rubrics of imperial power is not juxtaposed with what eludes majoritarian codifications and principles—the untranslatable, marginalized, and virtual zones of linguistic multiplicity. But let me clarify that becoming-minoritarian refers to the affects and possibilities fashioned as these subaltern collectivities challenge the majoritarian. It is neither located to any polar opposites because it is perpetually characterized by radical alterity.

Rather than acclimatizing itself with the re-emergence of previously repressed zones, the U.S. imperial power instrumentalized translation to domesticate English viz-a-vis the irreducibility of language. Although the Spanish colonial regime preceded this effort of linguistic instrumentalization by the Americans, it was accomplished through a different infrastructure. In the Spanish period, religious conversion actualized as a consolidation and solidification of the Spaniards' reign over the Filipinos. Catholic faith, has re-defined the notion of authority and submission in our country. More importantly, "it furnished the natives with a language for conceptualizing the limits of colonial and class domination" (Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism* 7).

The U.S. empire's weaponization of language evidently portrays a striated space relativizing its distribution to craft detrimental smooth space. Spanish friars translated some prayers and doctrines into the native's language for they knew that teaching the Spanish language first before converting the people is laborious. In other words,

the missionaries adjusted their language based on the major Filipino vernaculars to inculcate in the people's minds the authority of God and Spain's king. These religious mercenaries perceived translation as a noble conversion of the native's language into a gift coming from God (Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism* 22-32).

Whereas the Spaniards' armament of conquest, conversion, and translation, was Catholicism, the Americans' weapon was education or what is famously known as "Benevolent Assimilation." In other words, education was America's counter-resistance mechanism against the natives. The colonial government built many public schools across the archipelago, where English served as the singular medium of instruction. For this goal of assimilation to bear a legal force, the U.S. passed Act No. 74 in January 1901. The said law established the Bureau of Education which acted as the regulatory institution for the mandatory adoption of English in the colonial education system (Rafael, *Motherless Tongues* 44-45).

The totalization of the Filipino's language hinders linguistic differences in Philippine society, thereby creating a hierarchy of language from the divine to the secular. Worse, this brand of what Glenn May calls "social engineering" transformed into a cultural domination. Such a predicament inspired Renato Constantino to write his famous essay, "The Miseducation of the Filipinos," in 1959. His essay argues that the reason behind the Philippine society's incessant socio-economic estrangement and politico-culturally impoverishment is its colonial and conscious subservience to the U.S. The more Filipino students were taught and trained to blindly embrace American ideals, the more they became incapable of developing their critical acuity, creativity, and nationalism. Likewise, the knowledge and pedagogy of teaching English entailed the repression of diverse vernacular languages. However, the more vernaculars are universally translated into English, the more Filipinos become dislocated from their historical rootedness and relationship with their archipelagic life-worlds. In other words, rather than promoting historical consciousness and critico-nationalist dissent, American education produced one-dimensional subjects that further strengthened the Empire. Constantino supposes that this phenomenon portrays the demise of Philippine nationalism on one hand and education on the other. The hegemony of English has numbed the people's revolutionary impulse and estranged them from their revolutionary past. Moreover, the totalization of their critical imagination debilitated them when facing the future (Constantino 20-36).

For Rafael, both the projects of the stratification of translation include the mastery of language over others and the standardization of the play of speech (*Motherless Tongues* 9). It can thus be claimed that despite the emancipatory

import of the nationalist struggle led by Constantino, it is likewise guilty of the linguistic blunder initiated by the U.S. empire—the instrumentalization of language that presupposes the dominance of one speech over others. In other words, these cultural engineering projects committed linguistic stratification which confronts the immanent antagonism posed by various minoritarian zones and affects.

However, even though escaping the stratification or instrumentalization seems inevitable, the problem of totalizing translation and language is always faced by its internal propensity of indeterminacy, untranslatability, and insurgency. In my view, the conflict between the majoritarian powers and the minoritarian regions and discourses is the very reason for producing a thousand mothered and motherless tongues. In the context of language's insurgency, translation enables us to operate within the speech act, meta-linguistic operations, and across languages. Such radical aptitude to speak in multiple tongues allows us to treat language as a majoritarian principle on the one hand and minoritarian concept on the other. Through the principle of becoming-minoritarian, the belief in the possibility of a universal translation is identical to betraying other possible translations, which entails the suppression of other voices, affects, and intensities.

Translation as a speech activity can create and re-create society, relations, and the world through the incorporeal transformation of bodies. Consequently, a democratized plane consisting of bodies, movements, and cultures in perpetual conjunctions and becomings, is constructed. These linguistic activities characterize the language of minoritarian literature, i.e., being “affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization” (Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka* 16) that subsequently leads to new vibrations and stutterings.

The problematization of translation and conversion paved the way for the emergence of nationalist sentiments or consciousness in the cultural, linguistic, and historical domains. Such liberatory possibility presupposes that Filipinos devised ways to creatively domesticate, appropriate, and antagonize anything colonial in-between the complex process of conversion as translation.

Rafael’s theory of motherless tongues enunciates the principle of becoming-minoritarian or what I call becoming-motherless. It primarily uses translation as a minoritarian device to critically diagnose colonialism, power-relations, and language, especially in relation to Philippine postcolonial history. Although language and translation bear impersonal and untranslatable features, they were unavoidably weaponized during colonization. Sadly, translation historicizes language as a mouthpiece of majoritarian language and the imperial regime. For the colonized, translation is synonymous with conversion and colonization. The

more it is weaponized, the more it succeeds, and the more its redemptive aspects are marginalized.

Western translation is generally associated with war or conflict. Aside from its etymological origin, translation involves a history of violation and oppression, i.e., the violent elimination and transfer of words and principles from one culture or language to another. For the U.S. Empire, translation is a geopolitical weapon used to assert and fortify its global dominance. Upon its geopoliticization, translation is no longer a mere transfer of meaning. Instead, it transforms into a transmittal identical to meaning-manipulation. One implication is the hierarchization of values that privileges anything American or English.

Similarly, in a capitalist society, language is demoted as a mere device to achieve homogenizing and narcissistic ends, and its capacity to engender the becoming-other of life is desecrated. Its standardization or mastery murders translation. When everything is stratified, the communicative value, linguistic nuances, and the principle of untranslatability are marginalized. Practically, the goal of eradicating all translation is aggravated via the formulation of an automatic translation mechanism. This hegemonic initiative perceives everything as transparent, pornographic, and devoid of alterity or excess. This form of violence may lead to the destruction of the community and our relationship with the Other (Han 22). A theory of translation that seeks the obliteration of all *translation* presupposes that everything can be mechanically translated into a universal medium of communicative exchange (English) and commodity (market economy). Universalizing English demolishes linguistic pluralism and the cultural heterogeneity of other languages.

Against translation as war, Rafael formulates the notion of the *insurgency of language* to highlight that this war on translation can also be repelled in various ways through jokes, pidgins, and tropes. These means are vectors of more speech, writing, and interpretation. More significantly, the insurgency of language is a thriving concept in minoritarian literature. Like Kafka's writings, the more works of literature are written, the more style, possibilities of overcoming, escape, and hope emerge because more translation is conducted. Since language's insurgency and its various conduits open us to a redemptive existence, there is also a critical alternative to translation as war—*translation as play*. Translation as play opens us to the other and initiates an enduring alterity. It is a nomadic principle that delays and deviates from the previous. The utter obliteration of conflicts is impossible; that is why this alternative merely seeks to reformulate translation as war into a brand of indeterminate, perpetual derangement and displacement that averts the coagulation

of any type of power-relations. In this vein, it also depicts the possibility of freedom, for it liberates us from a world of imperial relations that reduce language and translation as means to achieve amplified potency and hegemony towards a world of becoming.

Through becoming-minoritarian, becoming is achieved neither in colonialism (English) or nationalism (vernaculars) but in between these two ideologies. Albeit merely occurring at the fissures of both ideologies, such initiative is noteworthy since it gives a glimmer of hope in overcoming the dominance of one speech over the other. In the section "Sonic Monstrosities and the Recalcitrance of the Vernaculars" of *Motherless Tongues*, Rafael narrates how Najeeb Saleeby was fascinated with how the vernaculars resolutely endured the forceful implementation of the use of English in all public schools since an enormous number of Filipinos remained loyal to the vernacular languages (50).

Redemptions Within the Interstices of the Empire

From Culpability to Capability: Filipinized English/Vernacular Accents

During the turbulent years of U.S. colonization, the incarceration of Filipino bodies inside public schools faced a radical adversary. The English language and the vernacular underwent a process of becoming-minoritarian. The Filipinization of English transformed the classroom into a space of perpetual phonetic mutation, cultural interplay, and opened the possibility of academic advancement. On one hand, it enfeebled the stratified/striated structure of English; on the other, it enriched the value and configuration of the vernacular. From the standpoint of becoming-minoritarian, the Filipinization of English likewise expanded the milieu of the English language and freed the vernacular from its myopic nationalist configuration. Of course, it goes without saying that the becoming-minoritarian language through the Filipinization of English is a purely creative and affirmative process. Deleuze and Guattari remind us that not all processes, spaces, and lines that are smooth, dynamic, and free are beneficial. There is always a possibility that a minoritarian activity or line of flight may convert into a line of destruction or retrogression: "we must remind ourselves that the two spaces in fact exist only in mixture: smooth space is constantly being translated, transversed into a striated space; striated space is constantly being reversed, returned to a smooth space (Deleuze and Guattari, A *Thousand Plateaus* 474). In addition, it is apparent that on both ideological opposites (colonialism and nationalism), people inevitably experienced a linguistic and cultural betrayal or sonic perversion every time a case of Filipinized English occurs. Therefore, the reconfigured classroom gave the students a daily experience

of incessant transformation, struggle, and contingency.

The becoming-minoritarian of language through the Filipinization of English concretized Rafael's conceptualization of translation as play in the classroom. According to Monroe, "The Filipino child learns to attach meanings to familiar objects and actions that have been named by his teacher in strange sounding words. He listens to the new sounds; he tries to utter them. He hears these strange English words uttered with the familiar Filipino intonation" (Monroe 155, as cited in Rafael, *Motherless Tongues* 55). The Filipinized version of English clothed the English language with Malay sound patterns. Creatively, the students effortlessly recognized the vernacular, configuring the materiality of the foreign vocabularies. This moment of becoming perplexed the Americans and led to a *terra incognita*—an excess within the American phonetic system.

Rafael's alternative to translation as war, translation as play, represses neither the foreign nor the local. Rather, translation transfigures into an "alertness to the sound of the first, retracing itself around the appearance of the second" (Rafael, *Motherless Tongues* 55). The playful and radical character of Filipinized English blurred the artificial and hierarchical demarcation between colonial and non-colonial values and introduced novel ways of thinking. In its contemporary variant, Philippine English is recognizably English, except that it is infused with creative vocabulary, syntax, and intonation that only Filipinos can decipher correctly, such as *balikbayan box, carnapper, and salvage*. Philippine English turned out to be indigenized through the addition of vocabulary from native dialects, the adaptation of English words to local needs, and modifications in pronunciation and grammar (Yumul-Florendo 566-571).

The becoming-motherless of language, where translation entails a creative movement, produced a new subjectivity diverse from what the colonizers imagined and manipulated. A minoritarian subjectivity emerges that makes English a foreign tongue to the Americans. The newly fashioned minoritarian subject is characterized by movements "of the speaker moving back and forth between his own and the other's language" (Rafael, *Motherless Tongues* 57). The said description of the dynamic subject resembles what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as the nomadic subject/subjectivity not only in *A Thousand Plateaus* but also in its prequel, *Anti-Oedipus*. In the latter, they explicate the kind of subjectivity that emerged from the tension between desiring-production and anti-production—the "schizophrenic." This nomadic subject grips the forces of production and anti-production affirmatively and radically by pushing them to their limits (Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* 20). Although Rafael's principle of motherless tongues or subjectivity does not directly

focus on the juxtaposition of psychoanalysis, capitalism, and schizoanalysis, he theorizes motherless subject as a by-product of various tensions, improvisations, and relations in the colonial classroom. By virtue of the English language's Filipinization, he claims:

> What comes across is neither the meaning of words nor the settled identity of the speakers and the hearer, but rather the sense of the unstable and shifting relationship of language to one another and to their users.… It is one where the vernacular escapes the physiological control of the native body and the pedagogical supervision of the American teacher, smuggling its way into the spaces of English, transforming its sounds, and displacing its referent. (*Motherless Tongues* 57)

Another source of minoritarian redemption for Filipinos during the American colonial regime is the *Vernacular Accents*. Through language's insurgency, vernacular accents offer immanent resistance to the imperial and linguistic system of American colonial education. It subjects the dominant system to the process of becoming-minoritarian. Amidst the utterance of these languages, vernacular accents persist, as they undermine linguistic hegemony because the aesthetic voice of their motherless tongues manifest as we speak our majoritarian languages. Every time a Filipino speaks Filipino, "the origin always comes back in displaced fashion: in the form of an accent. The accent is the trace of an operation—you might think of it as a kind of insurgency—of the first language within the second […]. They always speak with accents and those accents always betray where they came from. Their accents always reveal another speech or world" (Rafael, *Motherless Tongues* 199).

The vernacular accent exhibits a kind of stuttering in dislodging the existence of a minoritarian language within a majoritarian (Deleuze, *Essays* 109). Vernacular accent exhibits what Deleuze claims as the possibility in writing/literature where saying actualizes as doing. It is the author of the story or the speaker of the word/statement who becomes a stutterer in language, which is tantamount to making the language as such stutter.

A Filipino native who speaks English always speaks with style, i.e., "a non-style and one's language lets an unknown foreign language escape from it, so that one can reach the limit of language itself" (Rafael, *Motherless Tongues* 113). As a style, vernacular accent allows us to speak and translate in another language within a language, to fashion a new world within a pre-existing one. Thus, we are always speaking in motherless tongues, and utterance always involves the dynamic process

of translation. It is only by betraying one tongue over a multiplicity of other tongues that we can make ourselves understood (Rafael, *Motherless Tongues* 200).

Moreover, the vernacular accent is a middle principle of linguistic becoming. It stays phonetically between the English language and the vernacular. In other words, it stays (in a fleeting fashion) in the middle of the imperial and native accents. The creative stuttering that the vernacular accent produces "makes language grow from the middle, like grass" (Deleuze, *Essays* 11). Increased speech denotes the emergence of more accents, translations, fissures, and stutterings. In fact, even accents are subjected to rhizomatic variations, so they are also perpetually translated like language. Such cultural and linguistic transfiguration dynamically grounds our nomadic and assemblagic subjectivity. Lastly, accents are not only manifestations of translation at work and translation in play. It is also an emblem of a certain kind of resistance to intentionality and manipulation, as well as to the fascist tendency of oneself to master and totalize language, relations, and life (Rafael, *Motherless Tongues* 201).

From the *Manila Cochero* to Tagalog Slang

Even though some people criticized Filipinized English as a mere "little brown language," that is, an inchoate mimic of the original, the case of the "Manila Cochero" or coach rider for Rafael, is an exemption. He resembles the nomad that moves rhizomatically in all the major and minor streets, conversations, and life in the city. The Manila Cochero, as the city's "master of the profane," resides in spaces betwixt and between the school and the native's home (Rafael, *Motherless Tongues* 58). More importantly, he operates in the city's geographic, linguistic, and cultural interstices. This is the reason why he was able to extend the expression of becoming-minoritarian outside the walls of the classroom. In *Motherless Tongues*, Rafael explains:

> He no doubt would have a place to call home and perhaps would have one or two years of schooling. But his works situates him in between and at the boundaries of the two places…. he moves between the affective hold of the mother tongue, and the war of translation waged daily in the school […]. He is outside the authority of the school and the maternal conventions of home, he is there to speak in ways that would be intolerable in either place […]. The cochero's linguistic freedom opens up certain expressive and historical possibilities. (59)

Rafael cites Nick Joaquin, the 1976 National Artist for Literature, as one of the

best personifications of the Manila cochero. Primarily, Joaquin perceived himself as neither a disciple of nationalism nor a vanguard of politics. never identified himself as part of the political vanguard. Although from a wealthy origin, he never placed a 38th parallel between himself and the street life-world. He can be seen from "the presidential palace, to political rallies, the boxing ring to reception, for visiting dignitaries. As the editor of various weekly magazines, he spoke with everyone from janitor to typesetters and in 1971 even led a writers' labor union" (Rafael, *Motherless Tongues* 59). Joaquin reminds us of the radical psychoanalysts and activist Guattari. He travelled to different places and countries like Brazil to immerse with the people and help them to organize 'subject groups' through the Worker's Party capable of destabilizing several manifestations of domination in Brazilian society (Guattari and Rolnik *Molecular Revolution in Brazil*). Like Guattari, Joaquin was an omnivore of variegated spaces, resources, and causes.

Whereas Constantino's "The Miseducation of the Filipino" was a critical and pessimistic essay about U.S. imperialism or English's hegemony, as well as the debasement of the Filipino mind, Joaquin's essay, "The Language of the Streets," was an optimistic opus. Through the *Tagalog Slang'*s valorization of the ordinary, criticisms troubled him, especially the nationalist scholars. What aggravated this censure was his utilization of the American H.L. Mencken's theorization of slang as the very basis of national literature (Rafael, *Motherless Tongues* 59). Tagalog slang, as a language of the streets, is not a degenerate kind of speech; that is why it forms a basis of a true national language. According to Joaquin:

> In fact, it is the national language, not Filipino, [one that is] a natural growth from below, not a decree from above. This language […] is the most daring, the most alive, the most used language in the country today […]. It is being created by the masses, out in the open, to express their lives, to express their times […]. That's why it promises to be a great language; because it's being created for the sheer joy of creating. *Happy-happy lang*! (*Language of the Streets and Other Essays* 4)

The emergence of the Tagalog slang proved that there existed a minoritarian history beyond the panoptical regulation of colonial education. Against the possibility of essentialism or linguistic-colonial hierarchy, Joaquin's Tagalog slang does not maintain a hierarchy of values or relations like the one imposed by colonial education. Instead, it posits a rhizomatic movement that traverses socio-linguistic boundaries with incredible velocity through mass media, which further capacitates

speakers of different mother tongues to understand each other. While it escapes the colonial grasp of American education/language, it remains indebted to the Spanish culture and the Castilian language. It is undeniable that Spanish colonialism introduced to the Filipinos novel ways and perspectives in agriculture, education, and the geopolitical construction of the Philippine nation. These colonial dividends, critically speaking, are indispensable to the formation of national consciousness. After reconfiguring the natives' identities, Spanish colonizers paradoxically provided an opportunity for Filipinos to respond to the variegated challenges authored by what is "foreign" or "outside" (Joaquin, *Prose and Poems* 275-475). Spanish colonialism, as Hau explains in *Necessary Fictions*, "helped create the possibility of differentiation … [which] did not merely entail differentiation of the 'Filipino' from the Spaniard, but a differentiation … based in part on a growing sense of affinity for what is other to Filipinos' which implies a double process of 'Westernization' and 'Asianization'" (103-104).

Meanwhile, Joaquin perceives the Spanish linguistic legacy as intricately and unconsciously embedded into our culture up to the present, such as the vocabularies *silya* [chair]*, libro* [book], and *gobierno* [government]. These words were vernacularized over time, which is why, from previously being a language of colonial power or dominion, they procured "the foundation of a national language" (Joaquin, *Language of the Streets* 4). In other words, for Joaquin, the foundation of a national language is not Tagalog *per se*, but rather an assemblage of languages, minoritarian relations, and rhizomatic movements which are open-ended.

Paradoxically speaking, the Tagalog slang is a kind of becoming-Spanish that non-identically resurrects the Spanish language, minus the Spanish colonial regime. In this manner, Spanish converted into a motherless tongue already detached from its original speaker and system of colonization. The becoming-minoritarian of the Spanish language through the Tagalog slang does not establish a novel gradation of values. Instead, it differentialized Spanish and interlaced it with the various configurations of vernacular languages. Additionally, the process of becoming-minoritarian transfigured translation from power or domination to play. The Spanish's foundational importance "lies not in its ability to dominate the vernaculars from above or to serve as their horizon of their reference. Rather, it has to do with its capacity to connect and conjoin them while leaving them distinct. It allows, that is, for the recognition of something held in common among languages without reducing their differences" (Rafael, *Motherless Tongues* 63).[1]

1 See also Vicente Rafael. *The Promise of the Foreign: Nationalism and the Technics of Translation in the Spanish Philippines*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005.

Rafael claims that for Joaquin, the Tagalog slang flows through all the vernaculars without acknowledging the source or directive (*Motherless Tongues* 63). In this sense, the Tagalog slang can be considered as a motherless machine, i.e., without a cerebral father acting as its primordial origin. It owes its existence to anonymous tongues and sporadic creativity with the people in the streets. Hence, the formulated status of Tagalog slang (or presumably any other vernacular), Rafael opines, like Spanish necessitates an explanation. Tagalog slang "cannot be seen to form the bedrock on which the national language is built; rather, it is a shifting and protean node linking various languages as in a network. Slang, as the contingent formulation of a common speech, operates in a distributive and decentralized fashion. Hence, it can have only variable and unknown authors, obscure and unverifiable origin, indiscriminate interlocutor, along with uncertain and erratic life span" (Rafael, *Motherless Tongues* 64).

The becoming-motherless of language engenders a becoming-minoritarian of history, which involves differential ways of societal relations. Some of the specific words cited by Joaquin are *stamby* [bum], *genoowine* [anything of great value], *serbis* [paid sex], *T-Y* [thanks], *type* [somebody you are aroused by], *high na high* [very high in drugs], and *jeproks* [hippie, mod, rebel, flamboyant] (Joaquin, *Language of the Streets* 6-21). The molecular inventions and genealogies of these vocabularies only proved that a minoritarian linguistic history and subculture (sex, culture, and leisure) existed alongside the majoritarian discourse incarnated without the anticolonial struggle of the Filipinos, in conjunction with the American and Japanese occupations of the Philippines, the early periods of the new gay culture, history of drug culture, etc. (Rafael, *Motherless Tongues* 64-65).

Deleuze and Guattari remind us that becoming-minoritarian only seeks to expand all majoritarian standards and codifications in society by subjecting them to perpetual transformation (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 106). Meanwhile, William Connoly, in *Why I Am not a Secularist*, describes the principle of becoming-minoritarian as a politics of becoming that "changes the shape and contour of already entrenched identities, as well" (57). The Tagalog slang terms, as they are incessantly used and reconfigured by people, retain their fragmentary or minoritarian existence. They remain fragments "of larger narratives yet to be written, the traces of social histories that may never be told. The bits and pieces of slang instead suddenly triggering the recollection of the past as fractured, inconclusive moments through a series of linguistic association" (Rafael, *Motherless Tongues* 65). Take the case of the Tagalog term *barkada*. Popular since the 1950s, it is a collective term that refers to a person's closest friends. Its etymology is derived

from the Spanish barko [boat] in relation to the precolonial Tagalog word, *barangay* [boat and village]. Barkada is a microcosm of the manifold possible linguistic associations and the entire network of other words that lead away from these conjunctions—trobol, rambol, diahe, and lespo.

Whereas Constantino and the nationalist anti-colonial struggle substituted American colonial education's war on translation (translation's instrumentalization) into another war on translation (the displacement of the English language with a vernacular-configured national language in the postcolonial classroom), for Rafael, the nationalists just aggravated the linguistic predicament of postcolonial Philippines, if not inadvertently connived with the Americans (Cariño 1-15). Meanwhile, Joaquin diverged by conceptualizing his philosophy of Tagalog slang before the principle of translation as play or becoming-motherless/minoritarian. In this manner, English, like Spanish language, decentralizes itself and frees itself from totalizing the vernaculars' linguistic alterity.

The chain of linguistic associations is made possible by virtue of Tagalog slang's speed, spontaneity, creativity, and more importantly, its nomadic possibilities. Another thing, Tagalog slang's aptitude to critically absorb and decentralize all kinds of language engenders English to be entangled in it, as "when the writer himself is carried away to the point of dispensing with translation altogether" (Rafael, *Motherless Tongues* 68). Take the cases of "Happy-happy lang!" and "No trobol!" (Joaquin, *Language of the Streets* 17). The former means to drink together, especially with your *barkada*; the latter is derived from the former's last word, "lang!" which means, no trouble is going to happen. In these two examples by Joaquin, some English phrases were untranslated, such as the word "lang." In English, it traditionally means *only* or *merely*. However, upon its conjunction with the slang "Happy-happy," its meaning converts into another slang, "no trobol!" In other words, rather than developing a novel hierarchy of linguistic values, the Tagalog slang folded itself based on the English language's spelling and syntax. The minoritarian transition or translation of "*happy*" to "*happy-happy lang!*" attests to the Tagalog slang's capacity to escape the war of and on translation. As Rafael profoundly explains, "In lieu of war, it allows for translation as promiscuous and ongoing play. Veering from the serious responsibility of an officially mandated national language, Joaquin's translation of the language of the streets is underwritten by an ethos of attentiveness to what is new and what passes for new regardless of its provenance or precise meaning" (*Motherless Tongues* 68).

Translation as play is therefore capable of experiencing and reconstructing the nation during the postcolonial period. Since the hierarchy of values and power

is eradicated in the fluid usage and transformation of the Tagalog slang, the 38th parallel between the people of the streets like the *cocheros* and *tinderas*, and the academics, for example, is already non-existent.

The aftermath of the dismantling of English's pedigree over colonial or vernacular languages is a new democratized world where English could possibly or comically appear as a mere derivative of the Tagalog vernacular: "pussy comes from *pusa*, mother hen from *inahen* […]. What pronoun came first: the Tagalog or the English? […]. The friction of our *kiskis* undoubtedly sparked kiss, as the laceration of *gasgas* grows bigger in gash, and the dangle of *luslus* swings again in loose, and the sibilance of *sipsip* is scissored in sip […]. Even the English word for nurse, nanny, is obviously a derivative of *nanay*" (Joaquin, *Language of the Streets* 17-18).

In the world of difference or translation as play, no language, principle, or concept, maintains a hierarchical relation with others since the demarcation between the colonizer and the colonized disappears, and all are transformed into motherless machines. In Rafael's view, the creative possibility that English really originated from the Tagalog must be seen as a "joke […] that the vernacular words are neither the semantic equivalents nor the etymological origins of the English. Rather, a series of phonic similarities is made to resonate between the two, loosening the authority of English to delimit the vernacular and vice versa" (Rafael, *Motherless Tongues* 69). Lastly, the Tagalog slang's dynamic rendition of translation as play entails being attentive and vigilant to all languages' material configurations, especially with their sonic qualities. Translating a fashion Tagalog into English discloses both languages' fleeting kinship.

Conclusion

In this article, I reconstruct Rafael's motherless tongues as a manifestation of becoming-minoritarian—becoming-motherless. In my view, translation can never be totally detached from cultural or historical appropriation, and it will always be assemblagic, protean, and at work. If ever it metamorphoses into a deterritorialized state, it must still be territorialized to assume a historical value. In its territorialized yet fluid form, it incessantly operates in between speeches, pedagogies, and cultures. Minoritarian zones and spaces of indeterminacy can be found in the fissures and tensions every time language is weaponized, and culture is totalized. Ultimately, translation offers us new conceptual and practical apparatuses in understanding and radicalizing language, culture, and social relations. Thus, it provides us opportunities and challenges to transfigure language and the world perpetually.

Although Rafael's becoming-motherless appears to be guilty of overvaluing

the minoritarians, we must not forget that it does not occupy a sedentary location, and the spaces of emancipation it fashion are not geographical. In fact, becoming-motherless is not literally in the middle. It is a fleeting in motion, a ceaseless process moving in between manifold codifications of power and relations, which may further lead us to the twin possibilities of creation and destruction. Subjecting the middle into a state of becoming may anytime accommodate the imperial Other. The fissures the motherless tongues radicalize resemble a space that can easily be infiltrated by global capitalism or its gaseous infrastructures, such as the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, and the ASEAN Integration Project.

Speaking of the inevitable possibility of destruction, the Filipinization of English and the Tagalog Slang did not guarantee learning among all colonial students and increased appreciation of life among Filipinos. Despite the creative potentials of becoming-motherless, other factors hindered the students and other Filipinos from fully maximizing the creative and revolutionary potentials it offered, such as large-scale economic poverty, distant geographic locations, and cultural differences. Meaning to say, the minoritarian zones and emancipatory possibilities it cultivated and mobilized inside the classroom were not wholly successful in effecting change in the larger society where the other constellations of imperial power operated and where the nationalist sentiments functioned fervently. Although non-teleological, these limitations and inadequacies should likewise subject becoming-motherless itself to self-criticism or reconfiguration. It needs to be diagnosed against the backdrop of an archipelagic Philippine society—an assemblage of heterogeneous materialities, subjectivities, and geographies. In this manner, it is also significant to search and examine the possibility of becoming-motherless/minoritarian outside Manila or Luzon, where other ethnolinguistic and indigenous cultures, as well as emancipatory potentials exist. More importantly, the very idea of using the principle of becoming-minoritarian to a society fundamentally characterized by heterogeneity must also be critically examined.[1]

Writ large, motherless tongues should engage with pre-existing scholarship wrestling with a new grammar of translation, resistance, and nationhood against the backdrop of our changing times.[2] Its revolutionary possibilities are indeed theoretically praiseworthy, for it effectively shows how translation as play can

1 For a more recent problematization of translation as telecommunication, see "The Cell Phone and the Crowd: Messianic Politics in the EDSA II Uprising (Rafael, *Motherless Tongues* 70-96).

2 See Resil Mojares, *Waiting for Mariang Makiling: Essays in Philippine Cultural History*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2002; Epifanio San Juan Jr. *The Radical Tradition in the Philippine Literature.* Quezon City: Manlapaz Publishing, 1971.

subvert the numerous power-relations and knowledge-productions under the U.S. Empire. However, its potentialities will merely become futile if isolated from other scholarships and formulations of resistance against the U.S. Empire and other causes of societal predicaments.[1] For example, through Almario's *Sapantahang Wika*, the brevity of Rafael's motherless tongues should not stop us from still pursuing a more rigorous genealogical study of the Filipinos' intellectual and cultural linguistics based on our language (Wika) beyond the Noceda (1-23). Additionally, motherless tongues lacks the ethico-social fervor of the 1896 Revolution—a revolution that sought to confront physical, political, and cultural evils, in pursuit of *magandang kalooban* [beautiful soul] and [meaningful personhood] (Almario 24-25). More importantly, it must be examined in the context of the global capitalist society (the new Empire) concomitant with the noble goal of understanding profoundly the Filipino culture.[2] Hopefully, these tensions and new frontiers may lead us to a more fluid, inclusive, and critical understanding of becoming-Filipino today.

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1 See E. San Juan jr., *The Radical Tradition in the Philippine Literature*. Quezon City: Manlapaz Publishing, 1971; Virgilio Almario, *Sapantahang Wika*. Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2022.

2 See Gonzaga, *Globalization and Becoming-Nation: Subjectivity, Nationhood, and Narrative in the Period of Global Capitalism.* Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2009; Cariño, *Muni: Paglalayag sa Pamimilosopiyang Filipino*. Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2018.

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The Metamorphosis of Turkish Gender Roles: From *The Book of Dede Korkut* to a Girl's Dream in *The Rainbow*

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Abstract Masculinity and femininity are unremitting subjects of literature from Plato's *Symposium* to the present. Embracing diverse gender roles by individuals in line with their sex, masculinity and femininity are a part of the cultural accumulation of societies and their concomitant traditions. These roles, which particularly catch the interest of sociologists, psychologists, feminist authors, and cultural scientists, play a crucial role in the cultural memory of societies. Femininity and masculinity regulate the behaviour of all individuals and their accompanying demeanours are acknowledged as behavioural patterns in society which place gender roles at the centre. Despite the growth of academic interest in gender culture in Turkey, the perusal of the transformation of gender roles delineated in literary texts remains largely ignored. This study examines two Turkish cult classic texts, *The Book of Dede Korkut*- redounding the ancient Turkish society before the advent of Islam- and Ömer Seyfettin's *The Rainbow*—sketching contemporary Turkish society just before the establishment of the Republic— to throw light on the radical transformation of gender roles by specifically centring on the change of Turkish masculinity from a shared sphere welcoming women to its realm to a private domain having almost no room for women mainly due to religious values and nation-building process.

Keywords masculinity; femininity; Turkish gender roles; *The Book of Dede Korkut; The Rainbow*.

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Introduction

Laying eyes on Turkish society from the past to the present, it is observed that the roles of males and females have changed. These roles, whose paths once crossed, later opened up to two different worlds that were almost completely separated. The position attributed to women in society, and the perspective on gender difference are at the forefront of this root-and-branch change. The notion of femininity and masculinity has been largely examined by scholars encompassing studies on Muslim men and women which predominantly cradle Arab cultures, South Asia, and the Middle East involving Egypt, Iraq, Pakistan, India, and Iran, among other countries.[1] Turkey occupied a small place in these studies. Turkey, as a Muslim democratic country spreading between Europe and the Middle East, possesses a peerless position regarding gender roles that entails a special study apart from other Muslim countries. In the Turkish context, it can be easily argued that academic studies on gender focus on femininity and women's studies rather than masculinity, a relatively new research field in Turkey.[2] In this study, the transformation of Turkish femininity in relation to masculinity is scrutinised to offer a new point of view on gender studies and the relationship between masculinity and femininity, specific to Turkish gender roles. By doing so, this study aims twofold: first, to contribute to gender studies in Turkey; and second, to increase the visibility of Turkish gender studies on international grounds. In order to feature the transfiguration of gender roles in Turkey, two Turkish cult classic texts, *The Book of Dede Korkut* (*Dede Korkut Hikâyeleri*) (written down in the 15th century) which depicts the ancient Turkish

1 See, among others, Soha Abdel Kader, *Egyptian Women in a Changing Society, 1899-1987* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishing, 1987) and Ziba Mir-Hosseini, *Islam and Gender: The Religious Debate in Contemporary Iran* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

2 Among a small number of works, compared to women's studies, on masculinity studies in Turkey, there are Serpil Sancar's *Erkeklik: İmkansız İktidar: Ailede, Piyasada ve Sokakta Erkekler* (*Domination and Masculinity: Men in Families, Market and Streets*) İstanbul: Metis Publishing, 2009; the special issue "Masculinity" of *Toplum ve Bilim Dergisi* (*The Journal of Society and Science*) vol. 11, Fall 2004. *Masculinities: A Journal of Culture and Society* should be also mentioned.

society before Islam, and *The Rainbow* (*Eleğimsağma*) by Ömer Seyfettin (1917) which paints modern Turkish society right before the proclamation of the Republic, are analysed respectively. The study discloses how Turkish masculinity switches from a shared sphere encircling women to a private domain, not including them chiefly on account of the religious values and nation-building process. The study displays how male and female gender roles, whose paths crossed in ancient Turkish society, have evolved in almost different directions in modern Turkey in the recent Republican era as shown in the literary realm.

Masculinity Sphere as A Shared Space in Ancient Turkish Society

The origins of the masculine role are grounded on a scientific doctrine of innate gender difference taking a stance against women's emancipation. In the nineteenth century, the exclusion of women from universities and the assertions that the female mind was too sensitive to handle the difficulties of academic work emerged in this context, Raewyn, W. Connell argues (Masculinities 21).[1] The mainstream of academic thought on gender took a newfangled route with the escalation of the concept of social role in the 1930s. The notion of a socially provided scenario for individual behaviour first learned and then played out was easily applied to gender. By the 1940s, the terms "male role" and "female role" began to be used (Connell, *Gender and Power* 29–32). Notwithstanding the radical changes in the position of Turkish women especially on legal, political, and economic grounds owing to the proclamation of the Republic in 1923, Turkey can be still recognised as a male-dominated country adhering to the gender roles which foreground patriarchal norms placing women in the domestic sphere, justifying Deniz A. Kandiyoti's renowned claim: Turkish women are set free but unliberated (317).[2] Turkish culture today promotes traditional gender roles[3] assigning males an active public space as breadwinners whereas attributing females a passive private space as caretakers of home and family. Through imitation, boys and girls learn to live in those spaces since, Harris points out, they come "to acquire, to value, and to adopt gender-appropriate behaviour patterns" (37). This imitation takes us to the constant construction of gender roles underscoring that being a male or a woman is not a fixed condition, echoed in the revolutionary French feminist Simone de Beauvoir's

1 See also Connell's article "Theorizing Gender," *Sociology,* vol. 12, 1985, pp. 260–272.

2 All Turkish sources used in the article were translated by the author.

3 Ayşe Gül Altınay and Yeşim Arat, *Violence against Women in Turkey: A Nationwide Survey* (Istanbul: Punto, 2009); Saniye Dedeoğlu and Adem Yavuz Elveren, *Türkiye'de Refah Devleti ve Kadın* (*Welfare State and Women in Turkey*) (İstanbul: İletişim Publications, 2012).

well-received phrase: "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (273) As Cornell puts it, even though women's and men's positions are not basically similar, "the principle is also true for men: one is not born masculine, but has to become a man" (*Gender in World Perspective* 6). The behaviour patterns of these constructed roles point to patriarchal social values as well as hegemonic masculinity, a term of Connell, which comprises men's dominance over women alongside the power of some men over other men[1], designating gender inequality as an unrelenting concern. However, an exploration of ancient Turkish society specifies that women were together with men in almost every field away from the polarization of men and women in completely distinct spheres.

The never-ending woman question that cannot be deciphered even today was not an issue in ancient Turkish societies, which can be deduced from Turkish mythology, too. The women were the major figures, blessed beings with supernatural powers in Turkish mythological stories and embodiments of fire, water, light, earth, and tree as the springs of existence. To exemplify, in the Turkish "Creation Myth," the White Mother, who lives in water, takes her head out of the water and says to God Ulgen, "If you want to create, say this holy word as a creator, say 'I did it, it's done'. Don't say anything else, don't say 'I did it, it didn't work" (Ögel 433) and disappears in the waters. In traditional Turkish belief, it is a woman who inspired God Ulgen to create. Accordingly, in ancient Turkish societies, women were respected individuals treated equally with men in every sense.[2] They shared similar roles with men and took on the responsibilities associated with the masculine/public sphere today. As an illustration, women took part in state affairs

1 Similarly, Denton, in *Feminism and Gender Equality*, states that gender roles are formed by the patriarchal structure but negatively affect men as well as women. Within the framework of these roles, men, who are expected to be dominant and not show their emotions, may have mental disorders and be prone to domestic violence and even suicidal tendencies (2021, 6). That is, gender roles and related issues are as relevant to men as to women. Thereby, extensive research is carried out on masculinities, fatherhood, men's movements, male violence, education of boys, men's health, and the contribution of men to gender equality. These studies include, among others, *Feminism and Men: Reconstructing Gender Relations* (1998) by Steven Schacht and Doris Ewing, New York: New York University Press; *Masculinities* (2005) by Robert W. Connell, California: University of California Press; *Masculinities and Place* (2014) edited by Andrew Gorman-Murray and Peter Hopkins, Burlington: Ashgate; *Language and Masculinities: Performances, Intersections, Dislocations* (2015) by Tommaso M. Milani, New York: Routledge, and *Working with Men for Gender Equality* (2019) by Caroline Sweetman, Rugby: Practical Action Publishing.

2 Mehmet Akif Aydın, *Türk Hukuku Tarihi* (*The History of Turkish Law*) (İstanbul: Beta Publications, 2009).

alongside men, and orders were signed in the name of Khatun, the wife of Khan, as well as Khan (Şimşek 17-18). Ziya Gökalp states that in ancient Turkish society, women had a political influence as well as participated in wars. According to Turkish custom, when an order was to be declared, if it was announced as the Khan was commanding, this order would have no effect. For the orders to be valid, it was essential to declare that the Khan and the Khatun were commanding. What is more, ambassadors could come to visit the Khan when the Khan and the Khatun were together which means that in ancient Turkish society, the state revealed its authority when the Khan and the Khatun were together (46).

The reputation of ancient Turkish women in society is documented by foreign scholars, too. Franz Altheim, to name a few, remarks that women in the ancient Turkish community were free, and since the Asian Huns, they rode horses and shot arrows, played heavy sports such as ball playing and wrestling, and participated in wars (41). In his memoirs, Ibn-i Batuta notes: "Among the behaviours I have seen in this country, which has surprised me, is the extreme respect that men show to women. Turkish women walk around with their faces uncovered, they do not shy away from men, they shop in the markets. When you see ladies with their men, sometimes you assume men are their servants" (qtd. in Gömeç 73). The fact that women shot arrows, used swords, and rode horses like men is an indication of their presence in the male domain. Parallel to this fact, examining male and female roles in *The Book of Dede Korkut*, it is grasped that women share gender roles with men in ancient Turkish society, which turns Turkish masculinity into a joint sphere apportioned to females.

Turkish Gender Roles in A Joint Sphere in *The Book of Dede Korkut*

Analogous to Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* (411 BCE), and Plato's *The Republic* (380 BCE), *The Book of Dede Korkut* sketches women in the sphere of men, having a say in major administrative decisions and equal opportunities to protect the family and country. *The Book of Dede Korkut*, an anonymous pre-Islamic epic telling of the traditional lifestyle, customs, and traditions of the Oghuz Turks in the east of Anatolia between the 12th to 14th centuries (Özel 55), belongs to oral tradition and was probably written down in the middle of the 15th century (Meeker 231). The Oghuz was one of the major divisions of the Turkic peoples and the ancestors of the Turks of Turkey as both the Seljuks and the Ottomans were the offspring of the Oghuz (Eleonora 135). F. Ferhan Parlak signifies the stature of *The Book of Dede Korkut* for the Turkish world as such: *The Book of Dede Korkut* describes the traditions, morals, beliefs and customs, wars and entertainments

of the Turks, in short, the ancient Turkish life with all its vitality. It is one of the most important sources on the history of Turks (i). In the text, the female sphere is not only identified with home but, as Senay Eray Sarıtaş accentuates, it is coded with heroism, mainly peculiar to the male sphere, within the framework of the Alp woman (1957). Alp, a word denoting hero, valiant, and fearless that was primarily employed by the ancient Turks, was applied to women in addition to men. The principal pillar of family life was also considered to be the Alp woman of the Turkish world, who was characterized as a woman riding horses, firing arrows, and fighting for her community (Koman Parlak 95). Turkish women demonstrated bravery during battle by fighting with their men and exercising like men do, such as riding horses, shooting arrows, and wrestling. Women had to be as strong, courageous, and warlike as males because of the steppe's rugged terrain, unpredictable climate, and intense animal husbandry. It was their responsibility to protect their homes, tribes, and eventually their countries and states (Sever 130). To exemplify, in Scythians, women received military training together with men and fought alongside men in wars. Yunus Tayga encapsulates how girls were trained along with boys in Turkish society which beat a path for the emergence of the Alp woman:

> Archery and hunting activities were very important for ancient Turks. Since it was necessary to get used to the difficulties of the geography and the natural conditions they lived in and to raise the children accordingly, they would train their boys and girls to shoot, hunt, and ride horses. Children learned to hunt birds and rats with small bows and arrows, and as they got older, their bows and arrows were developed accordingly. After they grew up, they would have taken their place in society when they could use heavier fighting vehicles, join the war, and prove themselves. (20–21)

Conforming to the Alp woman type, women appear as heroes and are identified with courage and valour in *the Book of Dede Korkut*. Dede Korkut women, ancient Turkish women, are at the forefront by their out-of-home activities such as shooting arrows, wrestling, holding a sword, and riding a horse. They do not lag behind their husband and son in courage and bravery, and even save their lives when necessary. Aysel Ceyhun tells of these women: In the Oghuz Turkish society, people lived in tents and were surrounded by infidels; thus, women must be heroic, agile, and fearless (60). *The Book of Dede Korkut* includes stories delineating these heroic women who penetrate the male sphere. In the 1st story of *The Book of Dede Korkut*,

Dirse Khan, who fathered a son with the council of his wife, shoots his son while hunting by the provocation of his enemies. Upon learning that her son did not return from the hunt, the mother, just like a heroic man, gets on her horse to find him and sets off. She, accompanied by "forty thin girls" (17), goes in search of his son. To find him, she climbs the dangerous hills of Kazılık Mountain, whose snow never melts in summer or winter.

The most striking story where women step into the male domain is the 3rd one. In the story, Banu Chichek, the daughter of a khan, shoots arrows, rides horses, and wrestles. When Bamsi Beyrek, the son of another khan, Bay Büre, unknowingly enters the pavilion of Banu Chichek to hunt a deer, Banu Chichek loses her temper and says: "Whom is this presumptuous man trying to prove his masculinity?" (48). Bamsi Beyrek asks to see Banu Chichek. Pursuant to Turkish traditions, Bamsi Beyrek and Banu Chichek are betrothed in the cradle, but they haven't seen each other before. When Banu Chichek learns that Bamsi Beyrek wants to see her, she assumes a new persona to put him to the test since a man must prove he is a man in order to be allowed to marry a woman as heroic as she is: "I am Banu Chichek's nanny. Let's go hunting. If your horse beats my horse, you will surpass her horse. And let's shoot arrows, if you pass me, you will pass her. Then, let's wrestle; if you beat me, you will beat her, too" (49). As can be traced from the words of Banu Chichek, men share their gender roles with women who are equal to men in terms of valour. In order to deserve Banu Chichek, Bamsi Beyrek must overcome her gallantry. When Bamsi Beyrek surpasses Banu Chichek in every field, Banu Chichek reveals her identity and they get engaged. In another example, Bamsi Beyrek tells his father that he wants to get married with words foregrounding the joint sphere of men and women: "Father, find me a girl, who gets up before I get up, who mounts before I mount my black horse, and who kills my enemy right before I find him" (50). The words of Bamsi Beyrek prove women are expected to be equal to men in terms of valour and even to get the upper hand. Mehmed Kaplan clarifies this situation as such: The greatest value in the ancient Turkish community is heroism […] consequently; men seek heroic qualities that are the highest values for him in women, too (100). Likewise, Adnan Binyazar tells of the ideal Turkish woman of the time: She should be able to take the place of a man in every sense (62). Put differently, the ancient Turkish woman should have manifested herself in every sphere currently deemed exclusively male.

Similarly, in the 4th story, Burla Khatun learns that her son is captured by the infidels while on a hunt and says to her husband: "Let me know if you gave my son to the blasphemous infidels. […] If this is the case, let me jump on my horse

and gather soldiers. […] I won't come back unless I save my son even though I'm covered in blood" (84–85). When her husband is also imprisoned by the infidels, Burla Khatun takes her sword and "forty thin-waisted girls" (90), gets on her black horse, and arrives at the land of the infidel. In the 6th story, Kan Turali, son of Kanli Koja, wants to marry a heroic woman, yet he has to kill three monsters in the shape of a bull, a lion, and a camel respectively to marry her. While fighting them, Selcan Khatun, another example of the Alp woman, rushes to his aid: "A part of this enemy is for me, the other for you" (119). Kan Turali later realises that it was Selcan Khatun who raided and dispersed the enemy. Kan Turali and Selcan Khatun attack and defeat the enemy together.

In *The Book of Dede Korkut*, women are portrayed as the epitome of bravery, riding horses, shooting archers, engaging in combat, and defending their homeland against the infidels. This portrays the shared realm of masculinity and femininity in ancient Turkish civilization. In addition to associating the Turkish woman with motherhood and the house, the text also shows her fighting with the male. That is to say, as a noteworthy point, the ancient Turkish woman enters the men's sphere without sacrificing her role as a mother or a building block at home. To exemplify, in the 1st story of *the Book of Dede Korkut*, the mother laments when she finds her son lying on the ground, severely wounded. But his mother's milk becomes a balm for her son and he gets better. That is how motherhood is brought to a sacred level and the mother is described as a life-giver. Furthermore, the stories frequently highlight how mothers' authority is equivalent to God's, elevating motherhood to a hallowed position. The text also makes the important point that women are supposed to guide men and be more heroic than men as wise figures which is still unusual in today's world. Ancient Turkish society seems to be the equivalent of the utopian dream that Judith Butler points out for the modern world and that the concepts of masculine and feminine were reshaped and denaturalised (42).[1]

Gender Roles as Divided Poles in Modern Turkish Society

Coming to the second part of the study, it is observed that Turkish masculinity, alongside femininity, has changed its hue. Women were almost completely removed from the male sphere and roles mainly, besides other possible reasons, due to the nation-building process after the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923

1 In *Undoing Gender* (2004), Butler defines gender as "the mechanism by which notions of masculine and feminine are produced and naturalized, but gender might very well be the apparatus by which such terms are deconstructed and denaturalized" (42).

and the religious subtext that guided gender roles by assigning separate roles and domains for males and females. To begin with the nation-building process, as Gerami claims, during the nation-building process, local ideals of masculinity are outweighed by national ideals of masculinity owing to strong national leaders like Mustafa Kemal Ataturk in Turkey who promoted the Western hegemonic masculinity and banned men's skullcap and ethnic and religious clothing replaced by Western codes of dress (450). To Serpil Sancar, this change of attire was more related to the modernisation process of Turkey rather than gender roles. This was a period of great social transformation including the modernisation process based on establishing a nation-state in which it was up to women to support men and raise children who were devoted to the country. In this nationalist portrait, the country was a family headed by a man. The role of women was limited to raising children dedicated to the country (19, 32, 54). Sancar further remarks, in this modernisation process, women endeavouring to be active by participating in the political institutions of the new Turkish Republic were not included in political decisions and, either by force or voluntarily; they were directed to the so-called social aid activities (193). Defining the period after the early modernisation as the era of conservative modernity (1945–1965), Sancar puts, in a nutshell, the change in the role of women and how they were excluded from the male sphere as such:

> The Turkish woman is an image of a woman who has to embody, without contradiction, the characteristics of a nurturer and educator of the children of the homeland, and who fights when necessary, actively makes sacrifices for her homeland and her family along with the qualities of an obedient and quiet woman […] Yet, [this woman] who is desired to modernise is limited by the modernisation discourse itself by constantly reminding her of her duties and responsibilities. (194)

This family-oriented social space, where women can make themselves visible and be active with different empowerment strategies, is also the space for gender regimes to flourish and equip themselves (Sancar 195). As Sancar further argues, as a product of the family-oriented construction of modernity, the fields of femininity and masculinity were reshaped. While the family-oriented private sphere was attributed to women along with feminine values such as sharing feelings, making self-sacrifice, and transferring and teaching culture to new generations, the public sphere, where a social partnership was experienced and prioritized political practices based on the representation of economic conflicts of interest, competition,

winning and the ability to make everyone accept their own power, was ascribed to men (57–61). Thus, social life was gendered and women were deprived of the male space and the active roles they possessed in ancient times. That is how women take on a passive, weak, and submissive role that requires protection by men whereas men become active, strong, assertive, and protective, keeping women away from the masculine domain.[1] Although the mission given to Turkish women carries a nationalist spirit, it isolates them from the active male sphere and locates them in a domestic, private, and passive sphere.

In addition to the national construction of gender roles heartening Turkish women as the mothers of the nation in charge of raising devoted generations away from the masculine domain, Islam cherishes motherhood as the most essential virtue of womanhood putting women at the core of the family and home for the moral and religious well-being of the society. The subordinate role of woman can be simply traced in the well-known statement in the Qur'an that Eve was created from the ribs of Adam. Interpreting the words 'He who created you from a single soul and created its mate from it', commentators state that the first woman, Eve, is from Adam and created from his rib (Birinci 152).[2] Accordingly, in Islamic tradition, man is regarded as the head of the family and woman should be obedient under the protection of man, bringing about the superiority of men over women. This

1 These polar opposite adjectives assigned to men and women of the modernization process took the Turkish woman from her previous position and placed her in the sphere of the distinction between feminine and masculine analogous to the statements of Simone de Beauvoir in her ground-breaking work, *The Second Sex*. Simone de Beauvoir points out how men and women are defined by separate adjectives, and rather than woman, it is always man used in language to refer to human beings: "[…] man represents both the positive and the neutral, as is indicated by the common use of man to designate human beings in general; whereas woman represents only the negative, defined by limiting criteria, without reciprocity" which brings about "an absolute human type": the masculine (13). Therefore, "humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being" (15).

2 The significance of language and texts are undeniable in promoting the construction of gender. Likewise, in Butler's words, gender is a construction, "offered within language" in parallel to society, and "[i]f gender is the social construction of sex, and if there is no access to this "sex" except by means of its construction, then it appears not only that sex is absorbed by gender, but that "sex" becomes something like a fiction, perhaps a fantasy, retroactively installed at a prelinguistic site to which there is no direct access" (1993, 5). Thus, to Butler, gender, constructed by language and society, is an unreal inaccessible phenomenon. This phenomenon is largely inspirited by language and discourse used in texts, whether literary, religious, or scientific. To exemplify, *Malleus Maleficarum* by Dominican H. Kramer was one of the influential texts encouraging the secondary role and inferiority of women by the pretext of witchcraft in the Middle Ages.

superiority is accentuated by Binnaz Toprak as such: "So little is Islamic faith in women's ability for rational reasoning that the Koran accepts the testimony of two women as equivalent to the testimony of one man" (285). In the division of labour pursuant to divine law, the male is responsible for carrying out work outside the home while the woman is in charge of tasks inside the home. Men are the defenders and maintainers of women, according to the Quran (4:34). Maulana Wahiduddin Khan underscores the separate gender roles in Islam:

> The status of women in Islam is the same as that of men […]. Yet, Islam perceives man as a man and woman as a woman, and considering the natural differences, it advocates the principle of the division of labour between the two sexes rather than the equality of labour. (95)

Yet, for Khan, this does not mean that a man is a woman's superior, and in Islam, there is "the wisdom of the division of labour rather than the superiority of man over woman" (27). To Khan, it should be acknowledged that a woman's more passive nature, her aptitude for household chores, her mildness and affection, all of which make her ideally suited for domesticity—to which she is undoubtedly better adapted than her male counterpart—are the motives behind why she finds herself in a position of responsibility in managing the home (28). Furthermore, the biological separation of humans into males and females is the upshot of the Creator's design and without respect for this distinction, there can be no human progress. Any challenge to transgress the boundary established by the Almighty is equivalent to dismantling the entire natural order, a process that can only end in annihilation (Khan 136–137). Then, to Khan, based on biological differences, Islam justifies different gender circles. Turkish women are *ipso facto* somewhat imprisoned in the feminine domain of home and child-rearing compared to their active roles in the male domain in ancient times. Regarding the change in Turkish women's social position and role, Muharrem Kaya notes that while women were on an equal footing with men in terms of administration and the law in ancient Turkish societies, the nomadic horse culture was effective in bringing about the change in Turkish women's social standing and role. However, after the adoption of Islam, women were pushed to a more passive position in society with the influence of Arab, Persian, and Byzantine cultures (49).

Sevil Sezgin associates the transition of women's role from an active sort to a more passive one with the role of women in Arab society, where Islam was born and spread (54). Mehmet Akif Aydın tells of this role: At that time, women had a

secondary place in male-centred society. Leading a nomadic life also played a role in this. In the life of the nomadic tribes, who had to move frequently in harsh desert conditions and had to struggle with other tribes to gain booty, women, who were not from the warring class and were seen more as consumers, had a secondary role. As of this position, women's lives became trivial. The fact that girls were sometimes killed by their own families in order to prevent the family and tribe from exhausting their means is proof of this reality (86). Similar to Sezgin, Koman Parlak argues that it was inexorable that the Turks, who belonged to the Arab-Persian cultural sphere, would encounter a cultural shift that would have an impact on their existing order and material and spiritual civilization with the introduction of Islam. Certain alterations and transformations arose from the coming together of Turkish society, where women dynamically participated in social and political life before Islam, and the Arab society, which did not appreciate women at all before meeting with Islam, disregarded them and even buried them alive. These knotty views held by Arabs toward women, linked to their own cultural beliefs and the role they assign women in society, do not correspond with the worth specified to women by Islam (95).

It is Islam that gave women a wide range of freedom in Arab society (Çubukçu 37). Islam made significant changes in the social, economic, and legal position of women in Arab society (Aktaş 37–43). What is more, with the advent of Islam, as Koman Parlak claims, the position of women in Arab society has completely changed, and women have been saved from being a victim of ignorance buried alive and attained a lofty position where Heaven is laid under their feet. However, the negative perspectives of the communities that accepted Islam, due to their old customs and traditions, were unfortunately tried to be associated with Islam (97). Islamic thought gave the greatest value to women and enabled them to live in a dignified and honourable manner. From the Islamic standpoint, a woman is a noble and decent creature who should be treated with compassion, respect, and kindness. The Prophet is supposed to have advised against offending or hurting women, citing their sensitive, compassionate, and gentle nature (Sezgin 54). This delicate role; however, analogous to nationalistic concerns in the Turkish context, condemns women from their previous active role in society. Likewise, Aynur İlyasoğlu claims that women's piety is seen as compatible with the passive and submissive role assigned to them for conservative policies, and religious women live under the oppressive codes of patriarchy. Within the framework of this role imposed on them, religious women are expected to be women who speak little, know their place, are not very demanding, respectful to their husbands as good and supportive housewives, and are loving mothers (9–10). Feride Kaya encapsulates how this

blessed yet passive role confines Turkish women and even prevents them from being an individual:[1]

> The fact that women have a lower position than men at home and social life in the patriarchal structure has confined women to be good wives or mothers as a result of traditional roles. Our society, where girls are not even counted as part of the population in rural areas and are traditionally seen as workers in the fields or at home, has always blessed *motherhood*. Although this perception has moved to a point where the *maternity right* is extolled by religion, women still have not been cherished as an individual. (77)

The voice of Turkish women, imprisoned in a private domain and opposed being removed from their active roles coded with heroism in the male domain, became striking by Turkish feminist writers such as Fatma Aliye Topuz (1862–1936), Selma Rıza Feraceli (1872–1931) and Halide Edip Adıvar (1884–1964). Surprisingly, this voice is heard meritoriously through Ayşe, the little girl in *The Rainbow* by a male writer, Ömer Seyfettin (1884–1920), who is known for his nationalist stance. Apart from *The Rooster* (*Horoz*) (1919) and *The Order of the World* (*Dünyanın Nizamı*) (1919), his stories have not been studied much in terms of gender roles. His story, *The Rainbow* (*Eleğimsağma*) (1917), breaks new ground regarding gender roles by mirroring the pressure of gender roles on women through the eyes of a little girl.

Turkish Gender Roles in Separate Spheres in *The Rainbow*

The Rainbow, published in 1917, just before the establishment of the Republic, takes place in a village, Bozkaya. The protagonist of the story is 10-year-old Ayşe.

1 The role of Islam in shaping gender roles has been a topic of debate by copious scholars such as Gerami: *Women and Fundamentalism: Islam and Christianity* (1996) and "Men and Immigration" in *Men and Masculinities: A Social, Cultural, and Historical Encyclopedia* (2003), "Mullahs, Martyrs and Men: Conceptualizing Masculinity in the Islamic Republic of Iran" (2003), and "Islamist masculinity and Muslim masculinities" in *Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities* (2005). Another noteworthy book, among others, is *The Idea of Women in Fundamentalist Islam* (2003) by L. R. Shehadeh. In Turkey, studies on the relationship between Islam and gender roles are quite a few. İlkkaracan contributes to this neglected field via her book, *Women and Sexuality in Muslim Societies* (2000), and highlights how Muslim women are restricted by religion and nationalism. Another peerless study contributing to this ignored field is Gul Ozyegin's *Gender and Sexuality in Muslim Cultures* (2016). This edited volume encompasses articles focused on Muslim identities regarding masculinities and femininities in Egypt, Pakistan, Turkey, Iraq, Syria, and Iran.

Knowing that the way to get rid of the pressures on her and to lead a free life is to become a man, little Ayşe dreams of becoming a man by going under the rainbow, based on the belief in society. In fear of wearing the chador, which can be argued to symbolise socially accepted female roles, and of being deprived of riding and wrestling, which are considered peculiar to men, Ayşe falls asleep in the woods and dreams that she is a stalwart boy. She wakes up to the truth from her three-hour sleep in which she gains the freedom and dignity she desires by becoming a man. The story begins when Ayşe gets up from the loom she has been sitting on since the early hours of the morning. Although she is only 10 years old, she looks older than her age. She looks at herself in the mirror, her charcoal eyes, her rosy cheeks, and her black hair, and smiles: "How beautiful I am" (7). This beauty and her being close to adolescence mark the turning point of her life. She would lose the freedom she had as a child and want to become a man because of gender pressure. She is so strong that they call her "the wrestler Ayşe" (8) as she knocks even boys down with her strength. Like a boy, her favourite activities are riding horses, shooting guns, wrestling, and playing leapfrog. When she grows up, she would have to leave all these behind. This fact is always slammed in her face by the village vicar, Kurt Hodja: "Ayşe, tell your mother to get you veiled. It is no longer appropriate for you to wander around without a headscarf" (8). Knowing that she will have to wear a headscarf like every other girl growing up, Ayşe thinks that she will spend life in prison until she dies at the counter, and dives into deep thoughts: "Oh if I were a man..." (9). Ayşe has no doubts that she will become a hero when she becomes a man because to her only men can be heroes:

> Oh, if she were a man […] What would she not do!.. First of all, she would be the greatest wrestler not only in Bozkaya but also in the whole district. Then... a celebrated hero... and she would definitely marry the little daughter of the Zaims. She would fight battles, her chest would be full of medals, and she would cross mountains and spend weeks hunting bears as brave village boys do. (9)

Ayşe, similar to ancient Turkish women, wants to go into the masculine sphere that was denied to the Turkish women of the Republic period according to the roles they were assigned. In other words, she wants to go back to the times when women were more equal to men and had a say in society. But now heroism has become identified only with men and has been attributed to the male domain. Now it is only men who can go to the army to protect the homeland and wear medals on their chests.

Noticing the rainbow, Ayşe remembers the ancient belief that if one passes under a rainbow s/he changes his/her sex. She passes under the rainbow and becomes a man: "She is surprised when she gets up. She has grown in height and her shortened skirts remained at her waist. She brings her hand to her wet face. Her moustache touches her fingers. She looks at herself. A big lad! But not in men's clothing" (12). Here begins Ayşe's dream and also her assuming male roles. She runs home to put on men's clothes. She is so strong that she crosses the way she came in half an hour in three steps. What Ayşe wants is to act freely like men as well as the respect, power, and prestige she can gain in society by taking part in the masculine sphere. In a similar vein, Michael S. Kimmel expounds that masculinity is equivalent to having power over women and other men (238). Such a man as Ayşe would marry the most beautiful girl in the village. She takes the rifle hanging on the wall, goes outside, and hears the sound of drums and horns. She learns from the children playing on the path that the Zaims have a wedding and men are wrestling. She heads straight in that direction as it is time to show her masculinity. She, as the most potent man of the village, must marry Gülsüm, the youngest daughter of the Zaims. She enters the courtyard and shouts like a hero: "Step back and see who the hero is!" (13). Ayşe not only becomes a man, but she also becomes the most valiant and robust of them. Therefore, rather than wearing a headscarf and staying at home, she can get everything she wants and live a life as she pleases.

In the rest of the story, to everyone's surprise, Ayşe wrestles with two men at the same time. She defeats the mukhtar's son Hasan and asks Kurt Hodja to divorce Hasan and Gülsüm. Kurt Hodja, who exposes her to gender pressure every time he meets her by telling her to wear the chador, is Ayşe's worst enemy. Ayşe asks Kurt Hodja to marry her to Gülsüm, but Kurt Hodja rejects. As Ayşe did to Hasan, she raises Kurt Hodja in the air and threatens to kill him. The villagers begin to gather around and shout at Ayşe in the direction of the Hodja. Moreover, they have black chadors in their hands. Shrugging, Ayşe shouts and hugs her rifle. One by one, she knocks down anyone who stands in her way. Ayşe is about to kill the Hodja. Yet, she falls to the ground and hits her head on the ground. When she opens her eyes, she finds his father in front of her, punching her head. Thus, Ayşe's dream, interrupted by the Hodja signifying gender oppression, is terminated by another man standing for the same pressure. At the end of the text, the reader realises that the whole story is just a dream. Ayşe is in shock and cries in embarrassment. She wakes up from the dream that she is a man to get her freedom, ride a horse, shoot a rifle, wrestle, and so on. She is once again told that she has to give up all these as she is at the age of chador. At the end of the day, unlike her ancient female counterparts, Ayşe cannot

enter the realm of men in a society dominated by the patriarchal order.

In *The Rainbow*, a male-dominated society, comprising a gender culture that keeps women away from active roles in the male world, is depicted through the lens of a little girl. The restrictions imposed by gender roles mostly put pressure on girls, as in the case of Ayşe. For 10-year-old little Ayşe, deprived of doing what she wants and expected to wear a chador, the way to freedom and to gain power and status is to become a man. Although the roles of femininity are at the forefront of the story, the stereotypical expectations about male roles are also underlined. These roles put pressure on men as well as women. It is certain that men, who are always expected to be strong and brave, may also experience a stalemate due to these roles. The adjectives passive, submissive, weak, and emotional are assigned to women; whereas the adjectives active, strong, prone to violence, and realistic, including heroism that Ayşe pursues, are considered appropriate for men. Then, unlike in ancient Turkish society, women were strictly kept away from the male domain which transformed into a private area that contained only male-specific features.

Conclusion

The concepts of masculinity and femininity determine our way of thinking; therefore, they play a crucial part in the formation of identity. To Butler, gender is "applied to embodied persons as "a mark" of biological, linguistic, and/or cultural difference" (*Gender Trouble* 13). Within these parameters, it is observed that culture shapes others and even precedes biological differences. Masculinity and femininity roles shaped by culture bring along the characteristics that individuals are expected to comply with. The function of religion in shaping these roles is inevitable, too. There have been radical changes in the perception of masculinity and femininity before and after Islam in Turkish society. Due to the teachings of Islam, women have been more identified with home and the Turkish woman, who shared the roles of men before Islam, has been replaced by the woman identified solely with domesticity and motherhood. That is how masculine roles have been removed from women and the masculinity sphere has become a taboo for them. Another reason why the doors of the male realm are closed to Turkish women is the role assigned to them in the construction phase of a modern country after the proclamation of the Republic. According to this role, women are supposed to undertake the mission of raising children for the homeland as the caretaker of the home rather than protecting the home and homeland. In line with this mission, the gifts of heroism are not ascribed to women but are considered peculiar to men. Thus, a radical change has emerged in Turkish femininity turning women into passive individuals away from

the borders of heroism.

Culturally and historically constructed (Hearn 9; Gardiner 35), it is usual for the characteristics of masculinity and femininity to change relatively over time. In the Turkish context; however, a radical change is detected. The study discloses the deep-seated transformation of Turkish gender roles from a shared sphere to a private one by analysing a classic Turkish epic *The Book of Dede Korkut* which gives a picture of the ancient Turkish society before Islam, and *The Rainbow* by Ömer Seyfettin which portrays modern Turkish society in its bloom right before the proclamation of the Republic. In ancient times, as depicted in *The Book of Dede Korkut*, Turkish masculinity welcomes women into its domain. Women are connected with heroism, protecting the family and country coupled with shooting arrows, using swords, wrestling, riding horses, and having a say in administrative affairs. On the other hand, *The Rainbow* tells the story of a little girl who longs to possess a place in the masculine sphere that does not accept females in it due to religious values and the assigned roles to women in line with the nation-building process. On account of the transformation of gender roles, associating masculinity with heroism, and femininity with domestic and maternal responsibilities, in the recent Republican Turkish society, little Ayşe cannot find room in the masculine world even in her dreams. When all's said and done, gender equality, typical in ancient Turkish society, has remained utopian in a recently republican Turkey and even in today's Turkish society.

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The Moscow Text and the Imagery of Urban Perception

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Abstract Expounded in the article are prerequisites to a cognitive and semiotic description of the Moscow text as it is represented in the Russian literature of the twenty-first century. The concept of supertext or, the invariable recurrent text structure, is introduced and applied to textual representations of cities; the typical imagery forming the Moscow text is elucidated, along with its verbal representations. It is suggested that the practical description of the Moscow text should be made on the basis of the literary works constituting the Russian literary canon, which will ensure the conformity of linguistics and literary studies within the framework of general semiotics. The article mainly explores the specifics of the contemporary textual representations, drawing upon works shortlisted for literary awards. The literary material is supplemented with extensive social and cultural context, which is done in accordance with the modern literary studies, when the corresponding extra-textual reality is taken into account alongside the text itself. An orientation towards the literary text is postulated as absolutely essential, as a solid corpus of literary texts is indispensable for describing complicated linguistic phenomena and mental images standing behind them. The latest texts about Moscow feature a decrease in the status of the usual cult places of the metropolis, the authors' attention being redirected to urban images which have less historical or cultural significance.

Keywords Moscow text; supertext; urban studies; cognitive imagery; verbalization

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Introduction

The category of *space* is one of the fundamental categories (along with time and being) in the worldview of each person. It is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon which exists in several aspects: physical (real space accommodating the entire material world), perceptual (the space perceived), mental (images of space existing in people's minds), and conceptual (the space of abstract models and constructs).

Currently, the greatest interest of scholars is placed in the figurative characteristics of space, with an emphasis on how it is reflected in the minds of people who are aware of themselves and organize their existence in it. The spatial image, as semiotician Julia Gorelova suggests, always serves as an intermediary between a person's consciousness and the external reality, and in the course of its formation, individuals rely not only on direct sensations and emotions, but also on their previous experience[1]. At the same time, the socio-cultural doxastic factors (stereotypes, values, and norms) also influence the conceptualization of reality. As a result, people perceive objective phenomena in their own, naïve, or non-scientific, way, and, in the case of environmental perception, they impart individual meanings to every fragment of it. This fact, however, does not rule out the presence of generally recognized meanings fixed in the given culture and a certain universally-accepted image of space which would be common for most people. It can be thus stated that the

1 Julia Gorelova, "Imagistic Features of Urban Environment," *Imagistic Features of Urban Environment as a Potential for the Territorial Development: Proceedings of the All-Russian Scientific and Practical Conference*. Omsk: Siberian Branch of the Heritage Institute, 2020, p. 11.

mental image is a cluster of the most vivid cognitive representations containing the essential features of the object or phenomenon cognized[1].

Urban space is a special type of space centered around the modern person. Following urban scholar Julia Nikulina, it can be defined as a set of objects of the urban environment that are the locus of human life and existence in its material, social, cultural, communicative, mental, and metaphysical dimensions[2]. The space of the city, and especially of the capital city, is the concentration of all the spheres of people's life and the place where the person's cultural, mental, and social progress occurs. Any city is a special universe of relations, artifacts, and spiritual values, a particular spatial organization which includes specific structural components[3].

Acquaintance with any city begins, first of all, from its outward aspect, as manifested in its architecture and landscape. The characteristic features distinguishing urban space from other types of space would include the wide avenues and streets, boulevards and squares, high-rise buildings and numerous shopping centers, cafes and restaurants, parks, educational and cultural institutions, transport, etc. In addition, a person's perception of urban space largely depends on people inhabiting it, their social circle, their beliefs and values. Artistic images created by people of art (artists, poets, writers, cinematographers) also play a crucial role in shaping the perception of urban space. As anthropologist Francis Galton argues, imagery might be scarce in "scientific" minds and is abundant in people of artistic inclination[4]. A systematization of the sensations and experiences revealed would constitute a prerequisite for the formation of an integral multidimensional representation of urban space to be codified in linguistics means.

The concept of the *city image* originated in the 1920s in the works of area and culture studies scholar Nikolai Antsiferov dedicated to the imagery of St. Petersburg in literature[5]. In the 1960s American urban planner and philosopher Kevin Lynch noted that "like a work of architecture, the city is a structure in space, but on a gigantic scale, something that can be perceived only for the duration of time. [...] Everything is perceived not by itself, but in relation to the environment, to the chains of events

1 Paul Snowdon and Howard Robinson, "The Objects of Perceptual Experience," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society,* vol. 64, 1990, p. 157.

2 Julia Nikulina, "The Semiotic Aspect of How the Social Space of the Modern City is Arranged," *Philosophy and Social Sciences,* no. 2, 2008, p. 25.

3 Eduard Saiko, *The City as a Social and Cultural Phenomenon of the Historical Process.* Moscow: Nauka, 1995, p. 7.

4 Francis Galton, *Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development.* New York: Macmillan, 1883, p. 183.

5 Nikolay Antsiferov, *The Soul of Saint-Petersburg.* Petersburg: Brockhaus and Efron, 1922, p. 32.

associated with it, to the memory of previous experiences" (Lynch 15).

The modern social and cultural reality has somewhat changed the figurative characteristics of urban space, and therefore, the perception and representation of the city by its citizens has also changed. Despite the fact that urban space is created by people, at some point it goes beyond the control of a person and starts an independent existence of its own. A modern large city is no longer accessible to instant perception—it is necessary to build its image piece by piece, which undoubtedly complicates the process of forming a solid and stable idea of it.

As the arrangement of urban space is the result of both physical and spiritual human activity, which is sign-based, it can be examined from a semiotic standpoint, considering the city as text. Within the framework of this approach elaborated by the Moscow-Tartu semiotic school, the city is understood as a "melting-pot of texts and codes" (Lotman 282). Texts here would not only include literary works containing speech figures and tropes helping convey the authors' impression of the city, but also such semiotically represented city elements as architecture, landscape, toponyms, symbols, urban myths, etc.

Of particular interest are texts organized around the space of capital cities. For Russian linguistic culture, these are the Moscow and Petersburg texts. The object of the present research is the Moscow text or, *supertext*, a linguistic construct incorporating a totality of texts about Moscow. In Roland Harweg's terms, it is an *emic* text serving as the semantic invariant for a group of texts, already existent or yet to be written on the topic[1]. As the capital city of the Russian Federation, Moscow boasts an impressive history and has absorbed the spiritual, political and cultural experience of modern Russia. Moscow is certainly a center of gravity attracting people from different parts of the country and abroad.

The imagery of urban perception is largely shaped by the materials published in the media or posted on the Internet. Such images, however, feature a simple structure and contain the stereotypical ideas of the city. For purposes of linguistic and cultural study, it is worth turning attention to the images contained in artistic texts, in prose or poetry. Their structure is of a complex nature and they have a special vividness to them, which is accounted for by the artistic register of speech used. In addition to the features of the real ontological space, such images might incorporate elements from fictional spaces or, from the authors' assumptive universes. Unlike everyday perception, there is no automatism in artistic vision. It is a special, more subtle perspective which highlights individual details, adds special iconicity, and resorts to other artistic techniques, thus making it possible to perceive otherwise

1 Roland Harweg, "Pronomina und Textkonstitution," *Beiheft zu Poetica,* no. 2, 1968, p. 36.

long-familiar or even tedious fragments of the urban environment in a new light.

Materials

The present study examines the imagistic perception of the Russian capital, which is about constructing a holistic vision of the city and which aims at locating the logos of the city and conveying it in an artistic form. Quite legitimately, the study resorts to an analysis of linguistic means used to verbalize the perceptions of modern Moscow, as text is regarded as the first phenomenological givenness through which we ascend to the perceptual level. The material of the work was 45 Russian prosaic texts about Moscow collected in the book *Moscow: A Meeting Place*[1], along with 120 poems written in the 21st century by Russian authors Anatoly Arinin, Tatyana Berezhnaya, Marina Boroditskaya, Galina Brusnitsyna, Evgeny Bunimovich, Veronica Dolina, Michael Eisenberg, Vladimir Elistratov, Nataliya Filatova, Oleg Gruz, Michael Guskov, Yulian Levchuk, Alexander Voronin, etc. (41 authors overall). These texts were created by people who know Moscow well (they grew up in it, or moved to it a long time ago, or visited the capital often); therefore the information they contain is deemed to have a high degree of verity.

The images of Moscow in the works of the 21st-century authors are multifaceted, as it is one of the oldest Russian cities which has experienced numerous changes during its existence and ultimately turned into a modern metropolis. Quite naturally, writers and poets recall the historical past of the Russian capital, which marked the beginning and formation of other Russian cities, and describe Moscow as the principal city of Russia, an integral part of Russian history and culture: "Russia's head," "the World Capital," "Tsar-City." The country is governed from the capital, whose inhabitants are the first to learn what is going on in the state. Moscow is an all-embracing city where one can see things not to be found elsewhere. As American historian and urban sociologist Lewis Mumford observes, only the megalopolis, being the quintessence of the present day, can give the person the sense of the fullness of life[2]. We can therefore state the universal allure of Moscow in a sense that any individual can choose the most congenial environment for them from the endlessly diverse manifestations of the city.

At the same time, the Russian capital is conceptualized as built upon the organic principles, created in harmony with Nature and therefore very dear to every citizen. It is no coincidence that such a role of Moscow is reflected in numerous

1 Lyudmila Ulitskaya, et al. *Moscow: A Meeting Place*. Moscow: AST Publishers, 2016.

2 Lewis Mumford, "Rise and Fall of Megalopolis." *The Culture of Cities*. London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers (1970): 247.

Russian proverbs and popular sayings embodying people's wisdom: "Moscow is the heart and soul of Russia," "From Moscow, as from a high mountain, everything is visible," "He who has not been to Moscow has not seen Beauty."

Discussion

In modern literature, the myth of Moscow as "the Third Rome" is still of high relevance. On the one hand, it assigns the important mission of the guardian of the Christian faith on earth to the Russian capital, while on the other, it emphasizes Moscow's (and, more generally, Russia's) distinct path of development from both the West and the East: "There is Moscow—Great Rome, / There were two, it is the third" (Guskov (a)). Men of letters also evoke the external similarity of Moscow and Rome. Comparing these cities and their individual districts, Sergey Shargunov writes: "There are seven hills in Moscow, just like in Rome. Rome has Trastevere across the Tiber, with its temples and low houses on narrow streets; Moscow has Zamoskvorechye" (Ulitskaya et al. 70).

The Russian capital, like the "eternal" Rome, attracts people to itself, casts a spell upon them, and does not let them go, being a cathedral city and the spiritual center of Russia. It is thus no coincidence that a large number of golden domes, monasteries, cathedrals are mentioned in poetic texts. The architectural appearance of Moscow would be incomplete without its numerous churches. In addition to these images, the poem *Moscow* by Maria Medvedeva-Yakubitskaya contains another one—that of Moscow as a phoenix bird or, as a city reborn from the ashes to a new life:

> Moscow! The great golden-domed city,
> Riches of food you have seen and fierce hunger…
> You were abandoned, burned by your own lot and others,
> But You did not close your big eyes;
> You do keep the Orthodox shrines in yourself,
> And you are reborn as a Phoenix Bird to this day! (Medvedeva-Yakubitskaya)

Moscow also preserves the image of the mother of Russian cities, widely regarded as their progenitrix, and it chiefly appears in a female guise in the Russian textual tradition. Unlike the stern "male" Petersburg, Moscow does not lose its maternal origin[1]. This role of the city has developed historically and is unconditionally rec-

1 Yuri Mann, "Moscow in Gogol's Creative Conscience." *Moscow and the Moscow Text of Russian Culture: A Collection of Articles*. Moscow: RSUH, 1998, p. 64.

ognized by all, which has found its way into aphoristic verbal use: "Moscow is the mother of all cities," "It's not scary to give your life for Mother-Moscow." As a mother, Moscow is commonly perceived as beautiful by default and certainly not subject to any criticism. At the same time, people naturally expect to find a secure shelter in this city, good care, and readiness to accept them with all their problems and shortcomings: "From all over the country they fly to the capital—/ Moscow, like a mother, attracts them to itself" (Levchuk (b)). Here we deal with a typical urban metaphor—the capital city as a center of gravity.

In addition, Moscow appears to be a mysterious city filled with secret and magic, enchanting its citizens and guests. When referring to specific objects of Moscow's space (Sretenka Street, the Vorobyovy or, Sparrow, Hills, St. Basil's Cathedral, the Gogol Monument) men of letters stress the presence of a certain spell-binding secret in them: "St. Basil stands on a dais, and when it is dusk, you do not see the temple. But with each step, it, like an image in a photograph, manifests itself to a greater extent and finally appears in all its insane glory. This is the miraculous secret of this amazingly Russian monument which unites distinct beginnings like the eclectic Moscow itself" (Ulitskaya et al. 130). Rolan Bykov elaborates on the mystery of yet another locus of the Russian capital: "And if you stand facing the monument to Nikolai Gogol (who is sitting) and start walking around it to the left and then turn around sharply, it turns out that Gogol is spying on you. In my opinion, he saw not only the truth of life, but the very secret underlying the truth of life" (131).

Finally, Moscow gives the impression of a highly organized urban space with its landscape objects, buildings, and memorable places—the so-called points of dominance which make it possible to distinguish its characteristic urban space from other cities. The recognizable or, precedent, space of the Russian capital is created *inter alia* by Arbat, Sadovaya, Sretenka, and Tverskaya Streets, by Tsvetnoy or, Colored, Boulevard, by Sadovoye Koltso or, the Garden Orbital, by the Vorobyovy Hills, the Khodynka Field, the Moskva, the Neglinka, and the Yauza Rivers, by the Patriarch's Ponds, etc. Such sacred symbols of the capital as the Kremlin and the Red Square are also frequently mentioned in the micro-corpus under study. These symbols are imbued with history, and it is through them that the Russians feel a connection with their ancestors and take pride in their country. In terms of the number of occurrences, however, other streets and houses greatly surpass these well-known objects. For the Muscovites, their city is primarily associated with the old crooked streets which constitute the core of the cultural-imagistic code. They are convinced that the *real* Moscow is located within the Sadovoe Orbital, on the Vorobyovy Hills,

around the Khodynka Field, and along the banks of the Moskva River.

Artistic images are primarily images of memories. Writers and poets recall their native Moscow, which they knew as children: "A very large part of Moscow, the best for me, has passed into the past" (Ulitskaya et al. 10); "The intimate old Moscow flows as caramel into darkness" (Filatova (b)). The capital is undergoing change before their eyes, which is not always for the better. The old city so familiar to them and suggestive of history has sunk into oblivion and now only stays in people's memory. Ivan Tsybin writes the following lines: "Moscow, which is so dear to me, with its small houses and cosy courtyards, with its grandmothers sitting on benches there, with its unique charm and a barely perceptible, but recognizable flavour, with its horned trolleybuses floating swiftly along the Boulevard Ring, has disappeared altogether. I am really sorry that the city of my childhood no longer exists" (Ulitskaya et al. 75).

Yuri Arabov notes that "another time and another era have come" (Ulitskaya et al. 169). Following Maria Golovanivskaya, in modern Moscow, "[...] there is another life already—petty, commonplace, and scurrying" (Ulitskaya et al. 125). There are new shops, and malls, and banks, and advertising in the streets, and modern cars in the courtyards, and new residential complexes in the districts. The authors perceive these changes ambiguously. For example, Alexey Varlamov sees them as "alien, outlandish, or, ridiculous" (208); he resists them and ultimately feels deceived. Andrei Makarevich writes regretfully that "very soon there will be no old Moscow. Actually, it is no longer there—as the refurbished architectural monuments do not give any feeling of a living old city" (41). Michael Eisenberg laments the fact that "Moscow has now an amateurish artisanal look" (Eisenberg (b)). Due to the uncoordinated repairs, the capital has lost its formerly recognizable face and now wears many disparate "masks."

The receding Moscow of the past is also remembered by writers and poets for its crooked streets, turns, and nooks, as noted by Andrei Makarevich: "Old Moscow, in the complete absence of a general architectural plan and the subsequent variety of structures, was exceptionally charming. It was all a little crooked, consisting of twists, nooks and crannies" (Ulitskaya et al. 41). Other authors also emphasize the crookedness of the old Moscow streets, and the radical change in the architectural appearance of the modern capital due to mass construction: "Moscow was disappearing before my eyes. I don't really like the city that has been formed as a result of construction and demolition. I hardly like it at all. It has lost its sprawling, chaotic, and tender appearance, its charm that sprang from a conglomeration of settlements, former villages and estates; it has lost its curvature and privacy" (Ulitskaya et al. 7).

The second group of artistic images of the city comprises metaphorical images that reflect both the perception of the city as a whole and of its individual elements. As is well known, the basis for creating a metaphorical image is the transfer of the name from one object or action to another based on the similarity of any of their features. The metaphors that shape the general image of Moscow were examined from a linguocultural perspective, using the classification of cultural codes by Victoria Krasnykh[1]. According to the scholar, the cultural code is like a grid thrown on the surrounding world, and with its help, the world is divided, categorized, structured, and evaluated[2]. V.V. Krasnykh identifies six basic codes of Russian culture that can be implemented in metaphors: spatial, somatic, temporal, subject, biomorphic, and spiritual. As our analysis demonstrated, four cultural codes can be encountered the literary texts under consideration.

1. The *somatic code* is constituted by metaphors based on the symbolic functions of various parts of the human body. The metaphor *Moscow as the heart of Russia* has become traditional, emphasizing the key role of the capital in the life of the state. It invigorates the country and gives it an impetus to develop: "Moscow! You are the heart of my Motherland!" (Arinin (b)). Poets would also call Moscow *the head of Russia*, despite the fact that this metaphor is historically connected with St. Petersburg, as the popular saying goes: "St. Petersburg is the head of Russia, Moscow is the heart, Nizhny Novgorod is its pocket." The metaphor is present in Alexander Rudt's and Vitaly Sevryugin's poems: "Moscow, the head for holidays and troubles" (Rudt); "Russia's head" (Sevryugin). Michael Guskov compares the Russian capital with a thinking organ: "Moscow and the brain are but the same" (Guskov (c)).

The metaphors included in this group also reflect the specifics of a particular place. For instance, Rolan Bykov recalls the history of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior destroyed in 1931, which began to be restored at the end of the 20th century. It seems to the writer that "it was like a broken tooth that was put back in its place. And Moscow's smile is now one hundred percent" (Ulitskaya et al. 130). Lyudmila Ulitskaya has a similar anthropomorphic figurative vision: "Neither the old center nor the north are any more—only individual teeth in the new jaw can occasionally be found" (7). These metaphors indicate that the 21st century has preserved the idea of Moscow as a human city in people's minds, as an anthropomorphic organism cre-

1 Victoria Krasnykh, *At Home among Foreigners: Myth or Reality.* Moscow: ITDGC "Gnosis," 2003, p. 297.

2 Victoria Krasnykh. *Ethnic Psycholinguistics and Linguistic Cultural Studies.* Moscow: ITDGC "Gnosis," 2002, p. 232.

ated by Nature itself. Alyona Dergilyova, in turn, draws the reader's attention to the "smiling, yawning or screaming" facades of buildings with eyes, noses, and mouths; to the walls, wrinkled into a grimace as if they were "undergoing cosmetic surgery" (144). She painfully perceives this result, as the buildings have lost their former historical faces and received a smooth death mask instead.

2. The *subject code* of culture is associated with artifacts which fill Moscow's urban space and constitute the immediately recognizable structure of the surrounding world. Based on the personal impressions of her hometown, Marina Boroditskaya calls the Russian capital *my home* (Ulitskaya et al. 60), while Rolan Bykov refers to it as his apartment: "The whole city was my apartment—my beloved Zatsepa Street, Paveletsky Railway Station, Schipok Street, Balchug Street, the Sparrow Hills, Sokolniki District, Neskuchny Garden" (129). The metaphors coined by Irina Zaslavskaya and Alexander Popov-Ginzberg are also worth mentioning. They actualize the propositional meaning *the Russian capital as the center of attraction*: "Moscow is the All-Russian railway station" (Zaslavskaya); "the eternal railway station" (Popov-Ginzberg). The metaphors indicate that the capital is the largest transportation hub in the country, receiving about three million people daily. Michael Guskov's phrase "a golden, God-driven nail" (Guskov (b)) is reminiscent of the capital as a religious center, and Alexander Perov-Vtoroy's eulogistic metaphors "Moscow is the pearl of Russia" and "Moscow is the crown" (Perov-Vtoroy) express the socially-codified admiration for the city. In addition, the authors conceptualize as a pearl not only Moscow itself, but also VDNH or, the All-Union Exhibition of the Achievements of National Economy, located in Ostankino district: "the real pearl of Ostankino is, of course, VDNH" (Ulitskaya et al. 170).

Writers often present the metaphorical portrayal of distinct streets, districts, or houses of the capital. Maya Kucherskaya compares the famous Arbat to a fortified building, thus emphasizing the iconic role of this street in Moscow's life: "The Arbat stood strong. The Arbat was the house, the fortress" (Ulitskaya et al. 97). Andrey Makarevich focuses on the houses located in it, which have not yet been "crippled by restoration," and calls them "chiselled sculptures." He maintains that the authentic breath has gone out of the refurbished houses and that they have become mere "decorations," against which human life seems unnatural (41).

Images of the houses making up Moscow's urban space are found in stories by Vladimir Berezin, Marina Moskvina, Olga Velchinskaya, and Alyona Dergilyova: "The house stood like a gray battleship and there were lower-ranking ships around, tin boats of garages [...]" (Ulitskaya et al. 42); "My cloud-cutting house No. 10 in Bolshoy Gnezdikovsky Lane" (49); "[...] the architectural concept of Loskov's new

stone house in Mansurovsky Lane is based on a medieval castle with a round corner tower, a sharp Gothic roof and a spiral staircase. A Moorish balcony was awkwardly attached to the façade of this Gothic castle, and the walls were lavishly ornamented" (109); "the house like a smoothing iron in Petropavlovsk Lane, 1/2, next to the famous Khitrovka Square" (144). Andrei Makarevich writes about his alma mater, Moscow Architectural University, describing its façade with glazed tiles as "somewhat resembling the traditional Russian gingerbread" (40).

The metaphors used in describing houses and buildings are generally based on the likening of these to inanimate objects. For instance, Olga Trifonova recalls that one of the houses in Pervaya (or, the First) Tverskaya Street was called a "matchbox" (Ulitskaya et al. 12). Nikolay Beschastnov mentions the richly decorated house of the Apraksin-Trubetskoy dukes which is known as "a chest-of-drawers house" (149).

3. The *biomorphic code* of culture manifests itself in names related to people themselves, animals, and plants. No representations of the animal or, zoomorphic, code were found in the description of Moscow in the texts examined. The flora-related or, phytomorphic, code is present in the metaphors by Vladimir Berezin and Veronica Dolina indicating the organic origin and existence of the Russian capital. Vladimir Berezin observes that "from above, Moscow looks like the cut of a sawn tree, with its concentric streets resembling growth rings" (Ulitskaya et al. 42). Veronica Dolina regards Sretenka Street with its alleys as "the bulb of a tulip tree" (159). Alexander Minkin uses an anthropomorphic figurative metaphor, calling the respectable Taganka (a separate district of Moscow) a "teetotaler with whom you can't even have a beer" (131).

In a number of modern poems, we also encounter the metaphor *Moscow as a beautiful woman*. Despite the solid age of the capital, the authors often see it in the guise of a young, beautiful girl, whom "you wouldn't approach idly or nonchalantly" and whom "East and West covet":

> Moscow, I tell you, is a remarkable girl!
> You wouldn't approach her just for nothing.
> Suitors from everywhere, with ostentation
> Have sent matchmakers to her! (Berezhnaya (b))

Galina Brusnitsyna calls Moscow a giantess because the finger rings she has dropped are the three famous orbital highways[1]. Marina Boroditskaya creates the

1 Galina Brusnitsyna, "The Bridal Moscow," 2018. Available at: <https://stihi.ru/2018/08/20/485> (accessed September 17, 2023).

image of the capital as of a would-be fiancée who "wily flees from the wedlock" (Ulitskaya et al. 67). Like the true woman, Moscow can charm anyone and grab them tightly afterwards. As Lyudmila Ulitskaya points out, "Moscow does not let people go away from itself" (10). According to Olga Flyarkovskaya, Moscow has always had a right to steal people's hearts[1]. "I am avidly catching Moscow's breath," writes Elena Yakhnitskaya, and this metaphor once again proves that modern poets commonly perceive their hometown as a living organism (Yakhnitskaya).

4. The *spiritual code* includes metaphors embodying people's mythological or religious ideas about the world. Such metaphors do not arise immediately, but only as a result of gradual comprehension of what people have seen, and therefore they are mainly inherent to the capital's citizens rather than its guests. Some authors would compare the Russian capital with Paradise, as, for instance, Nataliya Filatova and Oleg Gruz: "Moscow is my only paradise" (Filatova (a)); "Moscow, with the infinity of its outskirts, seems like Paradise to many" (Gruz). At the same time, not only Moscow can be called a paradise, but also its districts: "Frunze District was designed by Stalin's stroke of the pen as a housing paradise for the staunchest communists, who were modest and non-public people in everyday life" (Ulitskaya et al. 124). Dmitry Bykov indirectly hints that Moscow was created by God, and calls the Sparrow Hills his favorite place, because he believes that they "are under the direct patronage of the most important Owner, being reliably protected from any interference; life is presented in its true fullness there" (215).

5. The *sentimental code* comprises the verbalized feelings which the capital evokes in its citizens and guests. Rolan Bykov resorts to the festive metaphor and calls Moscow "my eternal holiday" (Ulitskaya et al. 129). Quite in the same line, Michael Eisenberg defines the city as "a permanent display of fireworks" (Eisenberg (a)). Olga Flyarkovskaya, admiring the Russian capital, exclaims, "What a miracle of miracles / Our city is today!" (Flyarkovskaya). Writers also delight in certain places of the capital—the Sparrow Hills, for instance. Dmitry Bykov admires them as this is the point from where the hills of Moscow with its skyscrapers are visible. It is no coincidence that tsar Alexander I called the Sparrow Hills the crown of Moscow (Ulitskaya et al. 214). Vladimir Elistratov confesses his love for the light of lanterns and the millions of bricks from which Moscow University is built[2]. Dmitry Glukhovsky, when taking a walk at VDNH, discovered the similarity of its build-

1 Olga Flyarkovskaya, "The Typical of Moscow," 2014. Available at: <https://stihi.ru/2014/11/21/9578> (accessed September 21, 2023).

2 Vladimir Elistratov, "I love the Sparrow Hills in the Night…" 2010. Available at: <https://stihi.ru/2010/06/30/6057> (accessed September 18, 2023).

ings to ancient edifices (Ulitskaya et al. 171).

The analysis of the imagery which modern writers and poets employ to characterize Moscow suggests that distinct cultural codes interact in their minds. The metaphors considered indicate that in the 21st century, the idea of Moscow as a human city (biomorphic code) prevails in people's worldview. It is a living organism with its own character and destiny, which is constantly working, progressing, and renewing itself. Also, the objects of the city space—streets, alleys, houses, squares—are extensively compared with objects created by human hand (the subject code). Still, most of the metaphors depicting Moscow were born from comparing the city's appearance with natural objects.

In addition, the image of Moscow is created with the help of epithets. They reflect diverse attitudes to the capital city which the authors assume and can refer to both the city as a whole and its individual places. The epithets describing Moscow can be combined into three semantic-pragmatic groups. In the first of them there is admiration for the city and declaration of love for it. So, Evgeny Bunimovich describes the Russian capital as a "great city," stressing its leading role in the country's life, while immediately taking notice of the shortcomings typical of the Muscovites: "Due to the notorious Moscow laziness, which is so characteristic of the inhabitants of my great city, no architectural ensemble has ever been completed here, no project has been finalized" (Ulitskaya et al. 21). Yulian Levchuk's epithets are fairly simple, but they convey the poet's very intimate affection to the city: "Moscow is beloved and familiar"; "the much cherished city"; "Moscow is my dearest city" (Levchuk (d)). During a walk around his native Moscow the author exclaims that the capital is "both majestic and dear to heart, its avenues and streets endlessly attract us" (Levchuk (a)).

Poets and writers experience "a surge of love for their beloved Moscow" (Levchuk (c)) in different parts of the capital. Yulian Levchuk and Olga Flyarkovskaya recognize the Red Square and the Kremlin as such places: "their contours are beautiful—simple greatness!" (Flyarkovskaya). At the same time, Dmitry Bykov considers the Kremlin to be "quite alien" to the city. He characterizes modern Moscow as "a sick city," but despite this there are several places in it that attract him with their mystery (Ulitskaya et al. 215). They are the Sparrow Hills, the Moskva River and the Neskuchny Garden.

Olga Trifonova recalls the "shady and green" Alexander Nevsky Street in Miussy district where she was born. The writer is pleased to say that when she was a child "the 2nd Miusskaya Street was green and quiet and it has still retained this appearance" (15). Evgeny Bunimovich writes about the street of his childhood—

Novosushchevskaya Street, which is still "all covered in century-old poplars" (21). For Dmitry Glukhovsky, one of the favorite places of the capital is the "beautiful and amazing" Ostankino district (170). Lyudmila Ulitskaya recalls her favorite area on the left bank of the Yauza river, which is close to nature. She employs a variety of epithets expressing her warm attitude to the place described: "Zayauzye was a wonderful but neglected area; there are still some very soulful corners to be found there" (10). Sergey Shargunov considers the historic Zamoskvorechye area as "the most cosy, sweet, and magnetizing" place (89). Yuri Arabov, recalling the Moscow of the past, turns to one of its most criminal districts—the "legendary" Maryina Roscha or, Grove (166). Olga Trifonova calls her native Miussa district "mysterious" (14), where one could find such heterogeneous objects as research institutes, slums, the House of Officers, building belonging to the GULAG or, the Main Administration of Corrective Labour Camps, and an alley where the timber trade was carried on.

The second group includes epithets-personifications representing Moscow in a human, generally the female, guise. Galina Brusnitsyna's poem "Moscow is sad [...]" is built on such epithets. At first, the capital appears in a negative light and is characterized as "poor, sleepless, pale, slandered, sworn at, rushed, exhausted." Then the tone of the narrative changes and Moscow already appears in the image of a "sad, young, neat, nice and sweet" girl and, like the phoenix bird reborn, it recovers its splendid appearance (Brusnitsyna (a)).

The third group contains epithets with the meaning of Moscow's allure, its mystery and magic incomprehensible to the human mind. Anatoly Arinin admires the "attractively colorful" city, which Moscow becomes in autumn being naturally decorated with golden leaves (Arinin (a)). Tatyana Berezhnaya declares her love of the Capital: "And I love my Moscow, so motley, crazy [...] (Berezhnaya (a)). Dinara Zhabbarova exclaims: "Oh, Moscow, how beautiful you are!" (Zhabbarova).

Standalone Moscow buildings might also seem unusual and mysterious to the authors. For instance, Olga Velchinskaya describes Loskov's stone house as "fantastic," because it represents a mixture of several styles (Ulitskaya et al. 109). Alexey Kozlov calls an Italian-styled house shaped like the letter "O" "bizarre" (77), and Marina Moskvina believes the house by architect Ernst Nirnsee, one of the first skyscrapers in Moscow, to be "a fantastic structure" (49). For Dmitry Glukhovsky, the VDNH exhibition complex is the most spellbinding locus: "I can't think of any other such place in Moscow—weird, mysterious, artificially unnatural, and therefore completely magical" (170).

The epithets considered amply demonstrate that the Russian capital is loved by its citizens. People also cherish its secluded corners (courtyards, backstreets, etc.),

and this admiration cannot be explained in a rational way. This feeling stems in an incomprehensible way from heterogeneous impressions—mostly childhood memories and romantic sensations received already at a conscious age when people feel a certain mystery attracting them.

Conclusion

The analysis of the latest literary works about Moscow suggests that the 21st century may be considered a new stage in the development of the Moscow text. The life in the capital has changed considerably, and Moscow has become a megalopolis, one of the largest cities in the world, which is inevitably reflected in literary works. The authors take a new look at the current situation in the capital, sometimes supporting the changes in its appearance, sometimes, on the contrary, directing their thoughts towards to the bygone Moscow of their childhood and nostalgically remembering the objects of its urban space lost for good.

The general image of the urban space is always individual and at the same time fixed typologically. It arises from recurring themes, subjects, plots, and motifs that constitute a kind of supertext. Within the Moscow supertext, the typical myths about the Russian capital are still relevant: Moscow as the major and most spectacular city of Russia (a state in itself!), which commonly appears in a female guise (Moscow as the mother-city) and whose mission is to be the guardian of the Christian faith (Moscow as the third Rome). It is thus commonly perceived as the spiritual center of Russia. In addition, Moscow is a mysterious city which casts a spell on its citizens and guests; it is fraught with secret and magic and is constantly reborn to a new life (Moscow as the phoenix bird).

The Moscow text is constructed by its constituent authors through the prism of their own vision of the city. Writers and poets concentrate on radically different features in the realities of the capital, indicating their caring attitude to the city, and therefore Moscow appears multifaceted in their texts. Nevertheless, their descriptions follow more or less standard semantic patterns.

The image of Moscow in the works of the 21st century authors is formed in two main directions: the historical (or, public) and the psychological (or, private). Various urban objects become the focus of the narrative in literary texts. These elements of the city space can either be widely known, having become iconic for the Muscovites and visitors of the capital, or ordinary, unremarkable. It is generally the latter that acquire a personally relevant meaning. The authors pay the greatest attention to particular streets, alleys, old houses, and courtyards preserved in their original form considering them, in Olga Velchinskaya's words, "a sweet historical

homeland that belongs to every person" (Ulitskaya et al. 116). The authors write about it with great love, which is expressed in the fact that every one of them knows such minute details from the city life that make Moscow their home.

Any person creates a picture of the world, including the space where he or she lives, in accordance with their personal ideas about it. Fairly indicative in this regard is the creation of Moscow's spatial map based on the results of our analysis of the latest prose and poetry. Such individual psychological cartography permits representing the city's image as it exists in the minds of its inhabitants. Their sphere of interests is not focused on "the splendour of the church-onions of the golden-domed city," as a poet has so aptly put it (Filatova (c)), not on skyscrapers, cathedrals, palaces, theaters, or museums. Paramount value is attributed to the specific places of residence (the secluded side-yard and the quiet street with adjacent alleys) and to the loci related to the person's social activity (place of study or work).

As the study results suggest, the latest texts about Moscow feature a decrease in the status of the usual cult places of the metropolis, the authors' attention being redirected to urban objects which often do not have historical or cultural significance. These are, first of all, the buildings that have been pulled down or await demolition, the trees felled and the courtyards redeveloped.

In the current conditions, the main value for a Muscovite is tranquility, which implies a less hectic pace of life and its voluntary restriction to a small well-known space. However, the modern metropolis provides few opportunities for this. Muscovites are very closely following the changes which take place in their city. Everyone seems to agree that Moscow is a living organism with its own temperament, ever evolving. The capital keeps up with the times and reveals itself to each person in its own way. Still, the charming beauty of the city, which combines pleasant and disagreeable, spiritual and mundane, continues to attract people.

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