Crossing

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Department of English and Humanities

UNIVERSITY OF LIBERAL ARTS
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Editorial Note

We are delighted to bring out this issue of *Crossings*. After our take on the Entanglements of once-imperial English in the special volume just prior to this, we go back to our normal rhythm of presenting English Studies through the kaleidoscope of language, literature, and culture.

As usual, our undertaking of *Crossings* involves an occasional paper. Claire Chambers, an advisory editor of our journal, reflects on some of her "life-changing" moments in Afghanistan when she realized that ideas of freedom are not necessarily homogenous and universal. Her discovery of the local nuances of culture contests the West's reductionist view of understanding culture through sartorial stereotypes such as burqas or miniskirts.

In the Literature and Cultural Studies section, the first article by Shantanu Das examines different spatial constructs in Saadat Hasan Manto's "Ten Rupees," the tale of a teenager being forced by her mother to be in the flesh trade, that both limit and release subjectivity.

In the next article, Sahelee Parveen Dipa challenges the normative masculinity attributed to freedom fighters through her provocative reading of a collection of letters written during the Liberation War of Bangladesh, *Ekattorer Chithi*. The passion with which the young men fought on the battlefields finds a different tenor when they write home to explain their purpose. For Dipa, personal letters become subjects of public attention as they define gendered nationalism.

Issa Omotosho Garuba, in his article, moves us to Nigeria where we are reminded of the therapeutic nature of creative art in Olu Obafemi's *Running Dreams* while the psychoanalytic aspect of literature dictates Afruza Khanom's reading of Grace Paley's short story, "The Pale Pink Roast." Khanom identifies and elaborates on the dark triad of Narcissism, Machiavellianism, and Psychopathy in the protagonist Peter to show how he applies these manipulative behaviors for his sensory marketing and exploitation of female sexuality.

The next article examines the Oscar-winning film *The Shape of Water* and the Japanese anime *Ponyo* to highlight material ecocriticism and its ethical dimension through which the fluidity of water is characterized in these contemporary films. Shibaji Mridha's central argument lies in the insistence on the natural element's ability to bridge the human and non-human divide.

In his article, Shaibal Dev Roy explores the poetry of African American slave poet, George Moses Horton, from an ecocritical point of view while Musarrat Shameem surveys the creative work of some female writers who use the virtual space, "Pencil," to sculpt their cultural identity. Shameem's primary research will allow readers to understand an emerging trend where the digital space is allowing more and more writers to eschew traditional publishing modes to take advantage of a shared, interactive platform for their group formation.

The last article of the Literature and Cultural Studies section compares two literary instances

of metamorphosis written with a gap of 100 years. Kafka's human-animal interchange is re-examined through a look at a Nigerian black man's story of transformation into a white man. Samirah Tabassum underscores the vulnerability of the protagonists in a capitalist calculus to forward her arguments on biopolitics.

The Language and Applied Linguistics section is enriched by Tran Nguen Quyen Anh's rendering of Vietnam's experience of dealing with English as a medium of instruction in Higher Education. The controlled group study on translanguaging practices can serve as a benchmark for other researchers. Similar primary data is available in Mohammad Shahedul Haque and Fatema Tuj Jannat's quantitative-contrastive study of vowel sounds in English and Spanish.

Jimalee Sowell applies transformative learning theory to understand the impact of exchange programs on pre-service English language teachers. Sowell writes from her personal experience but validates her hypothesis through some research tools to point out the deeper understanding of teaching gained by exchange fellows.

The last article of the section recounts the newly introduced ELT and "new liberal arts" in China. The pressure of internationalization is shaping new avenues of pedagogy which require comparative glances. Yidie Xu and Fang Fan remind us of our shared future road that is changing the face of English Studies.

The Book Review section introduces readers to an influential publication by the Asiatic Society that introduces Bangladeshi writers writing in English. Two expatriate academics, Mohammad A. Quayum and Md. Mahmudul Hasan, have taken a laudable initiative of critical mass needed for creative writers. This anthology, in its limited scope, mentions the pioneers who have earned a niche for Bangladeshi authors. Many of these authors reside abroad. The collection gives these authors a territorial tag that is not lost in the baggage of South Asian, Indian or Commonwealth literatures.

We are happy to note that our journal is receiving much critical attention. Our readers' feedback and references will help our scholars cross the distance and find new academic shores.

On behalf of the Editorial Board,

Shamsad Mortuza, PhD
Chief Editor

Occasional Paper

Some Thoughts on Afghanistan

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I spent a life-changing year in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the 1990s, a visit that formed my intellectual perspective and inspired my career trajectory. Thus, I have long been fascinated by other people – especially women – who have spent time amid other cultures, and then experienced mixed feelings on returning to their native countries. Lately I have been reading the work of two adventurous women journalists, a generation apart from each other: British Yvonne Ridley (born in County Durham in 1958) and Dutch Bette Dam (b. Leeuwarden, 1979).

As well as writing for many of the best-known British newspapers, Yvonne Ridley has also done controversial work as a politician and peace activist. In her 2001 book *In the Hands of the Taliban*, Ridley detailed the ten days she spent in Taliban captivity. She had been caught by the extremists soon after the American invasion while dressed in a burqa, trying to get a scoop. Her book was written at top speed after her detention. As such, she sometimes reveals her complex and contradictory personality. Despite proud working-class roots and leftist politics (she would later take a prominent role in George Galloway's Respect Party), she was working for the right-wing paper *The Daily Express* when she was captured. She had also sent her daughter to an elite boarding school in the Lake District, suggesting political hypocrisy. Other signs of her identity confusion at this early stage of the twenty-first century are that she counts among her ex-lovers an Israeli, a colonel from the Palestine Liberation Organisation, and a British policeman (the peace activist-to-be herself also joined the United Kingdom's Territorial Army for a time). She writes with pleasure about binge-drinking and bacon sandwiches. A couple of years later, she would convert to Islam. I think of Walt Whitman's lines from his poem "Song of Myself": "Do I contradict myself? | Very well then I contradict myself, | (I am large, I contain multitudes)." Ridley contains multitudes for sure, and, despite her inconsistencies, she makes a warm and compelling storyteller. But the West does not want to hear her story, in journalism at least. She is unfairly seen as an apologist for the Taliban and Islam.

Ridley can be reductive about Afghans, asserting with an essentialism that recalls the British colonial martial race theory, "Afghan men are born fighters ... Fighting is a national pastime and has gone on for centuries" (39). A feminist, she hints at a worrying savior complex, for example generalizing: "dressed as an Afghan woman, I was trapped in a world of silence" (123). But if at first Afghanistan "did nothing" for her (137), by the book's final pages she is starting to develop a more textured stance on this varied nation of plains and mountains; Pashtuns, Hazaras, and Uzbeks; jingle trucks and the destruction of art; rugged barrenness and lush orchards. She is amazed to find herself "being treated with kindness and respect" by her captors (162). In turmoil during her incarceration, she recalls Christian

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tenets and says the Lord's Prayer. But she also promises that, when she is freed, she will make a point of studying the Islamic faith. This is a pledge she makes good on once she returns to London. The rest, as they say, is history.

I now want to explore the Dutch journalist Bette Dam's book *A Man and a Motorcycle: How Hamid Karzai Came to Power* (2014). Dam is a more consistent and self-reflexive traveller than Ridley. Early on, she muses: "For a moment it seemed odd that I, a Westerner, wanted to write his [Karzai's] story. Who was I to presume that I could comprehend this society?" (5). Whereas Ridley is able to believe two contradictory things at once with utter certainty, Dam is alert to shades of grey. For instance, she avers: "Thus began the Battle of Chora, reported in the media as a 'battle against the Taliban,' but in reality the distinction between friend and foe was completely blurred" (203).

Aged just 26, she went to Afghanistan for the first time in 2006. Five years after the US invasion, she found the country caught up in a complex power nexus, with many Western and local governments jockeying for power. Dam looked on aghast as members of the Press corps ensconced themselves in those international bases which had sprung up like weeds all over the nation. According to Dam in her impassioned 2019 TEDTalk, most journalists were selling instead of telling the news (n.p.). They were (and are) fervent believers in the commodity of the West's story of a global war on terror. Dam argues, then, that mainstream media produce conflicts, instilling fear in the hearts of their reporters, soldiers, and NGOs. They peddle this story within the binary of safety in the compound, while behind the barbed wire lurks what is constructed as an irredeemably evil and unknowable Taliban and al Qaeda.

Dam's journalistic truth-seeking and contempt for established narratives is reflected in novels. In James Meek's *We Are Now Beginning Our Descent*, a war reporter based in Afghanistan declares: "You stay in one country for more than a few months, you start to know so much about it that the editors aren't sure what you're talking about any more. They want you to get some of your ignorance back. You've moved too far from the readers" (53). As such, Meek suggests that only the most superficial contextual knowledge is demanded of foreign correspondents. Meanwhile in Zia Haider Rahman's *In the Light of What We Know*, a text to which I will return later, a character observes that Afghanistan's American occupiers "justify their invasion of Afghanistan with platitudes about freedom and liberating the Afghani people" (325). In her knowledge of Afghanistan, Dam has soared past most Western editors and readers, rejecting the usual pieties about saving Afghans. She left the compound (or echo chamber), was given unprecedented access to Karzai and his cronies, and made many Afghan friends.

Now Dam has written a biography (2021) of Karzai's opponent, Mullah Omar. This book is sensational because Dam was the first to discover the whereabouts of the elusive Taliban leader before his death in 2013. Emma Graham-Harrison wrote a viral article for the *Guardian* in which she argued that Dam's book "exposes an embarrassing failure of US intelligence" (n.p.). Dam says the Americans' historical blunder should not surprise us. As soon as she started asking about Mullah Omar on the street, Afghans had answers, but

Western journalists were too embedded to be talking to the right people or asking the right questions.

Nine days after 9/11, on 20 September 2001, President George W. Bush responded to the World Trade Centre attacks by addressing a joint session of Congress. He lamented that in the space of a "single day" the country had been changed irrevocably, its people "awakened to danger and called to defend freedom" (n.p.). The murders of almost 3,000 people generated anger in him and a drive for retribution. The attackers, whom Bush termed "enemies of freedom," were apparently motivated by envy as well as hatred:

> They hate what they see right here in this chamber: a democratically elected government. Their leaders are self-appointed. They hate our freedoms: our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other. (Bush n.p.)

In this passage alone, "freedom" is utilized in four instances, and in the approximately 3,000 word-long speech from which it is taken, the same word is invoked thirteen times. Given that the speech was a major statement of Bush's intent following the wound of 9/11 and that the US government used the code name "Operation Enduring Freedom" to describe its war in Afghanistan, it is clear that freedom is a crucial concept to the US and its allies. This is unsurprising, since the Statue of Liberty on Liberty Island in New York Harbour has long served as a symbol of freedom and the vaunted American myth of social mobility.

But what does freedom consist of, is it a universal value, and does everyone – men and women, and people from different classes, races, or religious backgrounds – experience it in the same way? In her essay "Terror: A Speech After 9/11," Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak thinks not. She caustically gives the example of a "fresh-faced" American woman soldier piloting a US aircraft carrier. This is empowering for the individual woman's sense of freedom, as she says to viewers, "If I can drive an aircraft carrier I can drive any truck." Spivak recounts that a male CNN correspondent remarked on this that "No one will be able to make sexist jokes about women drivers any more." Spivak calls this "the most bizarre example of single-issue feminist patter" and asks sardonically, "All women?" before concluding that "The 'women of Afghanistan' are coded somewhat differently" (84). In other words, the idea of the oppressed, unfree Afghan woman was politically appropriated as a category to justify imperial projects of violent intervention.

In 2014, Bangladeshi-born writer Zia Haider Rahman published his captivating debut novel, *In the Light of What We Know*. The book deals in part with 9/11 and its aftermath. One of Rahman's two protagonists, Zafar, takes a job in Afghanistan soon after the outbreak of war in 2001. He states that the American occupiers rationalize their occupation (and here I mobilize the same quote I looked at earlier when analyzing the work of Bette Dam) "with platitudes about freedom and liberating the Afghani people" (Rahman 325). Having studied law and worked for a US bank, Zafar is in some ways part of the so-called American relief effort. And yet he is simultaneously not part of it, due to his Bangladeshi background

and brown skin. Because of this, coupled with his working-class origins, he sees through the rhetoric of freedom as empty and platitudinous.

Later, Rahman's Zafar describes a raucous, sexually charged UN bar in Kabul, concluding: "It was a scene of horror. This is the freedom for which war is waged" (Rahman 360). Here, he unpicks what Americans mean by "freedom." The concept bathetically involves a person being free to drink alcohol and explore his or her sexuality – whether married or single is unimportant. To the occupiers, freedom is about individual choice in the free market. This means little to the majority of Afghans. The influx of new bars and nightclubs during the occupation is a popular, positive development in the minds of the local elite class but, as Zafar points out, "the poor are disgusted" (368).

From freedom's sister word, liberty, comes the verb "liberate," another word for saving. This idea of liberation and saving brings us to Lila Abu-Lughod's book, *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* (2013). The anthropologist tackles ideas about freedom in relation to the realms of race, class, and gender. A feminist with heritage partly in the global south, Abu-Lughod suggests that Western feminists see themselves as "saving" their benighted Muslim sisters. Abu-Lughod had written her original essay "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?" in 2002 against the backdrop of the initial phase of the War in Afghanistan. She took as her point of departure the toxic but hilarious George W. Bushism "women of cover," which conflated the politically nuanced American term "women of colour" with the issues surrounding Muslim dress and its supposed subjugation of women (Abu-Lughod "Saving" 783). In this essay, Abu-Lughod provided a fine-grained reading of the veiling debate. Rather than the universal symbol of oppression that many Americans assume it to be, the burqa is a Pashtun garment that can provide empowerment to the wearer – indeed, one anthropologist describes it as "portable seclusion" (Papanek, qtd. in Abu-Lughod, "Saving" 785). The problem is not necessarily tradition or culture but has more to do with militarization, as Deniz Kandiyoti has pointed out: "What to Western eyes looks like 'tradition' is, in many instances, the manifestation of new and more brutal forms of subjugation of the weak made possible by a commodified criminal economy, total lack of security and the erosion of bonds of trust and solidarity that were tested to the limit by war, social upheaval and poverty" (Kandiyoti 10). Abu-Lughod herself disagrees with any enforcement of the wearing of burqas, but observes that many women wear these garments voluntarily and have no wish to discard them.

Abu-Lughod next challenged George W. Bush's wife Laura Bush's November 2001 speech, in which Bush implicitly assumed that Afghan women would automatically be delighted to be rescued by American troops. Abu-Lughod writes:

> It is deeply problematic to construct the Afghan woman as someone in need of saving. When you save someone, you imply that you are saving her from something. You are also saving her to something. What violences are entailed in this transformation, and what presumptions are being made about the superiority of that to which you are saving her? (788–89)

Abu-Lughod encouraged readers to think about women who may or may not want or need saving, but who, more importantly, demand social justice. Finally, she advocated respect for difference, while not endorsing cultural relativism – the idea that everything can be understood and justified in the context of its culture. She demonstrated that it is no self-contradiction to dislike the Taliban, while simultaneously rejecting crude online petitions that claim to act against "Muslim men oppressing Muslim women" (787). What we should say is: a plague on both their houses.

Abu-Lughod also scrutinizes the repercussions from one notion of freedom being extolled above all other values. She questions whether women's clothing can symbolize freedom or unfreedom, and whether forces that put limits on every individual's free will mean that, as Wendy Brown puts it, "choice … is an impoverished account of freedom" (qtd. in Abu-Lughod, "Saving" 19). Abu-Lughod seems to suggest that the binary opposition of free and unfree is at the heart of twenty-first century versions of Orientalism. She argues that American feminism is deceived by the "powerful national ideology" (20) of freedom and fails to recognize the unequal power relations that underpin this ideology.

Rather than accepting the premise that Western freedom contrasts with imprisonment by Islam, Abu-Lughod deftly communicates that believing Muslims have their own ideas about, and goals for, liberation. The Islamic scholar Abdal Hakim Murad, also known by his birth name of Tim Winter, similarly writes that Islam represents "radical freedom, a freedom from the encroachments of the State, the claws of the ego, narrow fanaticism and sectarian bigotry and an intrusive state or priesthood" (Murad n.p.). Abu-Lughod's delineation of a dominant narrative of freedom recalls a statement made by Salman Rushdie regarding the World Trade Centre attacks in October 2001:

> The fundamentalist believes that we believe in nothing. … To prove him wrong, we must first know that he is wrong. We must agree on what matters: kissing in public places, bacon sandwiches, disagreement, cutting-edge fashion, literature, generosity, water, a more equitable distribution of the world's resources, movies, music, freedom of thought, beauty, love. These will be our weapons. Not by making war, but by the unafraid way we choose to live shall we defeat them. (393)

This somewhat tongue-in-cheek list is a salad of trivial things, ideals, and rights. It also neatly illustrates that many apparent freedoms are culturally specific shibboleths that might alienate not just "fundamentalists," but a good number of non-Western, non-Christian, non-male people (not to mention many Western vegetarians, including me, would be put off by the bacon sandwiches!). It becomes apparent that ideas of freedom are culturally located. Notwithstanding Rushdie's claims, liberty does not equate to wearing miniskirts rather than burqas.

To conclude, the notion of liberty in Western thought, since the time of Hobbes's *Leviathan*, has meant a freedom from external constraints and the right of individual self-determination. In Middle Eastern and Central and South Asian thought, by contrast, freedom – hurriyya in Arabic, azadi in Pashto, Farsi, and Hindi–Urdu, and স্বাধীনতা (Sbādhīnatā) in Bengali –

typically possesses political, communitarian connotations. It would be wrong to suggest that Muslims have not hotly debated the concept of freedom over the centuries. In the Sufi tradition, freedom has been compared to "perfect slavery" (Bostom n.p.), which indicates not only that slavery in the Arab world was, in Amitav Ghosh's words, a relatively "flexible set of hierarchies" (260), but also that the institution was often used as a metaphor for understanding "the relationship between Allah the 'master' and his human 'slaves'" (Bostom n.p.). Most of the writers I have discussed provocatively challenge Western perceptions of what freedom entails when they construct characters who express and embody freedom in relational and subversive ways. The issue of clashing cultural understandings of liberty highlighted by this paper is particularly pertinent in the light of Abu-Lughod's analysis of the rhetoric of "freedom" used to justify the War on Terror. Single-issue feminism has typically overlooked non-Euro–American traditions when defining "women's lib." The War in Afghanistan has led to the privileging of a Western dichotomy of freedom versus unfreedom. Lila Abu-Lughod interrogates and genders this binary. In a post-9/11 context, Ridley, Dam, and Rahman robustly challenge the two choices. We should not forget, though, that ideas of political freedom are more crucial in the Muslim world now than ever before. This is easily perceptible in the advent of the Arab Spring (later mournfully becoming known as the "Arab Winter"). The chant against the Egyptian regime that Ahdaf Soueif evokes clearly encapsulates and calls forth that ever elusive and changeable idea of liberty: "They said trouble ran in our blood and how'd we dare demand our rights | Oh dumb regime | understand | what I want: | Liberty! Liberty!' (Soueif n.p.).

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Literature and Cultural Studies

Space within the Space: The Subject-Other Dichotomy in Manto's "Ten Rupees"

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Abstract:

In Manto's stories about prostitutes, set in Mumbai (then Bombay), the city is presented with a kaleidoscopic projection of space. In the story, "Ten Rupees," the volumetric space of the city, conventionally dominated by the male characters – Kishori, Kifayat, Anwar, and Shahab, is overshadowed by the abstract space created in it by the female protagonist – Sarita. Sarita, a fifteen-year-old prostitute, is presented in the story as an Object (the Other in the Subject-Other dichotomy) of men's desire. However, she switches to the Subject position in her interactions with her customers Kifayat, Anwar, and Shahab in a car ride, and, as a matter of fact, she creates a gynocentric space of her own in the phallocentric space inside the car. In a theoretical framework drawn from both Simone de Beauvoir's notion of the Subject-Other dichotomy, and from the prominent ideas of space in the twentieth century architectural discourses, this paper, with a qualitative method, shows how Manto portrays the character of Sarita as the Subject rather than an Object within the spaces she inhabits.

Keywords: space, subject, Other, gynocentric, phallocentric

What makes Saadat Hasan Manto (1912-1955) a great literary figure in Urdu literature is not the controversy caused by the series of obscenity trials he faced in his lifetime. It is rather the wide range of multidisciplinary scopes his stories can offer to any reader to perceive and interpret the characters and their psyche depicted in those stories. Though a great number of Manto's short stories are based on the India-Pakistan partition in 1947, many other stories are about prostitutes, mostly set in Mumbai (then Bombay in Manto's lifetime, hence to be mentioned as Bombay in this paper). Apart from the dazzling Hindi film industry of the mid-twentieth century India, Bombay also has this dark chapter of prostitution of which Manto was an observant witness. In his stories (just to mention a few), "Ten Rupees," "The Insult," and "Khushiya," the protagonists are all prostitutes of different ages, living and working in Bombay. Out of these, this paper will take into account the story "Ten Rupees" in which the protagonist is a prostitute named Sarita. In an approach unbiased and free from any general prejudice against prostitutes, Manto portrays her in his story as a character who is capable of defining a gynocentric space of her own within the phallocentric or male-dominated space of the city, Bombay. In doing so, Manto presents a Subject-Other dichotomy in a paradigm of space through Sarita's interaction with her customers – Kifayat, Anwar, and Shahab. To identify the volumetric space of both the overall and the individual settings of the story, and also to show a connection between the Subject-Other dichotomy and this space in which the Subject and the Other dwell, both architectural and feminist perspectives of space can be considered. In the subsequent

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discussion, the paper will examine the idea of space as developed throughout the twentieth century and the idea of the Subject-Other politics from Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949).

Since its inception in the latter half of the nineteenth century, Gottfried Semper's volumetric idea of space influenced most of the proto-modern European architects like Adolf Loos, H. P. Berlage, Peter Behrens, and Camillo Sitte to take space "as a matter of enclosure" (Forty 257-258). His idea founded the school of architecture that took space as an element being enclosed three-dimensionally in a volume by another element, "wall" and thus be given a concrete visibility. There is another school of architecture that generated the aesthetic idea of space. Though great philosophers like Kant, Schopenhauer, Vischer, and Nietzsche contributed to the aesthetic definition of space substantially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it was not until the year 1893 when the topic received elaborate and definite attention from Adolf Hildebrand, August Schmarsow, and Theodor Lipps (Forty 258-259). Hildebrand regarded space to be something "animated from within" (cited in Forty 260); Schmarsow took it as "a property of mind, and not to be confused with the actual geometrical space present in buildings" (cited in Forty 261); and Lipps said, "… in the art of abstract representation of space, the spatial form can exist purely, unmaterialized" (cited in Forty 261). All three of them implied the abstract version of the volumetric space which later inspired many architects to develop distinctive theories on space and spatiality in the upcoming years of the twentieth century. However, while the modernist approaches to space as an architectural property hailed it as "a normal category in architectural discourse throughout the world," the postmodernist approaches to space rather lessened the amount of importance attached to it (Forty 268). One major work of this postmodernist approach is Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (1974) which shows "space" as a more general discourse to be relevant to many other disciplines. His idea of the "social space" is able to incorporate "social actions, the actions of subjects both individual and collective who are born and who die, who suffer and who act" (Lefebvre 33). Taking cue from this line of discussion, it is possible to define the volumetric space of the story "Ten Rupees" to be generating a social space for the characters in it. The volumetric space, in this case, would be the chawl where Sarita lives with her mother, the hotel rooms where she has mostly been taken to by her customers, and the interior of the car in which she goes out with Kifayat, Anwar, and Shahab. The social space would be the actions she does and interactions she makes in those volumetric spaces. In explaining Lefebvre's social space, Forty says, "…societies 'secrete' space, producing and appropriating it as they go along" (272). So, the chawl, the hotel rooms, the interior of the car – all secrete a kind of social space in the context of this story which is phallocentric in character as they are male-dominated.

In feminist discourses, space can be taken as an abstract idea, not a volumetric one. Space here is more about emancipation of women from social conventions; a sexual equality in the society to advocate woman's individual choice and voice; and also a share of equal rights in any social, political contexts irrespective of gender. That a woman needs to create that space of her own and how a woman can do so have long been a discussion among

feminist scholars. Mary Wollstonecraft, in her *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), has pledged for an equal space in education by addressing Charles Maurice Talleyrand-Périgord to demand "JUSTICE for one half of the human race" (Wollstonecraft 7). John Stuart Mill's call for "a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other" upholds a similar notion of space as well (133). When Woolf states that "a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction" (6), the requirement for a woman to become a writer does not limit itself only to a volumetric space of a room; it rather transcends the walls of that room and creates an abstract space for a woman who can uninterruptedly write about her true feelings. The arguments of Wollstonecraft, Mill, and Woolf, show a history of a movement that has been advocating for woman's own independent space from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries. In the mid-twentieth century, Simone de Beauvoir's theory of the Subject-Other politics as expressed in her book *The Second Sex* (1949) sheds light on the concept of space from the perspective of a sexual politics between man and woman. In the Introduction, she shows that, traditionally, man is always the Subject and woman always the Other in any man-woman relationship. Referring to Aristotle and St Thomas's remarks on woman "to be afflicted with a natural defectiveness" and to be "an imperfect man" respectively (cited in Beauvoir 16), she states, "Thus humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being. … He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other" (16). Beauvoir also highlights that the reciprocal claim that the Other can make to the Subject is absent when the Subject is the man and the Other is the woman (17). This makes the traditional version of the Subject-Other relationship between the sexes problematic in itself, and, therefore, leaves a possibility for advocating an independent space of woman as the Subject.

To form a connection between these two threads of discussion in the last two paragraphs, how the social space, generated from the volumetric space, gets gendered is relatable. In an attempt to investigate "how space as a social, cultural and political structure produces specifically gendered identities and how the construction of difference has been inscribed in our notion of space," Rachel Mader and Marion von Osten initiated a project entitled *Sex & Space* in Zurich in 1996 which showcased an exhibition along with lectures and films. In an essay on this project, Osten identifies "polarisations in social space" on gender grounds and remarks, "Although there were wide-reaching socio-political measures to reduce women to their reproductive role, it was the capitalist city that pushed women more and more into public space, acting as workers and employees, as dancers, femmes nouvelles, prostitutes and consumers" (Osten 215, 224). So, the social space itself is compartmentalized on the basis of gender, and thus woman's position as the Other in it is confirmed as it is largely based on the objectification of woman's body. Being a Marxist philosopher himself, Lefebvre, too, brings in the point of capitalism in his explanation of social space when he discusses the nature of abstraction in it (Forty 274). Now, if Manto's Bombay is viewed from this connection, it would appear as an emerging capitalist city with the advent of the Hindi film industry and the establishment of the textile mills. Popularly known as the city of dreams, Bombay attracted eighty-four percent of its work force from

outside the city as the 1921 census reveals (Matt Reeck xxii). This capitalist environment of the city eventually generated a phallocentric social space in it as the ratio between male and female workers was always too wide. With lack of employment for women and growing economic need among the working-class families they belonged to, Bombay served as a platform for prostitution to thrive. Also, to take R. K. Gupta's opinion, as expressed in his essay "Feminism and Modern Indian Literature," on how critics should work on the "re-interpretation of literary texts from a new critical feminist stance" (180), it is possible to read Manto's "Ten Rupees" from an interdisciplinary perspective of space. Krishan Chander's comment on Manto's metaphors to have "a well-organized and well-balanced geometrical diagram" confirms that possibility further (25). On this note, the paper will discuss how this framework of the concept of space presented in it can be applied to understand how Manto's portrayal of Sarita in the story, "Ten Rupees," cancels her position as the Other in the space she creates on her own within the phallocentric space of the city.

In the story, "Ten Rupees," Sarita is a fifteen years old girl who lives with her mother in a typical Bombay chawl. Manto defines this volumetric space of the chawl as "a big building with many floors and many small rooms" ("Ten Rupees" 10). The very first line of the story introduces the social space of this volumetric space: a building with many people living together yet disconnected from one another. Manto's words, "Everyone lived right on top of one another, and yet no one took any interest in anyone else," at once creates a sense of alienation from the neighborhood among the chawl dwellers which does not hold Sarita back in the volumetric space she belongs to ("Ten Rupees" 12). While her mother is "looking for her in the chawl" as Kishori, her pimp, has been waiting for her, Sarita is "at the corner of the alley playing with the girls" ("Ten Rupees" 10). The oxymoronic nature of the places mentioned in the line – the chawl (a congested, enclosed place) and the alley (an outside place) – sets the tone of the contrasting nature of personalities that Sarita's portrayal will show in cancelling her position as the Other later in the story. The alley, having liminal features, supports this transition in her character. Also, her disregard of the confined volumetric space in the chawl and preference of playing outside instead negate the domesticity in her character as is conventionally expected in women, and establish an outgoing aspect of her character which will be instrumental in the Subject-Other dichotomy in her interactions with Kifayat, Anwar, and Shahab in the car ride. With just two tasks to do at home – filling up the water bucket in the morning and filling up the lamp with oil in the evening – she has a relaxed routine to follow every day which is why she gets all her day to play outside with other girls. It is important to see the symbolism Manto has used here in the chores Sarita performs – providing water, a life-saving element, and providing light, a source of energy. This adds some more depth in Manto's portrayal of Sarita to set her capability of claiming the reciprocity that Beauvoir says is usually denied in the Other.

Sarita's Otherness is layered with her innocence. Manto writes, "She hated spending time with women and having to talk to them" ("Ten Rupees" 12). Along with that, her "playing meaningless games with younger girls" prompts the reader to identify her as an adolescent girl who may not have been mature enough to understand the phallocentric dominance in

her social space. This perception is strengthened more by Manto when he mentions how Sarita feels about her life as a prostitute:

> she considered this good entertainment. She never bothered much about these nights, perhaps because she thought that some guy like Kishori must go to other girls' houses, too. Perhaps she imagined that all girls had to go out with rich guys to Worli to sit on cold benches, or to the wet sand of Juhu beach. Whatever happened to her must happen to everyone, right? ("Ten Rupees" 16)

This shows that Sarita is not fully aware of what prostitution means. However, no matter how normal this whole experience may look for Sarita from this description, the use of the word "perhaps" more than once by Manto leaves room for an alternative interpretation. From the perspective of the men in the story, she is a prostitute, a female body which is objectified in a capitalist city like Bombay. The male gaze in the lines confirms this notion, "… when she rushed about the streets, if her dirty dress should fly up, passing men would look at her young calves that gleamed like smooth teak" ("Ten Rupees" 15). The only identity of Sarita that matters in the Subject-Other relation is that of a prostitute. Kifayat, when he first sees her, exclaims, "… hey, this girl's really young!" ("Ten Rupees" 18). In the view of the men in the stories, she is a female body to be objectified in exchange of money. So, Sarita's being young does not ignite any guilty concern in Kifayat and his friends for exploiting a minor; their only concern is whether she will cooperate with them or not. Sarita, by her customers here, is not hired as a young girl but as a prostitute. Beauvoir's point of taking prostitution as an act that "sums up all the forms of feminine slavery" marks the place for prostitutes as the Other (Beauvoir 569). The oxymoronic effect of the places can be referred to again as Kishori tells the "rich men with cars" to park the car "in the nearby market," away from the "dirty neighbourhood" filled with "the stench of rotting paan and burnt-out bidis" (Manto, "Ten Rupees" 10). The binary between the capitalists in the car and the working class of the chawl at once puts Sarita, both as a prostitute and as a woman, at a much lower position, thus already attributing her with some form of Otherness in the class context.

The car ride is the central part of the story. As Leslie A. Flemming points out, "Manto maintained in his best stories the sharp focus on the single illuminating experience in the life of a single alienated character" ("Formal Characteristics" 95). It is the volumetric space of the car that holds the entire Subject-Other relation between Sarita and her customers. Hence, the car ride is "the single illuminating experience" in the story. Sarita's outgoing nature mingled with the disconnecting social space of the chawl has already established her as an alienated character. However, neither this sense of alienation nor the prostitution evokes any existential crisis in her; rather she is shown as a character who is "blissfully free of worries" (Manto, "Ten Rupees" 15). Sarita is fascinated with car rides. When her mother tells her of the men waiting for her in the car, she becomes very happy though she has been dragged by her mother from her game. Her happiness is expressed in these lines: "She didn't care about the man but she really liked car rides. When she was in a car speeding through the empty streets, the wind whipping over her face, she felt as though

she had been transformed into a rampaging whirlwind" ("Ten Rupees" 14). The "wind whipping over her face" and the "rampaging whirlwind" bring in a sense of energy in her character which is juxtaposed by her suffocation in the hotel rooms with her customers. In the expository part of the story before the car ride, Manto has shown her rejection of the confined volumetric space which has been discussed earlier in the paper. Similarly, the volumetric hotel rooms, with all the senses of confinement in them, make her feel claustrophobic, "She hated those suffocating rooms with their two iron beds on which she could never get a good sleep" ("Ten Rupees" 17). In her suffocation in the volumetric space also lies her suffocation in the social space generated in those rooms in which she is treated as an object of some man's desire. Though she takes the experience as "good entertainment" as cited earlier, this excludes the hotel rooms and focuses more on the open spaces like "cold benches" in Worli and "wet sand of Juhu beach." So, the social space in the confined volumetric space is in sharp contrast with that of the open space. Sarita decks herself up with her blue georgette sari, Japanese powder and rouge, and her lipstick in a hasty manner which shows that she is not at all into making herself attractive for the men waiting in the car. When she is getting dressed, it "gave her goose bumps, and the thought of the upcoming car ride excited her. She didn't stop to think about what the man would be like or where they would go, but as she quickly changed, she hoped that the car ride wouldn't be so short…" ("Ten Rupees" 17). Prioritizing the car ride over the men pre-establishes a denial of the men as the Subject. At the same time, like the "cold benches" in Worli and the "wet sand of Juhu beach," her having "goose bumps" already invite a sensory depiction of the "single illuminating experience" (i.e., the car ride) before the experience actually takes place.

At the beginning of the car ride, the sense of suffocation comes back to Sarita as she sat "scrunched between the two men" and "squeezed her thighs together and rested her hands on her lap" in the back seat of the car (Manto, "Ten Rupees" 18). This clumsy body posture cannot help her transport to "a rampaging whirlwind." She starts to feel claustrophobic as the volumetric space in the car, which is making its way in the intense Bombay traffic in the streets at five in the evening, gives her the illusion of a confined social space like that of the hotel rooms. The car remains in the story as a phallocentric element being owned and driven by man in the phallocentric social space of the streets which are frequented by more such elements as trams, buses (i.e., more machines). Priyamvada Gopal shows that the association of man with machine is common in Manto's stories as he, according to her, explores "the reformation of male bodies and psyches" in Urdu fiction (Gopal 91). Such association between man and machine (something that is run by energy produced by the engine) instantly puts man as the Subject being in charge of controlling that functional machine and heightens Manto's depiction of the phallocentric space in the car as is seen in this story. Also, the place where the car has been waiting for Sarita – "outside in the bazaar" beside "a factory wall stretching into the distance on which a small sign read, 'NO URINATING'" – characterizes, with all its phallocentric elements, the essential phallocentric space in the neighborhood in which the car with "three young men from Hyderabad" is parked (Manto, *Bombay* 18). The marketplace being a place of commerce

and monetary transaction stands as a capitalist platform that provides a compatible social space for Kishori, a representative of the sexual commerce, to bring Sarita, the product to be sold, near the car in which the buyers are waiting.

Though the car can be taken as a phallocentric element following Gopal's idea, Sarita soon takes control of the phallocentric volumetric space in it as it starts generating a compatible social space for Sarita when it enters the suburb. Manto describes, "The cool wind rushing over the speeding car soothed her, and she felt fresh and full of energy again. In fact, she could barely contain herself: she began to tap her feet, sway her arms, and drum her fingers as she glanced back and forth at the trees that streamed past the road" (Manto, "Ten Rupees" 19). The initial clumsy body language is shed off by her and this signals the reciprocity in the Subject-Other dichotomy inside the car. As Shahab tickles her, she starts laughing, "wriggling close to Anwar," her laughter trails "from the car's windows to far into the distance," and Kifayat speeds up the car "trying to keep pace with the laughter in the back seat" ("Ten Rupees" 20). The awkward silence inside the car is filled in by the laughter and a playfulness. The process of Sarita's transition from the Other to the Subject takes a long stride as she switches from the back to the front of the car:

> Sarita wanted to get out and sit on the car's hood next to its iron fixture shaped like a flying bird. She leaned forward, Shahab poked her, and Sarita threw her arms around Kifayat's neck in order to keep her balance. Without thinking, Kifayat kissed her hand, and Sarita's entire body tingled. She jumped over the seat to sit next to Kifayat where she began to play with his necktie. ("Ten Rupees" 20)

The spot given to her initially is between two men in the back seat of the car. The sitting position, determined by the men, defines her position as an immobile, passive Other in that volumetric space. She switches from the back seat to the front seat and declares her capability of taking the lead of the social space in the car, and the desire to sit beside the flying bird made of iron on the hood of the car also metaphorizes this. Sarita not only exhibits a bold conversant body language in switching her place but also initiates a conversation with Kifayat who is in charge of handling the machine. She asks, "What's your name?" ("Ten Rupees" 20). This is the first linguistic expression of Sarita in that social space since the car ride began. The question she has asked Kifayat poses an authoritative demand from the Subject by the Other, and this interrogative tone, supported by her overt body language, exerts power from her position as the Other, thus claiming for reciprocity in the Subject-Other politics. So, "What's your name?" might as well be read as "Who are you?" calling into question the men's identity as the Subject.

It is important to note that the Subject, Kifayat and the other men, do not feel threatened by such power exerted by the Other; rather they quite enjoy this as Shahab says earlier, "By God, she's really spunky!" (Manto, "Ten Rupees" 20). As Norman Fairclough shows in his book *Language and Power* (1989), "The way in which orders of discourse are structured, and the ideologies which they embody, are determined by relationships of power in particular social institutions, and in the society as a whole" (31). If prostitution be taken as a social institution, the relationship of power in it depends on the exchange of money. Sarita's

power over the men derived from her bodily and verbal playfulness is immediately paid for by Kifayat with a note of ten rupees as a token of appreciation for the service she has been providing in the car ride. Just like the association of man with machine, the association of man with money, in this context, strengthens his Subject position. However, though she quickly tucks it in her bra at that moment, the ten-rupee note is of little interest to Sarita. Without an accurate knowledge of what prostitution means, she is also oblivious of the point of her being paid for her labor. This results in her returning the money at the end of the car ride.

Sarita's only desire in this car ride is to transform into "a rampaging whirlwind" and everything else "to fall into the whirlwind" (Manto, "Ten Rupees" 20). In the front seat, she starts singing songs from romantic Hindi movies of her time and asks Anwar, "Why are you so quiet? Why don't you say something? Why don't you sing something?" (21). This series of questions, and later her instructions to both Shahab and Anwar to sing along, set her as the head of the "small orchestra," as Manto describes it, that she carves out a space of her own out of the hitherto phallocentric social space in the car ("Ten Rupees" 21). Her verbal expressions – "Let's sing together," "Sing along, okay?" and later "Let's go for a drive" – are authoritative here in all their imperative and interrogative tones ("Ten Rupees" 21, 24). Sometime later, when Kifayat wants to know her name, she answers, "My name? ... Sarita" ("Ten Rupees" 22). Even the affirmative answer includes the authoritative tone of interrogation. So, when she returns to the back seat (her former spot in the car), it is only to activate the theatrical show as she still keeps her demeanor intact as an active user of that social space. With all the singing, clapping, honking, the wind's whishing sound, and the engine's rumbling, the social space in that volumetric space of the car finally establishes that reciprocity among all four of them, irrespective of their genders and identities as prostitute and customers. This harmony is described by Manto in these lines where the word "happy" is repetitive, "Sarita was happy—Shahab was happy—Kifayat was happy—and seeing them all happy made Anwar happy too, …" ("Ten Rupees" 21). The social space here also gets a kinetic energy analogous with the kinetic energy of the engine of the car. While singing, Sarita wears Anwar's hat and jumps again into the front seat "to look at herself in the rearview mirror" ("Ten Rupees" 22). Then, slapping him on the thigh, she asks Kifayat, "If I put on your pants, and wore your shirt and tie, would I look like a well-dressed business man?" ("Ten Rupees" 22). Here, the point of transvestism in Sarita's question strengthens her position as the Subject . The reciprocal interactions among the four of them continue throughout the time they spend on the beach right after the car ride. When the men, Sarita's customers, run down the shore with her, drink beer sitting on the wet sand with her, and keeps on laughing together, they no longer remain as the capitalist, rich customers who were rather worried whether a young prostitute of Sarita's age would cooperate with them or not. As it turns out, Sarita's youth, her innocence are transmitted to them. Manto expresses Sarita's transition from the chawl's social space to the open, gender-neutral social space the beach offers to her. She feels "transported" in the natural elements there as she wants "to fade into the horizon, dissolve into the water, and soar so high into the sky that the palm trees stood beneath her" ("Ten Rupees" 23). They

get back to the car, Shahab and Anwar doze off to sleep, and the car comes back to the "NO URINATING" sign from where they have picked Sarita earlier. Ironically enough, the car comes back to the market area, the place for monetary transaction, without making any monetary profit out of the female body as they initially desired. The story ends with Sarita's return of the note of ten rupees. In Manto's words,

> Sarita stopped and turned around. She returned to the car, removed the ten-rupee note from her bra and dropped it onto the seat next to him [Kifayat]. Startled, he looked at the note. "What's this, Sarita?"
>
> "This money – why should I take it?" she said before she turned and took off running. ("Ten Rupees" 25)

The crumpled note lies on the front seat as a final element of the phallocentric space of her society that she has both returned and rejected. The question, "why should I take it?", gives the social space in the car a final recognition as an independent space of her own in which the customer's male ego is slapped and man's identity as a customer of the female body in the social institution of prostitution is questioned once again.

By the time Manto was writing in Bombay (1937-1941 and 1942-1948), the Indian literary world saw how the Progressive Writers' Movement in 1933 created an Urdu literary subculture within it. The publication of *Angarey* (a collection of short stories) not only stirred readers with unconventional subject matters but also paved the way to founding the All India Progressive Writers' Association by Sajjad Zahir and Ahmed Ali in 1936 (Flemming, "Literary Context" 25). Following this, the Urdu Progressive Writers' Association was founded and an Urdu journal, *Naya Adab* (New Literature), was launched (25). The first issue of *Naya Adab* (April 1939) included its manifesto in its editorial: "In our opinion, progressive literature is that literature which looks at the realities of life, reflects them, investigates them and leads the way towards a new and better life …" (cited in Flemming, "Literary Context" 25). Though this new literary trend based on Realism vowed to "lead the way towards a new and better life," the founders of it staunchly criticized Manto and his contemporary, life-long friend Ismat Chughtai (both were members of the association), and rejected their stories as progressive enough on grounds of obscenity. Upendranath Ashk, another contemporary of Manto and his literary rival, opines in an essay that "there were many other significant social problems that were no less critical than the marketing and violation of women's bodies" (Ashk 38). From these, a debate on whether prostitutes and female bodies were progressive subject matters or not went on in the Urdu subculture of fiction. This debate is self-contradictory to the manifesto of the Urdu Progressive Writers' Association as it rejects the prostitutes and their stories to be realities of that time. In Manto's view, it is important to write about them as they hold a significant part of the reality of a society. Manto, in an essay, "Virtuous Women in Cinema," defends them by saying,

> Prostitutes are really the products of society. … Prostitutes are not born, they are made. … If a thing is in demand, it will always enter the market. Men demand the

body of women. This is why every city has its redlight area. If the demand were to end today, these areas would vanish on their own. (155-156).

This is further extended in a lecture at Jogeshwari College, Bombay in 1944, in which Manto said, "Those who want to bring down progressive literature, obscene literature, or whatever you want to call it, what they should really do is change the conditions that motivate such writing" ("Lecture" 263). Though when Manto was writing stories about prostitutes, Muslim women of India created a gynocentric literary tradition by founding and writing in Urdu magazines for women – *Tahzib un-Niswan* (1898), *Khatun* (1904), and *Ismat* (1908). These magazines broke down "women's mental isolation rather than glorifying their separate sphere" (Minault 86-87). Irrespective of their contribution in building the nation's gynocentric tendencies in both fiction and non-fiction in Urdu, the magazines had no place for to give voice to prostitutes and their miseries. The prostitutes, in reality, remained in the periphery as the Other in the society. So, Manto's representation of them in his stories as significant characters helps the reader to look into the darker realities of the society.

To sum up the discussion, it can be said that Manto's story "Ten Rupees" presents an apparently insignificant minor girl, Sarita, in a sexually political position of the Subject. Both as a dweller in a chawl in Bombay and as a prostitute, she is conventionally taken as the Other in the phallocentric social space of the city. The way she gets out of this gender biased space is shown in the episode of the car ride with three of her customers. She, in her interactions with them, creates a social space of her own that is gynocentric enough to assert herself as the Subject. The whole notion of space here gets a new definition from the Subject-Other perspective. It is true that she does come back to the very social space from where she often flies away; however, within the limited sphere of short story, Manto does portray her as a liberating source of energy and creates a discourse of power politics in prostitutes. Thus, through Sarita, he not only shows a mirror up to the reality of his society but also contributes to the subaltern feminist studies in Indian literature.

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Subversion of Colonial Masculinity and Manifestation of Gendered Nationalism in *Letters of 1971* (*Ekattorer Chithi*)

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Abstract

Bengali males, in colonial hegemonic discourse, were projected as "weak" and "submissive" (Macaulay qtd. in Chowdhury 4; Banerjee 29; Ray 21). This tendency of feminizing colonized males was naturalized through the process of constant discursive practices by the end of the nineteenth century. This discourse, as has been demonstrated by different historiographies, had influenced the self-perception of the Bengalis to a large extent. However, the colonial resistance and nationalist movements proved to be a fruitful site for the Bengalis to counter the negative portrayal of their masculine selves (Chattopadhyay 271). Again, emerging nationalist discourses in anti-colonial movements in various parts of the world led to the concept of "gendered nationalism" whereby nation is signified as mother and its male citizen as the savior or protector of the "motherland" (Mayer; McClintock, qtd. in Banerjee 6). Consequently, the view that woman is to be seen as the preserver of the tradition and producer of the valiant male citizen got normalized in the discourse of nationalism. It is against this background that this paper aims to read *Letters of 1971* (*Ekattorer Chithi*) – a collection of letters written during the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971 by the freedom fighters – as an endeavor to the historic legacy of reclaiming Bengali masculinity. *Letters of 1971* unraveling the gallantry of the freedom fighters, and their decision of embracing martyrdom over defeat, engages a glaring instance of a counter-narrative of the colonial discourse of Bengali masculinity. Alongside, the narratives of *Letters of 1971* will be seen, in this paper as participating in the discourse of gendering nationalism through its projection of the nation as mother who is in dire need of action from its valiant sons.

Keywords: masculinity, gendered nationalism, hegemonic discourse, Liberation War of 1971

Introduction

Maa Go Bhabna Keno? (Why Fear, Mother?)
O mother, why do you fear?
We are your peace-loving sons
But we hold weapons against the enemies
When in need
We know how to protest, mother
So don't be afraid
We won't fall, we won't fail

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We won't lose a grain of your soil
We know how to build a fortress using our very own ribs
We know how to protest, mother
So don't be afraid
We will not be affronted
We won't retreat like cowards
We know how to strike like lightning from the sky
We know how to protest, mother
So don't be afraid
We won't accept defeat
We won't live in weakness
We will smile and embrace death, when in need
We know how to protest
So don't be afraid.

"Maa Go Bhabna Keno?" (Why Fear, Mother?), a 1961 song composed by Gauriprassanna Majumdar and sung by Hemanta Mukhopadhyay, filled with patriotic fervor, became one of the few songs that kept inspiring the Bangalee freedom fighters during the 1971 Liberation War. The song is representative of the negation of the age-old hegemonic masculinity which was made normative masculinity established in colonial discourse through its continual reaffirmation of their resolve to protest, take risks, and be uncompromising. It is pertinent to the present discussion in two ways: one, that it can be read against the stereotypical projection of the fragility and weakness of Bengali males. In other words, it provides us a glimpse into the Bangalee masculinity that is quite contrary to the hegemonic masculinity of colonial discourse and its repeated emphasis on the resolution to safeguard against any impending doom on their mother/nation invites us to a world of gendered nationalism and its resultant implications for the female citizen. Drawing instances from *Ekattorer Chithi* (hereafter *Letters of 1971*) – a collection of letters written (in Bangla) and exchanged between the freedom fighters of the Liberation War of 1971, the present paper aims to map the development the Bangalee male subjectivity – a subversion of the stereotypical construction of Bengali masculinity as the Other of the manly white British, a corollary of colonial enterprise – through their valor and resolve to fight against their enemies and sacrifice their lives for freedom. Against the age-old projection of the Bengali male as effeminate, compliant, and physically feeble, as noted by scholars (Chowdhury 4), this paper posits that the 1971 freedom movement proved itself as a crucial site for the Bangalee freedom fighters to produce a counter-narrative to the oft-quoted "weakness and effeminacy" of the Bengali male whereby we get an alternative projection of Bangalee manhood (Bannerjee 29; Chowdhury 4; Ray 21). Also, this collection can be seen as participating in the already established discourse of gendered nationalism through its display of the trope of nation as mother figure and the responsibility of protecting the security and honor of the nation conferred on its male citizen (Bannerjee 6).

Rationale and Methodology

Most scholarship on South Asian studies concentrating on postcolonialism, nationalism,

and the concept of masculinity preoccupy themselves with Hindu nationalism and masculinity, and the intersection of anti-colonial movements, nationalism, and Hindu masculinity; and any discussion on Bengali masculinity arose as a corollary of the Hindu nationalist movement and the resultant 1947 Partition context. Also, in any discussion revolving around the term "Bengali masculinity" in a pre-Partition context, is a hazy one – in a sense, a monolithic term that cannot sufficiently capture the experience of the males of the newly independent Bangladesh – as it indicates an undivided Bengal and thus cannot be applied to the post-1971 Bangladeshi context. Chattopadhyay admits the complexity in discussing the term "Bengali male" as it refers to an ethnic and linguistic identity on the one hand and a national identity on the other (271). So, henceforth in the present paper, the term Bangalee masculinity will be used to refer to the nuances of the pre-Partition and post-independence context as reflected in *Letters of 1971*. However, it should not be taken for granted that the term "Bangalee masculinity" indicates a hegemonic, monolithic category. Moreover, there is not much scholarship on Bangalee masculinity in the post-1971 context, especially its imbrication in the project of the 1971 Liberation Movement, Bangalee nationalist venture. In order to clarify its different trajectory I use Bengali in the discussion revolving around colonial discourse while I use Bangalee to denote the experience revolving around the 1971 context. Any critique of the intersection of Bengali nationalism and Bengali masculine subjectivity in the lore of gendered nationalism – situating it in every day socio-political experiences – is, except for Bina D. Costa (416), very few and far between. The present paper, taking the letters written by the freedom fighters of the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971 as the starting point, purports to enter into the imbrication of Bangalee masculinity in the nationalist struggle and the subsequent shaping of gendered nationalism. The reason for choosing *Letters of 1971* as our point of departure is that these letters were originally composed by the freedom fighters to communicate with their near and dear ones. It gives us an unmediated picture of their ideological states. Not only that, the views of the fighters from all walks of life – across religious and economic backgrounds – assembled here might open up a multifarious perspective instead of a monolithic picture of the Bangalee male point of view. It should also be mentioned here that the present paper, given the limited research span, does not intend to provide a complete genealogy of Bangalee masculinity in the post-1971 context, but aims to draw attention to the existing lack of scholarship on the subject and to the wider scope in future studies on Bangalee masculinity. This paper employs a descriptive approach and textual analysis to explore the debates surrounding the concept of Bangalee masculinity and the manifestation of a contested picture of the negative stereotypes of previous eras.

Literature Review

The concept of Bengali masculinity is already a widely discussed topic in postcolonial and gender studies as well as in South Asian studies. Any discussion on Bengali masculinity by scholars immediately brings forth the discussion of politics of colonial masculinity. Attempts to relate the discourse of Bengali masculinity to the imperial context have been done by scholars whereby they showed the negative implications of such discourse on the colonial Bengali Hindu male psychology and self-perception. In order to defend

the colonial administrative politics of mobilizing Bengali male identities as "weak and effeminate," Bengali males, as has been shown by different scholars (Chattopadhay 271; Banerjee 29; Ray 21; Sinha 11), were excavating more masculine images of themselves from their past, constantly busy in self-ridicule for accepting such images, and mobilizing a positive self-image through their active participation in different social reform and anti-colonial movements. According to Chattopadhyay, along with emphasizing on physical strength, or *bahubal*, they were also looking for *buddhibal*, wisdom or intelligence, cultivated mostly by the emerging educated Hindu middle class (275). The early and late nineteenth century colonial India witnessed recurrent debates surrounding the discourse of Bengali masculinity constructed and contested by the colonial and colonized respectively. While many instances show that Bengali males were constructing and performing a more positive self-image in their everyday experience, there lingered, on the flip side, the legacy of negative stereotypes of colonial administrative policy in the post-colonized psyche. In her book *Colonial Masculinity: The "Manly Englishman" and '"The Effeminate Bengali" in the Late Nineteenth Century*, Mrinalini Sinha explores the politics of colonial masculinity which, instead of giving a monolithic picture of English masculinity versus Bengali effeminacy, gives a complex portrayal of phenomenon employing a historical materialist approach. Sinha is of the opinion that the framework of discrete "National" cultures as a tool cannot sufficiently explain the development of these categories and their subsequent manipulation in the imperial project (7). She warns against any criticism of racial politics that "eschew an integrated political, economic and cultural analysis" and restrains herself from treating the categories "manly Englishman" and "effeminate Bengali" as something pre-given, of a "fixed" category, rather situating these two categories in the context of four specific historic incidents in the late nineteenth century colonial India to unearth a complex genealogy between them – the Ilbert Bill of 1883, official response to Native Volunteer Movement in 1885, recommendations of the public service commission in 1886, and the Indian opposition to the Age of Consent Bill in 1891 (15). In doing this, she connects the issues of gender, imperial rule, and British domestic and cultural history to that of the development of colonial masculinity. Here, Sinha, using the framework of colonial masculinity, ventures into exposing the complex dynamics of power relations exposing the intricacies at the intersections of class, gender, religion, sexuality, and ethnic origin of both the colonizer and the colonized (11). Through picking up the above-mentioned "specific practices of ruling," she shows that the development of the categories – the colonized and the colonizer – were not something "self-evident" (1). They were informed of and influenced by "imperial social relations" (2). While Ashis Nandy's *The Intimate Enemy* (qtd. in Sinha 7) shows the birth of a stereotypical treatment of Bengali masculinity as a direct impact – mostly as a unilateral one – of the post-Enlightenment notion of "Western" masculinity and the colonial domination, Sinha's analysis here exposes how these two categories reinforced and influenced each other. Instead of seeing the emergence of the stereotypical mislabeling of Bengali educated middle class as "effeminate babu" as the development of a unilateral impact of imperialism – a corollary of the image of British metropolitan masculine ethos – as Nandy (qtd. in Sinha 7) does, Sinha sees the concept imbricated in the "various intersecting ideologies of race, ethnicity, class, religion, sexuality" that played a substantial

role in shaping the social and cultural developments in the United Kingdom as well as its national characteristics – especially its notion and representation of "English" masculinity (11). Thus, through her projection, the fact that British masculinity was also implicated in the history of British Imperialism also comes to the fore. How, in various phases of historic incidents, British masculinity experienced a transition – the notion of manliness from "godliness and good learning" to "vigorous muscular Christianity" – mostly influenced by the prioritization of the imperial recruiting agencies, is explored in Sinha's study (9). In brief, Sinha's analysis does not lose sight of the counter flows to colonial metropolis of the influence of the policies and the ideas. She, quite contrary to Said's (qtd. in Sinha 12) treatment of the West as a monolithic entity, always a pre-given or fixed category, sees both the West and the East as always evolving through the influence of the political, economic, and ideological policies of both the colonies and its center. Added to this was the stake of the Bengali elites' investment in, and contestation of, the concept for their own purpose (21). Sinha aptly chose the happenings of the late nineteenth century as a vantage point of her study as the aftermath of the Great Revolt of 1857 witnessed a radical restructuring of the administrative policies of the British colonial authority. Consequently, colonial race relations experienced significant changes and was rearticulated constantly to meet the demand of the changed material conditions (14). In these various changing historic circumstances, the notion of Bengali masculinity also had similar ups and downs. Sinha develops an in-depth genealogy of the notion. During the early days of colonial rule, the inhabitants of Bengal were broadly generalized as "mild-mannered and effete in nature," "of weaker frame and enervated character" (Orme, qtd. in Sinha 15). Macaulay's description of Bangalees is as follows:

> Whatever the Bengali does he does languidly. His favourite pursuits are sedentary. He shrinks from bodily exertion; and though voluble in dispute, and singularly pertinacious in the war of chicane, he seldom engages in personal conflict, and scarcely ever enlists as a soldier. There never perhaps existed a people so thoroughly fitted by habit for a foreign yoke. (qtd. in Sinha 15)

This excerpt not only holds a sweeping generalization of the negative stereotype of Bengali masculinity that keeps haunting the imagination and the self-perception of the Bengalis but also a justification for their age-old subordination to the various foreign rulers, such as the British. Sinha observes that this negative attitude of Macaulay's had a far-flung impact on the popular imagination regarding the Bengali masculine image and this attitude got concretized in late nineteenth century colonial India, especially at the hands of the then ruling authority for further manipulation and preservation of racial exclusivity (16). She also shows how the notion that was used as a sweeping category implies that all manipulated natives of Bengal were associated with the Bengali middle class, leaving the majority of the Bengalis, "the laboring classes and certain low-caste groups," outside the notion (16). To quote Sinha:

> Over time, effeminacy had evolved from a loosely defined attribute associated with the entire population of Bengal, and sometimes by extension of all of India, to

an attribute associated very specifically with Western-educated Indians, a large majority of whom were Bengali Hindus. On the one hand, the concept of Bengali effeminacy had been narrowed to refer quite specifically to this group of babus. On the other hand, the concept of Bengali effeminacy was also greatly expanded to include the politically discontented middle-class "natives" from all over India. (16)

This expresses the gradual teleological development and expansion of the term "effeminate Bengali" and its further manipulation for political purpose. While in the beginning this term would refer to the male inhabitants of Bengal, with the passage of years it served two purposes for the ruling class. It, as Sinha observes, not only came to be used to refer to the Western-educated Bengali Hindus, typically referred to as babu, but also for criminalizing the politically active middle-class Indians with such negatively stereotyping terminologies (16-17). Understandably, along with being manipulated for the tactical contrivance of racial segregation, this served, for the alarmed British colonial authority in India, as a mechanism for taunting the educationally and politically aspiring Bengali middle class who were beginning to claim a stronghold in policy planning and self-ruling in the late nineteenth century (17). Hence, this notion of Bengali masculinity experienced such alternating treatments at the hands of the British rulers. It calls for our attention to the nuances of the gradual transformation of the notion of effeminacy and its usage for political and cultural manipulation. Alongside, equal attention is to be paid to the intersections of class, gender, religion, and ethnic origin in the development and sustenance of such notions.

In *Make Me a Man!* Banerjee postulates on the formation of "Indian men" as "effeminate other" and relates it to the colonial enterprise (2). Her detailed analysis of fictional and non-fictional accounts, official memos, published histories, religious pamphlets, and autobiographical accounts yields a multifaceted and shifting interpretation of masculinity. For doing this, she develops the genealogy of "hegemonic masculinity," which "sets the standards for male demeanour, thinking and action" (Nagel, qtd. in Banerjee 7), and used by the colonial authority as a lens to cast a Eurocentric "gaze" on its colonized other. Her proposition, however, does not assume that before the colonial enterprise, the concept of masculinity did not exist in the Indian subcontinent. Notwithstanding its prior existence in the public imagination, Banerjee establishes a valid connection between the hegemonic masculinity and the Indian Hindu masculinity, as a corollary of colonial venture in the Indian subcontinent. Colonial officers, who were already fed into the ideology of Christian manhood, themselves being the concrete demonstration of their masculine prowess, started using their framework of masculinity in judging the Indian males (27). Through this process, Indian males were sorted under a "martial and non-martial" dichotomy and got concretized (MacMunn, qtd. in Banerjee 28). Among various races, Bengalis were seen as "the archetypal effeminate figure, hardly masculine" (26). Banerjee sees a strong connection between "hegemonic" or "normative" masculinity and the so-called "civilizing mission" of the British colonial enterprise (22). In order to validate the colonizing venture, it was imperative for them to establish the colonized subjects with a certain lack. The discourse of masculinity proved to be a fruitful site to be incorporated into it. Instead

of treating the concept of masculinity as something pre-given, she preferred to see it as a "historically, politically and culturally" constituted phenomenon (7). She situates the emergence of masculine Hinduism/nationalist politics to the happenings of nineteenth and early twentieth century in the background of the interaction between the British and Indian elite. Presumably, as Banerjee affirms, "Christian manliness" – a British colonial import in colonized India – comprising values like "martial prowess, muscular strength, rationality and individualism" – exerted substantial pressure among Indian males (23). Manliness, as Hooper puts it, is roughly associated with "physical strength, toughness, capacity for violence" (qtd. in Banerjee 47). As many scholars in this arena have shown, Bangalee males were seen as a "potent symbol of effeminacy" (26). One possible reason, reiterated by many previous studies, that often comes to the fore on this discourse is the many years of subjugation of the Bangalees. This long-term subjugation made them "not muscular, not aggressive, and not skilled in militarism" (22). However, it should not be assumed that Banerjee sees the colonized Indian male as the passive recipient of the hegemonic masculinity. Rather, Banerjee sees the institutionalization of the colonial masculinity as a site of contestation between the colonial officers and the colonized males (8). While the prime focus of her discussion is genealogy of Hindu masculinity, she puts forth, incorporating the framework of gendered nationalism, the references of the Nationalist resistances of the other colonized territories like Ireland, Palestine, Australia and Serbia (8-10). That site, along with being a site of contestation, provides a counter picture of the discourse of masculinity demonstrated by the colonized males. Irrespective of their spatial differences, all nationalist resistance movements share the same lot in capitalizing the "hegemonic masculinity" for serving their own purposes. For this, as Banerjee (12) puts forth, the Bangalees "drew on their own cultural memories and vocabularies of militarism" in order to recuperate their manly self-image. In this case, most relevant instances would be the attempts of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay and Swami Vivekananda in recuperating a manly self-image for the Bengali males by digging deep into their mythic past and orienting the Bengali males with their distinct manly image, ridiculing the fellow Bengali males for being inert in saving their motherland from foreign rule (45). More or less in all movements the "motherland or nation" was projected as woman "to be protected by the brave citizen warriors" and this worked as "a common metaphor for nationalism" (12). Banerjee's study opens up a new lacuna in the discourse of masculinity as it relates the concept with a nationalist resistance movement situating the concept of masculinity in a particular socio-political and cultural context. It is indeed a wonderful addition to studies on masculinity as in talking about Hindu masculinity. She establishes the connection among the wider colonized territories through the nationalist resistance struggles, renders visible the ways "hegemonic masculinity" was appropriated by the colonized males which was used once as justifying their subjugated position and as a medium of colonial "gaze" (10). However, instead of seeing the impact of colonial discourse as a specific historic teleological phenomenon, which interacted with the already existent concept of manhood, her analysis reinstates the stronghold of colonial masculinity in the subsequent development of Hindu masculinity with which most previous scholarly studies on the subject are preoccupied. Also, this study sheds little light on the pan-Indian

masculinity which also had interacted with colonial masculinity.

Saayan Chattapadhyay's research on Bengali masculinity provides a renewed lens to understand the concept and its development. While numerous studies on Bengali masculinity, as has been stated by Chattapadhyay, revolves around "physical strength, courage and virility of the Bengali male" which have been informed by the hegemonic colonial discourse on negative stereotype Bengali male identity, his main focus is the tendency prevalent in nineteenth century discourse of recuperating a "more masculine" Bengali male by diving deep into mythic historic stock (265). While a colonial definition of masculinity attached much importance to *bahubal*, Chattapadhyay shows *buddhibal* emerged as a counter-definition of Bengali masculinity adorned by the emerging nationalist discourse (275). Chattopadhay also talks about the emergence of the Bengali bhadralok masculinity discourse, arising out of the "compensatory" image of Bangalee masculinity – purported to counteract the negative stereotype at that time – basing and organizing his discussion on three distinct trajectories: Self-ridicule, Recuperation of the manly past, and Emergence of urban middle class bhadralok (274).

Theoretical Framework

Chandrima Chakraborty, in an introduction to a compilation on South Asian men and masculinities, builds on the development of masculinity, relating it to different political crises. She considers that different historical events, by making masculinities "visible," provide a lacuna through which we can better understand the concept of masculinity because political crises bring forth the nuances in the concept of masculinity and help to question its "naturalisation," and provide a complex understanding of "everyday/normal practices and experiences of 'being a man'" (411). Her conceptualization of crises is very interesting – incorporating a historical materialist approach – as she situates certain political crises in the interplay of class, gender, and ethnic relations (411). Instead of seeing masculinity as something given, or fixed attributes, she sees it as something evolving around different critical moments, in everyday practice and experiences, and looks for the ways masculine behavior is manifested during different crises by calling forth "manly" men to handle the situation and thus building a demarcation between "manly" and "weak" (411). This sort of analysis, that uses the framework of political crises like "colonialism, anti-colonial movement, state formations, civil wars, religious conflicts and migration" (Chakraborty 411), is particularly relevant to the present paper as it is based on the 1971 Liberation War of Bangladesh context. Also, like the previous scholarships on masculinity, she does not relate the concept of masculinity to British colonialism. Her analysis can be used as a framework for understanding the Bangalee freedom fighters' experiences of "being a man" during 1971, their conformity toward masculine norms during crises, and the feelings of anger and inadequacy in their inability to exhibit fortitude or bravado. Most importantly, Chakraborty's stance on the interrelation between moment of political crisis and the concept of masculinity – political crisis shaped and informed by the existing discourse of masculinity – can be a guide in shedding light on the Bangalee males' subversion of the age-old negative image of being "effeminate and weak" and the role of 1971 war in conceptualizing their male subjectivity (412).

R. W. Connell, in his analysis of the concept of masculinities, following Wetherell and Edler, is of the opinion that men do not exhibit a fixed masculine character trait, "[r]ather, they make simultaneously specific choices from a cultural repertoire of masculine behavior" (xviii). Actually, in conceptualizing the construction and enactment of masculinity, Connell supports Wetherell and Edler's discursive psychology which studies a masculine behavior in a particular situation (xx). However, he finds the framework inadequate in conceptualizing different forms of masculinities in different social groups like ethnic communities, regions or social classes, in situating it within wider social realities like economic inequality, state power, and global conflict, and forming a broad generalization about masculinities (xix). For him, the model of gender practices provides a ground to study the concept of masculinity as to him "masculinities are configurations of practice structured by gender relations" (44). Also, Connell's study on masculinity emphasizes the need for an intersectional approach in situating the phenomenon at the intersection of class, race and gender, region and religion. So, in understanding the Bangalee freedom fighters' pattern of masculine behavior, Connell's framework of gender practice in a given situation will particularly be important here. In addition to this, his hegemonic masculinity – "a currently accepted strategy, a historically mobile relation" (38-37) which he formulates as not automatic and open to disruption – proves helpful in understanding the predominance of a particular masculine behavior in a given time, like prevalence of martial character types in an imperial context in times of political crises. An important point on masculinity is that, as Connell states, "it does not exist except in contrast with femininity" (54).

Also, the freedom fighters' preoccupation with their sense of shame and dishonor at the thought of inactivity and leisure in a time of crisis could be explained through Sara Ahmed's conceptualization of the politics of shame and her contention that "emotions accumulate over time, as a form of affective value" (11, 103). Her emphasis on the production of the emotion, especially its "history of the production and circulation," its subsequent emergence as social norms and its performativity, and her utilization of Butler's concept of the "effect of repetition," often through "speech acts" in materializing the world, is particularly relevant here (11, 12). Following Ahmed's conceptualization of emotions as cultural politics, the freedom fighters' sense of shame on passivity can be understood as not something pre-given, as being already over there. Rather it is the effect of the repetition of the notion that not being able to meet the standard of ideal masculine behavior is a matter of shame, which have been reinforced through the gendered nationalist discourses in the colonial and postcolonial Indian context whereby preserving the honor of the motherland was associated with prerogatives of male citizens. Also Ahmed's contention that emotion becomes a means through which past sticks "to the surface of the bodies" becomes meaningful here in exposing the established masculine norms of the past and its recurrence in the present, through the freedom fighters' sense of shame (202). The freedom fighters' investment in avoiding the sense of shame also opens up their path for reintegration into the normative masculine self.

To conceptualize the freedom fighters' constant identification of the motherland with the mother figure, the concept of gendered nationalism proves to be a helpful model.

Country in nationalist discourses, as Sarker puts forth while speaking about Hindu nationalist ideologies, does not refer to "a piece of land," an abode of real people, but rather is conceptualized as the "Mother Goddess," and the people of it as "the sons of the mother" (2011). Women are seen "as a national symbol … the guardian of continuity and immutability of the nation, the embodiment of its respectability" (Mosse, qtd. in Ray 5). Samita Sen, in her analysis of social reform movements of nineteenth century Bengal, provides a linkage between gender and nationalism, like the "identification of women with a culturally and morally invested domestic domain" (231). In this process women were seen as the "repository of tradition" (Sen 231) and "national honor ... any act (e.g., rape) that defiles and violates their bodies becomes a political weapon aimed at destroying the enemy nation's honor" (Banerjee 13). Also prevalent is the tendency to look upon the "motherland or nation as women to be protected by brave citizen warriors" (Banerjee 12).

Manifestations of Bangalee Masculinity in *Letters of 1971*

Letters of 1971, a collection of letters written during the 1971 Liberation War of Bangladesh by the freedom fighters, was published in Bangla jointly by *Daily Prothom Alo* and Grameen Phone in 2009. This collection provides a glimpse into the context of the fighters' decision to join the war, their daily experiences of war and brave tactics, sometimes the depiction of gruesome experiences, concern for their family members. It is seen that the writers whose letters are chosen in this collection cover a wide age-range and profession – East Pakistani regiment members, professionals, and sometimes even students. Recipients of the letters were mostly parents, wives and children, siblings, relatives, and sometimes, fellow fighters and commanding officers. While these letters were primarily the medium for informing of the whereabouts of the fighters and family members, they become a great source for understanding the psyche of those male Bangalee fighters – exposing their reasons for joining the war, their tackling of emotional longings for their loved ones, and the popular nationalist discourse. A close reading of the collection of letters opens up a vista of the Bangalee male psyche fighting for their motherland at the cost of their lives. Hereafter, in this paper, we will be looking into the letters in light of the workings the legacy of hegemonic colonial masculinity, and its construction and contestation, and its performativity in the 1971 context. As Chakraborty puts it, any sort of political crisis becomes a site to expose the everyday masculine norms, and, taking 1971 as such, we can get a glimpse into the situations and processes of how masculine expectations of risk taking and responsibility were negotiated and met by the fighters (411). We find a continuation of the discourses of nationalist resistance movements in colonial India whereby the prominent intellectuals were "appropriating," contesting and mobilizing the attributes like "valorization of martial prowess, physical strength and the unwillingness to compromise" in these letters too (Bannerjee 12).

Several epithets before the word Bangalee like "valiant" or Bir were mobilized and used profusely, as in "Bir Bangalee ostro dhoro, Bangladesh swadhin koro" (Valiant Bangalees, take up arms, make Bangladesh independent). Here, the Bangalee male fighters were termed as valiant or Bir to encourage their participation in fighting the enemies and contribute in subsequent nation building. Like the reiteration found in the song "Maa go

bhabna keno?" (Why fear, Mother?), presented in the introduction, of vowing to protect and not yield to the enemy, we find the same resolution undercuts the theme of every letter in this collection. Each writer, more or less, expresses their intention to take risks to save the honor of their motherland. For textual analysis, the theme of these letters will be considered on two different trajectories: desire to take risks and responsibility, and the handling of emotional anxieties and the unwillingness to compromise.

The young fighters, as seen in the letters, are afflicted by guilt for not being able to take prompt decisions to set out for training, but now the threat of death cannot dampen their fervor for taking risks and contributing to nation building. The much-expected male role that society demands from its male citizens during any crisis is risk taking. Naturally, all the letters assembled here are the blatant examples of the inclination towards risk taking. Zinnat Ali Khan, a navy commander, expresses his resolve on risk taking thus: "If my blood is to be shed to save your honor, then history will testify that Bangalees did not hesitate to lay bare their lives in front of bullets" (Ahmed et al. 15). Abdur Rahim, lying in hospital with the ravages of splinters, writes about his fugitive life (54-56). Abu Bakkar Siddik alias Dudu Miah reiterates in a similar vein that he "prefers a hero's death to that of a coward" (44-45). Firdous Kamal Uddin, in a letter to his mother, marvels at his own transformation from a frightened person to fighter (57). Abdur Rouf alias Bobin's letter shows that he is not afraid of passing the night in the midst of threats of bullets, shells, and mortars as he recalls his faint-hearted character from childhood (36). A timid boy, afraid of going out unaccompanied, is now valiantly holding a rifle and passing nights in bunkers, chasing enemies. Bobin marvels at his own emotive transformation. His letter, a mixture of emotive recounts and resolutions, renders a unique picture of the Bangalee male psyche. Here, we see how emotional anxieties are handled maturely according to the reality of their situation. Against the reading of the Bangalee male as timid and "chicken-hearted," the letters – despite their youthful ebullience and romantic emotional note – contain a calm and restrained approach to the turbulent situation (Schanberg). Kazi Nurunnabi, a final year medical student, despite witnessing the gruesome death of 250 members of the then East-Pakistani police force in Rajshahi city, reassures his mother, saying, "while mass people are being killed indiscriminately, being alive is a dishonor" (Ahmed et al. 13). Nurunnabi's reaction is of a fighter in complete control of his situation. Written or posted on March 29, 1971, this letter gives a snapshot of the turmoil in Rajshahi when, attacked by the Pakistani Military, the city suffers casualties of 250 lives and is emptied of its inhabitants (13). Most importantly, his entreating to his mother not to worry for him at that moment directs us to a completely different projection of the Bangalee male in colonial rhetoric. Having witnessed the deaths of the common people, his conscience pricks him for being saved and he feels shame. Here, Sara Ahmed's concept of "the politics of shame" is also particularly relevant (103). The age old projection of the ideal masculine self – through the contestation of the colonial discourse of the Bangalee masculine image and counter-projection of an ideal Bangalee image – and its promise of the demonstration of risk taking, preservation of the intact interiority and the negation of the emotional bent of mind, as it denotes its proximity to femininity set a sort of standard for its fellow

masculine subject. Following Ahmed's contention that the gap between the ideal ego and the ego, and its resultant shame of not living up to the standard, gives birth to a desire to the reformation of the self (106), it can be surmised here that in case of Nurunnabi (Ahmed et al. 13), the gap between ideal masculine self and the real self creates a sort of anxiety and shame in his masculine self. Through the age old colonial rhetoric, an ideal masculine figure was established and made normative in the Bangalee psyche, especially glorifying its heroism and risk taking, and negating passivity and its emotional fervor. And any failure to meet this standard of the masculine subject led to a sense of shame for the Bangalee males. That is why he, like any other Bangalee male, considers it a shame to be passive and not do anything for his country, to escape from the war zone and stay safe. His depiction is rendered in an unwavering tone, his indifference towards the loss of control over the city and his patient watch over the next opportunity to attack is one of the masculine roles of risk taking and emotional restraint of a fighter. Hence, Nurunnabi's letter significantly contributes to an alternative image of the colonial Bangalee image. A similar sense of reverence for military prowess and the responsibility of safeguarding the nation, the mother and her honor – a mostly celebrated masculine trait established by the societal norms and colonial rhetoric – is noted in the letter of Navy Commando Zinnat A. Khan (Ahmed et al. 15). It glorifies heroic death – sacrificing lives for the noble cause of protecting the honor of the motherland. As military personnel, he considers leaving an example for the upcoming generation a valiant Bangalee masculine self who never hesitates to lay bare his chest to the bullet. Akhlaqul Hossain Ahmed, another fighter, is very practical in his approach. He shows no emotional fervor in the tone of his letter written to his wife (27). A similar emotional restraint is displayed in the letter of freedom fighter Rumi, evidenced through his youthful enthusiasm for taking revenge, his bent on avenging the "unparalleled savagery" of the Pakistani military, in his demonstration of professional military prowess and tactics (25).

A theme that runs through all the letters is the predilection, which can be best explained by the framework of gendered nationalism, that being a male son of the land it was incumbent on them to protect the honor of their mother, or nation. An attack on the land, in nationalist discourse, is symbolized as the attack or dishonor of the tradition, or of the women folk (Banerjee 12). Again, a society expects certain valorous initiatives from a male figure during any sort of crisis; failure to do so raises questions about the masculinity of that male member of the society. For the most part, all the fighters, as the letters exhibit, express a similar concern about the nation, its women folk, under threat from its enemies, and thus, it is beyond a masculine norm to sit idle instead of actively participating in the war. Freedom fighter A.B.M. Mahbubur Rahman writes from an Indian training camp with a sense of guilt for not informing his mother of his whereabouts (Ahmed et al. 14). His resolve to take revenge becomes a wonderful manifestation of the gendered nationalist venture, most particularly, when he says, "The day I take revenge for the dishonor of my mother and sister, and make my Golden Bengal free of its enemies, only then will I return to your arms" (14). Also, the tendency to self-question and reproach themselves for not participating in the idealized masculine behavior can be explained through Ahmed's stance

on the "cultural politics of shame" whereby a subject or self finds itself being lacking in not meeting up the idealized normative behaviors of an ideal masculine self (106). In all the letters, the fighters apprehend a sense of shame in their failure to do something for the motherland in a time of crisis, to stand up against the dishonor of its womenfolk. This sense of shame also opens up, as Ahmed puts it, a process of reintegration for the masculine self which leads to a self-recognition of the failure to "live up to a social ideal" (106). Alongside being an individual consciousness, the nature of shame that the freedom fighters exhibit here is also of a "collective shame" (Ahmed 103) as it results from their allegiance to their motherland. The embodied consciousness of the male citizen, particularly the embodied awareness of the motherland and its vilification of the bodily honor – the visceral dishonor of the female citizen – incites a sort of shame resulting from the failure to stand up against such trampling. In this case, Zinnat Ali Khan says that "[t]o save my Bengal Mother, the land upon which you gave me birth, the language that you taught me, and the motherland, many Zinnats like me have to sacrifice their lives" (Ahmed et al. 15). Abdullahil Baki alias Saju affirms he cannot but join the war (18). This is the least he can do for his country. Khurshed Alom assures that, "Your son is going to avenge the death of your sons." The letter concludes with a strong affirmation, "While your sons' honor is at stake, we, your sons, can't remain silent and do nothing" (19). Amanullah C. Faruk conveys his remorse for his delay in joining the training, his conscience constantly nagging him for the failure to join the war (21). All the above mentioned letters, with their striking similarity in demonstrating a normative picture, centers around the notion that male citizens are invested with the responsibility of ensuring and safeguarding the honor of the family, or the nation. Motherland, the mother as passive recipient of the valorous sons' protection, is completely dependent on her sons. Here the responsibility is of a collective one. While these letters exhibit the negation of the sense of shame, it also becomes an occasion for the hetero-patriarchal valorization of the long-established norms, where female citizens are led to secondary position.

Here, we come across a contrary picture from the discourse of colonial prejudices against Bangalee masculinity – their aversion to physical activity and military rule. One of the editors of the book, Rashid Haider takes on the prevalent negative stereotypes of the inherent weakness of Bangalee males to show his pride in the fact that the Bangalees, through their participation in the Mukti Bahini (Freedom Fighters) and their valiant embrace of death, proved the opposite (Ahmed et al. 1).

It should be noted here that in their reaction to the particular political crisis in 1971 and their participation and enactment of masculine norms, the Bangalee males are not exhibiting any monolithic image. Rather *Letters of 1971* exhibits a multifarious dimension of masculine subjects. For example, the younger fighters, mostly students, have a different sense and demonstration of the masculine behaviors and responsibilities – a passionate embarking on the war, an avid desire to serve the cause of the nation, an ardor for bearing the role of the male citizen, saving the honor of the womenfolk – than that of the older fighters and elderly men who regarded themselves as fated to serve for the cause of the country, a moral or ethical responsibility. Most of the young fighters' notes abound with

the instances of the pangs of their conscience for dawdling in taking the decisions to set out for camp training, reiteration of the necessity to save the honor of the country, a call for fulfilling the responsibility of the male child, putting aside all other worldly concerns. The married ones reflect their anxieties for their family and emotional longing for their spouses, while simultaneously displaying a paternal attitude towards their wives. Freedom fighter Golam Rahman, in his letter addressed to his wife, exhibits a complete surrender to divine providence, a patronizing attitude, a stoic indifference to life and death, and pragmatic advice to his wife (Ahmed et al. 31). Interestingly though, this letter provides a different reading of the hegemonic masculinities prescribed as a sort of normative standard of masculinities. The writer, despite passing his days amid war, expresses emotions for the domestic domain where his wife and children are. He does not show any ardent desire for heroic sacrifice for the cause of the nation. However, it would be unfair to presume that they had any less ardor in serving their nation. Ataur Rahman Khan Kayser, in a letter addressed to his daughter, expresses his emotions for not being able to stay beside his daughter and reasoned, almost with an ethical and moral bent of mind, that he needs to fight for the masses right now (39). The notes of the elderly fighters, though not brimming with the zeal and intensity of the younger, student fighters and the emotional exuberance displayed in married fighters, do contain a moral urgency in fighting for the nation. Nazmul Huda's note, describing an operation, is a glaring example of military prowess and bravery (49). Although he admits that physical and mental tiredness induce him to take respite from everything, his conscience does not let him do so. Patuary Neseruddin Noyon, most emotional of all, starting with an emotive note and romantic predilection, consoles and advises his expecting wife (41). However, there is no wavering or faltering in the resolution to fight for a peaceful and harmonious home for his progeny. This interpretation also provides a lacuna to the hetero-patriarchal normativity in the letters whereby male inhabitants occupy a valorized positionality in the society, in their power of preserving the honor of the motherland, the only valid safeguard of the nation.

So, their notes do not exhibit hegemonic masculine traits and characteristics from which a list of masculine behaviors can be prepared or prescribed. Rather, following Connell's proposition that masculinity can better be understood as a situated phenomenon – not something inherited or given – it can be articulated here that depending on the demand of particular situations, Bangalee males of various ages do not exhibit a monolithic character trait. On the contrary, there is a manifestation of complex character traits (xix). Notwithstanding, a subversion of colonial masculinity is a predominant motif that runs through all the letters. While we have seen in our discussion on colonial discourse that Bangalees were stereotypically known for their aversion towards physical activities and risk taking, the letters exhibit a different picture of Bangalee masculine attributes of risk taking in their participation in training and in confrontation with the enemy armed forces.

Conclusion

In this paper, taking the *Letters of 1971* into consideration, the contour of Bangalee masculinity – quite opposite to the stereotypical projection of Bengali males as "weak and passive" (Chowdhury 4) in the hegemonic colonial masculinity – has been situated in a

particular phenomenon. Instead of exhibiting a typical homogenous male characteristic, abiding by the much-expected social norms of a particular society, we see a rare blend of emotion and risk-taking roles in Bangalee male fighters through their exchanges with fellow fighters and relatives. Their notes abound with emotional longings and fervor for both the motherland and mother. Whereas emotion signifies weakness, their emotions are restrained and directed to the pursuance of a great cause, not a hindrance. This manifestation of Bangalee masculinity can be read as the contestation and subversion of colonial masculinity – physical strength, toughness and capacity for violence – through their unique display of emotion and risk-taking tendencies and unwillingness to compromise. It also calls for a wider prospect in exploring the trajectory of Bangalee masculinity in subsequent years to determine the impacts of globalization and neo-liberal economy.

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The Dialogue of a Literary Artist with His Art: Creative Writing as Psychotherapy in Olu Obafemi's *Running Dreams*

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Abstract

The world of Olu Obafemi's artistry is indisputably definable within the frameworks of social functionality and commitment which fundamentally underlie artistic creativity in Africa. Specifically, his artistic commitment has been situated within the conceptual frameworks of vision and revolution; that is, the vision for a better nation believed to be attainable through measures to revolutionize the unwholesome socio-political and economic development in Nigeria. Against this backdrop, this study contextualizes the craft of Obafemi's play, *Running Dreams*, as a psychological manifestation of the playwright's frustration with the system that has reflected no significant improvement in spite of his decades of artistic commitment to the yearnings and aspirations of the populace. The writing process is, therefore, construed as a psychotherapeutic process through which the playwright is able to purge himself of the psychological disturbances from which he presumably suffers. It adopts psychotherapy in psychoanalysis, using the specific conceptual frameworks of substitute gratification and transference. The study concludes that the nationalist consciousness and "unconsciousness" (psychological) of Olu Obafemi is immense, with *Running Dreams* not only assuming the macrocosm of his unconscious (dreams) wish fulfillment for the nation but also the overall summation of his passionate commitment to having a new nation which evidently cuts across his entire creative output and scholarly works.

Keywords: artistic commitment, artistic dialogue, creative writing, psychotherapy

Introduction

Olu Obafemi is a household name in the dramatic scene in Nigeria whose artistic output has created a vast pool or resource base from which dramatic theories and practices are drawn. The entire scholarship on the playwright's works and life has situated his artistic commitment within two conceptual frameworks – vision and revolution. Indeed, the two frameworks have been specifically identified as the keys to his "theatrical aims and objectives and determine the broad dramatic forms, techniques, aesthetics and strategies" within which his works are largely definable (Bamikunle 103), this being set against the backdrop of the emergence of a new generation of Nigerian creative artists in the 80s who, upon consensus of comments and ideology, saw themselves as rejecting many elements of the works of their predecessors because they were no longer relevant in confronting and curtailing the new phase of the socio-political economic imbroglio in the country (Bamikunle 103). Indeed, in an exclusive conversation with him, Obafemi offers a comprehensive insight into the motivations of the new generation of writers:

> The anger of the new generation of writers is not just against their neo-modernist predecessors, but against the thingified publishing elite, who like the ruling elite, have lost interest in the healing power and have gone after the lucre of coins found only in the profit market of curricula texts. The ruling elite had since ignored, indeed tried to curtail, the magical power of literature, the grenade and missiles of words which can enhance society's awareness of the interplay between human freedom, self-development and national development. (Anthony 17)

Against the foregoing, thus, they referred to themselves as "revolutionaries," who were aggressively bent on proffering a "radical social vision" for the Nigerian society against the political and economic woes which have since plagued the nation from within (Bamikunle 103). In this task of new and radical vision for social justice and national development, which is strongly built on the principles of Marxism, it is evident that distinct theatricalities, meant to suit the current challenges in the country, were instituted by this crop of literary artists. Since then, consequently, the way had been paved for theatrical experimentations, as opposed to the peculiar ambiences of animism, colonial and/or independence struggle and black identity of their predecessors. Indeed, it is within this developmental context that Saint Gbileka has explored and distinctly identified what he calls "Theatricalism" in the plays of the so-called second generation of Nigerian literary artists: Femi Osofisan, Bode Sowande, Kole Omotoso, and Ola Rotimi (172). Similarly, in his own submission, with particular reference to Olu Obafemi, who equally belongs to that generation, David Cook captures the aspiration of these writers thus:

> The battle is no longer primarily against outsiders but against the enemy within. The aspiration is to remould a more humane society from amidst the twisted inheritance of misplaced and misused power: the ruthless power of the gun and even more the callous power of cash. Linked to this is the insatiable lust for more and more power of every kind regardless of the suffering and deprivation of other human beings. Obafemi can be seen as one of the prototypes of the generation of playwrights who have seen the propagation of this theme as an imperative crusade. The aims of such drama are to expose social evils, to dispel the apathy and sense of helplessness of the sufferers, and to seek solutions. (46)

On the foregoing, however, for such a writer with genuine commitment to using his works to instigate a significant turnaround in such socio-political and economic travails of his nation, and who has been unrelenting in this regard for over three decades without any meaningful or considerable improvement in the ill system that has got the nation developmentally stuck, the tendency is there for such a writer to become frustrated at some points. This is because, considering the genuineness of his commitment to this course, the only gratification for him would be to have a revolutionized system that works, especially for the common people, who have long been the bearers of the huge burden of social and economic injustices in the country. This is adducible given that the human mind is considered as:

> the engine house of all human activities. It is responsible for how humans think,

> react, and understand things. Hence, in its process of trying to grapple with the challenges of life, the human mind can be plunged into some kind of anxiety, or unreasonable fear, and behaviour or may get stressed up as a result of the need to repeat unnecessary actions. (Awuzie 6440)

In view of this, the uniqueness of the structure and content of Olu Obafemi's *Running Dreams* (2015), when compared with his peculiar craft or style of playwriting, is construable as a remarkable signification of a psychologically frustrated and exasperated writer. Hence, the writing process is being constructed as a medium through which the playwright is particularly shedding his intensified emotional turmoil on paper. In other words, it is largely conceived in this study as an unconscious visionary and revolutionary dialogue of the playwright with his art, significantly as a form of psychotherapy to him; his art being his closest companion upon which he "repeats and presents again" his emotional troubles (i.e., the challenges of social injustice and national development in which the country is enmeshed) in order "to be master of them" (Huxley 5). Indeed, this psychotherapeutic essence is what the play is conceived to have been for the playwright, given that the specific national challenges assume the forces within which the playwright is gripped. Terry Eagleton's summation of the work of psychoanalysis within a Freudian slogan lends credence to the ultimate goal of attaining self-mastery of one's mental troubles, this being the psychotherapeutic context in which the playwright has been viewed in relation to his writing. According to him, the work of psychoanalysis "can perhaps be summarized in one of Freud's own slogan: 'Where id was, there shall ego be.' Where men and women were in the paralyzing grip of forces which they could not comprehend, there reason and self-mastery shall reign" (139).

The study therefore adopts Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy, with particular focus on the concepts of "substitute gratification" and "transference," as a critical tool to examine the nature of the conceived artistic dialogue and the extent of the emotional turmoil in the psyche of the playwright in the play. This is with a view to ultimately determining the therapeutic essence of the play on the playwright's psyche, with the entire writing process presumably assuming a self-psychotherapy measure or exercise the playwright has undertaken at some point.

Psychotherapy in Psychoanalysis and the Imperative of Creative Writing

Psychoanalysis is "a form of therapy which aims to cure mental disorders by investigating the interaction of conscious and unconscious elements in the minds" (Hossain 42). It emphasizes "the importance of intrapsychic events (i.e., events within the mind) as central to personality" (Liebert and Spiegler 53). The early development of this theory has been generally traced to the Austrian, Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), who is acknowledged to have "devised its technique, and based on its application made available substantial though often controversial discoveries about the human psyche" (Mowah 1). In other words, psychoanalysis is the name given to the method developed for:

> reaching down into the hidden depths of the individual to bring to light the underlying motives and determinants of his symptoms and attitudes, and to reveal

the unconscious tendencies which lie behind actions and reactions and which influence development and determine the relations of life itself. (Hinkle ix)

On the other hand, psychotherapy is connotative of "the use of definitive psychological techniques designed to [relieve] demonstrable disturbances in psycho-social adjustment" (Lowry 347). According to Donald Cameron, it is "primarily a transaction between the patient and his therapist" (qtd. in Wolberg 42). This presupposes thus that psychotherapy entails the investigation of intra-psychic events that may have caused some level of emotional trouble in a person with a view to relieving, alleviating, or curing such an individual of that mental turmoil, or to enhance personality adjustment.

As an activity that has direct bearing on the human mind, creative writing has been acknowledged as having the potential to assume a psychotherapeutic exercise or process (Awuzie 6441). According to Lionel Trilling, one of the primary functions of art is to "serve as narcotic," hence the artist "is virtually in the same category with the neurotic" (101). The very first way of viewing this lies in the fact that art or creative writing "may serve as a window into the unconscious" (Costa and Abreu 72), the underground site in the human mind where the distressing experience of the artist desires relief that can be indirectly accessed for psychotherapeutic analysis. The critical presupposition here is that there is a communicative dialogue, or series of dialogues, between the artist and their art; the creative writing in this context critically serves as psychotherapy for its client – the artist. This, indeed, is an embodiment of the "therapeutic transaction" observed above by Donald Cameron.

Further, "Substitute Gratification" and "Transference" are two psychological mechanisms identified by Lionel Trilling and Terry Eagleton, respectively, within which creative writing could assume a psychotherapeutic engagement to a mentally troubled literary artist. On the one hand, substitute gratification is regarded as a "fictional" way, a daydreaming in which the artist offers themselves a certain pleasure by imagining their difficulties solved or desires gratified within the creative work (Trilling 101). It is a psychological situation by which the creative writer perceives the creative work as an alternative route to reality or wish fulfillment. On the other hand, transference is a psychological process which involves "ascribing to others of feelings and wishes which are actually our [the artist's] own" (Eagleton 138). In the course of treatment, this can be ascertained when the patient begins "unconsciously to 'transfer' onto the figure of the analyst [the literary text or the protagonist in this context] the physical conflict from which he or she suffers" (Eagleton 138). It is, therefore, believed that this process is capable of relieving the creative writer from such psychological disturbances and/or emotional turmoil.

The Structure of the Play
Running Dreams imitates the form of a dream or stream of consciousness. The result of this is a blend of memories, experiences, and absurdities wherein the central character, Yohanna, assumes a split or fragmented individual, mediating the past and the present socio-economic and political situations in Nigeria, in particular, and the Third World countries at large. The dream experience progresses through a "retrospective technique,"

to use Birgitta Steene's words (112), that aids the dramatic juxtaposition of the two phases of history – the past and the present dispensations. Ideologically, the unredeemed past is traversed through Yohanna's memory which embodies the playwright's shift of emphasis from the usual conscious characterization to the unconscious (psychical) activity of the artist. According to Sigmund Freud, "the unconscious is the true psychical reality" (607). To this end, the structure of the play is construed as a great representation of the innermost social vision of the playwright. That is, Olu Obafemi has thus again upheld in this play, as typical of him and indeed his entire generation of writers, a revolutionary vision in the play; however, the dramatic structure, that is the traversing of the unconscious realm, which assumes an apparent deviation from his usual writing style, gives the play a new and distinctly unique artistic dimension in his oeuvre.

A holistic examination of the play will reveal that the audience has been presented with an almost unrealistic human situation, in such a manner that the central character is portrayed as striving to make unconscious efforts in order to come to terms with the nation's heavily troubling situation. This is a similar sense with which the reader is also confronted, trying to strike a logical balance in the dramatization and their, say, social environment. But, because the reader can see beyond the characters, certain ideological infusions, emanating from the observed construction of the dramatic piece on visionary and revolutionary geometry, are extractable from the dramatic structure. Thus, what Olu Obafemi presents does not necessarily render these dreams (these seeming unconnected acts and conversation) void of value. It is the reader and the way the work is perceived that matters in the interpretation of the underlying ideology in the play.

The Playwright and the Challenges of Social Injustice and National Development in the Play

The theme of socio-political and economic inequity in the neo-colonial system of Nigeria is indisputably pervasive in Olu Obafemi's works. As a literary artist, he has "spread his literary tentacle to virtually all aspects of the economic, social, political, cultural and intellectual life of Nigeria" (Obaje 323). Indeed, to a considerable extent, *Running Dreams* exhibits a visionary and revolutionary interrogation of the nation's current unhealthy socio-economic and political state, vis-à-vis the past, as implicitly given in the protagonist's unconscious dialogue with the nation's founding fathers – Mallam Aminu Kano, Sir Ahmadu Bello, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, and Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe. The prologue of the play discernibly paints a contemporary political atmosphere that is riddled with dishonesty and deceit, a situation whereby "the politicians go about making empty promises just to amass votes from innocent citizens" (Obafemi 12). In the context of the play, this is particularly linked to the peculiar phenomenon of god-fatherism in Nigerian politics as depicted in the character of Dr. Chief Afolabi Ojuola. The narrator's adlib, following the exit of the politicians from the stage, offers a critical insight into this unwholesome syndrome which has remained prominently the bane of the nation's democratic development and the continued social stratification.

By inference from the above, this means that for political office holders to rise to their

various aspired thrones on such paths of deceits, the tendency is that they can offer nothing substantially beneficial to the electorates in particular and the nation at large. Thus, the current socio-political and economic ambience portrayed in the play is that which has taken a paradigm shift from what was obtainable or practiced in the past by the founding fathers of the nation. That is, rather than building on the progressive blueprints of these past nationalists, the implicature from the play is that the current crop of politicians have demonstrated high levels of insensitivity to the plight of the citizenry as well as the nation's development. Hence, the hallmarks of the Nigerian society in the current dispensation are social injustice and stunted national growth.

The reader is privy to the above peculiar atmosphere in an encounter between Yohanna and a multinational company representative, Miriam, in which the former is to be interviewed and recruited to writing economic briefs for the company. The ill objective of his responsibility is explicitly stated by Miriam with an underlying motive of rendering Third World countries, such as Nigeria, perpetually bankrupt and politically and economically independent:

> MIRIAM: Writing economic briefs to justify huge international loans to these countries and also bring back money to our company and other big construction projects that you yourself already know from university and professional studies make the countries bankrupt and indebted so that they are completely dependent on us. They will then be willing to oblige when we need their oil, their political support and military necessities. You are one of thousands with equal opportunities and independence. Your budget is limitless. So must your loyalty be absolute. It is a job for the global Empire. (Obafemi 33)

The above apparently indicates the leadership ineptitude of those at the helms of affairs of these Third World nations by engaging in such treacherous long-term deals with the global powers that be which have had long-term adverse effects on their respective citizens. Earlier on, Yohanna had wondered over the wild gap between the living conditions of the top government functionaries and the common people of the nation as depicted in the part of the city in which his interview has been scheduled. Having experienced the other side of the same coin, he becomes uneasy on his arrival over the huge and almost incomprehensible social stratification therein:

> YOHANNA: I was just taking in the city and all its exciting contrasts. This part is so hi-tech, so well-built, so plastic, so unreal. Far out there in the valleys, there is so much difference, and so much squalor, all within the same city economy. (Obafemi 30)

Hence, by way of interplaying the past with the present condition, with a view to ultimately interrogating the social injustice of the present dispensation, the playwright is able to give weight to the challenging and troubling socio-economic and political injustice in the country that are, on the whole, perceivably problematic in the play.

A crucial point to note in the above is that the narrator is the same figure as the protagonist,

Yohanna. He is only momentarily cast to speak from the protagonist's mind, like an open book, while the latter is in a state of deep slumber. This is essentially an indication that the protagonist has been mentally troubled with the current socio-political and economic challenges of the nation. Hence, the problems are carried on to his dreaming (unconscious) state. Although this constitutes Yohanna's physically conflicting reality, it is made indirectly accessible to the reader via his unconscious. This is, therefore, the aesthetic way the play is observed to have achieved its texture; that is, by traversing the unconscious realm of the protagonist wherein the entire dramatization takes place. In other words, what the reader is presented with is the reflection of the unconscious reality of Yohanna which is largely directly linked to, and influenced by, his conscious (physical) reality.

The Play as Substitute Gratification

It is axiomatic that creative writing is a mental exercise which offers literary artists fictional avenues to engage myriad issues. In the process, presumptively, a form of dialogue is thus ascertainable between the artist and their literary creation. The enormity or seriousness of the engagement often depends, among other things, on the affectivity of the subject matter. In this way, the creative space allows the artist to undertake and explore even the obvious impossibility or things that are ordinarily unattainable in reality to the writer. When this is observed in a writer's work, especially an issue which appears psychologically troubling to the artist, it is translatable to the psychological phenomenon known as substitute gratification. That is, the likely inspiration underlying such a work or art is that the artist has simply employed such a creative world to gratify their psychological self over such unrealistic (in real life) yearnings by fictionalizing a world in which they have been accomplished. Therefore, given the psychological context in *Running Dreams*, elements of this development can be considerably accounted for in the play.

Against the above backdrop, the form of the play, which is describable as a psychological drama, is particularly significant. The play offers a fictional world whereby the protagonist is portrayed as a mentally troubled individual as a result of having observed a high and incomprehensible level of social injustice in that socio-economic and political setting of the play. Owing to his second-hand experience of the situation when that nation's founding fathers reigned, the protagonist appears to be mentally picturing the condition then, vis-à-vis the people-oriented policies pursued by those so-called great men, and then comparing them with those of the present dispensation which have simply created structural divides among the haves and have-nots, with the other side of the divide being continually impoverished. To this end, in his visionary bid to find a lasting solution to the problem, he envisages the possibility of interacting with, and interrogating, the founding fathers with a view to digging up and enlivening their policies in order that the current leaders can imbibe them to rebuild the nation. This is the mindset that Yohanna carries along with him, and because of the unrealistic and imaginative nature of such pursuits, they must have become repressed to his unconscious over time. The enormity and significance of the wish will, however, at some points, exert a certain level of force on his personality. Hence, in his unconscious, an alternative route to realizing this is being sought for, and the possible world is eventually created in his dream:

(… YOHANNA rises slowly after a loud snore which came like an earthquake. He is still in a dreary, half-awake state. The sky opens in his mind's eye. Four masquerades emerge wearing the figure Obafemi, Ahmadu, Zik and Aminu. A tongue for each of them breaks into narratives, following YOHANNA'S unconscious promptings. Dancers and singers accompany each masquerade.) (Obafemi 15)

The above apparently assumes a world in which Yohanna would have preferred to find himself in reality, as he institutes ideological dialogues with each of the founding fathers of his nation. It is from the conversations, which are replete with enormous clues on leadership, good governance, and nation building, that the reader is able to draw the significance of the protagonist's vision for his nation. For instance, a layer of this is deducible from the following conversation between him and the fictional Mallam Aminu Kano:

YOHANNA: Yes, Sir. I read your story and your famous, radical dicta. You brought up Islamic ideas on equity in your campaign trains during the First Republic. Many talakawas trouped in after you and your message of giving a platform to the Kano commoners and migratory petty traders. They joined and mannered your NEPU party. You sought to use politics to create an egalitarian Northern Nigerian society. You backed these actions up with many memorable quotes.

AMINU: Thank you, thank you. I am happy that there are youths who read up the history of our little effort – before your government cancelled history from the schools. But, which quotations are you talking about? You know it's been a long time since I left your world which has grown worse than the world of the NPC, which we opposed. (Obafemi 16)

The above conversation is significant in two respects. One, it is informative of the kind of political ideologies the nation's progenitors were being driven by; that which has the welfare of all and sundry at heart, regardless of religion and ethnicity, and is devoid of social stratification. Two, the reader is also hinted of the socio-political degeneration by which the current dispensation is characterized.

Given that the above is interpretive of Yohanna's unconscious visionary exploration of "the better past" to interrogate "the worse present" with a view to forging a new nation by taking clues from the past, his underlying optimism is derived from his conversation with the fictional Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe:

YOHANNA: As you have always done, even in 1964 after the rigged elections and the violence which you feared would make the Congo experience a child's play if not arrested. The fear of violence overrunning our polity due to power grab still looms on our political horizon.

NNAMDI: I fear still, but I know the nation can still become. It can still make it as the hub of Africa's rise to greatness in world politics. I believe it can.

YOHANNA: Thank you, Sir, for that belief in us, even as our leadership becomes more and more visionless and less patriotic … (As YOHANNA kneels to kiss his

feet, NNAMDI slips by and vanishes and the music swells and attains a raucous crescendo. Fade.) (Obafemi 26)

Despite Yohanna's understanding of the cluelessness and meanness of the current leaders, a fact that he can adduce from the spate of the social injustice in the country, he demonstrates high hopes of a better and healthy nation. This optimism is psychologically strengthened by his unconscious promptings of one of the nation's fathers above.

The context that the reader is offered, on the whole, is that which characterizes the protagonist as an individual who has his nation's fortune and glory passionately at heart, and is now mentally disturbed over the current unhealthy state of affairs in the nation. Hence, his internalization of the problems and the fictitious mechanism towards changing the status qou; being his vision for his nation, is only being realized in his dreaming states. To this end, the unconscious realization of Yohanna's vision that is embodied in his dialogue with the nation's founders in his dream, is a significant pointer to the process by which the playwright, who is acknowledged as being exceedingly perturbed in reality over the artificial challenges of the nation, has been able to substitute his conscious wish with fictional reality. This is underscored by the possibility of conversing with the founding fathers in order to share the troubles in the country with them; that which is unrealizable in the real sense, with the fictional realization in the play. This fictional wish fulfillment is the very way in which the playwright has been perceived to have explored the creative space largely to gratify his psyche and/or relieve himself of the overall psychological troubles occasioned by decades of unyielding interrogations of the problems and vision for an ideal nation in his creative works.

The Play as Psychological Transference

The critical context that the term transference offers in psychoanalysis is conceivable as the transposition from author-context to character-context in a literary text. This implies that there exists a link between the personality of the literary artist and a persona in the text, such that the former's mindset can, to some extent, be read and ascertained in the latter, by drawing on certain real evidences about the author. When a text has this framework, the subject matter has the propensity to be considerably driven by the psychological realities of the author. On this note, the process of writing could engender some level of relief, especially in the psyche of an enraged or troubled writer. This is because, in the process, a form of psychological transference is taking place whereby the writer's distress is being unconsciously transposed onto a specific character, usually the protagonist; an exercise that is acknowledgeably capable of easing their tensed psyche.

The characterization of Yohanna in *Running Dreams*, therefore, is being burgeoned as the playwright's psychical figure, onto whom the artist has unconsciously transferred his frustration with the unwholesome socio-political and economic situation in Nigeria. This is indeed conceivable, given the context of his critically acknowledged commitment in his creative space to such a course with an undertone of strong vision for a better nation. Fundamentally, the fact that there are perceived indices of frustration being at force in the playwright's psyche, of which its structure conceivably assumes a considerable signification,

is a pointer to this critical pattern. It is a matter between the patient (the playwright) and the psychotherapist (the text) in which the creative writing process assumes the interacting (therapeutic) process between them. In this way, the playwright has been enhanced in terms of ability to recollect portions of his frustration that he has repressed, such that he is "able to recount a new, more complete narrative about [himself], one which will interpret and make sense of the disturbances from which [he] suffers" (Eagleton 139).

Particularly, the characterization of Yohanna is central to the psychotherapeutic essence of the play. The implication of this is that, as the protagonist, Yohanna now assumes a macrocosmic psychotherapy of the entire text to the playwright, having been cast in that psychologically tensed figure in such a manner that what constitutes the contents of the play are the repressed elements of distress to him which the reader is able to access indirectly via his unconscious realm. For instance, this is evident in the conversation between him and Miriam. In the latter's address, while she lays much emphasis on certain attributes in Yohanna which have attracted him to the multinational company, Yohanna's response is contradictory to such acknowledgment. The comment is totally disregarded and what he seems to be battling with within himself is what he rather prioritizes as response, and this assumes an indication that such an avenue entirely constitutes a stimulant for him to unconsciously pour out or purge himself of those psychical disturbances relating to social injustice:

> MIRIAM: We need the soundness of your mind, the independence of your thought, the fluency of tongue. It's the raw material upon which you will be moulded.
>
> YOHANNA: Whatever that is supposed to mean! Anyway, I was talking about all the people these companies hire at near-slavery wages to work under dehumanizing conditions. I am talking about what the oil companies do, wantonly pumping toxins into the rain forest rivers. They deliberately kill people, animals and plants, and committing genocide among innocent cultures all over the developing world, like my country. That's the reality of the Niger Delta, where the golden egg is laid. (Obafemi 31)

A keen observation of those qualities the company treasured in Yohanna will considerably show they are traits that are indeed creditable to the playwright in the real sense. And moving a bit away from the context of the play, furthermore, the above is also suggestive of the fact that, at a certain point in time in the playwright's career, he might have encountered such an offer, which he would have undoubtedly turned down for obvious reasons, from the so-called multinational companies that have created large scale distress to the people of the Niger Delta in particular. On the other hand, it may also be that, peradventure, the playwright was privy to such reality which, though he was not directly involved, but constituted elemental upset for him.

Whether the above critical speculation is accurate or not, what is ascertainable is the fact that the experience that is being conveyed by the character is true to reality. Hence, it is partly symbolic of what Terry Eagleton would regard in the psychotherapeutic process as

"something of the 'fictional' relation to those real-life problems which a literary text has to the real-life materials it transforms" (139). On this note, it is logically establishable that the playwright has cast Yohanna in that unconscious space primarily to dissect his frustration, his conflicting psychical reality which he seeks to relieve or free himself from. This is imperative in that it assumes a creative exercise that is believed will act or prevail upon his mind, as does a psychotherapeutic process, thereby ultimately serving as a significant therapy to his psyche. Thus, hope and vision of an ideal nation remain the long-sustained phenomena which the playwright has been battling with, not just physically but also psychologically. They collectively assume a dream which, indeed, in the words of Goran Stockenstrom, is the "humanity's dream" (292) of the playwright.

Conclusion

The critical conception in this study stems from the totality of the playwright's strong and overwhelming vision for his nation. In this sense, it does not simply reflect the artist's representation of an ailing nation but also, more importantly, the dream concerning the ill-health of the Third World countries at large. To this end, the "running dreams" in the play perceivably assume the playwright's unconscious wish-fulfillments – strong and passionate wishes to see the nation stripped of ill-fate; a vision towards reviving humane values by means of increasing consciousness. In Sigmund Freud's supposition in this regard, "a conscious wish can only become a dream-instigator if it succeeds in awakening an unconscious with the same tenor and obtaining reinforcement from it" (553). This interplay of conscious and unconscious wishes is evidently ascertainable in Yohanna's personality, and is made explicit eventually towards the end of the play when he remarks that: "I have been running dreams, nightmares these many days … Revolutionaries, from other places, other lands, even from our own history …" (Obafemi 61-62).

In view of the above, it is clear that, for Obafemi, it is not a dream being experienced during sleep, but a waking dream; realizable artistically, that is primarily psychotherapeutic to his unconscious trouble with the nation's socio-political and economic problems. And this is constantly fueled by the revolutionary fervor to change the nation's ill narrative of socio-political and economic realities. Ultimately, this psychotherapeutic essence of the play is explicitly ascertained in Yohanna's last words: "I am awake from my dreams into a NEW MORNING. Thank Goodness!" (Obafemi 69). The implication of this is that, eventually, the playwright has been able to purge himself of the psychological disturbances with the aid of his art, a process conceived in this study as "the dialogue of the literary artist with his art." Indeed, this corroborates the assertion of the English essayist and poet, Charles Lamb, in his defense of the sanity of what is called the true genius – the artist: "The … poet dreams being awake. He is not possessed by his subject but he has dominion over it" (qtd. in Trilling 102).

The study therefore, on this note, concludes that the nationalist consciousness and "unconsciousness" (psychological) of Olu Obafemi is immeasurably great, with the play *Running Dreams* not only assuming the macrocosm of his unconscious (dreams) wish fulfillment for the nation but also the overall summation of his passionate commitment to

having a new nation which apparently cuts across his entire creative output and scholarly works.

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The Dark Triad and Sensory Marketing: Grace Paley's "The Pale Pink Roast"

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Abstract

With the commodification of the body image in modern day media and advertising, marketing of the self to gain power over one's surroundings has become a commonplace phenomenon. Well-adapted individuals are seen to manifest a perfect body image of themselves that give them the power to influence the behavior and decisions of others. From a psychological perspective, this propensity of self-glorification through sensory marketing reveals a narcissistic strain of manipulative behavior which embodies characteristics of "the dark triad." But for manipulation to occur, the victim must be willing for influence to take place. Through an in-depth analysis of Grace Paley's "The Pale Pink Roast," this article looks at how Peter's personality, infused with traits of the dark triad, appeals to Anna's sexuality and influences her into behavior that renders her feeling helplessly guilty and confused. From the very beginning of the short story, the sensory experience engages Anna's perception, clouds her judgment and affects her behavior. Here sensory marketing has been considered as a mechanism of persuasion that powerfully overwhelms Anna into sexual acquiescence and results in her surrendering to a desire that has an unwholesome effect on her sense of self. Through Anna, Paley explores the complexity of female sexuality that the modernized women of her time were facing.

Keywords: desire, persuasion, image, female sexuality, sensory marketing

Introduction

Grace Paley's literary works reflect a changing scenario in male-female relationships and female agency in the second half of the twentieth century and the first few years of the twenty first. Publishing in the late 1950s just as the second wave of the feminist movement began, Grace Paley (1922-2007) was among the earliest American writers to explore the lives of women in America. She was an American short story writer, poet, teacher, and political activist. She taught creative writing at Sarah Lawrence College and City College of The City University of New York, and was also the first official New York State Author. She received a Guggenheim fellowship in 1961, a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1966, and an award from the National Institute of Arts and Letters in 1970. As an activist, Paley was involved in anti-war, feminist, and anti-nuclear movements.

Naturally, these concerns were reflected in Paley's writing. She saw modern women jeopardizing all that feminist movements stood for by laying down concessions for the behavior of men they were in relationships with. Her stories speak of these "disturbances" that were destabilizing and confusing the purpose of the feminist movement as she

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understood it. In an attempt to throw light on the prevailing situation of gender relations, she writes of stories that reveal, as the title of her collection of short stories indicates, *The Little Disturbances of Man*. First published in 1959, the stories in this collection contain small everyday events focusing on the lives of women who are trying to live their lives as best as they can as gender relations are shifting in post-World War America and an awareness of their condition is becoming unsettling for them.

Aware of the "small drops of worried resentment and noble rage … [that] were secretly, slowly building in the second wave of the women's movement," Paley is wary about the role her writings would play: "I didn't know my small-drop presence or usefulness in this accumulation" (Geyh 94). As it turns out, Paley's writings created a space for women in ways many writers could not. Marianne Hirsch, in her introduction to an issue of *Contemporary Womens' Writing* quotes Alice Kates Shulman as saying on National Public Radio, "Paley's stories changed my life. We women needed to write about our own experience but feared we would be relegated to literary marginality. Now here was Paley, writing about what I lived, and it was recognized as Literature" (124). Paley's common trait of the storyline "following unexpected paths and revealing irresolvable complexities" (122) shows how even singular spontaneous attempts at agency may complicate even the simplest of situations. Each story brings to light characters and their complex moral situations where men are emotionally detached and women do not know how and when exactly to let go.

In the spirit of her lifelong activism and concern for female emancipation, Paley's short stories reveal women's own role in their subjugation. But, in contradiction to her fierce political and social activism, her short stories take a more subtle non-judgmental approach, reflecting a slightly humorous and admissive portrayal of the reality seen in her New York world of affairs and the relations she saw unfolding around her. In a 1985 "Fresh Air" interview, she told Terry Gross, "When you write, you illuminate what's hidden, and that's a political act" (Schwartz). With such a view, she wrote of women allowing themselves to be sexual playmates to men, and then having to lift the complete burden of responsibility alone. Ex-husbands come and go whimsically without taking full responsibility of their children. For example, one of the main characters in *The Little Disturbances of Man* (hereafter, LDM) is Faith Darwin, an alter ego of Paley. When we meet Faith, we also meet her ex, the father of her two young sons, a boastful charmer who has dropped by for a brief visit and expects his seven year old son to have learnt to read fluently, and then he vanishes again.

Paley's women are unsure of how to express and engage with their sexuality without demeaning themselves and losing self-respect in the process. She rewrites maternal characters with a sexuality that is easily targeted by predatory male behavior and negatively impacts their decisions. Even though all the male characters in her stories walk away from marriages and responsibilities, the women always seem to find excuses for those actions and are seen to cover up for their meanness. Her women cannot resist the temptation of giving in to their newly acknowledged desires. Unfortunately, they are shown to admire in men all that feminists were fighting against: control, recklessness, possessiveness, disrespect for

others, irresponsibility, neglect of the family, etc.

This article examines the characters in Paley's short story "The Pale Pink Roast," from an interdisciplinary psychological perspective with emphasis on the dark triad of personality traits and sensory marketing of the self-embodied by Peter, the ex-husband, that influences decision making in others, in this case, Anna. The discussion leads to an analysis of how and why Peter, the ex-husband, has so much influence over Anna's actions and reactions. This article moves forward by introducing various relevant terms such as the dark triad, sensory marketing, and desire whilst linking these discussion points to relevant parts of Paley's story as the conclusion, in this regard, is ultimately drawn.

The Dark Triad

The Dark Triad of personality is Narcissism, Machiavellianism, and Psychopathy. As mentioned by Jonasen et al., the characteristics that define each of these personality traits of the Dark Triad are "vanity and self-centeredness (i.e., narcissism), manipulation and cynicism (Machiavellianism), callous social attitudes and impulsivity (i.e., psychopathy)" (102). Individuals who embody these traits can be seen commonly in fictional texts in the form of antiheroes, Byronic heroes, or dark heroes (Jonason et al.). Jonason et al. claim that those who embody traits of the dark triad are all around us, whether we are willing to admit it or not. Kaufman et al. also develop this idea when they refer to the "emerging consensus that the dark core (or so called heart of darkness) of these dark traits consists of an antagonistic social strategy characterized by high levels of interpersonal manipulation and callous behavior (Jones and Figueredo, 2013; Marcus eta al., 2018: Mashagen et al., 2018)" (1).

Paley's presentation of Peter in "The Pale Pink Roast" has significant worth in showing how, through the dark triad, an insidious marketing of the self occurs and a sexually charged image is created. Peter is like most other men in Paley's works: he shies away from responsibility and divorces Anna even after having a child with her. A similar situation is referred to by Mary Colleen Ubel with regards to "A Woman, Young and Old," where the husband revokes his attention from the family and the narrator informs that "her parents 'were deeply and irrevocably in love till Joanna and I revoked everything for them.' The father sums up his point of view in this way, '... a wife,' he said, 'is a beloved mistress until the children come and then ...,' making clear the importance he places on a spontaneous sexual relationship" (17). Similarly, Anna, as ex-wife, is to Peter a site of spontaneous sexual gratification with no strings attached.

Peter clearly demonstrates the presence of the dark triad through his behavior and interaction with Anna. His character is a perfect embodiment of the dark triad that enables him to successfully market an image of his self and a corresponding lifestyle in order to manipulate those around him without any scruples. He actively builds his image with full awareness, reflects a strong sense of self-fulfillment in his attitude, and purveys a sensory aura that affects his surroundings in a way that allows for the fulfillment of his own egoistic needs. Narcissism is clearly evident from his sensory marketing of his self. His Machiavellianism is clear from the way he takes sexual advantage of his ex-wife, and Psychopathy is clear from

his total disregard of her feelings and the blame he lays on her as he confidently, without a single grain of guilt "easy and impervious, in full control, he cartwheeled eastward into the source of the night" (Paley 99). Fully at the expense of Anna who, under his influence, willingly returns to the active male/ passive female dichotomy.

The following sections with examples from the text that display his interaction with Anna support the assumption that the dark triad is embodied in Peter's character.

Narcissism
Narcissism finds expression in vanity and self-centeredness. From the moment Peter enters the park he flaunts his presence. Anna sees him: "straddling the daffodils," kicking "aside the disappointed acorns," as he "endowed a grand admiring grin to two young girls" (Paley 94). The verbs used here, "straddle," "kick," and "endow" in the description of his behavior, indicate an attitude of disregard and vanity. This is intensified by the words, "Look at me, I'm a real outdoorski these days" as he tells Anna to observe him as he turns around "singing like a summer bird" (Paley 94). And when he convinces Anna to take him to see her new apartment he takes her arm as he makes his way through a crowd of unfamiliar men and boys proudly saying, "Going, going, gone," and "So long, fellows"(Paley 94). His vanity is obvious here as he shows off his accomplishment of getting Anna to walk arm in arm in plain view as if she were his prize possession. Peter realizes that a lot of his ability to get things into his favor depends on the way he looks and carries himself. He boasts, therefore, of the way he looks after himself: "I take care of myself, Anna. That's why. Vegetables, high proteins. I'm not the night owl I was. Grapefruits, sunlight, oh sunlight, that's my dear love now." With intentions of convincing Anna that he is a changed man he says that, he is no longer "egocentric and selfish, the way I used to be" (Paley 47). Such a boastful glorification of himself invites Anna to consider him differently and think of him as a changed person.

Machiavellianism
The clear traits of Machiavellianism also noticed in Peter are manipulation and cynicism. The way he addresses others reveals a cynicism connected to his sense of vanity. He calls to Louie: "Hey, you glass-eyed louse, c'mere" (Paley 45); refers to his grandpa as "that old jerk"; and, has an obvious disregard for Anna. As for his manipulation, he gradually pulls Anna towards doing a sexual act that she would regret. He knows how to manipulate her emotions: "She was faint and leaden, a sure sign in Anna, if he remembered correctly, of passion. 'Shall we dance?' he asked softly, a family joke" (Paley 50). He shows a tenderness towards her that is not genuine, as he carefully scrutinizes every moment and every reaction Anna has to his advances as he seeks the level of opportunity he may take advantage of, only to accuse her of initiating and deceiving him into the sexual encounter they have.

Psychopathy
The traits of Psychopathy find expression in callous social attitudes and impulsiveness. Peter has a repulsive side to him that is hidden behind an image of positivity and confidence. As a father he has certain social responsibilities that he is unwilling to perform. His daughter Judy obviously loves him and is ecstatic to see him but after a temporary show of affection

as he refers to her as a fluffy cat he continues: "But you'd better keep your claws in or I'll drop you right into the Hudson River" (Paley 44). This is a terrible image to give one's child. Again, when Anna requests him to take Judy for the weekend, he sighs in bitterness and exclaims: "Come in peace, go in peace. Of course I'll take her. I like her. She's my kid" (Paley 44). Responsibility as a father is not a matter of whether the child is likeable or not. That he does not care about Judy much and considers her an obstacle to his self-fulfillment is clear from his proposition to Anna: "Let's ditch the kid. I'm not your enemy" (Paley 45). At the end of the story as an obvious indication of his callous attitude towards socially acceptable behavior and preference for impulsivity, he leaves Anna guilt-ridden, in doubt, and in tears as he himself happily, "in full control" cartwheels into the night (Paley 52).

From the analysis above, clearly the characteristics displayed through Peter's character weave a portrait of the type of man who controls the world around him through mechanisms of the dark triad. These devices leave him insensitive to others' needs as he "swirls" his way through life, leaving the pressure of responsibility and taking advantage of those who, entrapped by the illusory image of happiness he portrays through sensory marketing, are willing to sacrifice their time and agency to build up his ego.

Sensory Marketing

Aradhna Krishna defines sensory marketing as "marketing that engages the consumer's senses and affects their perception, judgment and behavior" (2). From the beginning of the short story in question, Peter is marketing his self and newly adopted lifestyle in a way that enwraps Anna in the false narrative of his sense of self. Bertil Hultén identifies three personal driving forces through which, "as a lifestyle, individualization expresses the culture and zeitgeist of contemporary society" (261). He continues his description of those forces in the same section of his essay as follows:

> The first one, image building, is linked to the consumption of brands and experiences, which give individuals an opportunity to create their own unique identity and image. ... (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995).
>
> The second one, self-fulfillment, is linked to quality of life and welfare, in terms of changing consumption patterns. ... The transition from low-value to high-value service activities emphasizes the importance of the personal value of the experience, and service-related time use emphasizes the self and self-fulfillment (Gershuny, 2000).
>
> The third one, sensory experience, is linked to an individual's striving for identity and image, as well as for self-fulfillment. In this regard, individualization is dependent on cognitive, emotional and value-based elements, which explain why most individuals should be seen as active, participative, and creative actors. ... (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2000). (cited in Hultén 261)

As mentioned in the extract above, a lifestyle is made to appeal to an individual through image building, self-fulfillment, and sensory experience. In this case, Anna, under the influence of the sensory marketing of Peter's projected image, makes love to him even though

she is no longer his wife and she has already married someone else. After this unexpected act she is in tears as she tries to justify her actions to Peter as well as to herself while, on the other hand, Peter, ego-satisfied by her confession that she "did it for love," blames her and then happily leaves the apartment. Such narratives are distressing, considering the fact that the feminist movement was meant to raise the self-esteem of women and free them from life decisions that would induce a guilt-ridden existence.

Desire and Female Sexuality

With its roots in the philosophical ideas of Plato, where desire is seen as an imaginative yearning for something that one does not have, desire as lack has been linked to understanding the development of the self through the writings of many including the prominent psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. In its simplest form, it can be said that in his "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I," he discusses the fulfillment of the desire to be as having its basis in reference to an external image (the mirror image as I or not I). From this concept, Graeber generalizes the object of desire as always being an image of perfection, an imaginary completion for one's ruptured self (*Anthropological* 257-258). Thus, desire is distinguished "from needs, urges or intentions" because "desire a) is always rooted in imagination and b) tends to direct itself toward some kind of social relation, and that social relation entails a desire for some kind of recognition" (Graeber, "Consumption" 494).

In 1920s America, a recognizable shift in subjectivity occurred as desire or rather the creation of it became a fundamental aspect of the self. Kathy L. Peiss documents an interesting aspect of desire in the socio-economic atmosphere in America in her essay "American Women and the Making of Modern Consumer Culture." According to Piess, "Modern American consumer culture arose after 1890 as an outcome of a synergy of economic and cultural forces. ... the modern ad agency promised to create a national market of consumers, indeed, to systematize desire." Her claim that consumer culture aimed to "systematize desire" implies that desire can be created and manipulated in accordance with the type of consumption consumer culture would encourage. As consumerism flourished there was a growing sense that consumption involved not only the purchase of goods but an entire way of life. Piess continues, the woman consumer was stereotyped as being "emotional and impulsive," and being driven by "inarticulate longings" and "dormant desires." They could be thus easily manipulated into making decisions that may even go against their self-interest. She further points out that the making of the female into voyeuristic pleasure objects was not and is not limited to male manipulation. Female advertisers are also "easily submerged in the celebration of female beauty," found it to be "an end in itself" and "conventional notions of women—in terms of beauty, frivolity, and romance-resurfaced." Feminists found themselves caught in contradictory impulses. Profound insecurities regarding the beauty of the average woman lead her to feel insignificant and out of fashion if somehow lacking in the latest craze in clothes, cosmetics, and accessories. Thereby, influenced by a consumer culture and images of consumption, individuals are encouraged to view themselves as desiring subjects that cannot live without pleasure, entertainment, acquisition, and euphoria. Individuals in such a consumer culture that forsakes positive moral undertones allow themselves to be manipulated in self-destructive ways.

As desire took center stage, self-control was replaced with self-gratification. Emilio and Freedman aptly observe that, "An ethic that encouraged the purchase of consumer products also fostered an acceptance of pleasure, self-gratification, and personal satisfaction, a perspective easily translated to the province of sex (234). This change in socio-cultural values affects the moral aspects of the American worldview. Psychologically drawn to the fantasy of the constructed body-image, both women and men yearn for bodily perfection that will evoke sexual responses. Interestingly, the simulated image becomes more real than real and ultimately displaces true identity. As a result, subjects in a consumer society feel psychologically and emotionally insecure when comparing their physical properties to these impossible-to-attain images. It is out of this insecurity and feeling of dissatisfaction that consumerism creates dependency on products outside the self. In the case of Anna, this dependency manifests itself in her need to be acknowledged by Peter as an object of desire.

The first description that the reader gets of Peter as compared to Anna is, "A year ago, in plain view, Anna had begun to decline into withering years, just as he swelled to the maximum of manhood, spitting pipe smoke, patched with tweed, an advertisement of a lover who startled men and detained the ladies" (Paley 43). This could be read as an indication that women in a marriage are usually pulled into a world of responsibility and self-denial in comparison to men who bloom into adulthood and yet retain their adolescent personalities. For such men, profusely appearing in Paley's stories, it is ok to be so – because women like Anna still admire and find something to love about their personalities.

Anna, in Paley's "The Pale Pink Roast," represents the paradoxical situation "modern" women were in. She is gradually aroused by Peter's physique and from the moment she sees him his appearance becomes a source of sexual excitement. Mary Colleen Ubel quite rightly comments on the effect of visual cues on Paley's women, "This physical weakness for men is common to Paley's women. Both Ginny and Faith are drawn to their husbands' physical attractiveness" (16). What Anna feels and acknowledges with a passing remark – "Peter, you're the one who really looks wonderful. You look just—well—healthy" (Paley 47) – Ginny openly declares, "Once I met my husband with his winking looks, he was my only interest" (Paley 93). Like Ginny and Faith, Anna is absorbed in the image of perfection Peter displays. When Peter takes off his shirt she cannot but admire his physique. She succumbs to his sexual appeal.

But as she stares at Peter, she thinks of what she had read somewhere, i.e., "cannibals, tasting man, saw him thereafter as the great pig, the pale pink roast" (Paley 48). Anna, like most other female characters in Paley's short story collections, swings between admiration and disgust in her attitude towards men. She attempts to deny and suppress the desire she feels for Peter by objectifying him as a "pale pink roast"(48). On the one hand, this signifies her attempt to deny the high level of attraction that she feels towards him. On the other hand, this cannibalistic image shows her wish to consume him. In an attempt to establish agency she mentally conjures up the image of the "pale pink roast." Interesting to note at this point is Graeber's observation about food consumption, "Eating is indeed the

perfect idiom for destroying something while literally incorporating it" ("Consumption" 505). So, symbolically, Anna's image of Peter is one that reflects her urge to destroy and yet incorporate him. Thereby, she equates the image of cannibalism with her carnal desire and the equivocal meaning presented by the metaphor of the pale pink roast exposes the contradiction she feels within herself.

Peter is like a model "for an advertisement of a lover" (Paley 43). His sensory marketing of himself affects Anna because it creates subconscious triggers that redefine her perceptions of him. The simulated image of him as a changed man deceives her into believing that Peter could be a new and changed version of himself, despite all that she knows to be true about him. Judging from Peter's flirtatious and carefree nature, and the fact that he unhesitatingly leaves his child, Judy, with a girl who apparently helped him take care of her the year Anne was working, even though he was meeting his daughter after quite a long time, clearly suggests the role he plays as a father is not exactly perfect. Thus, the question to be asked is: why did Anna expose herself to such meanness and allow a sexual event to take place despite knowing that Peter was an egocentric, selfish playboy? If Anna was bold enough to go through with a divorce, why did she subject herself to the degrading accusation, by Peter, of seducing him?

> You're great, Anna. Man, you're great. You wiggle your ass. You make a donkey out of me and him both. You could've said no. (Paley 51)

Though the sexual act was initiated by Peter, with Anna giving in to his direct and indirect advances, he easily lays full blame on Anna for the events that lead to the situation. The reader too asks, why indeed, did she not say no to Peter whom she already knows is unwilling to shoulder the responsibility of a sincere relationship? Peter's intentions are obvious from his comment, "You know, we could have had some pretty good times together every now and then if you weren't so damn resentful" (Paley 51). Peter's words reveal his inherent tendency to exploit Anna and escape responsibility especially through the phrases "every now and then" as he accuses her of being resentful and unwilling to have "some pretty good times."

Peter praises Anna's choice in pricey clothes, her salon fixed hair, "classy tv," and "fabulous desk" (Paley 51). His attraction towards her is not because of any genuine emotion or care. All that he mentions is superficial items: clothes, hair, and furniture. What is obvious here is that Anna does not matter to him as his ex-wife, the mother of his child, or even as a human being. To him she is just another opportunity to satisfy his male ego.

For Anna, the attraction she feels is not at all related to ego satisfaction. Anna's desire for Peter is fueled by his sensory marketing of his self and carefree lifestyle that feeds on Anna's insecurities derived from womanhood bound by responsibilities which make her feel less a subject of adoration and more a subject bound by responsibilities towards others. Noticeable here is that her present husband is also absent (as he is building up his business) and here too she has already started defending him. In her words, "He's a lovely person. He's moving his business. It takes time. Peter, please. He'll be here in a couple of days

(Paley 51). Yet, interestingly, there seems to be an emotional distance between Anna and her present husband. To feel wanted and secure she needs the approval of a man and even a man as unreliable as Peter will do.

Evidently, though she has divorced Peter, she still has not been able to fully let go. She succumbs to his advances. We are told that Peter suddenly kisses her "(l)ike a good and happy man increasing his virtue" and as he "tipped her chin to look and measure opportunity," he notices that she did not move away from him. Remaining in the "embrace of his right arm, her face nuzzling his shoulder, her eyes remained closed." She was seemingly transported to an alternate reality, into Peter's sensual world, for "she could not open her eyes" (Paley 50). Peter took this as a positive sign to advance:

> She was faint and leaden, a sure sign in Anna, if he remembered correctly, of passion. "Shall we dance?" he asked softly, a family joke. (Paley 50)

Anna's ontological reality is momentarily disrupted. Her closed eyes consume time and space, allowing Peter to transport her to a time before they were separated, a time when a common joke could be mutually understood. Taken out of context, this may seem like a romantic gesture of fondness but Peter is there for the fulfillment of his own desire. And, as easily as he temporarily steps back into Anna's life, he inevitably will remove himself again.

Anna realizes her own weakness towards Peter's appearance and gestures. So, from the very beginning of the story, we find her struggling to retain composure. This struggle within her finds expression in the bitterness and sarcasm she initially shows towards him. There is a trail of sarcastic comments. For example, she refers to him as "Peter, Peter, pumpkin eater" (Paley 48), which indirectly suggests the second line of this nursery rhyme: "had a wife and couldn't keep her." As such, she seems to experience what, according to Thapan is the feeling of "an unfulfilled femininity" which "women who have terminated a relationship perceive in themselves" (WS77). From a set of case studies of divorced women in India, Thapan also argues that women "experience the cynicism and bitterness that is part of a deteriorating or terminated marital relationship" (WS77). Interestingly, Anna is shown to experience the same as is revealed by her ironically sarcastic remark that she did indeed call Peter to become her lover and Peter's exclamatory response that she should not be so bitter.

When he accuses her of cheating on her husband, Anna is in tears. Peter responds coldly, placing all the responsibility and shame on her shoulders. It is only when she surrenders to his accusations and says she did it for "love" that he "smiled. He was embarrassed but happy" (Paley 51-52). He realizes he is in full control of her emotions and the situation and, thus, one of his parting comments is, "Oh, Anna, then good night, ... You're a good kid" (Paley 52). To him, she is just a "kid," not a woman!

In Anna's character portrayal, the reader notices a sense of self that is confused, contradictory, self-victimizing, and self-destructive. Anna is in torment both emotionally and psychologically because of a lapse of judgment on her part. By giving in to her sexual fantasy she has put herself in an uncertain situation. Indications that this momentary sexual encounter with Peter will inevitably lead her to deceive her present husband with

lies and destroy her own peace are obvious in the tears she is already shedding. All of the misgivings and helplessness are present because she looks for self-worth not in her own self but standards that depend on the opinion of someone from outside her self. She is not able to let go of the fantasy of being wanted and appreciated by a man.

Apparently, Anna is so fascinated by the image of power and carefree indulgence that Peter shows that she is deluded into thinking that by making him happy she will be fulfilled too. She is willing to forget what she knows about him and submit to his physical charm. She forgets that her past experience with Peter must not have been perfect or it would not have ended in divorce. Consequently, she is in denial about the fact that the stability she opted for in her present husband comes with its own price. Stability in a relationship comes with a strong sense of responsibility towards all those involved. She is so engrossed with the image Peter projects that she forgets that recklessness, spontaneity, carefree living, and disregard for consequences and social norms is not part of the equation for the stable family life that Anna so desperately desires.

Like Paley's other women, Anna has not been able to rise above her fear of falling short of expectations, her need to please, her need of validation and approval by men, in this case, Peter, thereby letting power and control fall into his hands. As a woman, Anna is unable to rise above thinking of herself as an object of consumption which exists for the satisfaction of others and, therefore, commits herself to a sexual affair which she later regrets. The fact that she wants to know how good she made Peter feel: "Did you have a real good time, Petey?" (Paley 50) makes it evident that, although she is a modern woman, her mind is still colonized by patriarchy and the expectations weighing her down. The psychological bearing of comparing and weighing one's value against unreachable imaginary standards raises a sense of doubt and dissatisfaction which, in turn, creates stress and anxiety in relation to one's subjectivity. The same is noticed as Anna, against her better judgment and her past experience with Peter, is immersed in the image he projects. Matched with his good looks is his projected image of confidence, certainty, control, and of course, his verbal admission of how he has changed: "I mean it's not egocentric and selfish, the way I used to be" (Paley 47). Anna is transported into Peter's self-narrative. In the case of such transportation, "while the person is immersed in the story, he or she may be less aware of real-world facts that contradict assertions made in the narrative" (Green and Brock 702). Against her better judgment, Anna plays into Peter's arms just as he expects her to.

Another possible explanation as to why Anna allowed herself to be pulled into a sexual act which she later regrets may lie in a claim made by Gerald Zaltman who claims that sensory cues are "hardwired into the brain's limbic system, the seat of emotions, and stimulate vivid recollections (177). Anna easily responds to Peter's self-narrative because this romantic side of him is familiar to her. They must have been in love at one time, otherwise there would have been no marriage or child, especially in the context of the then America. Fond memories accompanying her experience of life together would obviously play a role in her reaction towards his advances. Thus, instead of using her thought and reason as the basis of morality and behavior, she bases her actions and submissiveness to his sexual appeal on

the assumptive and imaginary bias of her emotional response.

Conclusion

The discussion above reveals how Paley's short stories gently advance her political agenda of raising awareness as each story she writes questions prevailing gender relations. Her stories collide with life head on. The perspectives she shows bring out realities that reveal the psychological and emotional worlds of women who are conflicted in their dealings with men. Paley was one of those women. Through her writing she was revealing authentic feelings of helplessness. She was, "the recovering daddy's girl who had always pleased men and been pleased by them" (Arcana 205). Anna's struggle was her struggle too. From her own experience she realized how much the feminist movement was suffering because of women being unable to hold on to their focus in such matters by submitting to sexual manipulation that find ground in insecurities that flourish in a commodified, consumer culture.

Paley's portrayals of dominating male characters, such as Peter whose personality reflects traits of the dark triad, also work as critiques of patriarchy. Even though men have been portrayed in such a negative light, Paley has never been criticized by men for her writing, neither have men been defensive in reading her stories. Judith Arcana gives a reason for this in the words of Paley's brother Victor. In his view, Paley is not a feminist. The women she portrays are "sad sacks" who have no direction in life: "They're getting kicked around by men. They seem to be making the same mistakes over and over again. One man leaves them and they move in with another man" (Arcana 213).

Such character-portrayals of men and women cut both ways: against men as power entitled beings governed by the dark triad who convincingly and powerfully apply sensory marketing through which they project themselves as desirable and fully in control (especially in their public dealings and social relations) yet somehow are able to escape corresponding responsibilities without any guilt or concern; and, also against women who are easily influenced by those types of personalities and, therefore, participate in their own victimization.

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Love as Water: Environmental Ethics in *Ponyo* and *The Shape of Water*

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Abstract

Analyzing two films, *Ponyo* by Hayao Miyazaki and *The Shape of Water* by Guillermo del Toro, this paper studies the portrayal of humanity's complex relationship with water that refuses to present itself as static, simple, and reducible. Attending to water as a dynamic entity, it investigates the dynamics of value and agency of water in its manifested ally, rebel, and love. Engaging in the discussion of reciprocity as a way forward to a world of harmony, the paper argues how water as an equalizer can inform humans to shun their anthropocentric hubris and can help recognize the shared materiality between the human and the non-human world. Drawing on references from the recent scholarship on elemental ecocriticism, material ecocriticism, and environmental ethics, the eco-aesthetics of the films will be studied to evoke an ethical position about water's fluidity and omnipresence that demand our respect and our recognition of the agency of the non-human world.

Keywords: water, ecocinema, elemental ecocriticism, material ecocriticism, anthropocentrism

Introduction

Japanese anime *Ponyo* and Hollywood blockbuster *The Shape of Water* have one thing in common in their unfolding of the unusual tales of love: the crucial presence of water. Both the films, in their respective water-dominated plots, unfold humanity's common materiality with the outside world, yoking a nexus between the land and the sea, the human and the non-human, and the known and the unknown. The fluidity and eeriness of water provide such a material condition in the films that the human protagonists are made to accept their own fluid nature that has always been inside them. The collapse of the boundary between the human and the non-human world is aesthetically achieved through the oneiric presence of water, powerfully presented by the creative visions of Hayao Miyazaki and Guillermo del Toro. The portrayal of water as a connector, transgressor, and mirror serves one crucial purpose by reminding us of the common materiality of the human and the rest of nature. In the process, the films induce a strong environmental ethics, warning us against the human hubris that leads to violence, chaos, and segregation between humans and the non-human world. Studying the films as two visual texts inundated with powerful eco-aesthetics can enthuse humans to think beyond the narrow limit of anthropocentrism and speciesism. Hence, this paper is a study of two tales of love nurtured in water, exploring its materiality, dynamism, and lively presence in connection with humans' complex dynamics with the non-human world.

Water portrayed in *Ponyo* and *The Shape of Water* acts as a repository of non-anthropocentric memory and desire. Water, as if holding up a mirror, reminds us of our evolutionary existence and fluid status of being, connecting us to the non-human world in a non-anthropocentric way. In the process, what these two visual texts attribute to water is an agency that can act, stimulate, create dream, and, in Jeffrey Cohen and Lowell Duckert's words, "make love and war" (16). Drawing references on the concept of elemental ecocriticism proposed by Cohen and Duckert, this paper investigates the dynamics of metamorphic water, considering water not only a life-forming entity that exists outside of the human/nonhuman animals' reality but also as an immersing fluidity that has the power to collapse the binary between the human and non-human world. It also draws on the concept of vibrant materialism in an attempt to recognize the agency of the non-human world as manifested in its response to human-caused environmental violence. To achieve that end, directors Hayao Miyazaki and Guillermo del Toro create a surreal, submerged world through vivid and colorful aesthetics. This powerful water-aesthetics, aided by creative imagination and technological support, can, eventually, invoke a spectator, transforming him/her as a more ecologically attuned sensing subject.

Prominent critic Paula Willoquet-Maricondi speaks highly of ecocinema's crucial role, avowing its value to arouse personal and political action among viewers. Her concept of a "paradigm shift" truly has an agency in subverting our traditional anthropocentric value system (45). She claims that the ecocinema is gifted in making a paradigm shift, pushing viewers "from a narrow anthropocentric worldview to an earth-centered, or ecocentric, view" (46). The shift might not be as swift and discernible as she asserts it to be, but what can be argued is that this shift is an entry point for a process of cognition, which can be achieved in the course of time through an exposure to ecocentric films. Adrian Ivakhiv's concept of ecocinema's power of "transporting" viewers in ways that other mediums possibly cannot is not at all far from Willoquet-Maricondi's idea of "paradigm shift." Drawing on the magnificent, kinetic as well as kinesthetic qualities of films, he suggests that they are efficient in elevating viewers' appreciation for the things and activities portrayed. Rather than being overtly critical of advanced visual technology, he intends to argue in favor of technology that can productively and communicatively mediate between viewers and the world, "a world which extends beyond what is immediately perceivable" (20). Thus, ecocinema's potential power of negotiating between the human and the non-human world can create a contact zone between the two apparently distinct worlds we have, unfortunately conceptualized through a watertight nature/culture dichotomy, especially since the Industrial Revolution. As the paper unfolds, we will see how *Ponyo* and *The Shape of Water* use the water narratives to mirror the human-animal in us, problematizing the boundary between the human and non-human world, and, in the process, develop a sense of common materiality, care, and love.

Ponyo and *The Shape of Water*: Violence against Nature

Ponyo is a Ghibli Production that immensely contributed to bring Japanese anime into the world stage. Upon its release in 2008 in Japan, and in 2009 in Southeast Asia and America, it went on to become a box office hit, earning both a loyal fan base and several prestigious

awards home and abroad. *Ponyo* is a fantasy tale of a goldfish named Brunhilde, later named as Ponyo, who falls in love with Sosuke, a human boy. The primary plot revolves around Ponyo and Sosuke's efforts to be together against her father Fujimoto's will. The vengeance of Fujimoto, resulting from human violence towards the environment, makes him decide to bring back the age of the ocean. As the plot unfolds, we see the love growing stronger, accepted by both Sosuke's mother, Lisa, and Ponyo's mother, Gran Mamare, the sea goddess. As the water overpowers the land, the existing harmony of the earth collapses. The fascinating images achieved by the breathtakingly hand-painted sketches create a surreal prehistoric world dominated by water that intensifies the climax of the anime, testing the bond of love between a human and a non-human. In the process, Ponyo attests to an indictment on humanity's irresponsible and selfish treatment of the natural environment, and the disasters that must inevitably arise in return.

The Shape of Water, released in 2017, is also a unique love story between a mute cleaning woman, Elisa, who works at a high-security government laboratory, and an Amazonian fish-man, captured and kept in the same laboratory. Set in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1962, the film gives voice to figures from a range of identity categories in terms of gender, sexuality, race, class, and disability. However, the iconic presence of the amphibian creature, which has gills like a fish but can stand like a human and has two breathing systems, makes it a symbol of an extreme other. The story primarily revolves around the utmost violence to which it is subjected by Colonel Richard Strickland who captured it from the Amazon River for further research and the selfless love it receives from Elisa. What follows is Elisa's successful attempt to free the fish-out-of-water from the confinement with the aid of her friend Giles, an artist, and her co-worker, Zelda, that eventually infuriates Strickland and his superior. Through a suspenseful climax, Elisa and the sea-creature are united underwater which figuratively promises a new hope, a new form of co-existence. The storytelling, cinematography, sincere performances of the actors, seamless background music, and finally the creative vision of del Toro not only made the film a massive success but also earned it immense critical appreciation. Like Hollywood blockbusters such as *The Day after Tomorrow* and *Avatar*, this several-awards-winning film, that won the Academy Award for the best motion picture, might not be touted as an environmental film by ecocinema critics. However, a close reading of this stunning visual text promises a sincere divulging of humanity's cruel treatment of the non-human world, and confirms the agency of the non-human other. Like *Ponyo*, the subtext of *The Shape of Water* strongly renounces human hubris and celebrates love, diversity, and reciprocity.

Both *Ponyo* and *The Shape of Water* address the discourse of violence against nature that is subtly embedded in the narration of the story. *Ponyo* starts with beautiful images of the underwater world in which we see diverse and beautiful fish, coral, and plants. This fantastic, deep ocean world of *Ponyo* is soon replaced by the surface water where images of tins, bottles, cans project the pollution caused by humans. We are shown how marine animals suffer by commercial fishing trawlers that catch all sorts of fish, big and small, along with countless junk in the process. The two contrasting images – one with pristine water nurturing the diversity of marine species and the other with polluted water struggling

with garbage – sets the backdrop of the anime in which water will take its own course in the form of a tsunami as the story unfolds. The film's next scene is crucial not only in developing the love story between Ponyo and Sosuke but also demonstrating the unkind behavior of humans toward the sea. Ponyo escapes her father's den, ends up being caught in a fishing net and, then, stuck in a floating glass jar. With this symbolic human violence on nature, Miyazaki manages to establish the cause of Fujimoto's wrath for humanity. Because of humanity's selfish act and cruelty towards the environment, he wants to end the era of abominable humans. His loathing for humanity is evident when he warns Ponyo against the humans: "What you know about human? They spoil the sea. They treat your home like their empty black souls" (29:35-29:45). Fujimoto is shown to refine vast quantities of the water life through an elixir to restore the original state of the ocean that is contaminated by humans. The massive tsunami that finally hits the earth is presented as a direct consequence of humanity's slow violence on the environment.

The violence towards the non-human world is portrayed more penetratingly in *The Shape of Water* as it happens to an anthropomorphized character who is capable of screaming and bleeding. The unnamed sea-creature is chained and kept in an artificial water tank in the laboratory of OCCAM, an Aerospace Research Center. Strickland treats it brutally since it is just a horrible beast to him, nothing but "an affront" (28:25). His white supremacist view of the world makes it nothing but a lurking thing in the tank who does not live up to his standard of beauty, worthiness, and ability. Seeing it bleeding terribly, when the doctor asks for help, he replies: "It's an animal. Just keep it tame" (42:05-42:08). He repeatedly wounds it by shocking it with an electric cattle prod. The horrifying image of the creature screaming and bleeding helplessly while tethered is one of the moving moments of the film. Human beings' selfish explorative attitude towards the non-human world comes across strongly in many scenes. One of the exemplary scenes could be when the doctor begs for the life of the intelligent creature to which the General, Strickland's superior, replies: "I can do whatever the hell I want …. It is my damn decision" (43:55-44:05). If the so-called Amazonian amphibious creature encapsulates the otherness of the non-human world, the cruelty towards it showcases the extreme violence of humans that they have been inflicting slowly, but steadily.

Ponyo and *The Shape of Water*: The Agency of Nature
Ponyo and *The Shape of Water* are, however, anything but straightforward depictions of nature at humans' disposal. Overlooking the agency of the non-human world portrayed powerfully in the films would be feeding our human hubris. If the films depict violence against nature on the surface, at the core they showcase how nature responds to human actions with more power and agency. In this regard, we can turn towards the Gaia hypotheses, proposed by James Lovelock, which has been a revolutionary concept in fighting against human beings' egoistic, anthropocentric standpoint. The Gaia theory suggests that the whole planet functions as a self-correcting single being in which all living organisms interact with surrounding inorganic organisms to build a synergistic, complex system. Lovelock's latest book *The Revenge of Gaia* proposes a vision of a vindictive Gaia punishing strong-willed humans, which is unfortunately a present reality. In the age of

the Anthropocene, humans can no longer overlook the concept of the revenge of Gaia or, the *thing-power* as proposed by Jane Bennett. Bennett, in her discussion of "vibrant materialism," subverts the anthropocentric dichotomy between life and matter, beings and things, and organic and inorganic. Coining the concept of *thing-power*, she intends to foreground "the material agency or effectivity of nonhuman or not-quite human things" in our understanding of the world filled with non-human things (viii). Bennett's idea of *thing-power*, which is adept in initiating and producing "effects dramatic and subtle," reinforces what the non-human world does to its surroundings in *Ponyo* and *The Shape of Water* (6). The retaliation of water and the non-human creature is manifested in the films in their embrace of fury and in their denial to regenerate, reinforcing Lovelock's belief that for each of our actions, there will be only consequences.

The payback of the ocean is made evident in *Ponyo* for a greater length of time; more than thirty minutes of the last half of the film has been dedicated to the revengeful tsunami. The scenes from 41:00 to 43:00 are particularly mention-worthy in their spectacular portrayals of giant waves that makes the ocean look like mad. The water level has risen so high that everything sinks under its mighty presence. The helpless sailors on the sea realize that the world is out of balance since the sea level is rising. The moon is so close that its "gravity is forcing the ocean to rise" (1:00:20-1:00-30). Fujimoto is made the voice of the angry ocean who declares a war on humanity. Eric Reinders considers Fujimoto as a crucial character who is not only motivated by anger at his daughter's disobedience of the ocean's law but also by the desire to seek revenge on the humans who have damaged his world. He argues: "This is the voice of anger at the destruction we humans have done to the world. This is the voice which says that it would not be so bad if humans were wiped away" (156). Reinders's argument reinforces the idea that the ocean is not a dead organism; it has its own mechanism to answer back. Thus, the retaliation of water, as portrayed by Miyazaki, can be interpreted as its wrath on humanity which, in the process, confirms water's role as an active agent.

The vengeance of the non-human world towards humans resonates subtly throughout *The Shape of Water* whenever Strickland's two torn fingers, bleeding and stinking, appear on the screen. After ripping off the creature from its natural abode, he subjects it to extreme cruelty and torture. In one of the encounters, while Strickland was brutally hurting the sea-creature with electric shock, it (I deliberately use a gender-neutral pronoun for the sea-creature to avoid both anthropomorphism and gender essentialism) retaliates by chopping off his two fingers. Del Toro decided not to show the violence explicitly. What is shown, rather, is the pool of blood covering the floor on which Elisa finds two mutilated fingers while cleaning the bloody mess. Though Strickland manages to fix his cut fingers through an elaborate surgery, his fingers start rotting, spreading a foul smell and bleeding occasionally. The damage is done for life by the non-human creature who evidently defeats Strickland's hubris, both species and technological, about which he always boasts. The expressions in its eyes, the gesture of the body, and the furious sound this shackled creature produces, while experimented on or tortured by humans, gives us a glimpse of its hatred and rage. It is the so-called Amazonian River god, once free and hurt by Elisa's apparent death,

who finally takes away Strickland's life in an act of final revenge. Strickland's epiphanic realization before breathing his last can be comprehended as humanity's ultimate awe of the inexplicable power of nature: "Fuck! You are a god!" (1:55:20-1:55:25).

Ponyo and *The Shape of Water*: Fluidity and Dynamism of Water

Nature's retaliation against human actions is a strong reminder of not only human ephemerality and vulnerability but also nature's agency and dynamism, and its mechanism to adapt and survive. By showcasing water's overpowering, fluid, and dynamic nature, both *Ponyo* and *The Shape of Water* maintain a crucial environmental ethical position. What these two visual texts imply is the uncanny dynamism and supremacy of water that is beyond human cognizance, which we constantly require both inside and around us. Cohen and Duckert's rhetorical question underline this idea, subverting our long-held understanding of elemental matters that surround us: "How did we forget that matter is a precarious system and dynamic entity, not a reservoir of tractable commodities?" (5). The centrality of water and the powerful portrayal of the non-humans in the form of a fish girl and a sea-creature in the films, subsequently, document the power and vitality of the non-human world that demands our recognition of its inherent value and agency.

Ponyo documents the consequence of the treatment of the ocean by humans as a resource. Fujimoto's hatred for humans results from the latter's selfish exploitation of nature. The ocean's overpowering response to human evil through submerging everything reminds us of its supreme agency. This hyperreal world with fish swimming on the street and marine organisms floating around the trees indicate water's elemental nature of fluidity and transformation. This agency of water is made obvious in the storytelling by giving it as much importance as any of the characters. Considering the ocean as "a living presence," Miyazaki informs in his discussion of the art of *Ponyo*: "the sea is animated not as a backdrop to the story, but as one of its principal characters" (11). In a close reading of the film, Dani Cavallaro confirms how the film foregrounds the concept of the ocean as a living presence throughout its progression. Referring to Miyazaki's craft of distorting the normal space and shapes, he discusses how the film uses effective techniques "to foreground the ocean's prominence," which are inspired by the "spellbinding physics of water itself" (89). The centrality of water is maintained in the love story by making it the active agent that brings the two lovers together. Sosuke meets Ponyo first floating on the sea, and she returns to him once again, after freeing herself from Fujimoto, riding on the sea waves. Finally, their love proves to be true only when they are submerged in water. There is no denying that water dominates almost every scene of the anime. It is the sea-goddess, also known as the goddess of mercy, Gran Mamare, depicted as possessing the supreme agency, who eventually restores the balance of the earth. Thus, what the film does is to portray water with power and dynamism that convincingly demands our respect and recognition of its unique elementality.

The Shape of Water sets off in a dreamy underwater space with the camera gradually taking us through a corridor where a chandelier is hanging from a ceiling and fish are swimming around it. We witness a surreal vision of sleeping Elisa floating above the sofa in her studio

apartment where everything floats in the water. The oneiric space with Elisa floating in it seems to be a dream of desire that she is pulled towards. Film critic Matt Thrift finds a connection between water and fantasy in the early setting of the film. In his review, he discusses how the film is "awash with Freudian imagery symbolising female sexuality and (re-)birth," which portrays Elisa as possessing her own sexual agency (par. 8). Lonely, ignored, and marginalized Elisa seems to be born again to start afresh, falling in love with the sea-creature. The plot of the movie seems to soak in a water-driven tale of transgressive love. Elisa first saw the sea-man inside water kept in a machine, and their mutual love and respect develop beside the water tank. Later, the unusual lovemaking scene happens underwater in a fantastic way when Elisa fills the bathroom with water. Even the plan she makes to release it into the ocean has also something to do with water. She informs about the time to execute the plan to her neighbor and friend, Giles, saying: "Soon. When the rain fills the canal that flows to the sea" (1:18:00). Thus, water functions as a crucial agent in bringing these two lovers together and finally reuniting them. It is only when the sea-creature jumps into the water with the apparently dead Elisa and brings her back to life by kissing her, do they come together.

These water narratives remind us of the crucial presence of water everywhere – both outside and inside our body. The role of water as an actant that has the power to bring life to entities is suggestive of the planet's crucial life force – water. The centrality of water in the narratives makes one thing clear: water is active, full of agency, and possesses certain elementality that is unique, yet shared. Ecocriticism's recent inclination towards elementality of matter is indeed substantial in the sense that it makes humans recognize the commonality of materiality of all biotic and abiotic organisms. Elemental ecocriticism focuses on all the four key elements – earth, air, fire, and water – and their "promiscuous combinations," that operates within "a humanly knowable scale while extending an irresistible invitation to inhuman realms" (Cohen and Duckert 7). Attending to the vital elementality of matter is crucial in the age of the Anthropocene not only to acknowledge the complex materiality and dynamism of matter but also the non-human materiality inside us. Cohen and Duckert in their discussion of elementality of matter bring forth some thought-provoking principles of elements. Referring to the centrality of fundamental elements like water, they argue that we are never out of our element. Drawing on Galenic humoralism, they continue that earth (black bile), fire (yellow bile), water (phlegm), and air (blood) are not outside of us, not "out there," but are "the shared ecomateriality that is both us and world" (13). Both the films attend to the elementality of things with certain centrality and conviction which, eventually, discloses that we are always exposed to the elements. Without acknowledging the dynamic agency of the non-human world, human knowledge would be subjective, boastful sermons since our understanding of ourselves and the world around us is, as suggested by Cohen and Duckert, "matter-mediated" (11). Thus, the powerful narratives of both the films demonstrate the agency and materiality of the non-human world which humans refuse to acknowledge either due to ignorance or excessive pride. The feeling of wonder that the films generate through a cinematic eco-aesthetic helps create an ecocentric space in our psyche, inviting us to recognize all natural forms as sentient and animate.

Ponyo and *The Shape of Water*: Love as Water

Both *Ponyo* and *The Shape of Water* can be read as attempts to bridge the separation between the human and non-nonhuman world through evoking a sense of love, respect, and acceptance. Like water, love is portrayed as fluid and transgressive which has the capability of making humans reflective. In the process, love as water functions as a mirror to remind the characters not only their fluid identity but also their human hubris. Letting go of his human sense of superiority, Sosuke accepts the fish girl and befriends her. Though Miyazaki creates almost a utopian world in which Sosuke's mother also accepts her without questioning Ponyo's identity, there are few like the old lady, Tokisan, at the Old Center who warn him against the strange affection. Yet, Sosuke must not leave her and must prove his love for her. Sosuke's love stands for a hope in the posthumanist tradition and a power in humanity's responsible action in that tradition. Sosuke's acceptance is a symbolic demonstration of a world of humility in which humans no longer are obsessed with what is human only. Before he proves his true love for Ponyo, Gran Mamare declares to Fujimoto: "If Sosuke's love is true, Ponyo will be permanently transformed, and the balance of the nature will be restored" (1:05:30). But, if his love fails, she will turn into sea-foam. The sea goddess enquires of him: "Could you love her if she moved between two worlds?" (1:31:40). Sosuke seems determined to accept her as she truly is. Unaware of the fact that Ponyo will transform into a human girl if his love is true, he says he "love[s] all the Ponyos" (1:31:30). His utterance – "I love her. It's a big responsibility" – is the anime's ethical position that demonstrates human acceptance of the non-human world with love and care as a responsible being.

If the powerful water overpowers the land, and the magical Ponyo overwhelms Sosuke, both the land and Sosuke, in return, allow themselves to be immersed in the formers' elements. Their union blurs the boundary between the land and the sea, between humans and non-humans, reminding us of the prejudiced anthropocentric human knowledge of definition and classification. To deflate the concept of hierarchy and separateness, Miyazaki emphasizes the continuity of all life forms and their mutual interconnectedness. In his discussion of *Ponyo*, Cavallaro argues how the smooth transition of Ponyo from a fish to a human challenges our understanding of the world. He states:

> The classification of diverse creatures allows humans to bask in the temporary illusion that nature can be explained and mapped out by science – until, that is, they begin to perceive nature's otherness, and decide to tighten the screws on this baffling universe by devising ways not merely organizing it, but also of mastering it. (108)

Miyazaki's world of *Ponyo* creates a counter discourse to this metanarrative, as suggested by Cavallaro, by depicting a world in which "the present and the prehistoric past coalesce in an uninterrupted flow of life" (75). Cavallaro considers that Ponyo successfully refutes the notion of humanity's separateness from nature, by creating a counter-aesthetics of human exploitation of its resources as though they were disposable commodities. He argues, "Miyazaki emphasizes the importance of embracing the Other as pivotal to the definition of

one's own being. This entails a loving and respectful acceptance of the Other's fundamental difference" (103). Thus, nature does not serve in the film as a source of humanity's comfort and gratification, rather as a form of self-discovery. Debunking the human construction of the hierarchy and the water-tight boundary between humans and non-humans, *Ponyo* certainly problematizes our customary understanding of the non-human world, and makes a strong case for advocating environmental ethics.

While in *Ponyo*, Ponyo, the non-human, leaves her water world and turns into a human, in *The Shape of Water*, it is Elisa, the human, who leaves her world and turns into a half-human, half-non-human water creature. However, the question is not who has sacrificed her essence, if there is any truly, as both the films celebrate the transformative, fluid nature of love and being, denying the fixity of things or identities. Like *Ponyo*, *The Shape of Water* collapses the frontiers of the two worlds – the world of humans and of non-humans, the world of the land and of the sea. By bringing the two apparently disjointed worlds together, what the film achieves is a unique status that destabilizes our understanding of ourselves and the Others. The love that develops between Elisa and the sea-creature is disturbingly unique as it is an intra-species affair that initiates on earth and is nurtured in water. Both of them speak a language of love and care, and respond and reciprocate through their senses. This transgressive love, that defies human understanding of gender, race, class, language, and species, is a celebration of the diversity of all life forms who are beautiful, beneficial, and relevant in their own unique ways. Elisa expresses her feeling to her neighbor friend, Giles, in sign language: "When he looks at me, the way he looks at me, he doesn't know what I lack, or how I am incomplete. He sees me for what I am as I am" (46:35-47:00). Thus, their mutual love and respect spring from their unprejudiced acceptance of who they are.

However, Strickland fails to appreciate the unique value of the sea-creature, judging it only in terms of its use value. He drags the "filthy thing" from the Amazon River so that he can vivisect it to learn more about it. His cruel comment to it, while enquired by the doctor about its future, reveals human exploitation of the non-human world as a source of knowledge and resource: "this thing dies, you learn, I live" (1:00:40-1:00:45). As the plot progresses, we witness how his sense of hierarchy as evident in his utterance "we are created in God's image" is downplayed by the mighty presence of the creature (29:05-29:10). In an interview with Fox 5, Del Toro describes the creature not as an animal, rather as "an elemental god from a river that represents the ancient holy past for another culture" (2:48-2:58). Interestingly, he introduces the human as an ugly creature who tortures, and studies, and prods, failing to see the creature as a divine and beautiful thing. He deliberately creates foil characters to Strickland to appreciate the sea-creature for its unique value. The doctor finds it "an intricate, beautiful thing" (1:00:29-1:00:32) while Giles gazes at him first and says: "He's so beautiful!" (1:06:36-1:06:38). Their acceptance of the creature as a unique being makes them help Elisa to release it into the ocean. It is finally through Elisa that the film pays tribute to love that has the power to make humans accepting and selfless. Risking her life in releasing it into the water, Elisa, like Sosuke, takes responsibility for what she loves. She confesses to Giles: "He is happy to see me. Every time every day. Now

I can either save him or let him die. Never see his eyes see me again. I will not let that go" (47:05-47:25). However, the film does not glorify the humans' role as a savior of the planet. Though ironically it is the non-human which brings the human back to life finally, what *The Shape of Water* celebrates is acceptance, mutual respect, and shared love.

Like *Ponyo*, *The Shape of Water* debunks humanist understanding of evolution, ecology, and technological coordinates. Developing fish-like gills on Elisa'a neck is a fictional treatment of evolution that reminds us of our shared heritage with creatures of the water. The final kiss in underwater in the last scene is truly symbolic of the union between the common materiality of human and non-human world. The film ends with the lovers floating, embracing each other, while one of Elisa's shoes falls off. This image seems significant in its power to demonstrate the human's letting go of their technological pride. However, with still one shoe on, Elisa does not lose her human identity completely; rather she embraces the non-human world with her human materiality. Her transformation, both material and perceptional, questions our taken-for-granted modes of human experience. An understanding of Elisa as a non-binary subject can have profound ethical impacts on our relations to the non-human world that allows us to appreciate her choice and recognize her materiality. Along the same lines, Cohen and Duckert suggest that humans let go of their human-ness and rather embrace their common materiality that they share with the non-human world. They lucidly state: "The less human the collective, the more humane it may become" (4). By "less human" they do not mean *The World Without Us*, but "a disanthropocentric reenvisioning of the complicated biomes and cosmopolities within which we dwell" (5). Their argument envisions a renewed understanding of elemental activity and human-non-human collaborations that can propel care, respect, and justice.

Ponyo and *The Shape of Water*: Water Aesthetics

In their symbolical embracing of the others, both *Ponyo* and *The Shape of Water* create powerful water aesthetics. By forcing us to go to the unknown, see the unseen, and feel the unfelt, the films collapse the long-drawn distance that the human psyche has developed for the externality of nature. Both Miyazaki and Del Toro use the effective storytelling technique of mixing the mundane with the fantastical to create powerful aesthetics with the aid of creative audio-visual technology. Cubitt, in his seminal book *Ecomedia*, argues that scientific and entertainment media rely on technologies to communicate between the green world and the human. He frequently uses the word techne "to designate not just machinery but such techniques as language and gesture that mediate between the green world and the human" (4). Both the directors use techne to its fullest potential to create a fantastic world that refuses to divide up the frame between the human and the non-human in ways that overlooks their essential interdependence and common materiality. To provide agency to the non-human world, they deliberately use the trope of magic realism – chiefly a Latin American narrative technique that includes fantastic elements into a seemingly realistic narrative and animism. The concept of animism is particularly more significant in *Ponyo* in which we witness the whole planet alive. Apart from portraying the ocean as a dynamic, living thing, personified as Gran Mamare, and making its waves, its actions seem alive, animate, the film gives unexplainable power to Ponyo who can transform between two

worlds and has a magic touch to transform things. Her unexplainable power to transform a toy boat into a real one is indicative of nature's mysterious power which is beyond human understanding. Miyazaki himself admitted the pervasive atmosphere of animism in most of his films: "I do like animism. I can understand the idea of ascribing character to stones or wind. But I didn't want to laud it as a religion" (333). Praising the animism practiced in Miyazaki's anime, Cubitt discusses how they are potentially shocking because "they break the North American codes of neoteny, and allow the doe-eyed heroes and heroines to face and perpetrate adult and animal cruelty and violence" (32). By collapsing these two worlds in a playful manner, Miyazaki's anime poses a challenge to the human-centered philosophy that has consistently tried to define each term (animal, human) in terms of the other. Cubitt argues that the aesthetics of anime is more about possession: "possession of the animal by the human, certainly, but also of the human by the animal, and of both by other agencies" (32). Therefore, the animism in Miyazaki's anime breaks the human/animal binary by its portrayal of a complex dynamics between the human and the non-human who are constantly possessed by each other.

These complex dynamics of agencies are equally on display in *The Shape of Water*. Being a fluid-genre itself, *The Shape of Water* as a representation of "New Hollywood" cinema does an excellent job in making us aware of the new ways of imagining the relationship between humans and the non-human world. To evoke that imagination, del Toro uses the trope of magic realism in the film, portraying water as desirable as love. Apart from making it a dynamic actant, the sea-creature has been given the status of a semi God. Strickland informs us how the natives in the Amazon worshipped it like a god, tossing offerings to water (41:45-42:00). It is vested with a magical power that human knowledge cannot fathom. We witness how his healing touch gives the bald-headed Giles his hair back and brings Elisa back to life. The influence of del Toro's Mexican heritage is evident in creating a real-world setting permeated with a sense of enchantment. He beautifully blends the storytelling tradition and magic realism of Latin America in unfolding the enchanting tale of Elisa. Rachel Hatzipanagos acknowledges the centrality of the director's Mexican heritage in appreciating the film's vision and message. She believes that in the tradition of Latin American authors, del Toro uses magical realism, which she finds evident "in the mixture of the mundane with the fantastical," to convey a coded and subversive criticism (par. 4). Del Toro's Oscar acceptance speech can be a testimony to this fact in which he recognizes the functionality of the magic realist tradition. In defense of the power of such a marvelous realist tradition, he assures: "everyone that is dreaming of a parable, of using a genre fantasy to tell the stories about the things that are real in the world today, you can do it" (2:40-2:50). Del Toro seems to push us to our extreme limit through creative imagination in an attempt to acknowledge the agency of the non-human world and recognize the many life forms that co-exist with their uniqueness along with humans. In this regard, we can turn towards May Ingawanij's discussion on animism that, she believes, makes the permeability of human and non-human worlds possible and perceivable. "As a structure of perception and framework of experience," she argues, "the relevance of animism to the theme of cinema beyond the human lies in its conception of the self as porous with respect to a multiplicity

of life forms" (91). As her discussion suggests, a shift of subjectivities from human to non-human subjects using techniques like animism or magic realism can make us aware of our narrow speciesism, exposing our prejudiced beliefs in human supremacy and agency.

In the process of collapsing boundaries between the human and non-human world, water has been used as a complex metaphor for love and desire. This desire finally overflows boundaries of gender, race, era, species, and dream, navigating through a complex dynamic of human-non-human-water interconnections. Both *Ponyo* and *The Shape of Water* begin and end with elaborate images of a world that is submerged in water. Considering water as a prominent figure in environmental imagination, Serpil Oppermann and Serenella Iovino argue how water signifies, symbolizes, and evokes images, emotions, and reveries, including our fluidic existence in the womb. They discuss elements such as water as "generative, always becoming, always in flux, going through inevitable stages of metamorphosis" (310). The liquid, oneiric dimension is a reminiscence of the films' perception of the sea below as analogous to our subconscious, that interacts with the conscious through desires and dreams. Dragging us into our subconscious, these films seem to remind us of our existence in the amniotic fluid of wombs. This prelapsarian state is a limbo between life and lifelessness in the sense that the formation of life in the mother's womb is a complex matter-oriented metamorphosis. Along the same lines, British author John Fowles refers to the sea as our evolutionary amniotic fluid, the element in which we were "once enwombed, from which our own antediluvian line rose into light and air" (282). While his argument situates the centrality of water in the evolution of the planet, we are also made aware that human materiality and the outside material world are elementally woven together. All three scholars hold the position that materiality of water, far from being a separate reality located outside human bodies, is within them no less than they are inside it. By foregrounding water as a mirror of that vision, both the films tend to question the human sense of hierarchy, separation, and hubris through a watery oneiric-aesthetic framework.

By using the technique of defamiliarization, directors Miyazaki and del Toro problematize our anthropocentric understanding of the known world. Cavallaro rightly argues how powerful Miyazaki's message of debunking humans' separateness from nature in his emphasis on the continuity of all life forms. He maintains that Miyazaki achieves it through a fantastic structure of defamiliarization by creating an unknown world of powerful waves and tsunami. The unexpected world of hand-painted aquatic effects makes it a more shocking visual experience that forces us to ponder what is beneath the surface. Cavallaro argues: "As eerie as the spellbinding bubbles punctuating the action, *Ponyo*'s world carries the uncanny truthfulness of images perceived in dreams" (75). The uncanny truth of the uninterrupted flow of life looks perceptible while we are forced to immerse in the fantastic water world. In the final scene of *The Shape of Water*, Elisa soaks in water, accepts her fluidity, embraces her desire, and, finally, accepts the love she feels, and thereby, her true self. Water has been made synonymous with love; it is water that makes Elisa discover who she really is.

In a candid interview, del Toro admits that the film is not only about love but also a

celebration of the things that hold us together rather than separate us. He maintains: "To me, it was important to make it about a thing that is stronger than anything, which is water or love. The strongest element is water, because it is malleable. And it has no shape. And love is the same. Love takes the shape it needs to take. No matter what the shape is, you fall in love madly. I do believe it" (qtd. in Applebaum). Presenting water as a bond of love, it seems to celebrate the power of elementality that is everywhere in many forms, in many colors, and in many shapes. In the process, the magical water narrative of the films substantiates Cohen and Duckert's claim that "the binding of the elements is love" (20). Elisa's love for the sea-creature and Sosuke's love for Ponyo support the idea that earth, air, fire, water, love, strife, spaces, and all forms of hybridities with which "we are coextensive" can create a sense of obligation in us (Cohen and Duckert 20). Both the human characters Sosuke and Elisa recognize that obligation through a process of trials and embrace the love as well as the water which is inside them as much as they are a part of it. In addition to that, what these two tales of water equally demonstrate is the heavy cost of the human failure to understand the planet filled with elements that are bound by love, yet pulled apart by strife.

Conclusion

Ponyo and *The Shape of Water*, therefore, convey a deep sense of respect for the non-human world, and no less deep a realization of the damage inflicted upon it by humans. These two visual texts affectively present two tales of love that truly stand for acceptance, diversity, and care for the non-human world. They seem to remind us of our common materiality with the rest of nature, collapsing the binaries such as human versus non-human, us versus others, land versus sea, and so on. The pervasiveness of water in the films proves to be the real actant in moving actions forward. Thus, providing water an agency, which can equally create and destroy both love and life, the films understate the superiority of humans and spiritedly challenge human hubris. Debunking the idea of what is human, they indulge in a watery world in which every construction, every identity, every being is in a flux. In the process, the films, with their creative energy and powerful vision, transport us to a promising world where things are valued and appreciated for their contribution to the diversity of ecosystems through their unique value and beauty. To conclude this paper, I borrow the closing voice-over narration of *The Shape of Water*, a dedication to the inexplicable love of Elisa, that can be interpreted as a human recognition of an omnipresent, overpowering existence of water, and of the planet, in general, of which we are just a part but which we do not possess: "Unable to perceive the shape of you, I find you all around me. Your presence fills my eyes with your love. It humbles my heart, for you are everywhere" (1:58:02-1:58:20).

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Enslaved Ecopoetics: George Moses Horton's Nature Poems

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Abstract

Scholars, such as Kimberly Ruffin and Katherine Lynes, reconsider American environmental poetry that excludes African American ecopoetic traditions of the antebellum period. According to Ruffin, in order to reconstruct and enhance our sense of ecopoetry, we must reevaluate the black tradition of nature poetry, exemplifying the contemporary approaches to slavery in the USA and elsewhere. Likewise, Lyne's "reclamation ecopoetics" attends to the history of dangers, despite centuries of methodical and organized exploitation, that human groups bring to the black human subjects as well as to non-human nature. Building on this scholarship, I focus on the nature poems of George Moses Horton (1797-1883), the life-long enslaved poet, that highlight the inseparable unity of nature and humans. Horton's poetry deployed nature to prove both the humanity and the intellectuality of the enslaved. My study traces a history of American enslaved ecopoetics that requires us to think of the enslaved human subjects as individuals whose nature poetry hinges on the dangers of subjection and exploitation of chattel slavery. My essay resituates Horton, the black bard of North Carolina, in the nineteenth-century American paradigm, analyzing his poetry and his racial subjugation from an ecocritical perspective.

Keywords: ecopoetics, enslavement, alienation, non-human, Horton

Recent scholars, such as Kimberly Ruffin and Katherine Lynes, among others, have reconsidered the nature and environmental poetry of George Moses Horton (1797-1883), a life-long slave from North Carolina, to theorize African American ecopoetics. Although these scholars built on Lawrence Buell's *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture*, they significantly differ from Buell in capturing the African American environmental imagination. On the one hand, Ruffin's environmental imagination explores the ecological relationships between living and nonliving things that resonate with Buell's project (Ruffin 18; Buell 131, 200). However, Ruffin goes beyond the ecocritical prerequisites set by Buell and his proponents – i.e., the authorial intent to protect the environment – to be considered as ecoliterature and broadens the limit of ecocriticism. He, then, studies Horton's nature poems under this new extended theoretical frame and notes Horton's constant struggle with his relationship with nature (37). On the other, Lynes builds on *The Ecopoetry Anthology*, edited by Ann Fisher-Wirth and Laura-Gray Street, and theorizes reclamation ecopoetics in the African American tradition. Lynes proposes the term "reclamation ecopoetics" to rescue nature poems, such as Horton's, and traces the lineage of African American reclamation ecopoetics. In so doing, Lynes "reasserts a relationship or connection between early African American poetic expressions of nature and human environmental concerns and those same

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expressions in contemporary poetry" (50). Lyne's work, similar to Ruffin, helps broaden the scope of ecopoetry that includes poems "not typical of nature poetry" nor "categorized as … environmental poem[s]" but have a lot to do with both nature and the environment (50).

Although there is a long tradition of nature poetry in the United States, Fisher-Wirth and Street have suggested that there is a much shorter tradition of ecological poetry – a subcategory of what they call "ecopoetics." Dating this literary movement to the 1960s, and particularly to the 1962 publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, Fisher-Wirth and Street suggest that ecological poetry "engages questions of form most directly, not only poetic form but also a form historically taken for granted – that of the singular, coherent self … it is often described as experimental" (xxix). In other words, ecological poetry bridges the divide between humans and nature, forcing the reader to confront the ways in which the so-called natural world is continuous with the human world. I contest, along with such scholars as Ruffin and Lynes, among others, two deeply intertwined issues implicated in the periodization of an ecocritical literary movement to the 1960s. Firstly, this periodization problematically leaves the nature poetry written, especially by the enslaved, in the prior literary ages out of the ecocritical matrix. This exclusionary practice is symptomatic of the exclusion of black people (or brown or yellow people as such) from the "human" category. This exclusion facilitates slavery as it categorizes slaves as non-human – "things" to be used, abused, and disposed of. Hence, their relationship with nature does not qualify as a human-nature connection. This process of domination, which Aimé Césaire calls "thingification," is the sheer abjection of an enslaved black body (42). Secondly, the nature-human divide itself is problematic. If ecopoetry asks the readers to experience the process in which nature is continuous with humans, we see all poetry is ecopoetry – bridging the divide between nature and humans – in some way or other.

My argument here sounds similar to the assertions of Paul Tidwell, who, in "The Blackness of the Whale," identified the limit of canonical ecocriticism that was founded on "too narrow a definition of nature writing" that "continue[s] to resist or reject" the poetry of non-white poets with "a reactionary and racist defense of an essentialized idea of nature" writing (qtd. in Hicks 202). This line of thinking is fraught with the danger of, as Kathleen Wallace and Karla Armbruster explain, "seriously misrepresenting" the nature writings of the authors "with other ethnic, national, or racial affiliations" (7). It is more so because this vein of ecocriticism considers only the nature writings of affluent white authors, mobilized by their class, gender, and race-based privileges. In doing so, it excludes the authors, who are fixed at a place because of their financial and gendered constraints and/or racial subjugation, for example, enslavement.

Building on this scholarship, in my essay, I am going to suggest a much earlier periodization for ecopoetics broadly and ecological poetry specifically. I will argue that George Moses Horton, an enslaved black poet from North Carolina who lived between 1797 and 1883, engaged in a form of what I will call enslaved ecopoetics. In particular, I will suggest that Horton's experience of enslavement enabled him to theorize a more fluid relationship

between the human and the natural world. While white poets of his generation – from Ralph Waldo Emerson to Walt Whitman – imagined the natural world as a site of inspiration, I suggest that Horton understood the natural world as continuous with the self. In short, Horton's poetry made manifest an ecopoetic, even ecological, form more than a century before the emergence of twentieth-century ecological poetry.

My study traces a history of enslaved ecopoetics that requires us to think of enslaved African Americans, whose life was fraught with subjection and exploitation. Moreover, this history of ecopoetics asks us to reconsider enslaved ecological poetic expressions that date back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries long before the formal theorization of ecopoetry in the 1960s. My essay resituates this enslaved poet in the nineteenth-century paradigm, analyzing his poetry and his racial subjugation from an ecocritical perspective. In so doing, I add Horton, like Scott Hicks' scholarship, to the pantheon of American nature writing, already comprised of Henry David Thoreau, Rachel Carson, and W.E.B. Du Bois, among others. In many ways, then, this project builds upon recent critical turns in Black Studies, in particular. In her recent monograph, *Fugitive Science*, Britt Rusert traces the emergence of emancipatory black scientific discourses in the nineteenth century. In *Black Prometheus*, Jared Hickman offers a cultural history of black intellectuals who theorized a human relation to the natural world that broke from an Enlightenment tradition that relied exclusively upon reason. Here, I will add to the discourse by suggesting that Horton's poetry realizes an enslaved ecopoetics that enables readers to think differently about the human relation to the natural world.

In the following parts of my essay, first, I will produce a short biography of the enslaved poet, Horton, who composed his poetry to buy his freedom while emphasizing his enslaved ecological relationships with the environment and other people around him. Then, I will explain "enslaved ecopoetics" – the theoretical framework for my essay. Enslaved ecopoetics – poetry written by slaves during the (American) antebellum period – serves as some of the earliest examples of black ecoliterature. In so doing, finally, I will study the ecopoetry of Horton, in which Horton weaves, in terms of ecological terms, his dream of emancipation from his lifelong bondage in chattel slavery. Examining examples of Horton's ecopoetry, I will argue that enslaved ecopoetics is Horton's direct response to the stultifyingly humiliating environment in which he was forced to live and toil.

Horton and Enslaved Ecopoetics

George Moses Horton, the enslaved black bard of North Carolina, was born into slavery to his slaveowner father and enslaved mother in 1797 on a North Carolina tobacco plantation where he spent his whole life working. He secretly taught himself to read with the help of white school materials, such as spelling books, parts of the New Testament, and Wesley's old hymns at a time when the US slavocracy banned reading and writing for the slaves (Horton, "Poetical Works" vii-viii; Sherman 1-5, 16-20). Later, he started composing poems in his mind as his biography reveals: "I composed at the handle of the plough [*sic*], and retained them in my head, (being unable to write,) until an opportunity offered, when I dictated, whilst one of the gentlemen would serve as my emanuensis

[*sic*]" (Horton, "Poetical Works" xiv). His poetic subjectivity was a mental process of composition complicated by his inability to write with his own hands. He used to visit the nearby University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for selling farm produce where he attracted the attention of white students with his oratory skills. White students gave him parts of Shakespeare, Milton, Virgil, among other white European poetry, along with the *Columbian Orator* (an anthology of essays and dialogues), geography books, and other school materials from the white education curriculum, based on which he improved his reading and composition skills (Horton, "Poetical Works" xv-xvi; Sherman 8-10). He developed, revised, and recycled the forms, vocabulary, and subject matters, borrowed from these white schoolbooks for his own purposes. At one point, he started selling his acrostic love poems to white students who used to buy them for their fiancées. These white students were his first amanuenses who transcribed his acrostics and made them and their author popular. Later, his more serious poems on the themes of slavery, emancipation, and alienation were transcribed by novelist Caroline Lee Hentz, a professor's wife at Chapel Hill (Sherman 8-12).

Horton became "the first black man to publish a book in the [American] South" when he published the first volume of his poetry, *The Hope of Liberty*, in 1829, still unable to write with his own hand (Hager 69). He published his second volume of poetry, *The Poetical Works of George M. Horton, the Colored Bard of North-Carolina: to which Is Prefixed the Life of the Author, Written by Himself*, in 1845. Lest we overlook the obvious, this is the year when iconic Frederick Douglass published his *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, the canonical slave narrative that changed the Abolition movement. This juxtaposition of two, among many, publications by two black authors is the evidence of the advent of a vibrant era of American literary movement, called the American Renaissance, in which black authors contributed profusely despite social, political, and financial drawbacks. Scholars and readers are indebted to the second volume of Horton's poetry as it contains, for the first time, the fragmented life story of the poet that reveals many of the dismaying secrets of his enslaved life. Then, in 1865, just after the American civil war, he published *Naked Genius*, with poems composed during his participation in the war with the hope of emancipation. However, his hope of manumission was not successful. He remained enslaved when he died in 1883.

Horton's volumes contain early samples of black nature poetry that finds its expression through the imageries and subject matters that portray the rural world of the slaveholding south, the elements of nature that continue with human saga, and the hope of a slave within distressing slavocracy. Horton, like any other slave author, did not write only to express his emotions. While his poetry was both a protest and an agony of his lack of societal representation due to his slave status, it was his source of money with which he hoped to buy his freedom. Furthermore, throughout his life, Horton wanted to be known as a "poet" so that he could melt the racial boundary with his intellectuality and creativity. Although he was not successful in gaining his freedom, Horton's poems were anthologized in many volumes alongside the white poets of his time, proving the success of his intellectual enterprise.

Ecopoetics was central to Horton's poetic enterprise that enhanced his appeal for manumission. In order to understand what I mean by ecopoetics and, more specifically, by "enslaved ecopoetics," it will be important, first, to turn to how Fisher-Wirth and Street discuss "ecopoetry." Fisher-Wirth and Street, in the Preface to the *Ecopoetry Anthology*, based on which Lynes proposes her theory of African American reclamation ecopoetics, theorize in exhausting detail three subcategories of ecopoetry: nature poetry, environmental poetry, and ecological poetry (qtd. in Lynes 50; Fisher-Wirth and Street xxviii-xxix.). However, there are some features that overlap all these categories, showing poetic participation at multiple layers. The first and the obvious one is nature as the subject matter either as an aesthetic object or as a backdrop that provides the poet with a repose for contemplation. Second, ecopoetic inspiration is fashioned by British Romanticism and American Transcendentalism. Third, the encounter between the human subject and nature reveals an epiphany – the truth of life (Fisher-Wirth and Street xxviii). Fourth, nature poems "influenced by social and environmental justice movements," question human injustice to nature. Finally, while environmental justice poetry establishes the human as a defender of nature, their third category, ecopoetry, troubles the human-nature divide by engaging questions related to form – poetic and self – most directly (Fisher-Wirth and Street xxix-xxx).

However, I call Horton's ecopoetry "enslaved ecopoetics" because these poems are composed while Horton was in the bondage of chattel slavery. Hence, these poems are the ultimate expression of his enslaved condition – his pool of frustration, drums of inspiration, and grains of hope. He expressed his fear of humiliation in terms of natural elements and events and expressed his vision of manumission through the political acumen of ecopoetics. I suggest that Horton's poems participate in multiple categories – nature, environmental, and, most importantly, ecological poetry. But I also suggest that Horton participated in an "enslaved ecopoetics." In my scholarship, then, enslaved ecopoetics addresses inequality based on race, gender, and class, along with other categories like access to and connection with nature. This enslaved ecopoetics provides aspirations for a reflection on the vulnerable black lives in the antebellum period, along with making arguments for the protection of nature and for the alleviation of the injuries to that nature. In short, Horton blurs the lines between human and non-human, but in doing this, he reveals how both worlds are structured by oppression, exploitation, and expropriation.

Ecopoetics: Enslaved Horton's Hope of Liberty

Joan R. Sherman notes the poetic ingenuity of Horton, leaving aside the influence of "Methodist hymns, the Bible, eighteenth-century British poets of the Graveyard and Romantic schools" on Horton's poetry (37). She acknowledges that Horton, similar to most of the nineteenth-century American poets, relied upon the "American environment" for themes and subject matters (37). Horton's ecopoetry is replete with diction and images of nature. The way he treated his enslaved condition in his nature poems as a poetic expression and a subject matter enlarges our understanding of the interconnection between nature and the enslaved black body. Hence, he seems to suggest a new way of thinking about ecopoetics. The lifelong enslaved poet transforms the authentic knowledge

of the rustic living, illiterate wilderness, the hard toil, and epiphanies of creative joy into poetry with sheer capacity and its countless manifestations. Horton's ecopoetics deploys nature sometimes as a source of inspiration, sometimes as provocations for the struggle for emancipation, and many times as the living record keeper of his devastating existence. Thus, his enslaved ecopoetics is heart-rendering, heart-illuminating, and heart-opening.

Enslaved at birth, Horton's nature poems deployed nature as coinhabiting empathizer and partner in weal and woe to prove both humanity and intellectuality of the enslaved. For example, consider Horton's 1845 poem, "Division of An Estate." It is an ultimate poetic expression of his enslaved condition. The poem concerns the confusion created at the death of the father of the family, a white enslaver. The heirs are dividing the estate, the slaves, along with other property. The slaves, as they are not "things," are in horrific confusion and terribly afraid of separation from each other. It is not a conventional nature poem, but it does concern the relationship between human and non-human animals. Horton writes, "dull emotion roll[s] through the brain / Of apprehending slaves" while the division of estate begins and confusion reigns among all animals (100).

He continues:

> The flocks and herds,
> In sad confusion, now run to and fro,
> And seem to ask, distressed, the reason why
> That they are thus prostrated. Howl, ye dogs!
> Ye cattle, low! ye sheep, astonish'd, bleat! (100)

These lines, with a tincture of Shakespearean soliloquy, invokes King Lear's lament at the death of Cordelia. It also manifests Horton's reading in classical British literature. However, more importantly, Horton's King Learean lament in the poem reveals the fears of separation from the near ones of the enslaved, but it also reveals that they are not in a better condition than that of the "flocks and herds." They can understand that the "day of separation is at hand," and they struggle to keep up with the "dark suspense in which poor vassals stand" (100). Yet the cattle, sheep, and dogs are likewise distressed, and their distress is more than simply a reflection of the mental state of the enslaved human beings. The sad confusion of division, which reduces human beings to flocks and herds, also distresses flocks and herds of non-human animals. The violence of an enslaving regime, in short, does not merely harm human beings. It is disruptive to an entire, living ecology.

Horton's poem hinges on the notorious scenes of auction block that Saidiya Hartman vivifies in her Scenes of Subjection. The "mournful procession of slaves" was brought to the auction block in coffle while the slaves continue singing "little wild hymn of sweet and mournful melody" (Hartman 32). In fact, the slaves were made to sing and pretend happiness so that the seller can attract the buyers. Slaves "shackled like a herd of cattle" are then examined by the potential owners (Hartman 35). In the end, fathers, mothers, children are separated and the fading jingle of their chains, mixed with suppressed sighs and groans, thickens the air. Horton was born into slavery. So, his lack of personal experience of being

in an auction block, although he had seen a lot of these horrible marketplace scenes in his lifetime, is made up with his experience of being divided up like any property or cattle among the sons of his owner-father, who were, in effect, his biological brothers. Horton captures the ultimate abjection and the thingification of the enslaved in this portrayal of antebellum division of property.

Similarly, Horton's 1829 poem, "On Summer" presents us with a sort of ecopoetics that links enslaved human beings to non-human elements and animals, all of whom are expropriated by slavocracy. "On Summer" demonstrates Horton's subtlety in using nature tropes to bring out his ecopoetic – even ecological – perspective. It begins by describing a bright summer day and the poem then creates a catalog of non-human natural objects: the hot summer sun, swarming insects, chirping birds, tired beasts of burden, and whatnot. The poem portrays a pastoral summer day from the rise of the morning sun ("Esteville fire begins to burn") to the approaching evening ("The nighthawks ventures" in "the evening air"). In between, the poet creates an image of "Perspiring Cancer" that "lifts his head" and terrifies others with its "roars terrific" (82. Here, and, in the following instances, Horton's poems are quoted from Sherman unless otherwise stated). Horton complicates the image of "Cancer," astrologically a negative moon sign, by attributing it with the dreadful "roars" and the panopticon surveillance "from on high" – the unmistakable images of slavocracy and its unkindness to the "timid creatures" – the slaves that "strive with awe to fly" for liberty (82).

The speaker continues:

> Thou noisy insect, start thy drum;
>   Rise lamp-like bugs to light the train;
> And bid sweet Philomela come,
>   And sound in front the nightly strain. (82)

Like any conventional nature poem, we see tropes like fireflies that "bid sweet Philomela come," and bees with "sweet exertions" and "delight" filling their honeycombs (82). His invocation of Philomela, the daughter of King Pandion I of Athens, has a long and fairly conventional tradition in English-language poetry. Ovid associated Philomela with song and pain, Samuel Taylor Coleridge published a poem about her, called "The Nightingale," in 1798, and T.S. Eliot referred to her in *The Waste Land* to express pain caused by human betrayal. The allusion to mythical Philomela, who was raped and whose tongue was cut out so that she could not tell of the crime, juxtaposes Horton's pain under slavery because he cannot fully express himself being under enslavement and incessant surveillance of slavocracy.

Yet Horton's fairly conventional nature poetry, which would have easily fit into the Romantic tradition of the period, quickly takes a turn. The immediately following stanza reveals the danger that "lurks beneath the smiling scene" in Horton's life (82). An ox resists the forced labor it must endure. While the farmer "hastens from the heat," the weary plow-horse "droops his head," and the cattle "ruminate beneath the shade," the ox desperately

seeks water (83). The speaker explains:

> The burdened ox with dauntless rage,
>   Flies heedless to the liquid flood,
> From which he quaffs, devoid of gauge,
>   Regardless of his driver's rod. (83)

Here, according to the speaker, one human is denying food, water, and rest to the ox while whipping it with a rod to force it to more labor. This one human is, symbolically, the representative of the human group that brings damage to the enslaved and nature. Horton's poem equates the enslaved with the laboring, enraged ox in the hot sun. The ox, whipped and forced to work in the heat, recalls the image of the enslaved humans toiling in the hot sun. Likewise, the "drivers' rod" recalls the image of an overseer's whip. Thus, in versifying enforced human labor, Horton links the condition of this ox to that of all the enslaved.

We can compare this poem with Horton's 1828 poem, "Slavery," where he laments:

> How oft this tantalizing blaze
> Has led me through deception's maze;
> My friend became my foe —
> Then like a plaintive dove I mourn'd,
> To bitter all my sweets were turn'd,
> And tears began to flow. (56)

The "tantalizing blaze" is not the hot sun in "On Summer," but rather the hope for emancipation that has led him "through deception's maze" because of his failed attempts to liberate himself. The deceptive system of slavocracy made the poet mourn like a "plaintive dove" unlike the "dauntless rage" of the ox in "On Summer" (83). Yet the ox in "On Summer" is not merely a metaphor for the enslaved. It is actually enslaved. Moreover, it resists the oppression of the heat and its human driver. Horton's poem, thus, delicately reveals that subjection permeates the human and non-human landscape. The hot sun, the uncaring farmer, the slave driver's rod – all these as a cluster create the frightening image of a slave owner and the oppressive system of slavocracy.

In the next stanza, however, the poem turns back, rather abruptly, to a Keatsean scene of mellow fruitfulness, albeit in summer, where a mother bird is waiting in her nest for her "young to see" (82). Interestingly, this mother bird brings in the image of the slave mothers although the slave mothers knew that their children were auctioned away, never to come back. Thus, on the one hand, Horton portrays a traditional image of nature both as a provider and preserver of human life similar to the Romantic nature poems. On the other, he portrays enforced labor practices where his engagement with nature is supplemented by, in the words of Lynes, "fear, traumatic memory, and rejection" (53). Horton, in the poem, through the strategic deployment of nature, blatantly exposes the antebellum system of slavery and its intricacies.

However, Horton's poetry did not always make manifest this enslaved ecology. Just as often, perhaps even more often, he wrote in a romantic mode typical of his historical

period. Compare "On Summer" to two other poems in his series about the seasons, "On Spring" and "On Winter." These are quite conventional in setting and expression. Firstly, they are pleasant and celebratory in aesthetic pleasures and emotional solace. Secondly, they are anthropomorphic in execution. In "On Spring," we get the impression of transient happiness in nature which is, in fact, the reflection of a life in bondage. Horton celebrates:

> Hail, thou auspicious vernal dawn!
> Ye birds, proclaim the winter's gone,
> Ye warbling minstrels sing;
> Pour forth your tribute as ye rise,
> And thus salute the fragrant skies
> The pleasing smiles of Spring.

In this poem, a presumably human speaker greets the dawn and the close of winter. The speaker observes birds singing, smells "fragrant skies," and anthropomorphizes spring as possessing "pleasing smiles." The events of the poem – dawn, birdsong, thaw – are all interpolated through the affective engagement of a human speaker. It only matters that spring can smile, for instance, to a human viewer who longs to see such a smile.

This poem engages political questions, such as slavery, peripherally. But it only uses the natural world as a metaphor for these problems. He writes:

> Exalted month, when thou art gone,
> May Virtue then begin the dawn
> Of an eternal Spring?

This "eternal Spring" – an everlasting period of birdsong and good weather – recalls so many poetic invocations of the day of Jubilee, the moment of emancipation that, as Horton anticipates, will inaugurate a new era for free slaves. But here, as elsewhere, nature functions merely as a means of understanding the feelings of human.

In "On Winter," the story is much the same. In this poem, Horton offers a vague warning of unfulfillment, a poetic death, a psychic unproductivity, which floats up. He writes:

> The voice of music dies;
> Then Winter pours his chilling blast
> From rough inclement skies.

If we consider the transferred epithet here, we see that the "rough, inclement" treatment of slaves gets its tongue under the nature trope of "skies." Winter, as expressed in canonical literature, is the symbol of rejection, desertion, desertification, and death – symbolic and literal. Horton, who had access to popular schoolbooks, such as the *Columbian Orator*, employs what was a common metaphor during this period. Winter, in this poem, functions as a symbolic prop to express his own emotional status as a slave in bondage, struggling for emancipation. Horton laments his fate:

> Lo, all the Southern windows close,
> Whence spicy breezes roll;

> The herbage sinks in sad repose,
> And Winter sweeps the whole.

In effect, during winter, when "pensive dove shuts up her throat," "larks forbear to soar," "cattle all desert the field," and "humming insects all are still," Horton presents the selfishness of the slave owners through a vivid image: "Lo, all the Southern windows close." Horton could easily sense the danger: to both the abolitionist Whites and the slave-owning Whites, Horton is important till he can write poems and till he is in bondage. If his poetic muse stops like the "pensive dove," all "Southern windows" will shut down and turn a deaf ear to his cry for emancipation. The revelation of this aspect of life is a deep but externalized self-realization through tropes of nature.

Uncommon for this period, Horton does not exclusively use the natural world as a means of reading the human landscape. Rather, he periodically reveals that the landscape functions as a seamless, ecological whole, one marked by scenes of subjection. Thus, Horton's ecopoetics concedes identical and overlapping perspectives, as acknowledged by Ruffin, of humans and non-humans in a regime of enslavement (40, 41). In other words, Horton's lived experience in bondage helps him discover a parallel between his predicament as a slave and that of the domesticated "flocks and herds." Enslaved ecopoetics, thus, claims attention to the world of the enslaved, where the enslaved body is abused by its owner under a hypocritic system. As nature poetry that deals with the truths of life, enslaved ecopoetics reveals the condition and frustration of enslavement – the fear that Horton can be in bondage for the whole life. This meaning determines what it means to write poems while in slavery in the antebellum American landscape.

Conclusion

Horton's central innovation was that he blurred the line between the human and non-human world, and in blurring this line he revealed the way that subjection permeated the North Carolina landscape in which he labored. In this sense, Horton's poetry makes manifest an enslaved ecopoetics, and particularly an ecological poetics, that does not entirely depend upon the human-nature divide that characterized most Romantic poetry of this period. I suggest that the poem I discussed did precisely this work. By blurring the line among animals, humans, and other natural entities, Horton reveals at once how all are subjected to enslaving regime. Written by an enslaved poet, who would have well understood the relation between the enslaver's property and the brutalized human worker, the poem reveals the vulnerability of all to the operation of human oppression.

I suggest here that Horton's nineteenth-century enslaved ecopoetics extends the significance of this genre by revealing the hypocrisy of slavocracy in heart-rending ways. Such an enslaved ecopoetics invites us to reconfigure how we read American literature and history. In my offering of Horton's nature poems under the term enslaved ecopoetics, I demonstrate that some of his poems trouble the distinction between human and nature, revealing the ways in which the human and non-human world are subject to various forces of division and control. More than a century before the conventional dating of ecological poetics, writers, such as Horton, made halting steps toward an ecological perspective. Horton's poems, as

both nature poetry and ecological poetry, take into account human history and American socio-political culture of antebellum more closely. Therefore, rather than dating ecopoetry from the mid-twentieth century, I argue for the origin of enslaved ecopoetry in, at least, the antebellum period.

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Virtual Connectivity through Creativity: Diasporic Bangladeshi Women Sculpting Cultural Identity in পেন্সিল *(Pencil)*

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Abstract

This article involves a popular Facebook group named *Pencil* that features creative productions from Bangladeshi people from around the world. While its basic focus is on writing, it also creates room for audio-visual productions such as songs, poetry recitation, dance, and photography. Among the contributors, a modest number is from diasporic Bangladeshi women who represent Bangladeshi culture through their artistic endeavors. The purpose of this research is to study how diasporic Bangladeshi women writers make use of the virtual platform of *Pencil* to express their kinship to Bangladeshi culture, as well as to carve an identity to endorse it. The prevalent discussion here is theoretical with a limited close reading of texts. While discussing the process of identity formation, this research refers to Stuart Hall's concept of "cultural identity" to create its theoretical background. Another predominant idea of the research is the "cyberspace" provided by the Internet to diasporic subjects. The final concept is "digital diaspora" which is integral to the study of cyberspace and diaspora. Considering the debate on the ambiguous role of cyberspaces in women's emancipation, this article argues in favor of cyberspaces by perceiving that the virtual platform promotes women's resourcefulness.

Keywords: women's identity, digital diaspora, cyberspaces, creativity

Diasporic identity is an elusive term in that its conceptual clarity diminishes with the plethora of appropriations cumulated around the concept. This article's concern is to observe how information technology (IT) facilitates diaspora identity construction through the practice of writing about one's native culture and the process of acculturation while residing in a foreign culture.

Diasporic identity formation today is vastly dependent on and facilitated by IT. The cyberspaces created by the Internet can give the dispersed diasporic subjects "a sense of shared understanding – no one else could possibly provide" (Brinkerhoff 47). This article attempts to shed light on the intricate relationship between social media cyberspace and diasporic life. Another focus of this work is to analyze the gendering of cultural practices as an indicator of preserving native traditions in a host country. This complicated proposition aligns with the idea of a hybrid identity as it requires an amalgamation of local and global culture as opposed to cultural polarization. Brinkerhoff posits that virtual communities offer diasporic subjects to deviate from a predictable pattern by selecting identity components from both the home and host cultures. Such an identity based on scattered components can be best understood by resorting to Stuart Hall's concept of "cultural identity."

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The synthesized identity is stated by Stuart Hall as a hybrid state since it is embedded in differences. According to Hall, cultural identity can be explained in at least two ways. Whereas the first kind of cultural identity reflects the shared historical experiences and cultural codes of a given people, the second, and more complicated cultural identity is a matter of "becoming" as well as of "being" (Hall 236). This second kind of cultural identity undergoes a constant transformation and therefore eschews the fixity of essence and becomes unstable in nature. Cultural identity can be either complicit with or departing from historical orientation, or it can even be both at the same time. That is why Hall defines cultural identity as "[n]ot an essence but a positioning" (237).

As Hall theorizes that diasporic cultural identity is always in a fluid state prone to mutations, it is obvious that at the present time the formation of a diasporic cultural identity should be significantly influenced by the dialogical spaces provided by the Internet. Thus, concepts such as "digital diasporas" and "web-diasporas" (Brinkerhoff; Ponzanesi), cyberfeminism, and cyberspace are relevant to this work as they have a role to play in diasporic cultural identity formation.

The use of virtual platforms for sharing cultural substances is not new for different diasporic groups across the globe. For example, Liza Tsaliki talks about the virtual cultural community formed by the Greek diaspora which she calls "Greekness" constructed on the Internet (162). Based on a recent survey finding, it is assumed that 98.5% of Bangladeshi immigrants in Canada exchange views on cultural, social, and professional issues on social media (Shuva 307). It is apparent from these studies that the Internet's support in establishing and continuing a rapport with the home culture from the host country has opened up a sea of possibilities for creative people by facilitating virtual community building. The focus of this research is particularly on women for some reasons. First, I argue that diasporic women are more active in reliving native culture. Next, women find it convenient to employ cyberspace in creating agency by practicing native culture. In this sense, cyberspace offers a convenient platform for women to explore their aesthetic subjectivities.

An online platform endorses a number of authors, from inside and outside Bangladesh, to showcase their writing both virtually and in printed forms. This Facebook group, *Pencil*, also has its own publishing house that brings out a good number of books every year. Many diasporic Bangladeshi women writers regularly contribute to this group and some of them have also been published through it. These writings are widely read and reviewed by people both on and offline. This study's focal point is to create a theoretical framework using the concept of gendered digital diaspora. Therefore, theoretical discussion is pivotal here. A limited study of two texts by two diasporic Bangladeshi women writers from this platform is included to perceive how the writers depict their own struggles in creating cultural identities through the fictional characters' struggles in the host land.

Pencil promotes creative activities like writing, painting, recitation, dance, singing, and photography, mostly by Bangladeshi people scattered across the globe. Through close observation, it becomes obvious that several Bangladeshi diasporic women play an active

role in these creative accomplishments which are acclaimed by a considerable number of people. Many of these contributors, especially writers, publish printed versions of their books from Bangladesh and travel here to celebrate the launching event. It is also worth mentioning that reunions of *Pencil* take place in countries like the USA, UK, and Australia where diasporic "pencilors" (a term invented by the group to identify the contributors) gather with their families to showcase Bangladeshi culture to their children and local people of those countries. Many diasporic female writers of this group write about the fictional and nonfictional lives of Bangladeshis living in the USA, UK, and Canada. Some of them post their renditions of Nazrul and Rabindra songs to show the nurturing of home culture. Most of the celebrated food photography posted here by diasporic women features Bangladeshi foods like "khichuri-ilish," "milk tea," "vorta-bhaat," and so on.

The inclusion of the virtual platform *Pencil* in academic research such as this article is pertinent in the sense that here I focus on the fictional writing of two diasporic Bangladeshi female writers. Apart from them, there are several other writers from the same category who regularly contribute to this platform upholding the navigation of fictional diasporic characters between home and host cultures. Since they reflect their own experiences in the writings and share them on a digital platform, it is not inappropriate to study that platform from a literary perspective.

Selecting female writers' works to observe how they amalgamate local and foreign cultures is grounded in the ensuing discussion. The emphasis of this article is on female writers because in the matter of identity formation of immigrants, gender is a defining factor and it is more so when South Asian women migrants are in question. Whether subject to compulsory or voluntary migration, diasporic people often tend to create a replicated homeland to relive national culture. In this context, national culture assumes a fixed, hence unflinching form, that symbolizes the recuperation of the homeland in the diaspora. This code of national culture enables immigrants to forge identities distinct from the dominant host culture. In the construction of a replicated home culture, the role of women has been considerably explored in diaspora studies. It has been argued that in an attempt to create a moral superiority over the "impinging Western influence," diasporic communities view the family, and especially women, as the preserver of "cultural sanctity" (Bhatia 515).

In her insightful essay "The Habit of Ex-nomination: Nation, Woman, and the Indian Bourgeoisie," Anannya Bhattacharjee argues that Indian immigrants create the idea of a nation that is ahistorical and not a geographically bound unit. She opines that this idea of a nation, in absence of any historical context, is constituted of "a timeless essence of Indian unity in diversity" and "the question of women [is] inextricably linked to nation-ness" (20-28). As women are considered vessels for storing the traditional values necessary for retaining the idealistic image of the nation in the diaspora, a mandatory division is created in the shared space of immigrant men and women as a domestic and public space. Bhattacharjee notes that whereas men occupy the public space of economic/political advancement, the figure of the woman stands in the domestic space signifying culture and tradition, even if she works outside the home. This is because the "Indian woman

is expected to be responsible for maintaining the Indian home in diaspora by remaining true to her Indian womanhood" (Bhattacharjee 32). From Bhatia and Bhattacharjee's cues regarding women's supposed role as the preserver of home culture, this article wants to establish that a similar performance of women as cultural envoys is apparent in diasporic Bangladeshi female writers' works.

Preserving native culture in the present time largely depends on the virtual spaces provided by the Internet. Cultural identity has assumed a new facet in the age of digital diaspora. Digital diaspora, in Sandra Ponzanesi's words, indicates that "there is a continuity between the online and offline worlds" (982). It involves reviewing online interactions, web hyperlinks, and digital traces online. However, Ponzanesi perceives that digital diaspora is an elusive term as it is flexible but also runs the risk of overgeneralized use. She thinks it is best to use this term relationally based on individuals or small groups of people experiencing different sets of materials, symbolic and emotional practices, that are all reflective of intersecting power relations. However, Ponzanesi believes in the transformative power of the digital diaspora which can propel migrants to reach new heights of endeavors. The following words make her point clear:

> Yet there is agreement on the profound ways in which digital connectivity has transformed privileged terms of spatiality, belonging and self-identification. Digital diasporas provide new possible cartographies to map the self in relation to increasingly complex patterns of globalization and localization, avoiding closures and the negative effects of identity politics. (Ponzanesi 990)

Digital diaspora has given the migrants an opportunity to sculpt the self in accordance with intricate forms of globalization and localization, opening up enormous possibilities for identity formation. Jennifer M. Brinkerhoff explores this perception of the digital diaspora in her book *Digital Diasporas: Identity and Transnational Engagement* as an advantageous agency as information technology helps form virtual communities that provide solidarity and material benefits. Cyberspaces also facilitate the negotiation of hybrid identity leading to the mobilization of the diasporic subject. Brinkerhoff accentuates the role of the Internet in developing virtual communities in the following words:

> The Internet is a mobilizing tool for the various types of organizations it supports. It facilitates the formation of shared identity necessary for collective action; it is an organizational/networking resource for assembling and communicating among individuals and groups, providing information and referrals to other actors; and it facilitates issue framing and confidence building. Results of mobilization agendas can be posted and disseminated to inspire continued commitment and subsequent mobilization. (Brinkerhoff 47)

Diasporas utilize this mobilizing power of the Internet for material benefits, such as information sharing and referral. Even though scattered around the globe, diasporic people can now create a sense of solidarity "around a shared cultural heritage and diaspora experience" (Brinkerhoff 203). In the process of forming a shared, hybrid identity,

cyberspaces generated by digital diasporas play a pivotal role in the construction of a cultural identity reminiscent of the home culture in the host country. Following the function of digital diaspora defined by Ponzanesi and Brinkerhoff, this research argues that *Pencil* also provides a shared space for the Bangladeshi digital diaspora by creating an appropriate cyberspace. For a better understanding of the ripple effect of practicing home culture from the host country, the next section delineates the idea of cyberspace.

The term "cyberspace" was coined by William Gibson in his cyberpunk novel *Neuromancer* where he gave a complicated overview of it. For Gibson, cyberspace is complex and a paradigm of data. At present, it envisages the digitalized platforms that are operated through the Internet. These platforms help the users form an imaginary identity albeit not totally virtual in many instances. For example, in artistic platforms like *Pencil*, the content creators frequently navigate in and out of virtual reality, producing an amalgamated presence thereby. Although it is presumed that traditional power structures are retained and even reinforced in cyberspace, women find it more appropriate to showcase their talent through it because of the veneer created by its distance from the real world. Robert A. Saunders analyzes the internal association between cyberspace and diaspora by observing that the "technological unification" has enabled diasporic Chinese people to develop "transnational identities and mobility across the Pacific Rim" (Saunders 72). Saunders also observes that acting as "economic and social elites" they have created "cultural continuums" that bind Australia, the USA, and many far Eastern Asian countries (72). Although he is not so enthusiastic about cyberspace creating novel methods of maintaining the nation virtually, he believes that it offers diasporic people "to have access to another realm of existence for a brief period of time" (Saunders 88). The present article also agrees with the idea that the virtual platform is not influential enough to create an impact at the national level; however, it definitely caters to the individual diasporic person's endeavor to carve a cultural identity in their homeland in spite of living in another country. It is evident from the present discussion that some Bangladeshi women's writing in *Pencil* can be considered to be an effort to form an identity statement. However, no significant study has so far been conducted about this process that connects gender, cyberspace, and digital diaspora in the context of Bangladesh. Therefore, through theoretical and textual discussion this article attempts to show that diasporic Bangladeshi women can create identity statements utilizing cyberspace.

To link the theoretical framework with the textual cases in point, this section briefly studies one short story by Ishrat Maherin Joya, a Bangladeshi writer settled in the USA, and a novel by Tabassum Naz, another Bangladeshi writer residing in Canada. Both the texts first appeared virtually on *Pencil* before getting printed by the same publishing house. In the short story by Joya, "Dhulomakha Shwapno," the Bangladeshi protagonist Rumana is shown as a struggling graduate engineering student at the University of Texas at Arlington. Unlike her classmates, she has to take care of her family along with studying. At home, she cooks and babysits. During group study sessions, she attends to numerous phone calls from family members and friends, seeking her suggestions on different household matters. There are also texts from her husband to come home early to release him from babysitting. She

also has to attend Bangladeshi family gatherings every week with home-cooked deshi food. Rumana struggles with mental trauma, frustration, and helplessness as she juggles her roles as a traditional Bangladeshi housewife and an American student. However, she is resilient enough to continue her study with help from her friends and digitalized communication tools like email and e-libraries.

The author of this story, Joya, was also a graduate student of Electrical Engineering like Rumana at the University of Texas at Arlington. There are some autobiographical elements in the story that reintroduces the writer as a diasporic subject who has been negotiating her identity using different cultural components including the Internet. Her presence in *Pencil* is also a part of the process of refashioning her diasporic identity.

An almost similar observation can be made about the other writer, Tabassum Naz, a doctor by profession who did further study in Canada and adapted to the new surroundings, having traveled a rough path. She uses the virtual space of *Pencil* to write about both Bangladeshi and Canadian cultures that make her fictional characters navigate assimilated identities. The novel *Rudaba* by Naz is about the eponymous Bangladeshi girl who journeys to Toronto after marrying a diasporic Bangladeshi man, Jamee. Jamee's sister, Dolon, is a diasporic woman who preserves her home culture in Canada despite being assimilated into Canadian mainstream society in many ways. For example, she is a successful working woman who is capable of doing things on her own. She also buys western clothes and cooks Canadian food. However, she also throws elaborate all-Bangladeshi parties and offers Rudaba her traditional saris and ornaments on certain occasions. In the novel, both Dolon and Rudaba strike a balance between the cultures of the home and host countries by utilizing identity markers like language, food, and attire. On a deeper level, Dolon relentlessly negotiates between the Bangladeshi community and her outside life as a working woman through a series of adjustments. Rudaba also starts learning to integrate her life as a Bangladeshi wife and a Canadian student. She connects with her family and cooks Bangladeshi cuisine with help from several digital platforms.

In the mentioned texts, the writers portray how contemporary diasporic Bangladeshi women strive to create a hybrid identity that is intertwined with their off and online activities. The reflection of the writers' own diasporic struggle is discernible in these fictional characters' gradual transformation. In both texts, the writers' focus on the empowering impetus of cyberspace on the protagonists implicates an analogy between them and their fictional characters.

Following the fictional representations in the texts under discussion, this article argues in favor of the stimulant function of cyberspace in diasporic women's creativity. That is why it calibrates how and in what ways cyberspaces help women's emancipation. Apart from voluntary activities on a digitized social platform, many Bangladeshi diasporic women are engaged in creating commercial content utilizing participatory media like *YouTube.* Although the present article revolves around the voluntary activities of women in the Facebook group *Pencil* to make a cultural statement, these activities indirectly promote their economic accomplishments too. For example, a few diasporic women writers gained

remarkable popularity using this platform before publishing printed versions of their works. They also used *Pencil* to promote their books. Consequently, the sale of the books rose substantially, bringing in a good amount of royalty for the authors. In the same way, photographs posted in the group helped the photographers reach a wider audience as well as achieve awards and accolades. Kylie Jarrett thinks that women's "cognitive and affective efforts in building and sustaining interpersonal relationships online, in communicating and coordinating activity with others, in producing and sharing content, is at the heart of the collective intelligence of digital media's commercial properties" (9). From this observation, it can be deduced that in addition to forming cultural identity, social media activities can also enhance the financial accomplishments of women.

Taking a cue from the current discussion the point can be further explored with the study of Maura McAdam, Caren Crowley, and Richard T. Harrison in their essay "Digital Girl: Cyberfeminism and the Emancipatory Potential of Digital Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies." This essay interprets how digital entrepreneurship can play the role of a great leveler in terms of equalizing the entrepreneurial playing field for women. The authors show in their research how Saudi Arabian women utilize the online platform "to transform their embodied selves and lived realities rather than to escape gender embodiment as offered by the online environment" (McAdam 349). Since this article mainly studies cyberfeminism in the context of cyberspace, digital diaspora, and some Bangladeshi diasporic women's trajectory in preserving their cultural identity using a digital platform, it gets involved in the mandatory debate on the role of cyberspaces in women's emancipation.

Some debates about the gender codes in cyberspace often initiate contradictory discourses. For example, critics such as Anita L. Allen, Debbie Ging, Eugenia Siapera, Valerie Dickel, and Giulia Evolvi are skeptical about the impartiality of cyberspace regarding gender codes and traditional societal power structures. Ging and Siapera believe that misogyny and anti-feminism intensify in online environments and can also spill over to other domains of life. Dickel and Evolvi find that offline misogynist narratives may also proliferate on the Internet. However, some critics consider cyberspaces as relatively unbiased towards gender. Studies also suggest that female-only groups offer a safer domain for women to reveal their talents. Howard Rheingold propagates the idea of the Internet as being "a space that promotes the spirit of cooperation and the creation of a truly democratic discourse and practice" (qtd. in Bonder 32). Rheingold perceives that the virtual community based on the Internet can offer participatory democracy for marginalized groups of people including women. However, Anita L. Allen thinks both men's and women's privacy is vulnerable in cyberspace even though women suffer more from the issue. The counter-argument to this view can be found in Kuah-Pearce who holds that cyberspace permits women users to engage themselves in different entertainment and economic ventures: "The information galaxy, the cyberspace and the Internet … are no longer viewed as a masculine space and tool as women have not only embraced but also used the cyberspace to negotiate and reframe themselves within existing social structure" (11). As cyberspaces provide virtual platforms for women to display their talents, it becomes easier for them to continue their work, avoiding bullying and assaults. Most digital platforms have administrators to deal

with cyberbullying and misconduct. Consequently, women feel safer expressing themselves freely in these cyberspaces.

Although this article does not anticipate Bangladeshi diasporic women becoming "cyborg(s)," rather than "goddess(es)" (Haraway 181), it definitely endorses the concept that cyberspaces promote women to sculpt individual cultural identities in the host country. Blending the theoretical and limited textual discussion, this research argues that irrespective of gender bias in virtual spaces, Bangladeshi diasporic women appropriate digitalized platforms in the reshaping process of their cultural identity. It is evident that both fictional characters and writers benefit from cyberspaces in expanding their horizons to accommodate native and host cultures. The transterritorial networking made possible by the digital diaspora initiates immense possibilities for creative Bangladeshi diasporic women in traversing the terrain of identity reinscription.

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Between and Beyond Metamorphosing Identity:
A Biopolitical Reading of *The Metamorphosis* and *Blackass*

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Abstract

This paper offers a critical comparative reading of the representation of animal and racial metamorphoses in Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* (1915) and A. Igoni Barrett's *Blackass* (2015), respectively, with a view to underscoring how the processes and consequences of metamorphosing identity foreground biopolitics. While the first novel muses on the transformation of Gregor Samsa, a human being, into a monstrous vermin, the second novel, a farcical take on Kafka's narrative, traces the transformation of Furo Wariboko, a black Nigerian, into a white-skinned man. The comparison is premised upon two axes: first, the human-animal interaction and tension that inform anthropocentric speciesism on one hand and the civilized-white/savage-black binary opposition on the other; second, the circuits of economic privilege and social accommodation. Exploring the ways in which we identify ourselves and are identified by the people in power, the paper locates the identity rubric of the human subjects in two different settings where the logic of the world is disturbed by unusual transformations and the disabled/non-disabled binary is put in a dialogue. In its enterprise of unmasking disability from its hegemonic referents, the paper incorporates insights from Disability Studies, Critical Posthumanism, Critical Race Theory, and Critical Animal Studies. By exploring the potential of debility's capacitation, that is, the extraction and exploitation of "body maiming" and/or "body capacities" in *The Metamorphosis* and *Blackass*, this paper suggests a non-anthropocentric interspecies vision of affective politics.

Keywords: metamorphosing identity, biopolitics, anthropocentric speciesism, debility

Introduction

"As Gregor Samsa woke one morning from uneasy dreams," so starts Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* (1915), "he found himself transformed into some kind of monstrous vermin" (29). One hundred years later, in 2015, A. Igoni Barrett, an emerging Nigerian writer, took a farcical shot at Kafka's enigmatic story of transformation in his debut novel, *Blackass*, that starts with a similar startling shock: "Furo Wariboko awoke this morning to find that dreams can lose their way and turn up on the wrong side of sleep" (1). Furo, a young black Nigerian, awakes on the morning of a job interview only to find that he has been transformed into a white man. Barrett upgrades Kafka's domestic drama of animal metamorphosis to an experimentation of racial metamorphosis for the contemporary readers by introducing yet another form of abrupt change and initiating a different series of aesthetic interventions in his farcical take. However, in both cases, the characters undergo a shift in their position

produced by the materialist view of capitalist society. The transformations cause a shift in their ability/disability but with curiously different effects: while animal metamorphosis shrinks Gregor the human's world, racial metamorphosis somehow enlarges Furo the black man's horizon. Based on two major vectors – capitalism and biopower, this paper explores how and why the identities of the protagonists are metamorphosed. The paper traces how the worlds in Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* and Barrett's *Blackass* expand from the personal sphere to a greater sphere through apparently unusual transformations. It also addresses the issues of animality and capitalism – factors that inform the biopower of debility, which leads to the discussion on the ways the body and identity of an individual – even irrespective of their being able/disabled – can be "maimed" vis-à-vis capitalistic productivity. What is important to explore is how *The Metamorphosis* and *Blackass* metamorphosed the maiming of identity.

Animality and Race

The problematic concepts of animality and race appear as two major vectors in the novels that maim the identity of Gregor Samsa and Furo Wariboko. The western concept of animality incorporates aspects like savagery and vulgarity. The west circulated this concept across borders and into a politics of social relations. Concepts of savagery and vulgarity being enforced and infused in the minds of people created the civilized-white/savage-black binary oppositions. This problematic concept of racial binary has a lot to do with the civilized-human/savage-animal binary as the conceptual frame

> through which the archetypal Human was historically defined in the Western culture process carried not only an oppositional (Human versus Animal), but also a hierarchical and temporal logic. In most interpretations of the human-animal ranking, the animal-like status of certain categories of human has been conceived pejoratively. (Anderson 12)

The concepts of race and animality are no longer the concerns of biology and nature only. Being inspired by critics like Foucault and Gramsci, race has entered the field of social agency and contestation. As such, animality and racism are parts of discursive and material inclusions or exclusions linked to power. Colonial power formations include the practices of othering where the white justifies their superiority by enforcing inferiority on the black that is no different than the human's self-definition as the best of all creations through exploring the idea of animality. Animality and racism have been a crucial reference point for constructing difference and hierarchy in Western cultures and eventually have gone beyond the borders to enter into the politics of relations.

The identities of Gregor and Furo are constructed and re-constructed by the vectors of animality and race. These western perceptions reduce the state of Gregor after the transformation and Furo before the transformation. The corporatization of blood relations in Gregor Samsa's case and the moral degradation that eventually occurs in Furo Wariboko's case are examples of how animality and racism enter the politics of relations. As a consequence of these hegemonic practices, Gregor in *The Metamorphosis* is no longer considered to be a part of his family and Furo in *Blackass* becomes selfish and left with no

intention to return to his family.

Conflict in *The Metamorphosis*: Corporatization of Blood Relations

This section offers a brief analysis of the conflict that exists in the novella. The conflict is brought to light through Gregor Samsa's transformation. There is a shift not only in Gregor's identity related to his ability but also in the relationship that he had with his family members. The result of the transformation of the character is seen to be highly influenced by the corporate nature of the surroundings. From a Marxist point of view, Gregor is shown to be alienated from the products of his labor by the capitalists who own the productions. Gregor is trapped by his employer through a combination of capitalist force and his necessity to provide for himself and his family which, according to Marx, is the "human law" that gives the capitalist owners the ability to control and neglect the workers if needed (Marx 47). However, the negligence that Gregor receives is not limited to that of the employers only, but stretched to his very own family members for whom he had been working selflessly.

To start with, the protagonist of *The Metamorphosis*, Gregor Samsa, hates his job as a traveling salesman but feels the obligation to continue working to provide financial support to his family. He accepts the role of the money-earner in his family when his father fails. Being a cog in the capitalist machine, he is so concerned about earning for his family that his job becomes the first thing that comes to his mind when he discovers his sudden transformation into a bug:

> But what was he to do now? The next train went at seven; to catch that, he would have to hurry at a frantic speed, and his collection of samples wasn't packed yet, and he certainly didn't feel particularly fresh and lively himself. And even if he managed to catch the train, he couldn't escape a dressing-down from the boss, for the attendant from work had been waiting at the five-o'clock train, and had long ago informed the boss that Gregor had missed it. (Kafka 30)

Even after such a drastic transformation, Gregor is concerned about reaching his workplace in time and imagines what might happen next. His concerns are logical as a lot of things are dependent on his job. His standing in the family before the transformation is solely due to his earning on which the other family members survived as parasites. This can be justified by the change in his relationship with his father, mother, and sister after the transformation.

As a son, Gregor feels the obligation to pay off his father's debts and support him financially. He does everything to benefit his father without being concerned about his own preferences. Gregor's father does not possess the same selfless feelings that Gregor does. Rather, the father uses the son for his own benefit and gets used to the fact that Gregor is working hard to provide for the entire family. Despite the hard work, Gregor's relationship with his father is distant. He appears to be close to his sister only. It might be that the father is ashamed of making his son work to pay off his debt or not being the breadwinner anymore. In such cases, it may be expected that the father would be

supportive of his son but his true resent is revealed soon after Gregor's transformation into a bug. His father shows disgust and hostility towards him as he no longer has the ability to earn and has turned into a burden for the others. In the first encounter between the father and the transformed son, the former becomes hostile and

> with his right hand he seized the chief clerk's walking-stick, left behind by their visitor on an armchair as well as his hat and overcoat, and with his left he fetched a large newspaper from the table, and stamping his feet, set about driving Gregor back into his room by waving the stick and the paper. None of Gregor's pleas helped, none of his pleas was understood; however submissively he turned his head, his father stamped all the more vigorously with his feet. (Kafka 42)

His father "forced him back, hissing like a savage" while all he wanted was to reach out to his mother who was shocked at the first sight of Gregor after the transformation (Kafka 42). But "then his father gave him a vigorous kick from behind, which this time was truly a deliverance, and he flew, bleeding heavily, into the depths of his room. More, the door was slammed shut with the stick; and then at last all was still" (Kafka 43). His father cannot tolerate the sight of his transformed son and decides to bombard him with apples while his sister begs him to spare Gregor's life. His treatment, attitude, and intention of causing injury to his son reveals his hatred despite the selfless feeling that Gregor always had for him. Now that his father is no longer dependent on him and has found himself employment, he feels no obligation to tolerate Gregor. On the other hand, Gregor's mother appears to be more caring towards her son as she happens to be the first person to inquire about him when he was getting late for work on the day of his transformation. "'Gregor!' – it was his mother – 'it's a quarter to seven. Aren't you going to leave?' That gentle voice! 'It's a quarter to seven. Hadn't you a train to catch?'" (Kafka 31). Mrs. Samsa worries about the state of her son and says that something must be wrong with him as he was not coming out of his room even when the chief clerk arrived. She rushes to the chief clerk and defends her son:

> 'He's not well, believe me, sir. What other reason could there be for Gregor to miss a train! Indeed, the boy thinks of nothing but the business. (Kafka 35)

Gregor also has a very close relationship with his sister, Grete. Even after his transformation to a fearful bug, Grete decides to take care of her brother, sympathizes with him, and serves as the connecting bridge between his parents and him. She is the only family member to come to Gregor's room every day, bring him food, and figure out his change in appetite as:

> To try out his taste she brought him a large selection, all spread out on an old newspaper. There were some old, half-rotten vegetables, bones from yesterday's supper covered in a white sauce that had gone solid, a few raisins and almonds, some cheese which two days ago Gregor had declared was uneatable, one piece of dry bread, one piece of bread spread with butter, and one piece spread with butter and salt. As well as these she also put down the bowl, now probably intended once and for all for Gregor, which she had filled with water. And out of tact, for she knew Gregor would not eat in front of her, she left hastily and even turned the

key, just so that Gregor might see that he could make himself as easy as he wanted. (Kafka 46)

She becomes the self-appointed caretaker for her brother and Gregor greatly appreciates her care. However, towards the end of the second section, a change in Grete's treatment towards Gregor can be located. She does not sympathize with him as earlier and appears to be completely inconsiderate of her brother's feelings. It seems that she no longer can tolerate the sight of the hideous insect living in the den. Realizing this, Gregor selflessly hides himself under the sofa until, at one point, "he was ... completely covered, and his sister, even if she bent down, couldn't see him. ... (A)nd Gregor even believed he caught a grateful glance when on one occasion he cautiously lifted the sheet with his head to see how his sister was taking the new arrangement" (Kafka 51-52).

Soon Grete gets a job as a salesgirl and is left with very little time to spare for Gregor. She now quickly pushes any old food into his room with her foot before rushing off to work both in the morning and at noon. She no more cares whether the food had only been nibbled at or left completely untouched. Her work being on her priority list, she hardly has time to clean Gregor's room like before and soon the room becomes filthy with grime and dust all over the walls and floor. With the hope of some extra income, the family brings in three boarders and becomes occupied with activities to please them. That is, the members of the family who were completely dependent upon Gregor's income, now start working to earn by themselves but are still in need of more money. Gregor initially loses his strong position in the family due to his inability to earn after the transformation and eventually loses connection with the entire family as they get busy with work to earn money.

In analyzing the before/after relationship of the protagonist with the family members, the animal/human relationship also has to be brought into account. The activities of the family members justify the unconscious human desire to categorize animals (other than human) to be less than human. Humans use the human-constructed human/non-human binary to place themselves in a superior position and justify their actions or treatment towards animals:

> Although human-animal dualism certainly is not an invention of capitalism, we should acknowledge, first, the influence of the capitalist mode of production on animal exploitation and, second, the complexity of connections between a number of modem dichotomies and particular stages of capitalism. (Kowalczyk 184)

When a person descends from being a human to being someone less than a human, it places him in the disabled category. Let us shed light on the scenario that usually exists in a family where one of the children is disabled. Such a family may be expected to adapt with the differently abled child who is likely to have different needs. It brings a shift in the role of the mother as she has to go beyond individualism and have "an enlarged sense of inter-connection between self and others" (Braidotti 49). Gregor's shift from abled to disabled was not positively received by his family who held on to the notions of normalcy that in this case is highly influenced by capitalism.

The change in the relationship between the protagonist and his family members is solely because of the transformation that caused Gregor's disability for which he could no longer play the role of the breadwinner. This disability caused by the transformation takes the form of a "personal tragedy" imposed on Gregor by capitalism that isolates and excludes him from being a part of the family and society (Russell 211). Gregor's disability can thus be marked as

> a socially-created category derived from labour relations, a product of the exploitative economic structure of capitalist society: one which creates (and then oppresses) the so-called "disabled" body as one of the conditions that allow the capitalist class to accumulate wealth. Seen in this light, disability is an aspect of the central contradiction of capitalism, and disability politics that do not accept this are, at best, fundamentally flawed strategies of reform or, worse, forms of bourgeois ideology that prevent this from being seen. (Russell 212)

Commodification of the body occurred due to industrial capitalism that created a new class of disabled who did not conform to the standard worker's body. The labor-power of these disabled people was erased and they were excluded from paid work. As a result, people who lost their ability to earn were identified as a social problem which had its solution in segregating them from mainstream life. In Gregor's case, he was segregated by his own family for losing his ability to earn.

Championing/Challenging Capitalism in *Blackass*: Brain vs Body

Employment also appears as a crucial issue in the novel *Blackass*. Being an ordinary Nigerian man, Furo could not find a job and was dependent on his parents even at the age of 33. Resigning from eighteen years of service at the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Furo's father invested in a chicken farm which was a failure. His mother did a banking job that "paid four times more than her husband earned" (Barrett 27). He envied his sister who, despite being five years younger, had more confidence, intelligence, and smartness. Furo's relationship with his family before/after the transformation remains untold in the novel unlike Gregor's before/after relationship with his. Rather, the story shifts from personal relationship to relationship with new people in the society whom the protagonist encounters after undergoing racial metamorphosis. Unlike Gregor, Furo embraces his metamorphosis as his new skin becomes his capital in various ways. He lands a better job with higher pay, a laptop, and company car without even having to stand at the interview queue – that too in a country with 50 percent youth unemployment. Ekemini, a random woman whom he meets in the street, offers him help. She not only asks if he needs to call someone but also offers money for his bike fare and gives him a thousand naira note while "her face was pleased as she handed it over" (Barrett 8). He is given an extra chunk of meat at the buka. Syreeta offers him help whenever needed, along with shelter and money as she was a woman "(w)ho knew the going value of a white man in Lagos" (Barrett 47). She searches for an opportunity to come close to a white man like Furo and does not hesitate to offer him her place to stay at. She proposes that he should get a massage to relax himself and says "'I can give you one if you want.' She held up her hands, showed her palms to

him. 'I'm good with my hands. And my house is not far from here" (Barrett 39). Furo is valued and treasured by unknown people even on the streets as if his whiteness was a brand sealed on his forehead that everyone stared at and wanted to achieve.

Furo's skin is the capital that earns him a girlfriend who provides him with all possible things. On the other hand, his girlfriend, Syreeta, wants to achieve a status that only whiteness or having a white partner could ensure. She not only gives him shelter but also ensures that he has everything he needs. In return, she uses his whiteness to fulfill her need as she introduces him to her friends with "He's American," in a tone "whose casualness did not hide her satisfaction" (Barrett 86). All of her friends are married to white men and their satisfaction lies in showcasing their white partners: "In the time that followed his arrival in their midst, Furo learned that Baby was married to a Dutchman, Ivy to a Canadian, Chika to an Englishman, Ego to a German, and Joy to the Italian" (Barrett 87). They are rather fascinated by the social status that they could earn for themselves by marrying a white man or by visiting fancy foreign countries:

> "I just got back from Atlanta," said a lady whose large feet were emphasized by her zebra-striped tights. She uncrossed one leg and immediately crossed the other. Balancing her glass on her knee, she shot a questioning look at Furo. "Lovely city. I attended a business conference with Gianni, my husband. He's Italian." (Barrett 86)

By getting married to a white man Syreeta and her friends can ascend to a better social position. They believe that "what they must have is whiteness at any price" (Fanon 34). Furo is dependent on Syreeta, but to her, the value of a white man's company is more than the money and support she is offering in exchange. Towards the end of the novel, Syreeta reveals that she is pregnant with Furo's child as soon as she gets a hint that Furo might be leaving her. Her desperation to live with Furo is an example of successful enforcement of hegemonic construction of hierarchy in the society where the whites are placed above the blacks even in a black country like Nigeria. For a black man,

> there is only one way out, and it leads into the white world. Hence his constant preoccupation with attracting the attention of the white man, his concern with being powerful like the white man, his determined effort to acquire protective qualities—that is, the proportion of being or having that enters into the composition of an ego. As I said earlier, it is from within that the Negro will seek admittance to the white sanctuary. The attitude derives from the intention. (Fanon 36)

A person may be entitled to social status because of his education, work, skills, or talent. But Furo's social status is based on the skin color he transmogrifies to. This skin color is the tool that helps him to receive attention from people who would never care for him otherwise. It increases his value not only in the job market but also among the ladies. When Furo meets Syreeta's friends he recalls his university days:

> The ladies reminded Furo of his university days. They were a type he recognized but hadn't gotten a chance to mingle with at close quarters, to sit beside and be

addressed by. They were the very ones who had partied at the trendy nightclubs that ordinary students could only dream about, who had travelled three hundred miles every Friday from Ekpoma to Benin City in the chauffeured rides of their aristos and returned in flocks on Sunday with excess cash and branded clothes and stories of their carouses that were the grist of campus gossip and front-page news of local celebrity rags. (Barrett 86)

His new skin color increases his popularity among the ladies. He gains access to gatherings with the type of ladies who would not mingle with any average man. Furo's skin transforms him from an ordinary man to one whose presence is a form of satisfaction and pride for the people around him.

Furo's before/after state in the society portrays the position of a black man among his own race. The scenario is even more crucial when the society is white as it creates scope for constant comparison of the two races. To be black in the United States means

> to face increased likelihood, relative to Whites, of living in poverty, attending failing schools, experiencing discrimination in housing, being denied a job interview, being stopped by the police, being killed during a routine police encounter, receiving inferior medical care, living in substandard conditions and in dangerous and polluted environments, being un- or under-employed, receiving longer prison sentences, and having a lower life expectancy. (Emile 295)

The human capital that appears to be of more importance here is not knowledge, education or skill but the skin color that one has or is likely to be born with. This capital is conceptualized by the whites and so everything that the whites have, including certain names, becomes the canon or the standard. In the novel, Furo Wariboko changes his name to Frank Whyte, a name that matches his whiteness and the new clothes that he had bought. A Nigerian name could never meet the standards:

> He had been trying out names as he chose his clothes for work, but none yet sounded right, none felt like his to keep. At first he considered taking Kalabari names, and then Itsekiri, Efik, Yoruba, but he soon gave up on Nigeria. In his new life he was American and his new name would confirm that. A new name from the new world for the new him – that sounded right. (Barrett 101)

The capitalist market prioritizes a white man's caliber over a black man's. A white man and his brain, being superior, deserves a higher rank in the workplace and ensures better salary. This is reflected in the novel as "Syreeta felt that his status, his oyibo-ness, had been taken advantage of. She argued that he was worth way more than eighty thousand and a company car, and when he sighed with indifference, she told him that the first job she'd got out of university had paid two hundred and fifty thousand. She was also given a car, the Honda" (Barrett 110). The corporate world has been favoring the whites and has created an invisible hegemonic difference between white/black brains. The hegemonic mindset makes them believe that recruiting a white man in a company not only attracts attention but also moves them to a better position. When Furo goes to see Mr. Umukoro, he meets

a woman who is astonished to see a white man working for Haba. When Furo reveals that he is the new Marketing Executive, the "woman's face cleared. 'Marketing executive,' she said, drawing the words and nodding slowly. 'It seems Haba is moving up!'" (Barrett 123). The presence of a white employee in a company would also be helpful for advertisement. Mr. Umukoro realizes this and initiates a conversation with Furo:

> "You know my business is advertising." Umukoro stared at Furo until Furo kenned he was awaiting acknowledgement. "I work mostly with multinationals," he continued after Furo nodded, "and most of their local branches are headed by foreigners. You white men like to do business with your kind." He dropped his gaze to the books on the table and a spasm of distaste curdled his face. "How much is Abu paying you? A hundred thousand per month? One fifty? I'll double that. And I guarantee you'll learn more about marketing than a bookseller can teach." He smiled his sinister face again. "Are you interested?" "Excuse me?" Furo said. "I want you to work for me." (Barrett 125)

This hegemony that was initiated by the whites has extended from them to the blacks and the superiority of white brains has been engraved in the minds of the black. The treatment that Furo receives before and after the racial transformation is a consequence of this hegemonic concept that dominates the corporate capitalist world where appearance gets more priority than the brain.

Biopolitics of Debilitation

Deborah A. Stone, a political scientist, offers a theory of how the state allocates people either to the work-based or the needs-based category by using medical certification. Through an analysis of government and intellectual justifications that give coherence to activities related to the concept of disability, she justifies how disability becomes an important "boundary" category for two incompatible distributive systems. The state uses the social construction of disability as the biopolitics of debilitation to control the state-controlled welfare system. In the normal process of aging, disability is expected to hit everyone someday. However, as Puar mentions in the "Preface: Hands up, don't shoot!" of *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability*, the biopolitics of debilitation is not intended to advocate democratization of disability:

> as if to rehash the familiar cant that tells us we will all be disabled if we live long enough. In fact, depending on where we live, what resources we have, what traumas we have endured, what color our skin is, what access we have to clean water, air, and decent food, what type of health care we have, what kind of work we do … we will not all be disabled. Some of us will simply not live long enough, embedded in a distribution of risk already factored into the calculus of debilitation. Death's position. Others, at risk because of seeming risky, may encounter disability in ways that compound the debilitating effects of biopolitics. (Puar xiv)

Both Gregor and Furo are victims of the biopolitics of debilitation. Biopolitics regulate their body capacities and the changes after or the state before the transformation are highly

affected by biopolitics. This effect is the debilitation that the characters undergo in the hands of biopolitics. As such, despite being differently abled after the transformation, Gregor does not get any recognition. On the other hand, Furo only gets recognition when he transforms to a white man. In both the cases, the body appears as the most dominating factor that regulates their flow of life. All the changes that the characters undergo are directly or indirectly related to their body. The concept of this body is constructed and enforced by biopolitics. As such, Gregor's differently abled body causes debilitation since it does not match the standard of body that biopolitics argues for. On the other hand, in the case of Furo, not getting a job before the transformation proves that his black body is not capable of doing what a white body can do.

The cause and result of change in identity and position of both the characters (Gregor Samsa and Furo Wariboko) are influenced by the calculus of debilitation where their positions change from the work-based category to the needs-based category and vice-versa. Disability, as shown by the Disability Studies critics, is caused by the biopolitics of debilitation. Being related and highly influenced by debilitating factors like capitalism, race, speciesism, etc., this maims the identity of a body. As such, even if the body is a normal/standard body devoid of any impairment, the debilitating factor that leaves the body with no other option but to shift from the work-based category to needs-based category acts as a reduction in normal/standard ability.

Maiming Identity: Gregor Samsa

Before the transformation, Gregor was a human worker trapped in the hands of his employer being "the boss's creature, stupid and spineless" (Kafka 31). He is assigned to play a specific limited role within a larger capitalist system that forces upon him the mentality of an insect obeying the command of its host for survival. Despite the discomfort he feels at work before the transformation and, with his new body and treatment by his family members after the transformation, Gregor never revolts. It appears that his mentality and body cannot be detached from his work/labor. As such, despite being a part of the production, his identity as a human is maimed by the force of capitalism. Later, his new transformed physical state is that of a monstrous vermin which gives rise to a different set of abilities that allow him to crawl, walk on the walls, etc. However, Gregor's state of being differently abled hardly gets any recognition as it does not comply with the normal notion of ability that is required to work and earn a living. His identity was debilitated in the hands of different forms of recognition of disability that "shroud debilities and forms of slow death while also effacing the quotidian modalities of wide-scale debilitation so prevalent due to capitalist exploitation and imperialist expansion" (Puar xvi).

If seen through the lens of Stone's categorization of able/disabled people then, Gregor's change in position can be said to be from the work-based category to the needs-based category. That is, from an able body to a disabled body that is now dependent on others to provide for it. However, the identity of Gregor as an independent human self was seen to be debilitated even when he had the ability to work. Prior to the transformation, Gregor is reduced from a human being to a worker and, after the transformation, he is reduced from

a worker to an insect that lacks the ability to work. He already undergoes "slow death" or physical wearing because of the workload in the first half. Lauren Berlant in "Slow Death (Sovereignty, Obesity, Lateral Agency)" discusses the slow death of the US waged workers whose bodies

> will be more fatigued, in more pain, less capable of ordinary breathing and working, and die earlier than the average for higher-income workers, who are also getting fatter, but at a slower rate and with relatively more opportunity for exercise. (775)

Gregor too appears as a worker who is fatigued with no potential or interest in demanding what he deserves. His identity is debilitated to such an extent that he does not even realize his position or dignity as an independent self and rather accepts the debilitated identity constructed by the people around him.

On the other hand, in the second half, Gregor's transformation from a human to a non-human allows his family members and others to navigate the bases of human-animal relationship where his position descends to a greater extent and is left destined for death. Thus, in the process, Gregor's identity is maimed twice. First, in the hands of his employers and second, in the hands of humans. In both the cases, he becomes the "Other" as termed by Edward Said. The state does not directly kill Gregor but maims his identity to such an extent that he is left destined to die. The fact that he is not killed by the state but rather left debilitated might appear as a relief but in reality it is not so.

Maiming Identity: Furo Wariboko

Fanon states that "the Negro is comparison" (163) and, being born as a black man, Furo is positioned in a world of constant comparison. Furo is a classic example of the black man who

> is constantly preoccupied with self-evaluation and with the ego-ideal. Whenever he comes into contact with someone else, the question of value, of merit, arises. The Antilleans have no inherent values of their own, they are always contingent on the presence of The Other. The question is always whether he is less intelligent than I, blacker than I, less respectable than I. Every position of one's own, every effort at security, is based on relations of dependence, with the diminution of the other. It is the wreckage of what surrounds me that provides the foundation for my virility. (Fanon 163-164)

The concept is engraved in the minds of people to such an extent that even in a black country like Nigeria, Furo's transformation into a white man makes him the Other but a more potential one or the I with whom the entire society starts comparing itself. As such, before the transformation, Furo's maiming of identity occurs in the hands of capitalism and biopower but right after the transformation, the entire society's identity starts to maim as they begin comparing themselves with Frank Whyte (Furo's new name).

Even in Nigerian society, blackness stands as a paradigm that holds the potentials to automatically debilitate one's position in the world. The presence of blackness can be marked

as an imaginary/invisible reduction of ability of a person that stands as a disadvantage. This also explains Furo's struggle to get rid of the blackness from his buttocks after the transformation as he starts applying whitening creams despite the harm they were causing. Furo constantly attempts to get rid of this blackness that remains as if it were dragging him down with its invisible power of reduction. Though his buttocks remain covered, they are exposed to Syreeta and he does not want that to be his weakness. Blackness, of course, "is not by itself an impairment. However, disability law recognizes that many traits understood as disabling do not necessarily arise from a medical condition, but instead are simply traits that create disadvantage when combined with an inhospitable social or physical environment" (Emile 298). Furo's blackness was certainly a disadvantage as it kept him away from securing a job and receiving additional attention and importance.

Before the transformation, Furo's identity was debilitated by the society which failed to ensure employment for its people. The society with its hegemonic use of biopower reduces the ability of a person through debilitation and tries to establish it as a form of political negotiation where the person is made to believe that he lacks the ability to work. Racism and Othering are two such vectors of biopower that the state uses and enforces to establish this negotiation. Being unemployed in a capitalist world maims the identity of a person which happened in the case of Furo before the transformation. As the story progresses, it is noted that the same vectors of biopower bring a degradation in Furo's morality after the transformation as he starts believing that he is worth more in value because of his skin color. The degradation is intrigued by the society as well as the capitalist market where corporate personalities like Umukoro offer to double the wage in exchange of the labor saying, "How much is Abu paying you? A hundred thousand per month? One fifty? I'll double that" (Barrett 125).

In a capitalist world the identity of individuals is measured by social status that is highly influenced by the wage they receive from their work. Since the corporate world values white brains over black brains, whites like Frank land a job with a higher salary while the black Furo cannot, despite having the same capacities (and, in fact, being the same person). His whiteness becomes an asset to build his identity. But on the other hand, this same whiteness is the factor that maims his original identity as Furo Wariboko.

Gregor and Furo share the same vulnerability in the hands of biopolitics. Their identities are maimed by biopower that enforces standards for a body and its capacities. In order to re-conceptualize debility and capacity, it is important to identify the politics of debilitation and aim at identity through posthumanism that endorses non-anthropocentric and non-racial perspectives.

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Language and Applied Linguistics

Examining English as a Medium of Instruction in Vietnam: Policies and Challenges in Higher Education

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Abstract

This paper is a literature-based review that critically examines the implementation of English as a medium of instruction (EMI) in Vietnam's higher education (HE). Drawing on policy documents and previous studies in the EMI domain, this paper provides a review of the EMI policies and sheds light on the challenges that could negatively impact the success of the project. The findings indicate a misalignment between the policies and actual implementation, as teachers and students face various challenges in the EMI classrooms. Such challenges include the insufficient supply of qualified teachers, low English proficiency, educational inequality, and irrelevant materials dominated by westernized perspectives. It can be argued that perceptions of teachers, students, and non-educational bodies, such as employers and recruiters, should be considered to ensure the sustainability of EMI implementation. In addition, this article also questions the validity of the monolingual ideology embedded in the EMI policy and discusses implications based on recent development in language education to present an alternative scholarship that transcends the English-only ideology and embraces the multilingual practices in the EMI classrooms.

Keywords: EMI, higher education, educational reform, language policies, internationalization

Introduction

The prominent role of English as an international language is well-documented in the literature. In multilateral scenarios, English is well-attested as the most effective language for "comprehensive international communication" in a myriad fields, including science, politics, business, sport, and media (Ammon, 2003, p. 23). In fact, the spread of English in today's world is not only restricted in the so-called "elite usage" of the language adopted in academic publishing or business conducts, but also penetrates people from all walks of life (Mauranen, 2018). Social-economic and technical transformations have established optimal conditions that propel the status of English as a dominant shared code and a symbol of neoliberalism (Kedzierski, 2016). The influence of English expansion on the domain of international education leads to the increasing use of English as a medium of instruction (EMI) even in non-English speaking countries (Vu & Burns, 2014).

The educational landscape of Asia has witnessed a large growth of programs instructed in English, especially in higher education (HE) (Kirkpatrick, 2011). The high demand for EMI in Asia can be illustrated by the education policy adopted in China, where English is introduced from the third year of primary school (Kirkpatrick, 2014). EMI as "the new

normal" in HE is also evidenced by the early acceptance of EMI policy in Korean universities where EMI programs were first introduced in the 1990s and since then have exploded in quantity thanks to enormous funding (Kim, 2017). The driving force behind the spread of EMI on an international scale cannot be separated from the belief that EMI could be the shortcut to bringing prestigious status to HE institutions (Lin & Lo, 2018). With HE institutions striving for prestige and respect, American universities, such as Harvard, Stanford, or Berkeley, have been regarded as the role models for success (Mohrman, 2008).

It is not surprising that Vietnam also joined the trend of globalizing the tertiary sector with the adoption of the EMI policy to fulfill various political, economic, and socio-cultural motives (Tran et al., 2018). As a response to the increasingly challenging global competitiveness, the promotion of the EMI policy in the HE sector in Vietnam is a strategy to improve the position of local educational institutions in the international ranking system, enhance the quality of education, attract both local and international students to join these programs, and increase the institutions' income (Nguyen et al., 2016). The plans to implement the EMI programs were officially initiated in 2008 with the introduction of the National Foreign Language Project 2020 (NFL 2020).

In the same year, Decision number 1505/QĐ-TTg presented a plan to establish the advanced programs, focusing mainly on the enactment of EMI policy in the HE system. Subsequently, circular 23/2014/TT-BGDĐT introduced high-quality programs and joint programs which also use English as a vehicle for delivering lessons. Against this backdrop, the EMI policy was expected to bring about educational outcomes, boost research capability, and develop talents who can work in English. However, unfavorable reports on the implementation of EMI policies in Vietnam's tertiary sector have thrown the EMI programs in a negative light. Previous studies have demonstrated a detachment between top-down policy and the reality of institutional and classroom practices (Nguyen & Tran, 2017; Pham & Doan, 2020).

Research Methodology

This paper employs literature review as its methodology to critically examine the implementation of EMI policy in HE in Vietnam. Drawing on policy documents and recent studies, this article examines the EMI policies promulgated by the Vietnamese government and addresses the challenges related to the enactment of such policies. Studies from other countries have related the practices of EMI in Vietnam with other non-English speaking contexts. Data were comprised of a number of policy documents obtained from the official portals of the Vietnamese Government and the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), relevant research articles, and book chapters. Data coding was informed by Braun and Clarke's (2012) thematic analysis. Codes were developed from the data and relevant codes were collated to construct the themes. While there have been many studies that shed light on EMI implementation in Vietnam, comprehensive reviews devoted to examine the policies and challenges in this area are scant. In addition, a synthesis of EMI-related documents and studies can generate a holistic picture of the EMI landscape, provide an insight into recent scholarship in language education that might inform EMI practices,

and serve as a reference point for future research.

Defining English as a Medium of Instruction

EMI is defined as "the use of the English language to teach academic subjects in countries or jurisdictions where the first language (L1) of the majority of the population is not English" (Macaro et al., 2018, p. 37). It differs from another educational approach called Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in the sense that while CLIL has a dual focus on both language and content via the use of an additional foreign language (Marsh & Martín, 2012), EMI places its emphasis on the delivery of content to students. As EMI does not have any explicit language goal (Walkinshaw et al., 2017), it also differs from English for Specific Purposes (ESP), which focuses on specific language, genres, and skills to address the academic or occupational needs of learners (Anthony, 2018). English learning is only considered a "happy by-product" of EMI rather than being positioned at the forefront of the learning process (Taguchi, 2014).

Policies and Motives Behind the Implementation of EMI in Vietnam

Vietnam's language policies have constantly been subjected to shifts in the country's socio-political landscape. The adoption of various official foreign languages in Vietnam reflects different historical periods of the country (Lam & Albright, 2019). As the country regained its independence after the Vietnam War, the attitude toward English was primarily negative for more than a decade after the event (Dang, 2021). During this period, Vietnam demonstrated its closely-tied alliance with the Soviet Union by adopting Russian as the predominant foreign language in the educational system (Dang, 2021). However, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, Vietnam entered a period of rapid transformation and reformation called "Doi Moi" in which the country transitioned from a centrally planned to a market-oriented economy (Ngo, 2020).

The transition underscored an opening to the era of a regulated market economy, which contributed to the rapid development of Vietnam's economic landscape (Hayden & Lam, 2009). In alignment with the economic changes, the educational system was also reshaped in response to the call for more programs relevant to the economy's needs (Oliver et al., 2009). Educational reform in this era led to new language policy and marked the emergence of English as the major foreign language in Vietnam (Lam & Albright, 2019). Russian soon became the dead language in Vietnam, followed by the rise of English as the most dominant foreign language in the country (X.N.C.M. Nguyen & Nguyen, 2019). English in Vietnam, once the language of the enemy, re-emerged as the shortcut for economic growth, educational reform, and the facilitation of a higher-skilled workforce.

The National Foreign Language 2020 (NFL2020) launched by the Prime Ministerial Decision number 1400/QĐ-TTg demonstrated Vietnam's willingness to engage in the educational globalization by taking further steps in reforming foreign language teaching and learning in the period of 2008-2020 (Vu & Burns, 2014). Some major objectives included in the NFL2020 project were: (1) initiating the 10-year foreign language program in which English becomes a compulsory subject starting from grade 3, (2) initiating intensive English training programs in vocational education, (3) initiating intensive English

training programs in HE, and (4) constantly updating the English teaching and learning practices according to the needs of students to enhance the foreign language proficiency of the workforce (Vietnamese Government, 2008a). To fulfill these objectives, the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) specified some important missions, including (1) implementing a unified language framework that corresponds to the six-point scale for language proficiency referred to as The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), (2) building and implementing EMI programs to teach mathematics in some high schools, (3) building and implementing EMI programs to teach foundational, specialized, and optional subjects in the senior year of university (Vietnamese Government, 2008a).

The project was estimated to cost USD500 million to fulfill the goals of providing highly skilled individuals and promoting the process of modernization and internalization of the country (X.N.C.M. Nguyen & Nguyen, 2019). Since the implementation of the ambitious NFL2020, Vietnam has witnessed tremendous changes in English education, including earlier introduction to foreign language, change in language of instruction from Vietnamese to English, reform of classroom materials, increased time dedicated to English teaching, and training and retraining on a national scale (Dang et al., 2013). Changes were the most notable in the tertiary sector with the introduction of advanced training programs which emphasized the use of EMI. The scheme of implementing advanced training programs in HE launched by The Prime Ministerial Decision number 1505/QĐ-TTg aimed to initiate the advanced programs as a strategic step to reform HE in Vietnam (Vietnamese Government, 2008b).

Advanced programs are cooperative programs that partner with prestigious Anglophone universities in the US and the UK (Nguyen et al., 2018). The programs were inclined to embrace training programs from the top 200 universities ranked by prestigious organizations. To accommodate the establishment of advanced programs, the Vietnamese government promulgated a set of criteria for implementing the programs, including (1) conducting training programs using EMI, (2) importing training programs from the world's top 200 prestigious universities, (3) recruiting teachers who have a masters or higher degree to teach the courses, (4) admitting students who are proficient in English to meet the language requirements of the program (Vietnamese Government, 2008b). It was expected that with the implementation of EMI in HE, the educational system could achieve the goals of improving the quality of the tertiary sector and promoting the ranking of some universities on the international ranking system.

In 2014, MOET issued Circular Number 23/2014/TT-BGDĐT, marking the introduction of joint programs and high-quality programs in HE. Joint programs refer to transnational programs that allow students to go to foreign campuses in their third or fourth year, giving them the opportunity to obtain a double degree upon graduation. High-quality programs refer to localized EMI programs established by local universities. One major characteristic of these programs is the import of materials, course content, and assessment plans from prestigious universities (Nguyen & Tran, 2017). As a result, with the promotion of the

EMI policy and programs imported from top-ranked universities, students are expected to acquire content knowledge and improve their English proficiency.

In addition, these programs were navigated towards research-based training in which students and teachers were encouraged to produce scientific outputs. EMI teachers ought to have one publication in the area of advanced training programs on an annual basis while students were required to form research groups led by EMI teachers. In addition, the regulation also foregrounded the need to maintain connections between the academic world and the world of work. Teachers and students were required to collaborate with organizations, corporations, and businesses to produce studies on the success of the advanced training programs (MOET, 2014).

Changes in language education policies in Vietnam denoted the government's responses to the country's socio-political shifts and the influence of globalization. The reform of HE programs might bring about tangible assets, such as the flourishing of research capacities, highly-skilled human resources, and other intangible assets, including the connection with the wider world and the promotion of educational prestige. In fact, the adoption of EMI was proven to be effective in attracting foreign investment and maintaining scientific and technical links with the wider world (Le & Chen, 2019). The import of the language curriculum and materials from the top global universities reflected the country's ambitious goal of promoting the ranking of local universities on the international ranking system, ideally reaching the position of top 200 leading positions in the world by 2020 (Vietnamese Government, 2008b).

Motives behind the promotion of universities' ranking were attracting both domestic and international students to the programs and stimulating the country's stagnant area of research publishing. It was proposed that by 2015, 100 scientific works under the advanced programs would be published in leading scientific journals (Vietnamese Government, 2008b). Although the HE research landscape of Vietnam has not achieved the expected vibrancy (Hayden & Le-Nguyen, 2020), it was evident that the policies acknowledged the influence of EMI programs and research productivity on the process of educational internalization.

Challenges of English as a Medium of Instruction in Higher Education
Despite various efforts to implement EMI as a strategic step to enhance the quality of HE, research has shown that there is a disconnect between the EMI policies stipulated by the government, university language policies, and the actual practices of EMI coursework in classroom contexts. For example, Aizawa and Rose (2018) investigated the gaps between university policy and classroom practices in the Japanese context. The findings suggested that the university policy did not trickle down to classroom practices due to the low English proficiency of both teachers and students.

In the context of Bangladesh, Saleh and Morgan (2022b) used a "Russian doll approach" to analyze the macro, meso, and micro levels of policy decisions and how such decisions were implemented within the university context. The findings indicated mismatches between

language policy and the decisions made in four universities and eight classrooms. While the macro-level analysis of existing literature revealed that public universities employed Bangla, bilingual, or a mixture of Bangla and English, and private ones adopted EMI, mesolevel analysis demonstrated that one public university used English as the vehicle for delivering lessons and put an embargo on using Bangla. Meanwhile, micro-level analysis indicated that seven out of eight teachers resorted to the use of translanguaging in their classroom rather than adhering to the EMI policy.

The same issues can be observed in the implementation of EMI in Vietnam. Studies on the implementation of EMI in Vietnam share some commonalities on the clash between expectations and reality, resulting from the fact that policy envisions were not translated well to the institutional and classroom levels. The main challenges that hinder EMI success result from the insufficient supply of qualified teachers, the low English proficiency, material-related issues, and potential tensions related to educational inequality (Nguyen et al., 2016; Pham & Doan, 2020; Tran et al., 2018).

Insufficient Supply of Qualified Teachers
One major concern of the implementation of EMI in the tertiary sector is the insufficient supply of qualified teachers. Teachers who participate in EMI programs should be masters of discipline-specific knowledge, proficient users of English, and well-qualified educators (Doiz et al., 2012; Wilkinson, 2012). Although teachers were reported to be moderately skilled in English writing and reading, lecturing in English to Vietnamese students was a different story (Vu & Burns, 2014). Teachers elaborated that their accent might dissatisfy students who preferred native speakers' accent. Teachers also expressed their concerns about giving oral presentations and explaining content area concepts in English as their pronunciation errors could lead to understanding difficulties encountered by their students (Vu, 2020).

In fact, the study by Le (2019) indicated that teachers' concerns were not baseless. Students pointed out that their teachers' unclear and incorrect pronunciation also contributed to their difficulties in understanding the lectures. Meanwhile, teachers also recognized that their low level of English proficiency could be an impediment to students' understanding of subject content and might negatively affect students' English development (Pham & Doan, 2020). However, from the lens of World Englishes, where the unquestioning position of native language norms is challenged by the varieties of English originating from different sociolinguistic contexts, students need to understand that learning English variations is no less important than conforming to native linguistic rules. As the idealized Standard English could no longer accommodate the fluid and dynamic use of the language in the expanding-circle contexts, appreciation for linguistic diversity should be promoted instead of native-speakerism (Fang & Baker, 2021). In this sense, rather than viewing the teachers' pronunciation as less than ideal, students should embrace it as a model of English for global communication that might enable effective communication with individuals from different sociolinguistic backgrounds (Hino, 2017).

In a case study conducted in a public Vietnam university, the criteria for recruiting lecturers

for EMI courses, as reported by an executive, were having graduated abroad, having a disciplinary degree from a foreign university to teach a core course, having experience in teaching in Vietnamese and English, and being able to adopt Western pedagogical approaches (Nguyen et al., 2016) However, even teachers who possessed postgraduate certificates from English-speaking countries asserted that they were having major difficulties in delivering lectures to students in a comprehensible manner as "academics cannot present all their knowledge to the students and students cannot understand what the academics teach them" (Nguyen et al., 2017, p.45). Teachers expressed that knowing English did not mean they could deliver EMI courses as teaching and explaining technical and abstract concepts were not easy tasks (Pham & Doan, 2020). Such issues not only deprive students of the mastery of content knowledge, but also put them at a disadvantage as English learners. Recruiting lecturers who have obtained overseas degrees does not guarantee the successful implementation of EMI in tertiary education.

Thus, a shortcut to promote content learning that was frequently practiced by EMI teachers was the code-switching strategy in which Vietnamese was used when introducing abstract concepts or when students started to have problems understanding the content. Common code-switching practices in EMI classrooms include using additional materials in Vietnamese and the reversal of the prohibition of using Vietnamese in classroom activities as compensation for the low English proficiency (Pham & Doan, 2020). The study of Dang and Moskovsky (2021) confirmed that despite the regulations on strict adherence to EMI, use of EMI in formal policy documents, teachers and administrators admitted that the code-switching strategy was negotiated in the classroom to maximize the student's understanding of the content knowledge.

According to teachers, Vietnamese was necessary when explaining jargon or disciplinary terminologies as the meanings of such terms were beyond the students' ability to understand (Dang & Moskovsky, 2021). However, the use of code switching also encountered objections from students as they stated that random mixing of Vietnamese and English made them lose their concentration on lessons (Nguyen et al., 2017) and lose motivation to improve their English (Trinh & Conner, 2019). Thus, teachers usually found themselves in a vicious dilemma in which either direction can lead to potential disruptions in the EMI classrooms. It is obvious that prohibiting the use of L1 and implementing an English-only policy in EMI in Vietnam HE is simply unrealistic given the reality of classroom practices revealed in previous studies.

Students' Low English Proficiency

When students enroll in EMI programs, high English competency is one of the indicators for success in their academic study. Yet, the compatibility between EMI programs' English entry tests and the language level for academic pursuit in the EMI environment is being questioned. For instance, in a case study at a university in Vietnam, the minimum language requirement for students who wanted to join EMI programs was scoring 500 out of 990 in a modified version of the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) administered by the university's English faculty (Nguyen et al., 2016). However, the fact

that higher institutions are using results from English for professional purposes test such as TOEIC as the gatekeeper for EMI programs has provoked various concerns. This is because the results of the TOEIC test might denote the ability to manage English in daily activities rather than the ability to function successfully in the academic domain.

It is no surprise that students struggle to comprehend discipline-specific knowledge embedded in the lectures. Rather than promoting students' English proficiency, the use of EMI in tertiary programs was said to be a double barrier, negatively affecting the students' ability to learn (Yao et al., 2021). Yao et al. (2021) examined the influence of EMI on students' learning experiences in a transnational university and revealed that the implementation of EMI policies brought various challenges to the learning process of the students. The students reported that they could not fully understand the lessons due to the speech rate of their teachers and the fact that they had to listen and write down the content simultaneously. Thus, the students had to seek other resources, such as course materials and slides to compensate for their lack of understanding (Yao et al., 2021).

Additionally, the students also faced challenges in academic writing tasks, since they were not equipped with knowledge of professional genres and technical vocabulary for their written assignments (Le, 2019). The language of English was also perceived as a negative factor in the learning experiences as they could not express their ideas and opinions fluently and clearly when they encountered topics in the content area. Consequently, they did not participate in speaking activities that involved the use of English (Le, 2019). Furthermore, since the students were accustomed to passive learning styles in high school where they assumed the role of listeners and receivers of knowledge, they lacked the communicative skills required to conduct conversations in English and were afraid of losing face when making mistakes, leading to their reluctance in taking part in classroom discussions (Tran et al., 2021).

This state of affairs points to the fact that despite the monolingual ideology of an English-only environment specified in the policy documents, institutional and classroom practices demonstrated certain deviations from the EMI policy envisions. This also calls for a shift in classroom linguistic practices that moves beyond the static boundaries of languages and embraces the fluid and dynamic nature of language use as the English-only policy might have unfavorable effects on teaching and learning.

The Issues of Educational Inequality

The implementation of EMI programs has been the leading cause of inequality in the domestic educational landscape as only a marginal group of students who can afford higher tuition fees and meet the English language requirements are qualified to join the programs (Trinh & Conner, 2019). The equality problems of HE internationalization might result from the labeling of EMI programs. With the label of "advanced programs," these programs create the impression of being a more privileged or elite educational opportunity while students from the Vietnamese-as-a-medium-of-instruction (VMI) programs are just "normal students" in "normal programs" (Tran & Nguyen, 2018). In one instance, the tuition fee of high-quality programs was five times higher than that of VMI programs at a

local university. The rationale for this, as explained by an executive, was that higher-quality product required a higher price point (Nguyen et al., 2016). Thus, there is an apparent dichotomy between the high-quality program and the VMI program (Wilkinson, 2012), in which the VMI program is essentially portrayed as poor quality when compared with its counterpart.

Differences in resource allocations could result in a further division between students and illustrate the manifestation of inequality in HE (Nguyen et al., 2018). This has sparked an even greater division between VMI and EMI students, underpinning the marginalization of students taking VMI programs. High level of educational discrimination might bring about negative consequences in the near future (Nguyen et al., 2018) as the socioeconomic gap between VMI and EMI students is increasing. An example of high tension between EMI students and students of mass programs occurred in Bangladesh HE where EMI students voiced their dissatisfaction with the false stories and hatred thrown towards them by the anti-English-medium people (Hamid & Jahan, 2015). In another account, Bangla-medium students reported that they suffered from emotional discomfort and a sense of inferiority as they failed to understand lectures and express their ideas in English, leading to English proficiency-based discrimination in the EMI classroom (Saleh & Morgan, 2022a). These incidents in the Bangladeshi context call for a reconsideration of the elite labeling and an investigation into the current polarization of Vietnam's HE to prevent discrimination between individuals and communities.

Materials-Related Issues

Aside from the mentioned challenges, imported materials also act as a barrier to the successful enactment of EMI. In response to students' learning needs, the adoption of materials in Vietnamese depicts the attempt to assist the students in solving their language issues. Teachers resorted to using equivalent materials and articles in Vietnamese as a cross-linguistic strategy, as they believed that academic materials in English could hinder students' ability to understand content knowledge (Pham & Doan, 2020). Accommodating changes in the language of instruction means that teachers have to update the slides for lesson presentations (Vu & Burns, 2014) and gain access to foreign materials (Tran et al., 2018). However, updating previous materials for the new curriculum was overwhelming for EMI teachers, as they often found themselves overwhelmed with little time to create new materials in English (Nguyen et al., 2017).

As a result, a university executive admitted that some EMI lecturers resorted to outdated materials used in their overseas study as resources for teaching (Nguyen et al., 2016). Other academics asserted that they had to translate Vietnamese materials into English while facing the language barrier as certain discipline-specific concepts were untranslatable (Nguyen et al., 2017). Furthermore, as imported materials were mainly westernized, students also reported a sense of disconnect between the international conversations included in the textbooks and the local reality of Vietnam's economy (Phan et al., 2019). The fact that materials are overwhelmingly informed, driven, and dominated by the westernized perspectives poses a potential threat as the knowledge provided in such materials might bear little relevance to

the students' reality (Leask & Bridge, 2013). In this sense, forcing the interaction with the international arena is not equal to devaluing students' home culture by integrating foreign materials into the EMI curriculum without adapting the content to accommodate the local cultural and socioeconomic background. Materials adopted from prestigious universities, regardless of their quality, may not reflect the practices of the local market and meet the learning needs and target needs of Vietnamese students.

Discussion and Implications for the Current Practices of EMI in Vietnam

Among the disputes about EMI in the HE of Vietnam, appropriate adjustments and careful planning based on continuous feedback from stakeholders, empirical research, and needs analysis could facilitate better implementation of the EMI policy in HE. On an institutional scale, the establishment of a support system where learning and self-improvement opportunities are available for teachers to adapt to a new environment is vital (Byun et al., 2011). In the same vein, Duong and Chua (2016) argue that setting up departmental units to supervise and facilitate EMI programs is beneficial, as these units allow timely responses to teachers' needs. Training on EMI teaching methods and techniques should be provided beforehand as having been trained in native English educational contexts does not equal the ability to teach in English. Cañado (2020) conducted a needs analysis to address the training needs of EMI teachers and found that teachers were not sufficiently supported professionally and linguistically when they were assigned to teach EMI courses. Therefore, they expressed the need for mobility programs, methodological training, and language training as compensation for their shortcomings as EMI teachers. Teacher training should be long-term and provided continuously throughout the programs so that teachers can reflect on their teaching practices and exchange expertise with their colleagues.

As teachers are the central agents who instruct EMI programs, education administrators should provide teachers with opportunities to raise their concerns in terms of resistance, demotivation, and disappointment in the new language policies to further investigate the limitations of the top-down language policies (Nguyen & Bui, 2016). Teachers hesitated to teach EMI courses as they were not ready to adopt English as a vehicle for delivering lessons despite their PhD training in English-speaking countries (Pham & Doan, 2020). As a result, teachers mentioned that they felt a sense of obligation towards the EMI policies since they had no choice but to respond to national and institutional regulations (Pham & Doan, 2020). However, Byun et al. (2011) warns that the unilateral enactment of EMI policies might lead to unwanted side effects and policy makers should take into account human resource availability and students' language proficiency before enacting EMI policies on a national scale.

It is also apparent that EMI policy operates under several key assumptions, such as English should be the only language permitted in the classroom, any deviation from the native-like English is seen as less than ideal, and the cross-contamination of L1 is regarded as an impediment to the deliverance of EMI. EMI promotes the inherent superiority of native-speakerness, monolingual policy, and the native/non-native dichotomy despite the call for an alternative approach that reflects the multilingual practices in Global Englishes (Sahan

et al., 2022). In contrast, Global Englishes marks a shift toward an alternative paradigm that emphasizes the use of English as an international language, challenges the established native norms, and promotes the flexible and dynamic nature of language (Rose et al., 2020). This paradigm shift stemmed from the fact that English has transcended beyond monolingual ideology and encompassed diverse English varieties as it spread across borders. Given the prevalence of Global Englishes, the translanguaging approach in education has gained momentum.

Unlike code-switching which views bi-multilingualism as autonomous linguistic systems (Rahman & Singh, 2021), translanguaging is defined as an approach to language use that regards the language practices of bilinguals as one linguistic repertoire (García & Wei, 2014). In this sense, translanguaging has transformed teaching and learning by normalizing multilingual practices in the classroom, valuing linguistic varieties, and validating students' L1 and local culture (Tian et al., 2020). Under the ideology of translanguaginng, English is seen as 'a social practice that is (re)negotiated and (re)configured by multilingual speakers over time according to their values, interests, and language repertoires in various communicative situations' (Sembiante & Tian, 2020) rather than as a connotation of the monolingual orientation of standard English.

In the context of Vietnam, Ngo's (2021) study revealed that translanguaging in the EMI classroom was a natural phenomenon as suggested by observations and interviews with the students. For example, in an observation of a group presentation, rather than struggling with expressing ideas in English, a student decided to shuttle between L1 and English to convey meaning, which represented a typical episode of translanguaging. In another account, students were found to utilize both Vietnamese and English online resources to answer questions posed by their classmate instead of following the prohibition of translanguaging practices imposed by their teacher.

In the context of Bangladesh, Rahman and Singh (2021) investigated the language ideologies of STEM teachers and students about translanguaging at a private university where English had been adopted as the official medium of instruction. The authors found that although STEM teachers and students acknowledged the rationale and motives behind the implementation of EMI policies in tertiary education, they reported that strict compliance with the ideology was detrimental to content teaching and learning outcomes. Looking through the micro lens of classroom practices, it was evident that the stakeholders adopted translanguaging by using both Bangla and English in the classroom to engage in the meaning-making process and develop a deeper understanding of the content knowledge (Rahman & Singh, 2021).

Similarly, Rafi and Morgan (2022a) found that despite the mixed reactions towards translanguaging practices in academic writing instruction, the translanguaging pedagogical approach helped the students improve their metalinguistic awareness and multicompetence, encouraged students' engagement in classroom activities, and allowed them to form more comprehensive responses in their writing task. In the sphere of reading, Rafi and Morgan (2022b) investigated the influence of translanguaging pedagogical intervention on reading

comprehension. The authors aimed to set up a translanguaging space where students could use bilingual resources in classroom activities and enlighten themselves with the cultural, ideological, and identity factors embedded in the act of reading comprehension. The results indicated that the translanguaging practices led to greater participation of students, improved reading comprehension, and a transformation in the stereotypes and prejudices. The intervention's success resulted from the fact that when emerging in the translanguaging space, students were able to question their preexisting knowledge, draw on their linguistic and cultural background, and build a bridge between languages, identities, and local culture.

Evidence from previous studies in the sphere of translanguaging questions the validity of the English-only policy and legitimizes the cross-contamination practice between languages in the EMI classroom. In light of the post-multilingual era, the translanguaging approach emerges as a shift away from monolingual bias and recognizes English as "socially constructed with emergent characteristics in real-life communicative contexts" (Tian et al., 2020, p. 9). Although translanguaging practices provide a non-threatening environment that encourages the co-construction of meaning among stakeholders and promote students' language and content learning, there are further questions that need to be addressed. For example, Morales et al. (2020) emphasizes that if "what gets tested gets taught," then how do we make assessments inclusive of translanguaging practices? This suggests that more work needs to be done to bring translanguaging ideologies from the margin to the forefront of the EMI practices.

Conclusion

With a short period of enactment and an expansion to a rather small selected group of students, the implementation of EMI in Vietnam tertiary education is only in its primitive stage. Previous research in EMI has predominantly focused on exploring the perceptions of teachers, students, and administrators to elicit possible limitations of the programs and difficulties faced by the stakeholders. However, there has not been any research that aims to explore the level of satisfaction and evaluation of non-educational bodies, including recruiters and managers, on the use of English in their workplace. As one objective of EMI enactment in the tertiary sector is to prepare students for the global workplace, feedback from the industry will provide a more holistic picture of students' readiness to join the marketized economy. Furthermore, there should be more studies examining translanguaging practices in the EMI classroom in Vietnam since such practices have not been thoroughly documented.

The fact that the road to internationalize Vietnam HE sector is paved with challenges does not denote the elimination of EMI policy. In contrast, EMI policy in Vietnam is constantly being revised and adapted according to the current state of practices, marking the country's changing education landscape and a transformation of the country as a rising force in the HE sector. Instead of focusing on non-educational goals, Vietnam needs to reconsider its reform agenda by situating the students at the forefront of the educational system. Without substantial reform on the current curriculum, it is uncertain that Vietnam can

secure the growth of HE and the supply of a highly-skilled labor force. A reform agenda is necessary but not enough if its implementation is mandated from a top-down approach. Conversations with relevant stakeholders and frequent updates on novel scholarships that might inform the EMI practices are needed to navigate EMI policy and shape the future landscape of Vietnam's HE.

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Sonority across Languages: A Contrastive Perspective on the Mutual Learnability of Spanish and English Front Pure Vowels

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Abstract

This paper presents a contrastive perspective on the front monophthongs in Spanish and English. Applying the quantitative-contrastive method designed and used in the researchers' earlier works of 2015 and 2019, we highlight the contrast between Spanish and English front monophthongs from a zonal frame of reference in the oral tact, and proceed to offer insight about the comparative levels of learner stress and difficulty that English speaking learners of Spanish and Spanish speaking learners of English as a foreign language will probably experience while attaining accuracy in the acquisition of their target vowel systems. The facts that English and Spanish front monophthongs are more different than similar (71.43: 28.57) and the acquisition workload is greater (80:50) for Spanish speaking learners of English have been established in this study. In addition, English speaking learners of Spanish will need to generate a greater degree (80:50) of substratum counter-influence than Spanish speaking learners of English for the accurate acquisition of their target vowels. Although both types of learners can transfer an equal number of vowel sounds from their L1 inventories, the ratio is not the same (20:50) and the study indicates that English speaking learners of Spanish in general will probably experience a slightly greater degree of articulatory stress in attaining perfection in the pronunciation of the target system.

Keywords: Spanish, front monophthong, contrast, substratum counter-influence, interference, acquisition workload

Despite having the same glossogenetic origin of the Proto-Indo-European language, English and Spanish developed and matured uniquely. The languages have obvious differences alongside similarities in their phonologies. Salcedo (2010) argues that present-day Spanish and English have similarities in syntax and lexis. However, when it comes to phonetics and phonology, the languages display noticeable dissimilarities, such as the presence and absence of long monophthongs in English and Spanish. On the other hand, occlusion and nasalization are the areas of phonology where the two languages display similarities. As many differences are revealed when studying the phonologies of these two languages, the information and insight obtained can help the learners and their facilitators use the right approach because, if they are aware of the contrast between the two sound systems,

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they can predict the potential areas of problem and come up with viable solutions to ease the learners' journey to the correct acquisition. Such an area of contrast is the front monophthong systems or the pure vowels in the two languages.

In the present study, we use the same method we used for English and Bengali (2015) in which we look at the differences between the two systems of English and Spanish in mathematical terms by calculating the total number of phonemes in each category as well as the interfacing identical phonemes to figure out the differences between the two systems. The calculations allow us to quantitatively discover the degree to which English and Spanish front monophthong systems are different or *away* from each other from a zonal frame of reference in the oral tract. This helps us to obtain an idea about the probable degrees of learner stress and workload as well as substratum counter-influence that is likely to be essential if English speaking learners of Spanish as well as Spanish speaking learners of English as a foreign language ever want to achieve accuracy in their acquisition of the front monophthongs of Spanish and English, respectively. Although one hundred and forty-seven undergraduate students of various disciplines at North South University in Bangladesh took part in a recent survey about the desire for learning a European language from a set of six languages (French, Spanish, German, Italian, Dutch and Russian) to indicate that Spanish is the most preferred language after French, the preference for the scope of the present study is in fact a matter of curiosity and research.

The Vowel Sound

Gimson (1975) points out that a vowel phoneme is the tiniest, irreducible yet discrete conceptual unit of sound in any language that eventually comes into existence through little or no physical or articulatory obstruction to the outgoing lung air. This unit is considered as some sort of consciousness or a concept that is later neurolinguistically transformed into a "sound" with certain physical properties that can be corroborated and studied by a sound-scientist. As an audible entity, a phone has determinable features, i.e., it has an initiation, a continuation, and a termination. Therefore, the phoneme is a concept which is the cause and the phone is the physical entity which is the effect or the logical consequence of the phoneme. In other words, the relationship between the phoneme and the phone is that of a cause and its effect. The cause or the phoneme is realized, when we work on it by using our vocal organs. In English, in order to realize the /i:/ in "feel" the speaker first needs to have the concept of the sound or the phoneme before he can give voice to the actual sound [i:], which is the phone. In order to produce the phone [i:] in English, the tongue has to be moved forward and upward in the oral tract. The lung air will pass through the oral tract, and the vowel sound wave will be formed with the vibrating air molecules.

The vowels and the consonants are the two types of speech sounds that generate the phonology of a language. The sound types are consequences of the dynamics of the articulators or actants. All speech sounds are products of the static and the dynamic actants interacting with one another and, through a process called "articulation," they generate sounds of a language. The various forms of the displacement and movement of the tongue – a dynamic actant – give birth to "vowel sounds," such as, /e/ and /u:/ in languages like English.

Ball and Rahilly (1999) argue that speech sounds are a form of mechanical energy released by vibrating air particles. Vowel sounds, just as any other types of sound, travel as sound waves comprising vibrating particles. A form of energy may be perceived as the capacity that can bring about a change in an environment. Since sound breaks "silence" in the environment, it is a form of energy. Realizing a vowel sound, such as /æ/, results in the release of sound energy. To produce the energy, the vocal cords and the actants experience vibration and displacement, and as the vocal folds strike each other, they also strike the air particles, causing them to oscillate systematically. This turbulence of air particles through sound waves results in speech sounds, such as those of the vowels and consonants.

Haque (2015) notices that among all the actants in the oral tract, the tongue is the most dynamic and versatile vocal organ, and through its three-dimensional movements, the tongue plays the most important role in generating the sound waves that produce vowel phones. The boneless tongue comprises *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* muscles that enable the organ to change its shape and position.and that is crucial for the correct pronunciation of speech sounds (Fiore & Eroschenko, 2000).

In writing, a vowel refers to either a grapheme or a visual graph – a sign meant for retinal experience. In phonetics and phonology, however, a vowel, or more appropriately, a vowel sound wave appears as a form of energy that, once generated, can travel through the air and enter the human sound receptors in order to eventually produce an auricular effect or experience. Language learners often fail to see the difference between the vowel graph and the vowel phone, and take one concept for the other (Haque, 2015). From articulatory frames of reference, vowels are the sounds or segments of speech continuum for which the pulmonic airstream is allowed to pass through the oral tract with little or no articulatory obstructions.

As there are five graphemes in Spanish (a, e, i, o, u), and five (a, e, i, o, u) in English, learners often tend to believe that Spanish as well as English phonology has the same number of five vowel sounds only. As a matter of fact, the Spanish language has twenty-three vowel sounds against twenty-five in English (Salcedo, 2010).

The spoken forms of natural languages do not exist without phonemes. Phonologically, each language of the world is composed of a definite, well-defined set of phonemes that all L1 and L2 learners must learn as part of their attempt at developing competence in that language. This is essential because speech sounds or phones, which are the discrete, indivisible, units of real sounds, cannot be generated without the help of phonemes that function as the conceptual basis of speech sounds. A language learner can articulate a well-formed phone of their target language if the underlying phoneme is internalized correctly since correct pronunciation primarily depends on correct concept of a speech sound. On the other hand, as Haque (2015) observes, mispronunciation occurs when there is an error at the phonemic or conceptual level, although other reasons, such as those involving the vocal organs, may also play a role. Therefore, it is very important that learners of a foreign language such as English learn about the phonemes of English as part of their effort to develop speaking skills. It is also equally important for the learner to be able to recognize

the traces and characteristics of mother tongue phonemes so that they can learn to avoid substratum influence in speech.

Vowel Realization

Vowels can be classified in terms of their position in the vocal tract. This tract is drawn as a quadrilateral chart, where all the vowels are arranged in different positions. From this positioning, it is found that the horizontal categories are *front*, *central*, and *back*, along with the vertical categories of *high*, *mid*, and *low*. While producing the front vowels, the tongue moves close to the opening of the oral tract, and for the back vowels, it moves back in the tract. Moreover, vowels can also be categorized as monophthongs or pure vowels, and diphthongs or compound vowels. Both English and Spanish possess these vowels.

As indicated above, vowel sounds are a consequence of the open interaction between the actants in the oral tract. The stream of air leaving the lungs through the trachea and the oral tract is the egressive pulmonic airstream (EPA), while the air entering the lungs, by inhalation or inspiration, is referred to as the ingressive pulmonic airstream. The articulators interact with one another in such a way that they allow the egressive pulmonic air to pass freely. The EPA does not face any obstacles and can pass through the oral tract more or less in an undisturbed manner. This happens because when the articulators interact, they do not touch each other. Vowels are produced in this way. For instance, for /i:/ the tongue goes forward and upward but does not touch the alveolar ridge. It is possible to exhaust all of the EPA while making a single /i:/ in English. Vowels in any natural language can be seen to have two broad categories: pure and non-pure or compound.

A pure vowel or monophthong is by nature a basic vowel sound in the sense that it is indivisible. It cannot be analyzed in terms of any other sounds. For instance, /e/ in the English word "egg" cannot be analyzed in terms of any other sound, while /ai/ – a compound vowel – can be, in terms of /a/ and /i/, so it represents the category of diphthong. McMahon (2002) states that, to describe vowels, three parameters such as the *height*, *frontness*, and *roundness* are to be taken into consideration. Inside the oral tract, there are front-back and high-low dimensions where different vowel sounds are articulated. However, this article exclusively spotlights the front monophthongs which can be categorized into three types: high front (such as /i:/ in the English word "reach," and /i/ in the Spanish word "tipo"), mid front (such as /e/ in the English word "excellent," as well as the /e/ in the Spanish word "elefante"), and low front (such as /æ/ in the English word "flag").

Interference and Mispronunciation

Lekova (2010) defined possible phonetic interferences as "the improper pronunciation of phonetic sounds in the second language caused by the existence of different phonetic structures from the point of view of the mother tongue" (p. 321). Therefore, if necessary, as Brown (2000), James (1994), and Hai and Ball (1961) acknowledge, the learner has to neutralize L1 interference or generate substratum counter-influence to fight back the mother tongue interference to ensure correct pronunciation of the words in the foreign language. An attempt at this process involves the learner's conscious effort to overcome L1 habits and influences that can disturb the correct realization of a phoneme in L2.

Brown suggests that such substratum counter-influence facilitates *cognitive pruning* which is equivalent to "the elimination of unnecessary clutter and a clearing of the way for more material to enter the cognitive field" (p. 87). To illustrate the point, we can consider the existence of long /iː/ and short /i/ in English and Spanish respectively. Unless an L2 learner of English speaking in Spanish as L1 is aware that /i/ in the two languages is not the same in terms of phonetic duration and longevity, s/he will not be able to make the difference when pronouncing words like lead and will inevitably pronounce it as lid or something close to it. The correct pronunciation in such cases comes from awareness of contrast as well as ability to suppress the habit and influence. This makes it necessary for us to opt for contrastive analyses of the English and Spanish phonological properties to provide learning as well as teaching with additional phonemic insight necessary for both the learner and the teacher.

An important element playing a vital role in the production of a vowel sound is the airstream that leaves the vocal tract. Vowels and consonants in most languages, including English as well as Spanish, are produced by the aerodynamics of the egressive pulmonic airstream. Compared to the "consonant sounds," some vowel sounds require less energy, and depending on the duration there are non-tense, e.g., short or lax and mid-long, and long or tense vowel sounds. The short pure vowels require relatively small amounts of energy and duration than mid-long and long vowels. For example, the English /ə/ is about one third of the duration and acoustic length of /ɑː/.

Postman and Underwood (1973), Anderson (2003), Lakova (2010) and Haque and Uddin (2019) believe that in foreign language acquisition scenarios in general, learning new sounds as against unlearning or neutralizing L1 habit receives more focus and attention of the learners as well as their facilitators. This is why the issue of substratum counter-influence is often grossly ignored and the L1 habit perpetually interferes with the learners' attainment of accuracy in pronunciation of the foreign language sounds.

Contrast and Implications
According to MacMahon (2002), Idahosa (2017), and Quintero (2019), English vowel inventory has twenty-five phonemes (including triphthongs) while Spanish has twenty-three. Among the twenty-five monophthongs in English, there are five front monophthongs. In contrast, Spanish has only two front pure vowels, where one is in the high section, and the other in the middle section of the oral tract. According to IPA, the orthographic and phonological vowels can be represented in the following way:

/a/ a	**/e/** e	**/i/** i	**/o/** o	**/u/** u
Central	Front	Front	Back	Back
Unrounded	Unrounded	Unrounded	Rounded	Rounded

Table 1: Spanish monophthongs

/e/ E	/i/ i
Front	Front
Unrounded	Unrounded
Mid	High
Short	Short
Relatively Tense	Relatively Tense

Table 2: Spanish front monophthongs

	Spanish	English
Monophthong	5	12
Diphthong	14	08
Triphthong	4	5
Vowels shown in the alphabet	5	5
Total number of vowels	23	25

Table 3: Contrast between English and Spanish vowels
(MacMahon, 2002, Idahosa, 2017 and Quintero, 2019)

In contrast, we know that the monophthongs in the English language are twelve in number:

/e/	/ɪ/	/iː/	/ʊ/	/uː/	/ə/	/æ/	/ʌ/	/ɑː/	/ɜː/	/ɒ/	/ɔː/
e	I		u		a					o	
Front	Front	Front	Back	Back	Central	Front	Front	Back	Central	Back	Back
Unrounded	Unrounded	Unrounded	Rounded	Rounded	Rounded	Unrounded	Unrounded	Unrounded	Rounded	Rounded	Rounded

Table 4: English monophthongs

The front monophthongs in English are as follows:

/e/	/ɪ/	/iː/	/æ/	/ʌ/
e	i		a	
Front	Front	Front	Front	Front
Unrounded	Unrounded	Unrounded	Unrounded	Unrounded
Mid	High	High	Low	Low
Short	Short	Long	Short	Short
Lax	Lax	Tense	Lax	Lax

Table 5: English front monophthongs

A schematic diagram of the inside of the oral tract may be used to present a view of the points of origin of the monophthongs of English (Collins & Mees, 2003, p. 89):
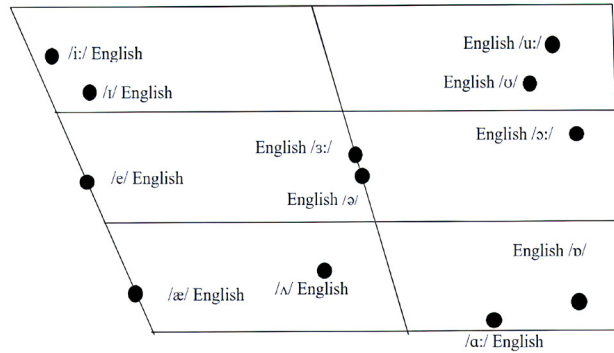
Fig. 1: Points of origin of the English monophthongs

The schematic diagram of the inside of the oral tract may be used to present a view of the points of origin of the monophthongs of Spanish (Ladefoged & Johnson, 2010, p. 44):
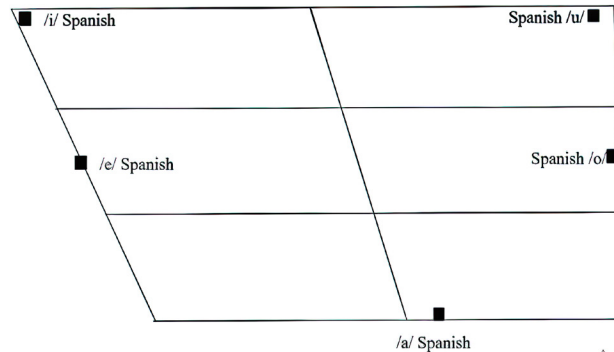

Fig. 2: Points of origin of the Spanish monophthongs

The following schematic diagram of the oral tract shows a zonal contrast between the English and Spanish front monophthongs:
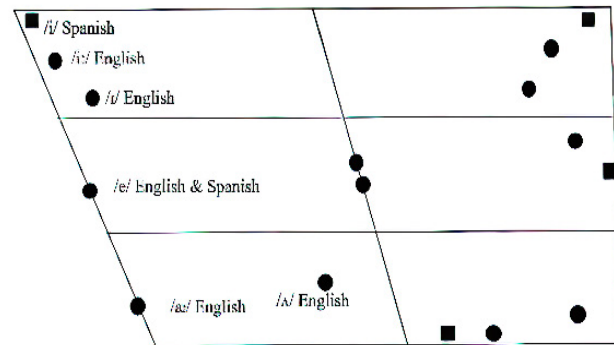

Fig. 3: Points of origin of the Spanish and English front monophthongs

From the information presented above, following MacMohan (2002), Idahosa (2017) and Quintero (2019), the identity features of the front pure vowels in English and Spanish can be delineated, mathematically contrasted, and summarized in the same manner as they appear in Haque (2015) and Haque and Uddin (2019):

Front monophthong	Spanish [2]	English [5]
/ɪ/ e.g. in English *fit*	Absent	High, front, lax, weak, short, moderately loud pure vowel
/e/ e.g. in English *ten*	Mid, front, relatively tense, strong, short, moderately loud pure vowel	Mid, front, lax, weak, short, moderately loud pure vowel
/i:/ e.g. in English *sheep*	Absent	High, front, tense, strong, long, moderately loud pure vowel
/æ/ e.g. in English *bat*	Absent	Low, front, lax, weak, short, moderately loud pure vowel
/ʌ/ e.g. in English *cut*	Absent	Low, front, lax, weak, short, moderately loud pure vowel
/i/ e.g. in Spanish *pino* (pine)	High, front, relatively tense, weak, short, moderately loud pure vowel	Absent

Table 6: Features of Spanish and English front monophthongs

Front pure vowel in the two languages with considerable interface are two:

Vowel Sound	Features
English & Spanish /e/	Mid, front, weak and semi-tense, short, moderately loud pure vowel

Table 7: Features of English and Spanish front pure vowel

For high front monophthong, the contrast is demonstrated below:

Spanish	English	Interfacing Phonemes	HFM Interface
01	02	00	00%

Therefore,
Interface = 00%
HFM Divergence = 100%

Hence, for high front monophthongs, we observe that there are front long and front short monophthongs in both languages but no identical phonemes between the languages. For that matter, in terms of high monophthongs, these languages are 100% different from each other.
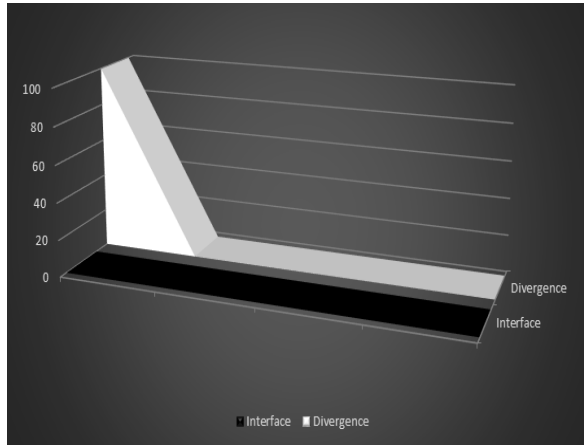
Fig. 4: There is no interface between English and Spanish high front systems

The indication of this disparity for the learners of English and Spanish are shown as follows:

Learner	Acquisition L2 HFM	Transfer L1 HFM
Spanish speaking learner of English	2 /i:/ /ɪ/	0
English speaking learner of Spanish	1 /i/	0

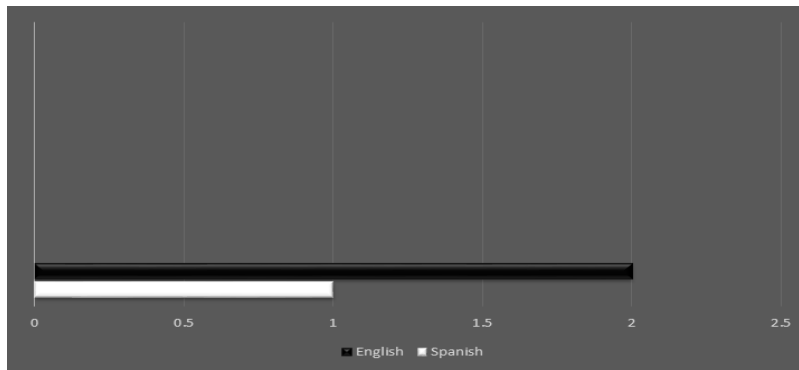**Table 8: Acquisition and transfer of high-front monophthongs**

Fig. 5: English is 200% richer than Spanish where high front systems are concerned

Therefore, the Spanish speaking learner of English has to learn two sounds from English phonology, while the English speaking learner of Spanish has to learn one sound from this category. In addition, both BLE and ELB have no sounds in their target language to tranfer and use.

There is only one mid front monophthong in Spanish as well as English, and this mid front monophthong is in complete interface:

Monophthong	Features
Spanish and English /e/	Mid, front, weak and semi-tense, short, moderately loud pure vowel

Table 9: Features of Spanish and English mid-front monophthong

For mid front monophthong, the situation is as follows:

Spanish	English	Interfacing Phonemes	MFM Interface
01	01	02	100%

Therefore,
Interface= 100%
MFM Divergence= 00%

Therefore, for mid front monophthong, our observation is that there is only one monophthong in both languages. Also, their position and features are identical, which make them strikingly similar.
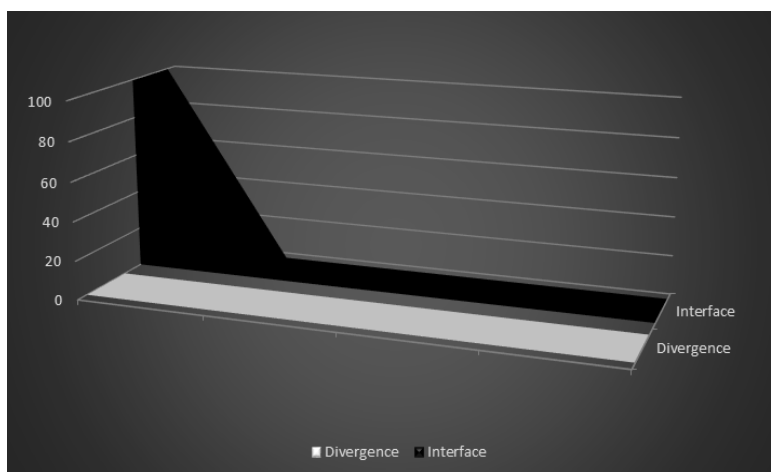

Fig. 6: The mid fronts vowels underscore the resemblance between English and Spanish

The implications of this difference for the learners of Spanish and English can be summarized as follows:

Learner	Acquisition L2 MFM	Transfer L1 MFM
English speaking learner of Spanish	0	1 /e/
Spanish speaking learner of English	0	1 /e/

Table 10: Acquisition and transfer of mid-front monophthong
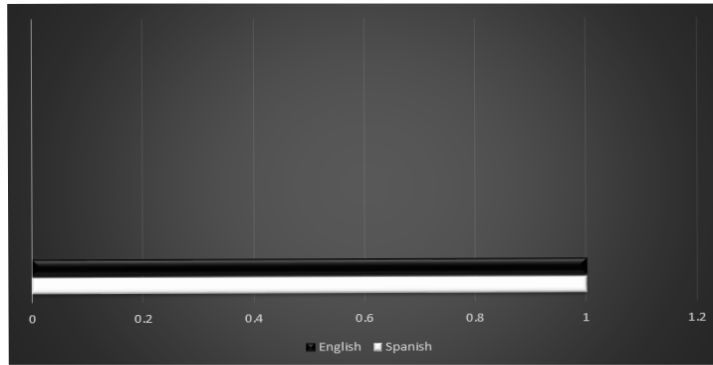
Fig. 7: The mid front monophthongs make English and Spanish resemble each other

Therefore, in terms of the mid-front monophthongs, /e/ is the common sound in both the languages which is why ELS and SLE will have this sound automatically transferred and employed in their target language.

There are two low front vowels in English while there are none in Spanish. Therefore, there are no interfacing low phonemes between these languages.

For the low front vowels, the following is the contrast:

Spanish	English	Interfacing Phonemes	LFM Interface
00	02	00	00%

Therefore,
Interface= 00%
LFM Divergence= 100%

Therefore, our observation is that there are two low front monophthongs in English as opposed to zero in Spanish. This confirms the fact that English depends more on low front vowels than Spanish does.
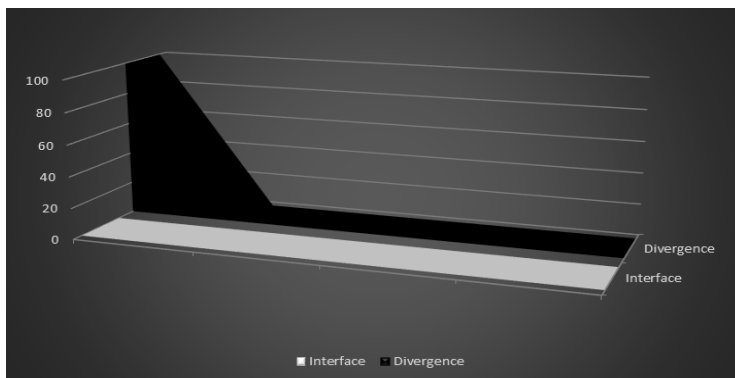

Fig. 8: Low front vowels give English a uniqueness that Spanish does not possess

The implications are as follows:

Learner	Acquisition L2 LFM	Transfer L1 LFM
English speaking learner of Spanish	00	00
Spanish speaking learner of English	2 /æ/ /ʌ/	00

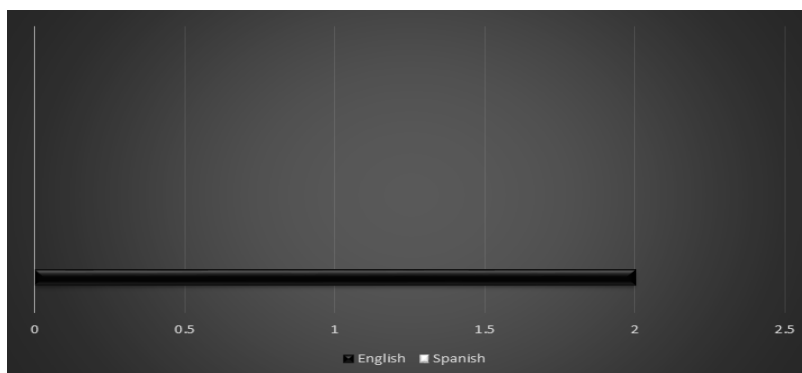**Table 11: Acquisition and transfer of low-front monophthongs**

Fig. 9: English is 200% richer than Spanish in respect of Low Front Monopthongs

Therefore, ELS does not have to acquire any sound from the Spanish phonology when it comes to the low front vowels and, naturally, there is no sound to transfer. However, since there are no interfacing phonemes, SLE has to acquire two new sounds from the target phonology, and there will be no transfer from L1.

Therefore, in the final analysis, we can confirm that total number of interfacing front monophthongs between English and Spanish as once mentioned above are two in number, and are as follows:

Monophthong	Features
English & Spanish /e/	Mid, front, weak and semi-tense, short, moderately loud pure vowel

Table 12: Total interfacing front monophthongs between English and Spanish

For the complete set of front monophthongs in Spanish and English, the following is the contrast:

Spanish	English	Interfacing Phonemes	FPV Interface
02	05	02	28.57%

Therefore,
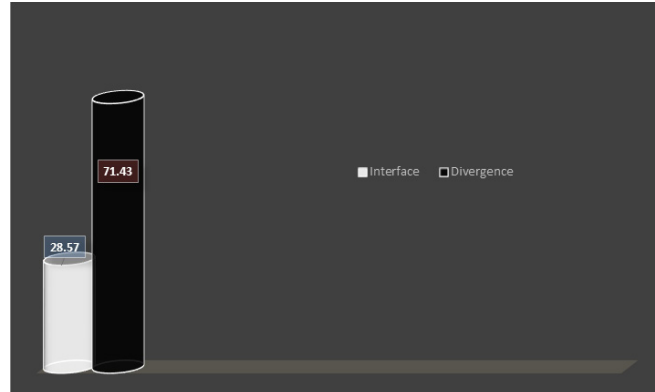Interface= 28.57%
FPV Divergence= 71.43

Fig. 10: English and Spanish front monophthongs are more different than similar

Accordingly, as far as the pure front vowels are concerned, Spanish and English are almost poles apart. This makes learning Spanish and English more challenging for the ELS and SLE, respectively. The implications of the phonetic differences for the learners of Spanish and English can be summarized as follows:

Sound type	Learner	Retention/ Transfer (L1)	Acquisition/ Learning (L2)	Substratum counter-influence (L1)
Front monophthong	English speaking learner of Spanish as a foreign language	1 /e/ **20%**	1 /i/ **50%**	4 /æ/ /ʌ/ /iː/ /ɪ/ **80%**
	Spanish speaking learner of English as a foreign language	1 /e/ **50%**	4 /æ/ /ʌ/ /iː/ /ɪ/ **80%**	1 /i/ **50%**

Table 13: Implications of the phonetic differences for the learners of Spanish and English

Fig. 11: Retention and transfer of L1 sounds make learning seemingly more stressful for ELS (20:50)
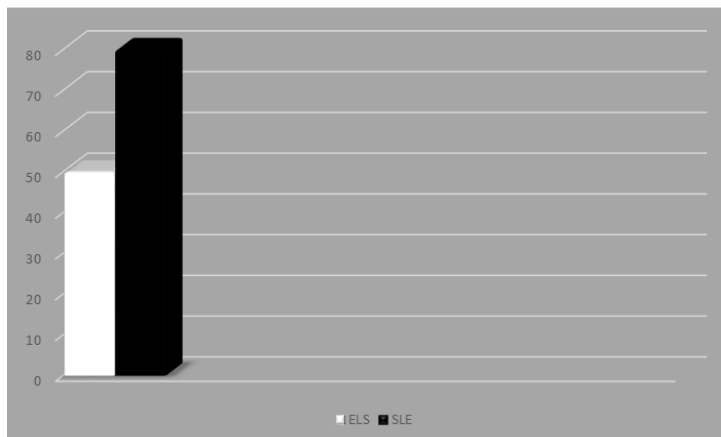
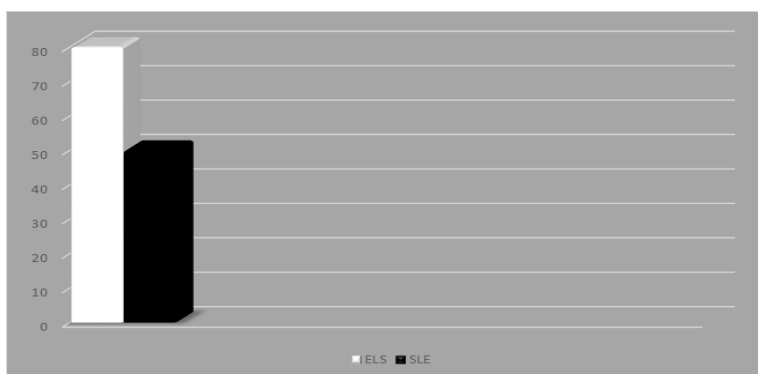**Fig. 12: The SLE encounters a greater workload in learning (80:50)**

Fig. 13: The ELS will contemplate a greater degree of substratum counter-influence to ensure phonological accuracy (80:50)

The Final Observations

From the zonal frames of reference, it appears that English and Spanish front monophthong systems are considerably different (71.43%) from each other, and that Spanish speaking learners of English have a greater acquisition workload (80:50) to deal with compared to English speaking learners of Spanish. On the other hand, while it is true that both groups of learners are at ease with the retention and transfer of just one mid-front pure vowel sound /e/, the ratio is not equally favorable for the English speaking learners of Spanish (20:50) and it, in fact, makes Spanish speaking learners of English experience comparatively low stress (50:80) due to the relative needlessness of the language substratum counter-influence. This, however, is not the case with English speaking learners of Spanish, and for that matter, the present researchers believe that English speaking learners of Spanish, in general, will probably experience a slightly greater degree of articulatory stress, and challenge compared to the Spanish speaking learners of English as they endeavor toward attaining the phonological perfection in their target system since the observations of

Postman and Underwood (1973), Anderson (2003), Lakova (2010) and Haque and Uddin (2019) suggest that acquisition of foreign sounds is often less stressful than completely neutralizing the substratum influence and interference.

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Impacts of an Exchange Program on In-Service English Language Teachers

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Abstract

Studies involving pre-service English language teachers have shown positive effects of exchange programs. However, to date, no research has focused on the impact of teach-abroad exchange programs involving in-service English language teachers. This study investigated the impacts of an exchange program on in-service English language teachers. Twenty exchange program alumni completed a survey focused on the impact of the exchange, and five of those twenty participated in follow-up interviews. Most of the participants reported developing professionally and personally as a result of participating in the exchange program. In terms of professional development, many participants reported having developed a deeper awareness of their teaching practices, and many indicated increased flexibility and adaptability in their teaching practices. The overall impacts included a deeper sense of cultural awareness and an expanded worldview. The results suggest that participation in an exchange program can be a useful form of professional development for in-service English language teachers.

Keywords: teaching practices, exchange programs, in-service teacher education, cultural awareness

As the world becomes more globalized, there is a growing need for educators at all levels and disciplines to help their students develop global competence, which is described by Zhao (2010) as "the knowledge and skills needed to function competently in the globalized world" (p. 427). Globally competent individuals more effectively communicate, collaborate, and interact with people from diverse backgrounds (Boix-Mansilla & Jackson, 2011; Longview Foundation, 2008; Zhao, 2010). In order to guide students towards global competence, teachers and teacher educators themselves need to be globally competent (Garii, 2009; Zhao, 2010). Globally competent educators are equipped with the knowledge and skills to provide instruction that meets the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students (Biraimah & Jotia, 2013). Research has indicated that international exchange experiences have been one of the most effective methods for developing multicultural educators (Cushner, 2007; Hadis, 2005; Stachowski & Sparks, 2007). While a number of studies have addressed the impact of exchange programs on pre-service teachers, thus far, no research has focused on the impact of exchange programs on in-service English language instructors.

Operational Definitions of Cultural Awareness and Expanded Worldview

Although *cultural awareness* and *expanded worldview* are not completely distinct categories, for the purpose of this study, *cultural awareness* is understood as appreciation and respect for other cultures, greater understanding and respect for diversity, and an increased understanding of the self vis-à-vis the other (including privileges) while *expanded worldview* is understood as a better understanding of what is happening in the world beyond one's own context.

Literature Review

What is an Exchange Program?

An exchange program sends participants to a country outside their own for a designated period of time in order to take part in scholarship or work in some capacity (Danico & Ocampo, 2014). Many exchanges are for students, but there are also several programs for researchers and instructors (Sevin, 2010; Singer et al., 2019). Exchange programs do not necessarily have direct reciprocity whereby a participant from one country changes places with a participant from another country (Danico & Ocampo, 2014). However, reciprocity across programs might be part of the overall design. For example, a government might send participants to countries outside their own on a specific exchange program and simultaneously receive participants for different programs. Through exchanges, public diplomacy is carried out by regular citizens of a country who interact with regular citizens of another country (Danico & Ocampo, 2014). Exchanges strengthen networks between countries that could result in a clearer understanding of the country represented (Danico & Ocampo, 2014; Sevin, 2010).

Impact of Study Abroad Programs on Pre-service Teacher Candidates of Various Disciplines

Research on the impact of study abroad programs for pre-service teacher candidates planning to teach in various subject areas has shown that participants developed both personally and professionally. These programs were designed with various components, such as language courses, classroom observations, methods courses, and residence with a host family. Depending on the design of the program, teacher candidates may or may not have actually engaged in teaching practice. Two early studies by Barnhart (1989) and Willard-Holt (2001) showed that, following an exchange experience, participants developed flexibility, adaptability, knowledge of pedagogy, empathy, and self-efficacy. Recent studies have shown similar results. Through a survey of 50 returnees who had participated in various overseas student-teaching programs lasting 9-15 weeks, Cushner and Mahon (2002) found that participants developed increased cultural sensitivity, which included increased empathy for others, and specifically included empathy for language development struggles; heightened self-efficacy in which participants became more resilient and persistent in the face of challenges; and a greater sense of global mindedness and diversity, which included a better understanding of other cultures and one's own culture. Zhao et al.'s (2009) study of 10 pre-service teachers' four-week experience in China showed that participants developed understanding and respect of another culture and greater empathy for language learners. In a study of 15 pre-service teachers who took part in a four-week study abroad

program, Pence and Macgillivray (2008) found that participants became more confident and developed a better understanding and appreciation of other cultures. In a study of a semester-long project with 26 American pre-service teacher candidates who took part in a virtual exchange with Turkish counterparts, Lin (2018) found that participants gained a better understanding of their privileges and preconceived notions and ultimately expanded their worldview.

Impact of Exchange Programs on Pre-service English Language Teachers
Similar to the results of studies that included pre-service teachers of various disciplines, research focused specifically on teacher candidates preparing to become English language instructors has shown that exchange programs result in personal and professional development. Many of these studies focused on pre-service candidates' development of empathy regarding the cultural and language needs of English language learners (e.g., Jiang & DeVillar, 2011; Malewski et al., 2012; Marx & Pray, 2011; Palmer & Menard-Warwick, 2012; Pilonieta et al., 2017). Participants also developed a heightened sense of cultural awareness and an expanded worldview. In a study of eight pre-service teachers who spent four weeks in Mexico, Kasun and Lee (2017) reported that pre-service English teachers developed an expanded worldview and a better understanding of their privileges. Similarly, Vatalaro et al.'s (2015) study of five pre-service teachers' experience in a study abroad program revealed that participants became more aware of their privilege and developed an appreciation for cultural diversity. A six-year study of pre-service teachers who took part in a short-time study abroad program in Honduras showed that teacher candidates developed cross-cultural awareness (Malewski et al., 2012). In a study of four pre-service English language teachers who took part in a one-month study-and-teach abroad program, Barrow (2017) found that participants developed more nuanced intercultural competence. However, this transformation was just as dependent on the cognitive and affective dispositions, which were influenced by participants' life histories (Holland & Lave, 2001), as it was on the influence of the program.

Impact of Exchange Programs on In-service English Language Teachers
To date, few studies have explored the impact of an exchange program on in-service teachers (e.g., Biraimah & Jotia, 2013; He et al., 2017). Biraimah and Jotia's (2013) longitudinal study of 24 American exchange participants in Botswana, Malaysia, and Singapore found that participants' knowledge base of the countries they carried out their exchanges in increased and showed sustained growth over time. Furthermore, the participants in Biramiah and Jotia's study deepened their knowledge of teaching methodologies and curricular content along with developing a greater sense of cultural awareness. He et al.'s (2017) study of 12 teachers from various disciplines showed that following participation in an exchange program, practicing teachers developed empathy for language learners and a new-found desire to create more linguistically and culturally responsive teaching practices. Until now, no study has focused specifically on the impact of an exchange program on in-service English language teachers' professional and personal developments following participation in the program. The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the impact of an exchange program on in-service English language teachers.

Theoretical Framework

The data for this paper were analyzed through the lens of transformative learning theory. *Transformative learning theory* (also, transformation theory) was first established by Mezirow (1978) while researching adult women returning to the workforce. Mezirow (1978, 1991, 1999, 2000, 2012) describes transformative learning as a particular type of learning in which the learner modifies existing perspectives, ideas, or assumptions as the result of a certain experience. Mezirow has adapted his model of transformative learning from the original, but all iterations include the following basic steps. The learner is engaged in some sort of activity or activities that could lead to a different meaning perspective. A meaning perspective (also, frame of reference, mindset, or habits of mind) is a basic belief one holds about the world (Mezirow, 1978, 1991, 1999, 2000). The learner investigates the self vis-à-vis the experience or incident. The learner then engages with others through rational discourse. Finally, the learner integrates the new meaning perspective into their existing frame of reference (Mezirow, 1978, 1991, 2000, 2012). The learner does not necessarily have to progress through all steps, and the steps taken may not necessarily be carried out in a linear order. Transformative learning is "individualistic, fluid, and recursive" (Taylor, 2000, p. 292).

In transformative learning theory, a transformation is a change in the perspective of meaning of a person that is non-reversible. According to Mezirow's theory, transformation occurs when a person engages in an experience (or series of experiences) that causes them to adopt a different perspective. For learning to be transformative, the learner must integrate the new perspective into their existing mindset, thereby developing a different way of seeing the world, which includes a different view of the self (Mezirow, 1978, 1991, 1999, 2000, 2012). An experience might have the potential to be transformative, but may not become so depending on how the individual processes it. As Taylor (1994) explains, "When an individual has an experience that cannot be assimilated into his or her meaning perspective, either the experience is rejected or the perspective changes to accommodate the new experience" (p. 159). The data from this paper were analyzed through the lens of transformative learning theory to determine whether the participants experienced transformative learning as a result of the exchange programs they took part in. I did not look at particular incidents that occurred during the exchange project but rather at the overall impact of the program as reported by participants.

Methods

Participants
Participant Eligibility
Participants were required to have a career based on English language teaching to be eligible to participate in the study. All participants had taken part in an exchange program that had lasted at least ten months. Study participants could have participated in multiple exchange programs and could have done the same program more than once or a combination hereof. Participants were required to have at least five years of total teaching experience to participate in the study (this could include time in an exchange program). Participants were not required to have returned to the same institution in which they had worked

prior to participation in the exchange program. For the protection of the identities of the participants, the exchange program(s) participants took part in are not named.

Participant Recruitment

To recruit participants for the first round of data collection, which was a virtual survey, I sent email invitations to exchange program alumni in my professional network. I also posted an invitation to the study on a closed site exclusively for exchange program alumni. The survey was open from April 21, 2020 to August 6, 2020. As of August 6, 2020, there were 30 responses. However, 10 responses were incomplete. All incomplete surveys were discarded before analysis of the completed 20 surveys began (Hittleman & Simon, 2006). At the end of the survey, I invited participants to take part in a follow-up interview. Fourteen survey participants agreed to be interviewed. I contacted seven participants for interviews. Five of the seven invited participants responded and were interviewed.

Consent Process

For the first stage of the data collection, the first question of the survey explained the study. Participants gave their consent through a positive response. Participants who took part in the interview strand signed an additional consent form.

Research Design

Data collection and analysis were guided by the following two research questions (RQs):

1. How has the exchange program impacted the participants professionally?
2. How has the exchange program impacted the participants overall?

A convergent sequential mixed methods design was used from which data in different strands are collected independently but interpreted in one analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017; Patten & Newhart, 2017; Polio & Friedman, 2017). Findings from the quantitative phase were corroborated and elaborated with findings in the qualitative phase (Johnson & Onwuebuzie, 2004).

Data Collection and Analysis

Before collecting data, I obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board of my home institution. In the first stage of the study, data was collected via a virtual survey. The survey contained both closed-ended and open-ended questions. Closed-ended survey questions were analyzed with descriptive statistics through SPSS software. For the second round of data collection, semi-structured interviews were carried out via Zoom software. Transcriptions were edited for accuracy prior to analysis. I first read the transcripts to get a general understanding of the data, making notes of major themes. Then I conducted a selective reading approach, identifying responses that aligned with the research questions (Van Manen, 2018). Data from the interview questions were merged with data from the open-ended survey questions and analyzed in response to the research questions. Open-ended survey questions from the survey and interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis (Cresswell & Poth, 2018; Van Manen, 2018). Themes were developed from an examination of the data rather than *a priori*, or pre-determined, codes (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Results and Analysis

Overall, participants in this study reported transformational learning in both professional and personal areas as a result of the exchange program they took part in, suggesting that participation in an exchange program can be an important form of professional development. This finding aligns with previous studies on pre-service teacher candidates of various disciplines (e.g., Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Lin, 2018; Zhao et al., 2009); previous studies specifically focused on pre-service English language teachers (e.g., Jiang & DeVillar, 2011; Kasun & Lee, 2017; Malewski et al., 2012; Marx & Pray, 2011; Palmer & Menard-Warwick, 2012; Vatalaro et al., 2015); and a study on in-service teachers (He et al., 2017) – all of which found that participants reported transformation learning as the result of taking part in an exchange program. Although professional and overall impacts are treated separately in this study, it is understood that professional and personal impacts are often intertwined. For instance, the increased flexibility one might have developed professionally could allow for more nuanced cultural awareness; simultaneously, enhanced cultural awareness could lead to increased flexibility in carrying out work assignments. Nonetheless, in this study, the findings related to work-focused content have been categorized as professional impacts, and the findings related to other impacts are categorized as overall impacts.

Demographic Data

The first part of the survey gathered demographic data. Responses showed that the majority of participants (75%) in this study had more than ten years of teaching experience (See Fig. 1). Additionally, exchanges were carried out in a number of countries (See Fig. 2). The most common duties reported included providing teacher training, teaching general English classes, and developing curriculum (See Table 1).
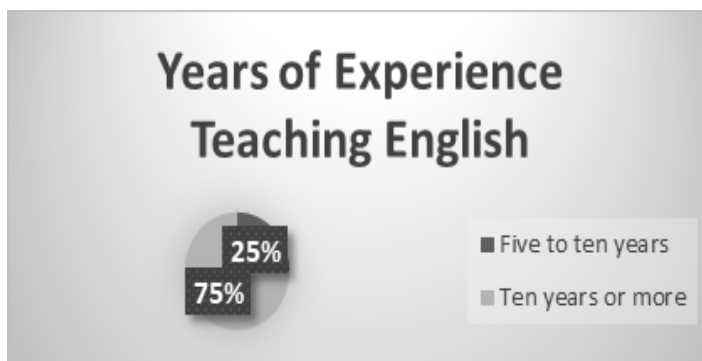

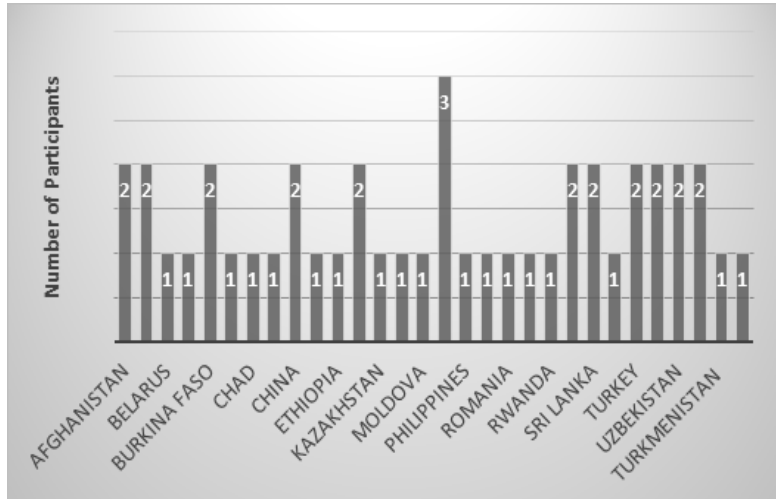**Fig. 1: Years of experience teaching English**

Fig. 2: Countries where participants carried out their exchanges

Duty	Number of times mentioned
Provided teacher mentoring	3
Taught general English classes	12
Taught ESP (English for Specific Purposes) courses (law, travel English, etc.)	3
Provided short-term training to pre-service and in-service teachers (workshops, seminars, conference presentations, etc.)	19
Provided long-term training for teacher candidates (TESOL methods course)	2
Taught research methods	3
Developed a language lab	1
Developed curriculum	9
Developed a webinar	1
Started a Writing Center	1
Led English clubs	1
Gave presentations on American culture	1
Served as project coordinator	1
Carried out an administrative role	1
Provided training of trainers (TOT) sessions to in-service teachers	2

Table 1. Main duties participants carried out during their exchange

Impact on Teaching Practices

The first goal of this study was to find out how the exchange program had impacted the participants professionally.

When asked in the survey to respond to the statement "My classroom teaching practices have changed following the exchange program," the majority, 55% of participants, either strongly agreed (25%) or agreed (30%). Twenty-five percent somewhat agreed; 20 percent neither agreed nor disagreed. This finding aligns with transformational learning theory, as most participants indicated that their teaching practices had changed as a result of the exchange program.
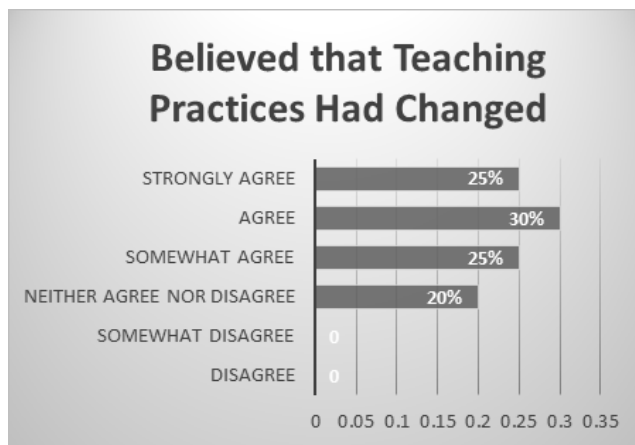

Fig. 3: Believed that classroom teaching practices had changed

Developed a Deeper Awareness of Teaching Practices

"Developed a deeper awareness of teaching practices" was the code that garnered the most responses in the open-ended data related to teaching practices. For several participants, the program seemed to serve as a catalyst for reflection that they may not have achieved otherwise. As Bolton and Delderfield (2018) explain, "Many [theories, frameworks, and models of reflection] require us to attempt to stand outside ourselves and our culture in order to critique it" (p. 60). One participant explained: "This experience made me reconsider some of my previous assumptions about best teaching practices and made me think about my cultural conceptualization of what learning is and what a 'good' classroom looks like." A respondent who had only somewhat agreed that the program had influenced their teaching practices said: "I became more confident that the communicative, student-centered techniques that I had been using in my teaching were effective. My techniques didn't actually change. I recommitted myself to reducing my TTT (teacher talk time) even more." For some study participants, the program provided the opportunity to examine existing beliefs, assumptions, and theories-in-use for effectiveness in different contexts (Bolton & Delderfield, 2018); for other participants, it reiterated and reinforced existing beliefs.

Increased Flexibility, Adaptability, and Improved Confidence

Several participants indicated that they had become more flexible and adaptable in their teaching as a result of participating in the exchange program. These findings align with the

several previous studies (Barnhart, 1989; Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Willard-Holt, 2001). For many participants, the inherent challenges of work assignments in a new context provided a platform to enhance flexibility and adaptability. One participant explained: "I learned to make do and change my plans quickly based on the situation, like technology problems, varying attendance of students, and the inability to make photocopies."

Became More Confident in Teaching

Several participants described developing more confidence in their teaching skills as a result of participating in the exchange program. This aligns with Pence and Macgillivray's (2008) findings in which exchange program participants indicated increased confidence. Some responses related to confidence gained through the experience of working transculturally: "Working with various groups of people in different countries has strengthened my teaching skills and my confidence in my teaching." Others mentioned the ability to overcome a difficulty: "I was able to conquer my fear of speaking in public."

Developed New Skills or Enhanced Existing Ones

Several participants indicated that the program had provided the opportunity to develop professional skills. One participant said: "I have developed new skills that I have never had before: teacher training, organizing conferences, and developing programs." Other participants indicated that the program had provided the opportunity to enhance existing skills: "The sheer number of presentations and experiences that I had propelled me to become better at public speaking, explaining information, and understanding my audience (student or teachers or administrators) better." Another participant said: "Co-teaching and collaborating with other teachers strengthened my own skill set and bag of tools."

Career Development Opportunities

For several participants, the experience gained in the exchange program served as a stepping stone to career advancement opportunities they may not have achieved otherwise. The skills participants developed and enhanced in the exchange program along with increased self-efficacy could have been instrumental in these achievements. Several participants indicated that they had either moved into more senior roles upon returning to their home institution or that they had secured new opportunities, such as a more specialized teaching appointment or administrative role. One participant explained: "I was hired here at the college, and I was the academic coordinator. I think the impact of working with teachers [in the exchange program] and then helping them to think about their skills really is partly why I could be good."

Little or No Change to Teaching Practices

Although most of the participants in this study indicated transformational learning experiences, some participants did not feel that their teaching practices had changed or were uncertain whether they had experienced any growth. One participant said: "My teaching practices have largely remained the same." Another participant reported: "I'm not sure how my teaching practices have shifted as a result of the program. I feel like the information was quite one-way. […] My colleagues [local instructors] did not take initiative (or perhaps feel comfortable) to teach me about their practices and pedagogies."

In addition to the impact of the program, participants were also influenced by their own life histories (Holland & Lave, 2001), including their own education, previous teaching experiences, and beliefs about teacher education. Participants who viewed themselves as the "knowers" or "experts" vis-à-vis the teachers and students they worked with during their exchange program might not have been receptive to considering how their experiences in the exchange program might have influenced their teaching practices. Having potential for transformation is not enough to make an experience transformative (Taylor, 1994). If the participant was not willing to assimilate the new experience into their existing mindset, then no transformation could have occurred.

Empathy for Language Learners

Because increased empathy had featured predominately in previous studies on exchange programs, I sought to find out about how participants in this study regarded empathy and English language learners. Participants responded to the following statement: "Following my exchange program experience, I have greater empathy for my students' challenges in learning a new language and/or adjusting to a new culture." The majority of respondents (70 percent) agreed with this statement, with 30 percent strongly agreeing, and 40 percent agreeing.
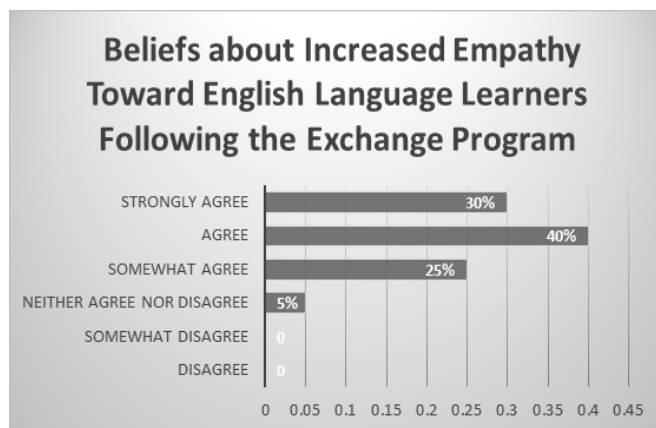

Fig. 4: Beliefs about increased empathy toward English language learners

Like the previous studies involving pre-service English language teachers' exchange experiences (Jiang & DeVillar, 2011; Marx & Pray, 2011; Palmer & Menard-Warwick, 2012; Pilonieta, et al., 2017) and in-service teachers of various disciplines (He et al., 2017), many participants in this study indicated increased empathy for English language learners. Follow-up responses to this survey item provided nuanced perspectives regarding participants' perceptions of empathy for English language learners.

Participants in this study had a number of years of experience as English teaching professionals before engaging in the exchange program, and many of them might have had prior overseas experience. A participant, who strongly agreed that their empathy had increased, explained: "It [the exchange program] has really made me appreciate the challenges our

international students face as they enter my current school." Some respondents felt they had empathy for English language learners before the exchange program: "I have lived and worked abroad before these experiences, so while my understanding of these challenges may have increased a little, I think I was already at a higher level than I would have been if this were my first experience." However, some respondents recognized that the exchange program could be a reminder of what it is like to be a language learner even though they might have already had multiple experiences in various contexts: "Having direct contact and experiences through exchanges with those learners of varied cultures provides an immediate empathy. Also, I have been an L2 learner in every country I have worked in." Some respondents seemed to believe that empathy for language learners is fixed: once you have attained it, you always have it. Others, however, seemed to believe that empathy for language learners could continually be renewed through ongoing experiences.

Overall Impact of the Exchange Program

The second goal of this study was to find out about the overall impact of the exchange program.

In this study, more data was gathered related to the impact of the exchange program on teaching practices than the impact of the program overall. This could have resulted from the design of the survey and interview questions, but it could also have been related to the fact that teaching and related professional activities were the prime focus of the exchange program.

Development of Cultural Awareness and New Relationships

The themes related to the overall impact of the program with the most responses were "developed a deeper sense of cultural awareness" and "developed new relationships and connections." Participants' responses demonstrated greater awareness of the similarities and differences between participants' own culture and the culture of the host country, a finding which aligns with previous research (e.g., Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Zhao et al., 2009). These findings are related to Hanvey's (1982) concept of perspective consciousness, which is the awareness that one's view of the world is not universal and could be quite different from others' views. One's perspective about the world are often shaped by cultural influences that one might not be consciously aware of until an outside experience provides the opportunity to view the self from a different perspective. One participant said: "I think, you know, we don't realize how American we are until we leave, and then we're like, oh, these are American tendencies, like, you know, timeliness is very American." For some participants, the exchange program helped increase feelings of connection to others: "I enjoy meeting people from other countries and cultures and working with them and learning about them and their professional and personal lives."

Expanded Worldview

In line with previous studies (Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Kasan & Lee, 2017; Lee, 2017; Lin, 2018), many participant responses also indicated that the exchange program had led to an expanded worldview. One participant pointed out that the exchange program itself had provided a link to learning more about the world during the program: "Living and

working in another country provides a wealth of knowledge about economics, geography, history, etc." Another participant indicated that experience in the exchange program had fostered more interest in current events globally: "I read the world news. I mean, I'm following what's happening in Belarus, because I saw the same thing in Kyrgyzstan, you know, and I'm following what's happening with Brexit, because I've been there many times. I'm following what's happening in Hong Kong and so on."

Life-altering Decisions

A few participants mentioned that the program led to life-altering decisions. Two participants mentioned finding a spouse during the program, and another participant decided to start a family following participation in the program: "I was very lonely during the exchange program. The isolation motivated me to start my own family after returning to the US. I got married and had two children within five years of returning home."

Personal Growth

For some participants, the program had spurred personal growth. For one participant, the exchange program increased their self-efficacy to engage in new and difficult challenges: "At the time, it was one of the most difficult things I have done, but I have gone on to do things that were even more challenging." This aligns with the findings of the Cusher and Mahon (2002) study, which shows that transformational learning experiences can lead to greater resilience and persistence in the face of challenges. For another participant, the exchange program helped to achieve perspective: "I think my program also gave me a new perspective on 'letting things go' and trying to focus on my priorities." Another realized success is not always measured by grand achievements: "I learned to accept small successes."

Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

This study was limited by the number of participants. The experiences and opinions of those who participated in the study do not necessarily reflect the experiences of English language teaching alumni of exchange programs as a whole. A larger data set could provide more insight. Furthermore, this study did not collect pre-departure data that could have provided information on changes from pre-departure beliefs and attitudes to post-exchange life. An intervention study could provide more insight into the impact of the program. A longitudinal study could provide a better understanding of whether such programs have a long-term impact and what that impact might be.

Conclusion

Overall, this study has shown that participation in an exchange program can be an effective method of professional development for in-service English language teachers. The majority of participants indicated both professional and personal growth as the result of participation in an exchange program. On the professional level, most of the participants indicated that the exchange program had an impact on their teaching practice and provided the opportunity to investigate existing beliefs and practices. For many, the exchange program created or renewed empathy towards English language learners. Participants further reported developing new skills or enhancing existing ones over the course of their exchange, and for some participants, experiences gained in the program led

to career development opportunities. On a personal level, participants reported developing a deeper perspective on cultural awareness, and for some, participation in the program led to life-altering decisions. Given that participation in an exchange program can lead to such transformational learning experiences for in-service English language teachers, such programs should be highly recommended for English language teachers. As such, administrators should consider promoting exchange programs for in-service English language teaching professionals.

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Bridging Language Policy and English Language Teaching in the Chinese Context: Recent Developments and Future Path

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Abstract

With the increasing role of English as a global language, teaching and learning of that language have become a focal point of instruction around the world. Against this background, China has followed the global trend of implementing various language-related policies and practice decisions. This conceptual paper first provides a brief historical overview of language policy in the Chinese context. Given the importance of compulsory education and tertiary education in China, this article links the previous language policy to the recent development of the Double Reduction policy and English as a medium of instruction in relation to English language teaching (ELT). This paper also discusses the culture, ideology, and identity issues involved in ELT in China. It ends by arguing the importance of reflecting on the current situation of language policy and ELT in the Chinese context against the backdrop of globalization. It also suggests that foreign language policy and ELT practice decisions, in China and other countries, should be guided and informed by more robust empirical teaching and research results.

Keywords: language policy, English language teaching, double reduction policy, English as a medium of instruction

Introduction

Driven by globalization with various linguistic and cultural contacts, it has become common for people who do not share first languages (L1s) to become involved in transnational, cross-ethnic, and cross-cultural communication. Thus, it has become necessary for people to master a lingua franca for intercultural communication. The fact that English is a global language (Crystal, 2003) has been widely recognized and has become the main reason for people to learn it. English and the internationalization of education are closely intertwined in education policy and teaching practices across global contexts (Gu & Lee, 2019). According to Fang (2018a), English should not be seen as a language in a vacuum but as a social practice in different sociocultural and sociopolitical contexts permeated with various ideologies. China, as the largest developing country in the world, cannot be ignored when discussing the use of English in teaching in global contexts.

This paper provides a brief historical overview of Chinese language policy. As language policy and English language teaching (ELT) are recurrent themes in applied linguistics,

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this article discusses ELT under specific Chinese language policies in relation to foreign language education. Given the importance of compulsory education and tertiary education in China, this article also links the recent implementation of the Double Reduction policy[1] and English as a medium of instruction (EMI) policies in terms of ELT. Furthermore, this paper addresses various culture, ideology, and identity issues involved in ELT in China. It concludes by arguing about the importance of reflecting on the current situation of ELT in the Chinese context given the introduction of various language policies, and suggesting that more effort is needed to promote the development of language education research against the backdrop of globalization.

This article aims to provide a better understanding of the future direction of ELT in China, as well as suggestions for improving foreign language policy. However, the complexity of ELT as adopted and adapted in Chinese society cannot be neglected. Therefore, it should be noted that the findings and suggestions discussed in this paper are based on specific conditions in different areas of China, so further consideration is needed to apply the results in other contexts.

Chinese Language Policy: A Brief Historical Overview

In academia, there is still a debate about the phases of Chinese language policy. According to Li (2019), the study of Chinese language policy could be roughly divided into four stages: 1) the formative period (1949-1986), which implemented the policy of the reform of the written language; 2) the development period (1986-2000), which mainly discussed the policy of normalization, standardization, and informatization of the written and spoken languages; 3) the mature period (2000-2006), which mainly implemented the policy of language legislation policy; and 4) the expansion period (2006-present), where policies were implemented with attention to the ecological perspective of language, providing language services and improving citizens' language proficiency. The papers collected in the recent Chinese Language Policy Research Report (2021) have shown a trend of researching language civilization construction, new media language, language protection, and online language teaching under the recent development of the new liberal arts programs in higher education. Therefore, the following sections focus on the current stage of Chinese language policy, as well as some educational policies in relation to ELT with cultural, ideological, and identity issues related to English language education.

ELT Under Some of the Language Policies in China
Double Reduction Policy in Compulsory Education

China's Double Reduction policy was implemented to ease the burden of excessive homework and off-campus tutoring for students undergoing compulsory education. The primary objective of this policy was to improve the efficiency of classroom teaching rather than "weakening" the status of English education in the basic education curriculum. It aims to dilute long-term score-oriented ELT in China and to provide an opportunity for more effective ELT. Because the Double Reduction policy has recently been implemented

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1 According to the Chinese Ministry of Education, the Double Reduction policy refers to "a reduction in homework and in time spent in after-school private tutoring for children from kindergarten to 9th grade" (http://en.moe.gov.cn/news/press_releases/202201/t20220107_593036.html).

in 2021, very few studies have investigated its effectiveness and impact, or its effect on ELT.

It is worth noting that learning English is not about mastering a set of foreign language skills. Rather, it is about practicing a foreign language to achieve smooth, decent, pleasant, and effective cross-cultural communication (Lu, 2021). Here, we discuss some insights about how ELT has been impacted by the Double Reduction policy from our perspective to link it to some recent scholarly arguments. In a report published in China Daily (Zou, 2021), President Xi is quoted as saying: "schoolteachers should assume primary responsibility for students' education" and "students should not learn less at schools and then focus most of their attention on after-school tutoring classes." Therefore, further research must address the question of how educators can construct an effective learning system for students in and out of school. For English teachers in particular, this means reconciling the fact that ELT in classroom settings is more exam-oriented with the fact that after-school English focuses more on its use for various purposes in student daily lives in the future.

In traditional exam-oriented education in China, most children passively learn English based on the curriculum standards and lesson plans to pass exams rather than for the actual need to communicate or because they have a genuine interest in English. This goes against the essence of language learning (Lu, 2021). Under the Double Reduction policy, it is essential for both policymakers and language practitioners to investigate how the education system and evaluation standards can facilitate the smooth transition from exam-oriented education to quality-oriented education. An issue remains regarding the manner in which students can cultivate an innovative spirit, expand their capabilities to serve national strategies, and contribute to the country's socialist modernization (Zou, 2021). The best way to foster the character and civic virtue of students in ELT is another issue that needs further exploration. This might increase the teaching difficulty for ELT lecturers. In this regard, future studies should focus on the development of personalized and diversified compulsory education English materials for education guided by quality development rather than knowledge learning.

It is also important to address the effective strategies that ELT instructors can apply to cultivate students' interest in English and improve their language abilities when using English. For example, Lu (2021) suggests that in ELT classes, teachers should create an English learning environment in which they leave the initiative in the classroom to students, while the teacher plays a secondary role to offer the necessary guidance and feedback, which optimizes the classroom learning process. Indeed, such a proposal does not differ much from student-centered learning in ELT. According to Wang and Zhang (2019), student-centered teaching helps students' increase their use of deep learning approaches and improves their cognitive and practical capabilities in the Chinese context. They suggested the provision of more practical cases and tasks related to real life and the formation of a supportive student-centered environment to engage students in active learning. However, Wang (2011) found that student-centered teaching might not be the teachers' preferred pedagogical choice due to classroom time constraints, the need to achieve the requirements of the mandated national curriculum, and the inadequate

academic preparedness of students in rural classrooms in China. Questions remain about how such student-centered environments can be created in different English classroom settings and how the relationship between the leadership role of Chinese English teachers and students' subjectivity can be handled in the English learning environment.

The Double Reduction policy also affects private tutoring institutions that aim to enhance students' academic performance in school. According to Wu (2021), although private tutoring institutions can help students improve their academic performance, they cannot develop their self-discipline and enthusiasm for seeking knowledge, which are key factors that determine success in life. Thus, out-of-school private tutoring organizations only act as a supplement to in-school education. Students who participate in out-of-school private tutoring classes are either seeking extra help with schoolwork or wanting to improve their educational prospects. However, it gradually becomes more of a "tool" that some parents use to encourage their children to achieve high scores and achieve top rankings in school competitions. Under the Double Reduction policy, the power of such educational services is significantly weakened, while the burdens of schoolteachers are intensified. Inevitably, this means that many tutoring institutions need to understand the intention of the Double Reduction policy and comply with the development of the current era to identify ways to transform their approaches in order to survive. Therefore, in terms of ELT, future studies should investigate how innovative teaching modes and methods can be used to transform private English tutoring institutions or tutors.

It is also worth exploring the construction of school platforms for extracurricular activities related to English language practice for children that give them access to public language resources and services. More research can be conducted to explore the current situation faced by schoolteachers of English and the opinions they hold regarding ELT under the new policy. In all, this requires different stakeholders, including policymakers, foreign language teachers, and teaching and research departments, to collaborate to explore how ELT methods can be used to contextualize the situation under the Double Reduction policy.

College Foreign Language Education in the Backdrop of the New Liberal Arts
In 2017, the concept of the "new liberal arts" was born at Hiram College in Hiram, Ohio, USA (Zhang, 2020). Its essence lies in the reorganization of the traditional liberal arts, the intersection of liberal arts and sciences, and the integration of new technology into traditional humanities courses, such as philosophy, literature, and language, to provide comprehensive interdisciplinary learning and research opportunities for students (Cai, 2021; Zhang, 2020). Regarding the Chinese context, Wu (2019) delivered a keynote speech entitled, "New Missions, Greater Mindset, New Arts and Humanities Discipline," in which he reiterated the concept of the "new liberal arts" and discussed the reform and development of higher foreign language education in the new era – its overall needs, plans, measures, standards, and objectives. The Chinese Ministry of Education issued The Declaration on the Construction of New Liberal Arts in 2020, which promoted the construction of the new liberal arts. Since then, the "new liberal arts" has become a

hot topic that has been continuously discussed by foreign language scholars in China. In the past two years, related research (Fang, 2021; Wu, 2019; Zhang, 2020) has analyzed and interpreted the concept and characteristics of the new liberal arts. These studies have proposed the basic ideas of innovation and development of English language education. Issues, such as the interdisciplinary development of English language education, the education of English language talent, and the reform of college English teaching for non-English majors, have been explored against the background of the new liberal arts (Cai, 2021; Wen, 2021). It is suggested that doing so will break barriers and strengthen interdisciplinary fusion, form a new integrated professional direction on the basis of the English language, promote the stratified and classified training of English language talents, and highlight the interdisciplinary and multilingual characteristics of English language talent training (Cai, 2021; Shi & Jiang, 2020; Zhang, 2020).

Higher education institutions have to cultivate international interdisciplinary talent who specialize in one particular language and one particular discipline and, at the same time, master multilingual ability through college English teaching for non-English majors under the construction of the new liberal arts (Wu, 2019). Wen (2021) examined the domestic development of college English teaching materials for non-English majors and integrated the ideological empowerment model and the synergy model of 'integration of specialty and innovation" into college English teaching materials for non-English majors against the background of the new liberal arts. She also proposed implementing the following: the organic combination of college English teaching materials for non-English majors with specialized English, the organic integration with mass entrepreneurship and innovation education, the organic coupling with specialty+ mode, and the organic integration with financial media teaching materials. Therefore, college English general education should advocate for interdisciplinary integration and adopt innovation and entrepreneurial education to keep pace with the times and cultivate international interdisciplinary talent.

According to Shi and Jiang (2020), ideas and reflection on English education in China's academic circles have shifted from worrying about the status of English majors as students of the humanities to thinking about the cultivation of high-quality talent. After reviewing reflections and suggestions on English language education over the past 40 years, they made several major suggestions: training objectives, training modes, cultivation programs, and teaching staff construction on the formulation of English major curricula against the background of the new liberal arts. Fang (2021) also mentioned that ELT for English majors must adapt to the demands of the new era and handle the internal relationship between commonality and individuality, as well as between extensive learning and intensive learning. He also suggested adapting to the broader interdisciplinary development space and the characteristics of higher education in the new era and conforming to the national development strategic target based on the administrative characteristics of higher education institutions and the specific requirements of professional talent training. In recent years, the current situation of English majors has been discouraging, and the appeal of English majors has gradually declined. In aspects such as recruitment, training, and employment, unprecedented challenges have been encountered. Therefore, some colleges and universities

in China are actively exploring the transformation of English major talent training against the background of the new liberal arts (Chang, 2021; Zhang, 2020). According to Zhang (2020), with the promotion of the concept of holistic education and the practice of the concept of the new liberal arts, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies has launched a One Innovative + Four Professional + One Compound program scheme (through the experimental class of top student talent, the four disciplinary directions of English majors, and the interdisciplinary talent mode of English plus Information Management) to cultivate distinguished English majors and provide them with diverse opportunities for professional excellence.

In the reform of English majors in light of the proliferation of the new liberal arts, Shanghai Jiao Tong University also developed innovative mechanisms to train talented English majors and strengthened interdepartmental, interschool, and international training. The university also embodied the concept and characteristics of the return to the original disciplines, interdisciplinary integration, and the promotion of practical teaching, including making courses, such as "Innovative Practice Project for College Students" and "Reading Original English Works," compulsory (Chang, 2021). Chang (2021) also mentioned that Shanghai Jiao Tong University formed three new major English disciplines characterized by linguistic intelligence and pathology, comparative literature, and intelligent and cross-cultural translation. We suggest that more interdepartmental and interdisciplinary majors within the humanities, such as "English + news," "English + history," and "English + law," be established to create new ways to cultivate new interdisciplinary talent. More language courses, such as French, German, Spanish, or Japanese, can also be opened to college student English majors to facilitate their multilingual skills as another way to cultivate interdisciplinary talent within foreign languages as a first-level discipline.

The academic foreign language circle in China has always restricted itself to self-development and has long neglected technological and economic demands, believing that only by maintaining integrity and purity can it implement the new model (Cai, 2021). The nature of the humanities and the value orientation of humanistic education for English majors cannot be ignored. However, priority must be given to current national and social needs rather than the humanistic features of the ELT, and the expansion of English major courses should truly transcend the boundaries of existing disciplines to foster interdisciplinarity. In addition to interdisciplines within the humanities, Cai (2021) proposed a new foreign language education (NFLE), which he considered truly interdisciplinary, especially with the hard disciplines urgently needed in China, such as science, industry, agriculture, and medicine.

As a branch of the new liberal arts, NFLE pursues new concepts to facilitate a paradigm shift from discipline-oriented teaching to market-oriented instruction. Its new structure highlights interdisciplinarity, the shift from language studies to language services, and the construction of new disciplinary systems. NFLE also develops new programs stemming from the reconstruction of traditional translation majors, English majors, and college English, which consist of new college English, English majors for science and technology,

and translation majors for science and technology. These emerging majors have some similarities. They do not use EMI to acquire knowledge about another subject, but rather use it to study how the knowledge of the subject is constructed and spread in English for specific purposes. This might mean that ELT teachers need to establish and maintain their own disciplinary or interdisciplinary capital to cultivate international interdisciplinary talent. Cai (2021) also believes that English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is considered the most suitable foreign language discipline system for NFLE; it is the foundation of interdisciplinary studies of foreign languages. Therefore, more ESP courses can be designed to serve other disciplines and meet the need for international communication in higher education institutions. Again, this proposal requires further investigation because not many students need ESP for their subject studies. A large number of students cannot easily use English or express themselves using the language for general purposes after graduation, let alone for the adoption of ESP in various programs. In short, the new liberal arts concept endows ELT with interdisciplinary features. ELT must not restrict its development to English as a major; rather, it should cultivate interdisciplinary talent. With the development of the new liberal arts, more empirical studies rather than conceptual studies might be required to test its effectiveness in relation to ELT.

EMI in Tertiary Education

With the trend of internationalization in higher education, EMI is becoming a global phenomenon in higher education contexts (Graddol, 2006; Hu, Li, & Lei, 2014). Against this background, China has followed the global trend of adopting EMI in higher education institutions (Hu & McKay, 2012). However, doing so has posed several challenges (Chen & Peng, 2019; Fang, 2018b). While EMI programs are a strategy higher education institutions use to promote their educational internationalization in China, those programs are still underachieving in terms of teaching quality and learning achievements (Jiang, Zhang, & May, 2019). Until now, the investigation of EMI in the Chinese context has been insufficient. This section discusses some of the obstacles to the implementation of EMI based on previous empirical findings in the Chinese context.

Previous research has summarized the difficulties in EMI implementation. Inadequate English proficiency of both academic staff and students is one of the main obstacles to EMI implementation (Gu & Lee, 2018). Students' poor English proficiency may prove to be the primary reason for the inconsistency between policy and practice. Moreover, EMI teachers' perceptions of English teaching can be regarded as a contributing factor (Jiang et al., 2019). Students who participate in EMI courses often have difficulty comprehending content knowledge and engaging in EMI classroom activities due to their limited language proficiency (Chen & Peng, 2019), and non-native EMI teachers often lack expertise in ELT to actualize the integration of content and language teaching (Gu & Lee, 2018). EMI teachers also encounter difficulties in identifying the role of language in content learning and in creating appropriate instructional designs to promote integration between language and knowledge construction (Cao & Yuan, 2020; Maxwell-Reid, 2020). Thus, EMI lecturers and students should be given sustainable and significant language guidance and support (Fang, 2018b; Lei & Hu, 2014).

Previous research has shown that increasing attention is being paid to reconsidering the nature and role of language as a semiotic resource to mediate higher-level thinking and knowledge construction of students (Kress, 2010) and to construct EMI instructional settings as a space for multilingual and multimodal meaning making (Blair, Haneda, & Bose, 2018; Fang & Liu, 2020). From other studies of EMI policies in China (Chen, Han, & Wright, 2020; Zhang, 2017), it can be concluded that EMI policies help facilitate the internationalization of higher education, but traditional expanding circle contexts (Kachru, 1992) have to deal with EMI at both the policy and practice levels in relation to L1 instruction at higher education institutions. According to Maxwell-Reid (2020), the learning of content knowledge is inseparable from that of language as a symbolic resource for a particular domain. Therefore, in EMI classroom practices, it is important to capitalize on the instructors' and students' full repertoires, particularly through the use of multilingual, multimodal, and spatial resources for language learning and knowledge construction, to create a flexible and context-specific teaching and learning environment (Blair et al., 2018; Cao & Yuan, 2020; Gu, Li & Jiang, 2021).

The English proficiency of EMI teachers and students was found to lead to adjustments in EMI practices for bilingual teaching or to utilizing translanguaging between Chinese and English for teaching and learning (Fang & Liu, 2020; Gu & Lee, 2018). Previous studies (Hu & Lei, 2014; Chen, Han, & Wright, 2020) also detailed various strategies that academic staff and students use to compensate for inadequacies in adopting EMI, including resorting to translanguaging strategies in teaching. Considering the gap between institutional policy and classroom reality, EMI practices need to develop and embrace diverse ways of meaning making, such as translanguaging strategies in action (Chen, Han, & Wright, 2020; Fang & Liu, 2020), even though English still remains the overall medium of instruction. It is argued that EMI instructors should coordinate with language specialists to maximize the power of language in enhancing content learning through joint actions and reflections (Cao & Yuan, 2020). Moreover, collaboration between subject and language specialists is required, which would benefit students' ability to learn the subject knowledge and improve their language skills (Jiang et al., 2019).

Language, Culture, Ideology, and Identity

Numerous official discourses about Chinese foreign language education policies have demonstrated that "an adequate command of English by Chinese individuals is necessary and important for the sustained development of the country" (Pan, 2011, p. 250). English learning is no longer conducted to acquire merely native-like forms of English to become monolingual. Instead, it has become a multidimensional education involving socio-political orientation, linguistic capital, culture comprehension, and ideological positionality construction (Gao, 2021). With the popularity of English in China, there is a concern that learning the English language could lead to the loss of Chinese identity; there is also a fear that the English language may have a corrupting impact on Chinese language and culture (Fang, 2018a; Lo Bianco, Orton, & Gao, 2009). This refers to cultural imperialism in which linguistic imperialism is a constituent part (Phillipson, 1992). Some studies considered English language learning as a form of cultural invasion and examined

the extent to which English culture should be integrated into the ELT classroom (Niu & Wolff, 2007; Safari & Razmjoo, 2016). However, the cultural and linguistic influences of English are not the sole results of power exercised by external forces from the West; they also arise from domestic forces (Pan, 2011; Simpson, 2017).

Language as semiotics is neutral; it is only endowed with symbolic power by human beings (Bourdieu, 1991). This could suggest a greater role of individual agency in the adoption or rejection of culture, ideology, or identity rather than passive acceptance under external pressures. According to Gray (2002), ELT inevitably confronts and delivers ideological, cultural, and identity messages, despite its focus on linguistic issues. For instance, Wang, Jiang, Fang, and Elyas (2021) addressed the importance of critical pedagogy in teaching linguistic and cultural literacy and suggested that ELT be conducted from multilingual and multicultural perspectives rather than toward emulation of native speakerism. Therefore, re-examination and representation of the English language and an openness to "multiculture" in ELT in China in response to globalization are necessary. Furthermore, it is essential that more diverse variations in English be noticed and adopted rather than favored native-speaker English (Wang & Fang, 2020). More multicultural and multilingual courses should be designed to equip students with a broad international perspective on the language learning.

Foreign language policymakers often discuss the urgent need for pedagogical instruction to integrate local elements and home culture into existing curricula (Wen, 2016). According to the Chinese Ministry of Education (2017), English education in China should not reinforce the uneven power relationship between western and local countries, but instead should interpret the hidden Chinese ideology during English instruction. The requirement of infusing native cultural value education into English education epitomizes how English education is deeply influenced by the nation's consciousness, as language education policy cannot exist in isolation from the overall political ecosystem (Gao, 2021). There is a need to further explore how students are expected to use English to convey local values and ideologies in a way that is comprehensible to the outside world through their language practices and identity construction. For example, Gu and Lee (2018) investigated how college students in China constructed identity and negotiated legitimacy in the interaction between Western and Eastern traditions in the internationalization of higher education. They pointed out that, although students experienced uncertainty and contradiction in the face of flexible bilingual teaching, their critical understanding of internationalization, globalization, and linguistic diversity was promoted in the heterogeneous contexts of cultures and values. Gao (2021) explored how Chinese English language learners negotiated linguistic ideology and constructed cultural identity while learning English; they also found that students who had experienced rich cultural capital were more capable of telling Chinese stories in English while also experiencing the conflict of ideological struggles and the construction of multilayered identities.

Therefore, we suggest that the proper niche for the intersection of native culture or diverse cultures and ELT is contextualized. Further research can also examine the extent to which

macro and micro-cultural factors and sociocultural forces of the West influence the ideological development and patriotism of students during ELT and how ELT can play a supporting role in improving the intercultural communication competence of students and their cultural and linguistic capital.

Chinese Language Policy and ELT: The Road Ahead

In this concluding section, we link the preceding discussion and findings, we also suggest further directions and identify implications for how Chinese language policy and ELT should be aligned, as well as how they can embrace a brighter and shared future together.

First, more time must be allowed to assess the feasibility and effectiveness of the double reduction policy, with more support from empirical studies. The Double Reduction policy can be used to improve the shortcomings of current ELT with the aim of reducing academic pressure, increasing interest in English learning, reducing exam-oriented content, and increasing practical content. Thus, it is suggested that ELT should focus on developing students' ability to critically and dialectically judge linguistic and pedagogical ideologies. Additionally, ELT should prioritize making students reconsider their future self-development through the process of English learning in and beyond the classroom instead of mastering the four basic English skills (Fang, 2018a). However, the inherent traditional exam-oriented education environment and the lack of better standard assessment modes of English in China make it difficult to implement the policy. Moreover, in view of different regional educational resources and educational environments, it is worth considering how the reform of exam-oriented environments should achieve a balanced relationship with educational fairness.

Second, the construction of the new liberal arts should consider the differences between arts and science in promoting interdisciplinarity and should foster the talents in academic researchers of ELT. The new liberal arts must be aware that the mindsets of science students and liberal arts students might differ, which might present more difficulties in ELT with the promotion of interdisciplinarity. Although the construction of the new liberal arts adequately meets the current demands of the nation and society to cultivate interdisciplinary talent, the cultivation of academic research talent for British and American literature, linguistics, and translation cannot be abandoned (Cai, 2021). The diffusion characteristics of humanistic knowledge and the perceptual characteristics of humanistic education require slight changes in the inheritance of disciplinary knowledge management and education methods (Wu, 2020). Therefore, viewing the English language as a component of the humanities does not lower it to the level of being a solely instrumental tool.

Third, EMI policies in China should recognize multiple resources, encourage bilingualism and multilingualism (Kirkpatrick, 2014), and revisit their language practices and their relationships with vernacular-medium instruction at higher education institutions (Zhang, 2017). With the use of English as a global language and the ever-increasing demand for English proficiency in the new era, there is a growing trend of EMI provision (Fang, 2018b; Galloway et al., 2020). Considering the obstacles mentioned above (see Chen & Peng, 2019; Gu & Lee, 2018; Jiang et al., 2019), more context-specific ways for compensation

should be explored. It is hoped that more empirical research will be conducted on language use and programs amid growing multilingualism in Chinese EMI classrooms by comparing observational data in English immersion education with those in L1 based instruction or vernacular-medium instruction (Chen et al., 2020; Galloway et al., 2020).

Fourth, ELT should not emulate native speakerism; instead, it should embrace flexibility, tolerance, and openness from a multilingual, multicultural, multi-ideological, and multi-identity perspective by embedding it into the multilingual paradigm. According to Gao (2021), it is worth noting that, as a Chinese person, one never learns English to become a native English speaker or construct an identity as one; rather, one learns English to showcase his/her sociopolitical orientation, linguistic repertoires, and ideological positionality construction in a globalized language to the globalized world. Therefore, Chinese teachers of English and students should increase their awareness of multilingualism (Wang & Fang, 2020) and critically employ their human agency and autonomy to embrace the essence and discard the dregs when confronted with intractable cultural, ideological, and identity issues in the process of ELT.

The aim of policy is to promote education; the aim of education is to implement policy. We conclude that if the current Chinese language policy is to be more effectively implemented in ELT, it should be contextualized with more effort from robust teaching and research results and be given time to develop.

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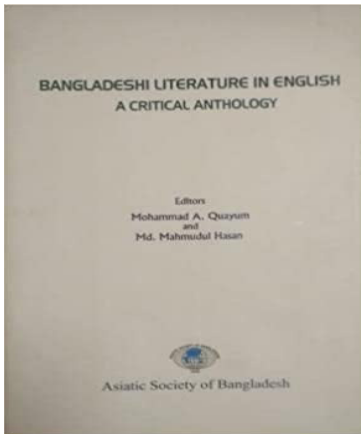Zou, S. (2021). Academic burden on students to be reduced. *China Daily*. https://global. chinadaily.com.cn/a/202108/21/WS612032d7a310efa1bd66a33a.html

Book Review

exchanges continues to inform Bangladeshi creative writing in English and positions the country inside the global literary exchange that goes beyond its borders.

Bangladeshi Literature in English: A Critical Anthology, edited by Mohammad A. Quayum and Md. Mahmudul Hasan, is a ground-breaking collection that addresses this critical gap. The anthology brings together a wide range of critical essays that collectively map the trajectory of Bangladeshi literature in English from its colonial roots to its contemporary manifestations. The volume is a welcome addition to the growing body of scholarship that seeks to recognize and celebrate the contributions of Bangladeshi writers to the global literary landscape.

The editors have assembled a diverse collection of essays that engage with a broad spectrum of authors, genres, and themes. The anthology is organized in a manner that allows readers to trace the evolution of Bangladeshi literature in English across different historical periods and cultural contexts. The essays are written by scholars who bring a wealth of expertise and critical insight to their respective subjects.

One of the strengths of the anthology is its inclusivity. The editors have made a conscious effort to represent a wide range of voices, including both established and emerging writers. The collection features essays on canonical figures such as Begum Rokeya and Syed Waliullah, as well as contemporary writers like Tahmima Anam, Zia Haider Rahman, and Neamat Imam. This breadth of coverage ensures that the anthology provides a comprehensive overview of the field.

The anthology also engages with a variety of critical approaches and methodologies. The essays draw on postcolonial theory, feminist criticism, diaspora studies, and other theoretical frameworks to illuminate the complexities of Bangladeshi literature in English. This theoretical diversity enriches the collection and offers readers multiple lenses through which to understand the texts under discussion.

In addition to its critical essays, the anthology includes a helpful introduction by the editors that contextualizes the field and outlines the key issues and debates that animate the study of Bangladeshi literature in English. The introduction provides a useful roadmap for readers who may be unfamiliar with the subject and sets the stage for the essays that follow.

The anthology is not without its limitations. Given the vastness of the field, it is inevitable that some authors and works are not covered in as much depth as they might deserve. Nevertheless, the editors have done an admirable job of balancing breadth and depth, and the collection serves as an excellent starting point for further research.

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Shamsad Mortuza. "*Bangladeshi Literature in English: A Critical Anthology*: A Ground-Breaking Collection of Critical Essays."
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history demands a critical scholarship that captures the various nuances of overlapping issues and ideas.

These writers largely fall into two categories. The first category of writers is mostly affiliated with the English Departments or academia, and they live or have lived in Bangladesh (e.g., Syed Sajjad Hussain, Razia Khan Amin, Niaz Zaman, Kaiser Haq). The second category of writers have either migrated to or settled in Anglophone countries (e.g., Monica Ali, Zia Haider Rahman, Adib Khan, Tahmima Anam, Dilruba Z. Ara, Nadeem Zaman, Fayeza Hasanat, Saad Z. Hossain). Their presence in the international literary scene is marked by the publishing houses that feature them. There is an emerging trend helped by the literary journals, anthologies, chapbooks, online ventures, annual Lit Fest and cultural activities of English medium schools, and creative writing programs which are producing new writers (e.g., Munize Manzur, Sohana Manzoor, Shabnam Nadiya).

Edited by two expatriate Bangladeshi scholars, Mohammad A. Quayum and Md. Mahmudul Hasan, *Bangladeshi Literature in English: A Critical Anthology* (2021), claims to be the first-ever critical anthology on Bangladeshi Anglophone literature. The shared legacy of the publisher, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, which started its journey as Asiatic Society of Pakistan in 1952, made this anthology equally symbolic. The decision to publish the book as a significant contribution to the literary map of Bangladesh seems deliberately strategic by the editors who had access to publish the book from outside of the country. The editor duo thus remind us of a tradition of writing that we have ignored for a long time. Yet the potential for the sector cannot be overlooked in a world that is intrinsically connected with English as its lingua franca.

In their acknowledgements, the editors admit that the project helped them "return to [their] roots in a metaphorical and meaningful way" (n.pag.). The anthology cleverly reclaims the Bangladeshi authors whose works are branded under the pre-independence or pre-Partition labels. Syed Sajjad Hussain, for instance, "wrote under three flags: British India, Pakistan and Bangladesh" (2). Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain and Syed Waliullah did not live long enough to see the birth of Bangladesh.

The extensive introduction to the anthology contextualizes the collection while explaining the selection process. Quayum and Hasan posit:

> Our selection and inclusion of chapters were based purely on the critical merit of the items, and breadth of coverage. In other words, we have decided to include some of the best critical material on Bangladeshi literature in English internationally, balancing it with discussions on the maximum number of new or established writers we could accommodate in the book. (6)

Etymologically, the word anthology denotes a bouquet (from Greek *anthologia*: *anthos* "flower" + *-logia* "collection"). And any collection is guilty of the personal choices of the collectors. The editors by design become the gatekeepers to decide who is in and who is not. The superlative "best" is loaded with a similar prejudice. The list of authors covered in the collection accentuate the idea.

Of the fifteen chapters included in this critical anthology, there are twelve research articles and three interviews. This seems like a good mix as the voices of the creative writers are added to supplement the analysis of the critics. Two of the authors interviewed, Niaz Zaman and Kaiser Haq, are also represented by critical essays on them. The multiple entries limit the scope of the anthology as there are two essays on Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, Adib Khan, Monica Ali, and Tahmima Anam each. While Rokeya is pitched as a "pre-independence pioneer" ("Contents"), the other three fall under the diaspora category. This is the largest category for which seven chapters are assigned.

That leaves only two writers writing in English from Bangladesh. If one looks at the list of writers who appear in the literary supplements of the English dailies (*The Daily Star* Literature page and Arts & Letters of *Dhaka Tribune*) or the literary journals such as *Bengal Lights* and *Six Seasons Review*, one is sure to find a new generation of writers. Many of these new writers come from an English medium school background and show considerable ease in expressing themselves in various experimental genres (e.g., science fiction, flash fiction, screenplay, hybrid, and hypertext) English. The personal choice to restrict the scope of the anthology to "best" writers contributes to what can be called a canon formation. And this canon merely discusses fiction and poetry. The genres of non-fiction (travelogues, essays, autobiography, memoirs) and drama are excluded.

It is to their credit that the editors do not claim that this anthology is complete in its coverage. Furthermore, the anthology aptly gives Bangladeshi writers a niche, freeing them from various academic tags of South Asian, Global South, Commonwealth, or Third World. The contributions of expat critics placed alongside Bangladeshi scholars hint at another issue. Susan Stanford Friedman's reading of Monica Ali, for instance, is heavy with references to Virginia Woolf and James Joyce. Fayeza Hasanat reads Monica Ali alongside Zia Haider Rahman and Tahmima Anam to detect religion as a source of dystopic consciousness. The scholarship coming from Bangladesh has a deeper understanding of the "local" contexts that have produced the "global" texts. Mohammad Quayum's interview with poet Kaiser Haq serves as another example where the poet is curiously dubbed as a "highbrow hijra" to denote the pivotal role played by him from his peripheral location. The use of a transgender category in local terms is unlikely to be featured in a non-native context.

Published in the Golden Jubilee of the country, the critical anthology complements several literary anthologies that have been launched to celebrate the occasion. One can only hope that this ground-breaking collection of critical essays will enhance the scope of creativity in English. This is the first of many anthologies that will help Bangladeshi writers writing from both home and abroad find a collective platform.

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- Abstract should be 150–200 words
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