Crossing

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Advisory Board

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Chinese astrology divides life into ten-year cycles, believing that each section has its own force. While bringing out Volume 11 of *Crossings*, we cannot but reflect on the planned changes that we are going to embrace in this new section. We are already in the process of being indexed with several databases to give our local effort an international accent. The expansion of our international advisory body to include some accomplished academics and journal editors has boosted our initiative.

Crossings has already become an intellectual forum for all those who take interest in issues related to language, linguistics, literature, and culture. The wide-ranging discussions available in the volume is a testimony of the fact that we have been able to create a discursive platform where literary texts can be analyzed for academic causes, language can be examined for both pedagogical and practical purposes, and cultural texts can be located beyond the academy.

The Occasional Paper reflects on the pioneer of female education in Bengal, Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain. Prof. Mohammad Abdul Quayum of Flinders University, Australia argues for the moral climate created by the nineteenth century Bengali renaissance that allowed Begum Rokeya to forward her feminist activism.

Nearly half of the articles that have been accepted for this volume engage with South Asian, including Bangladeshi, authors. In addition, while there are articles on canonical authors such as T S Eliot, H G Wells, R L Stevenson, and the Brontë sisters, they are equally matched by interests in contemporary authors from Africa, comic-books, and popular films. This reflects the changing ecology of English studies in which *Crossings* is located.

The language and applied linguistics section is dominated by the interest in how language works and operates in our lived experience. Language professionals are constantly investigating different ways of improving classroom teaching. The articles on process writing or feedback giving will be particularly useful for teachers who need information to improve their pedagogical models. The lexical analysis of a Malaysian newspaper's editorials shows the politics of confusion that language can construct.

In the book review section, the reader's interest in two books by Bruce King is generated by Kaiser Haq. The memoir of the peripatetic literary critic and historian, *An Interesting Life So Far*, and his collection of essays on eleven postcolonial writers, *From New National to World Literature: Essays and Reviews*, receive a credible endorsement from Haq.

The articles gathered here, as you can see, are varied – yet united in their spirit of enriching English Studies. Let us know how you feel about this volume and the changes that you want to see in the next cycle that we are entering.

On behalf of the Editorial Board,

Shamsad Mortuza, PhD
Editor

Occasional Paper

Inspired by the Bengal Renaissance: Rokeya's Role in the Education and Emancipation of Bengali (Muslim) Women

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Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain (1880-1932) is often considered as one of the most significant figures in the education and emancipation of Bengali (Muslim) women, especially during the early decades of the twentieth century. A contemporary of Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), Sarat Chandra Chattapadhyay (1876-1938) and Kazi Nazrul Islam (1899-1976), she was not only a brilliant writer but also one who passionately fought for the rights and dignity of women, as well as for women's social, economic, and intellectual empowerment. Here I would like to argue that Rokeya's efforts in educating and emancipating Indian women in general, and Bengali Muslim women in particular, were part of a larger social reform program or movement which began in Bengal in the early decades of the nineteenth century and lasted through the first half of the twentieth century, eventually resulting in a change in the course of Bengal's history, as well as in the fate and circumstances of Bengali (Muslim) women. In other words, I contend that Rokeya was influenced and inspired by this movement in taking up the gauntlet against the deeply entrenched patriarchy that shaped the mind and habits of her society.

The movement I am talking about is generally known as the Bengal Renaissance or Bengal Awakening, or, more appropriately, *nabajagaran*, a "new awakening." It was led by a group of mostly English-educated, upper-class, Brahmo/Hindu *bhadralok*, which included prominent reformist figures such as Raja Rammohan Roy (1772-1833), Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820-1891), and Rabindranath Tagore. They aspired to modernize India, and in their efforts to do so, they found it necessary to educate and modernize the Indian woman as well. In fact, the "woman question" was the front and center of this movement because much of the effort of these social reformers was directed towards "rescuing, reviving and refashioning women" (Chaudhuri 164). As the Young Bengal spokesman Kailashchandra Basu put it in 1846, "she must be refined, reorganised, recast, regenerated" (Chaudhuri 164). To achieve this, and to accord women subjecthood/agency, education and economic empowerment through access to property and the political process were considered to be of utmost importance. Only education and economic freedom, these reformists believed, could liberate Indian women from the age-old institutions of *sati*, male polygamy, child marriage, and prohibitions on widow remarriage, and subsequently make them "better companions to their husbands, better mothers to their children and better homemakers, in short, as expressed by the contemporary

Brahmo reformers, as, *sakhi*, *sumata* and *sugrihini*" (Chakraborty 79) – or more importantly, perhaps, as better and more complete human beings. This would also help to bring about *samya* or equality between the sexes.

As a result of this concerted effort and "intense debate and questioning with regard to the position of women" (Chaudhuri 166), a moral climate was created in which *strishiksha* or women's education was no longer viewed with disdain, and institutions for the education of girls slowly started to appear in Calcutta and elsewhere. For example, John Elliot Drinkwater Bethune (1801-1851), a barrister and Law Member of the Governor-General's council, in his "pioneering zeal to promote women's education" ("Bethune College") founded a school for girls in Calcutta in 1849, which was upgraded to a college in 1879. According to the Hunter Commission Report, by 1882, there were as many as 1,015 girls' schools in Bengal alone, with a student population of 41,349 (Chakraborty 81). These numbers increased to 2,238 schools and 78,865 students in 1891 (Chakraborty 45). With this new space and opportunities created for women, women themselves gradually started to enter the modernizing movement and participate in the debate on their future. For example, in 1861, Bamasundari Debi published a treatise on the pitiable condition of women, *Ki Ki Kusamaskar Tirahita Haile Ei Desher Shribiddhi Haite Pare* (What Superstitions Need to be Removed for the Betterment of this Country), and Kailashbashini Debi, wife of the Brahmo reformer Durgacharan Gupta, published a book of essays on the subject, *Hindu Mahilaganer Hinabastha* (The Degraded Condition of Hindu Women) in 1863.

However, the main limitation of this movement was that since it was initiated and led by the Brahmo/Hindu *bhadralok*, Muslims and other subaltern groups were at first not willing to participate in it. They came into the picture rather late: "By all accounts, Muslims had little to do with this so-called renaissance in the first half of the 19th century" (Chakraborty 76). Muslims were indifferent to this reform program at the beginning because they were more interested in preserving their separate religious identity. With their loss of power to the British, and particularly with the replacement of Persian with English as the official language of administration in 1837 (King 54), the Muslims started feeling isolated and marginalized, and found themselves on the brink of ruin. The elite Brahmos and Hindus, on the other hand, welcomed British rule because they saw it as "a deliverance" from "Muslim tyranny or medieval dark age" (Chakraborty 76). They were also eager to learn English and take up all the jobs available to non-Europeans in the colonial administration. With this new material empowerment and emerging social and economic leadership, the Hindu middle class came to view the Muslims as "the inferior dissolute other" (Chakraborty 77). This further aggravated the relationship between the two groups and pushed the Muslims away from their broader national identity into their religious shells.

With this changed circumstance in the public domain, Muslims did not want to take the risk of educating their women as that would also threaten the status quo at home, the private domain. Having lost control over the public domain, they came to see the home/private realm as the last bastion of defence. They felt that since women were "the core of family life and potential purveyors of ethical values and religious ideals" (Chakraborty 77), women symbolized everything worth preserving if their religion and religious identity were to be upheld. Therefore, women could not be allowed to come into contact with the outer world. Any attempt to educate the women would require relaxation of the purdah rules, which would, in their opinion, go against the teachings of the Qur'an and the Hadith (religious traditions based on the Prophet's sayings). Besides, Western education "would corrupt [woman] and prevent her [from] becoming a good housewife" (Barton 107). Thus, for example, when the issue of women's education was raised at an assembly of the Bengal Social Science Association in 1867, Maulvi Abdul Karim (1863-1943)[1] of the Calcutta Madrasa quickly dismissed it arguing that the education provided to Muslim girls at home was sufficient (Chakraborty 78). In fact, the issue of women's education was so sensitive at this time throughout the whole of India that even Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan (1817-1898), founder of the Aligarh College in 1875, "did not dare to include it in his powerful movement for Muslims' education, thinking that such a move would frustrate the ultimate objective of their advancement" (Hasan 48).

However, things began to change in the late nineteenth century when several Muslim leaders, as well as several magazines and periodicals edited by Muslim writers and intellectuals, began to adopt a liberal attitude towards women's education. They realised that education would help Muslim women to better interpret and appreciate the message of Islam, and therefore not only make them superior Muslims but also equip them to bring up their children according to the true teachings of the religion, ridding it of its superstitious practices and cultural deformities. After all, it was the women who were in charge of bringing up the younger generation, so if they were trained intellectually and morally, they could impart those values to their offspring and thereby push the whole community forward. With this awareness, Syed Amir Ali (1849-1928)[2] expressed at the annual meeting of the All-India Muhammadan Educational Conference[3] in 1891 that female education should advance at the same pace as male education (Chakraborty 78). It was also resolved at the same conference that all efforts should be made towards educating Muslim women (Chakraborty 78).

This changed attitude, focusing as it did on regenerating and recasting Muslim women, created an environment in which schools for girls started to appear in Calcutta and other parts of Bengal. The first known school for Muslim girls during the period was set up in 1873, not in Calcutta but Comilla (a district town in present day Bangladesh), by Nawab Faizunnessa Choudhurani (1834-1903), who was awarded the title "Nawab" by Queen Victoria and was the only female Nawab in British India. The second school was established in Calcutta in 1897 with the

patronage of Begum Ferdous Mahal, wife of the Nawab of Murshidabad. In 1909, Khojesta Akhtar Banu, mother of the well-known Bengali leader, Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy (1892-1963), took the initiative to start a school for Muslim girls in Calcutta. In the same year, Rokeya also began her school in her husband's hometown of Bhagalpur, Bihar, but owing to increasing disputes with her stepdaughter and stepson-in-law for familial and ideological reasons, she felt compelled to move the school to Calcutta in 1911.

Thus the school that Rokeya set up in Calcutta was only the fourth school for Bengali Muslim girls in the whole of Bengal. It would not be an exaggeration to think that the socio-cultural developments around her inspired Rokeya to take up the cause, and the political and moral milieu created by this reform movement helped her to find a measure of success. It is quite possible that had the Renaissance not opened up the environment and made education for women, and Muslim women in particular, acceptable, even if to a minimal degree, the idea of opening up a school for girls and taking up other activities to champion the cause of women, would not have occurred to Rokeya, or to her fellow women educationists and activists, as strongly. In this sense, she took up the mantle from her male counterparts rather efficiently and effectively.

In what follows, I will discuss Rokeya's vision for Indian women in general, and Bengali Muslim women in particular, as crystallized in her writings and the various initiatives she undertook, including setting up the school and a woman's association, to fulfil that vision.

Rokeya's Feminist Vision
Rokeya was a prolific and dedicated writer who wrote on women's issues for almost three decades, and in different genres – from poetry, polemical essays, fiction, and allegorical narratives to social satire, burlesque, letters, and journalistic vignettes. Altogether, she has left behind five books and scores of uncollected essays, stories, poems, and letters. Her books include *Motichur* (*A String of Sweet Pearls*), Volumes I (1904) and II (1922); *Sultana's Dream* (1908); *Padmarag* (*Ruby*; 1924), and *Aborodhbashini* (*The Zenana Women*; 1931). It is because of the depth and breadth of her writing that her early critics often came to consider her as one of the best women writers of her time. In a review of *Motichur*, soon after the book was published, the reviewer commented, "The book is written in chaste Bengali…. [Rokeya's] ideas about nation and nationality as expressed in the book have not been approached even by a minute fraction of the male members of the community …" (Quadir 628). Another reviewer observed in the context of *Sultana's Dream*, "It seems to us that Mrs. R.S. Hossain, the able authoress, is a lady of whom any nation may be proud" (Quadir 628). Her contemporary, writer and critic Mohitlal Majumdar dubbed Rokeya as the "soul and consciousness of her age" (Syed 17), and Abdul Hye, a literary historian, affirmed, "Of all the Muslim women who became famous as Bengali writers during the Tagore period, Begum Rokeya was the first and the best" (Syed 36).

As stated earlier, Rokeya fought for women's self-reliance, dignity, agency, and empowerment all her life. Her feminist vision could be summed up in the following basic arguments: men and women were equal at the beginning of civilization, but as time passed, men took control over society and began to deprive women of their rights to education, work, and property; now women have been reduced to a deplorable state and are often treated like slaves and animals, sometimes even worse than animals; although women are supposed to be in control of the inner domain, in India all women, regardless of their class, caste or religion, are essentially homeless; religion has often been abused by men to reduce women to their present subservience; purdah, women's segregation, and child marriage are the customs used for keeping women ignorant and enslaved to men; although men are mainly to blame for women's misfortune, women, too, are complicit as they have internalized patriarchal values without questioning them; women must wake up from their present slumber and fight for their equal rights, at least for the sake of society; it is customary to see women as inferior to men, but in reality women are equal and better than men, both morally and intellectually; so, if women are given the opportunity, they could turn this world of "sin and harm" (Quayum 160) into one of peace, prosperity and virtue; India's future lies in its women, so instead of "robbing" them of their rights, it is urgent that women become empowered through education and economic freedom so that the country can move ahead freely and find its rightful place among the commonwealth of nations.

Rokeya begins in a direct, forceful and provocative style. In one of her earliest essays, "Woman's Downfall" ("Streejatir Abanati"), she explains why women are in a "fallen" state; what has led to their current degradation; why they are treated like "slaves," "beggars," and "prisoners"; what has made them so indolent, ignorant, and weak (in body and mind); why they have lost all courage, dignity, and self-reliance; and what could be a possible remedy to all these issues. She has one finger pointed at men because it is they who have tactfully diminished women to the state of "their domesticated animals, or some kind of a prized property" (Quayum 23). They deprive women of all opportunities in society and yet deceive them into thinking that they are their best protectors. With such elaborate trickeries for centuries, men have now occupied the place of "lord" and "master" over their wives, instead of being their lovers and companions. However, Rokeya also considers women culpable because they have unmindfully embraced all androcentric values and accepted their subservience deliberately. They have become so "stupid" that they tend to distrust themselves in every regard and just obey their husbands (Quayum 22). They even fail to see that their cherished pieces of jewellery are the "markers of [their] slavery" (Quayum 23) and signify their husbands' authority over them. The bangles women wear, Rokeya writes sarcastically, are no better than the shackles worn by prisoners; their expensive chokers are like dog collars; women's gold necklaces are like the iron chains put around the necks of "Horses, elephants and other animals" (Quayum

23); and their prized nose-rings are like a harness, which allows the master to keep his wife on a tight leash.

Rokeya continues in a similar vein in her subsequent work. In "Home" ("Griha"), she strikes a furious blow at both men and women, arguing that in India, women are homeless: "we do not have a little hut to call our home. No other creature in the animal world is destitute like us. Everyone has a home – only we don't" (Quayum 50). Challenging the myth that while men rule the world, women command the home, she says this is just a tall tale to deceive women. In reality, every woman in India, regardless of her caste, class or religion, lives at the whim and mercy of men; if a man permits her, she may be happy, but if he abuses and exploits her she has no choice but to live a life of misery and subservience. Rokeya gives several examples from different social and religious communities to show how helpless women are even inside the inner quarters of their house, which is what their whole world has been reduced to. She shows how a queen lives unhappily inside her palace because she is neglected by her husband, who spends time away from home in the company of other women; how a brother robs his sister of her only inheritance from her husband when she comes to live with him after her husband's death; how a woman is forced to live with her husband's co-wives in the house which she inherited from her father. This is how women live in their "keeper's" house as their subjects – helpless, luckless, illiterate, ignorant, and in subhuman conditions. In the context of a visit to a family in Bihar, Rokeya caustically writes, "The house belongs to Sharafat, and as it has a drove of sheep, flocks of ducks and hens, so also there is a group of women" (Quayum 43).

Animal imagery abounds in Rokeya's writing as she repeatedly demonstrates how Indian women are forced to live in conditions comparable to those of animals, or worse. In her story "Woman Worship" ("Nari-puja"), she recounts how renowned scholar Pratap Chandra Majumdar's widowed mother passed away unattended and neglected without the slightest care or concern from the men of the house, except her son, who also failed to get any medical help for her in her dying moments, because she was only a woman and a widow to boot. Following this, Rokeya trenchantly reflects:

> Perhaps the master of the house wouldn't be without worry even when the family's cow was sick…. Maybe even a pet dog or cat doesn't die without treatment, and here was the best of God's creations, a wife in a family who was mortally ill, but no one bothered to take a look at her. (Quayum 122)

If this comment is meant for men of a particular family who were negligent towards a particular woman, in "Bengal Women's Educational Conference," she censures men across the subcontinent for their total apathy towards women, once again using animal imagery: "If a dog is hit by a car, we hear an outcry in the Anglo-Indian media. But there is not a single soul in the whole of the subcontinent to mourn for incarcerated women like us" (Quayum 127).

Rokeya believes that this deplorable state of women is a relatively "modern" phenomenon and that this was not so "in the ancient age" (Quayum 21). She further believes that male-centred religious tradition and knowledge have a central role to play in this because it is men who interpret religion. In the first version of her essay "Woman's Downfall," published as "Amader Abanati" (Our Downfall), Rokeya unequivocally states: "I have to say that ultimately 'religion' has strengthened the bonds of our enslavement; men are lording over women under the pretext of religion'" (qtd. in Sarkar 13). This outspoken remark created such a row that Rokeya had to retract it from all subsequent publications of the essay, but the point was made.

Rokeya uses the word "religion" here in the abstract, so we do not know whether she was thinking of all religions or of any one particular religion. My understanding is that she was referring to the changing status of women in Indian society over the course of its history, under the combined auspices of politics and religion. As we know, women were viewed with respect during the pre-Vedic period, and even during the early years of the Vedic era when people believed in the "feminine ultimacy" (Mookerjee 16); that women embodied the primal energy of the universe. Since every woman was endowed with some "divine power," known as *shakti*, women were generally seen to "carry the spirit of the goddess in them" (Reese 7). Society at the time was "to a great extent, female-oriented" and goddesses were viewed widely "as the Ultimate Reality" (Mookerjee 16). Women enjoyed "some inheritance rights" and had access to education (Reese 45). They could also take part in religious activities and perform "the required sacrifices by themselves" (Reese 45). It is also believed that "Three women – Ghosha, Apala, and Vishvavara – [were] among the composers of many hymns in the Rigveda," and that "About 600 BCE, a female named Gargi Vachaknav publicly debated Vedic philosophy at King Janaka's court" (Reese 45).

However, all this began to change as the male-centric Aryan culture with its powerful male gods and caste system slowly overtook the pre-Vedic practices. According to Reese, "By 500 BCE women increasingly were assigned the same low status as the *sudras*…. By the end of the late Vedic period, a well-known warning stated that 'a teacher should not look at the woman, the *sudra*, the dog, and the blackbird, because they are untruth'" (46). Circumstances further deteriorated for women during the Maurya (322-183 BCE) and Gupta (320-367 CE) periods, which are also known as "the classical era of Hindu culture" (Reese 47). This was when women's rights were further curtailed, and "motherhood was [seen as] the ideal of women" (Reese 47). Polygamy, child marriage, and *sati* were also introduced. Besides, since India's economy was flourishing and many foreign traders and rulers came to visit the country, to protect women from foreign influences, "Upper caste women were placed in the inner apartments of their houses and used the veil when they went out" (Reese 47). In other words, this was when the veiling and segregation of women were first introduced into Indian culture, long before the arrival of the Muslims or

even the birth of Islam (although now veiling is more frequently associated with Islam and the identity of Muslim women than with any other religion or culture). This was also when Manu's Laws were introduced to consolidate the practices of Hindu society, which not only further curbed women's rights and status in society but also helped establish men's absolute authority over women. At various points in this legal code, this is what the *Manusmriti* has to say about women:

> In childhood a female must be subject to the father, in youth to her husband, and when her lord is dead, to her sons; a woman must never be independent.

> A father sins unless he marries his daughter off when she reaches puberty.

> A husband should be worshiped as a God.

> A wife, a daughter, and a slave, these three are declared to have no property. The wealth which they earn is acquired for him to whom they belong.

> If a woman should happen to merely to overhear recitations of Vedic mantras by chance, hot molten glass should be poured into their ears. (Reese 57-58)

This might explain why Rokeya was so blunt in accusing "religion" as being responsible for women's degradation in society. She perceived the religious establishment of the time to be in collusion with the political establishment in introducing reforms which reduced women from being embodiments of divinity and the primal energy of the universe to creatures comparable to slaves, Sudras, and dogs. Rokeya's use of the slave metaphor and recurrent animal imagery to describe women in her writing possibly contain a sarcastic reference to Manu's Laws and other socio-religious tracts of the time.

Although she spared no opportunity in pouring scorn over what she saw as Muslim cultural practices inimical to women, Rokeya was understandably more cautious when it came to discussing issues of Islam. Being a practising Muslim herself who prayed five times a day, perhaps it was natural for her not to question teachings of the faith. It could also be that as a lone widow running a school for Muslim girls, she knew it would be impossible for her to earn the community's confidence and convince parents to send their daughters to her school if she herself became embroiled in controversies on that level. That she was discreet is evident in her following comment in a personal letter, "My late husband advised me not to discuss religion with anybody" (Quadir 534). Moreover, in "Woman Worship," one of her fictional Muslim characters says during a conversation on the rights of women in Hinduism and Islam, "I am not ready yet to rile the Islamic clerics. Leave out the clergies, Mrs. Chatterjee" (Quayum 126).

Notwithstanding this, Rokeya was most unforgiving towards her fellow Muslims, especially men, for their selective use of the religion and distorted readings of the teachings of the Qur'an and the Hadith so as to deprive women of many of their rights and privileges enshrined in the faith. In essays such as "The Female-half" ("Ardhangini") and "God Gives, Man Robs," Rokeya repeatedly asks: Why are

Muslim women denied the education opportunities when Prophet Muhammad had made education compulsory for both men and women? Why are Muslim women disallowed the right to inherit property and act as witnesses when such provisions are there in the tradition? She believed it was the misguided fanatics and sanctimonious groups, whom she condemned as pseudo-religious hotheads, who twisted religion for their own profit and power.

Rokeya was also virulent in her attacks on purdah, polygamy and child marriage, which, she believed, were the main stumbling blocks to individual growth as well as to the progress of women at large. But, much to her dismay, such practices were generally approved and even encouraged by the socio-cultural-religious establishments of the time. As mentioned earlier, Rokeya was herself a "victim" (her expression) of the purdah practise, being forced to live in isolation not only from men but also from women outside her close family circle from the age of five.[4] It is also because of her father's belief in the custom that she was not allowed to attend school in childhood.

In *The Zenana Women* (*Aborodhbashini*), which provides a series of anecdotal narratives about the practice of purdah among Hindus and Muslims in both Bengal and Bihar at the time, she graphically and trenchantly shows how bizarre and barbaric the custom was; how it was so laughable on the one hand, and yet so deadly and devastating for women on the another; how it reduced women to invisible and inert objects living under the thumb of men. For example, when we read how small girls are forced to live in a *myakhana* (secluded girls' quarters) for months before their marriage so they can get accustomed to a life of seclusion after marriage; or when thieves break into a house and rob the women of all their jewellery without any resistance as the women are more concerned about their purdah than their possessions; or when women are made to walk inside a mosquito net on a railway platform, a paddy farm, or in their own courtyard, so that no other men can see them; or when a doctor has to check a patient's tongue and pulse sitting behind a curtain or a mosquito net just because the patient is a woman – we laugh at the absurdity of the situation, but we also understand how mordant Rokeya's attack is on an institution that she saw as a root cause of women's degradation in society.

Rokeya saw child marriage and polygamy as nothing more than deplorable ways of fulfilling male lust. In her short story "Marriage-crazy Old Men" ("Biya-Pagla Buro") she exposes and ridicules three septuagenarian men who have married multiple times and have grandchildren of marriageable age, but are so given to lecherous ways that they want to marry yet again and marry virgin girls similar in age to their grandchildren. Rokeya punishes all three men by putting them in an embarrassing situation where the villagers trick them into a sham marriage either with a boy or with a hired dancing girl. This is the writer's way of condemning sly old men with no moral compunction in exploiting vulnerable young girls by treating them as mere sex objects.

In Rokeya's time, it was customary to view women as inferior to men. Men were thought to be stronger and more intelligent while women were considered shallow, weak, and emotional. She wanted to debunk this perception by showing that women were not only equal but could be even better than men, provided they were given the same opportunities traditionally enjoyed by men. In stories such as "The Creation of Woman" ("Nari-srishti"), "The Theory of Creation" ("Srishti-twatho") and *Sultana's Dream*, Rokeya uses wit as a weapon to establish this. In the two reciprocally related stories, "The Creation of Woman" and "The Theory of Creation," for example, using humor she shows how women are superior and more engaging in character than men, who tend to be flat, overbearing, and one-dimensional. In telling the story of the creation of woman and man through the Hindu fable of Tvastri's creation of the universe, the narrator explains that since the divine architect of the universe used so many ingredients to create woman, she can be confusing and complex, but at the same time she is rich and rounded in her personality. Thus, while she is tart, salty, and pungent, she is also sweet, beautiful ,and gentle; being timid, vain, and cunning, she also has the "beauty of the flower," "the brightness of the sun," and the "pleasant taste of honey" (Quayum 59). In "The Creation of Woman," Rokeya argues that since the woman is Tvastri's last creation, she is also his best:

> When people strain their brains the most to make something, they come up with a complete product; but when someone gains the expertise by making something again and again, the last item of the product is also the best. (Quayum 60)

Men, however, are not so lucky because when Tvastri created man, he had neither the expertise nor any scarcity of material; so he simply created according to his fancy with whatever he could lay his hands on. Thus, in "The Theory of Creation," which narrates the making of man, Tvastri explains: "For example, in creating teeth I took the snake's poison-fang root and branch; in making hands, feet and fingernails, I took the whole of the panther's paw; to fill in the cells of the brain, I used the donkey's brain intact…" (Quayum 76). This explains why, within the context of the story, women are moderate, balanced, and multi-layered, while men are vile, cruel, and stupid. Throughout her writing, women are variously compared to domestic animals like cows, sheep, and hens. In contrast, in "The Creation of Woman" and "The Theory of Creation," men are associated with swine, snakes, and donkeys – creatures which are full of negative attributes and perceived to be much lower in the hierarchical order of beings.

In *Sultana's Dream*, Rokeya artfully turns the patriarchal world upside down by creating a "Ladyland" in which women run the state and men are confined indoors. The whole situation is hilarious because in Rokeya's utopia, women not only do everything men do in the real world, but they do it much better. To begin with, women of Ladyland trap all the men into the mardana, the male version of the

zenana, not by brawn but by brain. They are highly educated and scientifically advanced because their queen has made education compulsory for all women; she has also prohibited child marriage. Rokeya is merely making the point that women can easily excel if given the right opportunities. Women in Ladyland are also morally superior; since they have taken over the state affairs there has been no crime; therefore, they have done away with magistrates and the police as they are no longer required.

Moreover, they keep the country beautiful and orderly, like a garden. This shows that women of Ladyland are not only intelligent and virtuous but also have an artistic sense. When asked by Sultana, who is visiting the land in her dream, what kind of work is entrusted to men, Sister Sarah, who is showing her around, promptly replies, "They should not do anything, excuse me; they are fit for nothing. Only catch them and put them into the zenana" (Quayum 161). Later, the queen adds that her country is open for trade with any country except where women are not allowed to do business, because, she adds, "Men, we find, are rather of lower morals, and so we do not like dealing with them" (Quayum 168).

By the end of the story, it becomes obvious that Rokeya is trying to inspire and motivate Bengali/Indian women to stand up for their rights, assuring them through her utopian fantasy that a glorious future lies ahead for them provided that they shun their slave mentality and regain their self-trust, will, conviction, and courage. They must forsake self-doubt and fear, and truly believe in their hearts that they "were not born to live the life of a feckless mannequin" (Quayum 32) or "just to gratify their husband-lords" (Quayum 137) – only then will they be able to march forward and seize the destiny that appears in Sultana's dream and turn it into reality. As a first step, they must rise from their present slumber and step out of the nightmare that continues to enshroud them. Thus, goading her fellow sisters, Rokeya writes in her essay "The Dawn" ("Subah Sadiq"):

> Wake up, mothers, sisters, daughters; rise, leave your bed and march forward …. Do not sleep any more; wake up, the night has ended …. Whilst women of the rest of the world have awoken and declared war against all kinds of social injustices … we, the women of Bengal are still sleeping profoundly on the damp floors of our own homes, where we are being held captives, and dying in thousands as victims of consumption. (Quayum 136)

Her clarion call is meant for all Bengali women, because she knows that only if *all* women rise together and stand up against their current injustices will there be a meaningful change in society, according women the honor and dignity they rightfully deserve and which they previously enjoyed during the pre-Vedic period in Indian history.

Rokeya as an Educationist: Founding of Sakhawat Memorial Girls' School
Rokeya was not just a visionary but also an activist. She did everything she could to

reify her vision and turn it into reality. First and foremost, she believed in the value and significance of education; that, without removing the "purdah of ignorance," Indian women could not fight back against their current misery and misfortune or find their true worth as human beings. It was with this in mind that she opened the school for Muslim girls, Sakhawat Memorial Girls' School, with the legacy of Rs. 10,000 that her husband had left behind for this purpose; appropriately, the school was named after him.

It was extremely risky for her to take such an initiative in an environment when women's education, in particular that of Muslim girls, was still a novelty and questionable and controversial at best. It was frowned upon also because Rokeya herself was a woman and a widow. As mentioned earlier, she had to face all kinds of vicious slander, including being branded "a whore and an embezzler of funds" (Gupta 28). But nothing could shake Rokeya's resolve. In addition to such daily persecution by orthodox segments of society, she also had to face many practical challenges of running a school because she had no knowledge of classroom teaching or managing a school administration. However, Rokeya's biggest hurdle was to get students for her school. She had begun the school in Calcutta in 1911 with only eight students. Her recurrent concern was how to increase that number and expand the school, given the social environment and apathy of Muslims towards women's education and especially their fear of violating the purdah. She went from door to door, campaigning for students and to convince the parents that education would not turn their daughters into Christians,[5] but instead, make them better individuals and citizens. She also assured parents that the purdah norm would not be violated, and their girls would be transported to and from school in fully curtained vehicles. With such sustained efforts, the number of students steadily grew. By 1915, the number had increased to eighty-four, and the school was upgraded to an upper primary school. By 1927, this number had further grown to 149 and the school was elevated to a high school with all ten grades. Rokeya also opened a boarding house for her school at this time to accommodate students who came from remote rural districts of Bengal. She also moved campus several times to adapt to the increasing number of students. When she began the school in 1911, she had rented a small room at Walliullah Lane, but in 1931, a year before Rokeya's death, the school moved to a larger rented accommodation on Lower Circular Road. After her death, the school became a fully-aided government school in 1936, and moved to its present location at Lord Sinha Road in 1937, where it still stands proudly as a testimony to all that Rokeya did for the education of Muslim women, at a time when they were hapless, luckless, tyrannized, and to use her own metaphor, utterly "ship-wrecked" (Quadir 537).

Rokeya believed that the purpose of education should not be merely to get a degree and find a job, nor should it be for the cultivation of the mind alone. Education should be wholesome and holistic so that it aids the development of all faculties of the individual, "physical, moral and mental" (Quayum 171). In "Woman's

Downfall," she states that education is not about pursuing "academic degrees," or "blindly imitat[ing] a community or a race," but for cultivating "the innate faculties of the individual" (Quayum 29). In "The Dawn," she adds,

> By education, I mean wholesome education; the skill to read a few books or write a few lines of verse is not true education. I want that education which will enable them to earn their rights as citizens …. Education should cultivate both the body and mind. (Quayum 137)

In "Educational Ideals for Indian Girls," she proffers that since education is meant as "preparation for life" and "for complete living," students should be trained intellectually, physically as well as morally; "moral education [should] not be neglected" (Quayum 171), she advised. Moreover, education should harness both the modern and the ancient, the material and the spiritual, so that students develop a balanced awareness of the various competing forces in life and not lose their sense of identity as Indians while acquiring Western knowledge. In this context, she wrote:

> We must assimilate the old while holding to the new …. Our aim should be to harmonise in due proportion the two purposes, spiritual and secular, in the education we impart …. We should by all means broaden the outlook of our girls and teach them to modernise themselves … [but we should not sacrifice] the elements of good in [India's] age-old traditions of thought and method … [so that] a new educational practice and tradition may be evolved which will transcend both that of the East and West. (Quayum 171-175)

It is with these ideals in mind that Rokeya followed an inclusive curriculum at her school, where traditional and modern, religious as well as science courses, were taught side by side. English was a compulsory subject. In addition, "maths … science, geography, history and public administration" were taught; even "Extra-curricular activities like music and sports were included … and the girls were exposed to a diverse range of literary and cultural activities" (Gupta 28). Rokeya's involvement with the school outstripped her love for writing, and we notice a protracted gap between the publication of *Sultana's Dream* in 1908 and the second volume of *Motichur* in 1922, with nothing of significance published during these fourteen years.

Rokeya's Social Activism: Starting a Muslim Women's Association

In "The Dawn," Rokeya advised women, "Form your own associations to protect your rights and privileges" (Quayum 137). She always placed emphasis on the collective identity of women because she believed that only through a united and organized effort could women fight prejudice, oppression, and illiteracy, and encourage public opinion in favor of their education and empowerment. With this in mind, she formed the Anjuman-i-Khawatin-i-Islam in 1916, an association for Muslim women which aimed to provide financial assistance to poor widows, assist low-income families in marrying off their daughters, and, above all, implement literacy programs among slum women. In 1919, Rokeya also tried to organize a

session of the All India Muslim Ladies' Conference in Calcutta to boost the standing of the Anjuman, but it did not go well due to factional politics within the group and ended in "a fiasco" (Quadir 526). Her efforts resulted in an exchange of letters in the media between Rokeya and Nafis Dulhan Saheba, who was then the Secretary of the All India Ladies' Conference; and although these letters document Rokeya's sharp wit and writerly talent, they also demonstrate the kind of challenges she often had to encounter, sometimes even from within her inner circles, in carrying out her mission.[6]

Conclusion

A "feminist foremother" (Jahan vii), Rokeya worked heart and soul to alleviate the plight of Indian/Bengali (Muslim) women. She began as a writer to inspire and motivate her fellow "sisters" to rise above their "incarceration" and misery and stand up for their rights and freedom. At times she did this by prodding and provoking them with harsh and caustic satire, and at times with witty and gentle encouragement to search within themselves for their true potential as human beings. In every instance, she emphasized education because Rokeya believed that education was the only way for women to overcome their present misfortune and find their subjectivity and selfhood. Her efforts, however, were not limited to her writings. She stepped out of the world of imagination into that of practicality and praxis by opening up a school especially for the education of Muslim girls, who were the most backward segment of society at the time, and also by founding an association for Muslim women to create a sense of sorority and collective identity in them as well as to serve those living in the slums through various financial and literacy programs. Her vision and her work make Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain the most significant woman Muslim Renaissance figure in Bengal, the movement which inspired and prepared her to take up the role of the savior of Bengali (Muslim) women, such that, in the view of Roushan Jahan, "every educated [Bengali] woman is a living memorial to this remarkable woman" (Jahan 55).

Notes

1. Maulvi Abdul Karim was an influential Muslim educationist of his time. He was appointed Assistant Inspector of Schools for Mohammedan Education in 1889, and subsequently became a School Inspector. He was one of the few Muslims to hold such important posts under the British rule.
2. A leading Muslim scholar, lawyer, and politician of his time, who was appointed professor of law at Calcutta University in 1881 and judge of the Calcutta High Court in 1890. He played a significant role in modernizing Indian Muslims, and was a founding member of the All India Muslim League in 1906.
3. This organization was set up by Sayyid Ahmad Khan in 1886, and it remained the main common political and intellectual platform for Muslims until the founding of the Muslim League in 1906 (Ikram).
4. For a detailed biographical discussion on Rokeya, see my introductory chapter in *The Essential Rokeya*, "Rokeya Sakhwat Hossain: A Biographical Essay."

5. It was common at that time to think that education would make Muslim girls into Christians. In Rokeya's short story "Souro Jagat" ("The Solar System"), when Gauhar, an enlightened father of nine daughters, shows eagerness to send his girls to school, his brother-in-law, Jafar, vehemently opposes the idea, fearing that this would turn his nieces into Christians. Rokeya herself was accused by her detractors of being overly Western and Christian in her thinking. One critic wrote, "[To her] everything Indian is bad and everything Euro-American good" (Tharu and Lalita 342); another complained that Rokeya's works were influenced by the Madras-based Christian Tract Society and their publications on Indian reform (Sufi 79).

6. Some of these letters, published in *The Mussalman*, are available in Quadir (526-534) and Quayum (183-192).

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Literature and Cultural Studies

Dionysian Africa as an Antithesis of the Apollonian West

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Abstract

On his deathbed, the protagonist Harry in the story "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" examines his past life. He concludes that he lived an empty life and that none but he is to blame for it. The narrative is structured in a diegetic frame, telling the past events of the protagonist by separating them off from the present events. The narrative, consequently, swings back and forth from interjected flashbacks to flashforward scenes, suggesting a triumph of the Apollonian virtue over the Dionysian vice, as the yardstick to measure a man. In setting his locales and depiction of places, Hemingway employs Manichean dialectics, indicative of his internalizing an Orientalist perspective that places Africa as opposed to the West. The bipartite representation reflects the author's subscription to the high Victorian values that he had absorbed while growing up. This paper contends that "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" embodies a dialectical struggle between the Apollonian virtue and the Dionysian vice in the human soul, presented as thesis and as antithesis. It attempts to decode the embedded binary symbols, illustrating that the usage of the imageries of the snow-capped mountains and the peaks, as opposed to the dusty plane of Africa infested with beasts, alludes to representation of life and death. Further, it asserts that the idea of Africa is feminized when Hemingway equates the continent with the image of Helen, making the latter a synecdoche of the former; and that this blending of hegemony and misogyny reinforces a politics of aesthetics that obliterates, distorts, and dehumanizes the image of Africa.

Keywords: Orientalism, Manicheanism, Dialectics, Eurocentrism, Synecdoche

Hemingway's "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" is a pastiche of Leo Tolstoy's novella *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*. Anticipating an imminent death, like Ivan Ilyich in Tolstoy's story, Harry in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" examines his past life. He juxtaposes his current state of physical disability and moral delinquency with his past. Harry concludes that his life has been an unfulfilled dream because he squandered his talent on a hedonistic pursuit; that he lived an empty life, and that none but he is to blame for it. The interjected narrative subsumes Harry's stream of consciousness and presents the protagonist's past events to the reader in a diegetic manner by setting them off from the events of the presentiment. The pace of the narration consequently, swings back and forth between analeptic and proleptic modes, from interjected flashbacks to flashforward scenes. The narrative frame provides the readers a broader perspective by allowing them to transcend a specific point of time

in the narration, so as to ascertain the origins of Harry's anguish. Describing the death of Harry, the effaced narrator subtly suggests a triumph of the Apollonian virtue over the Dionysian vice as the yardstick to measure a man.

To achieve his aesthetics, Hemingway uses Manichean dialectics in choosing his locales and depiction of landscapes as well as the respective ambience. The choice indicates Hemingway's complete internalization of the Orientalist perception of Africa as the Dark Continent, a perception deeply rooted in his subscription to the high Victorian values and evinced in his equating "physical courage to moral strength" (Meyers 98), as a kernel of individual integrity. The story, thus, projects a bipartite vision that abstracts Africa into a diaphanous apparition. The treatment of the African continent as the "Other" originates in "Western psychology," writes Achebe, as there is a desire to "set Africa up as a foil to Europe, as a place of negations at once remote and vaguely familiar, in comparison with which Europe's own state of spiritual grace will be manifest" (3).

This psychological need that Achebe mentions is manifested in Hemingway's story, when he places pristine Africa in opposition to the industrialized West. This essay posits that "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" embodies a dialectical notion of the perpetual struggle between the Apollonian virtue and the Dionysian vice in an individual soul, presented as thesis and as antithesis, respectively. This being the case, this paper attempts to decode the embedded binary symbols, discernable in the story. It illustrates that the usage of the imageries of the snow-capped mountains and the peaks as opposed to the dusty plains of Africa overrun with beasts, alludes to the representation of life and death. It further contends that to portray its destructive power, the idea of Africa is feminized by Hemingway, when he equates the continent with the image of Helen, making the latter a synecdoche of the former. This blend of hegemony and misogyny reinforces a politics of aesthetics that obliterates, distorts, and dehumanizes the image of Africa.

"The Snows of Kilimanjaro" begins with a riddle of death. The description of a dried carcass on the mountain is followed by the declaration of the protagonist's resignation to his impending death as he notices that the "big birds squat … obscenely," waiting for his death (Hemingway 3-4). From its inception, the story sets "death" as its theme, writes Stolzfus, from which there is no "recovery" (217). The imminence of death, however, catches Harry off-guard since he has come to Africa to recuperate from his ennui by purging himself of the "fat off his soul the way a fighter went into the mountains to work and train in order to burn it out of his body" (Hemingway 11). Harry evidently was attributing a therapeutic quality to Africa. His conviction in the pristine, bucolic, and pastoral Africa's ability to supply him with the required spiritual aliments, results in his associating Africa with the "creative phase of [his] life." He considers this phase as "natural existence," since before becoming the prey of lucre, Africa served him as his "spiritual home," where he was always the "happiest." To "start" it all over "again," therefore, he

considers Africa as his springboard (Hemingway 10). This intent to purify a corrupt soul, writes Oldsey, makes the story a symbolic attempt to attain the "heights" of a structured religion by "secular means" (188).

The world of Harry, however, becomes topsy-turvy; he forgets to apply the "iodine," as a thorn had scratched his knee (Hemingway 13), resulting in the gradual atrophy of his right leg. Africa, or more precisely, the image of a therapeutic Africa, turns out to become Harry's hospice: lying on his deathbed, he can introspect on the completion of his cycle of life, "out of which man comes and into which he returns at last" (Evans 602). In the remaining final moments, Harry concludes that he traded his talent for luxury, lived through an estranged marriage, and promoted a life of self-deception (Hemingway 11). The realization makes him angry; he quarrels with his phlegmatic wife Helen constantly and dies heartbroken. In the process of dying, Harry recalls the images of the snow-capped mountains of Schrunz and Black Forrest (Hemingway 7, 19). In the delirious penultimate moment before drawing his last breath, he "sees" the peak of the Kilimanjaro, believing that that is "where he was going" (Hemingway 27).

In light of Harry's ambition as a writer, scaling Kilimanjaro becomes his symbolic attempt to gain immortality, because "the act of writing," states Bluefarb, could be metaphorically compared to an "act of climbing" (6). The reference of the leopard that approaches the "House of God," on the other hand, alludes to a man's "attempt to transcend his animal nature," so as to reach his "spiritual plane of existence" (Stephens 85). Metaphorically, Harry then is striving to attain a transcendent reality, in Aristotelian terms which is described as the "Pure Mind," often equated with the "nature of God" (Bluefarb 6). The buzzards and the hyenas are the metaphors for the banal mendacity of human existence. At his death, in other words, Harry experiences a symbolic resurrection and spiritual ascension.

Until attaining this peak experience, as Harry remains tied to his temporality, he feels bitter. The resulting caustic resentment finds its outlet in vexation. Harry makes Helen a scapegoat, blaming her wealth for his hedonism (Baker 20), reasoning that though "this rich bitch" is a "kindly caretaker," she also serves as the ultimate "destroyer of his talent" (Hemingway 11). His acrimony towards Helen is commensurate to his measuring her worth in terms of wealth and sexuality. Despite her having a pretty countenance, "pleasant body," perky "breasts," "useful thighs," and the aptitudes that he values about her, she reminds him of the creeping up of death (Hemingway 12, 18). Helen becomes a symbol of a void, of that dark "*nada* that haunts him and that causes him to dwell obsessively with death" (Stoltzfus 221).

Sensuality is sharply contrasted to spirituality in Harry's dualistic perception of Helen. Harry identifies her sensuality and the latent fecundity as the source of his fall. Because the lasting nubility of a woman like Helen and the pristine land of Africa share a common aspect of fecundity, Harry effectively turns Helen into a

synecdoche of Africa, both being a manifestation of Mother Nature, with the power to reproduce that binds a man to both. Unfolding this analogy explains why her "pleasant smiles" makes him feel the approach of death (Hemingway 18), since it reminds him of his Faustian enslavement. Contrary to his anticipation, Africa and by extension Helen, serves him as an agent of death. Ironically, he attached himself to both, anticipating rejuvenation. He expected the amenities of life from Helen and a resurgent creativity from Africa, but the former deprived him of his creativity and the latter of his biological life.

The epiphany that he has courted Thanatos believing it Eros, makes Helen's "pleasant smiles" as despicable as the laughter of the hyena; not only does the hyena wait to devour his carrion, its shrill laughter appears to be mocking his intelligence, as does the soothing voice of Helen, reminding him of his castration. Helen, thus, is made a symbolic scavenger: descriptions of her prior amorous relations allude to her scavenging nature that is reinforced by the suggestion that she castrated Harry's creativity by means of her sexuality. The suggestion, ironically, exonerates Harry of his volition; and the misogynistic attribution makes Helen a bestial villain as the hyena. For, following the Anglo-Saxon tradition, Hemingway thought of the hyenas as "hermaphrodites, scavengers, singers of sad songs, smelly, ugly, and ultimately, comical in their failure to comprehend the 'realities' of our perceptions" (Glickman 506-7). Both Helen and the hyenas are conflated as identical beasts in Harry's symbolic perception; and his abomination towards both is intensified further because, for Harry, the two constitute the objective correlatives, linking him to death.

Africa as a Dark Continent too invokes a profound disgust in Harry. In this case, the culprit is its "mysterious nature" (Evans 602) and its state of disorderliness: failure to put iodine on time, breaking down of the truck, and the non-arrival of the rescue party (Stoltzfus 217). Rationality, the privy of civilization, disappears in this land of primitivism and mystery. Its ambience becomes unforgiving and its denizens behave contrarily. The "half baked" *kikuyu* driver fails to check the oil, burning down the truck (Hemingway 6). Its inhabitant, the personal boy, for instance, is of dubious origin, who uses an Indian appellation like "*memsahib*" than speaking a local patois, and Helen also sports an Indian outfit: "*jodhpurs*" (Hemingway 10, 12). This projection of Africa as confusing, inauthentic, and disorderly allows it to be placed as "the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization, a place where man's vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality" (Achebe 3). The storyline, in following Achebe's reasoning, exposes itself of having an encaged set of demerits, similar to African fictions of Joseph Conrad for which Edward Said made a scathing criticism. The gist of Said's criticism is essentially valid and equally applicable to Hemingway. For, in representing Africa, like his predecessor, Hemingway also gives the impression that the "Westerners may have physically left … Africa, but they retained [it] not only as markets but as locales on the ideological map over which they continue … to rule morally and intellectually,"

and that for the benefit of Africa, there is no "alternative to imperialism" (*Culture and Imperialism* 27-8).

Hemingway's subtle reiteration of these colonial vestiges is perplexing, since Orientalism could be defined, notes Said, as a form of "dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it … ruling over it: in short, Orientalism [constitutes] … a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient." Concurrently, asserts Said, the divisive "us vs. them" binary is applied to distinguish the Europeans from "those" of the "Non-European" origins, assuming an inherent "*positional* superiority" of the European identity (*Orientalism* 3, 7). Given that Orientalism originated in the metropolises of colonial Europe, one wonders, why Hemingway subscribed to a similar attitude? The Americans of his time, after all, considered the Far East as Orient.

The Euro-centric perceptions toward Africa that Hemingway subsumes are a direct result of his English heritage and his early identification with the Victorian values, acquired via reading the imperial fictions (Spilka 6). Kipling left a permanent mark on Hemingway's "technique, tone, theme, and code of honor," writes Meyers (88); Hemingway took him as his "aesthetic model," and from Kipling he learnt the techniques of short story writing. Because of their shared "biographical" and "literary affinities," Hemingway retained a life-long admiration for Kipling, even when the latter fell out of favor. Though he distinguished between Kipling's "aesthetic and politics aspects" (Meyers 91, 93), both shared a set of common "themes" in writing, both described their protagonists' "emotions in extreme situation: action, violence, brutality as well as loneliness, insomnia, and breakdown," notes Meyers (97).

The shared thematic content and the patterns of emotional portrayal that Meyers notes are abundant in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro." Africa is projected as uncanny, effeminate, and disorderly with a latent violence and death, as it is being feminized in the image of Helen. Like Helen, Africa is effeminate, as much as, like her, it is fatal for a macho man like Harry. Its appeals lay in its primitivism, which radiates its charm as a siren to allure men, intending to entrap his masculine strength; and its fatality is exposed in eventual devouring of its prey; those lucky to escape the deathtrap, however, are kept as hostage by this impassive Circe. The flocks of buzzards and the pride of the hyenas keep the hostages in perpetual terror, reminding them of imminent death. The conflation of this encased allure and the inherent fatality that Africa embodies is presented symbolically in the dialectics of Helen and Hyena. The homonymic quality of their names and the intended personification in choosing the dictions as a pair are evident. Helen also alludes to her mythic namesake, the personification of the *femme fatale*, of the ultimate flame for the sins of the flesh, who ruined the lives of the masculine Trojans. The adverse legacy is hinted to have continued in this case as well. Helen ruins Harry by castrating his masculinity, curtailing his ability to use his pen, an extended metaphor for phallus, by means of exercising her sexuality. Moreover, she devours her prey silently, one at a time, as it

is her fashion: prior to Harry, she had had others, as spouse and lovers (Hemingway 12).

Once the hyena and Helen are conflated in Harry's perception, they are portrayed as two faces of the same coin, one as the alter ego of the other. Behind her exterior beauty, as the Janus-faced Helen is suggested to have hidden her cannibalistic and carnivorous features, so is Africa portrayed as a quagmire that covers its interior fatality behind her exterior charm. The only escape from this tragedy of being gradually atrophied is a quick death, metaphorical and/or real, to ascend the snowy peaks, the symbol of the Pure Mind, above the mundane and bestial plains of primitivism. Though tainted with hegemony and misogyny, Hemingway captures the dilemma of a conflicted soul, of an eternal cosmic struggle between good and evil, however, at the expense of Africa and the Africans. In the story, the mute Dark Continent is personified as Helen and is made an arch-villain, a symbol of the Dionysian other, legitimate to be exploited, bruised, and abused, though through Helen, it pleads: "I've been destroyed two or three times already. You wouldn't want to destroy me again, would you?" (Hemingway 14). But the pleading falls on deaf ears and Africa as much as Helen remains the plain for hunting big game and pursuing exorbitant hedonism. After all, though it can inflict its raiders with the curse of gangrene, it still is a "rich bitch," meant to be exploited, because its prospects are poetical: in its dreams, it promises a house in Long Island (Hemingway 5, 9, 27).

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The Gender Politics of *Viraha:*
On Questions of Self and the Other

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Abstract

Viraha in high literature is constituted on the idea of separation, or "loss," the pining to get back to the primordial relationship with the supreme. This sacred "emotion" is operationalized through de-transcendentalization of divinity in a novel affective economy in both Bhakti and Sufi traditions. Though this new devotional sect sets forth a direct communion with the divine, the absolute other, the mainstream Bhakti traditions introduce the symbol of Radha and the High Sufi theology envisions an ideal Beauty realized in the body of the unique Woman as the medium or intermediary to the path of attaining the divine. This female other is considered to be the source of psycho-sexual plenitude necessary for the experience of union with the divine. Alongside this proposition, the new norm gets new dimension with the feminization of worship, i.e., the male devotee taking up the role of the female. Thus, the gendered phenomena takes on a new impetus in this mode of expression characterized as the female voice. Such an inversion of gender envisages a new Female Body which obliterates the flesh-bodied woman. Through a new presence, woman becomes absent in this symbolism through denial of their sexual difference.

Keywords: Sexual Difference, Female Voice, Gendered Devotional Practices

Bhakti and Sufi literatures are considered to be the experiential endeavors to register divine presence in the mundane world. Imagining divinity and defining the divine touch through human relationships remains a challenging task for the poets of these traditions. For weaving this extraordinary experience into human emotions, the poets resort to a mixed metaphor by reconfiguring the notion of love in the model of sacred and profane expressions. The entry of sacred love is through the profane sphere, i.e., the mundane world and their actors. *Viraha* is the chief emotion or the vehicle through which Bhakti and Sufi ideologies have been founded. With the prominence of the theme of *viraha*, the notion of love has undergone waves of change. The convergence of these two genres is evident in their emphasis on the potent force of love which manifests in the dual plane of presence/absence of the beloved; and these heightened feelings can only be realized in the separation from the beloved. The female figure is central here and it is the epitome of the *viraha* emotion. The privileging of woman gets crystallized through the bodily and psychological transformations of the notion of the feminine which has given a distinctive feature to this combined tradition of the East. The Bhakti and Sufi poets

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regard themselves as the female devotee, irrespective of gender in their longing for the divine.

This paper deals with how the discourse of *viraha* – built upon the tropes of loss/ separation by the mainstream theological traditions – has systematically made use of the female body. It critically examines the registers of femininity, culled out from the given hierarchical set-up of social-emotional transactions that inform this discourse. I have employed the theoretical insights from the French Poststructuralist Feminist School, predominantly the works of three stalwarts, Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, and Helene Cixous, to understand the entry of the female/feminine principle in the intellectual constellations of high Bhakti and Sufi traditions to articulate the purest form of love. Though coming from different strands, their writings have confronted the psychogenesis of the western philosophical tradition, in reconceptualizing the divine through the female body. I shall investigate the configurational principles of erotic devotional tradition of high Bhakti and Sufi traditions guided by these theoretical flashpoints.

French Feminism: Self, Other, and the Divine
French feminism came into the spotlight as one of the prominent philosophical traditions in its confrontation of the interpretation of divine love and female sexuality during the high tide of the psychoanalytic tradition of the western world. This engagement made them critically re-evaluate the founding principles of western monotheistic theology. They argue that the emergence of monotheism at a specific historical juncture marks the absence of "woman" from the signifying system of theology (Walton 88). The critique of phallogocentrism, where phallus has been privileged as a prime signifier in both philosophy and psychoanalysis, created the moment for interrogating the relation of self with the female other, thus setting up the feminist theological discourse on the question of the "divine." In the poststructuralist feminist paradigm, the trope "woman" has been used to make the point of the unrepresentability of the other on the theoretical postulation of "sexual difference." But the limitation of representing the other does not restrict the relation with the other. With the idea of an infinite nature of divinity, these thinkers propose an infinite relationship dynamic with the self and the absolute alterity. In their articulation, they do not resort to symbolization, most specifically in any particular human form.

Simone de Beauvoir, in her book *The Second Sex*, critiqued Emmanuel Levinas's construction of the concept of the "feminine" on three grounds: the Levinasean feminine is deprived of consciousness, his disregard for the reciprocity of the subject and object relationship, and "feminine" being characterized as "mystery" (Beauvoir xiv). Luce Irigaray, in her book *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* celebrated for its simmering rhetorical quality, mocked the complete disconnect on the part of the self and the other in the Levinasean idea of the "autistic transcendence" (50). This criticism came in the context of portraying the beloved or the other as one impeding

the path to transcendence as Levinas furnishes the complete dynamics of the ethical relation with the other in his book *Totality and Infinity*. Irigaray attributes this refusal on man's part to not acknowledge woman's autonomous entity and not being respectful to each other's "irreducible nonsubstantiality" (51). In unpacking the constituents of love, these criss-cross from nostalgia to the great comforts of home, where the deployment of the female other is to aid the man's love of self. This act of self-love through the mediation of the female body has other functions. As Irigaray notes: "the male version of love of self often takes the form or sounds the note of nostalgia for a maternal-feminine that has been forever lost" (52).

Irigaray argues for a different economy of relation of self to the other for a different order of love as the traditional act of love denies women of language. The traditional genealogy of the divine is about the divinity of father-son mediated through a virgin mother, leaving no space for the divinity of mother-daughter. She said that the love for self in the case of women has been discouraged or held in suspicion in the philosophical and psychoanalytic traditions. Women have been fetishized or idolized so far, and thus reduced to a "thing." This operation is at work to turn her into a mystery, always waiting to be unraveled, putting a seductive power on the "invisible." To break out of the ritual of serving themselves as man's self-realization, Irigaray argues for the importance of self-love on the part of women. She thinks that as women start loving themselves, this self-love would be *icon*-like, where it will illuminate a texture, a threshold, a gaze, a body, and flesh, speaking of which would mean that the men would struggle more to reach her beyond the aid of hands and tools (53). The love thus constructed is not for attaining the whole of the womb or going back to the origin but to reach all the available frontiers of contact. Irigaray specifically mentions that the configuration of love among women would be a destabilizing force in the heterosexual ethos of love-economy and thus opens up the space of infinity.

Irigaray cautions about man's propensity of doubling the world or creating it through symbols as they dominate the world of the symbolic. On the other hand, women's expressive forms, like chatting, gossiping, and singing, bears the mark of an affective economy without any objectification. This makes a space for an "immediate relationship to nature or to God" (97). Irigaray here, too, establishes that women, primarily, who do not invent any intermediary figures, can claim to forge a direct relationship with the divine.

Julia Kristeva traced the genealogy of love as an ideological move in the western tradition, starting from Judaic theology. She dwelled extensively on the representation of Shulamite woman in Jewish theology and conceptualized the Shulamite woman's search for a lover, who is in a play of transcendence/absence with her, as the condition of "Love," through which her subjecthood is in a constant process of evolving in the framework of a "quest." This dynamic on her part in this play with the beloved becomes the signifier of her access to the world of signification.

Kristeva denotes the characteristics of this yearning female self: "limpid, intense, divided, quick, upright, suffering, hoping, the wife – a woman" (110). Kristeva argues that on account of her love the woman "becomes the first subject in the modern sense of the term, divided, sick and yet sovereign" (111). The traits of "woman in love," as enumerated by Kristeva, resonate with Radha as imagined in the high Bhakti theology. In unraveling the invocation of the erotic relationship with the divine in the theological work of Song of Songs, the mystic song tradition of the Christian Church, Kristeva marked it as an important landmark of cultural moment which was in a transition period of instituting monotheism in the ethos of the father's laws in the existent field of the culture of mother goddess. This mother goddess tradition is a derivative of pluralistic psycho-social structures. Alongside this tectonic shift, Kristeva points to the gradual seeping in of the predominant heterosexual desire as the centerpiece of this new eros. Overall, the tradition of male lover and the paternal divine is set as the matrix of love dynamics. Kristeva names it as the "masculine divine" (168). The apparent celebration of bodily drives gets undermined, almost takes the form of a pathological character in the female cult of Marian. The Marian cult is brought forth by "homologizing Mary with Jesus" (168). When her cult got transported to the Eastern Church, Mary got changed into a "little girl in the arms of her son, who henceforth becomes her father" (169). Kristeva says this triad has encapsulated "three feminine functions (daughter-wife-mother)" within a totality where they vanish as specific corporeality while retaining their psychological functions (169). The vanishing of specific corporealities happens through the emptying of their feminine roles and through re-inscription of the father's word on the body, i.e., Virginity (170).

Helene Cixous, on the other hand, considers writing as the medium for communication with the other and the divine. She regards writing as an infinite way of relating to the yearning of the other. This marks female writing as it would eventually put women in a position to relate with the "loss" (21) and the severance of the "maternal" (22) from the world of signification. Writing creates the potentialities of reaffirming the ties with the maternal, and thus the idea of "lack" turns into a positive lack. Cixous's idea of writing as the attempt to form selfhood to make a way out of women's subjugation is obvious in the works of the female writers of the *Viraha* genre. Medieval Bhakti poet-devotee Mirabai differs from her male counterparts, as for them it has predominantly soteriological purposes, whereas for Mirabai, it is an individual journey. She salvages her oppressed social self as a woman by reconstituting her autonomous subjectivity in the name of her immortal Giridhar, her lover Krishna. Rabiya, the first mystic of the Islamic literary world, through her empty imagery, i.e., devoid of any qualitative principles, finds meaning of her existence only in the supreme One.

"Female Voice": On Gendered Economy of Devotional Practices

The mainstream Bhakti traditions introduce the symbol of Radha and the Sufi

theology envisions an ideal Beauty realized in the body of the unique Woman as the medium or intermediary to the path of attaining the divine. This other calls for a refashioning of the norm of emotional exchange. This female other is considered to be the source of psycho-sexual plenitude necessary for the experience of union with the divine. Alongside this proposition, the new norm gets a new dimension with the feminization of worship, i.e., the male devotee taking up the role of the female. Thus, the gendered dimension gets a new impetus in this mode of expression characterized as the "female voice" (Sangari 1990). Male poets switching to feminine roles have characteristically marked the high *viraha* genre from prevalent literary traditions and the trait is claimed to have brought in differences in expressions between the practitioners of mainstream *viraha* writers and the female ritual songs. Folklorist Dineshchandra Sen, while comparing the treatment of the human-divine relationship in Vaishnavite literature, remarked that in the hands of men, these songs have always been transported to a spiritual elevation where Krishna is garbed as God, whereas in women's songs this love possesses mundane qualities. For instance, Radha is fierce in her admonitions of Krishna's betrayal and unhesitatingly opens her heart to this forbidden love (Sen 12). The notion of "femaleness" was preached and followed invariably by all the sects of Bhakti, where the devotees are said to be female, irrespective of their gender identities, pining for a male God. An argument can be made that for the *nirguna Bhakti*, the divine is emptied of all qualities, but when it comes down to defining the "female voice," the markers and idioms are etched from the existent social reality, a hierarchical arena where women's roles are fixed in its social expectations. This helps in building up the essence of the "femaleness." Cultural theorist Kumkum Sangari writes on the genealogy of the female voice and its implication in the Bhakti tradition in her two-part essay titled "Mirabai and the Spiritual Economy of Bhakti." Sangari points out that the "feminization of worship" (1467) foregrounds the modalities and idealities of "femaleness" or the "feminine" which becomes available to the practitioners in this genre. While making this ideological push in the Bhakti tradition, the concept of gender undergoes a redefinition for envisioning a universal norm for its adherents. This formulation of gender happens from a metaphysical point of view and the symbolism associated with it is fashioned on two points: a perpetual search for an origin which is related to attaining salvation and the marking of the devotee's "heart" (1469) as the place of Bhakti. This is a place which is not supposed to be tinged with any specific properties, but the ideal construction is in its "femaleness" (1469).

The ability of the male devotees to assume the place of the feminine voice points to an understanding of the gender phenomenon as a socially constructed site. But this illuminative thought comes up to mask the implicit power-relations in the gender roles. Moreover, the male devotee's desire to shed off masculinity and immerse himself in the socially disempowered position of women becomes the tenor of ultimate subalternity. Sangari says that this is an example of the most powerful

construction of subalternity as it deals with the "inward understanding of a socially constructed vulnerability" (1471) but it does not stop here. It is put forward to get to the depth of female sexuality, though unfortunately the reference point is the existing social relations and the male sexuality pleasure principle in relation to its female counterpart. The notion of female sexuality is seen in its mysterious, nebulous sensuousness alongside the beauty in its vulnerability.

The female voice or femininity upheld in male devotional practices is seen as the key feature that brings forth the frailties and perils that flow at the subterranean level of human existence. And the source of this vulnerability is the separated status of the self from its desired home which is the supreme divine. So, the sense of self as the undivided unity comes out as another major argument because unity with God only ensures the cessation of rebirth or desire. In this economy of divinity and the poet-devotee, the female voice is merely the mode; it is not an earnest effort to understand the other, i.e., the women in their bodied-existence.

Hawley's Analysis

J Stratton Hawley, a renowned scholar who has extensively worked on the Bhakti tradition, raises two points about the complete absence of the Mother Goddess or the maternal aspects in the entire tract of the Krishna narrative and the transformation of the divine Woman into a human woman in the guise of devotees pining for Krishna (Hawley 179). By applying the psychoanalytic concept of "displacement," (he uses the term "psychogenesis"), Hawley finds the reason for substituting the powerful and independent figure of the woman with that of a woman longing for men in a bid to attain their place in the world of symbols or the world of Law – a Lacanian take obviously. This "achievement" happens at the cost of a separation from the mother figure. Different gender identity and the state of adulthood cause this double separation from the mother. The displaced glory of the mother gets shifted with the establishment of a male lover "as omnipotent, eternally full of appetite and eternally fascinating to the women who surround him" (177). This sheer omnipotence stirs the pangs which, in the end, lead to a disease, a mental ailment, only to be cured by the male lover personified in the figure of Krishna. Hawley is terse in his terming *viraha* as the "game" (177). Part of the strategy of this game is to earn victory over women by tying their longing with the immortal male divinity. Hawley continues to weave his argument of this story of supremacy by using the register of longing. At this point, he employs Indologist Martha Selby's readings of Caraka Samhita, a first century CE medical text on Obstetrics. In an attempt to glorify the fullness of a pregnant woman, the figure of a woman, emaciated in its longing for her male lover is pitted against the former in the text. Thus, it portrays the *virahini* woman as empty. In the following description of the binary view of qualities, the *virahini* falls into a somewhat inferior category. But they become equal in their state of temporary infirmity, as both of them are waiting for their male progeny or male lover (178). This is really striking, as the writer of the medical text imagined the foetus only as male. The whole argument makes the woman a simple carrier of

the foetus, stripping her of her agentive/subject position. She, too, along with the author, is pining for the male child and, by that token, the fulfillment of the familial needs of male legacy.

Hawley contends that *Viraha* as a genre practiced by the mainstream literary tradition is set up "to depict the struggles and longing of women in love" (125). For women, love has different shades and mostly these are tinged with her attachment to her surroundings. So, it is often seen that the songs of *viraha* in the women's tradition often express the wish that their family members – brothers and fathers – would come soon to take them to their natal places, from which they have been separated through marriage. Therefore, when a poet-devotee like Mirabai composes poems, she differs in her expressions of longing from those of Surdas. Her poems are built on the "women's role" (181) rather than on creating uneven standards for men and women in relation to the divine, i.e., Krishna.

The Absence of "Mother"

Hawley's enquiry of "Why men revel in the weakness and mostly the sickness of love meant for women?" (179) invites further curiosities, as in to know if the male devotee-poet revels in its real materiality or in the skin of real women. The formulation of *viraha* as a game, specifically "a man's game of trying on women's clothes and women's feelings" (180), has foregrounded the love goddess in its discourse and thus demon goddesses who are popular among women folk remain on the fringe. The immense popularity of the goddess Sitala among rural women of Bengal gave rise to the genre called Tushu and Vadu songs in Bangla folk literature. Seasons like summer and the monsoon belong especially to this goddess whose visitation is seen simultaneously as an affliction and grace. The demonic cult of the female deity Manasa is the other most favored goddess among women in this region. She is worshipped to ensure the regeneration and fertility of the human clan and here lies her maternal grace. There is a complete absence of the "maternal" facets of Goddesses like Manasa or Sitala in the cult of Radha and a resistance to portray Radha as a divine Mother. Wendy Doniger writes from the source of Brahmavaivarta Purana, "the mythology of Radha, who is almost never said to be a mother; when, on one rare occasion, she does give birth (to an egg), she kicks it away in anger, and her husband curses her to be barren evermore" (132).

The French Feminist Trio and Gayatri Spivak write about the configuration principles, through which the Virgin Mary and the Woman beloved are imagined for building up an ideal feminine in the service of the male divine in western tradition (Spivak 60). This normative idea impedes an ethical communication between self and the other. If the cult of Mary demands a sex-less, body-less persona for her deification, in *viraha* tradition we see the reverse technique. The image of Radha engrafts the ultimate beauty descriptions which verges on the almost impossible. In the treatises on erotic desire, Radha is a "lotus-woman (Padmini)," whose perennial beauty is

sketched as: "moderate in her desire, without anger or conceit, needing little food or sleep" (Schomer 110).

Radha in the Chandidasa tradition is the embodiment of pure love. She never appears alone and the Radha Sampradayas, the community of worshippers of Radha, commemorates her in relation to the lord Krishna, "We speak of a Radha cult only in synecdoche, for convenience, Radha is not to be compared with the autonomous Durga, a goddess ever virgin and lonely in her power" (Hein 120). The sacred figure of Radha, not to be portrayed as an autonomous goddess, harkens back to the historical evolution of Radhaite theology. Charlotte Vaudeville undertook a detailed study of Radha's emergence amidst the presence of powerful goddesses like Kali and Durga by sifting through the debates on Puranic commentaries. In different texts which had some imprints from the tantric ethos, Krishna Gopala or the cult of child god Krishna enjoyed protection under the care of a great Goddess, both as Durga and Kali. But during the 16th century in eastern India, under the active intervention by the Goswamis, who being Brahmins, became the interpreters of the Puranas, and intermingled tantric and the Bhagavata streams by excluding the horrid-faced Kali from the pantheon. Vaudville attributes this neo-Vaishnava synthesis to the rise of golden-skinned Durga, and the emergence of Radha as Krishna's consort (12).

The Image of Woman in Sufism: The Creative Feminine

The concept of the Virgin-Mother resounds in the high Sufi theology in the figure of Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad. In the high Sufi tradition, Fatima causes the birth of holy Imams and she has been named the Fatima-Creator (Corbin 1998). Ibn Al Arabi (1165-1240 AD), a medieval philosopher from Spain, furnished a systematic notion on the Sufi imagery, a medium to relate one's self to the divine. Ibn Arabi belongs to the school of Theosophy of Light, the sect that considers intellectual understanding of existence and mystical experience interdependent on each other. The stress on the direct experience with the divine, who creates through knowledge, inaugurates the role of feminine in the creation of mystic revelation. This woman embodies the ideal Beauty which has a creative force in evoking love in man and thus transports him beyond the tactile world. Ibn Arabi makes sure that this Woman of theophanic light is not only a conjectural image, because, for him, abstraction happens only through the experiential world. Corbin mentions a story where Arabi had a glimpse of that light in the guise of a woman. The incident occurred when Arabi was doing the ritual of moving around the holy Ka'aba. To avoid the crowd, he came down to the sand and continued the circumambulation. He was in a peaceful demeanor but also in a state of perplexity about his heart's longings. He started reciting some extempore lines loudly and the following narration states what he experienced:

> No sooner had I recited these verses then I felt on my shoulder the touch of a hand softer than silk. I turned around and found myself in the presence of a young girl, a princess from among the daughters of the Greeks. Never

had I seen a woman more **beautiful** of face, **softer** of speech, more **tender** of heart, more **spiritual** in her ideas, more **subtle** in her symbolic allusions. She surpassed all the people of her time in refinement of mind and cultivation, in beauty and in knowledge." (Corbin xvii, emphasis mine)

Through the example of this story, Arabi specifies the qualities of the image of the Woman that induces light and knowledge and allows man to attain the divine. He names this vision as the mystic Sophia. The image of the woman, as a blend of beauty and finer qualities, is constructed from socially accepted gender specific attributes.

The Beauty as Woman: Padmavati, Laily Majnu and Yusuf Zulekha

The portrayal of love in Sufi texts has developed alongside the philosophical tensions of the Bhakti ideas of profane and sacred love. Here, profane love refers to engagements between mortal human beings, while the sacred love would be envisioned only in terms of the human soul's pining for God's grace. The Sufi doctrine posited love at the core of spiritual upliftment. That is to say that only through the path of love can God be attained. But the excessive love has been seen as a sign of madness in Sufi thought. The ultimate decimation of Majnu to the entity of a mad human being reverberates this vulnerability.

Michael Dols' book *Majnun: The Madman in Medieval Islamic Society* begins with the popular Shakespearean quote on madness that it too follows a method (325). It hints towards the organizing principles of a romantic tale in the Arabic tradition, similar to the tradition of western heroic poetry. The common point of meeting for these two genres is the emphasis on "chaste love" and this chastity is expected of both the lover and the beloved. Therefore, when the Arabic traditions reached South Asia through Persian sophistications, it still retained the primary values of the portrayal of love that got molded into the Sufi doctrine.

Since all these texts have followed the Sufi symbol of love as a virtue that leads to the attainment of the Supreme, the exquisite beauty of female protagonists is not for their own embellishments. Rather, this beauty is a virtue because it excites the men of the stories, who are tied to the mundane world, about God's grand design. The romance saga of Padmavati surpasses the other two texts, *Laily Majnu* and *Yusuf Zulekha*, in communicating this spiritual mystery in its fullness. We find all the important male characters losing their consciousness from a single glance of Padmavati. Her beauty is astoundingly described in minute detail. Every part of her body is brought under scrutiny. Separate chapters have been allocated to describe the tale of her beauty and this is the principle composition structure of all Sufi romance texts. The awestruck poet begins with the declaration:

> How can I describe the beauty of Padmavati, My Lord/ She is incomparable in the three worlds/ Her hair flows to the full length/ Her body giddily fragrant/ It would drive you blind. [Padmavati rup ki kohimu maharaj/tulona dibare

nahi trijogoto majh/apado lombito kesh kosturi sourav/moha andhokarmoy drishti porabhov. (Ahsan 67)

The section where the Shah, the emperor of Delhi, the contender of the crown against Padmavati's husband King Ratansen, was moved to a temporary loss of sense, is quite dramatic. The poet writes:

> Having a glimpse of the face just for once
> The Sultan fell down all on a sudden
> Shah bewildered, wriggled with the pain
> All present there went for a toss
> He was lifted to the bed-chamber
> Shah was out of his senses for a moment
> As if the image stands right before him
> [Mohoschit Sultan pore okosshyat/shinghashone pori shah kore chotfot/ hahakar kori shobe ki hoilo sonkot/shoyon korailo niya shojjar opor/dondo ek ocheton chilo dillishwar/shei murti dekhe jeno noyan gochor]. (162)

A similar type of hyperbolic description is found in narrating Laily's physical attributes:

> Moon-shaped face, the enchantress of the world
> Her red lips are like glowing hibiscus
> The eye-brows is shaped in its perfect lines
> Her angry glance can make the yogis hurt
> The mirror relishes her scintillating hair
> She belongs to Padmini beauty, cultured and well-dressed
> [purno shoshi jini much jogoto mohini/jiniya bandhuli ful odhor rongima/ rotipoti-dhonu jinni bhurur vongima/noyan kottakkho bane hanilo toposhi/ chachor chamor jinni monohor kesh/jati e padmini bala sucharu subesh]. (Sharif 92)

Laily's beloved Majnu perceives the divine through her beauty. Majnu, even as a little child, shows his liking for everything beautiful. The poet writes how Majnu used to stop crying once he was taken into the arms of beautiful ladies. Zulekha's story also highlights the same importance of beauty as the memory of the divine, but in a different manner. In the romantic tale of Yusuf-Zulekha, both the protagonists have been portrayed as emblems of ultimate Beauty. But the beauty of Zulekha does more harm as she becomes forgetful of her duties towards God. She is shown stripped of her beauty, youthfulness, and independent life, in contrast to her dream person Yusuf, who is also endowed with indescribable beauty. His beauty is not enough to remind his beloved, the sensual Zulekha, of her ideal duty, as her idolatry hinders her vision of truth, which is quite contrary to the power of woman's beauty that reminds man of the ultimate truth/God.

Conclusion

The invention of the other happens in the light of one's self. The inauguration of Radha and her relation to the divine is (re)invented on the dynamics of the spiritual economy fashioned in the hierarchical structure of social conventions of gender roles in the mainstream *viraha* traditions. Radha appears first in these narratives as a derivative entity, replenishing the "lack/need" of the male divine principle and eventually she is subsumed to be the "voice" of her creators for the sake of Krishna's return. On the other hand, the unsullied and ascetic body, immersed in the service of the divine, is the goal of high Sufi tradition. The notion of Beauty here acts as a cleanser, a remover of the defilements of any sort. The restricted social movements of women, their existence within social codes of behavior that expect them to be docile and demure, are deemed as guards that keep her perennially beautiful. Woman, as the preserver of beauty, has been ideologically justified in the myth of Beauty as the touch of the divine – a Beauty which incites the sense of separation from the supreme and reminds the male devotee to go back to the original spring of Beauty. Therefore, the somewhat easy reversal of gender roles espoused by these traditions have been contested by the feminist philosophers and their suspicion is expressed for the erasure of the sexual difference in classical mystic tradition. Female body and the ideal Woman is conceived as an immaculate idea and the invisibilization of the flesh-bodied woman subject to the burden of time is a volatile outcome of uneven ascetic economy.

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Consciousness-Raising in Amitav Ghosh's
Ecocritical Novel *The Hungry Tide*

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Abstract

Ecocriticism, which studies the relationship between literature and the physical environment, has already permeated several other fields of literary study to create combinations like ecofeminism and ecopostcolonialism. As a novelist, Amitav Ghosh does not deal with ecological concerns with the declared open intent of novelists like Barbara Kingsolver. Most critics of Ghosh consider *The Hungry Tide* a novel about borders, refugees, history, and language. Some, though, have discussed it as an ecopostcolonial novel. The contention of this essay is that the twin narratives of the novel provide enough evidence of its engagement with ecocritical concerns. Piya, who dominates its main narrative, is a professional cetologist and a confirmed environmentalist whose actions and thinking have a bearing on ecological issues. The second narrative, though ostensibly about the refugees of the subaltern variety, is deeply engaged with the politics of human-animal relationships. So both narratives have a significant ecocritical component, which is meant to raise the consciousness of the readers.

Keywords: Ecology, Ecocriticism, Environmentalism, Consciousness-raising, Human-animal Relationships

Ecocriticism became a part of literary studies because academics from all over the world felt the pressure of what Cheryll Glotfelty calls the "global environmental crisis" (xv). During the 1970s, they responded to the crisis from their lonely perches. In the early 1990s, they came together to formally announce ecocriticism as a study "of the relationship between literature and the physical environment … an earth-centred approach to literary studies" (xviii), based on the "fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it" (xix). In this approach, literature transcends the confines of the human world, to embrace the "entire ecosphere" (xix).

Glotfelty has mapped the broad contours of ecocritical activity over time to trace its steady evolution from the study of the representations of nature in literature to the study of literary works that deal, openly or not so openly, with a variety of ecological concerns. Lawrence Buell, Ursula Heise, and Karen Thornber provide a variation on this by charting the growth of ecocritical scholarship in two major waves. In the first one, environment is equated with nature and writers use traditional genres of poetry, fiction, and non-fiction to show the intimate bonding of the human and the natural. In the second wave, writers use both old and new genres and aesthetic forms

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to focus on urban locations and industrialization for dealing with the benefits and risks from the environment across race, class, and gender and issues of environmental justice. Because of this, ecocriticism gets connected with postcolonial studies and minority literatures (Buell et al. 419), creating critical categories like eco-feminism and eco-postcolonialism. But in almost all of them, as Glotfelty rightly observes, the main concern is "raising consciousness about the environment" (xxiv), which is invariably involved with aesthetic and ethical concerns.

Almost in a similar vein, Richard Kerridge states that

> the ecocritic wants to track environmental ideas and representations wherever they appear, to see more clearly a debate which seems to be taking place … in a great many cultural spaces. Most of all, ecocriticism seeks to evaluate texts and ideas in terms of their coherence and usefulness as responses to environmental crisis. (5)

Problems related to the environment result from human actions and in turn impact human lives within varied cultural frames. That is why Greg Garrard says that

> one "ecocritical" way of reading is to see contributions to environmental debate as examples of rhetoric, in which culture [is] rhetoric, although not in the strict sense understood by the rhetoricians, but as the production, reproduction and transformation of large scale metaphors. (7)

Garrard calls these metaphors tropes, and discusses them under several heads: pollution, pastoral, wilderness, apocalypse, and animals. Thus an ecocritical reading focuses on how writers/novelists use their writings to deal with issues that touch humans in relation to their ecosphere, which includes their relation to the natural world, to land, water, forests, and other species of life, and also comments on the kind of self-consciousness with which they deal with them. Since making choices is a political act, the reading also unveils how this politics has a bearing on the choices the writers exercise in fashioning their writing/fictional style.

Another aspect of ecocritical reading, which has a bearing on consciousness-raising, has been suggested by William Howarth, who stresses the Greek roots of eco-critic – oikos and kritis – to suggest that such a critic is a "house judge," that is, "a person who judges the merits and faults of writings that depict the effects of culture upon nature, with a view toward celebrating nature, berating its despoilers, and reversing their harm through political action" (69).

In this formulation, the critic is projected as an "arbiter of taste," who judges writings on the basis of their attitude towards environment. Howarth also wants writers who deal with the spoiling of environment to recommend remedial action. This is almost like the position that was taken by the eighteenth-century satirists of England, like John Dryden, who stated that the job of a satirist is not just to expose

the reprehensible aspects of society but also to provide viable alternatives to what is attacked.

Dryden's position has not been accepted by later-day writers, especially of the twentieth century, like John Wyndham, who says that the satirist is not a moralist and is not obligated to provide remedies. Writers can help societies even by drawing the attention of people to rotten aspects of their society. One could say the same about writers who are troubled by environmental degradation. They can improve the awareness of people by drawing their attention to varied aspects of their relationship with their environment, which includes various manifestations of nature and other forms of life, like animals and other species, and may not suggest solutions for what they consider wrong or improper.

As a novelist, Amitav Ghosh is supremely conscious of the role of environment in the making of novels, as is clear from what he writes in one of his essays: "The novel as a form is founded on a myth of parochiality, in the exact sense of a parish – a place named and charted, a definite location" (Ghosh, "The March of the Novel" 294), which constitutes its setting and atmosphere. It comes close to Ian Watt's formulation of the "concept of realistic particularity" (17) as the essential feature of a novel: creating a credible environment for letting the characters come to life. Ghosh, like Watt, uses the concept to contrast the novel with the non-realistic settings of a romance and not to suggest his involvement with the environment in its ecological sense, even though the environment may acquire the proportions of a character in its own right, as in Hardy's *Tess of the D'urbervilles.*

I stress this because Ghosh is a little different from writers like Barbara Kingsolver who deal with ecological concerns in their fiction with an openly declared intent. In one of her interviews, she says:

> Certainly an appreciation for nature is an important feature of my work, and it arose in part because I grew up running wild in the woods with little adult supervision and I studied biology as a college student and then went to graduate school in biology. I am one of thousands of species that live in this place, and I don't ever forget the other ones are there. Species diversity is a biological fact. I think a lot about the world out there beyond the artifice that human beings have created. (Fisher 27)

Kingsolver's interest is also reflected in her non-fictional writings which combine her interest in nature with social activism. These include *Small Wonder*, in which she writes about rivers and natural beauties "and the strong bond between the human and the animal" (Wagner-Martin 157), *High Tide in Tuscan: Essays from Now or Never,* and *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle,* which she co-authored with Steven Hopp and Camille Kingsolver.

Ghosh has given several interviews and has also published non-fictional writings about several unpleasant aspects of our times, such as hazards of nuclearization,

political crises and disasters, and threats posed by fundamentalism. These are mostly social and political matters, and not perceived as threats to ecology. It is only lately, in 2016, that he published *The Great Derangement*, in which he laments that the writers have failed humankind by ignoring pressing issues related to climate change.

The contention of this essay is that *The Hungry Tide* is a carefully crafted multi-layered novel, characterized by narrative fecundity, powerful characterization, and textural richness. It celebrates its location, in which land and water are enveloped in a pleasing fluidity, the power of the unspoken word, and the place of music and poetry in human lives. Because of this, its critical response has also been quite varied, as is clear from the short discussion that follows. Some critics have commented on its eco-critical aspect, but mostly on the human-animal connection in conjunction with postcolonial concerns.

In her introduction to the volume of essays on the novelist, Chitra Sankaran admits that apart from dealing with "human condition in its simplicity and starkness," Ghosh's fiction deals with "compelling questions relating to the preservation of a delicate ecosystem and changing environment on humans and animals, and the responsibilities these generate" (xix). But none of the four essays on *The Hungry Tide* deal wholly with such questions.

Federica Zullo examines the hybrid nature of the novel's location, in which Ghosh carries out a "valid and profound examination of the complex relations between man and nature, man and community, the nation and its boundaries and fractures" (96). But the essay explores how the place is seen differently by Kanai, Hamilton, and Horen, as varieties of imagined communities. Likewise, Thomas Huttunen states that the novel has themes that "have been central through all the novels by Ghosh," including the "quest for connections," which "in this narrative covers the relationship of human beings to nature and animals" (122). But the essay largely examines "the linguistic and epistemological alienation of human from their circumstances and from one another" (122), by using the concepts of ethics and language formulated by Emmanuel Levinas and Ludwig Wittgenstein (123).

Ismail Talib's essay is about Ghosh's complicated "binary relationship with English" that goes beyond its negative and positive use in the novel, for it "not only dwells on the limitations of English, but questions the ability of language itself to explain or convey everything, including entities or situations that are profoundly important to human condition, such as mutual understanding and love" (142). Shao-Pin Luo uses Julia Kristeva's insight to uncover the ramifications of the intricate intertextuality in the novel, "from Rainer Maria Rilke's poetry, to Nirmal's testimonies, to Kanai's translations, to Kusum's folkore of the 'Bon Bibi,' to Piya's scientific notebooks, and to Fokir's mystical chants and songs" (145).

Among the critical studies of Ghosh, Anshuman Mondal's reads into the novel "the theme of modernity and development … braided, moreover, with the issues of

scientific knowledge and its relationship to subaltern ways of thinking and being" (17), though he does mention "environmentalism and conservation" and the "ethical dilemmas that result from this" (18). John Hawley critiques the novel along with *In An Antique Land* and *The Glass Palace* as a study of the "ebb and flow of peoples across continents and generations" (83). The tide provides the right kind of symbol for this flow of "history and the uprooting of populations, both of which have come to be seen as 'Ghosh-ian' themes" (132). This is stressed also by Piyas Chakrabarti, who remarks that "The landscape is constantly changing, remaking itself like the people who inhabit this land. Fixity is unacceptable and even impossible; flux is the order of the day" (162). In this way, virtually most of the responses to the novel deal with concerns that were outlined by Tabish Khair in his preface to a volume of essays on his fiction: "Travelling," "history," and "subaltern studies" (vii).

The *Annual Environment Resource, 2011* comments on *The Hungry Tide* within the frame of postcolonial ecocriticism. A discussion on similar lines figures in the books by Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, and Pablo Mukherjee, and in two essays in a volume edited by L Volkman, et al. An essay in the Volkman anthology by Jens Martin Gurr emphasizes the primacy of its narrative form and states that the "texts's narrative and ecological concerns are interwoven" (70). In fact, "the narrative form is central to its environmental concerns" (70). Because of this, his essay focuses exclusively on its form and unravels its surface and deep structure by using the concepts of emplotment of Hayden White and Paul Ricoeur.

The discussion that follows pays attention to the formal aspects of the novel and explores the major environmental issues embedded in it to show the kind of ecocritical consciousness it seeks to promote in the readers and the manner in which Ghosh makes that possible.

The plotline of *The Hungry Tide* revolves round Piyali Roy, nicknamed Piya, researcher from the US on marine mammals and an environmentalist, who comes to the Sundarbans to study the dolphins. Immediately upon arrival, she meets Kanai, who is on his way to Lusibari to see his aunt Nilima because her husband Nirmal has left a sealed packet for him. In her company, he also remembers his previous visit to the place as a schoolboy.

After a scary brush with an unscrupulous boat-driver and a forest guard, Piya makes contact with Fokir, an ordinary, unlettered fisherman, who saves her from falling into the water and helps her in tracing dolphins because of his knowledge of the sea and its creatures. When the trip is over, she goes to Lusibari with him and stays there for some days with Kanai and Nilima. On her next trip to the sea, Kanai joins her and also acts as her interpreter, for Fokir knows no English. This expedition ends disastrously. Kanai returns to Lusibari in another boat. Piya and Fokir are caught in a storm, in which Fokir dies. After leaving India, Piya returns to Lusibari to continue her work in collaboration with Fokir's wife.

Embedded in this narrative is another account of the rebellion in one part of the Sundarbans, which is made available to Kanai through his uncle's diary. The details of how and why this happened adds a significant postcolonial dimension to the novel in which the lives of humans are entwined with those of tigers, raising issues of human-animal connections, which has been commented upon by the critics already mentioned.

Some critics have studied this part of the narrative from the perspective of marginalized refugees, for the people who were prevented from staying there had come from Bangladesh. Amrita Ghosh calls the Sundarbans heterotopia where the refugee becomes a homo sacer (108). Susmita Roye discusses the novel as a conflict between the elite and the subaltern, "the betrayal of the weak by the strong, the betrayal of the dispossessed by the possessor" (59). Nishi Pulugurtha states that the novel gives voice to the subaltern and deals with issues related to migration and diaspora, and "abiding concerns about habitat, territory, ecology, and conservation" (89).

The two interpenetrating narratives in the novel create the broad canvas of a credible realistic narrative in which incidents and details have a bearing on matters ecological, which are based on Ghosh's meticulous research. In the "Author's Note" to *The Hungry Tide*, he writes how he conceived the tide country by acquiring information about it from different sources. He travelled the entire terrain with Annus Jalais and made use of her research "into the history and culture of the region" (401). He also met many more people, mentioned in the "Note," to get information about the places of the old Hamilton estate. So there is a mix of place names that really exist and those that do not, but are based on reliable information.

Piya's work as a cetologist is largely based on the information Ghosh collected from Professor Helene Marsh. He also accompanied her student Isabel Beasley on a survey expedition to Mekong to know about the Irrawaddy dolphins, which provides a solid substance to Piya's account in the novel.

For the incident that constitutes the embedded narrative, that has remained relatively less known than many other incidents of this kind, Ghosh mentions Ross Mallick's work on the Marichjhapi massacre and the unpublished research of Nilanjana Chatterjee and Annus Jalais. Ghosh's details function like a paratext, which, according to narrative theorists, "inflect our experience of the narrative, sometimes subtly, sometimes deeply" (Abbott 26). The details provided in the paratext stress that the ecological issues, especially about the human-animal relationship, in the novel arise from a lived reality and deserve careful attention. They also build faith in the readers about the ecological lessons that the novel suggests, for they give evidence of what Louise Westling calls an awareness of "scientific literacy" (82), without which the intended lessons would not have carried conviction. The lessons embrace several areas of ecocriticism, which include the right approach for understanding the

natural world and the ethics and politics of human-animal relations from national, postcolonial, and global perspectives.

A considerable part of the narrative deals with Piya's movement on water in the tide country. Her motivation for coming to this part of India is important because this has a bearing on what she finds and learns during the course of her research on Irrawady dolphins. In her conversation with Kanai during her second trip on the boat, she tells him how the declining numbers of the dolphin population in the Mekong area of Cambodia caused her deep distress. The decline was because of the exploitative ways of the humans, which constitute the single most important threat to the environment. The dolphins were destroyed by the American carpet bombing; they were massacred by cadres of the Khmer Rouge by "rifles and explosives" (Ghosh, *Hungry* 305) to convert their fat into oil for running boats and motorcycles; and they were removed from their natural habitat by unscrupulous businessmen for selling them to new aquariums. Because of this, she resolves to study the dolphins in the place of their origin in India, and tells Nilima that, for her, "home is where Orcaella are" (*Hungry* 400).

Piya is a dedicated, thorough-bred professional, whose professionalism is backed by sophisticated technology, a "beltful of equipment hanging at her waist" (*Hungry* 72). In her conversations with other characters, she comes off as a well-read person in her field of work and keen on finding new things. She is also well-intentioned and willing to take risks, as pioneers have always done.

Piya's expedition is adequately contextualized at the very beginning of the novel, and two of its major strands are directed at an improved understanding of the connection between the human and the non-human. The clue is provided in the description of the tide country in the beginning when Kanai reads it in Bengali during his train journey: that it cannot be dissociated from the mythic element that has been woven into it and is confirmed in a number of later scenes. This is important because though Piya is an American-Indian, "neither her father nor her mother had ever thought to tell her about any aspect of her Indian 'heritage' that would have held her interest" (*Hungry* 95). She does not even know the Bengali language.

What Kanai reads from the pages is a legendary account of the river, as "a heavenly braid … an immense rope of water, unfurling through a wide and thirsty plain" and then towards the end of its course, the braid gets undone, for "Lord Shiva's hair is washed apart into a vast, knotted tangle" (*Hungry* 6). Since Piya is totally unacquainted with her Indian heritage, she does not know this complex connection. The world around the humans may be studied scientifically but it cannot be totally dissociated from the cultural beliefs that link them with their environment.

The second is a realistic understanding of nature, which is different from the versions of nature in early ecological works, in which nature is tranquil, serene, and

harmonious. Quite contrary to this, the tide country is a place where people are "killed by tigers, snakes, crocodiles" (*Hungry* 6). This has a bearing on the human-animal relationship that is at the center of the embedded narrative in the novel.

A substantial part of the narrative is devoted to Piya's movement over water and is used by the novelist to do a number of things simultaneously. He creates a well-rounded portrait of Piya by building her association with Fokir and providing details about her past. Though she lacks knowledge about the heritage of the country of her birth, she was lucky to hear stories from her mother, "of playing in sunlit gardens, of cruises on the river" (*Hungry* 95), and from her father about the fish, which created her interest in studying dolphins. At the end of the novel she returns to Lusibari to continue with her work in her new home with the Orcaella.

Although Piya is laced with technology, that alone is not sufficient to conduct ecological studies. Right from the beginning, Fokir is the one who spots the dolphins. In fact, his guesses about their movement and the exact timing of their appearance are so accurate that Piya is really "puzzled by it" (*Hungry* 15). This is another lesson for her: that any work in that area cannot be conducted effectively without the support of local people who have a rich experience of the world around them. After Fokir's death, she returns to the place to carry out a project based on all that she has learnt from his knowledge of the watery terrain.

Throughout her movement on water, she also learns many other things, which are meant for the readers as well: that species are modified by their "choice of habitat" (*Hungry* 123), for the dolphins had "found a novel way of adapting to their behaviour to this tidal ecology" (*Hungry* 124). She sees around her "different ecological niches," or "micro environments" (*Hungry* 125), and finds how "dolphins are sensitive to atmospheric pressure, and that there are keystone species of the entire system," which constitute a "large proportion of the system's biomass" and that nature is "everything not formed by human intention" (*Hungry* 142). She understands the reasons for the proliferation of a dazzling variety of aquatic forms: that the waters of sea and river do not just intermingle, they interpenetrate.

Piya watches with fascination how the dolphins help fishermen to catch fish and also get a portion from this for their own use, creating what she calls a "remarkable instance of symbiosis between human beings and a population of wild animals"(*Hungry* 169). The experience of watching dolphins turns into a magical one, filling her with unparalleled happiness. In fact, it has another salutary lesson for her: "the idea that to 'see' was also to 'speak' to others of your kind, where simply to exist was to communicate" (*Hungry* 159). That is how she communicates with Fokir, too, for he does not know the language she speaks.

Another narrative in the novel relates to happenings in Marichjhapi, which have a strong bearing on the relationship between humans and animals, and are intimately connected with the lives of Nilima and Nirmal, who had come from Calcutta to

settle in Lusibari. Details about this part of the tidal country are made available from three sources: from the account written by Nirmal, from the conversations between Nilima and Kanai, and between Kanai and Horen. The context for the happenings is both realistic and mythical.

The realistic part is narrated by Nilima to Kanai, in which the readers learn that thousands of acres of the tidal country were bought by S Daniel from the British Sarkar in the 1930s to set up a colony where people could live in peace and harmony: "Here there would be no Brahmins and Untouchables, no Bengalis and no Oriyas. Everyone would have to live and work together" (*Hungry* 51). Tigers and crocodiles, who lived there, fed on them, and they, in turn, killed them. This is strongly reminiscent of the human-animal relationship in a pre-industrial setting, where love for animals and their killing is natural and quite acceptable.

In the myth surrounding the place, Bon Bibi had defeated the demon king Dokkhin Rai who would often take the form of a lion, but allowed him to stay in control of half the place, and thus restore order: the wild half meant for animals, and the sown half meant for humans, thus maintaining a healthy balance in the place. She, in fact, creates a "law of the forest," in which the "poor and righteous" are rewarded.

In Nirmal's version, the island was inhabited by humans, but after 1978, it was reserved for tiger conservation. The humans were actually refugees from East Pakistan and later from Bangla Desh, who had been forced to leave their homes, and sent to a forest in Madhya Pradesh, into an environment "that was nothing like they had ever known" (*Hungry* 118). Treated as intruders by the locals, they had been attacked by bows, arrows, and weapons. Since the Left government had come into power in West Bengal, these people had left their oppressive environment and settled on the island.

One of the active members of the rehabilitation program is Kusum, the mother of Fokir. She tells Nirmal that their stay in the Dandkarniya was unnatural because "rivers ran in our heads, the tides were in our blood. Our fathers had once answered Hamilton's call" (*Hungry* 165). But the government disregards their situation and condemns their actions by calling them "squatters and land-grabbers" (*Hungry* 190). When Nirmal goes there, he is impressed by their organizational skills, their ability to convert the place into an efficient and harmonious location, and feels sad that they are being harassed by the government. He provides a detailed account of how the people there try to fight the government and how they are eventually massacred.

On this issue, Nirmal and Nilima have differences. Nilima believes that the place is the property of the government, and she invokes the environment argument: "What will become of the forest, the environment?" (*Hungry* 213). When Nirmal invokes Daniel in his support, Nilima's answer is that conditions had changed since then. She warns her husband to keep off from the happenings there. The government will be "vengeful towards everyone who gets mixed up in the business" (*Hungry* 214).

Nirmal contests the government policy and tells Nilima that

> the island wasn't forest even before the settlers came. Parts of it were already being used by the government, for plantations and so on. What's been said about the danger to the government is just a sham, in order to evict these people, who have nowhere else to go. (*Hungry* 213-14)

The government authorities invoke provisions of Section 144 of the Forest Preservation Act to send police to warn the settlers. And that is where the argument of man versus the animal sharpens. The settlers say that

> our existence was worth less than dirt or dust …. This island has to be saved for its trees, it has to be saved for its animals, it is a part of a reserve forest, it belongs to a project to save tigers, which is paid for by people from all around the world. (*Hungry* 261)

Kusum asks Nirmal

> who are these people … who love animals so much that they are willing to kill us for them? As I thought of these things it seems to me that this whole world has become a place of animals, and our fault, our crime, was that we were just human beings. (*Hungry* 262)

Earlier, the tigers killed whoever came to settle there, but now, in the name of the tiger, the people living there were being killed, only because the money is coming from some foreign agency. Considering that the whole affair was being put under wraps, Nirmal thinks it necessary to leave an account for posterity. In this human-animal confrontation, the element of politics is quite pervasive. The government wants to get even with people who oppose its policies and use the preservation of animals as an excuse.

Considering that the human population that is being targeted consists of the deprived classes, of poor peasants and landless laborers who have already suffered displacements, one can easily understand its postcolonial dimension, of the exercise of power by the state over the poor and powerless. But considering also that the argument of the government against them in the name of environmental protection is backed by a grant from an international organization, it acquires another dimension as well, of globalized vested interests that work in league with political corruption at the national level. The manner in which the government torments the hapless people by stopping supplies from the outside and then finally destroying them by letting loose goons and discredited elements from the society on them is quite revolting and clearly suggests Ghosh's disapproval of their actions.

Another example of confrontation with a tiger in the narrative is related to Piya, when during her second stint on the river, she finds that a tiger who had moved into a village is being attacked by people. She is loud in her protest and openly says that revenge on an animal is an act of cowardice. She is taken away from the scene,

though she keeps on repeating that it is a horrifying act. She is shocked because Fokir too is involved in this. Kanai has to tell her that Fokir is not a "grass-roots ecologist," and that he "kills animals for a living" (*Hungry* 297), and that tigers do kill many people, "and she is wrong in feeling the suffering of animals but not of human beings" (*Hungry* 301), which echoes what happens on the island.

This leads to a crucial debate between Piya and Kanai. Kanai blames people like her who advocate for the protection of wildlife without taking into account the human cost, and the Indians who "curry favour with their Western patrons" (*Hungry* 301). When he draws her attention to the tigers in America, she tells him that there is a "difference between preserving a species in captivity and keeping it in its habitat" (*Hungry* 301). Her answer is that the difference is intended by "nature, by the earth, by the planet that keeps us all alive. Just suppose we crossed that imaginary line that prevents us from deciding that no other species matters except ourselves" (*Hungry* 301).

Piya has been groomed in America and trained to think about the environment in a way that makes her incapable of understanding the gravity of the argument presented by Kanai, which is also connected with the happenings on the island. Their exchanges reflect a debate that has been going on in the ecocritical camp between the local and the universal, which is similar to the debate within the postcolonial, in which universalism is generally understood as a disguised form of Eurocentrism. This debate is of immense significance and has been discussed in its fullness in an essay by Cara Cilano and Elizabeth DeLoughray, in which they plead for a serious consideration of the views of Ramachandra Guha, articulated in his essay in *Environmental Ethics* in which he argues that a globalized view of the environment may not suit the social reality of Third World countries: "Guha's work foregrounds questions of agency, the limitations of deep ecology, the reinscription of a centre-periphery binary, and the unmarked pervasiveness of American exceptionalist discourse" (72). The thrust of the conversations on this in the novel clearly suggests that all the species deserve respect, but in case of confrontations between the humans and animals, absolutist judgments may not work, for what may be a proper solution in one situation may not work in another situation.

This argument gains strength, when Nilima draws attention to the unusual character of the tigers of the tide country. She tells Kanai that "In other habitats, tigers only attacked human beings in abnormal circumstances: if they happened to be crippled or were otherwise unable to hunt down any other kind of prey. But this was not true of tide country's tigers; even young and healthy animals were known to attack human beings" (*Hungry* 241). She offers several explanations for this. One of them is linked to ecology, when she says that this propensity in tigers is linked to the "peculiar conditions of the tidal ecology, in which large parts of the forest were subjected to daily submersions" (*Hungry* 241). This washes away "their scent

markings," and "confused their territorial instincts" (*Hungry* 241). So the tidal tigers are more aggressive than normal tigers, and therefore, have to be treated differently from tigers elsewhere.

Piya is a staunch environmentalist who has great respect for wild animals. When a tiger is attacked by the people, she is shocked, and is not willing to change her stance even when she is told that they too kill humans. In fact, in the village where the tiger had been spotted, he had already killed two people, and that is why Kanai tells her that an ideal argument cannot provide the way out, for it does not take sufficient cognizance of the context of the human-animal confrontation. Huggan and Tiffin attempt to see the incident in its context, as they understand it, and offer an explanation that seems a bit difficult to accept: "while the villagers are certainly taking revenge on a 'man-eating animal,' they are also symbolically avenging their persecution at the hands of the Bengali state" (188-89).

The environmental argument for saving the species suits Piya, for it is easy for her to save dolphins. But it is difficult to accept it in the case of tigers, partly because they are a different variety of animals and partly because she does not know them well enough as tidal tigers. Ghosh evinces consciousness of the troubled boundary between the humans and the tigers, which has been made more complicated by national and global politics. In such a scenario, Fokir provides a way out by voicing what can only be called cultural wisdom: "when a tiger comes into a human settlement, it's because it wants to die" (*Hungry* 295).

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"Things can change in a day": Rereading Arundhati Roy's Novels in the Dichotomy of "Change"

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Abstract

In both of her novels, Arundhati Roy focuses on specific fatal incidents – either deliberate or accidental – which have catastrophically changed the lives of the major characters, including the children. In *The God of Small Things*, the unexpected death of Sophie Mol and brutal killing of Velutha exposed those matrices of oppression which, lying unchallenged apart from jeopardizing Ammu and Velutha, problematized the psychic development of Rahel and Estha. Likewise, in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, Anjum's deadly experience in the Gujarat massacre, the brutal rape of Revathy, and the killing of Miss Jebeen in Kashmir shed light on those dreadful socio-political extremities, which ostensibly beckon an endangered future for the generation to come. Focusing on Roy's novels, this paper attempts to exhibit how the predominance of the socio-political upheavals has not only changed the lived experience of the child characters in a cataclysmic way, but also exposed them to a world of cruelty, injustice, and futurelessness.

Keywords: Roy, Social Oppression, Political Violence, Kashmir, Formidable Future

Change is an inevitable part of human existence. Every socio-economic and political change brings either a positive or negative impact on our lives – while chaos can be turned into harmony, the order can be disjointed in a moment. Arundhati Roy, in her Booker-winning novel, *The God of Small Things* (1997), henceforth *TGST*, reiterates the line "things can change in a day" (32) several times. As the story unfolds, the dichotomy of the word "change" becomes evident. Each time the readers come across this line, they are taken back and forth both to the past – when, amidst subliminal discord and disorder, Rahel and Estha were somewhat happy with their naivety and childishness – and to the cataclysmic present that was dramatically changed after the accidental death of Sophie Mol and the killing of Velutha in police violence. The ambivalence of "change" reverberates with the same tenacity in Roy's much-awaited second novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017), henceforth *TMUH.* In *TMUH,* Roy's narrative exposes those sites of abusive and exploitative power – communal riots, state-sponsored violence, deprivation of

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minority rights, and violation of human rights – which, apart from jeopardizing the lives of the adults, put the future of Zainab, Miss Jebeen the second, and Murugesan's daughter in danger. Focusing on Roy's novels, this paper attempts to exhibit how the predominance of the socio-political upheavals has not only changed the lived experience of the child characters in a cataclysmic way, but also exposed them to a world of cruelty, injustice, and futurelessness.

Children occupy a significant place in Roy's novels. In fact, in both of her novels, Roy has poignantly depicted the myriad psycho-social encounters of the child characters from diverse angles. *TGST,* apart from being an epitome of caste and class exploitation, is also a mirror of the entangled lives of Rahel and Estha. They were dizygotic twins – born from two separate but concurrently fertilized eggs. In the subliminal discord of being reared by a single mother, who has no Locus Standi in family property, and the oblique taunting that they were millstones of the family, the twins in their early childhood were so attached that they were like one soul in two bodies. Moreover, they were playful and happy with their mother's love and Velutha's affection. Roy describes them thus:

> In those early amorphous years when memory had only just begun, when life was full of Beginnings and no Ends, and Everything was Forever, Esthappen and Rahel thought of themselves together as Me, and separately, individually, as We or Us. As though they were a rare breed of Siamese twins, physically separate, but with joint identities. (*TGST* 2)

Their connectedness is exemplified when, touching Estha's "fever-hot fingers whose tips were as cold as death" (*TGST* 111), Rahel could guess "whatever the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man had done to Estha"(*TGST* 115). Though Rahel had not been there, she could exactly feel Estha's torment of being molested and the constant fear of being visited by the heinous Orangedrink Lemondrink Man in Ayemenem. Without consuming the same things, Rahel could even describe "the taste of the tomato sandwiches – Estha's sandwiches, that Estha ate – on the Madras Mail to Madras" (*TGST* 3). Whereas their feelings and memories have coalesced in such a unique way, the death of Sophie Mol and the killing of Velutha changed their lives forever. For them, things changed in a day. After the catastrophe, they were forcefully separated from Ammu and from each other. As a consequence of this split-up, "the two of them are no longer what They were or ever thought They would be. Ever" (*TGST* 3).

Arundhati Roy, both as an author and as a human rights activist, in her fiction and non-fiction, vehemently criticized those matrices of oppression, which violently dehumanized people in the name of caste and religion. The brutal beating of Velutha and his death in police custody exposes the Manichaeanism of law and order system and the hypocrisy of the upper caste people. Unlike his father Vellya Paapen – who endured the "Crawling Backwards Days" of the pre-independence period, when

Paravans "were not allowed to walk on public roads, not allowed to cover their upper bodies, not allowed to carry umbrellas," (*TGST* 74) – Velutha was a rebel. In his character, there was "a dangerous unwillingness to agree to the 'performance' of his own low-caste status" (Tickell 26). His defiant spirit was apparent in "the way he walked. The way he held his head. The quiet way he offered suggestions without being asked. Or the quiet way in which he disregarded suggestions" (*TGST* 76). His confidence and "refusal to be interpellated [or addressed] as a Paravan" (Needham 6) made him an enemy of the touchables and the untouchables alike. Vellya Paapen was afraid of his son because Velutha had a rebellious spirit that was quite unlike a Paravan. Comrade Pillai assumed Velutha as the only potential threat to his political eminence and was secretly plotting with Chacko for Velutha's expulsion from Ayemenem. At *Paradise Pickles*, "all other touchable workers … resented Velutha for ancient reasons of their own" (*TGST* 121). Baby Kochamma abhorred Velutha both for his low caste standing as a Paravan and his connection with the communist party – what Baby Kochamma assumes has made him assertive and defiant. However, the world of Rahel and Estha was unaffected from all these caste and class hierarchical hypocrisies. The twins adored Velutha as their best friend. Ammu was aware of her kids' fondness for Velutha. However, she got "surprised at the extent of her daughter's physical ease with him. Surprised that her child seemed to have a sub-world [with Velutha] that excluded her entirely" (*TGST* 176). Where the naive twins shared a beautiful "tactile world of smiles and laughter" with Velutha (*TGST* 176), the world of the adults was waiting for an opportunity to eliminate him.

When the affair between Ammu and Velutha was disclosed, and the three children were found missing, Baby Kochamma made the best use of this coincidence to frame Velutha in a rape and kidnapping case. Every opponent of Velutha's, including the "History's fiends," used this opportunity to take his or her revenge. In the FIR, Baby Kochamma reported that Velutha had sexually assaulted Ammu and kidnapped the three children Rahel, Estha, and Sophie Mol to take revenge of his expulsion from the factory. Passos remarks that the Kottyam police were too ready to:

> believe Baby Kochamma's rape story … The reason why the policemen immediately believed the rape story is that they could not conceive of Ammu's consent to have sex with an untouchable because, according to common-sensical cultural references, her family is there to grant that she will not be allowed to consent. (97)

Although every accusation against Velutha was a banal lie instigated by Baby Kochamma's wild imagination, Inspector Mathew, an upper-caste police officer, from his prejudiced point of view, without conducting any in-depth investigation, believed Kochamma's every word. However, for his safety, before ordering Velutha's arrest warrant, Inspector Mathew communicated with Comrade K N M Pillai, the communist party leader in Ayemenem, to be sure of whether Velutha has any party backup or he is on his own. Taking the opportunity, Pillai played his part.

He informed Inspector Mathew that "as far as he was concerned, Velutha did not have the patronage or the protection of the Communist Party. That he was on his own" (*TGST* 262-263). Finding Velutha a mere Paravan who had no direct party support, it becomes easy for Inspector Mathew to deal with Velutha with the exact violence and ruthlessness that the upper caste people usually exhibit to the untouchables. Mathew orders the accused to be beaten to near death because Velutha has transgressed the caste boundaries – being an untouchable, he dared to love a touchable woman. But being a member of a voiceless class, he grew concerned about the exploitation of their labor by the upper caste.

When the six touchable police officers found Velutha at the History House (where Rahel and Estha had taken refuge after their boat had been capsized and Sophie Mol was lost in the high tide), they began to beat Velutha violently in front of the twins. In this brutal violence:

> His skull was fractured in three places. His nose and both his cheekbones were smashed, leaving his face pulpy, undefined. The blow to his mouth had split open his upper lip and broken six teeth, three of which were embedded in his lower lip, hideously inverting his beautiful smile. Four of his ribs were splintered, one had pierced his left lung, which was what made him bleed from his mouth … His lower intestine was ruptured and hemorrhaged, the blood collected in his abdominal cavity. His spine was damaged in two places, the concussion had paralyzed his right arm and resulted in a loss of control over his bladder and rectum. Both his kneecaps were shattered. (*TGST* 310)

The brutality perpetrated on Velutha exhibits that the police officers' intention was not to catch the accused Paravan but to "instil order into a world gone wrong" (*TGST* 260) and restore the family pride of the touchables. According to Passos, Velutha's capture had been executed in such a violent manner because "Velutha represents what touchables fear, the fear of losing privilege, of being dispossessed, of having one's purity and ascendancy questioned" (*TGST* 96). What Estha and Rahel witnessed on that day was "a clinical demonstration in controlled conditions (this was not war after all, or genocide) of human nature's pursuit of ascendancy" (*TGST* 309). It was not merely physical torture; it was a naked exhibition of the torments the untouchables endured for centuries.

J A Kearney, in "Glimpses of Agency in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things,*" asserts that the exposure of the twins to the violence "damages their personalities irreparably" (127). Witnessing the brutal beating of Velutha by the police officers is a horrendous experience for a seven-year-old boy. The violence perpetrated on Velutha has affected Estha so intensely that even in his youth, he failed to come out of the trauma of his childhood memories. Estha was so traumatized at the beating and death of Velutha that sometimes he was gripped by unnatural quietness. Roy describes:

> Once the quietness arrived, it stayed and spread in Estha. It reached out of his head and enfolded him in its swampy arms. It rocked him to the rhythm of an ancient, fetal heartbeat. It sent its stealthy, suckered tentacles inching along the insides of his skull, hoovering the knolls and dells of his memory; dislodging old sentences, whisking them off the tip of his tongue. It stripped his thoughts of the words that described them and left them pared and naked. Unspeakable. Numb. (*TGST* 11-12)

For Estha, things started to change from the day the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man molested him. The fear of his reappearance deprived Estha of his innocent childhood joy. Estha, after his molestation in Abhilas Talkies, was traumatized by the abuse that gripped him like "the uneasy octopus" that hardly "sank and settled at the bottom of the deep water. Sleeping a dog's sleep. Ready to rise and murk things at a moment's notice" (*TGST* 212). The already fragile Estha, being a direct witness of the violence against Velutha, became so paranoid that when Baby Kochamma used him as a token of her acquittal, Estha completely lost his peace of mind. To evade the charges of lodging a false FIR against Velutha, Baby Kochamma was obliged by Inspector Mathew to make any of the twins testify to Velutha's involvement in their kidnapping. Baby Kochamma chose Estha to manipulate for her purpose. Being threatened by Kochamma that if any of them did not cooperate with the Police, they would have to go to jail along with Ammu for killing Sophie Mol. To save Ammu, Estha conceded to testify. Being blackmailed by Baby Kochamma "what had Estha done? He had looked into that beloved face and said: yes" (*TGST* 32). As a consequence of this false testimony, over the last twenty-four years Estha "had carried inside him the memory of a young man with an old man's mouth. The memory of a swollen face and a smashed upside-down smile … of a bloodshot eye that had opened, wandered and then fixed its gaze on him" (*TGST* 32).

After this catastrophic incident, Ammu was forced to leave Ayemenem, Estha was sent back to his father in Madras, and Rahel was left alone in Ayemenem. Ammu, having no *locus standi*, had no voice either to revoke their decision or to do anything in favor of her children. Being separated from his mother and sister, and forced to stay with his drunkard father, Estha was deprived of an amicable childhood and his life changed forever. As Roy remarks, "a few dozen hours … affect[s] the outcome of whole lifetimes" (*TGST* 32).

The trauma of the death of Sophie Mol chased Rahel from childhood to womanhood (*TGST* 17). As Elizabeth Outka comments,

> The "Loss" is alive for Rahel at every moment, following her – and even chasing her – through linear time, from school to school, from childhood to womanhood, a frozen moment and yet one that is perpetually on the move. This static omnipresence appears in a simpler though starker form in the recurring symbol of Rahel's toy watch, which always shows the same time,

> ten to two. The watch itself ends up buried at the site of Velutha's beating and Sophie Mol's death, as if recording permanently the moment and the place when time stopped altogether – and simultaneously suggesting that the moment will always be present. (6)

Rahel could hardly tolerate the grief of the separation from her twin brother, Estha. Before she could manage that shock, the news of Ammu's death brought an unusual change in Rahel's psyche. In Ayemenem house, Chacko and Mammachi provided her with "the care (food, clothes, fees), but withdrew the concern" (*TGST* 17). Enduring this carelessness when Rahel had developed a good understanding with McCaslin, a doctoral student from America, she wanted to embrace that love and care. She drifts to marriage "like a passenger drifts towards an unoccupied chair in an airport lounge" (*TGST* 18). Rahel sought marriage as an escape from her psychic troubles, with her conjugal life starting in Boston. McCaslin was indeed in love with Rahel. He embraced her, "as though she was a gift … unbearably precious" (*TGST* 19). Even after being drenched in love and care, Rahel was cold and expressionless in response. Her eyes were always mystified, searching for something as if she were looking for someone "out of the window … at a boat in the river [for Estha]. Or a passer-by in the mist [for Velutha]" (*TGST* 19). McCaslin could never make sense of that look. What he assumed to have seen in Rahel's eye "was not despair at all, but a sort of … a hollow where … the emptiness in one twin was only a version of the quietness in the other" (*TGST* 19-20). In fact, the emptiness that Estha's absence has created made her exasperated and despondent towards life. McCaslin was heartbroken by Rahel's unresponsiveness and gradually "incurred by the confirmation of his own inconsequence, he became resilient and truly indifferent" (*TGST* 19), which eventually culminated in the end of their conjugal relation. Her divorce was as quick as the marriage decision. McCaslin could never fathom Rahel's agony because,

> He didn't know that in some places, like the country that Rahel came from, various kinds of despair competed for primacy. And that personal despair could never be desperate enough …. It was never important enough. Because … [i]n the country that she came from, poised forever between the terror of war and the horror of peace, Worse Things kept happening. (*TGST* 19)

After being divorced, Rahel was not engaged in anything significant. She was merely surviving by working at a petrol pump. When she came to know about Estha's return to Ayemenem, she quits her job immediately and leaves America only "[t]o return to Ayemenem. To Estha in the rain" (*TGST* 20). Having no ambition or goal to achieve, thus, the lives of the twins moved to futurelessness because neither the family nor the society supported them in any way. In fact, Rahel and Estha were not responsible for what happened to them: "[they] are not the sinners. [they] are sinned against. [They] were only children. [They] had no control. They are the

victims. Not the perpetrators" (*TGST* 191). For them, things changed in a day, not in a better but in the worst way.

The Ministry of Utmost Happiness (*TMUH*) introduces the readers to an experimental narrative. Somak Ghoshal, in his review, "A Far Cry from the Writer's Brilliant First," prefigures *The Ministry* as "a gargantuan handbook to modern India and its injustices" (1). Unlike *The God of Small Things,* her much-awaited second novel is jam-packed with characters. In *TMUH*, telling those individual and collective stories, Roy takes "a panoramic view of violence, injustice, suffering over decades of India's history" (Ghoshal 1). *TMUH* is shadowed with a pessimistic tone. In this novel, characters, both adult and the young ones, are victims of the wild political ambitions of the idiosyncratic political leaders who want to transform a polymorphous country into a monolithic one. It is an undeniable fact that in India, "[n]o manner of linguistic uniformity or vegetarianism can organically make real the fantasy of a one nation/one people/one religion" (Lahiri). Moreover, the denial of the "congenital diversity" of India retains the perpetual risk of "genocidal catastrophe" for the people categorized as a minority (Lahiri). Amid the rise of such socio-political upheavals, while the present has changed into the mayhem of extreme realities, the predictability of a better future for the children is as hopeless as building castles in the air.

While in *TGST* Rahel and Estha have been the direct victims of violence, in *TMUH*, the child characters get affected indirectly. Depicting the horrendous experience of Anjum, Revathy, and Murugesan, Roy foreshadows a chaotic future for their children. Anjum, a transgender person embodying the tension between opposing forces inside India: man and woman, old and new, Hindu and Muslim" (Bailey), takes us to the "Macondo Madness" that the present-day postcolonial India is. She discovers Zainab, a three-year-old abandoned girl, in a dargah. Anjum adopts this child and rears her as a foster mother. Eventually, their love for each other grows. Anjum was happily living in the Khwabgah, the palace of dreams, until she had her deadly experience in the Gujarat riot in which "around a thousand people were killed, most of them Muslims suffering at the hands of Hindu nationalists" (Acocella). In fact, the madness of the riot and the massacre she witnessed on that day changed her life for good. Being a transgender person (Hijra), she survived the bloodthirsty rioters because they believed that killing a Hijra might bring them bad luck. So they left her untouched. However, her companion, Zakir Mian, could not save himself from the hands of the fanatics. To save herself from the spree of mob violence, she, along with countless Muslim families, took shelter in a mosque. Unlike many, she was fortunate enough to be rescued. Zakir Mian's eldest son, who "went on his third trip to Ahmedabad to look for his father" (*TMUH* 46), brought Anjum back to Delhi.

After being rescued from Gujarat, Anjum failed to resume her normal life. She was so terrified by her gruesome experience that to accommodate Zainab with the

changed reality of the rise of communal hatred, she forced her to learn the "Gayatri Mantra" so that in mob situations, "they could recite it to try to pass off as Hindu" (*TMUH* 47). Anjum feared that Gujarat could come to Delhi at any moment; hence she forces Zainab to cut her hair off to look like a boy and made her wear boy's attire for her security. However, all these impositions seemed strange to Zainab, and being scared, she started distancing herself from Anjum. Although Anjum has not encountered any deadly incident like Gujrat in Delhi, she decides to be more cautious about her daughter. In short, whatever she chooses to do for Zainab stems out of fear, uncertainty, and anxiety, which are unavoidably prevalent in the air. After her near-death experience in Gujarat, the future Anjum could anticipate for herself, for Zainab, and all the people of the minority community, is predominantly one that is murderous.

Orphans and abandoned children are the focal point of the narrative of *TMUH*. In the middle of the novel, a foundling in Jantar Mantar becomes the center of all attention. This abandoned child is dramatically taken to the custodial care of Tillotoma and Anjum. Tilottoma names the child Miss Jebeen the Second. Although the mystery of Zainab's identity is not disclosed until the end of the novel, a letter brought by Azad Bharatiya traces out the mother of Miss Jebeen the Second as Revathy. The letter unfolds the horrifying experience of Revathy who writes, "I am Revathy, working as a full-timer with the Communist Party of India (Maoist). When you receive this letter, I will be already killed" (*TMUH* 417). Therefore, it is apparent that they were holding the last words of a mother. This letter opens up the horrible reality of the group she was part of and discloses the reasons behind her child's abandonment in the chaos of Jantar Mantar.

In her depiction, Roy uses deadly events as exploratory ones to investigate the hypocrisies and injustices responsible for premeditated killings, and massacres. As a mouthpiece of her community, Revathy boldly expresses the horrifying condition of her people, the Tribals and the Adivasis, who became the direct victims of the government's project "Operation Green Hunt."' She illustrated this project as a war against people. Revathy kept describing the forest scenario, saying that because of the infiltration of the police and armed forces, her living place became a war zone where thousands of police and paramilitary members occupied their houses and land. Regarding the infiltration of the government forces, a victim's account states that the police and armed forces were "[k]illing Adivasis, burning villages … [because] they want Adivasi people to vacate forests so they can make steel township and mining" (*TMUH* 421). From her letter, it becomes evident that to resist the oppression of the security forces and get back their arable lands, Revathy joins the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA), a blacklisted communist group in India.

Revathy was educated; therefore, instead of being involved in the direct armed struggle, she had been working as an informer for PLGA. One day she was captured

and eventually brutally gang-raped by six police officers. Roy, in *TMUH*, gives a vivid and disturbing description of this violence perpetrated on Revathy. These police officers inhumanly brutalized her body to render the message to the other comrades that a similar fate is in store for them. Revathy could escape from police custody but failed to avoid the consequences of that rape. The child of those six men or one started to grow in her womb. She was devastated by the violent sexual and physical torture. The sexual assault perpetrated on Revathy changed the course of her life.

The struggle Revathy and her people were engaged in might have no end except in their complete annihilation. From her own experience, Revathy could predict the future of the child born out of rape violence: as a girl, she might become a victim of such violence too. Revathy did not want her daughter to face the same fate. So, she abandons her in Jantar Mantar where she felt someone from the noble or deprived people gathered there might give shelter to her child and help her survive towards a better future.

The denial of due honor to the life-sacrifice of S Murugesan and the subsequent disfiguration of the statue built for his commemoration blatantly exhibits the dominance and intolerance of the upper caste people. In *TMUH*, S Murugesan, a Dalit from Tamil Nadu, is depicted as an army soldier. He is deployed in Kashmir. In a terrorist attack, his life ends there within a day. The patrolling jeep "he was riding in was blown up on the highway … He and two other soldiers bled to death by the side of the road" (*TMUH* 317). The death of Murugesan was not a natural one. He died while he was on duty serving his country. Both from religious and national perspectives, his death is noble. However, his village people did not recognize his sacrifice, especially the Vanniyars (who were not "untouchable"). They treated his dead body the way they used to treat him as an untouchable. Hence, they did not allow "the body of S. Murugesan (who was) to be carried past their houses to the cremation ground" (*TMUH* 317). They were even dead against the army's plan to build "a cement statue of Sepoy S. Murugesan, in his soldier's uniform, with his rifle on his shoulder, at the entrance of the village" (*TMUH* 318) to commemorate him.

The statue of an untouchable with a weapon seemed threatening to them because they felt it might instigate a revolutionary spirit in the untouchables and pose a danger for them. Therefore, three weeks after the installation of S Murugesan's statue, "the rifle on its shoulder went missing … a month later the statue's hands were cut off … two weeks after the amputation of its hands, the statue of S. Murugesan was beheaded" (*TMUH* 318). Neither the police nor the local court wanted to pay serious attention to this case because they did not want to enrage the touchable class. Despite the disfiguration of the statue, S Murugesan's baby, unaware of a similar fate, kept waving at the statue calling it "Appapppappappappappa" (father). Entirely disfigured, "the headless statue remained at the entrance of the village. Though it no longer bore any likeness to the man it was supposed to commemorate,

it turned out to be a more truthful emblem of the times than it would otherwise have been" (*TMUH* 319). The silence and inaction of both the police and the local court authenticates that the distortion of the statue of an untouchable is a legitimate act. This incident also exposes how the upper caste people disregard and mock the contribution of the lower caste people in India. In fact, untouchability is the most oppressive and indomitable institution in India. The practice of untouchability has changed very little since independence,

> in spite of social and political movement of B.R. Ambedkar (1891-1956) and the political and social affirmative action taken by the Indian state for the uplift of the ex-untouchables (now known as Dalits) in the form of the Untouchability Offences Act passed in 1955 followed by the Protection of Civil Rights Act in 1976, the social evil of untouchability exists and persists in Indian society. (Awana 265)

Hence, by the callousness of the legal system and the attitude of the infallibility of the touchables, the untouchables got the clear message that the upper caste will never acknowledge their sacrifice and hard work. While the statue of Murugesan could not escape the brutality of the upper caste people, his progeny is not expected to live in a better world free from exploitations based on untouchability. Murugesan's mutilated statue foreshadows a similar fate for his daughter and the people he represents. Hence, the Constitutional promises of change to a better world are nothing but a mockery for them and their next generation.

The second half of *TMUH* focuses on the Kashmir crisis. Depicting the gruesome reality of Kashmir, Roy takes readers on a tour of the volatile condition of Kashmir, which, in no time, turns unpredictably violent and deadly. Roy, in her portrayal of Musa Yeswi, depicts the dreadfulness that became an unavoidable reality for the Kashmiris. Musa lost his family in "a horror perpetuated by the Indian army" (Khair). His daughter and wife "died by the same bullet. It entered Miss Jebeen's head through her left temple and came to rest in her mother's heart" (*TMUH* 310). That one bullet turned Musa's world upside down. Oeendrila Lahiri, in her review on *TMUH*, comments, "[t]he stray bullet that casually kills Musa's daughter has been, over the last 20 years, responsible for swathes of marked and unmarked graves in Kashmir." Roy stresses too that, in the Kashmir valley, "in every single household something terrible has happened" (*TMUH* 371), which made the crisis of Kashmir a never-ending game of revenge.

Retrospecting on the events that culminated in the death of his daughter Miss Jebeen, and sixteen other people, on the day mourners were carrying to burial the body of Usman Abdullah, a famous university teacher, possible assumptions can be made to understand the sustenance of the crisis in Kashmir. Roy, taking Kashmir as a backdrop of this novel, tried to shed light not only on the possible causes of the involvement of many Kashmiris in the undercover militancy but also on the reasons behind the repressive and often violent standing of the security forces. Musa is a

direct victim of the extremities of both the militant groups and the government's agencies in Kashmir.

The assassination of Usman Abdullah, a secular and progressive Muslim, by an unidentified gunman is a clear indication that "the syncretism of Kashmir that he represented would not be tolerated … [and] all arguments would be settled with bullets" (*TMUH* 320-321). Because of his open-mindedness, Usman Abdullah "had been threatened several times by the newly emerging hard-line faction of militants who had returned from across the Line of Control, fitted out with new weapons and harsh new ideas" (*TMUH* 320). These militants were obstinately strict to their new rules of intolerance. They openly expressed their controversial views like "Shias were not Muslim" and "women would have to learn to dress appropriately" (*TMUH* 321) to stay in Kashmir. In the face of the rise of such extremist groups and their intermittent militant actions, either against the peace-loving people of Kashmir or against the soldiers of the security forces, keeping normalcy in Kashmir became a major challenge.

Moreover, to tackle those unpredictable situations like suicide bombing, terrorist attacks, or sudden mob violence, the security forces need to stay on high alert all the time. Amid such unpredictability, the slightest miscalculation could result in the death of innocent people, and thus the situation deteriorates. Musa's wife and daughter were killed in such a quagmire. When Musa's daughter was killed on that day, her mother had been holding Miss Jebeen in her lap and standing in the balcony to watch the procession of thousands of mourners who were carrying the dead body of Usman Abdullah. The police opened fire on the procession and both his wife and daughter died by the same bullet. Sixteen others were killed too and the mourning of one death ended with a death toll of seventeen. Thus, both the infiltration of the government forces and the insurgencies of the extremist militant groups, the situation changed in such a catastrophic manner so that in Kashmir, "death was everywhere, Death was everything" (*TMUH* 314).

While the lives of the children are affected by violence on the one hand, the violence against them changes the course of lives of the adults. Those who watched Musa Yeswi burying the dead body of his daughter notice how differently he acted that day: "[H]e displayed no grief. He seemed withdrawn and distracted, as though he was not there" (*TMUH* 344). His life was devastated by that incident. Musa could assume that "[l]ife as he once knew it was over … Kashmir had swallowed him, and he was now part of its entrails" (*TMUH* 344). The life of Musa changed in a day. As an act of retaliation, Musa joins a militant group named Tehreek, and his fugitive life begins.

Due to the clash between the government forces and the extremist militant groups, Kashmir is never at peace. For Miss Jebeen and the others who died, the language of the bullet has destroyed the possibilities of any peace-making process. For the Kashmiris, the normalcy of life is not a livable experience; rather, normalcy is only a

matter of declaration. Whereas the extremist militant groups with their insurgencies are intensifying the gravity of the situation that has already gone beyond control, the agents of the security forces torturing and mutilating innocent people in the name of peace and order are also adding fuel to the flame which is pushing young minds into militancy. In the midst of such mayhem, with no possibility of having an amicable future either for the present generation or its progeny, in Kashmir, "Death went on. The war went on" (*TMUH* 324) and "[d]ying became just another way of living" (*TMUH* 314).

Eckhart Tolle stresses that "[t]he power for creating a better future is contained in the present moment" (qtd. in Gizzi). Nevertheless, when the present is jeopardized with the persistent threat of class and caste oppression, patriarchal supremacy, socio-political exploitation, religious hatred, state-sponsored killings, denial of minority rights, loss of social security and many such matrices of oppression, the hope for a favorable change is nothing but a mirage. Exposing the child characters to such mayhem, Roy, in both novels, has ascertained that "things can change in a day." While Rahel's and Estha's lives are completely changed on the day of Sophie Mol's death and Velutha's killing, Zainab's, Miss Jebeen the Second's, and Murugesan's daughter's future changed for the worse in the everyday realities of class and caste oppression, and communal hatred.

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Influences and Individualities:
Exploring Nissim Ezekiel's Poetic World

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Abstract

Nissim Ezekiel, recognized as the pioneering figure of Indian poetry in English, was influenced by a great many poets of the western literary tradition, subsequently influencing numerous poets of his succeeding generations. Having brought modernity into the literary scene of the Indian subcontinent, he made an immense contribution to English writing, initiating a new poetic trend in this region. Before him, Indian poetry had been charged with high romantic and mystic ideals, but he first began to present everyday life in poetry, abandoning the past trend. Well informed of the western tradition of the twentieth-century poetry, Ezekiel brought something new to Indian poetry in English. In his formative years, several poetic voices of the west and their works made an impact on his work, but like great poets of the world, he was able to set a new trend, create an individual style, and become influential to later generations of poets in India and beyond. This paper, therefore, explores how western tradition of modern and romantic poetry contributed to the shaping of Ezekiel's poetic world. The paper also argues that Ezekiel's arrival in the realm of Indian poetry in English gives birth to a new era of poetic tradition in India in particular and the whole subcontinent in general.

Keywords: Nissim Ezekiel, Modernity, Indian Poetry in English, Influence, Individuality

Nissim Ezekiel's poetic journey that covered more than five decades was enriched with various kinds of experiences. To put it slightly differently, the poet achieved poetic signifiers through a continuous struggle during his whole life. On the way to becoming a poet of distinctive stature, Ezekiel received inspiration from many of his predecessors. Influence is an integral part in every writer and poet's life, since no writer or poet is identified as an isolated being detached from their previous generations or trends of literature. In the same way, later generations of writers and poets are influenced by their ancestors. In his prominent work titled *The Anxiety of Influence*, Harold Bloom argues, "Without Keats's reading of Shakespeare, Milton, and Wordsworth, we could not have Keats's odes and sonnets and his two *Hyperions*. Without Tennyson's reading of Keats, we would have almost no Tennyson" (xxiii). It is a well-articulated argument in favor of influence and inspiration – the critic refers to some great poets of English literature who, he believes, influenced one another. Great authors obviously influence the later generations of writers who

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in turn influence the following generations. It is an undeniable truth that literary influence generates anxiety among writers, but great figures of literature never stop influencing others.

Ezekiel, himself a great figure in the history of Indian poetry in English, influenced his later generations of poets. He was influenced by the Western master poets, and he, likewise, influenced other younger generations of poets. Among the poets was Gieve Patel whom Ezekiel inspired and helped with the publicaiton of individual poems or collections of poems. At first, Ezekiel had hostile comments about Patel's poems, but as he continued his efforts to improve, about a year later, "it was Nissim who published Gieve's first collection of poems" (Rao, *The Authorized Biography* 165). Many emerging poets of the time went to him, gave him their poems, sought comments and suggestions for improvement, but he did not discourage them outright; rather, he showed them how they could improve their work, how they could practice the craft, and how seriously and deeply they should take art. He was, no doubt, a great mentor of the young and emerging poets who had serious and sincere efforts to continue writing.

Ezekiel, the most important modern Indian poet, accepted literature produced through inspiration and influence. And though influence does not downgrade literature, imitation does. Ezekiel states in an interview with Saleem Peeradina, "A good poet allows himself to be influenced, assimilates the influence, resists the influence. For a good poet, influence does not mean imitation, it can even mean going in the opposite direction" ("with Saleem Peeradina" 59). Ezekiel not only considers influence to be part of the literary practice but also thinks that it casts a positive impact on literature. Influenced by other authors, many poets sometimes produce wonderful literary pieces, but it is important to note how they resonate with or resist the influence. The poet emphasizes on abandoning imitation – here lies the significance of resistance to influence. In one of his notable poems titled "The Great," Ezekiel reveals how great people, writers or poets, influence others:

> The great can never know how much I love them.
> Every day they live and die in me but still
> They cannot make me great. I am alone.
>
> The great are greater in me as I love
> With their words and do the things they say
> Ought to be done for love, but still I am
> Exposed to life and know it quite alone.
>
> The great are strong upon the printed page (lines 1-8)

The great in the poem refers to the people who pave the way for later generations of poets and writers. In Ezekiel's poetic career, many great people, including writers, poets, and artists of various countries and cultures, were inspirational – they had made him, as the poet believes, what he later became. The poet has a deep respect,

as the lines suggest, for the great figures of the literary world, but he is humble in saying that he cannot be great in the same way as them.

Ezekiel believed that the great literary figures had been highly influential in his poetic career. In the poem "Confession," he writes, "The great provide a pattern for our lives" (23). It is obvious how respectful Ezekiel was to his previous generations of poets who had enriched the literary world through their outstanding works. The great people create some patterns that pave the way for the writes of the later generations who continue developing the patterns. Ezekiel, himself a great poet, created patterns for his contemporary poets as well as the poets from later generations in India. Graziano Kratli asserts how Ezekiel was influential on another Indian well-known poet, Dom Moraes:

> Among Indian writers, the one who was most influential on Moraes's early development as a poet was Nissim Ezekiel. … In his autobiography, Moraes recalls how their meetings "always followed an identical pattern: we had coffee in a seafront café, when I showed him my new work, and then walked along the front, and he would discuss it." Ezekiel also expanded Moraes's literary horizons by recommending poets such as Rimbaud, and critical essays by Eliot, Pound and Leavis, and by warning him against Indian critics and Indian praise, the latter a consequence of the "appalling standards" represented by the former. More significantly, perhaps, he instilled in his mentee the idea of poetry as a craft rather than a gift, and (quoting Yeats) of beauty as the result of labor. (179)

Moraes owes a debt of poetic craft to Ezekiel as he refers to his inspiration and direct learning from the great poet in his autobiography. Moraes met Ezekiel frequently, sat with him for hours and days, discussed poetry, and learned the craft – he indeed spent years under Ezekiel's tutelage and learned invaluable lessons on poetry from him. Ezekiel recommended Moraes to read other great poets from Europe who were also influential on Ezekiel himself.

Although Ezekiel was influenced by European and American poets and culture, he did not detract from his own culture and society, because his motherland remained a major influence on his long and illustrious poetic career. Generally, Indian poets writing in English are influenced by the West, but Indian poetry in English never "lost its native colour, taste, opinions, morals and intellect. Thus Indian sensibility in Indian English poetry completes a full round" (Srivastava). The same is true about Ezekiel as his poetry never circumvents Indian reality. Modelling himself on the Western tradition, he set a new tradition of Indian poetry in English, picking up elements scattered here and there in a large country like India. Gillian Tindall rightly observes:

> So his work and his life were informed by several sets of tensions, not just between East and West, but between the sense of separation from India and

the sense of belonging, between Judaism and unbelief, between thinking of himself as a Westernised Indian intellectual (a distinct category in his generation) and knowing himself to be someone at once more exotic, more isolated and still more obscure. (22-23)

Ezekiel's life, to a great extent, was full of tension, as his large body of work shows ambivalence about background, belonging, belief, and so forth. Among the people of the subcontinent, there exists a complex trend of acceptance or rejection of the Western culture. Ezekiel, who had a close affinity with Eastern and Western cultures and literatures, attempted to assimilate both in his work. But a strong sense of ambivalence on his relationship or adherence – such as East and West or belonging to India and somewhere else – impacted his poetry. After a sojourn in a metropolis of the West, he returned to India and began to form complex ties with the city to which he belonged and in which he was born, felt an ambivalent relationship with work, environment, neighborhood, culture, and so forth, and also thought that he was, to some degree, an outsider. His poems exhibit his deep commitment to and involvement in the busy metropolis that he considered his own.

Ezekiel, no doubt, is a poet of the city, because city life and city reality pervade a substantial measure of his work, and city life is one of the most powerful influences on the poet. Out of a vast experience about city and city people, he portrayed a variety of images of city life in his poetry. Mohammad Shafiqul Islam observes, "Many of Ezekiel's poems on city refer to Mumbai which is most of the time compared to Baudelaire's Paris and Eliot's London. He often presents Mumbai with its beauty and ugliness, sonority and cacophony in his poetry" (45). Like Eliot and Baudelaire, Ezekiel wrote on city life, particularly on his own city Bombay. In one of his defining poems entitled "A Morning Walk," he depicts the squalid pictures of city life, as the following lines reflect:

> Barbaric city sick with slums,
> Deprived of seasons, blessed with rains,
> Its hawkers, beggars, iron-lunged,
> Processions led by frantic drums,
> A million purgatorial lanes,
> And child-like masses, many-tongued,
> Whose wages are in words and crumbs. (15-21)

It is the real picture of the city, Bombay, where the poet grew up and lived a major part of his life. Many modern cities of the world have almost the same picture, and Bombay reality inspired the poet to write a number of poems on city reality. The streets he walked along, the parks he visited, the marketplaces he went to as well as the people he met are important elements of his poetry. In "A Morning Walk," he shows that the city is filled with slums, garbage, and lower class people including beggars, hawkers, and criminals, which is why he calls the city "barbaric." Nature

no more synchronizes with the seasons to which people have been accustomed to for a long time.

At the end of the poem "A Morning Walk," the poet writes, "The city wakes, where fame is cheap, / And he belongs, an active fool" (41-42). A certain group of people live in luxury whereas a majority of the city-dwellers struggle hard to live hand to mouth. But the city remains a place of attraction where people hailing from various corners come in search of fortune and fame, which is, however, cheap. R. Raj Rao observes that "Nissim's continuing interest in Bombay, and his poetic evocations of it in the manner of Yeats and Eliot, eventually gave rise to a school of poetry that is sometimes referred to as the Bombay school. It is made up of poets who, like him, were born or bred in the city, and regard it as home, and who, of course, write only or mainly in English" (*The Authorized Biography* 37). Like Yeats and Eliot, Ezekiel also wrote poetry describing the city and commenting on city life. For Ezekiel, it is Bombay that he always kept in mind – life in the city is presented as authentically as he observed. The city of Bombay is more known to the world because of many amazing poets, besides Ezekiel, born and brought up here, who are part of the Bombay school of poetry.

During childhood, adolescence, and even youth, Ezekiel was highly inspired by his mother, the person who played a part in the formation of his literary career. Born to a family having a decent cultural and literary background, he read a wide range of books and developed a literary mindset. His parents, especially his mother, inculcated in him the pleasure of reading books, and it grew in him as a habit from childhood. He does not forget how he learnt from his mother as he responds to a query in an interview, "But the real source of my literary sensibility was my mother. I always knew it came straight from her to me. She reacted intuitively to my writing. With the rest of the family it was conscious encouragement; with her it was a primal assurance" (Ezekiel, "with Imtiaz and Anil Dharker" 44). The encouragement that he had received from his mother worked as a foundation for his career. Her inspiration and feedback to his writing had been instrumental in the shaping of what Ezekiel later became, and which he acknowledges

In his life-long concern about identity, Ezekiel explored the essences of different religions through his poetry. Judaism, the religion to which Ezekiel's family and his ancestors belonged, influenced his work even though he did not take an interest in traditional religions. The followers of Judaism in India have a long history of their migration to India, their decision to stay in the country, and struggle as a minority. Most Jews of the past generations left India, and now very few of them live here, but it was not possible for him to deny his connection to Judaism, as the following remarks suggest:

> Ezekiel belonged to Mumbai's tiny, Marathi-speaking Bene Israel Jewish community, which never experienced anti-semitism. They were descended from oil-pressers who sailed from Galilee around 150 BC, and, shipwrecked

off the Indian subcontinent, settled, intermarried and forgot their Hebrew, yet maintained the Sabbath. There were 20,000 Bene Israel in India 60 years ago; now, only 5,000 remain. Most of Ezekiel's relatives left for Israel; he served as a volunteer at an American-Jewish charity in Bombay. (Joffe)

Ezekiel's previous generations had been oil-pressers who migrated to India a long time ago. Shipwrecked, they had settled in India, the country that they started accepting as their own, but over time, most of them went back to Israel. Unlike others, Ezekiel's parents remained in India, and started living a decent life in the country. In the poem "Background, Casually," the poet refers to his religious background: "I went to Roman Catholic school, / A mugging Jew among the wolves" (6-7). Growing up in post-Independence India, Ezekiel was influenced by the contemporary events happening in India as well as around the world, but he did not care about who belonged to which religion, because he was "raised in a secular milieu" (Joffe). He grew up in such an environment, in such a family that no one could instill the seed of narrow-mindedness about religion in him. His parents taught him to be secular, and his work bears testimony to his stance on secularism.

Ezekiel read a great number of classic, romantic, and modern writers and poets of world literature, and was an enthusiast of, to be more specific, the nineteenth-century English Romantic poetry. Romantic poets remained, therefore, a great influence in his early poetic career as he was also considered a poet with romantic attributes. The poet, in his acknowledgement of the Romantic poets' influence on his poetic career, says, "I modelled myself on the poets that are normally read in India in school textbooks – Shelley, Byron, Keats and others" (Ezekiel, "with Saleem Peeradina" 53). Romantic elements prevail in the poems that he wrote in the early days of his poetic career. Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley, and Byron were among his favorite poets during his college and university life, and Keats made a huge impact on his work. Ezekiel also treats love, one of the dominant themes of romantic poetry, in some of his poems, including "And God Revealed":

> Yet we with wiser love can master love
> And with the news we bring of other worlds
> Enlarge the world of love with love of worlds.
>
> As lover, Love, you know that I am lost
> In continents of thought, and every urge
> To see, know, hear, touch and praise the earth
> Is concentrated on your lips and thighs –
> The strange mysterious way of earthly love. (5-12)

The poet addresses love in his poems, but his treatment is distinctive. Love, the poet confirms, can win the complex wars taking place between nations or between two people, and the world of love expands if people extend their love for the world. In "Love Sonnet," he describes a love scene: "You and I wait for words; / Our love

has formed like dew on summer nights" (5-6). The speaker of the poem, the lover, expresses his feelings to his beloved that they will make their time special while together. Their love is as special as the dew in summer nights. At the end of the poem, the poet writes, "We look inquiringly at road and sky, / A certain happiness would be – to die" (15-16). Here the poet shows how gracefully a lover and his beloved spend their time together – their emotions and feelings are so strong that they are ready to die together. He treats love in a variety of ways in his poems, and "Love Sonnet" certainly celebrates romantic love. In another poem titled "For Satish Gujral," Ezekiel also celebrates love and imagination:

> It is the task
> of love
> and imagination
> to hear what can't be heard
> when everybody speaks. (19-23)

The lines bear witness to Ezekiel's identity as a romantic poet, but the poet did not feel comfortable with the identity as he criticized the traditional notions of Romanticism in Indian poetry. But the romantic elements in his poetry are distinct as the above lines suggest – here the task of love and imagination clearly marks a difference. Imagination is one of the most important elements of romantic poetry, whereas love is the dominant theme. Ezekiel is also found preoccupied with the thought of love at the end of his poetic career, as he writes in "Sub-conscious": "You do not love me any more. / Unloved, I cannot stay alive" (12-13). This poem is among the ones that Ezekiel wrote in the 1980s when the poet was at a mature stage of his poetic career. Although the context of the poem is different, the lines may imply the kind of love that the poet always sought.

Apart from having a fondness for romantic elements in poetry, Ezekiel was a modern voice emerging from the postcolonial reality in India. As he had the mold of a modern poet, he was tense about losing Indianization and adopting Westernization. Many of his poems, including "A Time to Change," reveal the frustration of the poet for the loss of faith and human relationship in modern India. As the poet writes, "We who leave the house in April, Lord, / How shall we return?" (1-2). The poet wants to show that the new generation turns back on values, finding themselves alienated in the Indian society. To have respect for heritage, rich tradition, and resourceful culture is what makes a person a proud citizen who should also look forward to the changes that help the nation advance. Aversion to changes that are pivotal in reforming a nation in line with global perspectives makes people backward-looking. On the other hand, people having global consciousness and mindset adjust with all the developments of human beings on earth, and a modern person believes in multiculturalism, multilingualism, and multiple identities.

With his progress as a poet, Ezekiel began to resonate with the modern poets of the West such as T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, W. B. Yeats, and

W. H. Auden. Among the modernists, Eliot remains the most inspiring for Ezekiel. Thus, he is sometimes called "The T. S. Eliot of modern Indian English poetry, … a highly important figure in the field of Indian English literature" (Samal 176). Eliot's depiction of the human condition after the world wars is the most poignant in the history of modern literature in general and modern poetry in particular. His projection of reality which is dominated by complexity, confusion, alienation, fragmentation, and despair bear the marks, many critics believe, of modernism in European literature, which later influenced the writers and the poets worldwide. Amit Chaudhuri notes, "He is, of course, also echoing T. S. Eliot's adaptation of Ecclesiastes 3 for the purposes of expressing …" (209). Many critics have found Eliot's stirrings of modernism in Ezekiel's work as well as some themes. Chaudhuri, too, offers a Biblical reference, Ecclesiastes 3, that resonates with Ezekiel's concerns – the key point of Ecclesiastes 3 is that there is a time for everything.

Eliot's depiction of human psychology, society, degeneration, and city life influenced Ezekiel who also dealt with the same entities from the realist point of view. The experiences that he had from his encounters with other people in society are the subject matter of his poetry. K D Verma observes, "Much of the modern poetry … subscribes to the view that the nature of the man is finite and that its principal concern is the world of experience, the image of life as it is, the fallen world like that of Eliot's *The Waste Land*, or the usurous [sic] world of Pound's *The Cantos*" (229). Everyday experience of human beings is the prime concern of the modern poets – they show how people lead their life amid so many challenges and crises existing in modern societies. Images of the fallen world – the world that seems to fall apart every day – are what Eliot and Pound have presented in their work. We find similarities between Ezekiel and European modernist poets as they deal with city life. In "Commitment," Ezekiel writes:

> Truly, I am betrayed, consorting with
> The world contracts my love, vast organised
> Futilities suck the marrow from my bones
> And put a fever there for cash and fame.
> Huge posters dwarf my thoughts, I am reduced
> To appetites and godlessness, … (1-6)

The poem clearly reveals that the poet is not happy about what is happening around him – he feels that the city has deceived him in various ways. His association with the modern city life has caused a damage to his sensitivities and sensibilities. He wants to believe that the organized disorder, chaos, degeneration, and dereliction have taken away the life force, and the people seem to run after money and fame. We find an Eliotesque tone in this poem – *The Waste Land* also features the decadence of London life, and Eliot shows people's indifference to and negligence of ethics and morality as the root of degeneration.

Eliot presents the post-war reality of Europe in his magnum opus *The Waste Land*

(1922), whereas Ezekiel offers Indian reality of the later twentieth century. Although Ezekiel read Eliot widely, he did not follow his complexity of poetic language; rather, he developed his own style which is deceptively lucid but powerful in content. The affectations of a character and her friends and family are shown in a poem titled "Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T. S." Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" portrays, likewise, some pretentious women who have markedly different cultures and lifestyles but are similar in their artificiality. Eliot's famous lines, "In the room the women come and go / Talking of Michelangelo" (13-14), depict the women. Ezekiel essentially intends to present Indian English through "Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T. S." but Pushpa's family members and the women in Eliot's poem are found to be leading a pretentious lifestyle. In the poem, Pushpa is presented thus: "Coming back to Miss Pushpa / she is most popular lady / with men also and ladies also" (26-28). To wish bon voyage to Miss Pushpa, her family and friends arrange a party in which the guests speak a slew of words to praise her. The poet intends to show the artificial representation of a class of people as Eliot shows the artificiality of women in the poem "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." Some lines in the poem titled "Counsel" anthologized in *Latter-Day Psalms* give the same meaning of Eliot's "Datta, dayadhvam, damyata" in *The Waste Land*:

> Express your gratitude
> By giving what you have to give.
> You may get nothing in return.
> And bear your restlessness with grace. ("Counsel" 31-34)

Eliot advises modern people to give, sympathize, and control in order to bring back rain and peace to the barren land. Ezekiel, too, suggests that a person has to be grateful, sympathetic, and restrained in order to build a peaceful society and live a peaceful life – the tone of *The Waste Land* is echoed in the above lines.

Ezekiel was also influenced by Eliot's impersonality theory that shaped the realm of modern poetry. The theory suggests, "What happens is a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable. The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality" (296). Eliot puts emphasis on depersonalization of the poet who is at work to produce poetry, highlighting the objective representation of particulars. The final outcome, that is to say the work itself, is more valuable than the poet's emotion, personal belief, or choice. It is important for poets to surrender and sacrifice the self to produce a valuable work of literature. Thieme's observation about Ezekiel's position on the impersonality is, therefore, worth noting, "[Ezekiel's] comments on the poetic process emphasize impersonality and the need to surrender one's sense of identity to the dictates of the particular poem being written at the time" (xxxv). Ezekiel's poetic process highlights impersonalization and surrender of the self to what Eliot considers valuable – the final product is poetry. Poems should not retain the identity of the poet, his personality, or his personal belief.

On Ezekiel's major influences, Rao claims that "there were two role-models available to him when he decided to become a poet, and that he had to choose between them, sometimes settling for a combination of both. The two were, of course, W. H. Auden and Rilke" (*The Authorized Biography* 111). Among the major influences from the West, Auden and Rilke also cast an impact on Ezekiel's work. Both Auden and Rilke had their distinctive ways of writing that he attempted to follow, but what attracted him most is the patience that they demonstrated in revising and waiting for appropriate words to come, as Ezekiel claims, "The best poets wait for words" ("Poet, Lover, Birdwatcher" 3). As far as themes are concerned, both of them dealt with the reality of city life, whereas Ezekiel also wrote a wide range of poems focusing on the decadent state of urbanity. Ezekiel's poems portray urban images that affect the minds of modern people, and the images recurrently appear in his poems.

It is widely known that Ezekiel was an anti-traditionalist who introduced a new trend of Indian poetry in English, breaking a long tradition of romantic, mystic, philosophic, spiritual, and religious poetry in India where Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Toru Dutta, and Sarojini Naidu had been the key figures. Arvind Krishna Mehrotra observes that "Henry Derozio, Toru Dutt, Aurobindo Ghose, and Sarojini Naidu were courageous and perhaps charming men and women, but not those with whom you could today do business. The poets of the post-Independence period had therefore to make their pacts elsewhere" (2). Mehrotra goes back to the past tradition of Indian poetry, referring to some poets of the times who, he thinks, do not fit in the contemporary poetic scene in India. According to Mehrotra, the poets writing in English in post-Independence India faced a different reality, so they had to "make their pacts" with other forms, styles, and languages for their poetry. Mehrotra indicates that the post-Independence poets, including Ezekiel, promised to bring a change into the poetry scene in India, and that was possible through the lens of western modernism.

Ezekiel's attack on the traditional mystic and romantic trends of Indian poetry came out of his strong sense of modernity and individuality. About Aurobindo's work, Ezekiel comments, "In reality, Sri Aurobindo's literary ideas are commonplaces blown up like multicoloured balloons and let loose without restraint" (qtd. in Narayan 274). This comment reflects Ezekiel's harsh criticism of Aurobindo's poetry that flows uncontrollably having no relation to reality. Ezekiel's poetry, on the other hand, speaks of city life, beautiful Indian landscapes, the everyday world of human beings, and the crises of city life. But the poet did not forget to recognize how his predecessors, especially Sanskrit poets, also influenced him:

> How freely they mention
> breasts and buttocks.
> They are my poetic ancestors.
> Why am I so inhibited? ("Passion Poems III" 1-4)

The poet refers to the Sanskrit poets whom he considered bold and great, who inspired him to write passion poems. The Sanskrit poets had not refrained from writing what they would feel – they had spontaneously depicted female bodies in their poems, but Ezekiel hints in the poem that something deterred his contemporaries from drawing sensual images in their work. To him, exposing the inner impulse in poetry needs courage and forte that the Sanskrit poets had possessed, but his contemporaries hesitated to address them in poetry.

Some of Ezekiel's poems directly resonate, as critics have found, with the poems of Western modernists. As Rao quotes King, "… the purgatorial image of 'A Morning Walk' and the reference to the poet's own middle-age has echoes of Baudelaire, Blake, Eliot, and especially Dante. It suggests to him that the poems in *The Unfinished Man* may be seen as 'a mini-*Divine Comedy*, moving from Hell through Purgatory to a vision of Heaven or Salvation'" ("Ezekiel's Bombay Poems" 134). Indeed, the poets Baudelaire, Blake, Eliot, and Dante influenced the making of what Ezekiel has come to be known for: Indian poetry in English. Even a particular poem like "A Morning Walk" shows how Ezekiel employs the features of Western modernist poetry in his work. The poet writes, "Driven from his bed by troubled sleep / In which he dreamt of being lost / Upon a hill too high for him" ("A Morning Walk" 1-3). The fourth collection of poems titled *The Unfinished Man* (1960), one of his defining poetry collections, is described as having the notions of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. King's observation is justified as the poems in the collection offer a journey of a man from a hell to a heaven through purgation.

After a certain period of his fascination with the modernism of the 1950s, when Auden, Empson, Graves, Yeats, and Frost were the leading poets of the West, Ezekiel broke away from the Western conventions, and during this time, the poet discovered his own real voice. Wiseman gives an example by referring to the poem "In Retrospect":

> In this poem, the rhythm moves with the mind and feelings, the line-breaks and the syntax play with and against each other, the voice is personal, dramatic and strong, sensitive to nuances of feeling and attitude and to wide tonal colouring. Nowhere do we find the arbitrary literariness which characterises Ezekiel's earlier work. The short lines, the sinewy free verse, the flexibility of syntax and tone are here perfectly appropriate, assuming into themselves without strain the impulse of the experience and allowing it to find its own shape, its own potency. (251)

Here Wiseman refers to the style and technique that Ezekiel developed as his own in the later stage of his poetic career. "In Retrospect," both stylistically and thematically an important poem, exhibits Ezekiel's mature poetic craft. There is a mark of the poet's genuine feeling in the poem that shows the flow of language, and the poetic elements are well employed in each line and stanza of the poem. The form perfectly resonates with the content, helping the speaker's voice find an appropriate shape in

the words. Here are some lines from the poem:

> The spring was late
> but I was impatient.
> I used too many words,
> and now I know:
> there is a point
> in being obscure
> about the luminous,
> the pure musical
> phases of living
> which ought to be
> delicately improvised
> and left alone. (19-30)

During this time, the poet seems to have realized that it was necessary for him to shift to a new mode of writing, inspired by "the pure musical / phases of living." In the poem, he also hints that he could not maintain precision in terms of words, phrases, or syntax in his poetry in the past, so he needed a change, which is why he sought improvisation in his craft. These lines bear witness to his mastery over phrases, words, and rhythm as well as control over line breaks. Wiseman further notes that Ezekiel "learns, with much difficulty, to abandon styles inherited from others and to create his own style for his own purposes" (251). This observation by Wiseman attests to Ezekiel's position as a great poet having individual traits. It also reveals that he had been fond of the styles employed by Western poets for many years, but from now, he intended to speak with his own voice, developing his own style. Here is the justification that Ezekiel gradually progressed with exceptional poetic potential and demonstrated his individuality in poetry.

There are ample references to Ezekiel's turning away from the influences of the Western poets, especially the major poets of modernism. The poet himself mentioned it several times in different interviews and essays. In such an essay published in *Times India*, the poet revealed both his association with and dissociation from the Western poets:

> The early influence on me of Pound and Eliot concerned poetry as an art, as well as on criticism of poetry, of society past and present, of modes of thinking and feeling etc. But I never accepted the doctrines which Pound and Eliot, separately defined for themselves and their readers. I sorted them out for myself, modified them to suit my temperament, and so on. It would be misleading and unfair to say that Pound and Eliot influenced me only on the 'technique side'. Their influence was far reaching, even comprehensive, but I was never dominated by it. I used it and went back to it from time to time, noting how my growth changed my attitudes to their outstanding creative as well as critical writing. (qtd. in Mishra and Kumar)

It is already established that Eliot, Pound, and some other Western modernists influenced Ezekiel, and he understood poetry as an art from them in his preliminary stage as a poet. Their works shaped the mode of his thinking and feeling, but he was not a blind imitator of the Western poets – he did not continue with their doctrines of poetry. He observed their style, technique, and mode, reread their works but created something of his own, something new, especially in his later career. Their influences were widespread, but they could not dominate over his creativity. His creative faculty began to shine more luminously since the time he demonstrated his individuality.

With his absolute awareness about Indian reality, Ezekiel created diction, style, and technique of poetry on his own – he does not match any other poet from the past, especially when he has a secure place in Indian poetry in English. The Indian poets writing in English before him did not contribute to the development of modern trends in poetry, but Ezekiel made all the difference by rejecting the past. In an interview, he claims that "The immediate environment is one of my concerns" ("with Imtiaz and Anil Dharker" 48). Contemporary society, its problems, environment, and the crises of individuals were what Ezekiel was concerned about – he widely addressed the present ambience of Indian society in his work. Here is also proof of his individuality – although he was inspired by the great American modernist poet Williams, the reflection of the inspiration in his work is minimum. Ezekiel wrote some poems following his style, but he composed a poem titled "For William Carlos Williams" in which the poet declares that he does not want to write like him, but he likes the mode of his writing. Here are some lines from the poem:

> I do not want
> to write
> poetry like yours
> but still I
> love
> the way you do it. ("For William Carlos Williams" 1-6)

Fascinated by Williams's style and mode, Ezekiel, of course, had much liking for his poetry, but he did not want to imitate the American poet, because imitation is what he disliked and avoided. The poem is written in such a way that it has become close to the style of Williams's poetry, as there is a mark of precision, finesse, and direct treatment of particulars in the poem.

In the later stage of his poetic career, Ezekiel showed

> a greater command over his art, a deeper maturity in thought, a more delicate sense of craft, a higher sensitive awareness of words, and their poetical content, a more skillful tightness in organization and a deeper inward awareness of the organic form of a poem than in the past. (Shahane 253)

It is indeed an appropriate observation that Ezekiel gradually improved his craft,

achieved an exceptional command over techniques and styles of poetry, and was able to earn a secure position as the front-ranking Indian poet writing in English. Over time, he became able to demonstrate a significant progress, with individual qualities, in his work – from style to content, diction to syntax, and from control over line-breaks to organization, he left an imprint of a positive change, progress, and uniqueness. This kind of transformation took place because many things worked as a force for him. In this regard, Wiseman observes:

> To change a style, a voice, a tone in a major and dramatic way does not come easily to a poet, implying, as it does, far more than a surface tinkering with words and lines. It necessitates new ways of looking at the world, new and strange rhythms of thought and feeling, and, often, new kinds of subject matter which insist upon their own particular shapes and sounds. (250)

The above observation by Wiseman is definitely a general statement concerning all poets and writers who strive to seek their own self and find their own voice in writing. Change of time, location, social structure, values, and so forth provide the poets and writers with new materials and themes for writing. Ezekiel went through the same phases of time, gathered varied experiences, and was able to establish himself as an outstanding poet with individual qualities. Regarding Ezekiel's progress, K R Srinivasa Iyengar argues, "In his later poetry … there is revealed a more careful craftsmanship, a more marked restraint and a colder, a more conscious intellectuality, than the first two volumes" (657). Unlike his early collections of poetry, the latter ones – *The Unfinished Man*, *The Exact Name*, *Hymns in Darkness* – bear the marks of improvement, maturity, perfection, intellectuality, wisdom, restraint, precision, and finesse in style, technique, diction, and presentation. The poems show that the poet had his control over language and handled the themes more competently.

Ezekiel's poems have crisp descriptive details of Indian landscapes, with which the poet deeply feels an affinity as he writes, "The Indian landscape sears my eyes. / I have become part of it" ("Background, Casually" 66-67). The poet has used the word "sear," which, in fact, expresses his deep love for the sights and sounds of the country – he considers himself to be an integral part of India. From *A Time to Change*, his first collection of poems, to *Latter-Day Psalms*, the last collection, the poet exhibits his mastery over content and form. Apart from the details of objects from the surroundings, the poet exposes imperfections and incongruities existing in society with precise and powerful poetic language. In many of his poems, India is shown as having the lush abundance of topography, and the poet presents the bounty of the country rather than complaining much against what his land lacks in comparison with other places with which he is well familiar. India, its culture, landscape, diversity, and its rich tradition, therefore, are what have shaped Ezekiel's poetic world. Above all, the poet has been profoundly influenced by the postcolonial reality of the country.

Note

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Hoarding Spaces: The Laboratory in Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde* and Wells's *The Invisible Man*

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Abstract

In *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and *The Invisible Man*, R L Stevenson and H G Wells respectively represent the laboratory as an invasive site that "hoards" public spaces. This paper argues that the two novels' laboratory manifests as a heterotopic space that stands in radical opposition to the public space. This study further argues that the tensions in the two stories are founded on how the private practice of science within the laboratory invades public space. As a space of otherness cast in opposition to public visual accessibility, the laboratory in the selected novels becomes the approximation of concealment and hoarding of important, as well as dangerous, knowledge. Finally, this study compares the laboratory's representations in the two books to show how the tensions between the private and the public spaces interact within and across narratives of the late Victorian period.

Keywords: Hoarding Spaces, Private and Public Spaces, Laboratory, Heterotopic Space

As Louis James has noted, many imaginative creations of the late Victorian period come "from a cultural schizophrenia" (2) that derived from the mixed feelings of anxiety and excitement towards scientific discoveries of the time. As a place for scientific experiments, the laboratory became a convenient artistic symbol with which some Victorian writers probed the consequences of science. Anne Stiles reveals that the dominant feeling in the late nineteenth-century Britain was pessimism towards evolutionary science, a pessimism that was given expression in the late Victorian journal titled *Mind* wherein popular critics and even scientists such as Thomas Huxley, James Sully, Francis Galton, and Alexander Gain published articles that discountenanced scientific practices and discoveries of the time (319). Some of these critical writings, as Stiles further notes, have been widely influential in the positions taken by writers of the late Victorian period, specifically Robert Louis Stevenson and Herbert George Wells (323). These writers published dystopian science romances in which the laboratory took the form of a "devil's smithy," as expressed in Robert Browning's poem "The Laboratory" (1844). In *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (henceforth, *Jekyll and Hyde*) and *The Invisible Man*, Stevenson and Wells respectively represent the laboratory as an invasive site that "hoards" public spaces.

Philip Tocker reminds us that the word "hoard" derived its meaning from the sixteenth-century practice of outdoor poster advertising for the storing or holding on to "space on the rough board enclosure surrounding construction work which was commonly used for posting" (26). To *hoard* in this sense, therefore, signifies both taking over and concealment of space. In the two selected novels for this study, the laboratory is depicted as a metaphor for how the private practice of science *hoards* public space, an act that creates a tension between the private and the public spaces.

To draw insight from Michel Foucault, space, among other things, can be the "intersection of places" (1), that is, a "form of relations among sites" (2). Space provides the environment within which many places or sites interact. Yet, a space has an interactional relationship with other spaces. Each space is defined through the cluster of relations that links it to other spaces. However, in this paper, I am more interested in the space Foucault refers to as heterotopia – the other space, the opposite or the physical manifestation of utopia. These are spaces that "have the curious property of being in relation with all other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize or invert the set of relations they happen to designate, mirror or reflect" (Foucault 3). Heterotopias are based on a displacement that arises when places are termed in opposite to the generally occupied space. Such spaces – the heterotopias – become isolated from the general space. Although, as Benjamin Genocchio has observed, Foucault's notion of heterotopias is problematic in not making a clear distinction between heterotopias and other physical spaces (40), in which case it is possible to categorize every spatial manifestation as heterotopia, I am nonetheless using heterotopia as the other space which creates a radical alterity between itself and an established space. In this case, the established space is the public space, the place where visual accessibility is not restricted to the public.

This paper therefore will show that the laboratory in *Jekyll and Hyde* and *The Invisible Man* manifests as a heterotopic space that stands in radical opposition to the public space. This study will also argue that the tensions in the two stories are founded on how the private practice of science within the laboratory invades public space. As a space of otherness cast in opposition to public visual accessibility, the laboratory in the selected novels becomes the approximation of concealment and hoarding of important, as well as dangerous, knowledge. Finally, this study will compare the representations of the laboratory in the two books to show how the tensions between the private and the public spaces interact within and across narratives of the late Victorian period.

Apart from the laboratory, there are other heterotopias in radical opposition to established public spaces in the Victorian period – mental asylums and prisons, for instance. Some other heterotopias like the libraries, museums, art galleries, and display shops, unlike the laboratory, remained subjected to the public gaze and thus did not inspire feelings of anxiety in the society. Even mental asylums and prisons

did not create so much anxiety as the laboratory, because these sites were maintained with strict restriction of inmates who were not allowed to mingle with society. The Victorians' fascination "with the act of seeing" (1), as Kate Flint informs us, as well as the power and pleasure constructed in seeing, seems challenged in the emergence of private laboratory practice in late Victorian period. The laboratory in signifying an enclosed experimental space, hidden beyond the voyeuristic and controlling gaze of the public, led to hysterical reactions at the time. Andrew Cunningham and Perry Williams observe that by the late nineteenth century private laboratory practices, especially in physics and medicine, have replaced earlier public practices like the anatomy theaters. The public's anxiety towards private laboratory practices was not entirely based on abstract fears. The medical historians Bynum, Brown, and Porter remark that many new discoveries were made in the latter part of the nineteenth century "when new pathogenic organisms were being announced every few months" (129). They note that such infectious diseases as tuberculosis, cholera, and gonorrhoea became known from laboratory rooms, leading to mixed feelings over the potentials of laboratories to manufacture and infect the public – physically and psychologically – with *new* diseases that were not previously known or that were not previously in existence. The restriction of visual access to the public on the activities within the laboratory space further intensified public anxiety.

The stories of *Jekyll and Hyde* and *The Invisible Man* reveal late Victorian suspicion of the laboratory as a site for the creation of social disorder. Represented as a place with the potential to destroy individual and social harmony, the laboratory in these stories becomes a site for the transformation of the scientist into a monster and a threat to society.

In *Jekyll and Hyde,* the laboratory is the private space within which Jekyll creates Hyde. Importantly, Hyde is not only a creation of Jekyll's, but also the product of Jekyll's transformation. The private space of laboratory experimentation destroys the individual scientist and poses a threat to the public. The story reveals that the experiments and discoveries within the private space of the laboratory do not remain within the laboratory. Such discoveries as Mr Hyde escape from the laboratory into the society. They contaminate and threaten the stability of the community. Already, laboratories signify the sites of experiment and the potential places for the manufacture of diseases in cases of failed experiments for instance. The disease metaphor and the notion of failed experiments are strong in the narrative depiction of Edward Hyde. Hyde's contact with the society is portrayed as contagious. He infects the people who come in contact with him with his "pure evil" (71). He brings out the worst in them – morally and physically. Although it can be contended that it is not the wrong in Hyde but the wrong in these characters that manifests in their meeting with Hyde, yet it is during such contacts with Mr Hyde that they display their extreme behavior. The gentlemen, Mr Enfield and the unnamed doctor in the beginning of the story, are said to have "screwed [Hyde] up to a hundred pounds," (9) inflating the cost of the treatment of the child who Hyde has trampled upon

when he runs into her path. Also, Mr Utterson, believing that Mr Hyde has taken his friend and client, Dr Jekyll, hostage over some past sins requests Jekyll to permit him to clean up his (Jekyll's) mess by implicating Hyde in something that could free Jekyll from the burden of his past sin. The most obvious impact of this contagious destructiveness of laboratory discoveries in the story is seen in Dr Hastie Lanyon's deterioration after witnessing Hyde transform into Jekyll. Lanyon suffers from the psychological exposure to the scientific discovery from Jekyll's laboratory. After this incident, Dr Lanyon says in his letter to Mr Utterson,

> I saw what I saw, I heard what I heard, and my soul sickened at it; and yet now when that sight has faded from my eyes, I ask myself if I believe it, and I cannot answer. My life is shaken to its roots; sleep has left me; the deadliest terror sits by me at all hours of the day and night; and I feel that my days are numbered, and that I must die. (66)

The narrative language used to describe Hyde in the story is full of images of degeneracy, contagion, and disease. At one point, Mr Utterson says that Hyde possesses "one of those maladies that both torture and deform the sufferer" (50). In another instance, Hyde is described by the butler Poole as the "masked thing like a monkey" (52).

The enclosure of the laboratory space beyond public censorship and control leads the individual scientist to extremes, beyond the bounds of caution. Jekyll remarks, "the temptation of a discovery so singular and profound, at last overcame my suggestions of alarm" (69). Jekyll's desire at the onset bears a mark of socially good intent in what he regards as the wish to cure a widespread human problem of the warring members in humanity. But the desire for personal glory and power, envisioned within his laboratory space, leads to his catastrophic end. The laboratory space in this story therefore signifies a place of scientific egotism, of destructive desires, and of the disorder of the individual. As a private space, Jekyll's laboratory is a potential threat to the public, rather than a cure for the society. Yet, if the laboratory as a private space is radically opposed to public gaze, then even Mr Utterson's study where the letters that explain the secret life of Dr Jekyll are hidden becomes implicated. Such private heterotopias that emerge from high intellectualism and professionalism and which maintain an occult disposition towards the public are questioned in the story.

Stevenson depicts the laboratory as a site within which the progressive scientist, without a level of public control, transforms into a monster. Interestingly, Dr Jekyll's laboratory has once been a public anatomy theater before he converts it into a private chemical lab. The description of the laboratory's trajectory carries a tone of anticlimax:

> The doctor had bought the house from the heirs of a celebrated surgeon; and his own tastes being rather chemical than anatomical, had changed the destination of the block at the bottom of the garden … the theatre, once

> crowded with eager students and now lying gaunt and silent, the tables laden with chemical apparatus, the floor strewn with crates and littered with packing straw. (32)

Dr Jekyll, like every other human being in the society, is imperfect and divided between the attractions of good and evil. But as Mr Hyde – the transformed scientist from the laboratory – Jekyll becomes "pure evil" (71). The laboratory transforms the scientist into an emotionless monster. This view of laboratories as private spaces within which the scientist is transformed into a monster is more elaborately depicted in H G Wells's *The Invisible Man.* Griffin the invisible man is dismissive of public laboratories. He abhors the intrusion of the public into his private affairs, and he struggles to restrict the public from knowing what he does within his laboratory and from what he believes to be the public's desire to rob him of his intellectual property.

In *The Invisible Man,* Griffin the liberal scientist is invisible to the public gaze. His invisibility on the one hand stems from his lack of social status and unwillingness to participate in society. On the other hand, the society refuses to accord him social status, prying into his private space and seeking to establish its control over him. The tensions in the novel often arise when society pries into the activities going on within Griffin's enclosed laboratory. At "Coaches and Horses," Mrs Hall and the Iping villagers curiously probe what Griffin does within his room, and also what is hidden within the bandaged figure of Griffin himself. Griffin has faced a similar situation with his landlord and his neighbors at the house in Great Portland Street before he disappears completely from their view. Griffin's inclination to hide in his laboratory alienates him from the society, making him apprehensive and violent each time he feels that the public space is trying to invade his privacy. Meanwhile, the nature of his private laboratory practice is already an invasion into public space and consciousness. His seclusion arouses an unhealthy curiosity in the public.

Daniel Berlyne's theory of curiosity is instructive here in explaining the relationship between curiosity and knowledge or the desire to know, as well as how curiosity can be understood as the response to an already invaded psyche. Berlyne observes that curiosity is often usually externally stimulated, particularly from experiences that create stimulus conflict or incongruities (180-181). That is, new experiences and discoveries are invasions that often create a complex and uncertain sensation within the brain. This sensation leads to an unpleasant experience that stimulates the brain to act in ways that can dispel the uncertainty. Although Berlyne's theory does not account for the curiosity that comes in contexts that may not require any new experience or discovery, it however provides an explanation of the kind of motivation behind the conflict in *The Invisible Man.* The incongruity or stimulus conflict created in the situation of Griffin's hoarding of knowledge and the anxiety that his privatized knowledge can be harmful to society (or even for the mere inquisitiveness to know what is hidden within his laboratory) arouses social curiosity

at first, and later a concerted violence towards the isolated scientist. From this sense too, curiosity reinforces Kate Flint's observation of the Victorians' attractions with the visual and the construction of power and vulnerability on the ability to see and be seen respectively: "The Victorians were fascinated with the act of seeing, with the question of the reliability – or otherwise – of the human eye, and with the problems of interpreting what they saw" (1).

Interestingly in both *Jekyll and Hyde* and *The Invisible Man,* the scientist's body is both laboratory (experimental space) and experimental object. This point is clearly demonstrated in *The Invisible man* as Griffin's laboratory space becomes aesthetically linked with his body. At Great Portland Street, his landlord and neighbors are curious about the activities within his laboratory room. But at Iping, the villagers are curious to know what is hidden within his bandaged body. The body as the scientist's private laboratory opens up more avenues for the investigation of gazing and spaces. The Victorian society's investment in the visual and the desire of the public to have visual access to the physical and material body (laboratory) of the scientist lead the late Victorians into antagonism with the increasingly isolated scientist. The inability to see the scientist's laboratory complicated with society's feeling of vulnerability inspired from the awareness of being seen by the scientist further sets the public against the hidden scientist. Ironically, the more secluded and invisible the scientist turns, the more visible they become to the haunted public psyche. This point reinforces the notion of the invasive nature of private laboratory practice at the time. Hyde's deformity makes him visible to the public even when no one remembers exactly how he looks, given also that no photographs of him exist in the public domain. Griffin's invisibility emphasizes on this point better. He becomes visibly present in the public consciousness in his invisibility, a development that creates an uneasy relationship between him and the public.

Even before the latter part of the nineteenth century, writers have been skeptical of scientific exploits, often showing how such ventures can be destructive to the scientist and to the society. For example, Mary Shelley's Faustian hero in *Frankenstein* is a scientist who alienates himself from society in pursuit of grand ambitions. He ends up creating a monster that makes life miserable for him and his relatives. The major difference, however, between such earlier and later Victorian dismissals of scientific practice is that the later Victorian writers like Stevenson and Wells are more wary of the private practice of science as against the practice of science generally. In *Frankenstein,* it is basically the grand ambitions of science that is critiqued, not the private practice of science. Stevenson and Wells portray their own Faustian scientists' pursuits as scientific processes towards their dehumanization largely due to their seclusion from public control. Once alienated from the public, science becomes private and serves the individual will rather than a social need. The implications for the alienated scientist's seclusion are usually privations that – apart from the dangerous experiments that could transform them into monsters – further deny them of the basic means of social survival. In Griffin's case, his ambitious

experiment runs him into bankruptcy, and further leads him into desperate criminal activities as he struggles to survive.

Without institutional backings which already signify a level of public control on experiments, Wells depicts in the story the futility of embarking on such lone projects as Griffin's. Money is a powerful symbol in the story. Griffin's monkish behavior and inability to establish healthy relationships with people lead him to relate with the society only in a formalized, business-like atmosphere founded on monetary terms, as Paul Cantor has observed. From his landlord at Portland Street to Mrs Hall at Iping, Griffin loses his humanity further as his relationship with others becomes defined in monetary terms.

At first, we are made to think that Griffin's invisibility (his secret discovery) is the cause of his vulnerability and that society is already primed up to antagonize him. The curiosity that greets his contact with people reveals the public desire to invade his private space, to know what is going on within the laboratory. But gradually we realize that it is more about Griffin's unwillingness to participate in society as against society's invasive prying into his private space. Even when he realizes that his lone scientism is useless without some form of social existence, Griffin still holds on to his private space and turns violent towards the society. His privations are more self-inflicted than socially-conditioned. His desire to privatize knowledge alienates him completely from society and relationships. He is scornful of the open nature of laboratories in institutions like the universities, suspecting that his professor will steal (publicize) his discoveries and partake in his "glory." He tells Kemp thus:

> Now you have me! And all that I knew and had in mind a year after I left London – six years ago. But I kept it to myself. I had to do my work under frightful disadvantages. Oliver, my professor, was a scientific bounder, a journalist by instinct, a thief of ideas – he was always prying! And you know the knavish system of the scientific world. I simply would not publish, and let him share my credit. (78)

He abandons the public laboratories for a more private space. The more he embraces his private laboratory the more alienated he becomes from family, from friends, and from love. In his egotistical manner, he dismisses the alienating effects of his laboratory:

> I did not feel then that I was lonely, that I had come out from the world into a desolate place. I appreciated my loss of sympathy, but I put it down to the general inanity of things. Reentering my room seemed like the recovery of reality. There were the things I knew and loved. There stood the apparatus, the experiments arranged and waiting. And now there was scarcely a difficulty left, beyond the planning of details. (81)

He loses his sense of humanity, showing neither remorse nor sympathy over his

father's death. He foreshadows his own death through the dream he has the night he successfully makes himself invisible:

> I experienced again the strange sensation of seeing the cloth disappear, and so I came round to the windy hillside and the sniffing old clergyman mumbling "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," at my father's open grave.
>
> "You also," said a voice, and suddenly I was being forced towards the grave. I struggled, shouted, appealed to the mourners, but they continued stonily following the service; the old clergyman, too, never faltered droning and sniffing through the ritual. I realised I was invisible and inaudible, that overwhelming forces had their grip on me. I struggled in vain, I was forced over the brink, the coffin rang hollow as I fell upon it, and the gravel came flying after me in spadefuls. Nobody heeded me, nobody was aware of me. (96)

Griffin's laboratory is not the only one apparent in the story. Dr Kemp's study is also a private laboratory that symbolizes high intellectualism and it is hidden from the public gaze. His private study has always been a laboratory, through which he gazes at the world unseen. Only when there is no threat of an intruding public gaze does he leave his window blinds up. His introduction in the story goes thus:

> IN THE EARLY EVENING TIME Dr. Kemp was sitting in his study in the belvedere on the hill overlooking Burdock. It was a pleasant little room, with three windows north, west, and south – and bookshelves covered with books and scientific publications, and a broad writing-table, and, under the north window, a microscope, glass slips, minute instruments, some cultures, and scattered bottles of reagents. Dr. Kemp's solar lamp was lit, albeit the sky was still bright with the sunset light, and his blinds were up because there was no offence of peering outsiders to require them pulled down. (59)

In a sense, the difference between Kemp's laboratory and Griffin's is that Kemp makes his private discoveries "public" – public in the sense that his discoveries are available to the cult of scientists or the science societies, unlike Griffin who refuses to publish. Kemp is due to receive a *fellowship* – social recognition – from the Royal Society because he publishes his scientific findings. Unlike Griffin who is a private scientist, Kemp is a *social* scientist, the type Griffin calls scientist-journalists. In another sense, however, Kemp's works are private and hidden from public gaze, given their high intellectualism. His high intellectual disposition, which already sets him apart from the common people of Port Stowe in his isolation within his study, is perhaps best illustrated in his initial condescending attitude towards the people over the rumors of an invisible man. Kemp believes then that the rumor is simply a manifestation of the common people's vacuousness.

Wells may have also used Kemp to represent the cult of scientists (the Royal Society) which tries to exercise power and control over society and over private discoveries.

In this sense, Kemp's public is different; his is the Royal Society's. The systematic artfulness with which he plots Griffin's doom exposes his motives to destroy a free and private power that threatens to displace the respectable place of the Royal Society. When Adye the police officer remarks that the methods proposed by Kemp to hunt down Griffin are "unsportsmanlike" (a metaphor for inhuman), Kemp replies, "The man's become inhuman, I tell you … I am as sure he will establish a reign of terror – so soon as he has got over the emotions of this escape – as I am sure I am talking to you. Our only chance is to be ahead. He has cut himself off from his kind" (112). "His kind" that Kemp refers to may by no means be the generality of humanity as it can be the cult of scientists. Griffin's death therefore is not entirely the victory of society over the individual, but also the victory of a regulated public authority (like the Royal Society or the government) to control the individual's private space. It is the victory of the Royal Society over the prodigal scientist. Perhaps this view explains the empathetic narrative tone that informs Griffin's death.

The Invisible Man is Wells's depiction of the destructive tendencies of science and the tension between the public and the private spaces. From the story's plot, we can reach one significant conclusion: the private laboratory with its attendant alienation and inhumanization of the scientist can lead the lone scientific discoverer to one end – criminality! Like in *Jekyll and Hyde,* the creation from the laboratory is an infectious disease. This contagion metaphor has deeper implications in the two stories. The infectious power of laboratory discoveries does not die with the scientist who has discovered them. Like diseases, they spread. Already, Thomas Marvel has contracted the disease as we observe from the epilogue to the story.

Foucault's description of nineteenth-century European society's relation with the heterotopic space of the dead is significant here. The cemetery, we are informed, used to be located at the center of the city to signify the soul of the community. But in the nineteenth century, cemeteries were shifted to the outskirts of the city with the increased fear that death was an illness in itself and could be contagious. Foucault puts it thus: "The dead, it is supposed, bring illness to the living, and it is the presence and proximity of the dead right beside the house, next to the church, almost in the middle of the street, it is this proximity that propagates death itself" (6). This notion of contagion in such heterotopic spaces as the cemetery perhaps led society to move further away from public domain other *contagious* sites like asylum homes, prisons and even hospitals. But the laboratories remained in proximal relationship with the public. The fear of contagion from private laboratories can be traced to their proximity with public spaces. The denial of visual access into the private laboratories leads further to tensions between the individual and the community as we observe in both stories. These tensions that arise from the demand to see, especially in the awareness of being seen, reveal also how power and vulnerability are respectively constructed around seeing and being seen without seeing in the Victorian society. In these novels therefore, laboratories are depicted as destabilizing heterotopias that

superimpose their gaze on the public space. The laboratories threaten to control the ability of the public to gaze.

In both *Jekyll and Hyde* and *The Invisible Man,* the scientist is the visible unseen. The visibility of the unseen scientist who is hidden within the private laboratory walls hoards public space in the sense of a taking over of and a concealment of space, of knowledge, and of public consciousness. In the two stories, Jekyll/Hyde and Griffin use the confines of their laboratories to launch themselves in covert ways into the public space. Their different experiments provide them with means through which they can gaze at the society without being seen. One significant difference however between the representations of the laboratory in the two novels is on the scientist's purpose for disallowing public visual accessibility into the laboratory. In *Jekyll and Hyde,* visual accessibility is denied the public because of the scientist's desperate desire to cover up a failed experiment. In *The Invisible Man,* it is more about the scientist's desire to hoard or privatize knowledge.

Society's curious action to restore the scientist to public control eventually leads to disastrous ends for the scientists. In *Jekyll and Hyde,* the butler Poole mobilizes the people with the endorsement of Mr Utterson and they invade Jekyll's laboratory. In *The Invisible Man*, Dr Kemp mobilizes the inhabitants of Port Stowe to reclaim possession of Griffin's body as they bludgeon him into public visibility. Interestingly, in the two stories, at the point of the lone scientist's forceful public invasion into their private space, they cry out for "mercy." Hyde cries, "for God's sake, have mercy!" (53); Griffin cries, "Mercy! Mercy!" (128). But their cries fall on deaf public ears that are bent on reclaiming the private domain of the scientist for public control. These unheeded cries for mercy when considered as pleas for clemency from *erring* scientists raise moral charges against the Victorian public. Could the private practice of science and the discoveries from the secluded laboratories be a moral consequence of the public decadent behavior, a point more emphasized in *Jekyll and Hyde*? Could the society's anxiety and unease with a heterotopic space that seems to play surveillance on its hidden activities be a result of society's desire to suppress such gazes in its bid to cover its hypocritical existence?

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Roots of Power and Resistance: An Allegorical Reading of Syed Waliullah's *Lal Shalu* and *Tree Without Roots*

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Abstract

This paper traces the sources of power that Majeed, the protagonist of Syed Waliullah's *Tree Without Roots* (1967), manipulates to claim his influential position in Mahabbatpur – a fictional village in the then East Pakistan. *Tree without Roots* is Waliullah's own transcreation of his novel *Lal Shalu* (1948). While "lal shalu" literally means "red cloth," the significant change in the title of the transcreation – with its recurrent use of images of roots, rootlessness and uprooting – reflects the author's added emphasis on Majeed's obsession with power. Exploiting social and cultural elements, such as religion, superstition, gender inequality and class structure, Majeed creates an atmosphere of fear to rule over Mahabbatpur. He becomes economically and socially powerful, for a time dominating the entire village with his narrative before any hint of resistance. This paper comparatively analyses the original novel and its transcreation, examining the works in the context of the Partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, a division based on religion – the chief of source of Majeed's power. The paper interprets Majeed's vulnerability and eventual downfall as an allegory of the futility of separate nation states based on religion.

Keywords: Transcreation, Partition, Power-knowledge, National Education Policy, Patriarchy and Resistance

Tree Without Roots (1967), Syed Waliullah's own transcreation of his Bangla novel *Lal Shalu* (1948) – literally meaning "red cloth," traces the rise to power of a seemingly harmless *muezzin*, Majeed. Majeed uses his cunning to transform himself from a stranger to a person of eminence in Mahabbatpur, where he sets up his establishment on shaky ground. Mahabbatpur is evidently an ordinary village of East Bengal, and like any other village, it is home to a number of religious poor farming people. Majeed is not a native of the place. He was forced long ago to leave his home "where there were too many people and not enough food" (*Tree Without Roots* 7). He lived for a while in the Garo Hills where he worked as a *muezzin* to, in Majeed's words, shine "the light of God" on the "illiterate" and "infidel" locals (6). His life was lonely and difficult. To improve his economic and social condition,

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Majeed travels downhill. He takes with him religion and intoxicates the inhabitants of Mahabbatpur, exploiting them for his personal gain. It is here that he strikes roots deep in the soil. Majeed uses certain mechanisms to maintain a position of power in the locality and challenges all threats to his power. This article comparatively analyzes *Lal Shalu* and *Tree Without Roots* taking into consideration the historical context in which the works were composed.

Waliullah started writing *Lal Shalu* while he was in Kolkata sometime before the Partition of 1947. In the background of the novel is the formation of India and the two Pakistans – countries founded "in the context of religious and/or Islamic zeal" (Maksud 219, our translation). After Partition, Waliullah came to Dhaka, where he completed *Lal Shalu* and published it in 1948. The Partition, religious riots, and mass migration form the backdrop of the novel, where we find a common man turned conman abusing religion as a tool to reach a powerful position. The source of Majeed's power is the *mazar*, which is not really the resting place of a holy man, but a forgotten tomb on the outskirts of Mahabbatpur. At the beginning of the novel, we find the grave "oozing with damp rot," with two collapsed walls and "moss-overgrown blackened bricks" visible on the remaining ones (10). Majeed, with his narrative power, transforms this grave into the *mazar* of Pir Shah Sadeque. Sometimes he is afraid that he may not be able to sustain his con-game for long, but the people of Mahabbatpur are "so simple and good-hearted" that he is reassured in his ability to trick the villagers (12).

Upon Majeed's arrival at Mahabbatpur, we notice him speaking at a gathering of people before the house of Khaleque. The protagonist could not have chosen a better place to announce his dramatic arrival in the village. He is drawn to the wealthiest man in the area. Seeking a powerful ally in the process of gaining control is part of his game; deposing that ally to become the dominant one is the next step. In Tanvir Mokammel's film *Lal Shalu* (2001), Majeed is provided with a *mazar*-assistant, a would-be Majeed, who does not appear in Waliullah's original novel or in the transcreation. The assistant, a menacing figure, has the potential to oust Majeed and seize power in the way that Majeed subtly overthrows Khaleque to become the most influential person in Mahabbatpur. The conman refrains from using force in his bid for authority. His ploy is more elusive and functions at an ideological level.

Michel Foucault, who theorized the nature of power, notes that after the end of the eighteenth century, the nature of exercise of power began to change. In the place of direct force, the process of domination began to incorporate "subtle coercion" (Foucault 181). Discourse was institutionalized to allow power to be "at once continuous, uninterrupted, adapted, and 'individualized'" (Foucault 61). The discourse institutionalized an intact relationship between power and knowledge that gains a certain amount of authority and legitimacy. Majeed legitimizes his *mazar* cult through his narrative, which is based on a piece of knowledge he has created through lies and false perceptions. He produces an imaginary *pir*, and accuses the

villagers of neglecting his tomb, thereby committing a grave sin. Majeed instils in the villagers a deep sense of guilt and remorse: "You are all blind … You are ignorant men, men without understanding. If you were not, then how could you have left the *mazar* of Saint Shah Sadeque unattended like this?" (10). Majeed then claims that he had been living in the Garo Hills in peace, comfort, and contentment, performing God's will, till one night he dreamed a special dream. He narrates how he was called upon by the saint to save the latter from oblivion and remarks that he was "destined to see the dream" (11). "Allah knoweth, ye know not. We know nothing, my brethren, nothing, beyond what the Almighty wishes us to know," he proclaims (10). Majeed's myth and narrative are intended to establish him as among the elect, for the Almighty has apparently given him secret knowledge through the dream. Majeed converts this secret and sacred knowledge into power. He becomes the intermediary between God/the saint and the inhabitants of Mahabbatpur.

Moreover, knowledge about the villagers helps Majeed's accession to power. The shrewd Majeed understands their psychology well. He is aware of their weaknesses and their strengths, their superstitions, and what may give rise to fear within them: "Day after day Majeed studied the villagers surreptitiously, seeking to learn their habits and customs, trying to penetrate their minds," and he decides that they are "strong and vigorous, but a little naïve" (14). With his secret knowledge derived directly from the Almighty, and his knowledge of the villagers, Majeed succeeds in creating a hegemonic position for himself. He generates an aura of mystery and fear around the *mazar* and hence himself – holding himself beyond the common people's wit and increasing his power. Consequently, Abul Maksud observes that the villagers become like domestic animals tied to the stake of the *mazar*; they can neither move freely nor go beyond their ordained space (231). The caretaker of the *mazar* here is similar to the King in Satyajit Ray's *Hirak Rajar Deshe* (1980), who develops a "systematic prisonhood" to control the body and mind of his subjects: "The more they know, the less they obey." Knowledge, therefore, becomes the property of the mighty. Majeed too does not allow the villagers to seek knowledge beyond the boundaries he has set for them. By casting a mist over Mahabbatpur with his knowledge of the divine, he spreads his network of power.

Majeed's first wife, Rahima, becomes a symbol of the villagers. She is awed by the enigma surrounding Majeed. To solidify his hold, he constructs a world of "must nots" about her: "You must not walk that way, Bibi … No, Bibi, you must not let yourself be seen like that out in the open" (18-19). Through the creation of fear and shame, "frail-bodied" Majeed establishes his sexual and spiritual dominance over "tall, heavily-built" Rahima (17). He transforms Rahima, once the village tomboy, into a "frightened, chilled, terrified" creature for behind Majeed "stood the enormous shadow of the *mazar*" (18). Within less than the length of a page in *Lal Shalu*, Waliullah pronounces the word *bhoy* or "fear" seven times in relation to Rahima (6-7). The novelist also remarks that the villagers are simply another version of Rahima – terrified and yielding.

Khaleque, the most powerful man in Mahabbatpur before Majeed's arrival, is no different from the other villagers in bowing to the latter's wishes. The two men support each other while vying for influence over Mahabbatpur. The renovation of the burial site of an unknown person takes place with Khaleque's financial investment. The grave is covered with a red cloth with silver trimmings, a shelter is constructed to protect the grave, and incense sticks and candles are lit around it. The *mazar* even hoists a triangular flag. Soon we see Majeed becoming the owner of a house, then an inner house. He buys land and cows, and his storehouse is stocked with grain. In addition to the *mazar*, Khaleque funds the *maktab* and the mosque. While Khaleque's "friendship" is vital for Majeed, the relationship with Majeed is also important for Khaleque. The landowner needs to be perceived as a religious figure for his popularity and acceptance among the villagers. Majeed helps in the creation and upholding of that image.

Majeed begins the process of extending control over Mahabbatpur through small incidents. First he scolds an old man, Dadu, for not knowing the *kalma*, the declaration of faith. Verbal abuse turns into corporeal punishment when he circumcises a grown boy and his father before the village. However, the disciplining of Tara Mian, which occurs next in the novel, marks a more complex form of control established by Majeed.

Tara Mian is the father of Kulsum, a widow working as part-time help in Majeed's household. Kulsum brings an unusual request to Rahima. She demands that Majeed mediate with God for the death of her quarrelsome parents. Waliullah here provides a comic scene of discord between the old couple, where Tara Mian gets worked up by insults hurled at him by his spouse. The old woman reserves her "trump card" for the climax of the argument: "Do you still think you were the father of my children? … I swear by God, that you were not their father" (26). Waliullah's presentation of their quarrels is lighthearted; it is as if the couple enjoys their sparring ritual. At one point, Tara Mian charges at his wife, stick in hand, and is relieved when his sons tackle him. No doubt exists in his mind that he is indeed the father of his three children, and his wife uses such language only to aggravate him.

Tara Mian's fault, for Majeed, is not that he has secreted his wife's crime as he pretends. Rather, Tara Mian threatens the image of omnipotence that Majeed has created surrounding himself in Mahabbatpur. He undermines the *mazar*-keeper's position as an all-seeing, all-knowing being. When Majeed starts meddling in the domestic affair, instead of attributing the latter's knowledge of his wife's comment to some intuitive ability, Tara Mian goes home and beats Kulsum – perceiving her part in informing the outsider. Tara Mian, therefore, must be chastised. Since Majeed is aware that he will not be easily subdued, he devises an ingenious method to punish the old man – a punishment of the soul.

According to Foucault, "It would be wrong to say that the soul is an illusion, or an ideological effect. On the contrary, it exists, it has a reality, it is produced permanently

around, on, within the body by the functioning of a power that is exercised on those punished" (177). On the evening of Kulsum's beating, Majeed summons a special assembly at the *mazar*, inviting the village to witness Tara Mian's ruin. He dominates the trial – planting suspicion in Tara Mian's mind regarding his wife's fidelity and the paternity of his children. In the course of the trial, the audience witnesses the fierce and bold Tara Mian gradually becoming "less defiant" and "less arrogant," till eventually he is unable to meet Majeed's eyes (30). Eventually, it is proven before all that Tara Mian has sinned by concealing the wrongdoing of his spouse. Moreover, he is seen as a cuckold, daftly bringing up three children who are probably not his own. Tara Mian's manhood is shattered. He is seen as a spineless creature who, despite repeatedly hearing confessions of guilt from his adulterous wife, has failed to act. His soul is crushed. At one point, he begins to sob loudly, and on sudden impulse, leaps forward and kisses Majeed's feet. Back home, he asks Kulsum to forgive him. Besides begging forgiveness from his daughter, prayer and giving "five-pice worth of offerings to the *mazar*" were to constitute Tara Mian's expiation as prescribed by Majeed (33).

Following the trial of Tara Mian, the first storm in the novel breaks out. This storm foreshadows the hailstorm to take place near the end of the novel. During the inclemency, Kulsum enters Tara Mian's room, where the old man breaks his self-imposed fast. A little later he goes out, and in the Bangla novel, simply disappears. In the transcreation, he goes to the *mazar*, where "sitting there in front of the grave covered with its red cloth and silver trimmings," he dies (35). None of the villagers feel sympathy for the victim in either text, for "he had sinned … and now he was suffering for it" (32). There is no mark of bodily harm in Tara Mian's punishment; Majeed simply crushes his will to live. Nobody suspects that the punishment springs from Majeed's dual motives of impressing Kulsum, and simultaneously, uprooting a threat to his omnipotence. Ironically, the soul-killer consoles Kulsum after her father's demise. The bereaved daughter, like the other villagers, finds meaning in Tara Mian's punishment.

The *pir* or holy man visiting the neighboring village of Nawabpur offers the next challenge to Majeed's authority. Majeed's enmity with the newcomer, Tanvir Mokammel points out, is grounded in professional rivalry (29). The episode receives varying treatments in the original novel and its transcreation. While in *Lal Shalu*, Majeed confronts his powerful adversary – winning back followers from Mahabbatpur, the core of the chapter is omitted in *Tree Without Roots*. The arrival of the *pir* merely serves as a transition, in the transcreation, for Waliullah to turn to the next topic, which he treats in detail – the chastising of Amena, wife of Khaleque.

The visiting *pir* seems to have done an even more thorough job than Majeed of establishing his narrative and spreading his branches of power, for masses from many villages throng to Nawabpur to pay homage to this professed religious leader. In *Tree Without Roots*, Majeed makes a feeble attempt to present himself as more

powerful than the *pir*. However, the miracle-maker's stay in the vicinity does not overwhelm him because Khaleque, his much-needed ally, shows no interest in the *pir*. Concentrating on Khaleque alone, Waliullah reduces an entire chapter of *Lal Shalu* to a few remarks in *Tree Without Roots*. The significant reduction of an important chapter marks a narrowing from the social to the personal, for while *Lal Shalu* can be read as an allegory of the social, economic, and political conditions of East Pakistan that led to the flourishing of Majeed and his kind, Majeed, the individual, is at the center of *Tree Without Roots*.

Though Majeed's hostility towards his rival is missing in *Tree Without Roots*, it is clear even in the later work that abusing religion for personal benefit is not unique to Majeed, but was a common feature of society during that period:

> It is the custom in Muslim Bengal for the *pirs* to visit their followers each year immediately after the harvest when homes are well stocked with grain … There they camp for days on end, feasting, holding prayer meetings, addressing huge gatherings, and showering blessings on the sick and healthy alike. (42)

It is evident that these *pir*-impersonators intend to reap maximum profits from visits to their admirers, for it is not only their hosts – like the well-to-do Matlub Khan – who are at the peak of prosperity following the harvest. Even the poorest peasants are capable of bestowing material gifts at the time. Majeed, in *Tree Without Roots*, seems less perturbed about the peasants of Mahabbatpur visiting the *pir*. His sole purpose is to prevent his own Matlub Khan, Khaleque, from falling into the clutches of his enemy – a man he ironically dubs *bhondo pir* or false *pir* in *Lal Shalu*.

Amena, Khaleque's first wife, falls an unwitting prey to Majeed's obsession with power rooted in the dual forces of the *mazar* and Khaleque's patronage. Amena, an attractive woman of about thirty, has been married for thirteen years but is childless. Khaleque, in the meantime, has remarried, and Tanu, his second wife, produces a new baby every other year. The elder wife dreams of a "sweet, fat little thing" to love and nurture, for which she instigates Khaleque to bring blessed water from the *pir* (47). Amena's crime, from Majeed's perspective, is obvious. Overstepping Majeed, she has commended Khaleque to his competitor. He fears that Khaleque's involvement with the *pir* may cause the already waning flock of Mahabbatpur to entirely lose faith in him. Amena's request also highlights her awareness of Majeed's incapacity – Rahima too is childless. She, therefore, cannot be spared. The challenge for Majeed, then, is to punish Amena without grieving Khaleque, for he cannot afford to lose the latter's support.

To put into effect the disciplining of Amena, Majeed concocts a theory of "coils" in a woman's womb preventing conception. The more coils there are, the more difficult it is for a woman to conceive; if there are too many, a woman remains childless. This fiction helps Majeed to explain both Amena and Rahima's condition.

Shifting the blame to Rahima for the couple's barrenness, he assumes the authority to solve Khaleque's problem. It is worth noting that though Majeed later remarries, Jamila, his second wife, too is shown childless in the duration of the novel.

As part of her punishment, Majeed invites Amena to circle the *mazar*, assuring his ability to unwind the coils if there are fewer than seven. She is to circle the grave after a day of fasting, without taking *sehri* or having *iftari*, and performing Majeed's made-up rituals. Amena's fainting in his custody is a stroke of luck for the keeper of the *mazar*. Instead of being startled into inaction by this "unexpected development," he calmly uses it to his advantage, explaining that her sinful soul shied away from the saint (58). He then craftily leads Khaleque to suggest divorce: "It would not be right to keep Amena under my roof any more. I shall send her away," Khaleque declares (68). Majeed engineers their divorce for another reason. Amena intrigues him. Since he has no power to make her yield to his desire, he ensures that Khaleque is stripped of the same power. Amena's punishment is also an indirect sentence on Khaleque for prioritizing his wife over Majeed.

Following the separation of Khaleque and Amena in *Tree Without Roots*, Majeed's ascension to power in Mahabbatpur appears confirmed. He is exempt from any kind of repercussion for his misdeeds. Even the most affluent man in the village is no match for him. Moreover, there is none to contest his assumed omnipotence, for Majeed never admits that he learned of Khaleque's order to bring blessed water from the *pir* from Dhala Mian, Tanu's brother. Rather, he pretends that his knowledge of the matter comes from his closeness to the saint of the *mazar* and to God. Mahabbatpur is, therefore, transformed into a panopticon-like state, where everything is controlled by the all-seeing Majeed.

Akkas, in *Lal Shalu*, could have provided stronger resistance to Majeed's authority than the illiterate population of the village or the ill-educated Khaleque. The young man has escaped Majeed's influence by venturing outside Mahabbatpur, where he picked up secular education. Yet Majeed, with his cunning, is also able to uproot the danger posed by Akkas – a character surprisingly absent in *Tree Without Roots*. The episode hints at the long-standing clash between secular and religious education in this part of the world. Abul Barkat et al. in *Political Economy of Madrassa Education in Bangladesh* provides a detailed account of the birth, growth, decline, and rise of *maktab*-madrassa education. During the Mughal period, these institutions "existed as the fountainhead of inspiration and guidance for the growth of the intellectual, moral, and cultural life of the society" (Barkat et al. 61). When the country was colonized, there were 80,000 madrassas in Bengal "functioning efficiently, maintaining high standard of teaching and offering a high degree of intellectual training" (62). However, the British rulers suspected these institutions of harboring the hope for a separate state of the Muslims. They started neglecting the madrassas, leading to their decline. In a further setback, the British government demolished many madrassas following the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857. The Darul Ulum Deoband

Madrassa then emerged, rejecting everything Western (63). This madrassa opposed the study of English, which would give learners access to the growing world of knowledge and science. Though it produced a number of scholars, historians, and poets, and played an important role in the movement against British rule, it is evident that its chief end was to disseminate Islamic education. This stance took a firmer grip after the Partition of 1947 based on religion. Barkat et al. attest that after the Partition, the government of Pakistan promoted madrassa education in both West and East Pakistan through direct patronization. Given the revival of *maktab*-madrassa education during the period when *Lal Shalu* was written, the ground is already prepared for Majeed to successfully shoot down Akkas' plan to set up a secular school that could churn out disciples capable of defying his reign.

Akkas appears in *Lal Shalu*, shortly after Amena's departure, with the hope of establishing a school in Mahabbatpur to spread modern "English education" – "Only school education can save the Muslims," he declares (*Lal Shalu* 45, our translation). However, the elders of the village, who are under Majeed's scheme, are not convinced by Akkas' argument. There are two *maktab*s to take care of education in the village, they retort. However, Akkas is adamant. He starts collecting funds for his dream project, and even applies to the government to set up a school in the locality, compelling Majeed to intervene. As with Tara Mian's case, Majeed calls a meeting at the *mazar* – his home-turf. Akkas comes prepared to debate in favor of modern education, but Majeed's attack comes from a different angle. "Where is your beard, *mian*? Aren't you the son of a Muslim?" he charges (*Lal Shalu* 45, our translation). Akkas looks around the *mazar*-room. He does not see another face resembling his own. There used to bebeardless men in the village before Majeed's era, but they seem to have become extinct, he reflects. Akkas is sufficiently embarrassed before the crowd. His desire to set up a school in Mahabbatpur is interpreted as a "*bodh motlob*" or "wicked purpose" (*Lal Shalu* 45, our translation). He wants to reason for the necessity of English education in the present day; but his intent is again overrun by Majeed, who agrees that times are indeed bad since people are disinclined towards Allah. Therefore, what the village actually needs is a mosque – a grand mosque to make the villagers proud. The assembly cheers as if Majeed has uttered what was in their hearts. Akkas, meanwhile, exits the meeting unacknowledged. With his retreat, Majeed becomes the unrivalled dictator of Mahabbatpur. With the acceptance of his proposal for a new mosque to supplement the religious instruction of the *maktab*s, Majeed evidently uproots the possibility of future contenders for leadership.

The formation of Pakistan in 1947 provided a firm ground for the growth of the madrassa like the ones existing in Mahabbatpur. The madrassa has continued to be influential after the liberation of Bangladesh. Barkat et al. again informs us that in the span of about six decades, the number of madrassas has rapidly increased from 4,330 in 1950 to 54,130 in 2008 (82). Further, during the period 1970-2005, the

madrassa grew at a faster rate (4.65%) than mainstream educational institutions (3.04%) (Barkat et al. 82). Haripada Datta compares Akkas' defeat to Majeed and his "*mazar* religion" to the defeat of secular education to religious education (97). The once prominent slogan "Send Your Child to School," according to Datta, has been overpowered by the slogan "Send Your Child to Madrassa" (97). Though, according to a report in *The Daily Star*, approximately 75 percent of madrassa students remain unemployed ("Three of Four," pp. 3-4), this form of education is still relatively preferred by people of the lower class in Bangladesh.

More recently, religious considerations have also entered the realm of mainstream education. The National Curriculum Board of Bangladesh, 2017, unexpectedly dropped a number of texts from the Bangla syllabus at the primary and secondary levels[1]. The decision to exclude these texts was controversial, and it was alleged that non-Muslim and progressive writers were dropped to meet the demands of various fundamentalist organizations. It was also claimed that certain texts were removed as part of the process of making the curriculum a communal one. Bangladesh came into being in 1971 under the guiding principle of secularism, which was to be one of the baselines in theory and practice. Noting the fall of this promise, Jatin Sarkar laments that it appears that the ghost of Pakistan is still with us (13).

In *Tree Without Roots*, Waliullah omits the chapter involving Akkas. Hence, the debate regarding secular and madrassa education is overlooked. The mosque is the brainchild of Khaleque, in the later version, to reduce Amena's guilt. He predictably offers to bear the cost of its construction as well. The mosque, an institution for the dissemination of religious knowledge along with the *maktab*s, is decontextualized from the conversation regarding forms of education and its social impact in the transcreation. *Tree Without Roots* was published in 1967 – years after Waliullah had immigrated to France. Evidently, while recomposing *Lal Shalu*, Waliullah either thought that the debate regarding secular and religious education was no longer relevant, or he was influenced by the Western novel, where, in many cases, the inner workings of the individual takes precedence over matters of social concern. The exclusion of Akkas marks a narrowing of the social dimension of the work. The political edge of *Lal Shalu* is made blunt in *Tree Without Roots*.

Following the humiliation of Akkas, the stage is set for Majeed to reign indefinitely over Mahabbatpur. However, resistance comes from an unexpected source – his second wife, Jamila, no more than "a young kitten" at first glance (79). Jamila's "gale of laughter" unsettles the formidable position that Majeed had created for himself (80). There is a subversive quality about her laughter. It threatens to shatter the institutionalized hypocrisy of the *mazar*. Jamila's laughter comprises what Showkat Ali calls "*pran dharma*" or "life-force" (27). She has a natural energy, full of courage and vigor, that directly defies the restrictions of Majeed's artificial, concocted, and merely ritualistic *mazar*-religion. Jamila's laughter, at times, tinkles "merrily like an armful of fine golden bracelets" (80). However, often it is also like "a warm, bright

sunburst piercing the clouds, utterly fearless and irresistible" (81). Within the span of two pages of *Lal Shalu*, Waliullah pronounces the word *hashi* or "laughter" thirteen times just after the appearance of Jamila (50-51). Against it, he presents Majeed's growing feeling of bitterness and bewilderment. Jamila ignores the world of "must nots" that had subdued the physically powerful Rahima. She is not at all frightened by Majeed's threat, "It is not proper for a Muslim woman to be heard laughing. No one is to laugh that way in my house again" (80). Majeed, the master-puppeteer of Mahabbatpur, does not know how to handle this young girl. As the conflict continues between Majeed's created fear and the life-force that Jamila represents, Majeed gradually weakens and, ironically, starts fearing Jamila.

The inhabitants of Mahabbatpur had so long suppressed the life-instinct within themselves in their fear of Majeed, but the latter's hold is temporarily broken when Jamila inadvertently distracts the men during the *zikr*. Soon after Majeed's arrival at Mahabbatpur, we find him grumbling when the peasants sing and entertain themselves during the harvest. He explains his discontent as the danger that happiness poses "because it makes one forget one's ultimate duty" (15). For Majeed, it is the duty of every villager to bow down to the made-up saint of his *mazar* aborting all pleasures of life. This is precisely what Jamila refuses to do. We observe her tending to her appearance before the mirror, her eyes sparkling as she gazes upon her reflection – "eyes that fear neither God nor man" from Majeed's perspective (87). During the *zikr*, while the men are busy chanting the name of God, Jamila wanders beyond the boundary of the inner house and comes to rest beneath a tree near the *mazar*. Standing there, she appears "mysterious yet fascinating, like the moon seen through filmy clouds" (93). Once they spot her, the men cannot take their minds off Jamila. Even when she moves on, they look for her "like hungry beachcombers searching for nourishment on a shore bare as bone" (93). Majeed, with his best efforts, cannot make them regain concentration on the *zikr*. As the deposed ruler strives to regain control, it becomes clear that for the first time, Majeed has met a worthy opponent.

Soon, nature joins Jamila in countering Majeed. All attempts to teach Jamila a lesson fail. When Majeed dictates that she must perform the long *tarabi* prayer, she falls asleep in the *sejda* position. When he drags her to the *mazar* to tie her up, she spits in his face – "the face that inspired awe in everyone in the village, the face that commanded respect from all" (101). Unlike with Rahima and the villagers, Majeed cannot subdue her with his cunning. The first raindrops signaling the storm feel to him "like the saliva which Jamila had spat at him" (105). Waliullah intentionally connects the two forms of resistance, Jamila's life-force and the natural force, both of which work effectively against Majeed's hypocritical regime. Even Rahima becomes rebellious out of sympathy for Jamila and presses him to bring her from the *mazar*-room. There, he discovers the girl unconscious on the floor: "One of her feet, which were painted with henna, touched the grave," telling the story of Majeed's defeat (106).

Majeed's downfall at the end of *Lal Shalu* can be interpreted as an allegorical depiction of the futility of the formation of a strange nation like Pakistan, with its two distinct parts, in 1947. Haripada Datta observes that while Waliullah shows the futility of a state based solely on religion in his novel, he does not represent its complete defeat because of his awareness that the forces behind the creation of such a state cannot so easily be uprooted (97). That is why, at the end of *Lal Shalu*, we witness Majeed trying to convince the villagers to retain faith in God and the *mazar* (Datta 97). Datta contextualizes Majeed's persistence in the political situation around the time of the Partition. The birth of a nation like Pakistan, in his view, opens the gateway for hungry but clever individuals like Majeed to abuse religion for their survival: "The philosophy of the nation-state supports this kind of activity as if it were natural," he claims (Datta 94, our translation).

Whereas *Lal Shalu* ends amid a storm, Waliullah extends the conclusion of *Tree Without Roots*. In the final scene of the transcreation, having transferred his wives to Khaleque's residence, Majeed returns to the *mazar* amid fear of his dwindling influence over Mahabbatpur. Earlier that day, his "friend" had refused consolation from him. He had also noticed the villagers turning to the landowner bypassing him, for Khaleque could provide them with material support. Majeed knows that if he deserts the sinking *mazar*, the villagers would lose their trust in him. He, thus, forsakes the apparent safety of the village and returns to the *mazar* – not to protect the tomb, but the "truth" that he had created.

Waliullah, in a way, generates sympathy for Majeed even while exposing his cunning and hypocrisy. Majeed is the hero, not the villain, of the work – as Serajul Islam Choudhury points out (x). In fact, Waliullah makes it clear, in both the original novel and its transcreation, that the instinct for survival guides many of Majeed's misdeeds and lies at the root of his *mazar*-profession. Our sympathy for the protagonist is amplified at the end of *Tree Without Roots*, where Waliullah focuses on the conman's final attempt to save his *mazar*-based faith. Majeed is afraid of the rushing floodwaters, but he is more afraid of being displaced from Mahabbatpur and having to start afresh. Therefore, we see that the protagonist's final action in *Tree Without Roots* is directed by his desire to remain in power, indicating that forces like Majeed will not easily be uprooted.

Note

1. Among the excluded poems are Humayun Azad's "Boi" (Books), Rabindranath Tagore's "Bangladesh-er Hridoy" (The Heart of Bangladesh), Sanaul Haque's "Shobha" (Meeting), Jasim Uddin's "Desh" (Our Country), Bharat Chandra Ray Gunakar's "Amar Shantan" (My Child), Gyan Das' "Sukher Lagia" (For Happiness), Lalon Shah's "Shomoy Gele Shadhon Hobena" (If Time Runs Out), Sunil Gangopadhyay's "Sanko-ta Dulche" (The Shaking Bridge), and Rudra Mohammad Shahidullah's "Khotian" (The Ledger Book). The prose pieces omitted are Satyen Sen's "Lal Goru-ta" (The Red Cow), S. Wazed Ali's "Ranchi Bhromon" (Trip to Ranchi), Ronesh Dashgupta's "Malyo Dan" (Garlanding), Kazi Nazrul Islam's "Bangaleer Bhasha" (The

Language of the Bengalis), and Sanjib Chattopadhyay's "Palamou Bhromon Kahini" (Palamou Travels).

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The Water Ethic: An Elemental-Ecocritical Reading of T S Eliot's *The Waste Land*

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Abstract

The recent scholarship has evidently established the nexus between modernism and ecocriticism which reinforces modernist writers' anxiety of humans' changing relationship with nature. T S Eliot, one of the high priests of modernism, not only displays the evolving urban landscape but also cautions us about an imminent diseased and dysfunctional world. To further the burgeoning ecocritical discussion for understanding Eliot's poetry, this paper explores the depiction of one crucial elemental matter – water – in his literary masterpiece *The Waste Land*, and argues how water is presented as a dynamic entity in contrast to being a passive and fixed matter. Referring to some of the recent scholarship of elemental ecocriticism, eco materialism, and environmental ethics, it aims to discuss how humanity's failure to recognize water's agency has wrecked the earth, forcing us to live in a waste land. Thus, this paper is an attempt to read *The Waste Land* as a water ethic that recognizes a world of reciprocity and cautions us not to treat the non-human world as a commodity.

Keywords: Elemental Ecocriticism, Water Ethic, Ecomaterialism, *Revenge of the Thing*

Reading T S Eliot's *The Waste Land* as a cautionary tale of a degenerating civilization which is alienated from its harmonious connection with the natural world is no longer startling in the era of the Anthropocene. Though Eliot is primarily read as an urban poet whose focus is modern humans and their spiritual crisis in a post-industrialized world, he has been recently rediscovered by ecocritics who argue that his writings are loaded with environmental nuances. Like many other modernist writers, Eliot's discontent over human beings' changing relationship with nature can be traced in a number of his poems which informs us of a materialist and paralyzed society. To contribute to the ongoing ecocritical discussion for understanding Eliot's poetry, I explore the depiction of water in *The Waste Land*, arguing that water is presented as a dynamic and vibrant entity in contrast to being an inert thing. Drawing on the recent scholarship of ecocriticism, eco materialism, and environmental ethics, I discuss how humanity's failure to recognize water's agency has devastated the earth, compelling us to live in a waste land. Furthering Jane Bennett's idea of *thing-power*, I also develop the notion of *revenge of the thing* which results from treating the non-human world as a commodity and a space for exploitation. This paper, thus, is an effort to read *The Waste Land* as a carrier of environmental ethic that can remind us to show respect to nature and disown extreme human hubris.

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Contrary to popular belief that modernism is in opposition to nature, this literary movement has gradually proved how modernist texts can offer valuable resources for ecocriticism. A majority of the modernist writers showcase, through their work, a self-conscious testimony to the profound changes in human relations with the planet. Many modernist texts involve a crucial questioning of conventional ideas about nature, challenging our anthropocentric worldview. Modernism laments not only the loss of a center and the sense of alienation from the self and the society but also mankind's separation from the natural world. The "hyperseparation" between the human and the non-human world that commenced especially since the Industrial Revolution in western civilization reached its zenith in the early twentieth century (Plumwood 47-55). Modernist literature may, sometimes, affirm to traditional, romantic views of nature, but it also productively questions and problematizes them. A sustained interest in the natural world, portrayed either with a sense of agency and immediacy. or with a profoundly disturbing absence, can be traced in the works of writers such as E M Forster, T S Eliot, Virginia Woolf, Edward Thomas, and W H Auden. Critic Anne Raine considers that modernist texts bring forth a new environmental sensibility that is evident in the portrayal of destruction and displacement of the natural world brought by the new techno-scientific practices, forcing nature to recede "into the past or into the margins of modernity" (101). Though they might not directly address the environmental anxieties, these texts anticipate the evolution of ecological discourse that "complicate, critique, historicize, or abandon the concept of nature" (Raine 103). Elizabeth Black, in a similar vein, explores the importance of nature, place, and the environment to British modernist poetry, and discovers a haunting loss of some vital connection to the earth in the writings of some major poets including T S Eliot. Strongly arguing why modernism should be a crucial area of interest for ecocritics, she suggests that applying ecocritical insights does not encompass "anachronistically foisting current environmental opinions" onto modernist texts, but rather foregrounds "existing anxieties" in order to gain a deeper understanding of artistic responses to the natural world (40).

On a similar note, Etienne Terblanche in *T S Eliot, Poetry, and Earth: The Name of the Lotos Rose*, arguably the first full-length book discussing Eliot's poems ecocritically, investigates an ecopoetic understanding of Eliot's poetry in connection to new materialism. In his opinion, the most important aspect of Eliot's "Earth-engagement" is how his poetry rediscovers in a remarkable manner the way that leads from nothingness to something meaningful (185). Eliot's recognition of nature's agency is evident in his portrayal of natural entities which apparently look inert, but gradually transform into something vibrant. Terblanche argues that earth has agency and vibrancy which is not non-responsive to human action. Considering Eliot's poetry as an anticipation of the concept of new materialism, he suggests that his major poems refuse to consider the non-human world in reductionist or essentialist terms. Seeking new perspectives on the conventional dichotomies such as nature vs. culture, being vs. thing, material vs. immaterial, new materialist ecocriticism

prevents the idea of living with idealized nature in union and harmony that is pervasive in traditional environmental imagination. Those who reduce matter to simple matter, refusing to acknowledge its agency, end up in a "Prufrock's dilemma" in a post-industrialized world (Terblanche 186). Briefly discussing Eliot's concern for the polluted Thames, he also suggests how his poetry criticizes a materialist culture that simply disregards its connections with nature. Thus, an exciting nexus between ecocriticism and Eliot's modernist poetry can be traced in the recent ecocritical discourse that mostly developed in the last three decades.

Exploring Eliot's poetry with an ecocritical lens can offer new insights into both the individual poet and the modernist imagination of nature. A reevaluation of Eliot as a landscape poet is crucial to appreciating the vast array of his poetic engagements which is often associated with "urban spaces, social commentary and linguistic experimentation" (Black 7). Elizabeth Black's discussion of *The Waste Land* as a disturbing vision of a society that is "estranged from nature and on the brink of environmental collapse" strongly substantiates the idea that environmental catastrophe is a central concern in the poem (7). She furthers the argument by considering the poem as a prophecy of "environmental crisis and climate change," and alluding to Eliot's broader observations in other writings on the dangers of intensive farming and the exhaustion of natural resources by modern industry (89). In the same vein, Terblanche argues that *The Waste Land* adumbrates what we now term "global warming and the ecological crisis" which is manifested in the individual and collective disconnection of humans from the earth in form of the deficiency and desertification (71). Whether the discussion of global warming and climate change in relation to the poem is far-reaching or anachronistic can certainly be a matter of debate. However, the recent ecocritical inclination towards modernism confirms that the poem has potential environmental messages and concerns that require serious study. To further this ecopoetic understanding of Eliot's *The Waste Land*, I explore the portrayal of one particular entity of our environment – water. Though both Terblanche and Black refer to water briefly in their discussion of the poem, the absence/presence of water is so pervasive in the construction of the poem that it itself requires a close reading ecocritically. In the process, this paper, primarily informed by elemental ecocriticism, materialism ecocriticism, and environmental ethics, intends to add something substantial to the emerging ecopoetic discourse of Eliot's poetry.

The centrality of water to *The Waste Land*, both literally and symbolically, denotes the crucial place of water in our planetary life. Although Eliot was not writing as a hydrologist, and he was more invested in the symbolic nature of water in the construction of the sterility/fertility question, his emphasis on the pivotal role of water as a source of rejuvenation and as a protector of the cycle of nature cannot be overlooked. The poem's constant reference to water and rain in the expressions such as "dead land," "dull roots," "stony rubbish," "dead tree," "dry stone," "brown land," "dull canal," "damp gust," "limp leaves," "arid plain" and so on along with

the chanting for rain and invocation of two significant rivers, the Thames and the Ganga, reminds us of a framework of water imagery that holds the poem together. Water in *The Waste Land* can be read not only as a backdrop of modern humans' suffering or a spiritual symbol of resurrection but also as a catalyst for driving readers into a required environmental discussion. The dynamism of water as presented in the poem refuses to accept its identity as passive and fixed. In this respect, the poem anticipates a recent development of the ecocritical discourse namely elemental ecocriticism. Elemental ecocriticism is a brilliant attempt to make humans aware of the significance of elemental materiality both inside the human body and the outside world. The recently published book *Elemental Ecocriticism* seeks an elementally invested ecocriticism that explores in fictional and critical texts "a lush archive for thinking ecology anew" (Cohen and Duckert 4). The book primarily addresses all the four major elements – earth, air, fire, and water – and their "promiscuous combinations," that functions within "a humanly knowable scale while extending an irresistible invitation to inhuman realms" (Cohen and Duckert 7). According to Cohen and Duckert, the editors of the book and also the authors of the introduction, water, like any other foundational element, is never still, never straight forward, and never reducible, but rather is "lively as language" (8). Emphasizing the materiality of water, they argue that humans must not ignore the lively, metamorphosis power of elemental matters. Cohen and Duckert provocatively ask: "How did we cease to know that earth, air, fire, and water move, rebel, ally, crush, and desire?" (5). They urge us to reconsider our traditional and anthropocentric way of looking at water in an attempt to understand human's complex dynamics with water.

Along the same lines, considering water as a prominent figure in environmental imagination, Serpil Oppermann and Serenella Iovino in "Wandering Elements and Natures to Come" 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 portrayal of water in *The Waste Land* echoes an analogous form of ecomateriality when water is presented as responsible for the great change of the earth. The dry land is pining for rejuvenation brought on by water. The poem is not a simplistic representation of human-caused disaster, environmental or otherwise, that results in making everyone and/or everything suffer. Rather, it portrays the complex dynamics of environment by making water an active agent in answering back to human actions. The absence of water is so impactful in the poem that modern men are overwhelmed by its agency. Hermit thrush-like-modern men's chanting of drip drop drip drop is an expression of their powerlessness against the mighty water as they recognize that water has withdrawn itself, and resultantly, "the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief, / And the dry stone no sound of water" (19-24).

Water figures prominently in the aesthetic design of the poem, embodying itself in the form of rivers, canals, seas, and rain. All forms of water are shown as

dysfunctional: the deep sea is swelling where the body of Phlebas is devoured, the canal is dull, the rain is suspended, and the river is sweating "[o]il and tar" where "[t]he barges drift / With the turning tide" (267-269). Thus, the poem depicts water not as a mere resource or an inert matter, but as vibrant and active. The manifested dysfunctionality of water does not make itself weaker; rather it imbues water with more agency, making it more destructive. The representation of dynamism of a thing in art cannot be only limited to its affirmative and exuberant conditioning. The argument that aesthetics should avoid such things as the disgusting and the disturbing was already challenged by the modernist experimentation. In this regard, Terblanche argues how Eliot's modern aesthetics have long been counting on opposites in creating a counter aesthetics to convey his ideas meaningfully. He believes Eliot showed us that the aesthetic should not be "confused with the artificial, the ugly-denying, or the decorative" (186). Thus, Eliot's negative aesthetics of water should not be confused with its inertia and compliance. Water, on the contrary, is manifestly responding to human actions. Its anger and frustration are evident in its refusal to tolerate any more human burden. In the poem, the Thames refuses to swallow human-made garbage:

> The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,
> Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends
> Or other testimony of summer nights. (177-179)

Is it a silent fury? No. Eliot immediately adds to the last line the grave consequence: "The nymphs are departed" (179). The ethos of the poem suggests that humans are as vulnerable as the nymphs; if not physical, the spiritual death of humans is complete. Water, thus, is presented with an agency that can greatly impact its surroundings, changing the course of events. Water is certainly not reduced to a simple matter in reductionist or essentialist terms. Hence, the poem can offer a new materiality that is not centered around humans only since it strongly considers the recognition of the agency of the non-human world. Eliot seems to attend to elemental matters, giving back agency to nature, and writes against the reduction of the non-human world to a commodity and resource. Thus, the extent to which Eliot's poetry anticipates eco materialism is a matter of critical study.

Eco materialism or material ecocriticism, a nexus between ecocriticism and new materialism, offers new ways of exploring language and reality, mind and matter, human and non-human, nature and culture, and so on. It engages in the complex discussion of "the agency of matter, and the interplay between the human and nonhuman in a field of distributed effectuality and of inbuilt material-discursive dynamics" (Oppermann and Iovino, "Material Ecocriticism" 79). Material ecocriticism opens up new textual possibilities of the materiality portrayed in art and literature, re-negotiating the boundary of customary human agency. *The Waste Land*'s tendency to echo an eco materialism is germane when we witness water not only as a dynamic matter but also as an *actant*. Scholar Bruno Latour coins the

term *actant* to refer to an active agent that has efficacy and can perform things. He describes *actant* as "any entity that modifies another entity in a trial," something whose "competence is deduced from [its] performance" (237). Water portrayed in *The Waste Land* endorses Latours's idea of *actant* as it engenders immense effects that can change the course of events and offers ample agency that can make a difference. The way the absence of water overpowers the landscape, making the human civilization a waste land, signifies its superior agency over humans.

However, water seems to rise above its *actant* form and alters itself into a *thing-power* in the poem. *Thing-power* is an idea developed by Jane Bennett that she establishes in her discussion of vibrant materiality of things. Bennett in her renowned book *Vibrant Matter* proposes a "vibrant materialism" that fundamentally subverts the anthropocentric dichotomy between life and matter, beings and things, and organic and inorganic. What she seeks to achieve is to foreground "the material agency or effectivity of nonhuman or not-quite human things" (viii). Analyzing the idea of *thing-power*, she argues how ordinary items can surpass their status as objects, exhibiting vestiges of individuality or aliveness. Though her idea of *thing-power* is predominantly related to man-made objects/matters/materials, the magnitude of her discussion is so broad that one can expand the idea to other natural elements. Bennett's concept of vital materiality can be useful to corroborate the claim made above: "We are vital materiality and we are surrounded by it, though we do not always see it that way" (14). If a plastic bottle, some pollen, and a dead rat can be lively, vibrant, and self-organizing, as discussed by Bennett, why not water? Bennett may not precisely refer to inorganic elements like water as a *thing-power*, yet, her assertion of "a liveliness intrinsic to the materiality of the thing" is inclusive enough to imply that all matters, organic or inorganic, may fit in the category of vital materiality (xvi). Furthering her idea of *thing-power*, this paper suggests that water portrayed in the poem reveals such vitality and agency, particularly when obstructed and exploited, that we can consider its response as the *revenge of the thing*.

Bennett's concept of *thing-power* which is capable of animating and producing "effects dramatic and subtle" answers for what water does to its environs in *The Waste Land* (6). The revenge of water is demonstrated in its withdrawal from its natural course, in its refusal to cooperate with the human world. The repetitive invocation of water in Section V: "What the Thunder Said" reflects not only its desirability and supremacy but also its retreating void:

> If there were water
> And no rock
> If there were rock
> And also water
> And water (346-350)

Rivers, canals, seas not only throw back the garbage onto their banks but also cause

the death of animals and plants. Before water overpowers the land, as we can see in the poem, it hurt nymphs, hermit thrush, trees, roots, and leaves. More miserably, water here is not presented as it classically appears in stories such as the story of Noah's Ark in the Genesis. Section IV titled "Death by Water" clearly states that there is no chance for redemption and regeneration. Phlebas the Phoenician, now dead, is at the mercy of the deep sea that refuses to accept his body. Unlike as described in the mythical Greek underworld that shelters souls of the dead, here the sea devours his body indifferently: "A current under sea / Picked his bones in whispers" (315-316). This section satisfies one of the prophecies of Madame Sosostris in the poem's first section, when she warns the speaker, uttering "[f] ear death by water," after pulling the card of the drowned Sailor (55). Black, in the same spirit, warns us that the dynamics of the waste land is a cautionary tale against exploiting and neglecting the natural world, on which our ultimate survival depends. Reminding us of the autonomous force of nature which consumes Phlebas and strips his body to its bones, she rightly argues: "the sea has no reverence for human attributes such as youth or beauty" (100). An ecocritical reading of this shortest section in *The Waste Land* can offer an understanding of the vulnerability of humans and a reminder of extreme human hubris. Showcasing the power of water, this section exposes, as Bennett uses in reference to the human's treatment to non-human world, the futility of "human hubris" and "earth-destroying fantasies of conquest and consumption" (xi). Ironically, here it is the humans who finally are consumed by the earth's elements. Thus, aesthetically challenging human hubris, water, as a vibrant matter teeming with agency and power, reminds us to question our anthropocentric, hierarchical understanding of the non-human world.

The British author John Fowles describes the sea as our evolutionary amniotic fluid, the elemental entity in which we were "once enwombed, from which our own antediluvian line rose into light and air" (282). While his discussion establishes the centrality of water in the evolution of the planet, we are also reminded that if this primal force is a giver of life in this planet, it may take that life back as well. There can be no denying that water and the rest of the planet are elementally intertwined. The failure to realize the planet loaded with elements that are bound by love and pulled apart by strife, creating "a swirled mess of obligation," can cost the whole planet greatly (Cohen and Duckert 20). In *The Waste Land*, the natural cycle of water is clogged as there is no rain. Water no longer presents itself in its pristine form, rather as polluted, unclean, and dull. Resultantly, the modern landscape is presented as an infertile, meaningless, and fragmented space that requires the blessing of water. Hence, the meditative prayer to water to show pity on us and to make the earth livable again is implied throughout the poem:

> By the waters of Leman I sat down and wept …
> Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song,
> Sweet Thames, run softly, for I speak not loud or long. (173-184)

The poem seems to make us acknowledge the supremacy of water by recognizing its agency. The way water answers back to humans' actions by changing its ways and forms can be suggestive of its metamorphic nature on which we humans do not have control. Thus, there is no denying that *The Waste Land* can cater to diverse environmental ethical schools of thought since it apparently documents, as this paper argues, a water ethic that advocates the recognition of water as a dynamic and powerful agent.

At the center of any environmental ethics is the idea of respect to the diversity of the planet. This respect should not spring from the fact that the non-human world is useful to us for its instrumental value. Rather, it should originate from a sense of awe that we all are interconnected in a symbiotic matrix. In this respect, Aldo Leopold's idea of "the land ethic" can be crucial, which sensibly addresses man's relation to the earth. First published in 1949, Leopold's classic book *A Sand County Almanac*, and especially his essay "The Land Ethic" can be considered one of the earliest texts that initiated the environmental ethics discourse. To Leopold, land is not merely soil; rather it "enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land" (204). His land ethic proposes a symbiotic relationship between humans and land that should grow out of respect. He believes a direct communication is required with nature beyond our own self-interest to extend our ethical position. Considering man-made changes more severe and comprehensive than evolutionary changes, Leopold states: "Waters, like soil, are part of the energy circuit. Industry, by polluting waters or obstructing them with dams, may exclude the plants and animals necessary to keep energy in circulation" (217). Therefore, he proposes an ethical relation to earth that cannot exist without love, respect, and admiration for land, and a high esteem for its value. His biocentric holistic embrace of the whole ecosystem as something valuable which deserves respect and preservation is crucial to my discussion of water as a dynamic entity that is worthy of respect. *The Waste Land* shows that if one elemental entity like water goes out of balance, the whole earth suffers imbalance. If we intend to obfuscate and conquer "a fountain of energy flowing through a circuit of soils, plants, and animals," we must be prepared to live a ghostly life of memory and desire in an arid plain (Leopold 216). The phrasing of the title of this paper, "The Water Ethic," is, thus, an appropriation of Leopold's idea of the land ethic. Hence, a water ethic, like Leopold's land ethic, changes the role of humans from a conqueror of the earth to a plain member of it.

A water ethic is a non-anthropocentric approach that celebrates the integrity, stability, and beauty of the earth, respecting all its organic and inorganic entities for a healthy planet. All species, all organisms, all entities, all ecosystems should be treated as having their own unique, intrinsic value that cannot be substituted. *The Waste Land* can certainly be read as an attempt to recognize this value of non-human entities through its display of agency and *thing-power* of water. The revenge of water tells an alternative tale of vulnerable human civilization, humbling humans' lofty vision of

themselves. It signals the anthropocentric mindset of humans that constantly blinds us about the life-flow that surrounds us. The crowd crossing the London bridge briefly exhibits our negligence of the constant presence of nature: "A crowd flowed over London Bridge, / … / And each man fixed his eyes before his feet" (60-63). The crowd seems to be obsessed with their lives, their loss, their sufferings, nonchalant about the life of the Thames which has literally functioned as a life-force for the city of London. It is, then, not surprising why the speaker laments in the final section: "London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down" (427). An ecocritical interpretation of the falling can be understood as a failure to connect with the Thames respectfully. In this regard, the poem seems to address what Cohen and Duckert call "the binding of the elements" through love and respect. Reminding us of the "swirled mess of obligation," they argue how earth, air, fire, water, interstices, and impossible hybridities with which we are coextensive are "intimate aliens" (20). The common materiality among all things on earth should bind us together with a common purpose for a mutually respectful co-existence.

Thus, *The Waste Land* adumbrates an environmental ethics making us aware of the inherent value of non-human entities and championing the idea of respecting nature. Even if the poem is burdened with the disturbing and dreadful images of water, its faith on "a flash of lightning," "a damp gust," and "black clouds" to bring rain, finally, signals a return to Mother Nature (394-397). This return signifies a revival of faith and respect, even if it occurs in a limited fashion. Though the Ganga does not promise its blessing, the poem's much-discussed chanting of *shantih shantih shantih* in the end faintly signals a restoration. In Eastern mythology, the Ganga is worshiped as a river goddess, which signifies a reverence for the power of nature. The tales of mythical, magical power of natural entities maintained in ancient cultures can be compared with the present-day dynamics of agency and intrinsic value delineated in environmental ethics discourse. However, a water ethic relevant to the age of the Anthropocene requires more complex understanding in the light of elemental ecocriticism and eco materialism. Water needs to be understood as a dynamic entity that has immense metamorphic power to change the course of action. Apart from considering water as a crucial life forming element that demands respect, we should recognize its intricate agency and power of retaliation. This shift in ethical position is required to understand water as, in Cohen and Duckert's words, "a storied tumble of relation, sudden rupture, and material burgeoning" (8). Acknowledging the materiality and fluidity of water can help re-define our complex relationship with it. A new water ethic, thus, is a call for hope that foregrounds the shared materiality of humans and the non-human world.

The ecocritical discourse embedded in Eliot's *The Waste Land* problematizes our anthropocentric understanding of the poem that tends to focus mostly on the interest and existence of the modern individual humans. It requires us to take an ethical position environmentally, which can stimulate a symbiotic relationship between humans and the non-human world. Eliot's modernist aesthetics, thus,

brings forward not only a modern man's alienation from the society but also an alienation from the natural world. The crucial presence of water in the poem aptly reminds us that if the reciprocity between human and nature suffers, the earth is no longer a healthy place to live. Thus, the implied water ethic demands our respect and our recognition of its intrinsic value, metamorphic power, and agency. The disputes within the ecocritical discourse over intrinsic/non-intrinsic value, thing/object, biocentric/ecocentric individualism/holism, moral agency and so on might pose a challenge to our understanding of the non-human world and our relation and response to it. However, what is crucial is not to be bogged down by the conflicting ideas, but to claim moral responsibility of human actions. In this regard, we can, once again, turn to Leopold who sensibly asserts: "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise" (224–225). The eco-poetic aesthetics of *The Waste Land* powerfully kindles that right and wrong in us, reminding that nature was integral to modernist imagination as much as it is to us today.

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The Trope of Death in Ahmed Yerima's *Mojagbe*

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Abstract

Contemporary African nations are plagued with hegemonic, despotic, and unchallengeable leadership which is a major bane of meaningful development and growth to the black race in general. People often groan under such myopic leadership. In solving leadership crisis, which is like a deadly disease, Ahmed Yerima in his play metaphorically suggests *death* as a lasting panacea. Employing the postcolonial concept of hegemony as the theoretical framework, the study investigates the trope of death in Yerima's *Mojagbe* with a view to exploring the representations of the *deathly* reign of Oba (King) Mojagbe and a foreshadowing of the "death" of such dictatorial leadership as Mojagbe's in contemporary postcolonial nations. In order to liberate people from the hegemony of the absolute anarchical monarch, Death is consulted to put an end to the kingship of Oba Mojagbe. The collective effort of the Yeye who represent the judiciary paves way for the termination of Mojagbe's autocratic reign. Expounding the trope of death in *Mojagbe*, Yerima deploys proverbs, incantations/chants, code-mixing, and code-switching. The study therefore establishes Yerima's commitment to his polity by depicting one major problem bedeviling the milieu – leadership crisis.

Keywords: *Mojagbe,* Ahmed Yerima, Representations of Death, Post-independence Nigerian Leadership, Hegemony

Ahmed Yerima is one of the prolific 21st-century Nigerian playwrights whose thematic preoccupations cut across various socio-economic and cultural aspects. As a committed artist, he engages his plays in the depiction of the ills within the polity. Generally speaking, the subject of leadership crisis has become a major issue that has gained the creative attention of Nigerian, and indeed, African writers as a way of establishing their commitment to their crises-ridden milieu. Gbemisola Adeoti refers to Yerima as "one of the most notable dramatists to have emerged on the Nigerian literary stage in the last decade of the twentieth century" (xi). Through the instrumentality of his writings, Yerima has been able to explore various cultures in the country. Most of his dramatic texts are "spatially and geographically situated in Nigeria and they depict the socio-cultural situation of the nation. His

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creative muse has the Nigerian society (especially post-independence) as its canvas" (Oguntoyinbo 3). His literary prowess and commitment to playwriting have been recognized through the award of various local and international prizes. For instance, *Yemoja* won the best drama (globally) at the 2001 Cervantino International Arts Festival, Mexico. Similarly, *Hard Ground* won the Nigerian Liquefied and Natural Gas (NLNG) award for Literature in 2006.

Yerima's *Mojagbe* is an eponymous play that centers on the dictatorial rule of Oba Aderemi Mojagbe who unleashes terror on those who made him. He is divinely blessed with virtually everything. However, he is blindfolded by his egomania to the extent that he kicks against God. Mojagbe employs the instrumentality of death to suppress all his supposed enemies, including higher authority that he is not supposed to treat contemptuously. Meanwhile, the king who kills humans as though they are chickens is reduced to a weakling when confronted by Iku (Death). In the play, Yerima employs death as a check on the excesses of the authoritarian ruling class that often try to play God. However, the ability of man to *teach and learn* remains his challenge, and that is why he keeps repeating his errors. Considering the responsiveness of writers to serious issues confronting humanity, one would have thought that those problematic issues ought to have been resolved. Nevertheless, the reverse has always been the case. This is why rhetorical questions are asked in the blurb of the play: "But will man ever learn? When will history cease being a mere catalogue of catastrophe?" This implies that man has not actually learnt from his past woes; hence, the reason for their recurrence.

Yerima uses his plays to conscientize people about certain superfluous activities of postcolonial leaders whose actions are not different from the rejected colonial rulers. Writers in Yerima's class often highlight, in rather scathing burlesque and comedy, the travesty, which is African leadership. *Mojagbe* metaphorizes "African leaders' obsession with power, a seductive drive that breeds moral corruption, dictatorship, delusions, economic distortions and ruination, megalomania, perversion and desecration of all that is good in African traditions" (Adekoya 11).

The study is predicated on the postcolonial concept of hegemony. In postcolonial discourse, hegemony refers to the exertion of dominance by the ruling class on its subject through the subtlety and inclusivity of power over the economy and different state apparatuses. Although the term was originally coined to interrogate power relations between imperialist power and the colonized people, it becomes relevant in the exploration of postcolonial leadership due to the striking resemblance between colonial leadership and post-independence leadership. Hegemonic order in postcolonial polity involves the suppression of the masses' "desire for self-determination" (Ashcroft 107).

Yerima artistically reveals the psychological mania of humans, most especially leaders, as well as their unconscionable ambition, and associates them with delusion and social stasis. The playwright addresses the act of governance and the lapses

of the ruling class. In the author's note to the play, Yerima calls on the leaders or the political class to remember their mortality. Thus, they should direct the affairs of their people with conscience and reason as their attributes and conduct will indelibly eternalize their reign. He further explains in the note that what informed the writing of the play is the need to present the type of leaders that forget to learn from history and how man confronts himself while searching for inner peace, which he himself often destroys in the first place (Yerima 6).

In the play, death is depicted as a dialectic phenomenon. Although death is usually seen as a tragic experience, that of Oba Mojagbe is seen as a welcome development. The Yeye who mastermind the accession of Mojagbe to the throne observe the king's misrule and thus come to the rescue of the people. They summon Iku (Death) to visit the king in order to liberate the polity from his clueless claws. Mojagbe is known for his braggadocio and wickedness; he kicks against those who make him king. The cries of the people reach the Yeye who represent the judiciary, and the urgent action taken by them to bring succor to the masses is laudable. First of all, they see themselves as belonging to the people – "The people who own us" (Yerima 9) – and as the voice of the voiceless masses. Their ignorance and silence over the suffering of the people would have been unjustified. Thus, they represent hope for the disillusioned people over whom Mojagbe rules, though dictatorially. Although the political setting of the play is traditional or monarchical, the playwright uses it to mirror what operates in a democratic setting where many *demons* have taken over leadership mantles. It is envisioned that the modern-day judiciary should be more responsible and responsive to the unheard cries of the masses.

As far as the Yeye are concerned, the only thing that can bring respite to the people is the death of Oba Mojagbe. Bame A Nsamenang posits that an African worldview pictures the human life-cycle in three levels of selfhood. The first is the spiritual selfhood, which originates at conception, or earlier in an ancestral spirit that reincarnates. The second level is a social or experiential selfhood that begins at conception, the cycle from rite of incorporation or introduction of the child into the human community through to death, while the third phase is an ancestral selfhood which follows biological death (16). African idea/ideal of human existence is summed up in this statement: "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am" (Mbiti 108-109). It is, however, ironical that a king who should uphold the ideals of his culture kicks against it and feigns ignorance of its existence. Mojagbe is oblivious of the connection between those who make him king and his kingship. It is his autotelic existence that eventually leads to his autonomous downfall. Africans value collectivism against individualism. On many occasions, Mojagbe turns down the counsel of his chiefs, acting as if he knows it all. His deafness to the suffering and oppression of his subjects paves the way for his *deathness*.

Mojagbe's dream of hovering death and white calabash is confirmed by Abese who tells the king: "We heard it, Kabiyesi … we heard the drums of death, and also

a white calabash is seated on your throne" (Yerima 12). The white calabash on Mojagbe's throne signifies the expiration of his tenure as an absolute monarch whose reign has brought more pains than gains to the people. The Yeye declare the throne empty and its occupant replaceable. The amnesiac Mojagbe thinks the dream is a mere joke; hence, he does not bother to give it a serious thought. Even when he is reminded, he tries to avert the realization of the deathly dream only by looking for "a head to put in it" (Yerima 12). Blames and counter-blames are major features of African leadership. The incumbent leadership blames its failure on the former's ineptitude, while the former accuses the present of irresponsibility and mismanagement of resources. This act depicts the narrow-mindedness of leadership in Africa. Mojagbe is supposed to assess his reign and listen to the views of his chiefs who should be his think-tank; he is, however, beclouded by his hegemonic notion.

Following the hue and cry of the people, Esan declares his availability and readiness to ameliorate the deteriorating situation in the village:

> I am ready. If to die is to have my village in peace, let it be. *Iku.* Death. Come and be my companion. Let us strike the heart of the old lion who enslaves my people. Be with me, my fathers, as we strive to remove the dictator, and enthrone the rightful king. (Yerima 14)

The characterology of Esan is symbolic. He is a son to the former king. He reveals that Mojagbe is "the usurper of my father's throne" (Yerima 14), which means that he is supposed to be the king. Thus, Mojagbe's accession to the throne is questionable. To perpetuate his domineering and unruly rule, he employs threats and various anti-people policies. Within the African cultural space, "the superiority of an individual is determined by his gender, position and age among other things" (Jegede 685). As Jegede enunciates, position and the traditional hierarchical and hegemonic leadership configuration plays a major role in *Mojagbe.*

In Yoruba cosmology, Esan means recompense. Esan has, therefore, come to repay Mojagbe the consequence of his illegal and oppressive tendencies. Esan sees himself as a solution to the age-long problems of his polity; thus, he comes to prove his messianism. To Esan, it is only death that can put an end to the dictatorial reign of Mojagbe; this is why he calls on Death to accompany him to actualize his liberation agenda for his village. The employment of animal imagery to describe Mojagbe foregrounds his display of animalistic nature – "the old lion" (Yerima 14). His presence on the throne indicates marginality, threat, enslavement, and oppression. The solution to these identified problems is to force his immediate abdication, which is encapsulated in his death. Mojagbe is a literary representative of many *old lions* sitting tightly on leadership thrones in African nations. It is observed that most African countries are governed by aged ones who have perpetuated themselves and, indeed, their lineage, in leadership positions. The institutionalization of gerontocratic democracy in the African political landscape is not unconnected to socio-economic and political retrogression being witnessed. Writing on "The

Problem of Gerontocracy in Africa: The Yorùbá Perspective as Illustrated in the *Ifá* Corpus," Omotade Adegbindin pontificates that "gerontocracy is coterminous with authoritarian traditions in traditional Africa which, supposedly, are responsible for the lack of sustained curiosity to look at issues from different perspectives" (454). As Esan declares, it is high time these *old lions* were removed, while the death of their terror-ridden tenure would be ensured. Esan re-echoes Kwasi Wiredu's standpoint on the unfortunate and increased exacerbation of the "authoritarian odour" (Adegbindin 456) that suffuses African polity. According to Wiredu,

> Our social arrangements are shot through and through with the principle of unquestioning obedience to our superiors, which often meant elders. Hardly any premium was placed on curiosity in those of tender age, or independence of thought in those of more considerable years. (4)

The hegemonic nature of Mojagbe is displayed when he employs death as a weapon to dominate his perceived enemies and opponents. He asks Isepe, the village high priest, to get rid of Esan, whom he sees as a threat to his kingship. The bestial nature of Mojagbe is brought to the fore as he roars like the lion he is described as. While the king has lost his sense of reasoning, Isepe, an elderly man, makes him realize that killing Esan would send a bad signal to the entire land. Isepe finds it difficult to convince him. The title, *Kábíyèsí,* emphasizes the unquestionable nature of Mojagbe's authority and pronouncement; hence, Isepe says: "… Kabiyesi. Who will question my king? *Ka bi o osi!*" (Yerima 17).

Mojagbe himself can be seen as death personified to the people. His breaths are not just threat, but also death. To checkmate the unlawful acts of traditional institutions, absolute monarchy needs to be reviewed. The conception of leaders as demi-god, second-in-command to God, is rather counterproductive as these leaders wantonly abuse power since they cannot be questioned.

Abese is asked to execute Esan by decapitation as "a warning to all those who dare look at the king straight in the eyes" (Yerima 18). One of the weapons that the ruled can use to checkmate the excesses of the rulers is criticism. Leaders need to be criticized to ensure that the right thing is done. However, the ruling class often abnegates criticism. Those who represent the mouthpiece of the downtrodden in the society are often labeled as a "national threat." Unquestionable and autocratic leadership should be rejected before total freedom can smile on the masses.

Achille Mbembe's description of the African state as the postcolony which implies "certain kinds of nation states that, having achieved political independence, govern with inherited structures of violence and domination" (Ashcroft 125) is apt. As a matter of fact, the postcolony is characterized by oppositionality. It is, however, argued that the "postcolonial relationship is not primarily a relationship of resistance or collaboration but can best be characterised as convivial, a relationship fraught by the fact of the commandemente and its 'subjects' having to share the same living space" (Mbembe 104). Mbembe submits that:

… it would seem wrong to continue to interpret postcolonial relations in terms of absolute resistance or absolute domination, or, as a function of the binary oppositions usually adduced in conventional analyses of movements of indiscipline and revolt (e.g. counter-discourse, countersociety, counter-hegemony. …). (105)

Mbembe's position becomes practicable when postcolonial leadership redeems its already dented image and humanely treats its subjects. Leadership that is fond of executing lives of presumed enemies, instead of executing justice and fairness, and dispensing good governance deserves to be collectively resisted. Total demolition of hegemonic leadership structure and (re)construction of a responsible and responsive one in postcolonial Africa will eliminate the current reality of oppositionality with which the postcolony is submerged.

Whereas the water of wisdom is supposed to flow from the head to the other parts, the reverse is the case in Mojagbe, who acts foolishly whereas he is surrounded by wise individuals. An ordinary messenger to Mojagbe knows that it is wrong and sinister to kill a prince (Esan), but he sees Abese's view as an affront and contempt:

> Ha, **Baba, you should know**. The death of a prince this way will bring evil to the land. Cut him loose, Kabiyesi. Be a father to the people. The gods may revolt … causing pestilence and hunger throughout the land. We have seen this happen before. It left a bitter taste of gall on our taste buds. Please, reconsider, my lord …. We only want the king to walk right … in the footpath of his father …. Do not hurry to shed this blood. An act a king will think about consequences later is not a good act. A dog does not eat a dog …. (Yerima 18-19, emphasis added)

Abese's articulation above implies that the king is ignorant, wicked, amnesiac, and childish. Mojagbe does not envisage the lethal consequences of his abuse of power on the people and the land as a whole. Mojagbe ought to be a father figure to the people; ironically, he needs to be fathered considering his idiosyncratic amentia. This perfectly captures the praxes of postcolonial leaders who, though are old, act childishly. Some members of cabinet of postcolonial leaders are cerebral and reasonable, including Ibese; unfortunately, they are not often listened to as they frequently face removal during cabinet reshuffle. In spite of Abese's wise and convincing submission, Mojagbe remains recalcitrant and uneducable.

Yerima portrays Mojagbe as a coward even though he appears dreadful to those who try to challenge his draconian leadership style. His fear of looming death is shown during his conversation with Isepe:

> Now to the task ahead. Tonight, Isepe, Layewu came to my bed chamber. He revealed his face to me. (ISEPE *begins first with a chuckle*.) Abese found a white calabash on the throne. (*Then a laugh.* MOJAGBE *watches in disbelief*.) Why do you laugh? I say I stared death in the face, and you laugh? (Yerima 21)

It is ironical that the king who breathes death could be afraid of the same. Mojagbe identifies the implication of death to him and his reign.

Isepe is an archetype of sycophants who surround leaders. They are supposed to give them good counsel; however, the reverse is the case. Isepe is the priest who mediates between the deity and Mojagbe. As a representative of the gods, he ought to be truthful and responsible. Nevertheless, he only massages the ego of his employer in order to maintain his job; Isepe symbolizes modern day servility in African polity. Postcolonial leadership is laden with individuals of Isepe's caliber who know the truth but are always economical with it. Some leaders fall into error because of obsequious advisers with whom they surround themselves.

Moreover, Mojagbe's impolitic and tendentious leadership has a lethal effect on the future generation. Isepe informs the king that his young bride cannot bear children because all the six children in her womb have been sacrificed to elongate the life of the king. This denotes that the king is only interested in his own lifetime, while he kills the future generation to perpetuate his dictatorial rule. Mojagbe's dementia is further echoed when he blesses Isepe for sacrificing the children that his young wife would have given birth to, although he says "sometimes I long for a son. Just to sit on the throne when we are old and gone" (Yerima 23). This is similar to the monarchical democratic government being practiced in most African countries where political leaders replace themselves with their children at the expiration of their terror-filled tenure.

The corporealization of death is underscored in the play when Mojagbe narrates a fearsome dream he has where he observes that a big party takes place in the palace. In attendance are both the living and the dead who engage in eating and drinking. However, his presence is completely ignored. This signifies that, among leaders from different climes, Mojagbe is not given any recognition because of the kind of leadership he provides. Similarly, the dream prefigures his disbarment and spurning by both the living and the dead. He is, therefore, on his own as all those who are supposed to give him support have deserted him to his own follies and doom. Through this depiction, Yerima implies that one thing that can make bad leaders disquieted is to be deserted by those who massage their ego. It is, however, disheartening to note that there are people who encourage dictatorial leaders such as Isepe whose conscience has been seared because of what they would eat. Isepe, for instance, betrays the oppressed people by volunteering to be the priest who engages in divination for the tyrannical Mojagbe.

Another action of Mojagbe that underlines the motif of death is his usurpation of land belonging to the Oyo people whom he drives away. Chief Balogun who represents a voice of sense sees this illegal action of the king as "the brewing wheel of death" (Yerima 28). However, instead of paying attention to Balogun, Mojagbe remains intractable.

The conscientized women of the village protest against the deadly acts of the king. Their major demand is that Prince Esan should not be decapitated by Mojagbe whose mind is made up already to kill the innocent lad. The women dress half-naked as a way of demonstrating their rejection of the obnoxious and egomaniac leadership style of the death-breathing Mojagbe. Despite the fact that chiefs, including Otun, Osi, and Balogun, appeal to him to listen to the voice of the angry women, Mojagbe proves more stubborn. He asks Osi to "speak with your women" because "Our blood boils" (Yerima 31). This action of the women is supposed to challenge him, but he sees it as contempt. The power-drunk king does not have any regard for the personality of women. His attitude to the demand of the protesting women reiterates his non-responsiveness and irresponsibility as a leader. African literature is filled with the motif of women's commitment to ending socio-political problems. Historically, the likes of Moremi assiduously tried to end security threat in their times. Women have been variously portrayed as weak and incapable of doing anything serious. However, Yerima, the male-feminist, proves that women are not weak; they can do what even men may not be able to. For several years that Mojagbe has been oppressively ruling the village, men who are chiefs do not have the effrontery to confront him. However, the women exhibit their commitment to humanity when they challenge him. This supports Mary E Modupe Kolawole's view that "woman is particularly feared but respected … dreaded for possible supernatural impact on men and on the society. At other times, she is a potential Pandora with mystic powers" (66).

Contrary to Mojagbe's egocentric stance that he is a self-made ruler, the Yeye's view reiterates that no king or leader is self-sufficient. It is the people (populace) that are responsible for the making of a king/leader. However, upon his enthronement, Mojagbe soon becomes oblivious of this fact; hence, he bites the hand that had fed him. Leaders only beg for people's votes, but the moment they assume office, the electorate become beggars. Although the text is set in the old Oyo Empire, its thematic thrust is relevant to the leadership experience of modern Africa. In other words, the examination of an aspect of old Oyo history, the despotic rule of Oba Mojagbe in the pre-colonial years, is depicted for the contemporary world in order to identify the characters to absorb and those to deride and renounce. Again, the women reject wanton shedding of innocent blood by Mojagbe whose terror-ridden reign is characterized by multiple deaths. According to the Yeye, "you decided to spill the blood of a prince at the market square. The market women do not want blood in their market" (Yerima 35).

Metaphorically, the world is a marketplace, while human beings are market people. It is inferred that the earth dwellers frown upon the shedding of blood. They see judicial killings as a desecration of the "market." The Yeye further confront Mojagbe saying: "too many children have died during your tenure as king" (Yerima 35). Thus, Mojagbe has no regard for human life. He kills both the living and the unborn children.

Mojagbe only clutches at emptiness; he is beclouded by the transitory grandeur of the throne. He still dances, while the whole land has rejected him. His illusionary grasp of power shows that he is not living in the world of reality. His memory has been eroded by transient benefits and powers of kingship. He even threatens the women that he would let male slaves loose among them so that they would sexually assault them. As a king, Mojagbe believes so much in the title 'ka bi o si' (Yoruba), which means "no one can challenge your authority." In other words, he enjoys absolute, unchallengeable authority. In actual fact, there is no authority that cannot and should not be challenged. Postcolonial leaders are not different from Mojagbe who threatens those who oppose his anti-human policies. Contemporary postcolonial leaders tend to formulate some policies targeted at silencing opposition parties that criticize their ineptitude. The attitude of the king demonstrates vacuity of sanity:

> Yeye: The air here has gone suddenly foul and a mad king sits on his stench. Away! We must prepare the land for a new one. (Yerima 38)

The "air" here symbolizes the polity. Leadership actions make the ambience foul. The decision of the women from the conclave to prepare for the coronation of another king metaphorizes the outright denunciation of bad leadership. Some of the youths of the village decide to run away from home as a result of hardship and severity of life. Unfortunately, they end up as slaves and laborers in other people's land. Without mincing words, bad leadership is one of the factors that push people away to other places in search of greener pasture. Akande laments the condition of the émigré villagers thus:

> We found our own sons digging wells, common *konga* in Ipile. Dirty, cold and hungry. It was disgraceful. Children of royalty. *Shiioo*! (Yerima 49)

The above signifies the estrangement, non-belongingness, dehumanization, inhumanity, and indignity they are subjected to in the strange, faraway land. Although they are royal children, they are never treated as such in their own land let alone in the strange land. The experience of the returnee migrants could be described as unhomeliness; that is, the experience of dislocation, which Martin Heidegger describes as "unheimlich or unheimlichkeit" – literally "unhousedness" or "not-at-home-ness" (188) which is also sometimes translated as "uncanny" or "uncanniness" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 49-50). They do not feel at home even in their home; hence, their unhomeliness precipitates their homelessness following their dislocation. The testimony of Morili, one of the returnee migrants, is paradigmatic: "… at a point, there was nothing to live for here. No food … no work … even the palm tree went dry" (Yerima 49-50). This iterates the failure of the leadership to ensure provision of basic amenities for the citizenry. The palm tree represents the wealth of the village, just as petroleum is the major source of revenue for Nigeria. Unfortunately, the palm tree has dried up. This suggests the ruination of the major source of economy for the village as a result of the leadership's economic

cluelessness and lack of managerial ability. The economic situation of contemporary postcolonial nations is no different from what operates in the polity of Mojagbe whose (in)actions have contributed tremendously to political instability, economic stagnancy, and moral decay in the land.

Motunrayo, a slave captured from the Igbo Odo village by Mojagbe's warriors, is possessed by Mojagbe to be in charge of medicine and to attend to shrines. Eventually, Motunrayo is instrumental in his death. Motunrayo decries the tomfoolery of Mojagbe:

> Eledumare blessed him, put in his mouth food that he did not cook. But, once in power, he decided to take on even the spirits, and exchange roles with his God. See how easily man forgets his place. Like a child he hangs onto and claims a plaything he was only given to play with for a while. Little foolish children, all! (Yerima 71)

The above succinctly delineates the characteristic habit of contemporary political leadership in most developing countries. Yerima accentuates the transience of power as no one would continue to be in a leadership position; the moment death comes, everything ends. He therefore condemns leaders who hold on to power, which is a plaything that does not last forever. Indeed, man's understanding and awareness of his evanescence will help to know his limitation and not try to equate himself with God.

The trope of death in *Mojagbe* is double-edged in that it represents bad leaders like Mojagbe as death and that there is need for the death of such myopic and braggart leadership in order for true development and transformation to be ushered in to the polity. The literary representation and chronicle of hegemonic leadership is "an attempt to reflect the agonies of the time, the hopes of the time, to show a way out of all the problems and to condemn negative forces" (Edde 45).

Yerima demonstrates his literary and cultural resourcefulness through the employment of certain dramatic techniques. As a play that is rooted in Yoruba culture, *Mojagbe* deploys several proverbs to add local flavor to its thematic preoccupations, historical allusion and chants/incantations. The playwright engages in preponderant use of proverbs in the play to establish his cultural dexterity and also foreground the *Yorubaness* of the locale. Proverbs often occur casually in everyday oral conversation. The references of proverbs can be persons or situations that are familiar to the interlocutors (Olatunji 171). Most of the proverbs employed in Yerima's *Mojagbe* are uttered by Oba Mojagbe in his interaction with his chiefs and subjects. According to Olatunji,

> The Yoruba have great respect for age and proverbs enjoin respect for elders whose greater experience of life's hopes and sorrows yields worldly wisdom which younger people need for guidance. (171)

To some extent, the use of proverb is reserved for the elderly ones in Yoruba society as it is believed that *ẹnu àgbà lobì ti í gbó* (the kola ripens better in the mouths of the elders). This also apes the kind of respect accorded the elders among the Yoruba. Kaphagawani and Malherbe state that "there is in general among traditional African communities an emphasis on age as a necessary condition for knowledge and wisdom" (212). It is, however, contradictory that Oba Mojagbe, who is supposed to be the custodian of the cultural practices and philosophical corpus of his people, is found wanting in moral and character. Olatunji posits that Yoruba proverbs serve as social charters to praise what the society considers to be virtues and condemn bad practices (171). There are several Yoruba proverbs for different communicative contexts and purposes. Mojagbe only looks for some proverbs that suit his own purpose. Below are examples of the proverbs used in the play.

- "Hands that are clean abhor dirt, unless the owner intends to wash them again." (Yerima 25)

- "The hunter, who went into the bush with his dog for a month, returns home without it. (Yerima 26)

- "The villagers refuse to ask him about his dog, because he appeared well fed, and he takes offence." (Yerima 26)

The context in which these proverbs are employed appears tense. The suspicious and fearful Mojagbe uses these proverbs to attack his chiefs for conniving with his conjectural enemies to unseat him. The chiefs are, however, ignorant of the plot against the suspicious king. It is observed that the proverbs are used for condemnation. Furthermore, Mojagbe tells his chiefs: "Truly, on the day you invite a child to give you a bath, remember that the navel cannot be covered" (Yerima 30). Ordinarily, no one would leave one's navel uncovered because it is supposed to be hidden from the public. However, it becomes impossible for one to cover one's navel for somebody who is to bathe one. Mojagbe deploys this proverb to let the chiefs know that what they are trying to cover up is an open-secret. He accuses the chief of sending a message of death to him through Layewu, the late king, who appears to him in his dream.

At another instance, Mojagbe condemns the action of the Yeye, spiritual mothers of the conclave, who lead naked women in a protest against his misrule. He expects the Yeye to address the problem of insecurity in the land. The king is told that the people of Igbo Odo attacked and killed six members of the same family on their farmland. Thus, Mojagbe says: "They leave the seriousness of leprosy to cure ringworm" (Yerima 40). As far as Mojagbe is concerned, insecurity in the land is compared to leprosy, while his misrule is likened to ringworm. His use of this proverb foregrounds his delusion and maladroitness.

Apart from proverbs, Yerima also makes use of o*fó*, incantation. Incantation has to do with the verbal aspect of the magical act among the Yoruba, while others are

the rites, charms and medicines. Through magic, people tend to manipulate both the natural and supernatural worlds and subject them to their will. Incantation may also involve divination at times. In the play, incantations and divinations are employed to manipulate the perceived antagonists of the despotic king. Isepe serves as Mojagbe's priest and helps him consult with the oracle in order to know those plotting against him.

The essence of divination is to seek *definition* and explanation to knotty issues. Wande Abimbola avers that, in the traditional Yoruba society, Ifa priests were seen as the physicians, psychiatrists, historians and philosophers in their respective communities (14). Mojagbe recognizes those roles of Ifa priests; that is why he engages Isepe to help him with divination. Following the death of Isepe, Mojagbe *possesses* Motunrayo, the "very fair and beautiful slave girl" who is "found loitering in the bush" (Yerima 51), when the village warriors confront the people of Igbo Odo for killing six people from the same family. Mojagbe deliberately requests the *ownership* of Motunrayo so that she will be in charge of his medicine and help him spiritually.

Moreover, Mojagbe himself uses incantation in order to prevent Iku (Death) from killing him:

> Mojagbe: Iku Ojege Olona
> Iku Alumutu, it is you I call.
> Olonaaiye.
> Keeper of the gate between the worlds of the unborn, the living and the dead.
> Once he hugs you, you are gone…
> He provides food for mother earth.
> Death who kills a Babalawo bi enitikogbofa.
> Iku to pa onisegunbe'nitikologun un.
> Iku who killed Abiri, and Abiri died,
> Iku who killed Abiri, and Abiri went to the land beyond, beyond.
> It is you that I greet and call. (Yerima 67)

Mojagbe's incantatory rendition above attests to Abimbola's position that there are eight things which humans dread – ikú (death), àrùn (disease), òfò (loss), èpè (curse), ègbà (paralysis), òràn (trouble), èwòn (imprisonment) and èse (affliction) (50). These dreaded calamities are what people experience under the authoritarian regime of Mojagbe who is ironically frightened by death.

Similarly, Yerima employs both code-mixing and code-switching in the play. Code-switching and code-mixing represent linguistic phenomenon of bilingualism; they can be attributed to interference of language when they come in contact. Code-switching refers to the alternation between different linguistic varieties used by

the bilingual/bi-dialectal during the conversational interaction, while code-mixing means embedding of various linguistic units such as affixes (bound morphemes), words (unbound morphemes), phrases and clauses that participants, in order to infer what is intended, must reconcile what they hear with what they understand (Bokamba 277). Below are instances of both code-mixing and code-switching in the play.

– Isepe: It is 'Edi' my lord… (Yerima 16).

Here, Isepe code-mixes English and Yoruba. The word "Edi" means spell. However, using its Yoruba version tends to carry more semantic weight than the English translation – spell

– Mojagbe: Ewo! My ears did not hear that… (Yerima 43).

Similarly, Mojagbe makes use of code-mixing in the speech when he decides to use "Ewo" which is a Yoruba lexical item for taboo, something that is forbidden.

> Mojagbe: Iku Ojege Olona
> Iku Alumutu, it is you I call.
> Olonaaiye.
> Keeper of the gate between the worlds of the unborn, the living and the dead.
> Once he hugs you, you are gone…
> He provides food for mother earth.
> Death who kills a Babalawo bi eni ti kogbofa.
> Iku to pa onisegun be'nitikologun un.
> Iku who killed Abiri, and Abiri died,
> Iku who killed Abiri, and Abiri went to the land beyond, beyond.
> It is you that I greet and call. (Yerima 67)

In the excerpts above, Mojagbe employs both code-mixing and code-switching during his apostrophic speech addressed to the late Isepe whose death he masterminds and in the course of his incantatory rendition to avert his looming death. The deployment of code-mixing and code-switching attests to the linguistic multiplicity of the locale of the play.

Conclusion

Yerima employs his creativity to challenge despotic and hegemonic leadership in the African context. Through the trope of death in *Mojagbe*, he exposes the cowardice and trepidation of such leaders and metaphorically wishes for the death (discontinuance) of autocratic leadership in Africa. This study has therefore examined the trope of death in the play by exploring deadly (in)actions of Oba Mojagbe who represents death itself. In other words, the playwright presents a catalogue of administrative jiggery-pokery in his polity. As a writer who is committed to his society, Yerima depicts the salient ills of his cultural milieu with a view to proffering possible cures to those ills which have rendered the regime agonizing for the people.

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The Struggle of Memory against Forgetting in Kamila Shamsie's *Salt and Saffron*

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Abstract

This article studies the ethics of remembrance and its transformative potential through the reading of the postmemorial narrative of Kamila Shamsie's *Salt and Saffron*. While it is the story of a particular individual's journey of memory transformation, it speaks to a shared experience of rupture in the wake of Partition violence and what it might mean to confront and transform the powerful impact that this collective memory has on everyday lives. The analysis of the central character's evolution seeks to demonstrate the way in which memories of Partition violence are connected to the continuation of an oppressive class system in Pakistan and how transforming these memories also implies transforming a worldview that maintains class prejudices. In so doing, the article offers broader insights for understanding the nature of intergenerational memory, mourning, and transformation in the wake of historical violence.

Keywords: Mourning, Melancholy, Kamila Shamsie, *Salt and Saffron*, Partition, Postmemory

The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting.
— Milan Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* (1)

One person's lament can be someone else's elegy.
— Kamila Shamsie, *Salt and Saffron* (37)

Not-Quite-Twins: Conceptual and Otherwise

The difference between lament and elegy as poetic genres is a blurry one as far as their mood and content are concerned. Both capture a loss and the sorrow and grief emanating from it. However, an elegy is a meditation that takes the poet beyond the immediate loss to the reflection of some permanent principle about the tragic aspects of life. In contrast, a lament, defined as "an expression of deep regret or sorrow" by J A Cuddon and C E Preston (448), is more visceral, cried out in a voice stemming directly from the wound. The difference seems to consist in the emotional immediacy of a lament and the analytical belatedness of an elegy. The latter can only be conceived of when the mind has lamented for a while, contemplated on the absence of the beloved and finally come to terms with it with an acquired knowledge about the ephemerality of life, for instance. The moods and psychical states evoked by lament and elegy seem to parallel the acts of melancholy and mourning

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respectively. "The reflective mind," which, according to S T Coleridge, is required for writing an elegy (268), is the state a person reaches after proper mourning, after working through the trauma of the loss whereas a lament is the verbal and sonic manifestation of pain that the wounded psyche lets out in the melancholic pull of the past. Used in the second epigraph, the chance remark of the narrator-protagonist of Kamila Shamsie's magical realist novel *Salt and Saffron* Aliya appears to have commented on the two states a traumatic past may induce in a person, and the novel's central struggle could be said to consist in the movement from one state to the other. This article will largely focus on Aliya's being unconsciously defined by the past and her conscious effort at memory transformation as an ethical choice through mourning. It has two major foci: first, the article will explore Aliya's melancholy as a psychological state induced by class structures and demonstrate the capacity of agency in transcending her prejudices, which allows her to move on from melancholy to mourning. Secondly, by commenting on Aliya's mourning through the interpretation of silences, it will point out the official silence around partition trauma by the states of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh that, arguably, binds these countries to melancholic loops of re-enacting violence.

Melancholy and mourning are very similar in their impacts on human beings; they both cause intense occupation with grief and have at their core a loss – "of a loved person, or … some abstraction … , such as one's country, liberty, an ideal and so on" (Freud 19). The loss, in the case of melancholy, does not necessarily imply the death of the beloved, but it may very well be the loss of him/her as the "object of love" (Freud 21). Sigmund Freud thus leaves the originary cause of both these states of mind open-ended. However, what distinguishes melancholy from mourning is the absence of one trait in the latter: "an extraordinary diminution in … self-regard, an impoverishment of … ego on a grand scale" (Freud 22). Freud describes mourning as a conscious and normal exercise while melancholy is an unconscious pathology. The objective of mourning is, what Jacques Derrida so evocatively says, "to make sure that the dead will not come back …" (120).

Melancholy implies the impossibility of moving on. The melancholic state traps a person in an obsession with a loss, where s/he keeps acting out the scene of loss. "In post-traumatic acting out," Dominick LaCapra argues, "…one is haunted or possessed by the past and performatively caught up in the compulsive repetition of traumatic scenes …" (21). In working through, as opposed to acting out, one is able to "distinguish between past and present" instead of being entangled in the loop of melancholic past (22). Here, one consciously wrenches oneself away from performing the scenes of trauma repetitively, which allows for some resolution. This is where the prospect of a future opens up transcending the moment of trauma to a psychic state of analytical clarity that allows a person to move on to the future while acknowledging the past. It thus has an ethical dimension to it, which LaCapra seems to imply when he says, "Working through can be related to the ethical turn [in discourses around history and trauma] and conceived as a desirable process …"

(xxiii). In the discussion above, we have found a number of pairs: lament and elegy; melancholy and mourning; acting out and working through that closely correspond to each other. They help us for a nuanced understanding of the responses to loss, their processes, and ethical aspects. They are somewhat symptomatically similar yet critically different like the not-quite-twins that plague the house of Dard-e-Dil through history.

Salt and Saffron is a tale of the fictional royal family of Dard-e-Dil, one that has carried the curse of not-quite-twins for centuries. That Aliya is totally aware of the ridiculousness of the idea is evidenced in the very opening of the novel: "All right, don't scoff, mock or disbelieve: we live in mortal fear of not-quite-twins" (1). The trope of not-quite-twins running through the novel is suggestive of the not-quites born on 14 and 15 August of 1947 respectively: the nations of Pakistan and India and the tremendous human disaster that took place around that event. With this curse, Shamsie exploits the archetype of Leda and the Swan of Greek mythology, where Zeus rapes Leda in the guise of a swan on the same day she has had sex with her husband Tyndareus. As a result, she lays twin eggs – one containing Zeus' offspring Helen and Pollux, and the other containing Tyndareus' children Castor and Clytemnestra. The catastrophes these not-quites bring about – Helen for the immortal city of Troy and Clytemnestra for the victorious Commander-in-Chief Agamemnon – are detailed in the Greek classics of *Iliad* by Homer and *Agamemnon* by Aeschylus. At the heart of this myth is a trauma, the rape of Leda, that has disastrous repercussions for generations to come. This archetypal story encapsulates and allegorizes many of the issues arising out of the India-Pakistan partition and its post-generations. The immensely complicated family tree of Dard-e-Dils, recorded by Babuji, bears witness to the many appearances of not-quites through generations. This curse operates through a simple principle: There will be only one set of not-quites at any moment of history, who will bring disaster to the family and diminish its pride. At the time in which the story is set, there is a strange set of not-quites as they have not been given birth by the same mother. The narrator-protagonist Aliya's name is starred together with her aunt Mariam as not-quites in the family tree. No one knows how that has come about although Aliya guesses it is Mariam's doing. The only way she and her aunt may be twins is because they have entered "a world" on the same day: "Mariam Apa and I entered a world, not *the* world I'll admit, but a world – one inhabited by my parents and Dadi and Masood and Samia and Sameer and all the rest of them – on the same day" (57). Aliya's parents never heard of Mariam before the day her mother went to labor. Mariam is the daughter of a lost brother of Aliya's grandfather, who severed all connections with the family immediately after turning eighteen. However, as Mariam's father passes away many years later and as she does not have any other kin around where they used to live, she comes to live with Aliya's family. She would not speak to anybody except for ordering food to the family cook Masood, so it is impossible to know about the place where her father went after his self-exile. Nevertheless, Aliya and Mariam could communicate almost

telepathically like sometimes twins are believed to be capable of doing, and Aliya was exceptionally perceptive of Mariam's gestures as well: "I was so accustomed to translating her gestures into sentence that I sometimes wondered why people looked so perplexed when I claimed to be quoting her words exactly" (192). While in their house, Mariam falls in love with Masood, and they have to elope to get married as the extremely class-conscious society of Pakistan will never allow such a union to happen. Her elopement becomes a huge scandal in the high society of Karachi since people's coming together across class boundaries is unthinkable there. This is how Mariam brings shame to the family by fulfilling the curse of not-quite-twins. Aliya, as the other half of the pair, is supposed to further degrade the family, so when she shows the least bit of interest in Khaleel, a boy originating from the poor part of Karachi, Aliya's cousins – Samia and Sameer – become very concerned. It is not so much Mariam's elopement with Masood or Aliya's interest in Khaleel that causes the scandal or holds scandalous possibilities as the class prejudices that keeps them apart. Love draws people together across all boundaries: those of class, gender, religion, and so on, but, within a particular society, only certain kinds of relationships are socially approved. The relationship between Mariam and Masood falls outside the range of socially-approved relationships in a context that is acutely stratified on the basis of class. In order for them to be together, they have had to remove themselves from their own society. It is obvious, therefore, that the configuration of the society is responsible for the scandal around their elopement.

Class, Metanarratives, and Postmemories

In exploring the great class divide of Pakistan, *Salt and Saffron* unravels how social stratification determines the personal choices of human beings. Contrary to the fundamental principle of existentialism, "existence precedes essence" (Sartre 26-27), a principle that characterizes humans as self-defining and free-willed animals, the characters of *Salt and Saffron* are seen to be trapped within the prejudices of the class they are born into. The establishment of the fictional royal family of Dard-e-Dil dates even further back than the Mughal rule in India. Whosoever is born in the family is brought up on the elaborate Dard-e-Dil lore and is expected to behave as their aristocratic lineage demands. Handed down from one generation to the next, the family stories undergo occasional alterations and modifications whenever expediency dictates, ultimately forming a familial metanarrative. This ensures a semblance of uniformity of conduct by the Dard-e-Dils, who attempt to live up to the standards set by their predecessors. The rigidity of class-boundaries necessitated and perpetuated by an aristocratic past makes Mariam's decision to marry the family cook so unacceptable. Even though having a royal lineage might have many enabling consequences, such as pride and dignity, it also determines the limits of knowledge, imagination, even language for its members. Attempts are always made to replace unpleasant memories with more convenient stories, and people turned rogues by the aristocratic standards of Dard-e-Dils are often pushed out of the range of visibility. This gives an extremely prejudiced view of the family's

past, exaggerating some events while subverting others or replacing facts with fictions. These prejudices seep into the members' personalities, determining their actions and behaviors. For instance, even for a Western educated girl like Aliya, who is otherwise imbibed with progressive literary and theoretical ideas, the prospect of a life with a boy from Liaquatabad, the poor part of Karachi, is unthinkable until a certain point. Contemplating the limiting aspect of her memories as a member of the royal family, she concludes: "Our lives … are crippled by memories" (31).

These crippling memories are passed on to the new generations of Dard-e-Dils from the old in a postmemorial way. Coined by Marianne Hirsch to describe the intergenerational transmission of traumatic memories of the Holocaust, "postmemory" has been used by Partition Studies scholars like Tarun Saint (2010), Sukeshi Kamra (2015) and Ananya Jahanara Kabir (2014) to delineate the structure of the transmission in the context of the Indian subcontinent, especially the Partition. In the absence of any official memorialization of Partition trauma by the divided nations of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, a repressive tendency that will be discussed later in this article, memorialization of the Partition has taken very informal forms. Family had long been the only channel through which memories could be directed and passed on until oral historians took initiatives to record stories in the mid- to late-1990s. As a result, family as a unit of memory transmission is considered vital in the Partition context as Tarun Saint contends, "Due to long absence/suppression of an archive of first generation survivor testimony, family memory in South Asia became the primary vehicle for the inscription and transmission of memory…" (46-47). Memories transmitted within family environments most often take the routes that Hirsch describes as postmemorial. Intergenerational transmission occurs, according to her, through the stories, photographs, paintings, behaviors, etc. of the older survivor generation that post-trauma generations assimilate during their collective existence in a family and/or community. Even though these memories are not one's own as they have not been acquired through experience, they are "transmitted … so deeply and affectively as to *seem* to constitute memories in their own right" (Hirsch 5; emphasis original). Partition novels often demonstrate a consciousness of these channels of memory transmission, which the novelists use to connect characters, especially protagonists, with their pasts. Accounting for these postmemorial transmissions often noticed in Partition novels, Saint argues that the repressed stories of the people on both sides of the Radcliffe Line are "reconstituted and reinterpreted through literary modes of remembrance" (47). For example, Salman Rushdie, as pointed out by Israk Zahan Papia, invests his narrator Saleem Sinai with the gift of telephathy in *Midnight's Children*, which he uses to acquire and store other people's stories very much like the work of postmemory (1). Also, in *The Shadow Lines*, Amitav Ghosh's unnamed narrator's archive of experiences consist of "that which is lived and that which is narrated and heard" (Kaul 307), which is also a postmemorial process. Likewise, Aliya's "troubled relationship with her parental past," Quratulain Shirazi observes, is forged through postmemorial structures in the

narrative of *Salt and Saffron* (14). Herself a second (or third?) generation witness of the Partition, Shamsie's personal investment in the novel is evident in an article written by her scholarly mother Muneeza Shamsie entitled "Sunlight and Salt: The Literary Landscapes of a Divided Family," where she outlines the rupture of her family into three in the wake of the Partition (137). Not only has Kamila Shamsie drawn from the stories she was told by her parents and other family members, but another novel, *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961), written on the Partition by her mother's aunt Attia Hosain, deeply informs her own novel as well. Muneeza Shamsie details how her daughter read *Sunlight* as a teenager and later during the writing of *Salt and Saffron* (139). *Sunlight* thus is one of the textual postmemories Kamila Shamsie draws on in her novel. In fact, Muneeza Shamsie's article gives a rare insight into the postmemorial transmission of the memories of the Partition within a family and their artistic expressions through novels.

Aliya's connections with the past are made in the narrative through the acts of listening to others' stories, looking at and discussing photographs and paintings or adopting behavioral traits of ancestors. Storytelling is of great significance in the collective existence of the Dard-e-Dil family as Aliya says, "Oh, they are a talking people, my relatives, and I have breathed in that chatter, storing [or storying?] it in … my lungs …. And yes, when need arises I can exhale those words …" (18). This clearly illustrates how stories sustain and perpetuate the connection between generations and why Aliya has become a great storyteller herself. Most stories told to her by others are ones of traumatic events in the past involving the not-quite-twins. Meher Dadi's telling Aliya the story of the Partition when the family got divided due to the fight between not-quite-twins is just one example of how the act of recounting memories serves as a foundation for subsequent generations' knowledge of the past. Indeed, Shamsie seems to have stressed this function of storytelling through the narrative of the novel itself, which is entirely written in a manner akin to storytelling with an imaginary audience in mind with whom the narrator is in dialogue as when she says, "Cast *your* mind back to Baji's crowded flat and the unrolling of the family tree" (67; emphasis mine), or "Let me take *you* to the day of Masood's disappearance …" (78; emphasis mine). The use of the silent audience suggests the transmission of memory further from the storyteller to the listener, so the novel acts as an instrument for the formation of affiliative postmemories too that extend family stories to "a larger collective in an organic web of transmission" (Hirsch 36). Photographs and paintings serve a similar purpose in memory-formation in *Salt and Saffron*. Aliya's thoughts about a picture on the wall of Baji's flat captures this:

> The setting [of the picture] was the grounds of the Dard-e-Dil palace. I recognized it instantly from the photographs and paintings that adorned the walls of Dadi's house in Karachi, recognized it well enough to know that to have snapped that particular vista the photographer must have been backed up against the marble statue of Nur-ul-Jahan, founder of the house

of Dard-e-Dil. Behind the figures who posed in the foreground was the arched entryway to the verandah that led to the part of the palace where Dadi's immediate family lived. … If the photographer had angled his camera up, say, thirty degrees he would have captured the spot on the palace roof where you could stand and look through a gap in the trees to see the house where the yak-man [one of Aliya's great-grandfathers] and his wife raised the triplets, just outside the palace walls…. (40)

Aliya's ability to detail everything surrounding the Dard-e-Dil estate minutely, even to the "spot on the palace roof" that could be seen if the angle was moved just "thirty degrees" (40) without ever being there physically, evidences how connected she is with the place where her ancestors lived. This connection with the past is forged by the other photographs and paintings she saw in her grandmother's house in Karachi. Like stories, photographs and paintings, conscious or unconscious behavioral traits get transmitted across generations too as when Aliya overtips a taxi driver to make him feel lower on the way from the London airport to Samia's flat – a trick she has adopted from her Dadi. It is through these processes that Shamsie explores the intergenerational transmission of memory and connects Aliya with her past in the narrative, a past that is not "remembered" in the traditional sense of the term as Hirsch says, "Postmemory's connection to the past is thus actually mediated not by recall but by imaginative investment, projection and creation" (5). Aliya's reconstruction of the past of the Dard-e-Dil house in her quest for Mariam is an elaborate example of such "investment, projection and creation" (5).

Aliya's postmemorial connection with the past is not without a serious underside. In fact, Hirsh has warned that "to grow up with overwhelming inherited memories, to be dominated by narratives that preceded one's birth or one's consciousness, is to risk having one's own life stories displaced, even evacuated, by our ancestors" (5). Considering the impact other people's memories have on Aliya, it feels like the present has not so much been "displaced" or "evacuated" (5) as it is appropriated by the past. She is a representative of modern Pakistan with a familiarity with Western critical and activist traditions like feminism and Marxism, yet she is unable to shed the deep-seated class prejudices inculcated in her by others' stories. The stories, handed down through generations, have trapped her in the rut of class prejudices, and she finds it exceedingly difficult "to be freed of remembered biases" (32). This, of course, has grave consequences for her personality. The remembered biases in the Dard-e-Dil royal house are sustained and perpetuated though the structures of postmemory, which is the reason behind Mariam's having to run away with Masood from the known social environment and, ultimately, Aliya's deep sense of loss at her elopement. Therefore, her loss of Mariam is in effect caused by the the social stratification and its rigidity. Aliya's melancholy, which has Mariam's disappearance at its core, by extension, is also caused by the class structure of contemporary Pakistan. As we will see later, the difficulty in moving from melancholy to mourning

arises mainly because she struggles to transcend the class consciousness that her royal lineage has instilled in her. While melancholy is in itself a psychological state, in Aliya's case, it is made worse by the fact that her surroundings uphold the very reason for her loss as a norm. So, her pathology is actually fed constantly by the society, in which case Aliya ultimately has to use her agency at the risk of being a social outcast like Mariam to achieve some resolution of her loss through a conscious act of mourning by deconstructing the family history in her effort to find Mariam. From the initial pages of *Salt and Saffron*, it is very apparent that Aliya is a narrator with personal prejudices and limitations of knowledge. This is consistent with the theme of the novel that represents the evolution of her character from a biased perspective to free-thinking and from ignorance to knowledge. As noted above, Aliya's ignorance, from which she is to evolve later to knowledge, has resulted from the boundaries of the knowable imposed by her postmemories. Just as knowledge is limited by crippling memories, so is there a limit of imagination as well. For example, Aliya tells her artist friend Celeste to paint Aunt Mariam's picture older and happy because her imagination only allows her to picture Mariam as unhappy for her elopement with a man from the lower class.

Aliya's Melancholy and Mourning

All these limitations of perception – cognitive, imaginative, and, as we will discuss later, linguistic – are crucial to the understanding of Aliya's loss and her melancholic psychic state. As said before, she is able to communicate with Mariam almost telepathically just as some twins are believed to do even before the development of ear and larynx in the mother's womb. It is Mariam's recognition of Aliya's presence that invests her existence with visibility. The closeness between the aunt and niece, however, cannot help Aliya transcend the class biases so indelibly inculcated in her – so much so that she cannot imagine anything beyond the realm of possibility defined by her aristocratic lineage. The shock of Mariam's departure and the impending shock of discovering (though not admitting to herself) that she has been just as disgusted as the rest of the family at Mariam's elopement with Masood horrify her. Aliya remembers how she actually feels when she hear the news: "… I *had* felt something other than shock. When Aba [her father] told me she'd eloped I felt humiliation. Also, anger. Worse, I felt disgust. *She's having sex with a servant.* Those words exactly flashed through my mind" (112-113). Her affection for Mariam, however strong it is, cannot accommodate Masood in the world she has been born into. It is for the same reason that Aliya is reluctant about seriously considering a life with Khaleel: "I was born into a world that recoiled at such prospects" (51). The blinding discovery of class prejudices within herself makes Aliya react as she does by slapping Dadi, her grandmother, moments later when she apparently calls Mariam a "whore" (104). She needs to believe in the comfortable lie that she slapped her grandma because, whatever Mariam has done notwithstanding, she remains family and, therefore, needs not be called names. However, it is only much later that she recognizes that her reaction has been unjustified, that she has recoiled like the rest

of the Dard-e-Dils at Mariam's marriage with Masood. Discovery of the self as a being limited in perception and perspective is, therefore, what induces Aliya's melancholy. Her terrible reaction is accompanied by the "diminution in … self-regard" (Freud 22). Aliya's being degraded in her own eyes, a characteristic that distinguishes melancholy from mourning, is evident in how she feels about herself immediately after the incident: "I had so often felt the urge to smash my fist through my reflection in the mirror in the weeks after Mariam left" (114). This urge to smash the image of the self implies its massive diminution for Aliya. Her disgust at the thought of Mariam's having sex with the servant Masood is caused by her deep-seated class consciousness rooted in the society. Social stratification is also the reason for Mariam's having to flee from her surroundings with Masood. Aliya's psychological state of melancholy, therefore, has a social origin that not only causes it but makes it difficult for her to wrench herself out of it as well.

For four years after Mariam's departure, Aliya stays away in the US, doing her undergrad in English Literature and only coming back to Karachi for three months during summer vacations when she knows Dadi will be in France visiting her son. She earns a name for her storytelling abilities in college though there is one story that she never tells: Mariam's. Storytelling comes to her naturally, as discussed before, because she is brought up in a family where stories connect people to their pasts and determine their futures in a postmemorial way. That Aliya never tells Mariam's story is a sign that her linguistic capacity lacks the means of expression when it comes to Mariam's disappearance. Her repeated avoidance of Dadi and inability to speak of Mariam are evidences enough that Aliya is caught up in a melancholic state. The gaping hole of her loss defies linguistic rendition and re-enacts the scene of loss over and over again. Physical symptoms of Aliya's melancholy are evident in her changed sleeping pattern and the repeated nightmares she has in her college dorm room. When she attempts to tell Celeste the story of Mariam, she can only produce a fragmented narrative because she has not quite been able to come to terms with it yet. When she ruminates over Samia's question about not telling that story ever, she concludes that she does so as it does not have a resolution. Being in melancholy implies being trapped in the cycle of re-enactments of the scene of loss that are necessarily without resolution. The process of working through only begins when she actively endeavors to find out about where Mariam came from and where she has left, thereby giving her story a resolution, as an act of principled remembrance or ethical recalling. Consisting of Aliya's narration, the narrative of the novel itself is the story with a resolution, where her quest for Mariam ultimately transforms her personality and psychic state, breaking away from melancholic re-enactments of class prejudices to mourning that allows her the freedom to dare to be with Khaleel.

As said before, *Salt and Saffron* is written entirely in a manner akin to storytelling; it is as if Aliya were producing a narrative account of her quest for Mariam and Masood. She would rather not give details of Mariam's story in the college years and refuses to answer any questions about it. It is when the Starched Aunts propose

a comfortable excuse at a family meeting for Mariam's questionable conduct by branding her as an imposter who took advantage of the Dard-e-Dils, Aliya starts searching for Mariam as an ethical choice between repressing the unpleasant past and reclaiming it. The Starched Aunts' attempt to erase Mariam from the family history or, at least, to push her to its fringes is the instance of an active act of memory-making through which a familial metanarrative will eventually be created, suppressing the reality of Mariam's existence. Aliya registers how she feels when the excuse is proposed and comments on the formation of the dominant story:

> I could almost hear the scissors snipping away the strings which bound Mariam Apa to our lives. Here, now, the story was shaping; the one that would be repeated, passed down, seducing us all with its symmetry. In parentheses the story-tellers would add, "There are still those who say she really was a Dard-e-Dil, but a new identity was fabricated for her by those who felt she blemished the family name." (129).

The motive behind constructing a revised story about Mariam is to prevent the reality of the event from destabilizing the class consciousness of the family members. Aliya's persistent love for her aunt enables her to go against the new family narrative – an act that ultimately leads her to rise above class prejudices. In short, her struggle to remember Mariam has translated into a struggle against the power of class metanarrative. It is her memory that enables her to be an active agent rather than a passive actor enacting the story. In the process, she finds a way of working though her past that leads to mourning from melancholy. A willful forgetting of Mariam complying with the prescription of the new narrative would push Aliya further into the depths of her melancholy. Keeping memories alive is, therefore, a means of preserving agency and the capacity for working through – at least for Aliya. She is aware that her imaginative reconstruction, with which she puts up the ethical resistance to the metanarrative, is no surrogate for the real events that have led up to Mariam's elopement. However, this narrative is what ultimately helps her in working through her melancholy. It not only enables her to accept Mariam and Masood's marriage, but eats away the superstructure of her class bias, so that she can accept Khaleel's hand, about which she has been reluctant only because of his Liaquatabad roots.

Once Aliya consciously decides to look her melancholy in the eye and forces herself to work through to an ethical alternative to willful forgetting, time progresses for her. While the family's oldest member's comment at the family meeting nearly obliterates Mariam from the family's chronicles except as an imposter, "what we were we no longer are" (129), her nostalgia for a mythical past transforms into an admission of facts for Dadi and Baji's generation: "What we are, we are" (43, 113). From that point, Aliya's resolution to take Khaleel by the hand before the entire family and say, "*Just because a thing has always been so, it does not always have to be so*" (193; italics original) is definitely a progression of history and an evolution of mindset. Even

though Shamsie envisions no miraculous solution for the India-Pakistan animosity, the fact that borders are going to become more unstable and people more mobile, it is always possible to start anew for the new generation of Dard-e-Dils on neutral soil just as Samia and Rehana, an Indian cousin, do in London.

The Partition, Language, and Silence

Although Aliya's loss and melancholy are not directly related to the Partition of the subcontinent, the novel is deeply steeped in Partition trauma. The entire Dard-e-Dil family is cut into two by the event of the Partition, resulting in eternal animosity across borders. Like *The Shadow Lines*, yet in a different way, *Salt and Saffron* refuses to confine the Partition to the few months around 14-15 August 1947 but illustrates its transgenerational aftereffects in the present. The novel suggests that the Partition is the severance of ties between siblings and family members. Many other Partition novels also use the "sibling rivalry" trope to imply tensed relationship between India and Pakistan since their independence as it is difficult, Suvir Kaul points out, not to use this metaphor in the South Asian context (8). For example, both Anita Desai and Salman Rushdie dramatize enmity between a brother and a sister in *Clear Light of Day* and *Midnight's Children* respectively. In *Salt and Saffron*, among the triplets born in 1920 (a year after the Jalianwalla Bagh massacre), Mariam's father Taimur disappears nine years before the Partition while Akbar seeks a new future in Karachi at the prospect of Pakistan in 1946, and Sulaiman stays back in India. They are "handcuffed" to history, to echo Salman Rushdie (3), by their lives and times in that crucial historical period of South Asia. It should be noted here that both severances have resulted from misunderstandings and miscommunications, which could be easily resolved if it were not for the pride and prejudices of the people concerned. Strong affection remains unabated beneath the surface of enmity irrespective of nationality among the old members of the Dard-e-Dil family. Aliya remembers how Dadi weeps for not being told about the visit of the Prufrock lady from India despite the fierce enmity she supposedly feels about those who have remained on the other side of the border since they share a common history – personal as well as collective – that Dadi evokes while shedding tears for her childhood friend: "We were girls together" (28). The family of Dard-e-Dil – now ruptured into two irreconcilable branches – has to go through an enormous change to reconfigure itself because of its division caused by Partition trauma. Ananya Jahanara Kabir, whose own family was fractured in the Partition, comments on such ruptures and their consequences: "The fracturing of families through the permanent reconfiguration of the personal, the political, and the collective dimensions of loyalty and belonging was amongst the most painful aspects of Partition" (6). Apparently, the Dard-e-Dil family has been divided, but it is still one in Babuji's genealogical records. Even the curse of not-quite-twins has neither broken nor doubled because of the split. The principle of one set of twins at a time has also not ceased to determine the actors of the curse regardless of the sides they take in an India-Pakistan cricket match.

As said before, the Partition implies severance of ties between people who have strong feelings for each other in *Salt and Saffron*. In Taimur's disappearance, Dadi loses the person she loves; and Akbar and Sulaiman lose the brother they have so far been inseparable from during the first rains of monsoon in the year 1938. Since then, during each monsoon Dadi and Akbar, whom she loves as well and eventually marries, barely exchange any words, for each of the two understands the need for the other's grieving. In 1971, Akbar dies of heart failure just at the fateful moment of the first rains. (And it should not be forgotten that the second fracture of the subcontinent, as a result of which Bangladesh became separate from the west wing of Pakistan as an independent nation, occurred in the same year.) Dadi has been running away from the monsoon to France since Akbar's death as rain has acquired a haunting implication for her, triggering memories of losing loved ones. It is the same monsoon in which Dadi decides to stay in Karachi that Aliya resolves to encounter her class-handicapped self and find out the whereabouts of Mariam and Masood. This mainly involves creating a narrative of the events leading up to Mariam's disappearance, deconstructing family myths, listening to unsaid things, and analyzing pregnant silences.

Much of *Salt and Saffron* constitutes Shamsie's deliberations on the inadequacy of language and eloquence of silence. Language has been demonstrated as being an inept medium for expression of complex human feelings. Faced with the possibility of meeting Dadi for the first time in four years, Aliya cannot decide how she feels about it because of the disaster of their last encounter. The word "nervous" cannot capture the complexity of multiple feelings she has at the prospect of seeing Dadi, nor do words like "love" or "hate" express Aliya's emotion for her (88-89). Her self-conscious narrative contains many gaps that render it an unreliable account of the true events. She compares the drainage of meaning with the lack of salt in food, which, in each narration, interrogates the very endeavor of representing facts in language. The crisis of meaning is more acute when a language that is euphemistic in nature is used. The South Asian decorum and Dard-e-Dil protocol of aristocracy require that language be used euphemistically, even at the expense of the vulgarity of truth as Dadi says, "When you live in euphemism you can't speak to people who are accustomed to direct speech" (107). Shamsie further examines how the second language speakers of English, the former colonial masters' language, drain it of meaning. The repeated use of "flay" and "miscreant" in Pakistani dailies deprives the words of their subtle nuances, making them unable to evoke any specific action or person (110). In the worst case scenario, language is entirely drained of the emotions it inspires as when a very funny Turkish movie is rendered completely mirthless by its subtitle. Only Mariam, whose understanding of the funny moments of the movie gives Aliya the first hint that she might be from Turkey, nearly rolls on the floor while the subtitle readers – Samia, Sameer and Aliya – look on at the screen, perplexed. Shamsie does not deny, however, the possibility of multiplicity of meaning when she describes the same couplet on the wall of Mariam's room as

having one meaning to the general readers and something else for the Dard-e-Dils. Therefore, the richness of language, the author seems to imply, lies in its fluidity, instability and openness to interpretation.

Set against the inadequacy and instability of language is the eloquence of silence. Mariam never utters a single word except while ordering Masood for food – a peculiarity that perplexes all who know her, and everyone has his/her own theory about it. No theory is, however, verifiable, and Mariam's silence generates interpretations *ad infinitum* even after her departure as though the absence of words has inspired a clamor of interpretations. Two of the interpretations – one by Aliya and the other by Sameer – deserve close attention. Aliya believes that Mariam's silence has neither resulted from her inability to speak, nor is it that she does not have anything to say. It is her desperate need to listen to other people, perhaps in order to find out the reason for her father's departure that has rendered her speechless. Or perhaps she has found out why Taimur has had to leave and does not want to communicate with the world that has no place for her father. Sameer, on the other hand, interprets her silence as an attempt at subversion. The fact that she always gives Masood orders about meals in questions rather than imperatives, convinces Sameer that Mariam has been trying to subvert the class prejudices built into language by refusing to use it. And, when she does use language, it is only with Masood, the cook from the lower class, her manner of speaking undercutting the established "employer servant paradigm" (214). These interpretations of silences lead to introspection about established beliefs and accepted norms and, eventually, help Aliya in the process of working through. The only person for whom Mariam's silence never seems to be a problem is Aliya, for she could communicate with her Aunt without speaking at all. Aliya owes the habit of translating silence into words to Mariam, who emits meanings, as it were, by unsaying things. It is the failure of Aliya for not listening to the silences in between utterances that provokes her to slap Dadi. Dadi's love for Taimur is misinterpreted as hatred for Mariam as the utterance is recognized as meaningful and not the silence. If this miscommunication can undo eighteen years of love between Dadi and her grandchild, one can easily surmise how much one can be misled by written or oral history.

History of the Partition and National Melancholy
Historiography in India and Pakistan around the Partition took very different turns following their independence. The originary story of India is woven around the Nehruvian narrative of the long struggle against the colonial power for freedom of a nation that made a "tryst with destiny" long ago (Nehru). It stipulates a vision of secularism and accommodation of diverse people within one national entity. Pakistan, on the other hand, considers Islam as its unifying force and celebrates the birth of a new Muslim nation, but for which followers of the Islamic faith would have assumed a minority status in a Hindu-dominated country in the post-British reality. Both metanarratives are taught to schoolchildren and have formed their consciousness about the respective histories of their countries. The rupture

of the subcontinent is generally attributed to the power-hungry Jinnah and his Muslim League in India while the Hindu leadership and their supposed intention of communal domination over Muslims are held accountable in Pakistan. Even as these stories feature the tragic "sacrifices" people had to make for their independence, both of them have celebratory rings to them as well. They generally consider the enormous human sufferings of the Partition as the sacrificial price they had to pay for independence. The celebration of independence combined with the narrative of sacrifice has drowned the cries and sufferings of the Partition for far too long. This is similar to how the familial metanarratives of the Dard-e-Dil house overwhelms individual choices and voices. An uncanny silence reigned on both sides of the Radcliffe Line about the lives and properties lost, people dislocated and bodies violated. History books treated the violence of the Partition as a corollary of the independence, reducing stories of sufferings to brief descriptions and statistical data – so much so that it would not be untrue to say that there had not been any "history" of the Partition for a very long time. However, the voices drowned by the independence metanarrative had eventually to come out to take stock of the freedom that generates so much popular jubilation.

The historiography on the Partition witnessed a decisive moment of shift in its focus during the anti-Sikh riots in 1984 in Delhi and elsewhere in the wake of the murder of Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguard. Survivors and witnesses of the mayhem against the Sikh population, one in which the state was thought to be indirectly complicit, realized that the communal violence against them is a repetition of what took place in 1947. This came as an epiphany to the oral historian Urvashi Butalia when a Sikh elder said to her that it was like the Partition all over again. Butalia observes the presentness of the past here: "It took 1984 to make me understand how ever-present the Partition was in our lives too, to recognize that it could not be so easily put away inside the covers of history books" (6). The oral narratives she collected were compiled in her seminal work entitled *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* (1998). A similar work of oral historiography was done by Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin titled *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India's Partition* (1998). Both works, the latter to a greater degree, are notable for their emphasis on the gendered dimension of Partition violence.

The efforts of Butalia and others to salvage history through oral historiography was complimented by subaltern historiography. Subaltern historiography brought the stories of real people's suffering in their everyday life around the time of the Partition to the foreground – something very opposite of what metanarratives of grand political events do. Instead of grand political events, it focused more, for instance, on the story of the pregnant woman who had a miscarriage on the road before strangers' eyes in broad daylight, while migrating on foot from Lahore to India, or the father who slaughtered his daughter to "save" her "purity" from the imminent gangrape by men of other religion. In addition, the renewed enthusiasm in literary

representation of the Partition, both in regional languages and English, resulted in many instances of scholarly re-evaluation of the Partition in several research areas treating literary works as "'fictive' testimonies" or "testimonial fictions" (3, 5). The cumulative achievement of all these researches is that they questioned the official metanarratives of independence and successfully cast doubts on their seemingly inviolable premises.

The Partition has become a trope or a motif in the subcontinental history that cannot be left behind in the past. Instead, the communal violence witnessed in 1947 resurfaces at the socio-political level every so often with a slightest nudge to the so-called religious feelings, as exemplified by the anti-Sikh riots in 1984, Gujrat pogrom in 2002, and the acts of lynching that have become so common in India today. Similar events have been reported from Pakistan and Bangladesh as well. Indeed, the most significant repetition of geopolitical fracture seen for the first time in 1947 was 1971 when the east wing of Pakistan got separated in the process of the bloody independence of Bangladesh. The recent events of the persecution of minorities, hardening of identities along religious lines across South Asia, and the ongoing crisis of Kashmir reminds us of the "unfinished" nature of the Partition (Saint 9). Despite oral and subaltern historiography or "fictive" witnessing of the Partition, the absolute absence of official memorialization may have resulted in the repeated acting out of religious violence in post-Partition times, which may be countered in an ethical and cultural act of mourning. The total unwillingness of commemoration by the states of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh keeps the past wounds alive, festering them in the present and holding possibilities of future traumas in the forms of ethnic and religious hostility. As a moral obligation, therefore, South Asian states must engage with their traumatic memories that have been repressed for more than seventy years. The refusal or avoidance has been unsuccessful in laying the ghosts of the past to rest who have so often come back to haunt the region with resurgences of violence. If *Salt and Saffron* has any contribution to the act of working through of Partition trauma, it is the underscoring of the importance of listening to silences along with all the other kinds of historical narratives. Aliya represents a modern post-Partition nation-state with a complex mix of modern ideas and deep-seated prejudices. Just as her mourning involves an active engagement with the past through the interpretation of silences as much as words, the nations of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh need to work through their Partition-melancholy and break the cycle of violence by being attentive to the silences of history that official metanarratives have caused. In other words, an elegy of history has to be constructed with sustained analyses of articulated and unexpressed memories instead of being trapped in the perennial lament that South Asian history has become.

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attack. As Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in their seminal text *The Madwoman in the Attic* have shown, two Brontë sisters, Charlotte and Emily, tried to absorb these Miltonic and patriarchal narratives of subjugation by championing the egalitarian struggle of Eve and Lucifer over the hierarchical order of Adam and God. In *Shirley*, the eponymous heroine brings the issue to the forefront by asserting that Milton miserably failed to comprehend the depths of Eve's intentions but merely gave into the archetypal oversimplification of feminine character. In reality, a woman is simultaneously compliant and assertive – a complex mosaic of reason as well as passion – fluidly shuffling between personas in keeping with necessity and ability. *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* demonstrate this fact where the heroines, Jane and Catherine, never quite conform to the etiquettes and elegance expected of them. Ultimately, they emerge victorious as they bend the will of their male counterparts, living or dead. Analyzing the three above mentioned novels, this essay aims to explore how the Brontë sisters actually attempted to reverse the metanarrative of the fall from Paradise – to exonerate Eve and hail her as the genuine "hero" – to prove how the feminine intellect and will is far superior to that of the masculine because, despite all the injustices toward them, women are not vengeful to their male counterparts, because if they were, humankind would have long gone extinct.

In her incorporation of the cubist style in poetry, Gertrude Stein seems to wonder about "Patriarchal poetry their origin their history" (Nelson 263) which is inextricably linked with *The Bible* and its masculinist readings espoused by the agents of Western literary tradition such as Milton whose literal and metaphorical blindness toward one half of the human race crippled the women's imagination and asphyxiated their creativity for centuries. Thoroughly deserving of the epithet "covering Cherub … the great inhibitor, the Sphinx who strangles even strong imaginations in their cradles" bestowed on him by Harold Bloom, the paradigm that Milton's bogey successfully established had slammed the door shut on women who endeavored to explore new territories – artistically, economically, and even psycho-sexually (191). What is ironic is that the seemingly heaven-inspired poetry not only convinces men, who are all too willing to accept anything, sublime or sedentary, that hails them as superior and enslaves the opposite sex, but that Milton's verse hypnotizes its female readers and convinces them of their inherent decadence and inferiority through the authority of the grandstanding father/author – the bastion of intellectual patriarchy – as manifested in Virginia Woolf's recorded impressions on *Paradise Lost* in 1918. Despite being aware of the masculinist propaganda perpetuated in epic-proportions, the paragon of feminism is mesmerized by the "wonderful, beautiful, and masterly descriptions of angels' bodies, battles, flights, dwelling places" which makes the androgynous Shakespeare, the greatest poet of all time "troubled, personal, hot and imperfect" (5-6). The sheer grandiosity of Milton's poetry leaves Woolf feeling "puzzled, excluded, inferior, and even a little guilty," albeit, indeed because of, the epic's cosmological condemnation of womankind and confinement to their mediocre and meager roles and places under the scarlet stone of subjugation (5-6).

Since this subjugation is facilitated by a masculinist myth which slanders the foremother Eve as the progenitor of Sin and Death, the myth itself demands deconstruction. Why does Eve let herself be beguiled by Satan in the guise of a serpent? More importantly, why does she eat the forbidden fruit of knowledge which precipitates the fall of mankind on earth and, by co-damnation, to the anguish of gestation and maternity? Eve's is a quasi-parallel story to that of Prometheus who stole fire from the gods and gave it to humanity which ensured the mastery of mankind over hostile animals and prosperous propagation of the species. Similarly, without the knowledge brought about by Eve's "Sin," *Homo sapiens* would still have been lagging in the dire animalistic crudity. However, unlike Prometheus, Eve is not proclaimed as a hero in the patriarchal metanarrative but an archetypal villain of disobedience on a par with the Prince of Darkness himself, and the only conceivable reason behind it seems to be her femininity. In spite of the condemnation of God(s)[1], if Eve were masculine like Prometheus, her cosmological conviction would have been overturned long ago. Thus, as Simone de Beauvoir described her experience of the four women imprisoned in a dark subterranean cave in Tunisia, mastered by one man, shackled by their subordinate roles of cooking, needling, knotting, and rearing children, the women have been enshrouded by their anatomy – the womb, the shrine of procreation – had become the tomb where women were interred in immanence without any hope of transcendence (77–78). What are women to do to reclaim the minimal footing and sense of belonging in society in order to survive? The answer appears to lie in the effort to refute, and if possible, reverse Milton's bogey and the associated patriarchal assumptions. As the Danish author Isak Dinesen declares:

> Adam had a time whether, long or short, when he could wander about on a fresh and peaceful earth … But poor Eve found him there, with all his claims upon her, the moment she looked into the world. That is a grudge that woman has always had against the Creator: she feels that she is entitled to have that epoch of paradise back for herself … Thus these young witches got everything they wanted as in a catoptric image [and understood] that no woman should allow herself to be possessed by any male but the devil … So there you find, not only the old witches of Macbeth … but even young ladies with faces smooth as flowers … All this they got from reading – in the orthodox witches' manner – the book of Genesis backwards (qtd. in Gilbert and Gubar 187).

Many women have (and still are) attempted to reverse the metanarrative, trying to withstand the slings and arrows of patriarchal backlash, suppression, and demonization. For example, Charlotte Brontë created *Shirley*, a novel still shamefully underrated by the critical male intelligentsia because of its blatant accusation of Milton's cosmology's depthlessness which is required to understand a complex female character such as Eve. The woman-bashing scholarly society had hitherto seen women not with a mind and a soul but in terms of their flesh and ability

to shed sweat and blood only in the service of their pen-pecking molesters (or, male-masters). Satirically reverential of the jaw-dropping poetry he has produced, Shirley, the central character of Brontë's novel, asks some crucial questions: "Milton was great; but was he good? His brain was right; how was his heart?" (270). She understands that in order to empathize with or properly understand someone, one has to have a heart, an inclination to put oneself in another's shoes, which Milton was devoid of along with the eyes to see through the façade created as a pretext to denounce everywoman for a crime she has not committed. In her slightly comic acrimony, Shirley illustrates this in breathtaking detail:

> Milton tried to see the first woman; but, Cary, he saw her not …. It was his cook that he saw; or it was Mrs. Gill, as I have seen her, making custards, in the heat of summer, in the cool dairy… preparing a cold collation for the rectors – preserves and "dulcet creams;" puzzled "what choice to choose for delicacy best; what order so contrived as not to mix tastes, not well-joined, inelegant, but bring taste after taste, upheld with kindliest change. (270)

Mocking Book V of *Paradise Lost* where Eve "entertains" Adam and his cohort of "Angel guests … / … on hospitable thoughts intent" a dainty feast consisting of delicacies as "dulcet creams," Shirley reveals how shockingly apathetic Milton was to Eve's status as a fellow Edenic creature. It is as if Eve's sole purpose is to serve Adam as the Angels' sole purpose is to serve God (*PL* 5.328–332, 347). In *Shirley*, Charlotte Brontë presents an alternative myth to that of Milton and the book of Genesis. Her prototype of Eve is not the docile submissive "half doll, half angel" (296), but a spirit similar to that of Lucifer whose revolutionary fervor for breaking the bondage of subordination is capable of blinding, or at least deceiving, the Omnipotent even if it lasts a short while. Shirley's Eve is the mother of the immortal Titans whose audacity is in no way less daring than Prometheus:

> I would beg to remind [Milton] that the first men of the earth were Titans, and that Eve was their mother; from her sprang Saturn, Hyperion, Oceanus; she bore Prometheus … The first woman's breast that heaved with life on this world yielded the daring which could contend with Omnipotence, the strength which could bear a thousand years of bondage, the vitality which could feed that vulture death through uncounted ages, the unexhausted life and uncorrupted excellence, sisters to immortality, which, after millenniums of crimes, struggles, and woes, could conceive and bring forth a Messiah. The first woman was heaven-born. Vast was the heart whence gushed the well-spring of the blood of nations, and grand the undegenerate head where rested the consort-crown of creation. I saw – I now see – a woman-Titan (270)

It is not difficult to decode that here Shirley speaks of Eve not as a person but as the feminine spirit. Milton the great bard cannot find it in his heart to forgive either Eve or his daughter. But the vastness of Eve's heart forgives him as well as all his sons –

the patriarchal slavers – who have bound the wings of Eve in fetters. In all honesty, if Eve had not forgiven Milton and "*man*-kind" in general, she would never have borne him in her womb in dire agony, nurtured him with nourishing breast-milk, "borne him in her arms and in her heart. But for her the race of the world would have trampled him under foot [like] a squashed boneless snail" (Joyce 28). If he had a little morsel of profundity of soul, he would have been conscious of the fact that the Messiah was conceived immaculately. Even the Son of God needed a mother to bring him into the world as Sojourner Truth had pointed out: "How came Jesus into the world? Through God who created him and the woman who bore him." The embittered former African American slave added the challenging question for everyman to ponder, "Man, where was your part?" (Marable 68).

Being the sole claimant of Eve's body and soul, Adam, it seems to Eve, is the absolute master/God/author of her existence which is self-evident in her speech of surrender: "My Author and Disposer, what thou bidd'st / Unargu'd I obey; so God ordains, / God is thy Law, thou mine:" (Milton 4.635-637). Being thus overshadowed by the pantheon of patriarchy, Eve dreams of dismantling the shackles of the garden of Eden and flying to escape her subjection:

> Up to the Clouds … I flew, and underneath beheld
> The Earth outstretch immense, a prospect wide
> And various: wondering at my flight and change
> To this high exaltation;" (5.86-90).

Plagued this plight, any human being would do what Eve does – make a pact with the devil's egalitarianism in hopes of overthrowing God's hierarchical order. Satan appears to be the champion of the downtrodden, refusing to surrender to the "tyranny of heaven," according to Shelley in *Prometheus Unbound* (3.1.57). Likewise in the play *Cain*, Byron's Lucifer rejects the autocratic politics of Paradise and offers autonomy and knowledge for all – the precondition of power. In *Paradise Lost* itself, Satan rises up in revolt against the divine decree of Primogeniture which accords the "Son of God" preferential treatment, elevating him above the highest of archangels. In protest of God's injustice, he delivers a daring speech which can become a part of any liberal politician's rhetoric:

> Who can reason then and right assume
> Monarchy over such as live by right
> His equals if, power and splendor less,
> In freedom equal?
>   Much less for this to be our lord
> And look for adoration to th' abuse
> Of those imperial titles which assert
> Our being ordained to govern, not to serve? (*PL* 5.794–802)

Eve sides with Lucifer not because she is seduced by him, as many critics claim; she agrees that no single creature of God should be given mastery over the other.

Eve's joining of forces with Satan is neither carnal nor covetous but ideological. Disinherited by her God/father/author through cosmic constriction of primogeniture and coverture, subsumption of a woman's properties by her husband upon marriage, education to be the slaves of the "superior sex," Eve and Satan are united in their grievance. In her poem "Doubt," Mary Elizabeth Coleridge, niece of the legendary S T Coleridge (but not less able), confesses being struck by epiphanies when she saw "no friend in God – in Satan's host no foes" (40). In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* Mary Wollstonecraft divulges her impression of the "lovely pair" tucked in their snug state of innocence as "an emotion similar to what we feel when children are playing or animals sporting," and unable to bear the lack of knowledge in the state of pure bliss, Wollstonecraft inadvertently thanks Eve for liberating humanity from the lobotomy of God's tyranny. She concludes, "I have, with conscious dignity or Satanic pride, turned to hell for sublime subjects" (25). Combined with the thirst for sublimity, Wollstonecraft's dignity and pride cements the position of female authors with Shirley's Titanic Prometheus Eve. In fact, the anti-Miltonic Eve created by Charlotte Brontë in the shadow of her recently deceased sister, Emily, who herself had penned the feminist *Jane Eyre* which was denounced by Elizabeth Rigby, Lady Eastlake, and many female defectors to patriarchy for having "the tone of mind and thought which has authority and violated every code human and divine abroad, and fostered Chartism and rebellion at home, is the same which has also written *Jane Eyre*" (173). In *Shirley*, the heroines Caroline and Shirley herself find expression of their pent-up rage in the revolutionary fervor of the similarly exploited starving workers, smashing the machines of domination, resembling the Prometheanism espoused by Satan and Eve.

Now, an obvious question remains unanswered. Was it worth the trouble for Eve to go out of her way to dare disobey God's patriarchal order to gain emancipation which resulted in her ultimate failure? Would she not be better off accepting her fate, remaining docile and passive to Adam's hegemony? The answer is no, because as Brontë had vehemently asserted in *Shirley*, "All men, taken singly, are more or less selfish; and taken in bodies, they are intensely so" (142), coupled with Shirley's declaration that "[men] misapprehend [women], both for good and evil: their good woman is a queer thing, half doll, half angel; their bad woman almost always a fiend" (296), demonstrates how women are defined and treated by men. If women are servile, they are labeled as "good," and when they rise up in revolt, the women become evil, which is exactly what happens to Eve and all her daughters[2] living amongst us today.

In addition, *Shirley* illustrates what happens to women who surrender to their fate of servitude in the form of Caroline's long-dead aunt, the wife of the rector Mr. Helstone, unsurprisingly named *Mary Cave*, a spirit manifested in the aforementioned cave-dwelling Tunisian women. Mary Cave had died of neglect because belonging to "an inferior order of existence" (376) she was not allowed to challenge the secondary roles assigned to women in society and engage in a profession

which would relieve the deep-seated angst which racks women psychologically and economically. Disillusioned, dispossessed of all the expectations endowed by her caged imagination, she "gradually, took her leave of him and of life, and there was only a still, beautiful-featured mould of clay left, cold and white, in the conjugal couch, he felt his bereavement" (46). It shows how the institution of marriage hinges upon the basic principle of female subjugation, and also how women starve psychologically for a lack of purpose.

Even without the matrimony, women suffer from marginalization and alienation which is depicted through the "old maids" Miss *Mann* (the name symbolizes how women in the patriarchal society are desexed and re-sexed for implicit insubordination) and Miss Ainely whom Caroline visits to learn the formula of remaining un-commodified in the matrimonial market. However, what she experiences horrifies her. Miss Mann remains a spinster to whom "a crumb is not thrown once a year," and like the exploited workers of mercantile capitalism, she has to exist "ahungered and athirst to [feminine] famine" (154). Miss Ainely, on the other hand, is more optimistic; nevertheless, her optimism emerges from an illusion of a sense of belonging through religious devotion and self-denial. In order to lay claim to a place in the dark dank corners of male-hegemonic community, women have to basically deny their sheer identity and rights as equals of men.

Abhorred and petrified of the state of these women, Caroline sees no other option but to offer herself up as a sacrificial lamb or a good in the bizarre bazaar of brides. Even so, she cannot be willingly enslaved by the man she loves, her distant cousin Robert Moore the mill owner, because "'forward' was the device stamped upon his soul; bit poverty curbed him," and he could not afford to marry a portionless girl as Caroline (26). Rejected by Robert, Caroline is not enraged but fatally grief-stricken due to her unsuitability to make a niche in this inhospitable world. In dire despair she questions, "Where is my place in the world?" (149). The third-person narrator, incensed by Caroline's desperation, seems to insert herself as the condemning voice rebuking Caroline's feminine nature which causes her to love without being asked to:

> A lover masculine so disappointed can speak and urge explanation, a lover feminine can say nothing; if she did, the result would be shame and anguish, inward remorse for self-treachery. Nature would brand such demonstration as a rebellion against her instincts, and would vindictively repay it afterwards by the thunderbolt of self-contempt smiting suddenly in secret … You expected bread, and you have got a stone: break your teeth on it, and don't shriek because the nerves are martyrized; do not doubt that your mental stomach – if you have such a thing – is strong as an ostrich's; the stone will digest. You held out your hand for an egg, and fate put into it a scorpion. Show no consternation: close your fingers firmly upon the gift; let it sting through your palm. Never mind; in time, after your hand and arm have

swelled and quivered long with torture, the squeezed scorpion will die, and you will have learned the great lesson how to endure without a sob. For the whole remnant of your life, if you survive the test—some, it is said, die under it—you will be stronger, wiser, less sensitive. This you are not aware of, perhaps, at the time, and so cannot borrow courage of that hope. (89–90)

This embittered description of the apathetic *maledom* seems to foreshadow the Nietzschean maxim "Whatever does not kill me makes me stronger" (99). The passage shows how the woman's voice has been silenced over the ages, asking them to sink into the solipsism of self-loathing, assuring them of the survival of the sufferer. This gradual crucifixion of everywoman mocks the Christian consecration or transubstantiation of bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus – the Messiah Milton so adored – brought into the world by Eve (or at least, one of her daughters) whom Milton so abhorred. In *Shirley*, the transformation is reversed into stone and scorpion that offer women poisoned death instead of salvation and eternal life.

For a while, Caroline seems to obey the commands of this voice which rudely awakens her to the reality of her existence. Unable to mentally stomach the stone of subjection, she starves herself and physically dwindles toward death. This reminds us of the "mad scene" in *Wuthering Heights* where Catherine commits to a hunger strike in opposition to Linton's misbehavior with Heathcliff. Starvation is a form of protest waged by disenfranchised peoples universally, regardless of time and space. Many psychologists opine that the development of anorexia nervosa in young girls is an unconscious self-abnegating protest against growing up a girl – akin to Freudian "penis envy" in response to menstruation which is labeled as a "curse" and a gradual disempowerment in comparison to the boys' mastery. Ironically, self-starvation is sanctioned by patriarchy in reaction to female appetite which is partially blamed as the reason for the Original Fall. Caroline's starvation is carefully juxtaposed with the voracious appetite of the curates whose omnivorous palates are not condemned by the society which is famished due to the war-time depressed mercantile British economy in 1811-12 when the novel is set. Furthermore, Caroline's contrition is associated with the despairing dramatization of Eve's admission of guilt to Adam in Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "A Drama of Exile": "I adjure thee, put me straight away, / Together with my name! / Sweet, punish me! / …I also, after tempting, writhe on the ground, / And I would feed on ashes from thy hand," exposing the depth with which the denigration of the "second sex" is complete (C. Brontë 185). To return to whether Eve could simply yield to male mastery, one must state that from the discussion above, it is safe to assume that the oppression of women is inevitable. It is certainly preferable to go down fighting rather than waning into nothingness from paralysis which is the case with Caroline. Therefore, on this account, Eve is exonerated from all false charges laid on her.

However, yet another question remains unanswered; was Eve's fall conceived

by fatalism or free will, in relation to the Calvinistic ideal of determinism and Puritanical concept of self-determination? If the Calvinistic ideal of determinism is taken to be the truth, it is God who is the culprit in the myth of origin because it was His intention all along that Eve would take the fall for His sadistic design. This deliberate dispossession and defilement of feminine nature by making her the devil's sojourn was brilliantly scrutinized by Robert Graves in his *The White Goddess*. Defiant of the monotheistic myth that Milton champions, Graves argues:

> The new God claimed to be dominant as Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, pure Holiness, pure Good, pure Logic, able to exist without the aid of woman; but it was natural … to allay the woman and the rival permanently against him. The outcome was philosophical dualism with all the tragicomic woes attendant on spiritual dichotomy. If the true God, the God of the Logos, was pure thought, pure good, whence came evil and error? (456).

God is trapped by his own fallacious logic; if He is pure good, He can neither create nor conceive evil which would, in effect, mean that He has lost control of His own creation and cannot foster total obedience.

Even if God had embodied and created the dialectics of virtue and vice, and if Adam and Eve lived in an idyllic state of ignorance, surely, they could not be expected to abide by God's commandments word for word. If a half-trained dog fails to fetch the bone once, certainly the dog's owner would not damn him for eternity. Indeed, the dog's owner would try to prevent the dog from doing something which would hurt him, and the same responsibility falls on God. When Eve was approaching the forbidden fruit, assuming that she did it of her own accord, it was imperative for God to step in and protect her from Satan's influence. Why does He not do so? This leads us to the question: "Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then He is not Omnipotent. Is He able, but not willing? Then He is malevolent. Is He both able and willing? Then whence cometh evil? Is He neither able nor willing? Then why call Him God?" (in Thrasher 434). On both counts, God has some questions to answer, and shamefully condemning Eve for all the Eve-ill has been equally satanic on the part of patriarchy.

In *Wuthering Heights*, Emily Brontë analyzes the feminine fall from two perspectives. Firstly, the divinely ordained fall of Catherine Earnshaw from Hell into Heaven. Secondly, a willing fall of Isabella from Heaven or Thrushcross Grange to Hell or Wuthering Heights.

With its heap of dead cats, aggressive bitch with her squealing puppies, and extremely inhospitable, hostile inhabitants, the "vast oak dresser [extending] to the very roof … laden with oatcakes, clusters of legs of beef, mutton, and ham … sundry villainous old guns, and a couple of horse-pistols, … three gaudily-painted canisters … and immense pewter dishes," Wuthering Heights may appear to "civilized" men

like Lockwood as the den of a one-eyed Polyphemus from whence there is no return – "a perfect misanthropist's Heaven," where God's order has been dismantled only to be replaced by hellish anarchy (E. Brontë 5–6). In the beginning of the novel, although the residents of the abode, Heathcliff, Hareton, and Catherine Jr., are partially related, the rage, resentment, and ruthlessness among them, devoid of the heavenly hierarchical structure, radiates the demonic thirst for equality. The devilish dynamics are developed even further by Emily Brontë in the hopes of creating a reverse origin myth, when Lockwood, along with his diabolical hosts, is engulfed with snowfall resembling a "billowy white ocean" which recalls the "deep snow and ice" of Milton's abyss,

> A gulf profound as that *Serbonian* bog
> …
> Where Armies whole have sunk: the parching Air
> Burns frore, and cold performs th' effect of Fire
> Thither by harpy-footed Furies hail'd,
> At certain revolutions all the damn'd
> Are brought:
> …
> to starve in Ice. (2.592-600)

The third hellish element discovered by Lockwood is the revolution espoused by the icy-fingered incarnation of the storm, out of the swinging branches and swirling snow, the ghost of Catherine Earnshaw/Heathcliff/Linton who has been "a waif for twenty years," protesting against the patriarchal sermon of "Jabes Branderheim" (E. Brontë 32).

In her lifetime, for Catherine Earnshaw, raised as she is as in the fashion of a wild untamed nature goddess, along with her brother/lover Heathcliff, the Heights looks like a perfect miscreants' heaven. In fact, in conversation with Nelly Dean, Catherine seems to have blurred the distinction between the two: "What is heaven? Where is hell?" She elaborates:

> If I were in heaven, Nelly, I should be extremely miserable … I dreamt once that I was there … that heaven did not seem to be my home, and I broke my heart with weeping to come back to earth; and the angels were so angry that they flung me out into the middle of the heath on the top of Wuthering Heights where I woke sobbing for joy. (102)

This is why the witch-child Catherine's ghost breaks the conventions and expectations of a myth and haunts not her place of death, the Grange, but the Heights. But what causes her to flee from her heavenly niche and take refuge in the Grange by marrying Edgar Linton? The death of Old Mr. Earnshaw upon which event, the helm of the household is inherited by Hindley as the new *pater familias* through Primogeniture – God's hierarchical law on which Satan wages war in Milton's metanarrative. In

addition, Hindley brings home his bride, Frances – the paragon of patriarchal ladies – an "angel of the house" who could not be better conceived than Coventry Patmore himself. Her dread of following the model set by Frances starts gnawing away at Catherine's free soul. Since Catherine is Eve's descendant and Mephistophelian Heathcliff's sojourn, she falls from hell into the heaven of Thrushcross Grange. Here, they experience what could be described as the embodiment of Milton's paradise: "a splendid place carpeted with crimson … a pure white ceiling bordered by gold, a shower of glass-drops hanging in silver chains from the centre, and shimmering with little soft tapers … we should have thought ourselves in heaven!" (60). The Grange is everything the Heights is not, and it certainly makes an impression on Catherine. She is ushered into this heaven with a bite of the bulldog Skulker – a totemic animal which rightly recognizes a hellish invader in heaven. "Look … how her foot bleeds," Edgar Linton ejaculates. "She may be lamed for life," Mrs. Linton cries out (63). The description of profuse bleeding bears connotations of menstruation in a pubescent girl, which is also tied in with marriage, child-bearing, and ultimately death, as foreshadowed by Frances' death alongside Hareton's birth. Therefore, by trespassing upon the Grange, Catherine has crossed the threshold in her journey from innocence to experience, as Eve had done before her by eating the forbidden fruit of knowledge.

Having been doted on and "cured" by the genteel society, Catherine learns to adopt their mannerisms and maintain a ladylike persona. Later on, she accepts Linton's proposal of marriage because Heathcliff's inadmissibility into the refined culture due to his frightful appearance so widens the gulf with Catherine that he is now "beneath" her. Despite being depicted as "soft," "weak," slender, fair-haired, effeminate looking, Edgar manages to vanquish the "tall, athletic" robust masculine figure of Heathcliff, and cage the wild free soul of Catherine (E. Brontë 122), for Edgar's power, as that of God in Genesis, originates with "the word" (John 1:1). Edgar does not need a masculine physique, because his lordship is guaranteed by titles, documents, books, leases, wills, testaments, and all the paraphernalia by which God's hierarchy is passed on over millennia. As "the soft thing [Edgar] … possessed the power to depart from [Catherine] as much as a cat possesses the power to leave a mouse half killed or a bird half eaten," he proceeds to totally devour her with the full thrust of the patriarchal machine (91). When, surrendering to the Miltonic God's and Adam's victory, Eve concedes that feminine "beauty is excelled by manly grace / And wisdom" (4. 490–91), this capitulation and subsequent repression of desire, in the Freudian sense, foreshadows Catherine's neurosis.

Like Caroline in *Shirley*, Catherine develops anorexia nervosa, but the latter's is in response to her pregnancy – to starve the alien invader of her body – giving birth to whom would be Catherine's doom. In a rare moment of compassion, Milton honors Eve by calling her "the mother of human race," although her motherhood has resulted from her Sin (4.475). However, motherhood is the ultimate fragmentation of one's own identity, and since her identity has been splintered many times before

resulting in her obsessively inscribing her own name "CATHERINE EARNSHAW … CATHERINE HEATHCLIFF … CATHERINE LINTON" (E. Brontë 24-25), she dwindles through starvation, renounces her will to live, and as Frances Earnshaw before her, dies.

In contrast to Catherine who really has no other option but to fall, Isabella's fall resulting from her elopement is completely self-determined – as she chooses to ignore the warning of Catherine and Edgar – a conventional fall according to the Miltonic Puritanical perspective from the paradise of Thrushcross Grange to the inferno of Wuthering Heights. Isabella has been victimized by her devotion to romantic tales, mistaking appearance for reality, dark and well-built Heathcliff for "an honorable soul" instead of a "fierce, pitiless, wolfish man," she makes her getaway from the prison of her polished household in search of another but what follows could never have been imagined by her (131). Her puzzled questioning "Is Mr. Heathcliff a man? If so, is he mad? And if not is he a devil?" (174) summarizes her predicaments precisely, but Nelly's remark "that conscience had turned [Heathcliff's] heart to an earthly hell" (411), echoing *Paradise Lost*, illustrates the magnitude of Miltonic malice a woman has to bear for taking an earthbound flight with the devil. When she escapes Wuthering Heights with a child in her belly, she giggles like Bertha Mason, the madwoman in Rochester's attic, and is so effectively banished by her brother and Brontë, the author, that she is practically dead to the readers of this novel. So, no matter which direction a woman takes, the double bind of patriarchal tradition does not let her get away without tearing off her legs. As Emily Dickinson beautifully portrays, …looking oppositely / For the site of the Kingdom of Heaven" (#959, lines 15–16), the fallen Eves in our society are forced to be "Born – Bridalled – Shrouded / In a day" (#57, lines 10–11).

Now as we realize that for women living in patriarchal societies the fall is inevitable, it is time to turn to the last question this essay would attempt to answer: Is there any cracks through the commanding columns of patriarchy through which a woman can slip through and still survive? The answer is, yes, but there is no shortcut to the path to freedom, as shown in *Jane Eyre*. Women have to persist, clench their teeth and fists, persevere through the ordeals of the female Odyssey, to be as shrewd as Penelope who outsmarts all her suitors, display the masculine masquerade of passivity, but never let go of their passion, their repressed aggression, and ultimately, capitalize on their will to freedom, as Jane Eyre never lets go of her ire, never gives into the patriarchal heirs, and transforms herself into the air of sublimity – air which women can breathe in deep and taste the sweetness of freedom. This is what makes *Jane Eyre* a potentially subversive text; it was an audacious attempt which critics, patriarchal agents of both sexes, tried to burn under the fume of criticism and controversy – to no avail – because Eve's spirit, the self-evident right of women's equality, liberty, and pursuit of happiness is indomitable. This is exactly what Jane represents. Despite being tempted to "fade away into the forest dim" from the imprisonment of existence, Jane withstands all the patriarchal pitfalls of submission

and prevails (Keats, line 10). She overcomes a series of ordeals and finally finds an equal footing with the man she loves, and through the miraculous rejuvenation of Rochester's amputated body, Jane cures him of his false sense of superiority.

Captivated in the masculine mansion of her late surrogate father, Uncle Reed, Jane hides behind the scarlet curtains and gazes at Bewick's *History of British Birds*, which shows that her imagination is analogous to Eve's desire to fly and escape the constraints of society. However, her evil cousin John Reed flings the heavy volume at her in a shocking reminder of Eve's earthbound flight which engulfs her in raging fire – the fire of rebellion she inherited from Eve – and she lets it loose "like any other rebel slave … resolved to go all lengths" (C. Brontë 14). Like a doting mother, Mrs. Reed takes the side of her son soon to take up the helm of mastery, and like a true Miltonic daughter imprisons Jane in the red-room – a patriarchal death chamber – haunted by the ghost of the late master Reed where her "endurance broke down" (22). Alone and isolated, Jane confronts her inner soul on the "great looking glass" reflecting her Eve-like revolutionary selfhood which reveals the extent of injustice against her: "my heart beat thick, my head grew hot; a sound filled my ears, which I dreamed the rushing of wings; something seemed near me; I was oppressed and suffocated" (24). The entirety of her pent up frustration explodes on Mrs. Reed when "an invisible bond had burst" as she "struggled out into unhoped-for liberty" (53). In a vindictive assertion of her true spirit, Jane denounces Mrs. Reed due to the latter's association with the "black pillar[s]" and "carved mask[s]" of patriarchy such as Mr. Brocklehurst who runs an institution, aptly named *Lowood*, where women like saintly Mrs. Temple and ascetic Helen Burns are starved and murdered both physically and psychologically.

When Jane wriggles out of Brocklehurst's dungeon of death, she has a minor scratch as she wears the mask of docility, but her ulterior motive of gaining equality is unscathed. Compared to *Shirley*'s Caroline, despite all the disadvantages of femininity and orphanhood, Jane is fortunate that she at least has the mobility that Caroline so desperately yearns for. Jane moves from Lowood to Thornfield with optimism for a new beginning. However, as the name *Thornfield* suggests, here she would be biblically crowned with thorns. Whether she can bear this crown and still maintain a sane head would define the outcome of Jane's march to freedom.

At first glance, it seems as though Thornfield is the place where Jane would acquire fulfillment. In their first Romanticized encounter, Brontë reverses Milton's myth of Eve's fall preceding Adam's; here, Rochester falls first, both literally and figuratively, injures himself and is compelled to lean on Jane's shoulder which symbolizes men's inability to rise without women's help. In fact, Rochester acknowledges Jane's unfettered intellect, "the resolute, wild free thing" which is manifested in her drawings. "Those eyes in Evening Star you must have seen in a dream," says Rochester in utter amazement, "And what meaning is that in their solemn depth? And who taught you to paint the wind?" (C. Brontë 193). He realizes that Jane's spirit is as

airy as her name suggests – the wind which cannot be mastered. In reciprocation, Jane sees through his façade of a gypsy soothsayer and declares, "With the ladies you must have managed well, but you did not act the character of a gypsy with me" (308). Their mutual understanding reaches the climax in the first betrothal scene when, in a moment of utter despair and ire, Jane unmasks herself of the temporary visage of gentility and divulges in an unforgettable assertion of integrity:

> "Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless? You think wrong! – I have just as much soul as you, – and full as much heart! And if God had gifted me with some beauty, and much wealth, I should have made it as hard for you to leave me, as it is now hard for me to leave you. I am not talking to you through the medium of custom, conventionalities, or even of mortal flesh: – it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God's feet equal, – as we are!" (386).

Analogous to Mary Wollstonecraft's declaration of women as intellectual equals of men, Jane here vehemently debunks the Miltonic myth that God has made men spiritually superior. Men and women are equals which Rochester admits, "My bride is here, because my *equal* is here, and my *likeness*" (387, Italics mine).

As astonishingly as this egalitarian claim is, Rochester suffers from a sense of guilt because he knows that his claim is not honest. He retains superiority not for being the lord of Thornfield but for his knowledge about sexual congress, as signified by Adèle Varens, his daughter begotten with Céline, as well as the hitherto undiscovered double of Jane's, Bertha Mason. It becomes obvious immediately after the betrothal scene as Rochester treats Jane as a virginal possession soon to be overpowered by defloration. "It is your time now, little tyrant," he announces shamelessly, "but it will be mine presently: and when once I have fairly seized you … I'll just – figuratively speaking – attach you to a chain like this" (412). When Rochester threatens Jane with domestication via lustful domination, she feels boxed in, because marriage is still a despotic institution based on the premise of inequality. Her anxiety fractures Jane's psyche and alienates her from herself. When she looks into the mirror after wearing the wedding gown, she does not see herself but "a robed and veiled figure, so unlike [her] usual self that it seemed almost the image of a stranger" (C. Brontë 437).

But she remains uncharacteristically subdued and unable to break out of this prison and passion. Just when she needs her the most, the incarnation of Jane's recalcitrant *élan*, her dark double, Bertha Mason, comes to her rescue. The mad bad Bertha's incendiary tendencies echo Jane's own rancor at Gateshead where she unleashed her fury on the supercilious Reeds like "rat," "mad cat," "bad animal" (9). Laughing the "low, slow, ha! ha!," Bertha reminds us of Eve's sojourn, the devil's sarcastic laughter at God's failure to hold onto his preordained order; she tears off Jane's bridal gown and attempts to burn Rochester in his sleep. Finally, she provides Jane

the justification for escape and self-preservation on principle devoid of passion to *Marsh End*, again, suggestive of the end to Jane's long march to freedom.

Under the protective wings of her newly-discovered relatives Diana, Mary, and St. John Rivers, the latter finding Jane employment at a girls' school, it appears as though she has really found the autonomy and fulfillment she, along with her foremother Eve, was looking for, when she wonders, "Is it better, I ask, to be a slave in a fool's paradise … or to be a schoolmistress, free and hones, in a breezy mountain nook in the healthy heart of England?" (548). Certainly, it is a rhetorical question which sounds dangerously similar to Satan's assertion in *Paradise Lost*, "Better to reign in Hell, then serve in Heav'n" (1.263). It all comes crashing down, of course, when St John proposes marriage. Pressed by her cousin to come to a decision, as she deliberates with herself, Jane understands that the work ethic of "you are formed for labor, not for love," that John follows will wring her wings of passion and leave her with nothing but servitude of reason (C. Brontë 613). "I must disown half my nature … force myself to the adoption of pursuits for which I had no natural vocation," she reflects, and, remain "as a wife… always restrained… the sole helpmate that [he] can influence efficiently, and retain absolutely till death" (619). Marrying John, therefore, would mean to replace the crown of thorns with a path of thorns, to reject the Dionysian master for an Apollonian one, to substitute the Devil with Adam. As it is foreshadowed by the tales of Eve in *Paradise Lost*, Catherine and Isabella in *Wuthering Heights*, the choices of principle and passion taken in isolation embody the slippery slope of enslavement unless the woman gains the upper-hand and bends her counterparts to her will, which is exactly what Jane does.

As she telepathically hears the call of "time to assume ascendancy" and rushes to Thornfield, two events precipitate in actualizing Jane's equality with Rochester (C. Brontë 640). First, her stumbling upon a huge fortune from her uncle in Madeira making her economically emancipated; and second, Rochester's disfiguration, which is, as Richard Chase had termed, "a symbolic castration" (468). Since Rochester has gouged out his "full falcon eye" which shows him the mirage of superiority, as predicted by Jane, he can in effect *see* the profundity in Jane's character, as well as those of all of Eve's daughters. Nonetheless, now, as Jane tells him, Rochester is "green and vigorous. Plants will grow about [his] roots whether [he] asks them or not" (C. Brontë 678). After the marriage, Rochester is miraculously healed of all his injuries which is a scathing satire on Milton's blindness, his incapacity for empathy, and thus, his inability to overcome his own disabilities. In this equality, we can also realize Jane's superiority, and in essence, the superiority of all the daughters of Eve. For, despite being wronged by men throughout the history of *man*kind, women still love their fathers, brothers, husbands, and sons. Even if the opportunity is provided, women do not take revenge upon their masculine sojourns, as portrayed in the characters of Caroline, Shirley, Catherine, Isabella, and Jane Eyre. In their mercy, women gain magnanimity and reverse the misogynist Milton's myth. Here then,

we have the fulfillment of Eve's vision – the revision of the myth of Origins to help women unreel Adam's Pythonic constriction. At long last, women can be convinced that they had "fall'n by mistaken [patriarchal] rules," unearth their own *graves* of immanence and ascent to the ever-radiant light of transcendence (Finch, line 52).

So, would Milton's death give life to women, as Sir Leslie Stephen's death gave Virginia Woolf a career? Absolutely, said the Brontë sisters, and *Jane Eyre* is a living testament to this. Since women in patriarchal society are fallen creatures with their destiny set in stone, symbolized by Mary Cave, Miss Mann, and Miss Ainely in *Shirley,* and Catherine and Isabelle in *Wuthering Heights,* they must stand up and fight for their right, as Eve had done, rather than resigning to fate. If a woman can find the strength to withstand all the lashes and backlashes of masculine misogyny, as Jane Eyre does, they would bring about a revolution to overthrow the patriarchal status quo, as Margaret Oliphant reluctantly admits in her scathing review: "Ten years ago … the only true love worth having was that … chivalrous true love which consecrated all womankind … when suddenly, without warning, *Jane Eyre* stole upon the scene, and the most alarming revolution of modern times has followed the invasion of *Jane Eyre*" (qtd. in Gilbert and Gubar 337). Any revolution, as Marx certainly knew, would claim its own quota of souls. The first soul feminist revolution must desecrate is that of Milton's, and *Jane Eyre* being, according to Elizabeth Rigby, "preeminently an anti-Christian composition … The tone of mind and thought which has fostered Chartism and rebellion" (qtd. in Gilbert and Gubar 337), does exactly that, along with all the women associated with producing *The Women's Bible* and the magazine called *Lucifer the Light-bearer* in the 19th century. Eve is redeemed, resurrected, and redefined as a Promethean Titan for all she has done for women's independence and the survival of humankind.

Notes

1. God(s) assumes that in patriarchal societies, other men play the role of surrogate God.
2. Eve's daughters mentioned in this essay are not her literal daughters, but all women "descending" from Eve, and thus, automatically labeled as moral inferiors by patriarchy.

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The Micropolitics of Class and Class Consciousness: A Reading of Akhtaruzzaman Elias' *Khoabnama*

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Abstract

In classical Marxism, the logic of class struggle is located in the antagonism between two major classes of the capitalist system. However, the "agrarian question," and uneven development of capitalism across the globe – along with colonial and postcolonial realities – have problematized the bipolar idea of class and revolutionary politics. Bangladeshi writer Akhtaruzzaman Elias' fictions embody the contradictions arising from the disparity between the structural dimension of class and its articulation in emancipatory movements. This paper, focusing its investigation on Elias' magnum opus *Khoabnama*, explores the micropolitical and dynamic dimensions of class by addressing Elias' depiction of the inner contradictions of subjective experiences and internal dialectics of class struggle. The micrological divisions within a class and the implications associated with such divisions are outlined here. Besides, the paper also offers an organic understanding of class consciousness which develops from the subjective experience of exploitation and resistance and the negotiation with the immanent potential of social transformation.

Keywords: Class, Class Consciousness, Micropolitics, Contradictions, Overdetermination.

Akhtaruzzaman Elias' novels, *Chilekothar Sepai* (1986) and *Khoabnama* (1996), set against grand historical events, both explore people's response to revolutionary possibilities and negotiation with the immanent potential of social transformation. *Chilekothar Sepai* portrays the tempestuous time of 1969 when the people of former East Pakistan stormed the streets demanding the fall of West Pakistani military dictatorship. *Khoabnama* is set around 1946-48, a period overlapping the Pakistan Movement, the Partition of Bengal, and the Tebhaga Movement. The Tebhaga Movement took place in the northern part of Undivided Bengal when peasants, who were required to share half of their produced crops with the landowners, demanded two-thirds of the share. In both novels, an astute portrayal of the marginalized urban proletariat and rural peasantry is observed embodying Elias' dialectical investigation of individual and social history. His exploration of people's subjective experience of oppression and resistance opens a space for another discussion – how the questions of class and class consciousness are articulated in his novels and where they stand in

dialogue with socio-historical contexts and the global tradition of Marxist thought.

The question of class is of paramount importance in the Marxist framework, for it was Marx's consideration of class conflict as the driving force of history that triggered what has come to be known as "historical materialism." Immanuel Wallerstein outlines a threefold contribution of Marx's development of the concept of class. First of all, Marx sees history as the history of class struggle; secondly, the idea that a class-in-itself is not necessarily always a class-for-itself; and finally, the argument that the foundational conflict in a capitalist system is the conflict between the owner and non-owner of the means of production – the bourgeoisie and the proletariat (Wallerstein, "Class" 115). In classical Marxism, both class politics and theoretical class analysis locate the logic of class struggle in the antagonism between two major classes of the capitalist system. Besides, the consciousness of the revolutionary class is attributed to the consciousness of the proletariat only. This approach, along with the dominant mode of viewing the history of capital, is conspicuously Eurocentric (Chakrabarty 7). In addition, the dominance of the bipolar model of class relegates the peasantry to a status of a conservative and reactionary class (Marx and Engels 48). Peasantry is deemed a backward section of capitalism which constitutes the "agrarian question" – the reflection of an incomplete transition to capitalism (Bottomore 412). However, colonial and postcolonial realities due to the uneven development of capitalism outside the metropolis and peasant involvement in anti-colonial and anti-ruling class revolutions have further problematized the classical idea of class and revolutionary politics. The universalizing discourse of Marxist theory and praxis is contaminated by the particularity of local histories as well which hindered its translation in non-European contexts, particularly in South Asia. In such a context, the contributions of Akhtaruzzaman Elias' fictions in understanding class and class consciousness could be worthy of academic investigation as the writer has been called "empathetically Marxist" (Dasgupta 57). This paper will focus on *Khoabnama* with occasional reference to *Chilekothar Sepai.*

The spatio-temporal settings of *Khoabnama* are the agrarian Bengal of the last half of the 1940s. An agrarian society is often called a feudal society but the European connotation of Feudalism fails to correspond fully to an apparently pre-capitalist mode of production in a non-European context. Agrarian Bengal was an amalgam of many opposing forces and drives as it was ruled by a colonial power whose policies were determined by the logic of global capitalism.

Andre Gunder Frank thinks that the economic system of the world has existed as a single form for some centuries. What makes the world-economy apparently non-uniform and disparate is its unequal and uneven development over space and time (Frank 71). The first wave of European colonization engendered the advent of a complex system under the umbrella of a single economy. Wallerstein explicitly calls this system "capitalist in form," in existence since the 16th century ("Patterns" 59). The colonies had pre-capitalist modes of production and proved to be fertile lands

for increasing accumulation of capital (Marx, qtd. in Frank 76-77). This world-economy as a systematic unit enveloped the globe by embodying an "extensive and relatively complete social division of labor with an integrated set of production processes which relate to each other through a market" (Wallerstein, "Patterns" 59). Since the 16th century, a capitalist world-system has enwrapped the globe that has subsumed all other production processes. Besides, the moment capital goes global, the moment it shifts from the formal to the real subsumption of the labor process, it develops itself only in certain parts but leaves most of the parts underdeveloped in its global operation. It is not solely a temporal feature but part of a structural and spatial relationship as well, as Gunder Frank theorizes. Bengal too, a victim of the uneven development of capitalism with its apparent pre-modern mode of production, functioned within the capitalist world-economy.

Hamza Alavi notes that the British colonial project of Permanent Settlement in 1793 transformed the nature of landed property of Bengal from a "feudal" to a "bourgeois" type and thus pre-capitalist agrarian societies seemed to have a capitalist appearance. However, Partha Chatterjee thinks that this bourgeois transformation under colonial rule is contradictory and ambiguous, as the legal structure of property relation attained a bourgeois character only but the "semi-feudal" mode of bondage and exploitation was strengthened (170). Such a contradictory amalgam of material and political conditions directly affected the class question of Bengal and its reflection is evident in *Khoabnama*.

The social formation portrayed in *Khoabnama* is centered on agrarian rural Bengal. In such a society, the class structure is not that rigid and cannot be readily reduced to objective wholes and the peasant question arises exactly from this phenomenon of the differentiated peasantry. Utsa Patnaik observes, "the peasantry is highly differentiated economically into more or less distinct classes" and considers this differentiation within peasantry a powerful tool to understand the class reality of South Asian agrarian societies (A82). On the basis of labor-exploitation criterion and whether wage or rent predominates as a form of exploitation, she classifies the class structure of agrarian society into five categories – the land owners of the feudal types and capitalists, the rich peasants, the middle peasants, the poor peasants, and the landless fulltime agricultural laborers (A85). Patnaik's model is arranged in a hierarchical order on the basis of the concentration of the means of production. Akhtaruzzaman Elias' fictional representation of class corresponds to this reality of differentiated peasantry too.

Apparently, on a vertical plane, the dominant class in agrarian Bengal in the late British colonial period was the *Zamindars*, the feudal land owners. No *Zamindar* character appears in *Khoabnama* but there are implicit references to a *Zamindar*. The apparently dominant class in rural Bengal then was the *Jotedars* like the family of Sharafat Mondol. *Jotedars* were a group of landowners but had to pay taxes to *Zamindars*. Though. according to Patnaik's categorization, they belonged to the

same class with *Zamindars* as they relied entirely on the labor of others, the fact that they had to pay taxes to *Zamindars* put them in a lower stratum. They could be called rich peasants but they did not engage themselves in any manual work as Patnaik's rich peasants do. They used to lease out their lands to the sharecroppers and sometimes directly hired labor to cultivate their lands. The way they became landowners follows the process of primitive accumulation. In the novel, Bulu, who owned four acres of land, had to surrender it to Mondol for failing to pay back the debts with exorbitant interests (Elias, *Khoabnama* 360). He resorted to cultivating the same land as a sharecropper that he once owned. Marx calls this process of primitive accumulation as "the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production" (*Capital* 875). Here one finds a complete separation between the worker and the ownership of the conditions of production and the commodity simultaneously that alienates him from the realization of his labor. Even though there used to be a contract of fifty-fifty share of the crops, in the name of irrigation cost and rental charge of cattle and ploughs, Mondol deducted more crops from the sharecroppers' share. The remaining crops were hardly enough for subsistence. Mondol took away the land that belonged to the family of blacksmiths in the same way (Elias, *Khoabnama* 338). He also took the lease of Katlahar Bil, a vast waterbody, from the *Zamindar* which was considered a clan property of the fishermen where they could fish for free (347). After Mondol had occupied it, their right to fish ended. That is how this class of landowners accumulated their wealth and maintained their class power. The increasing accumulation of the *Jotedars* coincides with the increasing differentiation too. Partha Chatterjee finds that "a new stratum of sharecroppers" was created from rising differentiation in the debt-bound peasantry as agriculture was gradually being commercialized and the "effective control of land" was being transferred to *Jotedar* creditors due to indebtedness (198).

If the class structure of agrarian Bengal of the 1940s is plotted along the y-axis, the dominant groups are found on the positive axis and on the negative are the dominated groups. In the novel, an array of such groups is found that belong to the negative axis of capital. Here, the class question gets a little complicated as the dominated groups again get distributed along the horizontal x-axis making the picture of a differentiated peasantry conspicuous.

From Patnaik's postulation, it can be derived that the negative axis begins with the middle peasants. They are further sub-divided into "upper middle peasants" and "lower middle peasants" who are respectively "net exploiter of others' labor" and exploited itself (Patnaik A85). Hurmatullah belongs to the "lower middle peasants" who needs to work in others' lands besides their own lands to subsist. Then there are the "poor peasants" who either work as sharecroppers or hire out their labor for wages. Tamij falls in this group. In Patnaik's final category – a class of full-time laborers who do not "operate any land at all" and whose subsistence is entirely dependent on hiring out labor for wages – Tamij's father and early Tamij are discernable. There are other professional groups who cannot be classified within

the rigid objectification of the agrarian class structure. Among them are fishermen (*majhi*), blacksmiths (*kamar*), and oilmen (*kolu*) who are also seasonal farmers. Their lands were taken away by the *Jotedars* too and as a result, they ended up as sharecroppers. The appropriation of Katlahar Bil drove the fishermen away from their traditional profession. The oilmen too were turning to full-time farming because an oil-mill was installed nearby. The subordination of these marginalized people to *Jotedars* stands as an illustration of the formal subsumption of the labor process under capital.

The exploration of differentiation beyond the rigid objectification reveals the micropolitics of class antagonism which can be discerned through the micrological divisions within the same objective class. In this paper, the idea of micropolitics is borrowed from Michel Foucault's postulation of microphysics of power where he broods on the infiltration of the mechanism of power into the minuscule of the society, to "the most minute and distant elements," ultimately ensuring an "infinitesimal distribution of power relations" (216). Here, the idea corresponds to the influence of the minutiae social and cultural elements on class reality at the minuscule level. All the categories on the negative y-axis live under almost the same economic conditions and the margins separating lower-middle peasants, poor-peasants, landless laborers, and other professional groups are significantly narrow. Moreover, they are subjected to the same intensity of exploitation. In them, the alienation between the producer and the means of production is evident. Here, they are forcibly being torn from their means of subsistence and hurled into the labor market as free, unprotected, and rightless peasants. Farmers found their crops appropriated by the *Jotedars* who evicted the fishermen too. These evenly exploited groups live under the same economic conditions, yet there are hints of division and antagonism among themselves. This division suffers double sessions of determinations – the economic and the superstructural.

The differentiation within the peasantry, as already shown in relation to Patnaik's categorization, stands as the economic manifestation of this division. In spite of their similar material condition, the degree of relation to the means of production and the engagement of their labor have differentiated the peasantry and rendered them to inhabit "contradictory locations within class relations" (Wright 16). However, what is evident in the novel are the superstructural factors that organically create divisions. Hereditary professional status which often looks like caste division is one such factor.

The difference among the *chasha*, *majhi*, *kamar*, and *kolu* is mainly the difference of status. In Elias' *Khoabnama*, the farmers think that they belong to a higher status group than the fishermen. The fishermen contrarily deem the oilmen as lowborn. Inter-group marriage is strictly discouraged. Abitan, a woman from the fishermen community after marrying Gofur, an oilman, was practically ostracized from her paternal community. When Muslim League activist Abdul Kader endorsed this

marriage, he was censured by the village elders (361). When Tamij first approached Hurmatullah's daughter Fuljan, though reciprocating initially, she later rejected him, saying, "You bloody son of a fisherman! How dare you try to touch the sky?" (422). Tamij aspires to be a full-time farmer, abandoning his ancestral profession. He was assigned by Mondol to cultivate a piece of land adjacent to Hurmatullah's. When Tamij for the first time went to visit that land, Hurmatullah openly expressed his contempt and disgust by saying, "No way I'm going to work with this bloody son of a fisherman. I will ask Mondol to relieve me of my duties" (378). Later, while working, if thirsty, had Tamij ever asked for a sip or two from his water bottle, Hurmatullah always pretended not to hear him (393). Hurmatullah also made a big fuss when Tamij's father sat beside him at the funeral banquet of Mondol's grandson (431-32). He could not bear the idea of sharing the water bottle or sitting beside a fisherman in a social gathering. This awareness of status defined their position in their social milieu.

Wallerstein identifies "social strata" as an "internal intellectual uncertainty" in the question of class ("Class" 116). Social strata, which is associated with social status too, is not solely determined by the economic base. Karl Kautsky contends that a number of class conflicts mentioned by Marx and Engels in *The Communist Manifesto* are actually "conflicts between status groups" (Bottomore 84). Later Marxists also had to deal with this complication arising from the social ranking in relation to the basic class question – "the immediate and transitional strata" that obscures "the class boundaries" (Bottomore 85). The micrological divisions within a class, owing mostly to the status factor that obfuscates class boundaries, are more of superstructural elements. Nicos Poulantzas thinks that even though class is defined principally by the production process, i.e., economic base, it is wrong to conclude this base structure can alone determine classes. The superstructural elements like the political and the ideological ones have decisive influences too (Poulantzas 14). However, Poulantzas' insistence on superstructural determination comes from the idea that a class springs as a class only when it is equipped with "class consciousness and political organization" (Bottomore 85). Althusser too thinks that the "capital-labor contradiction" is prescribed by the elements of superstructure like the state, ideology, religion, culture, and political movements ("Contradiction" 106). This "capital-labor contradiction" leads to the "contradictory locations within class relations" as inhabited by the micrological groups.

Any theoretical analysis bears the burden of maintaining certain objectivity, and therefore, runs the risk of seeming mechanistic. However, fictions can overcome this barrier and explore the realm of subjectivity more deeply. In Elias' novels, this advantage adds some organic perspectives to understand the nuances associated with class. Hasan Al Zayed thinks that Elias is more interested in "the inner dialectic of people and their character" and "retains the inner dialectic of class struggle by paying attention to its micropolitical dimensions, deftly portraying the internal dynamism of class struggle as such" (237, 240). Zayed insists on concentrating

on Elias' depiction of "class within a class" to understand the micropolitics of class antagonism. Class antagonism does not necessarily exist only between opposing objective classes. The hint of antagonism also shadows over the same objective class. Though in a different context, Gayatri Spivak also reflects on the internal divisions within an objective class, as she says, "the colonized subaltern subject is irretrievably heterogeneous" (284). In her attempt to critique the position of people in Ranajit Guha's construction of a dynamic stratification of colonial social production, she argues that the idea of people can only be perceived as an "identity-in-differential" (Spivak 284). Here the subaltern class is found differentiated into broader sub-categories – the lowest strata of rural gentry, impoverished landlords, rich peasants, and upper-middle-class peasants along with the poor peasants. The micrological divisions within those subcategories are not explicitly mentioned but the concept of identity-in-differential hints on further micrological divisions.

Even though the exploration into the micropolitical helps to dive deeper into the miniscule of class reality and the infinitesimal level of individual and social life, it also takes back to the basic question about class. What is a class and how can it be defined and understood? Do the micrological entities pose as separate classes? What is the ultimate implication of micropolitical understanding of class in terms of revolutionary praxis?

Micropolitical understanding of class posits some challenges to the classical bi-polar model. Erik Olin Wright finds this polarized concept of class misleading for he thinks that the class relations in concrete societies are spread across various complex spatial and temporal realities. He points out two complexities of this bipolar simplification. Firstly, there coexist various kinds of class relations in most societies, and secondly, class relations are associated with "complex bundles of rights and powers, rather than simple, one dimensional property rights" (Wright 12). Wright's engagement with the concept of class is based on the idea of rights and powers which are associated with the production process and he considers the sum total of such rights and powers to be the social relations of productions (10). Wright's ideas are more aligned with a non-binary, micropolitical understanding of class as he is reluctant to reduce the class structure of a society on the basis of property right over the means of production. In *Khoabnama* too, as already shown, the question of power and status often determines the contradictory locations of micrological groups more than the ownership of the means of production.

Ernesto Laclau questions the concept of class as a universal category resting on the idea of a teleological "homogeneity of social agents" where the proletariat is the sole agent of global emancipation ("Questions" 7-8). For Laclau, society appears as a space of plurality where different groups articulate their demands through particularistic languages and what is thought as universal is actually contaminated by the contingent interventions and articulations of the particulars ("Identity" 51, 55). He further thinks of the notion of universal class as a "laborious political

construction" which fails to stand out as the automatic and necessary movements of a structure ("Identity" 52). Moreover, Laclau argues that the articulating function and the intuitive content of class is lost because a universal working class no longer exists for it has become a part of the chain of the plurality of identities that strives for emancipation ("Constructing" 297-8). The rise of identity politics in the last decades of the 20th century articulating multiple subjectivities has led to the gradual absence of empirical agents embodying a universal identity. The proliferation of symbolic class – the managers, academics, lawyers, and so on – appears as one of the reasons Laclau disregards the universality of the working class. This symbolic class along with the traditional middle class and the people excluded from the circuit of production relations (such as the permanently unemployed and homeless) are increasingly failing to resonate with the voice of the working class. This proliferation of division within the universal category of class unsettles the traditional concept of class. However, Žižek contradicts Laclau's idea that the category of class and class struggle as movement for emancipation are becoming irrelevant due to the advent of the plurality of political subjectivities. Žižek thinks that the diminishing significance of class struggle is owed to the result of the "paradox of 'oppositional determination'" of capitalism (320). Laclau thinks that the category of class is only a part of the enumerative chain of identities but for Žižek, besides being a part in the series, it also "predominates over the rest" (320). Žižek further argues that the apparent dissolution of class and the proliferation of plural identities are themselves the result of the dynamics of deterritorialization of global capitalism (319).

Class, originally, is the expression of social relations of production. This relation is determined by the ownership of the means of production. In any mode of production, as Marx explicitly writes, "the direct relation between the owners of the conditions and the direct producers … reveals the innermost secret, the hidden foundation, of the entire social edifice" (qtd. in Bottomore 85). So, class is determined through the mediation of production relation. It is a dialectical category of both capital and means of production. Basically, from this relationship comes the bipolar model of class in modern capitalist society. However, in apparently pre-capitalist modes of production too, class ultimately goes down to the relationship with the means of production. Here, the scheme by which the production process within pre-capitalist root was incorporated by the capitalist economy is the formal subsumption of labor under capital. In the formal subsumption of labor, the production process does not undergo a revolutionary transformation as capitalist proper but the existing process becomes the process of accumulating capital itself (Marx, *Capital* 1019). Here, an existing labor process is subsumed by capital which was developed by more of an outmoded mode of production (1021). Capital takes over an already established and available labor power. In the functional contour of formal subsumption, a peasant becomes a day laborer, or an independent peasant find himself at the disposal of the owner of money or land and gets bound up by a contract. The labor process and the production process goes on as before but it

comes under the subordination of capital. A similar thing has happened in the case of Bengal. A rising class of landowners, the *Jotedars*, began accumulating capital by formally subsuming the available labor process. The way they became landowners is more like primitive accumulation in nature and it shows a hint of a semi-feudal mode of agricultural production taking a capitalist turn. They mostly acquired lands by seizing them from immediate producers – small peasants or the independent petty-producers. Either the peasants were held by unpayable amount of debts with exorbitant interests or they were forced by political pressure to sell the land. Either way, the producer lost the land and no longer had any ownership of the means of production. As for the micrological categories, even if they are divided within themselves and have an antagonistic attitude against each other, they have the same relation with capital and the means of production. *Kolu*, *chasha*, *majhi*, *kamaar* – all have the same relation with the production process – they do not own it. Their labor has been subsumed by capital, making them flock under the umbrella of a single class. The division within them, the stratification on the grounds of status denotes the qualitative division of labor – the social division of labor within a class, not classes proper. The symbolic classes of the contemporary world too, although overshadows the class antagonism, are not classes proper in the structural sense. However, Slavoj Žižek, though in stark contrast with Laclau, also concedes that the split between micrological categories of class are growing more "radical than the traditional class divisions," that these categories are attaining their own world-views and almost an ontological dimension (323).

The crisis that appears here is that of the paradox between the structural formation of class and its articulating manifestation. Class is determined by capital's relationship with labor where the ownership and control over the means of production mediates this determining relation. However, the fact that social division of labor is increasingly dividing the class of the non-owners of the means of production internally needs to be acknowledged too. Because of this division and the advent of newer and plural political subjectivities, class struggle has been relegated from its place as a site of primary struggle even in the leftist tradition of the contemporary world. But the problem is that if class is categorized on the notion of status and power, then it falls into an endless array of micrological categories. This postmodern trap of endlessness does not offer any substantial contribution in the field of emancipatory praxis. However, the antagonism among those micrological groups, though not class antagonism proper, indeed needs to be addressed, for this micropolitics of class has a determining effect on the articulation of class consciousness too.

A class cannot be fully defined in terms of its objective condition; the subjective awareness of this objective situation is indispensable in understanding a class (Bottomore 89-90). When it has a collective understanding of the common interest and in turn organize as a united force to accomplish the class goal, a class is said to attain class consciousness. It is generally understood that the rise of a radical class organization coincides with the process by which class consciousness is formed.

Classical Marxism is preoccupied with the consciousness of the proletariat, the subjugated class in capitalism (Marx and Engels 47). Peasants, contrarily, are deemed a class devoid of class consciousness and thus a class-in-itself. The dichotomy of class-in-itself and class-for-itself engenders from Marx himself as peasants are considered a class on the basis of "economic conditions of existence" and not a class for their failure of producing "a feeling of community, national links or a political organization" (*Brumaire* 239).

Inspired by the *Brumaire*, some thinkers concluded that "class-in-itself" is a class devoid of class consciousness and peasantry as an objective reality is a "class-in-itself" but not a "class-for-itself" since it has no political or cultural expression of class identity (Cohen, qtd. in Andrew 578). Marx further says, "They are therefore incapable of asserting their class interest in their own name … They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented" (*Brumaire* 239). So, the peasantry is relegated to a class that is incapable of representing itself. Ranajit Guha's position goes against this idea. Whereas Marx drew his idea from the role of 19th century French peasantry in facilitating the accession of Louis Bonaparte, Guha's claim comes from his study of peasant insurgencies in colonial India. Guha contests that the "politics of the people." of the subaltern (peasants) was an "autonomous domain" ("Historiography" 190). Guha brings forth the question of representation but with a different connotation than Marx's. Not that they needed to be represented because they could not represent themselves but they were not deliberately represented, "clearly left out" by the elitist discourse of nationalist politics (180). Guha recognizes their politics as "autonomous domain" since peasant rebellions had all the elements of conscious movements – organized conscious leadership, some well-defined aim and definite objectives and means to achieve them (*Elementary* 4-5). For Guha, the peasantry is not a class devoid of class consciousness.

In Elias' novels, how subjugated people negotiate with the idioms of exploitations in their everyday life and how their consciousness is articulated in resisting those idioms is depicted. Tamij's trajectory can help to understand how peasant consciousness is articulated in *Khoabanma*. Tamij, as a day-laborer, worked in the region where the Tebhaga Movement broke out. Initially, Tamij was not a supporter of the Movement. Rather, he was a traditionalist, acknowledging the authority of the *Jotedars*. He despised the radical peasants and considered their action preposterous. He thought to himself, "The land belongs to the *Jotedars*. What amount of crops they get should be totally dependent on their will" (370). This Tamij later appears as an insurgent protester against exploitation. After his first season as a sharecropper, when the moment of crop distribution arrives, Tamij consciously experiences the exploitation of the *Jotedars* and his consciousness undergoes a transformation (464-67). That respectful and obedient Tamij is never found again, and in his place is somone insolent and rebellious. Guha stresses that insurgency is the site where "a conservative tendency made up of the ruling culture and a radical one oriented towards a practical transformation of the rebel's conditions of existence – met for a

decisive trial of strength" and that is why insurgency can be taken as the mirror where the peasant consciousness is duly reflected (*Elementary* 11). Tamij goes through this decisive trial. There is this hegemony of the ruling culture which has made the peasants accept the beliefs and values that ultimately serves the ruling class and simultaneously there is an insurgent consciousness which challenges that hegemony too. The memory of the Tebhaga Movement often comes alive before Tamij when his grievance is expressed. He gets lost in the stream of thoughts when his eyes feast upon the field full of crops. The recollection of peasant agitation in the Tebhaga-flared region occupies his mind and he finds himself among the agitated peasants of the Movement. In his daydream he beats the *Jotedars* with sticks when they come to claim the share of the crops he alone produced (Elias, *Khoabnama* 394-95). Tamij is found at the vanguard when a group of fishermen defy the authority of Sharafat Mondol over the Katlahar Bil, and go to fish there (535). Tamij also leads the defiance against Kalam Majhi, the new lessee who, despite promising the fishermen to return them the right of the Katlahar, makes it his private property (637-42). Not only Tamij but also other characters like Tamij's father, Baikhuntha, Yudhisthira, and Keramot Ali express their resistance against the oppressor class on different occasions.

Even though they resist, they seem to lack a totalized understanding of class struggle that aims at the upheaval of the existing economic system. Neither does Elias attribute such kind of consciousness to them. Marx asserts that even if the peasants have grievances against the oppressors, the rents and interests, and the taxation system, they have no opposition against the whole economic system (cited in Andrew 580). The nature of their populist struggle can be militant but "populist struggles are not class conflict unless populists participate in struggles for dominion between potentially hegemonic classes" (Andrew 580). Georg Lukács asserts that for the other classes (except the bourgeois and the proletariat) within capitalism with economic roots lying in pre-capitalism, "class consciousness is unable to achieve complete clarity and to influence the course of history consciously" (55). The peasants of the Tebhaga Movement too could not guide the movement to a revolution which could transform the mode of production and property relations. Their demand was limited only to a two-third share of the crops. This limitation corresponds to Lukács' claim. Ernesto Laclau also notes that the demands of the workers in resistance are not always anti-capitalist or against the totality of the oppressive system per se but can be comprised of reformist agenda that could be solved within the system (qtd. in Žižek 319).

However, in *Khoabnama* the struggles of the peasants emerge based on how the world appears to them. The logic of exploitation appears to them in the form of famine, loaning from usurers, and mortgaging lands to *Jotedars* for subsistence and losing those lands afterwards. The depression of the 1930s and the Famine of 1943 accelerated pauperization and augmented the number of sharecroppers and agricultural laborers as they lost their lands to *Jotedars* and money-lenders (Cooper

244). The haunting memory of the famine and the appropriation of peasants' land by the *Jotedars* are recurring in *Khoabnama* too. The struggles of those peasants reflect the exploitations they are subjected to and how they want to abolish them. Their consciousness may not be the full-fledged "revolutionary class consciousness" but they too want to change the conditions that keeps on exploiting them.

The point of departure in *Khoabnama* is that class consciousness does not appear a telos there as it is to Lukács. For Lukács, consciousness is *sine qua non* for revolution and this consciousness has to be "imputed" by a revolutionary vanguard. Lenin too championed vanguard intellectuals who are not directly associated with the immediate production process as their distance from the production process would help them to have a totalized understanding of the class relations of capitalist society (Bottomore 90). On the other hand, the underlying tone of Elias' work seems to look out for an organic consciousness that develops itself from the subjective experiences of the oppressed people. This consciousness comes from experiences of everyday life, determined by the logic of exploitation they suffer, the idiom of resistance they come up with. Tamij's transformation from his submissive dormancy to a resistant agency manifests this organic consciousness. This transformation engenders from one's negotiation with the exploitation of his/her own labor. The consciousness that makes Tamij aware of his conditions and to resist develops organically from his subjective experience of everyday life and his negotiation with the exploitation he suffers. It is not imputed from outside by revolutionary intellectuals and activists. Nor it is always borrowed from somewhere else as Lukács claims, "Class consciousness of the peasants changes frequently … because it is always borrowed from elsewhere" (61). Tamij's consciousness is hardly a borrowed one. The idea of this organic consciousness is more aligned with the thoughts of Rosa Luxemburg who thinks that the formation of class consciousness should be from the social experience of people's life, the experience of class struggle rather than coming from "professional revolutionaries" (Bottomore 90). Antonio Gramsci's ideas too correspond to the notion of an organic class consciousness as he writes, "Any revolutionary work has a chance of success only in so far as it founds itself on the necessities of their life and on the demands of their culture" ("Workers and Peasants"). Here, both the necessities and culture refer to the ones that developed organically from the lives of workers and peasants.

Besides, whereas Lukács's idea of class consciousness carries an inherent sense of economic determinism, this organic consciousness is not a direct determination of economic base but an overdetermined phenomenon by microcultural and micropolitical factors too. Louis Althusser thinks that even if the economic base in the last instance determines the superstructure, there is relative autonomy and reciprocal action of superstructure upon the base ("Ideology" 238). Class consciousness, in that sense, is not solely determined by the economic reality but by superstructural elements too. Ernesto Laclau even thinks that class antagonism is not a structural output of production relations since the workers as individual are

not solely the expression of economic base ("Structure" 202). They can experience the injustice done against them and in response, can resist due to cultural and other superstructural reasons too (cited in Žižek 319).

Mridula Mukherjee asserts that peasants' consciousness and actions are not products of a self-contained system but mediated by "the dialectic of recurrent oppression and resistance" (2176). Many "invisible" factors like the administrative and legal systems play a significant role along with the question of subsistence, land, tenancy, and occupancy in shaping the consciousness. Mukherjee argues that cultural factors like traditions and customs are indispensable to the shaping of peasant consciousness (2174). Pothik Ghosh too thinks that the stratification existing organically in the pre-capitalist communities and the psycho-cultural aspects can help to understand the immediate oppressive and hierarchical socio-economic dimensions of people's lives (134). The loyalty, the code of deference that Hurmatullah and early Tamij maintain towards the subjugating class, though originating from a certain relation of production, has, in fact, turned into a cultural code. Only when Tamij could break it, his rebel-consciousness became evident.

In Elias' *Chilekothar Sepai*, the shortcomings of imputed consciousness are insinuated. Anwar, an urban leftist, comes to the village to assess the "objective conditions"' for revolutions and organize the peasants. However, he finds himself at a loss in the course of overwhelming events as he fails to understand the emotions, beliefs, conventions, practices, and culture of the peasants (93). He fails to communicate the philosophy of collective resistant with the peasants (106-07). He even hesitates to mingle with them as their odor irritates his olfactory nerves and rustic accent disturbs his sense of propriety (105, 186-87). In short, Anwar lacks the ability to understand the rural conditions in its organicity. This inability causes a split between the organic culture of the peasants and the urban leftist politics that ultimately results in the failure of the latter to bring any substantial revolutionary outcome. Here, the term culture is being used as the totality of lived experience and everyday practices. Anwar fails to turn himself into Gramsci's organic intellectual who "no longer consist in eloquence … an exterior and momentary mover of feelings and passions, but in active participation in practical life" ("Intellectuals" 141). Unless the "vanguard intellectuals" can internalize the organic culture and language of the apparently revolutionary class in question, and become organically revolutionary intellectuals, imputed consciousness always gets trapped in that split.

Both novels embody the contradictions associated with organic consciousness and the impediments such contradictions lead to. Like micropolitical factors, the contradictions are overdetermined phenomenon too. An overdetermined contradiction, according to Althusser, "may either be overdetermined in the direction of a historical inhibition, a real 'block' for the contradiction or in the direction of revolutionary rupture … but in neither condition it is ever found in the 'pure' state" ("Contradiction" 106). The dominant contradiction here is that the micrological

groups stand in the way of achieving a totalized class consciousness to form a class unity. In Elias, however, the micrological groups do not appear as involved in a hegemonic struggle with any particularistic demand. None of them particularly assumes the "function of universal representation" (Laclau, "Structure" 303). They do not appear as precursors to plural subjects of identity politics either. Their appearance serves only as a manifestation of inner contradiction of class structure. In *Khoabnama,* there is hardly any moment of united action of resistance that reflects the interest and long-term objectives of the whole class but only manifestations of resistance for immediate interests. The *majhis* stood together to claim their right over Katlahar Bil on multiple occasions but that too within a very limited scope. The marginalized people of Girirdanga and Nijgirirdanga are never found to stand united against the oppressors. Rather, when *majhis* stood against Shorafat Mondol, the *chashas* like Hurmatullah and others worked as Mondol's muscle. So, the unity, long term objectives, and the totality of class interest are hindered by the division they had among themselves. The objective of consciousness is to create a unity for concerted actions, as proclaimed by Marx – "workers of the world, unite!" But the micropolitical divisions affect class consciousness by disrupting class unity. The divisions which are culturally or superstructurally overdetermined are also the function of status consciousness. Lukács claims that "status consciousness masks class consciousness" and *Khoabnama* seems to testify to this claim (58).

The antagonism among people at the micro-level manifests the non-homogeneity of class consciousness. Lukács argues that class consciousness is divided within itself. This division of consciousness is owed to the micropolitics of class. Since class cannot articulate itself homogenously and appears divided within itself, its influence is reflected in the realm of consciousness too. Laclau asserts that class unity comes under threat when the subject becomes decentered and fails to reinforce his/her identity as a social agent and "differential identitary logic" traverse class boundary to constitute identity which fails to intersect class positions ("Constructing" 300). The dissolution of people into micrological groups posits such impediments to class unity as evident in *Khoabnama.* This micropolitics accounts for a non-homogenous and divided consciousness that stands as an impediment to united actions of the marginalized classes.

Another historical impediment the organic consciousness apparently suffered, as depicted in Elias' novels, is the subversion of the radical impulses of the marginalized class by the nationalist elites. The Tebhaga Movement was exclusively a peasant movement but the Muslim League (ML) appropriated the rhetoric of Tebhaga. Pothik Ghosh comments that the communal politics of ML "thrived only by drawing sustenance from the radical politics of Tebhaga movement." (117). Taj Ul-Islam Hashmi calls this phenomenon "communalization of class struggle" where the "the attainment of Pakistan" was regarded "as the final step towards an egalitarian system" (219). In *Khoabnama*, ML leader Ismail declared that in Pakistan, Tebhaga would be implemented congenitally (499). After independence, when Tamij reminds

Kader of their promise, Kader is vexed and mocks Tamij for his sharp memory (602, 647). In *Chilekothar Sepai*, the appropriation of Bairageer Bheeta stands as the symbolic consequence of the movement of 1969 (204, 244). The space created by the radical impetus of the peasants is seized by the compromising nationalist middle class, and the demands and aspirations of the peasants and working class people were deferred and relegated. Such a portrayal very conspicuously articulates the pitfalls of both national consciousness and the defeat of organic consciousness as it cannot be manifested through united actions of the subjugated class which is micrologically divided.

It seems that to explore the formative dimension of class consciousness, if formed in the first place, *Khoabnama* hosts a setting where the Tebhaga Movement did not have a firm root. The geographical contour of the novel predominantly covers the villages where the stories and rumors of the Movement often invade the landscape, the gust of fear infects the *Jotedars* but the flame of the Movement is absent. However, this deliberate distance is not without merits. Partha Chatterjee finds that the vigor of the Tebhaga was absent in some districts of North Bengal where "a new stratum of sharecroppers" was created from rising differentiation (198). And the *Jotedars* having effective control over the means of production set the background of a distinct exploitative milieu. How the experience of encountering exploitation and negotiation with it through conformation and resistance affects the formation of consciousness is portrayed in *Khoabnama*. On the other hand, the setting of the novel in the region where the Movement was already in full motion, would predominantly manifest the expressive dimension of consciousness – the concerted actions against the oppressors. If the expressive dimension is considered to be a yardstick to assess the result of consciousness, then Elias cannot be taken to be totally oblivious of it. In his novels it is rather explored why the consciousness, developed from an organic negotiation with life and its intimate experiences cannot deliver the desired result.

Here, one thing is clear that the hint of organic consciousness is found developing on the individual level only. Tamij through his subjective experiences of everyday life attains it but most of the peasants remain subjugated by the dominant world-view. On some occasions they manifest united actions but ultimately they are found to be lacking a strong class organization. The consciousness imputed by the vanguard intellectuals is not coherent with the organic living conditions of the subjugated class and the organic consciousness does not arise evenly from every individual of a class and locality. For Elias, the oppressed classes in general are neither class-in-itself nor class-for-itself. Elias' dialectical outlook to society and history keeps no room for a telos of finality like class-for-itself. Class consciousness for Elias is never a state of being but always a process of becoming. In his last appearance in *Khoabnama*, fugitive Tamij rides a train to go looking for a possibility to fight for the Tebhaga. The way his daughter is presented in the very last lines of the novel hints at the new site of material struggle where people will keep on fighting. Borrowing the phrase

from Adam Przeworski, it can be said that, for Elias, a class is always a class-in-struggle (qtd. in Andrew 583). It is not to be reducible to the fixed idea of class-in-itself or class-for-itself. A dialectical view of history can only accommodate an idea like class-in-struggle and in Elias' novels, it is evident.

An attentive investigation into the micropolitics of class and class consciousness can help to overcome the prevalent mechanical understanding of those concepts and to grasp the inner dialectics of class struggle with its embedded contradictions. It exposes the split between the structural formation of class and its articulation in emancipatory politics which Akhtaruzzaman Elias' critical and dialectical vision captures astutely.

Note
1. All quotations used in this paper from *Khoabnama* and *Chilekothar Sepai* are the author's own translation as no recognized translations of these two novels are published yet in English.

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"The best in this kind are but shadows": Pathos of Aesthetic Alienation in *New Grub Street* and *The Sandman*

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Abstract

Aesthesia or the art of perception involves an awareness of human tendencies and the Greek origin of the word, *aisthesis* stands for "one who perceives." As much as an author might or might not find it significant to observe their surroundings and then fictionalize them to be able to emulate a lived reality, seen and heard all too well – one cannot disagree that once the vision they try to communicate achieves a heightened focus and is given a shape of words – the writer finds themselves in a mode of paradoxical nonexistence, in other words, aesthetic alienation. This paper aims to identify the very process through which a writerly vision comes true as an author decidedly chooses creative sincerity over domestic comfort as seen in George Gissing's 1891 novel, *New Grub Street*, and Neil Gaiman's *The Sandman*, a DC Vertigo comic series (1993). Closely examining the dramatis personae and their intimate imitation of the respective authors' aesthetic beliefs, the article makes use of both primary and secondary data and discovers that the domain of creative genesis is always separated from the finished literary products, autonomous and distant.

Keywords*: Aesthetics, Alienation, Literary Practice, Dream, Reality

In order to understand how aesthetic interests are pursued in the world of creative writing, one can suggest a certain scene (Act 4, Scene 6) from *King Lear* where Shakespeare dramatizes Lear and Gloucester's self-affliction and a consequential change of heart in the middle of a storm. When Lear, a now maddened beggar, appreciates Gloucester, a man who could feel life with depth despite his apparent blindness, the latter does not take time to calmly affirm, "I see it feelingly" (4.7.205). Likewise, in the previous scene, as two actors respectively pretending to be a vagabond (in actuality, the noble youth, Edgar) and an elderly nobleman (his "authentic" homeless father, the Earl of Gloucester) walk up a hill together, the audience also "feelingly" sees a "horrible steep" (Shakespeare 4.7.198) above the English channel in place of the flat stage. The language of Shakespeare itself plays a more active role in creating the illusion than sound effects or however many props a director uses. Nevertheless, just after a while, we feel pulled out of the theatrical performance and thrown into real life almost in the same breath when Edgar becomes a mediator between the imaginary "irreality'"of Shakespeare's play and the terrestrial awareness of the audience. The scene reverses as yet again he stands aside and admits to "trifle

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thus … to cure" (Shakespeare 4.7.198) his father's suicidal thoughts and pretends to be another man from the beach below helping the old man attain a "miraculous" survival from a potential fall off the cliff. However self-reflexive and many-layered a stagecraft it is, the audience, ready to be entertained like Gloucester, is not necessarily after an apologia for the decisions Shakespeare might make to prove anything geo-politically, historically, or contextually accurate, for it is more drawn to the value of "speaking what we feel, not what we ought to say" (Shakespeare 5.3.324).

This Coleridgean "suspension of disbelief" readers or observers assume to momentarily isolate themselves and fully indulge in theatrical illusions while at the same time surveying the stage like a haunting third is a paradoxical situation that can be applied to a fictionist who is presently invested in the processes of creating a narrative. In order to attain a heightened state of imagination till the plot takes its own course and characters become *real* in an author's imagination, he/she is to consider themselves to be an outsider watching the stories slowly unfold before them. The Eliotesque desire of "doing the police in different voices" (Bedient 104) perhaps, pervades all possible creative ventures when an artist, trying to "animate many different voices with equal conviction" (Bate 31), finds it somewhat imperative to dissolve "the very identity of the body that writes" (Barthes 142). Oscar Wilde also claimed the same in "The Soul of Man under Socialism": an author "stands outside his subject, and through its medium produces incomparable artistic effects" (307). In light of this aesthetic alienation – a prerequisite for any visionary effort – both George Gissing and Neil Gaiman, despite a century-long gap in terms of the very idiosyncratic nature of writing, address how a writer "instead of participating in life, watch(es) themselves standing apart, making it the raw material for art" (Bate 12). For Gaiman, this attempt involves showing a renewed interest in William Shakespeare as a sub-character playing an important role (much akin to how Shakespeare treated "less significant" peasants in his work) in issues 13, 19, and 75 of his critically acclaimed and publicly admired comic series, *The Sandman* (1990). The character of Shakespeare here deals with the inevitable isolation of a historical existence he achieved by producing timeless narratives (Puschak 06:30-06:39). As for Gissing, in his novel, *New Grub Street* (1891), it is Edwin Reardon, an ambitious talented young writer of commercially unsuccessful novels from Victorian London who, in his pursuit of the "golden" era of literature "unsullied by mechanical production" (Knox 105), fails to appeal to the salability of authorship and finds himself isolated from the community of self-proclaimed "populist" editors, publishers, and writers. They also captured the power of individual aesthetic visions that shape the authors' respective interpretations of the world, heavily emphasizing the notion of literature as "dream-material" (Katsiadas 71); and the extreme price an author has to pay giving life to his/her imagination while not being able to live one of their own.

Initially supposed to be a revival of a 1970s DC superhero with the same name as a monthly horror comic in 1988 (later printed in *Vertigo* collections), Neil Gaiman replaced the common idea of a muscle-bound crime hunter with a pale slender-figured

divinity named Morpheus, Oneiros (after the Greek God), Lord Shaper, Prince of Stories, Dream Lord, but mostly as Dream who rules over the realm of Dreaming. Traditionally considered a "low art" (primarily appealing to teenagers) exhibiting colorful illustrations of overtly masculine men/feminine women or mainstream slangs and speech balloons, the very definition of comics, however, has gone through significant changes over the recent years as a form of alternative rhetoric ranging from the sorts of pragmatic (*Kick-ass,* 2008) to those of non-sequential surrealistic (more or less all Japanese *manga* series). An ever-flexible genre-bending continued series, it allows a writer to accessorize an imaginary environment much similar to what the thirteenth-century French writers did in a Vulgate Cycle – a huge network of interlocking tales featuring hundreds of quasi-historical, mythical, legendary or actual characters from different universes of literature, politics, mythologies, and religions in a parallel montage – which together would contribute to the making of the mother plot. Gaiman takes advantage of this particular form of popular expression as well as the incredible lack of concrete information regarding Shakespeare, the man and the writer to fictionalize his works (specifically, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*) into a parallel metafiction that "comments both on Shakespeare's life and on the nature of literary creation and storytelling" itself (Round 97). Much against the pedagogical tendency of dissecting Shakespeare in terms of quotation marks, reference lists, and academic formats, Gaiman explores the "obligation to imagination" (2013) a storyteller has to fulfill: "of telling, of being told to, of being told about" (Blank 299). Just the way Shakespeare single-handedly revisited, adapted, and popularized hundreds of otherwise little-known original narratives, giving them a new identity and form from what they used to be – Shakespeare himself has been reconstructed in Gaiman's world as a dream emissary catering to both the Renaissance and modern subjectivity – an author in search of a *vatic* truth that requires his deliberate disavowal of the little propensities which ultimately make him a human. Though carefully preserved in the pages of history, the alienation of a genius rising above an awe-struck audience only to find themselves desolate in a kingdom made of their own imagination is an inevitable end which seems to strike the three-fold mirror image of Dream the protagonist, Shakespeare the character, and Gaiman the author all at once in the "plethora … of art, beauty, and other worldliness" (Lancaster 71) that is the fantasyland of *The Sandman*.

In *The Sandman*, the bard appears three separate times, the first being "Men of Good Fortune" (No. 13) in which Gaiman introduces Shakespeare as a novice writer full of ambitions ready to leave his mark on the world, while the other two are "A Midsummer Night's Dream" (No. 19, winner of the World Fantasy Award, 1991, and the only comic to win in the category of Prose Fiction) and "The Tempest" (logically enough, the last issue of the series, No. 75) all of which have bits and pieces from the original plays intermingled with Gaiman's personalized narrative. Each of these issues plays with our usual suspicions about the bardic magic of creativity Shakespeare possessed; the authenticity of his work; the universal appeal he was

able to create; his decided biographical presence or reticence; and all in all, how he became a master of storytelling in his lifetime followed by a possible empathetic understanding of what cost him to do just that. The protagonist, however, by no means, is Shakespeare but Dream, one of the pantheon of the Endless which other than himself, consists of his six siblings – Destiny, Death, Destruction, Desire, Despair, and Delirium – personified entities of universally applicable attributes. It should be of interest to notice here that of all the equally dynamic anthropomorphized forces that Gaiman illustrated in a controlled yet chaotic vortex of intertextual mythologies and polyphonic storylines, it was Dream he chose to be the protagonist, perhaps, because as Kurt Lancaster says, this character captures one of the core issues Gaiman wanted to explore in *The Sandman*: "humanity's desire for dreams and the cost of attaining that desire" (71) – also reinforced by Dream Lord himself: "He [Shakespeare] did not understand the price. Mortals never do. They only see the prize, their heart's desire, their dream" (Gaiman 20). In other words, Dream is addressing the unforeseen perils of a lifelong dedication towards the endeavor of dreaming which Gaiman thinks is but equivalent to storytelling and requires an ultimate compromise of living a life as one knows it so that stories about different modes of lives can be observed and then publicly communicated. And for Gaiman, no one but Shakespeare is a perfect vessel of some of the most powerful stories ever told for his "propagation of dreams via stories, humanization of the cosmos and cross-cultural coherence," the leading dreamer of his time and even that of Gaiman's (Lancaster 72).

In an issue (No. 13) primarily concerned with questions of men and mortality, Shakespeare greets the readers of Gaiman for the first time as a certain "Will Shaxberd," a supporting character that Dream meets by chance when he goes to a Renaissance pub to see someone called Hob Gadling, a man whose desire to be immortal was granted by Dream during one of his investigations of the mortal world and its dreams. Shaxberd, desperate to win fortune's favor and about to stage his first play, finds it exceptionally difficult to compete with his contemporaries like Christopher Marlowe, whose "gifts" of composing plays like *Dr. Faustus* according to Shaxberd are the signs of a sublime aspiration, "or more than [that], to give men dreams, that would live on long after I am dead" (Gaiman, No. 13, 13). The concept of defeating death, therefore, in a dialectic connection draws itself back towards the question of immortality posed by Gadling. Later, it is revealed that ironically it is Shaxberd who is about to do it, and not Gadling, for a more aesthetically meaningful proposal is being offered to no one but the writer, a man soon to dream up the narratives which will gain him eternity. In a private bargaining scene, the ambitious playwright readily accepts the gift of creativity from Dream Lord almost in a Faustian fashion in exchange for writing two plays to celebrate Dream and his immense power over humans (revealed later in No. 19). Thus, in Gaiman's imagination, the *bildungsromanic* journey of Will Shaxberd, an average writer on his way to becoming William Shakespeare, one of the world's pioneering literary figures, starts.

It can be argued that an inherent characteristic of a dream is its malleability containing "multiple projections of imaginative activity" (Katsiadas 63) at the same time, giving us enough scope to entertain our interpretational interests (Vorwerk 7). For Shakespeare's second appearance in the comic, Gaiman skillfully develops a storyline (No. 19) which not only holds the same title as Shakespeare's original play, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1596) but also incorporates its actual plot and some of the major characters including Titania, Oberon, Theseus, Hippolyta, Puck, the rude mechanicals, and so on. Gaiman remains true to the Shakespearean motifs and chooses a theatrical piece with one of the most brilliant dreamscapes imagined – full of fine fantasies, lucid dreams, parallel realities, bizarre transformations, carnivalesque transgressions of ontological boundaries, reversal of magic spells and lovers, communion of royalty and groundlings, humans having the "most rare visions" (Shakespeare, *Midsummer* 138) of fairies, and the list goes on. However, what stands out about this play is how it appraises the power of human imagination; the way "dreamers" or people involved in any field of liberal arts are perceived in their time; and the tragic eventualities that might yield before or after a dreamer (in this case, a writer) decides to dream (write) and supplant the reality with their aesthetic ideals. Perhaps, this is what motivated Gaiman to make use of the "parted eyes" in *AMND* and envisage how Shakespeare, the dreamer in debt to d/Dream for his creative inspiration might pen his dilemmas, underscoring a crucial issue closely tied to *The Sandman*'s heart: aesthetic alienation or simply put, an artist's commitment to his/her art in relation to the everyday life they live (Shakespeare, *Midsummer* 176).

An astounding miscellanea of Ovid, Chaucer, Marlowe, Spenser, North's *Plutarch*, English folk-tales, and idyllic sceneries of Sussex Downs, *AMND* has been adapted previously by well-known writers like Rudyard Kipling (*Puck of Pook's Hill*, 1906) or Terry Pratchett (*Lords and Ladies*, 1992), but *The Sandman* surpasses the common expectations of all regular, irregular, and even rare readers of comics. Unlike others, it involves Gaiman imagining the way Shakespeare, an ideal Romantic dreamer would have confronted the sine qua nons of the outer world, where "dogs will bark; people will interrupt; money must be made; health will break down" (Woolf 51); and mostly, a son will demand his father's attention. In "A Midsummer Night's Dream" (No. 19), Gaiman opens the scene with a troupe of actors including Shakespeare and his eight-year-old son Hamnet, making their way to an English countryside on June 23, 1593 to stage the first show of *AMND* which historically is also very close to the year of the original play's composition. As the illustrations progress, we begin to notice Shakespeare's constant denial to spend time with his son since the playwright is too occupied directing the actors, meeting Dream who will bring a mysterious audience for the play's premiere, and finally, mediating between the land of Dream (since the fantastical creatures in the audience are none other than the real-life counterparts of his characters in the play) and the land of men (real-life mechanicals). And when the bard moves on to attend a far more important call

of duty which is to please Dream and his audience with the first of the two plays he promised in his contract, we see the grey shadow of a dejected Hamnet falling behind in the background (2), "a telling image that connects the reader to Hamnet's plight" (Lancaster 71).

Furthermore, when an ecstatic Hamnet approaches Shakespeare to share a conversation he just had with a fairy creature (Titania), the playwright cannot help expressing his vexation at the "foolish fancies" (Gaiman 25) of the child. This ironic situation raises questions about the authorial honesty of the very man who is keen to "give men dreams" (Gaiman, No. 13, 13) and offer "to airy nothing/A local habitation and a name" (Shakespeare, *Midsummer* 17), yet undermines the power of dreaming and considers the actual encounter between his son and a fairy just another product of a "seething brain" (Shakespeare, *Midsummer* 4). A dreamer pressured to live up to his visions that will define humankind's future modes of storytelling, Shakespeare in one fraction of a moment seems to forget the way dreams work, that there is no "big dream" (high aesthetic taste of the royalty or critics) or "small dream" (malapropisms of the rude mechanicals or Hamnet's childhood fantasies) since all of them are born of imagination's "great constancy," equally "strange and admirable" (Shakespeare, *Midsummer* 25) in their own rights. It takes till the end of the comic for the bard to finally believe in his own words verbalized through the epiphanic realization of Theseus in *AMND*, "the best in this kind are but shadows" (Shakespeare 25-26). It implies that the best (or even the worst) of creative labors are but illusions, a part of the shadow-realm a writer visits only in their dreams and creates visions so powerful that have "the disconcerting ability to take the place of real-life" (Castaldo 105), for the writer inhabits the story and the story, in turn, inhabits the readers' world.

At the latter part of the installment, Shakespeare's distance from his son brings about even more cathartic twists when Hamnet's fear of his own death becoming one of his father's stories does turn out to be true as the playwright's figment of imagination, Titania, the fairy queen from *AMND* reveals herself as an existing entity among the onlookers. Intrigued by Hamnet's performance as the play's Indian boy, she takes an interest in the lonesome child following the exact fashion of the "fake" Titania on stage (who was responsible for the changeling's disappearance from the human realm) and gives him the attention he deserved but did not quite receive from his father. Some critics claim Hamnet is the real-life source of the epitome of Shakespeare's tragedies, *Hamlet*, but what is significant here is how Gaiman has drawn a parallel alignment between the reality Shakespeare imagines and the reality that does actually happen, mirroring the way he imagined it. In an attempt to defamiliarize the known and pursue the sublime remote, Gaiman's Shakespeare becomes a spectator to his own life: "I watched my life as if it were happening to someone else. My son died. And I was hurt. But I watched my hurt, and even relished it, a little, for now, I could write a real death, a true loss" (Gaiman, No. 75, 27). The final page of the issue throwing a casual remark on Hamnet Shakespeare's

premature death in 1596, "aged eleven"(Gissing 26), reiterates an acute awareness of loss permeating the world of Shakespeare's creation, majestic yet very lonely. Similar to Shakespeare, Dream's assistance in the death of his son, Orpheus, signals a climactic hour in "Brief Lives" (Nos. 41-49 of the series) since a part of Dream is freed of his son's responsibility. A series of unfortunate events thus triggers an already felt isolation or imprisonment within self-made walls which is a recurrent motif in the comic and reflected at the very beginning of it when Dream Lord finds himself captured at the hand of some corrupt mortals who wanted to kidnap his sister, Death, but took him instead. Alienation also finds its way of blatant revelation when the groundling Hob Gadling finally understands why the mighty lord of Dreams visits a mortal like him after every one-hundred years – precisely because he does not have any friends, is "lonely" (Gaiman, No. 13, 23) and always has been since he bears the burden of ruling over the land of Dreaming – a burden solely his to carry.

A dream-narrative within a narrative about a protagonist named Dream, No. 19 of *The Sandman* is a stand-alone story about storytelling which stresses the self-decided alienation of a playwright/actor/dreamer safeguarding themselves from possible distractions so that the more imminent task of carrying on with the show is properly met, thus becoming "a man who gives up all true connections to everyday life for eternal glory," only to regret it later (Castaldo 101). Not very long after the play begins, we see Shakespeare mortified at the news of his friend Marlowe's death and yet ready for the stage against his better judgment, such is his isolation enforced by untold responsibilities since it is he whose dreams and "shadow truths will endure when mere facts are dust and ashes, and forgot" (Gaiman, No. 19, 21). Here, in a symbolic way Gaiman implies how Shakespeare's undeniable emergence as the Bard of the Elizabethan "singing nest" both literally and metaphorically obliterated the existence of the other writers of his time and even some of the next (Puschak 04:30-05:39). Gaiman makes a similar approach in the last issue of *The Sandman*, "The Tempest" (No. 75). There, Ben Jonson appears in a good number of pages to let us know that Shakespeare, indeed, did borrow many of his plots and characters from secondary sources like those by Montaigne, Plutarch, and Raphael Holinshed. However, they are simply forgotten over time since Shakespeare immortalized the versions he customized and made completely his own, so much so that the less informed audience like Hob Gadling thought the possibility of *King Lear* having a happy ending is a work of "idiots" (Gaiman, No. 19, 19). But the truth is Shakespeare reversed it in his play because this is what he had envisioned in one of his dreams.

Shakespeare makes his appearance for the final time in *The Sandman* in its last issue, "The Tempest," (No. 75) which incidentally was also his swan song with the same title. As the bard struggles to finish the final play he promised to write for Dream, his wife interrupts and complains, "You dream too much nonsense" (Gaiman, No. 75, 21) which she believes is leading their only daughter, Juditha, astray. The concept of dreaming associated with "daydreaming" or similar pejorative suggestions seems

to continue when Shakespeare comes across a puritanist comment in an inn and is called a "plague-crow," a bringer of the black plague in the country because sins bring plagues and his plays bring sins (Gaiman, No. 75, 7). At this point, Gaiman reveals a realization he has come to after years of practicing as a professional writer as well as his historical knowledge of Shakespeare: the reception of a dreamer in their time. In all probability, a man of "small Latin, and less Greek" (Jonson 31) background, Shakespeare was considered an "upstart-crow" with his thick provincial accent (Bate 12) at some points of his life upon entering the London Theatre. Also, condemned multiple times by historiographers for showing more interest in monetary investments, political alliances, "bricks and mortar" (Gaiman, No. 75, 39), and making an exit as soon as enough money for an easy life after retirement was managed, Shakespeare might not have received the same recognition when he was alive as we might think, at least not by some sections of the native/non-native communities of readers, viewers, publishers, actors, or patrons – simply because logically it would be impossible to please all at a time. Being a poet, he was also a "lunatic," a "lover," and a "madman" who "sees more devils than vast hell can hold," (Gaiman, No. 75, 10), as would like to believe some of the anti-theatre conservatives of the contemporary canonical tradition.

Therefore, Gaiman believes to be able to harbor the creative impulse and not compromise innate aesthetic values while at the same time make a living out of it or produce plays for public consumption against the "constraining conventions of theatre and in some cases, financial well-being of his family" (Pendergast 190), Shakespeare the author had to experience estrangement unlike any other man of his time. As much as Gaiman explores the *imago* of the bard as a distant star inspired by exquisite dreams and mythic materials, he does not forget to remind us that Lord Strange's Men are laborers who "also need to pay [their] way through the countryside" (Gaiman, No. 19, 15). However, the readers of *The Sandman* are not given a proper chance to be disappointed at the thought of pure organic dreams being utilized as a mere commodity by the professional playwright, for Gaiman makes sure that Dream meets Shakespeare, the source of poetic visions unites with the artist, and the Romantic pursuit of aesthetic values finds its way back home for one last time in the final issue of the series.

"The Tempest" (No. 75), thus, functions as a valedictory narrative of the quadruple orientations of Prospero, a dream-vision of Shakespeare; Shakespeare, the anamorphic human vehicle remembered for his stories; Dream, the archetypical prince of dreams (stories) without whose assistance there would be no Shakespeare; and finally, Neil Gaiman, the master writer who brought all the previous three to his pages, invisible but unmistakably present only "a paper's thickness away" (Brown 165). They all simultaneously plead for our indulgence to "set them free" from "the burden of words" (Gaiman, No. 75, 41), for all of them are one embodiment of the same self-portrait: a storyteller celebrated for his imaginative plenitude. The greatest legacy of Shakespeare in his ability to maintain a delicate yet effective

verisimilitude of concepts like reality, truths, and dreams to their full complexity is what Gaiman finds to be the ultimate definition of writerly achievement. In his mind, Shakespeare lives all his dreams (beautifully illustrated in No. 75 with Shakespeare sitting at his desk by the candlelight and dreaming his visions in shades more vivid and real against the monochromic setting of his room) and gives shapes to "things unknown" (Shakespeare, *Tempest* 5.1.15). As Mazzotta comments on the epilogue of *The Tempest*, "If we are chameleons who become all we touch, then, we may really be nothing of our own" (Pendergast 196). Shakespeare does confirm to lose himself among the many lives he created, no less eventful than the "real ones" of Ben Jonson (Gaiman, No. 75, 37) and despite all the resentments of continuing to do so against the approval of his kinsmen or even the church (as shown in the final pages of the series), he is finally released of his aesthetic responsibilities and continues to live, though alone, through the creations born of his dreams. Hence, for Shakespeare, the shadow line between illusion and reality can be found oscillating in a third space behind the g/Globe and its curtain which is where d/Dream, the quintessential origin of creativity abides (Gaiman, No. 75, 40).

On the other hand, at once comparable and not with Gaiman's Shakespeare, George Gissing introduces a 19th century emerging young writer named Edwin Reardon in his novel, *New Grub Street* (1891), a perpetual dreamer determined to regain the Arcadian glory of the British literary history at the cost of not living his present reality in a new London, a very "new" Grub Street, *The Nether World* (1889), or *The Whirlpool* (1897). A labor-market of writers of histories and dictionaries, it was a promiscuous city that changed the very definition of literature with self-proclaimed "progressive" journalism and championed its mass consumption through plagiarized articles, replicas of reviews, periodicals, manuals, readers' digests, fancy magazines with velvety covers, inflated political proceedings, and ornate official supplements. Reardon and his friend, who also happens to be an aspiring self-dependent writer, Harold Biffen, together portray a Janus-faced struggle of pursuing the aesthetic impulse to create and at the same time a remarkably ambivalent late-Victorian temper to the business of "realist" literature. The very opening scene of the novel with an unperturbed Jasper Milvain casually enjoying his breakfast and throwing a remark rather "with cheerfulness" (Gissing 7) on a man being hanged in London creates the onset of a fiction prepared to present the reality as it is, thriving with "penny-a-liners" (Lewes 300), desensitized space-fiilers of voluminous journalistic/ literary production (i.e., a three-volume system or a three-decker novel) recycled to the point where they lose their substance. As claims the Yule brother, Alfred, "The evil of the time is the multiplication of ephemerides. Hence a demand for essays, descriptive articles, fragments of criticism, out of all proportion to the supply of even tolerable work" (Gissing 69). Similarly, his daughter Marian is found in the British Museum contemplating on the lack of originality among the writers of the time while "exhausting herself in the manufacture of printed stuff which no one even pretended to be more than a commodity for the day's market" (Gissing 200).

Uncompromising times like these do not leave too many options to explore in terms of creative writing, driving young old souls like Reardon towards their self-decided isolation, "never seeing those of his acquaintances who were outside the literary world" (Gissing 297), the world he created in his imagination free of all procedural formalities, journalistic attacks, political upheavals, and critical retorts of his contemporaries, namely Milvain and John Yule.

"The economic realities of the profession continued to demand a flexibility of both talent and attitude from those who would chance it for a living" (Asch 27) and Reardon, one of the many writers in the novel, appears to find it increasingly difficult to become a tradesman and consider writing merely as an economic activity, a profession of industrial utility and not a vocation of choice. Trapped between the educated middle-class readers' demand for quick journalistic materials (like those in *The Current*, *The Study*, *The West End*, and so on) and the sophisticated Scriblerian tradition of exploring the power of language to a satiric end, Reardon almost becomes a real-life model of Gissing himself, making the novel a "*roman a clef*" (Poole 141). The entire scenario here evokes the same struggles that Gissing experienced in his life as a writer conditioned to "speak an alien language and live in a Leyden jar" (Gosse 279), underrated and at times rebuked for being unfaithful to the much popular genre of romantic realism "written to please people" (Gissing 86). In that way, we can draw a parallel connection between *The Sandman* and *New Grub Street*, both of which investigate the nature of creative endeavors in an autobiographical connection to the writers themselves. Whereas Gaiman manages to frame the despair of authorial sincerity in an allegorical comic and appeals to his readers' pleasure, Gissing demands a direct yet "far studious … mode of readerly engagement" (Hone 180) challenging the late-Victorian liquidation of literature to the state of "table garnishing" (Gissing 170). With an Arnoldian confidence in classics as "touchstones" and a tireless pursuit of authorial intents, Reardon turns into "a Jasper of the facile pen," a miserable man of letters who feels as "unfortunate" as a street woman selling away his honor, his intellectual propriety (Gissing 455).

As Gissing explores the complex idea of serious literature supplanted by casual journalism, "objective art's inevitable, degrading concession to subjective economic experiences" (Asch 28), Reardon fails and his counterpart, Milvain thrives. "An alarmingly modern young man" (Gissing 4), Milvain seeks opportunities and seizes one by marrying Reardon's widowed wife Amy, a proud inheritor of £10,000 from her uncle, right after Reardon dies following a lifetime of depression, poverty, broken health, frequent attacks of writer's block, and the ultimate death of his son. The symbolic body swap of Reardon by Milvain shows "the intellectual temper [which] was that of the student, the scholar," of Homer, Virgil, or Dr. Grantly and his reverie of the English countryside is of no value to "the market [that] conditions the act of thinking itself" (Asch 30), the observations that might or might not be organic but disposable only before the taste of London and its self-contained meritocracy. Altogether, the disappearance of Reardon from Grub Street

only implies the impossibility of separating the aesthetic merit of any given work from the commercial value it has a chance to attain in the market. If a day's work of translation or review of an already reviewed product is worth "ten to twelve guineas," it does not matter whether the work concerned has the imaginative value "of a mouldy nut" (Gissing 181).

Since the subjective essence of writing/reading is plagued by press machines and the capitalist nature of journalism is rewarded by the laws of supply and consumption, some regular practices of a literary enthusiast in Gissing's world would include: reading at least four newspapers and two magazines, composing Saturday columns, sketching out papers, and recording potential material on a daily basis (Gissing 181). Milvain's triumph over an overworked Reardon who fails to anticipate the ubiquity of telegraphic communication (after Edison) and appease a people "who can't distinguish between stones and paste" only indicates what is deemed as success in the New Street of writers, readers, and publishing houses (Gissing 181). Gissing complains that here hundreds and thousands of paper sheets are merchandized and maltreated in the name of academic, journalistic, and thespian enterprises only to meet egocentric ends and parade a commercial sentiment of offending and defending contemporary literature just so a profitable business can be established. In Reardon's case, despite nurturing a passing fancy to let go of his "uncompromising artistic pedantry," he ultimately fails to do so due to an intrinsic fear that perhaps every writer feels of being forgotten or worse, remembered for their authorial insincerity (Gissing 64). Whereas Shakespeare, the character in Gaiman and the laureate of Renaissance England, was able to please many and please for long by presenting the general truth of humanity, Gissing found that same nature of truth, be it one of literature or life, drastically changed as press politics and pragmatic journalism corrupted the ways life itself was perceived in the late-eighteenth century Grub Street: prosaic, redundant, and mechanized.

Coming back to fiction, since the middle-class readership developed a taste for what Gissing found to be a "Zolaesque style of novel writing" with agreeable stories, cheerful notes, "systematically flattered" naturalism and tantalizing romance stories for a plot, the triplets of Reardon, Biffen, and their creator all felt that the Victorian fascination with literature as a breeding ground for faltering materials was only a communal loss of interest in the classics (998). Critiqued many a time for this "nostalgic retrogression" and haughty classicism which Garrett Stewart argued, expose Gissing's "devotion to the dead past as a repudiation of the future" (337), rendering an obsolete contempt against the mass readers (for him, consumers) of his time – it cannot be denied that Gissing's preoccupation with a selected few bygone days in the history of British literature and rigorous stylists like Landor, Quincey, and Ruskin rather barred him from seeing the beauty that the popular work of Austen, Dickens, or George Eliot possessed – accessible, yet no less sincere than what Reardon so desperately sought in his work. The ideal image of a reader for Gissing, is one of a traveler he met in his childhood who knew Latin and always carried a copy

of Horace "battered, thumbed and penciled" (330) for regularly tossing and turning and memorizing the pages by heart, implying how important Gissing found it to cultivate a genuine reception of aesthetic voices not by mass-mediated markets at that moment, but years later by the scholars, critics, and enthusiasts, a new progeny of studious readers hopefully more modern and mature than the previous.

An example can be found in the novel itself where Reardon and his friend Biffen read excerpts from Sophocles' *Oedipus* and find themselves lost in a technical conversation trying to determine the correct acoustic patterns one should adopt to separate the narrative voice of the chorus from those of the singular characters (Gissing 134). Here, the high expectations that Reardon, and in turn, Gissing nurtures regarding an absolute profitless circulation of first-rate fiction produced and appreciated by writers, readers, and publishers of similar intellectual aptitude more interested in curtailing the vernacular for the sake of a coded literacy seems to be an attempt too ambitious ever to make a reality. The aesthetic responsibility that Reardon takes on his shoulder to train the mass reading ear "to a restrained, if not reticent" (Matz 213) symbolic register of a text signaling an ideal literary engagement irrespective of common human concerns (at times, financial and even biological), is bound to fail precisely because such concentrations are remarkably "self-contained" (Asch 34), making Reardon an isolated artist looking for inspiration in the loopholes of a dead past, not ready to consider his own time and spirit as potential source material for aesthetic investment. This is where we can see another point of departure between Gaiman's Shakespeare and Gissing's Reardon – one willing to turn his life into art and the other, art into life – though both experience the same desolation of a writer's persona determined to live their dream at any cost.

Against Reardon's unfeasible vision of a perfect world of craftsmanship and aesthetic sensibilities, we see the constant triumph of eloquent automatons like Milvain with their "cyborg-like capacity" to regurgitate stories already told for the umpteenth time and a pathetic picture of sincere writers like Reardon and Biffen typing away banal advertisements choosing clerkship over creativity (Hone 206). A more harrowing picture ensues towards the middle of the novel when Biffen jumps into a blazing fire risking his life to save a manuscript he has just completed after much toil only to realize a few days later that perhaps the critics and readers would have been stirred to actually give his book a try with him dead than alive. And over the next few chapters, we can see a completely heartbroken Reardon aimlessly roaming about the city streets dreaming over his once successful attempt at writing while spontaneously reciting in public some lines from *Antony and Cleopatra,* which had "superfluous kings for messengers" to the commons (Gissing 206). Almost instantly, he receives a "loud mocking laugh" of the onlookers of a modern London (Matz 212), reflecting a culture that has rejected its noble past and "does not listen, but only hears" the many great voices it once sheltered like that of Shakespeare (Hone 217). Inevitably, Reardon's demise after a while in the following chapter reinforces Gissing's personal confrontation with the contemporary world of fiction where the

audibility of literary voices has to flirt with the madness of modern London, easy to avoid but difficult to live in. All in all, despite epitomizing the manifold dimensions of a vain aesthetic vision, Reardon does invoke a cathartic air permeating the entire novel and the city that produced it and he accepts the isolation of an author readily lost in a "valley of the shadow of books" and finds comfort therein (Knox 93).

Throughout the ages, as imaginative perceptions change in a self-questioning survival game of artists, writers, or other practitioners of liberal arts, ancient binaries of "observing" and "being observed" rather seem to gesture at even more interrelational complexities between those who write and the oeuvres that in turn write them – be it in the Victorian London of George Gissing's *New Grub Street* or the chimerical territory of Dream in Neil Gaiman's *The Sandman*. In both texts, we see how writers and their commitment towards a creative construction lend them an alienation which is highly intuitive and inevitable since the focused immersion that is required for the telling of a story and the way it is observed or intended to be told ultimately depend on the observational integrity of the authors themselves. Also, as Barthes notes, the active participation of an audience willing enough to be born with the writer ready to die is a significant factor for one to read or write more freely without any added inhibitions. Still, somewhere in the middle of a story the storyteller disappears – making us question how they see a story coming alive living a story themselves, how they narrate us a dream while bringing us out of it, and mostly, how the shadowy realm we see once we close our eyes builds the world that we see with eyes wide open.

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Understanding Deviant Space: A Study of the Subversion of Power Dynamics in *Paharganj*

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Abstract

This paper, preoccupied with intersectionality in spatial criticism and broadly portraying the visual representation of urban space in popular culture (film), critically looks into the lived experiences around the Delhi neighborhood, Paharganj, as illustrated in Rakesh Ranjan Kumar's 2019 film *Paharganj*. Theoretically grounding on Henri Lefebvre's spatial triad and production of space, and on Michel Foucault's "panopticon" and "heterotopia," this paper investigates (a) ways in which Paharganj turns into a deviant and dangerous space with its countercultural brooding and camouflaged criminality and how such deviant "lived space" negates or adds dimension to the "conceived space," and (b) how such subversive space (Paharganj) challenges territorial jurisdiction by creating an alternative and resistant power nexus which sometimes leads to its denomination as the "Republic of Paharganj," a status as "dangerous" or desired space in the film. As a part of its spatial reading of popular cultural texts, this paper primarily takes on *Paharganj*. However, to substantiate Paharganj's spatial representation in popular culture, this paper also secondarily makes reference to two other films: *Holy Smoke!* (1999) and *Dev. D* (2009).

Keywords: Spatialization of Counterculture, Spatial Partitioning of Power, "Production of Space," Deviant Space

Introduction

French Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre's pioneering text *The Production of Space*, arguing in favor of the social status of space as continuously constructed by human interactions and thus shaping human relations, paved the way for a cultural turn of spatial criticism. His notion that space does not represent any "preexisting void" pointed at the curious investigative approach towards space, in literature and popular culture, as something being both productive and a product. Following the critical path of Lefebvre's sociology of space, French poststructuralist philosopher Michel Foucault added the power dimension to Lefebvrian spatial criticism in his prolonged genealogical study of power. Foucault's extensive lecture series (including "Des espaces autres"/"Of Other Spaces") of the 60s later revived the discussion on space from a more political perspective putting notions like "heterotopia" and "panopticon" into the context of hegemonic power relationships. Foucault's spatial discourse conflates gaze as an essential component for the understanding of such power dimensions in social relations. For him, spatial organization informs and

determines our power relationship which he famously calls "cartography of power" (Deleuze 21-23). This paper, broadly portraying the visual representation of urban space in popular culture (film), critically looks into the lived experiences around the Delhi neighborhood, Paharganj, as illustrated in Rakesh Ranjan Kumar's 2019 film *Paharganj*. Theoretically grounding on Henri Lefebvre's spatial triad and production of space (for the first research question) and Michel Foucault's "panopticon" and "heterotopia" (for the second research question), this paper investigates (a) ways in which Paharganj turns into a deviant and dangerous space with its countercultural brooding (i.e., drugs, alternative spirituality, queer encounters, etc) and camouflaged criminality (i.e., murder, rape, etc) and how such deviant "lived space" negates or adds dimension to the "conceived space," and (b) how such subversive space (Paharganj) challenges territorial jurisdiction by creating an alternative and resistant power nexus which sometimes leads to its denomination as the "Republic of Paharganj," a status as "dangerous" or desired space in the film. As a part of its spatial reading of popular cultural texts, this paper primarily takes on *Paharganj*. However, to substantiate Paharganj's spatial representation in popular culture, this paper also secondarily makes reference to two other films: *Holy Smoke!* (1999) and *Dev. D* (2009).

"It's like a whole new world": Paharganj, A Deviant Space

Rakesh Ranjan Kumar's *Paharganj* (2019) is the tale of a Spanish girl, Laura's search for her missing German boyfriend Robert who is reportedly in Delhi and, to be more specific, lives in the hood area outside Delhi Central Railway Station called Paharganj. To a European woman unaccustomed to the Indian urban landscape, Paharganj appears to be a chaotic yet spatial maze and she gradually entangles her quest for her boyfriend with the local police's quest for the same person as the prime suspect of the murder of the Home Minister's son, Jeetendra Tomar. In another parallel segment of the story-line, the involvement of Tomar, himself a basketball player, in the murder of basketball coach Gautam Menon's brother and in drug-dealing adds to the aspects of gang-feud and social justice. Thus, the trajectory of two quests and Menon's attempt to get away from his trauma gradually unveils the complex and subversive nature of Paharganj and how this market-place, popularly perceived as bustling, accommodates alternative practices of everyday life. Besides, the representation of Paharganj in a visual fiction adds a cultural dimension to the real-life version of the place. Kumar's Paharganj has a deviant and clandestine face with BDSM sex-parlors, queer orgy lounges, basketball betting zones, make-shift brothels, scattered drug zones, alternative spiritual dens, and last but not the least, crime sites. Apart from the quotidian dinginess of the place, a dark and counter-productive force is at work at Paharganj which challenges the normative urban ethos of Delhi and jeopardizes the administrative and legislative authority's hold on the neighborhood.

First, let us consider how we understand Paharganj. While Paharganj, a backpackers' must-visit for countercultural indulgence, is a legally defined geographical entity lying

within the urban vicinity of Delhi, it is represented as an imagined cartographical entity in popular visual culture in *Paharganj*. In the film, it is portrayed with its usual colors with cheap lodges, street food, tickets counters, bustling narrow alleys and by-lanes, money-exchange bureaus, dance bars, brothels, and the like. Such real and representational aspects of space, as Edward Soja contends, is called "real-and-imagined" space (11). A real-and-imagined place opens up the avenue for literary and cultural representation of space and how such a representation construes and deconstrues our conception and lived experience of a place. Authors and film directors act as literary and cultural cartographers of space, attracting our curious attention to a space's conversation with social and human representational factors within the dialectical dynamics. Such representation manipulates our perception of space through the depiction of a novel set of lived experiences, and consequently, transforms a place's conceptual essence. This is what Henri Lefebvre calls "social production of space." Lefebvre's tripartite understanding of space has three dimensions: perceived space (*espace perçu*), conceived space (*espace conçu*), and lived space (*espace vécu*) (38). To Lefebvre, it is our human actions which produces a place and likewise the space manipulates, influences and sometimes determines the social relations (170). To put it in the context of Paharganj, the physical and material geography of Paharganj with its common everyday practices (spatial practices) is the perceived space, while our idea of Paharganj as an affordable tourist neighborhood situated on the map with a demarcated territory is what he calls the conceived space and the real-time or/and actualized living experience as represented in art and literature is the lived space. Theoretically speaking, the lived or third space might transcend (or rather, deviate) the balance between the popular perceived space and official conceived space.

In line with Lefebvrian consideration of space as a social production, Paharganj's visually represented living condition among drug dealers, hippies, prostitutes, sex-customers, criminal gangs, libertine spiritual devotees, human scavengers, "slumdogs," and spiritual tourists depicts a complex yet charming space. The everyday interaction of drug-lords, lowlife urchins, foreign tourists. and businessmen constructs a Paharganj which is risky yet accommodative, deviant yet caring. Munna, apparently a juvenile gang leader, is attributed a mass-friendly impression who responds positively to the petty local injustices such as taking goods without paying. Even on a larger scale, this is Munna who, through his underworld connection, kills the minister's son, Tomar, thus ensuring a deviant or legally unsanctioned manner of justice for Coach Menon's brother. Moreover, Paharganj helps us to understand the same space in different lights at different moments ("slices of time," in Foucauldian terms). Munna's criminal engagement also transforms the premises of the railway line going across Paharganj into a subversive space of criminal encounters and a symbol of spatial domination. In this way, while these rail tracks become the place of contention over domination between the local mobs during the day, it produces the alternative sporting capital through basketball betting once the sun goes down.

Such undercover gambling/crime sites participate in their own (deviant) capital production and the local gamblers serve as the forces of capital production in such periodically recurring events. The same space also serves as the hideout for the murder suspects as we see the investigating officers browsing through the betting zone in the evening. The rail track loses its popular signified (alluding to Saussure) as a public space when it goes through Paharganj. Moreover, the production and distribution of substance drugs (in particular, heroin) in Paharganj and such production-induced capital also ties up different unholy alliances often leading to murder, like that of Robert. Thus, Paharganj reorganizes the spatial capital, produces contentious social relationship based on this capital among the forces of production (Tomar/Robert vs Pradhan/Munna), and gradually produces a shield through renewed spatial practices.

Not only does Paharganj endorse unsolicited modes of capital production, its complex geography creates varied assumptions about identity. Spaces like the railway premises, slum area, dingy hut, cowshed, Mughal-styled buildings, and neon-signed stores create an ontological mirage. Laura came across myriad (mis)-conceptions from the inhabitants of Paharganj about her identity during her spatial exploration into the place following the desperate quest for Robert: when at a BDSM parlor to search for Robert, Laura was taken as a client; while asking the pimp about Robert, she was mistaken for a prostitute; while at Baba Ghantal's den, she was conceived as someone to be offered to Baba or when at the hippie concert at Paharganj, people took her as a member of the community. Apart from encountering such ontological misconceptions, Laura had her share of disillusionment with her imagined notions of Paharganj. For instance, Baba Ghantal's conflation of spirituality with sexuality is stereotypically understood as having countercultural hippie underpinnings and hence, Laura's initial reaction to Baba's den, marked with half-naked devotees, dancers, weed-smokers, and hippies, reflects her countercultural preconception of oriental mysticism. However, (mis)-taking Baba as a potential locator for Robert, Laura gets disillusioned in her experience inside Baba's den, and her rape unveils the (s)exploitative nexus closeted behind the countercultural spirituality. The Bengali Baba, popular as a spiritual panacea in exchange for material and sexual offerings, has his own shield against the local administration which will be discussed in the second section. Thus, from Laura's perspective, Paharganj as a lived space dynamically negates or adds dimensions to Paharganj as a conceived space. Sitting in a local café, she meditates over the contrast between her prior conception of Paharganj evoked through the videos sent by Robert and her "real" lived experience of the chaotic hood-scape of Paharganj that she encounters, "The videos of Paharganj that you sent me are quite different from what the place is like, in reality" (00:44:15 – 00:44:21).

Spatially speaking, *Paharganj* construes two replicated entities – one is the simulation of another cityscape, i.e., Amsterdam's Red District area, while the other is a subversive microcosmic representation of India. Such spatial reconceptualization sanctions moral deviations. The film poster, adding a subtitle "The Little

Amsterdam of India" with the main title "Paharganj," echoes the tainted drug and sex landscape of Amsterdam in Paharganj. The subtitle itself creates a presumption vis-à-vis the sexual and narcotic license of the space. However, while the red-light district of Amsterdam has an established legal authorization, its spatial simulacra Paharganj negotiates with the legal structure and spatial organization of India and creates a queer and deviant underworld, a category which Richard Symanski calls "immoral landscape" (162). The assertive rendition of Paharganj as a miniature version of India's constitutional entity is indicative of an alternative spatial right. The participation and holding of the placards inscribing "Republic of Paharganj" by the foreign mourners along with the locals in the funeral procession suggests two things – first, a symbolic proclamation of Paharganj's alternative sovereignty and ritualistic uniqueness and then, foreign tourists' territorial re-appropriation and revised identification based on their lived experiences across Paharganj. It is as if, apart from the people of the Republic of India, a "new" people are emerging from the (Re)Public of Paharganj, a simulated administrative entity which has its own Pradhan (Headman) and where they follow a transfer of power from one Pradhan to another. Such alternative spatial consciousness is reflected in Yousuf Khan's voice when, after being asked by the investigating officer if he knows about the murder of the Home Minister's son, he wittily retorts, "The Home Minister of which country?" (01:25:25 – 01:25:28). Due to the general sense of stigma towards non-normative sexuality and sexual practices, and the resulting policing and zoning of the area as a sex capital, Paharganj, as an indulgent space, becomes a non-repressive (also de-stigmatized) safe-zone for queerism, BDSM, spiritual non-conformity, and prostitution. The co-existence of hetero- and homosexual space adds to the dimensionality of this place and hence, Paharganj's spatial practice questions the monolithic conception of space as heterosexualized and hence, streamlined. Thus, apart from its taken-for-granted status as a dingy and cheap tourist hub, it is newly conceived as a shelter for the so-called social and moral deviants. As the lived space is now differently conceived, social relations and presence of individuals in this space are now conceived in a different light. Such a pluralistic cultural situation is what David Harvey, author of *The Right to the City*, considers to be a condition of "multiple liberties" (29), an essential component to resist any hegemonic practice of in the spatial geography.

There are other films which portray the deviant nature of Paharganj, though it is mainly *Paharganj* that combines the power with spatial re-appropriation. Jane Campion's *Holy Smoke* (1999) underscores a similar vein of representation of Paharganj with tainted zones of prostitution and the influential spiritual guru named Baba who indoctrinates sexual freedom as a means of spiritual awakening, thus attracting tourists like Ruth Barron (played by Kate Winslet) from across the world. Ruth, the Australian girl, is seduced by the exotic world of Paharganj completely different from her own, and she decides to remain there for the rest of her life amidst the "divine" intoxication of sex and "holy smoke." The hypnotic

sessions along with intoxicating drugs deeply ties Ruth in with the countercultural religious cult. The Rastafarian ritual of smoking marijuana or cannabis to achieve a heightened spiritual state has its resonance in what the Baba of Paharganj practices. Thus, Paharganj of *Holy Smoke* turns into an alternative spiritual space. Anurag Kashyap's *Dev. D* (2009) portrays the spatialization of prostitution across the Paharganj neighborhood with a rather empathetic pitch. Leni aka Chanda (played by Kalki Koechlin), a Delhi student of half-European descent and victim of public shaming for an accidental MMS scandal, begins prostituting herself part-time and finds at least some dignity and independence in her life. Her part-time profession in Paharganj brings her back to life with an allowance for body-capital and where she does not feel the sense of moral otherness. Paharganj's mid-range brothel with its stigma-less ethos becomes her new shelter/sanctuary, one of the three factors that Symanski identifies with urban brothels, the other two being customers/business and police presence (88).

In *Paharganj*, though the director did not show the presence of queer, tans- and extreme sexual culture (BDSM) in long shots, the collage-like quick shots of gay lounges, BDSM parlors, and Baba's transman pimp, all hint at the sexual geography of Paharganj and reflects the growing visibility of LGBTQ presence and extreme extent of the Indian cultural landscape. Such sexual turns in spatial criticism can lead us to the understanding of body-capital involving non-conforming expressions of sexual orientation, which till the 90s referred primarily to prostitution (see Symanski). The production of sex-capital as well as narcotic capital are two strong by-products of Paharganj and these two products establish the dialogue between two subversive forms of geography – sexual geography and narcotic geography. Not only that, the drug mafia, otherwise known as the waste collector, Triloki Pradhan's underground organ-trade produces illegal bio-capital for him. Gang-rivalry-induced victims are the primary source of such clandestine forms of capital production as Pradhan's boastful assertion hints at the bodies from which he collects the organs, and "if anyone interferes with my work, I kill him" (01:20:44 – 01:20:50). Such illicit liaisons put him into business dealings with countries like America, Columbia, Israel, Turkey, and Japan, and hints at the potential for medical-tourism even though the local authority is unaware of it. Paharganj, a singular geographical dot on the map, becomes the center of multifarious capital productions and its capital responds to deviant desires, and sexual and narcotic emancipation. It thus turns out to be a social product that produces new relations/identities. This section is primarily concerned with how the space, encompassing diverse countercultural and deviant capital formation, dynamically transforms itself into a deviant space and also produces and is produced by social relations. The following section analyzes how such deviant space unsettles the power dynamics.

Spatializing and Subverting the Power Nexus: A Foucauldian Reading

Michel Foucault, in his *Discipline and Punish* (1977), has presented a genealogical study of spatial manipulation in maintaining the homogenous power hierarchy.

He illustrated, with reference to Jeremy Bentham's architectural model of the prison-house called "panopticon," how spatial structure by creating an "unequal gaze" can serve to uphold the power relation for the purpose of regulatory control over individuals. If Henri Lefebvre and Edward Soja can be labelled as social cartographers of space, Foucault's in-depth investigation of space in maintaining the power/knowledge hegemony rightly earns him the title of political cartographer of space, or, in Deleuzian terms, "new cartographer." Foucault echoes the Lefebvrian proposition by claiming the space to be dialectical, not to be assumed as "the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile" (qtd in Tally Jr. 119). Foucault's contribution to the spatial turn of cultural studies is evident in *Discipline and Punish* where his spatial analysis of power helps us to understand the significance of space as a political production and a means of power.

In *Paharganj*, the godforsaken urban neighborhood of Paharganj, though commonly conceived of as a dingy tourist location for so-called forbidden pleasures, has turned into an underworld powerhouse which encounters the state law and order system. The state police is uncomfortable in its confrontation with the gangsters of the chaotic outskirts of the Delhi railway station, Paharganj. The murder investigation of Jeetendra Tomar initially puts the local police in jeopardy as they were trying to get through the cobwebbed underworld of Paharganj in order to solve the murder-mystery. As stated before, the parallel quests of Spanish girl Laura for her boyfriend and of the police force for the murder suspect are directed to the same person, Robert, who is involved with the Paharganj drug cartels. The drug-and-sex induced capital and spatial organization of inhabitants and their houses rendered Paharganj into an ambiguous and heterogenous power nexus. Here, the young ganster Munna, spiritual Baba, marriage-counsellor/pimp, Headman Triloki Pradhan, Yusuf Khan, are all involved in the deviant practices that have a certain share in the power dynamics. In the beginning of the film, though Laura was wondering why people come to such dingy places as Paharganj, we understand that it is not the one-dimensional crowd that gives it a signature. Rather, the narcotic and subversive sexual ecosystem of this place has turned it into a Foucauldian "heterogenous space," a space that "claws and gnaws at us" (*Other Spaces* 3) unlike the Cartesian "homogenous extension" (*res extensa*) (qtd. in Tally 235). Paharganj's spatial appropriations as the "Republic of Paharganj" and/or "Little Amsterdam" are some material entities that act as other spaces alongside the commonly held ideas, a phenomenon that Foucault calls "heterotopia" or "other spaces" where the norms of behavior are suspended and deviations are exercised ("heterotopias of deviation") (*Other Spaces* 1).

In Paharganj, the interdependence of countercultural phenomena (i.e., drugs and sexuality) and the ensuing capital controls the threads of the local political nexus. As we see in the film, even the local police officer hesitates to take up the murder case fearing fatal consequences and another officer denounces Laura's rape accusation against the spiritual Baba Ghantal, asserting that it was false. Instead of playing the role of a "syndic" (Foucault uses this term to mean government authority) or

corrector, the police inspector refuses to recognize Baba as a sex offender. We hear the officer-in-charge of Paharganj police station calling the Paharganj slum area "risky." The complex huddled mushrooming of structural establishments in Paharganj denies easy access to and any panoramic surveillance of this crime zone. As a result, the police cannot keep track of the town's inhabitants, and instead, the inhabitants track the movements of the police and inform the up-and-coming gangsters like Munna and Pradhan. Therefore, the CCTV cameras become a mockery in the Paharganj slum area, and in the police stations, the CCTVs lose their power. Thus, when the police officer threatens the local hooligan Sonu (Munna's rival) with "I'll take off your pants and beat you up," Sonu apathetically retorts, "There are cameras here." As a result, the policeman's right to observe is reversed as the right to be observed. Whereas the panopticon ensures the dissociation of the see/being seen dyad, i.e., "in the peripheric ring, one is totally seen, without ever seeing; in the central tower, one sees everything without ever being seen " (*Discipline* 202), in Paharganj, the authority oftentimes fails to maintain constant visibility of the underworld and, rather, is caught up in the underworld's surveillance. Thus, the Foucauldian panopticon becomes dysfunctional in Paharganj. Rather, a subtle reversal of the panopticon can be seen where the police are actually unable to locate the gangsters. The unusual use of spatial components (such as stinky cowshed, shabby billboard stands, sex parlors, waste-dumps, and narrow by-lanes like Charas Galli) as hideouts entangles the visibility of Paharganj's goons and their evil nexus, and, thus, challenges the "gaze" of the local police. The police's ways of exercising power are slackened due to the chaotic partitioning of Paharganj. Instead, the angry gazes (Fig. 1) of Baba Ghantal's devotees destabilize the police officers when they enter Baba's den to investigate. They become the unwanted outsiders in Baba's so-called spiritual space.

Fig. 1

Another example in the film's context is how the investigating police officers are constantly being watched and escorted by Triloki Pradhan (Fig. 2) and Yousuf Khan's bodyguards (POV shot in Fig. 3 also hints at counter-surveillance).

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

Such spatial settings reflect the Foucauldian panopticon, an "enclosed, segmented space, observed at every point" (*Discipline* 197). In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault argues that subjection through visibility is a desired outcome of the panopticon and he extends his argument, asserting that "visibility is a trap" and constitutes an unequal power relationship (200). However, Paharganj's subversive spatial partitioning coupled with the sex-narcotics nexus challenges the normative entrapment mechanism.

Sexual capital in the form of body-politics also functions to uphold Paharganj's mafia dealings. We observe an upturn in the power-relation in the scene where the local police officer, attempting a raid at a Marriage Counselling Office (in actuality a BDSM parlor), was whisperingly reminded by the camouflaged pimp-turned-commercial matchmaker of the call-girls that she has procured him; thus, buying his/the authority's silence by exploiting the stigma associated with sex. Her unsettling question, "Where are my receipts for the girls I supplied to you," helps viewers to understand the under-the-table tampering of the law by the camouflaged sex-dealers. The police officer's out-of-focus face and the pimp's sharp gaze (Fig. 4) is a visual indicator of the alternative power nexus of Paharganj.

Fig. 4

Munna, the urchin who fights to stake his claim on the Paharganj slums, haughtily pronounces that "all the cops of Paharganj are on my payroll," further showcasing a subversion of the power relation. Irregular "spatial partitioning" (Foucauldian coinage qtd. in Tally 123) and discontinuous changes in identity have rendered the

place complex and sometimes impenetrable, thus denying an automated cognitive (mental) mapping about this place. Laura's utterance "Oh, God! This place is much more complicated than I had imagined" (00:09:20 – 00:09:25) or the police's skepticism over the possibility of carrying on an investigation in such a cob-webbed space echoes such complexity and informs us of the dynamics of lived space vis-à-vis Paharganj.

Alternative libertine spiritual rituals complement the power structure of Paharanj and adds to its mysticism. The adherence of foreign tourists to the countercultural spiritual practice of an Osho-esque Sex-Baba Guru Ghantal also adds to the ambiguous power construct of Paharanj. His tantric practice of meditative congregation and sexual libertinism has given him a twofold enigma: the awe-inspiring devotion of mostly foreign orange-clad devotees (especially women) and the status of a sexually-charged spiritual cult. The popular belief that women willingly offer their sexuality for spiritual sanitization and he can solve problems of all sorts add to this cult status. This Baba's den is considered by the police officer in *Paharganj* to be a holy shrine not to be trifled with to avoid danger or Baba's anger. However, the same policeman's unquestioned devotion to the Baba leads him to evade Laura's rape complaint against Baba. Clad in the cloud of alternative spirituality, the popular Baba thus endorses sexual abuse and takes carnal pleasure in bodily violence (Laura's rape by Baba Ghantal), a crime which even the local police tend to overlook. Thus, the moral sanction of alternative spiritual practice in Paharganj diminishes the legal concern.

It turns out to be impossible for the mainstream power structure (so-called dominant power exerciser) of Delhi to map the mechanisms of power in the Paharganj underworld. Absence of such easily decodable symbols of Paharganj's sources of power turn them into non-localizable power centers. Such mapping is what Foucault calls "cartography of power" (qtd.in Tally 122) which helps the dominant forces to retain its power. Without it, they are helpless and then they have to employ contributors and informers like Parvez in *Paharganj.* Inside Paharganj, it juxtaposes the power hierarchy of real space like Delhi (again, a heterotopic phenomenon): Triloki Pradhan succeeds the previous Pradhan in the dealing of the slums, drugs, and waste/scraps; Munna fights with his rival to come close to Triloki Pradhan; Robert and Jeetendra Tomar are ousted from the slum-scape as the potential rival to Pradhan's drug cartel to mention a few political instances. Within the power matrix of Paharganj, we also find intra-tension and a reversal of power relations. Robert and Jeetendra Tomar, the once high-end drug dealer of Paharganj (apparently with whom the police sympathize) are killed by Munna, the gutter-born slum orphan. And, till the end of the film, Paharganj has retained a resistance to and not been "subjected to [the] field of visibility" of the mainstream disciplinary mechanism, never letting it be the monopoly of the Delhi police (*Discipline* 203).

Conclusion

Due to the material complexity of spatial practices, space no longer remains a void. Rather, it changes its shades and produces novel human relations and revolutionizing human conceptions about space. Likewise, Paharganj, a so-called cheap tourist hub, becomes a site of politics, struggle, desire, and contention. Such fragmented and tentative zones resist homogeneity, thus challenging the mainstream hierarchy of power and creating an alternative zone for sexual freedom and subversion of moral and cultural borders. Paharganj, literally meaning "hilly neighborhood," ironically owes its name to its geographical proximity to Raisina Hill, the center for the Government of the Republic of India and the place where the *Rashtrapati Bhaban* (Presidential Residence) is located. However, as far as the visual representation of spatial practices and the lived experiences are concerned, the film *Paharganj* delineates how a space is socially produced and productive, incorporating a gamut of heterogenous and non-normative ethos. Broadly speaking, this paper has been an investigation into the sociological dynamics of a space represented in popular culture, and its resulting counter-hegemonic power nexus which destabilizes the disciplinary model. Placing itself in the South Asian context and incorporating aspects of literary geography and spatial humanities, this research has thus explored the interdisciplinary and transnational potential of the study of space represented in popular culture.

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Language and Applied Linguistics

Exploring the Status of Teaching Listening and Speaking Skills after the Introduction of their Tests in Secondary Level Education

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Abstract

Among the four skills of a language, listening and speaking are often considered to be more frequently used skills in real life communication. Many studies show that English listening and speaking skills were less or rarely taught in the classroom mainly because these were not tested in public or internal exams in Bangladesh. But the National Curriculum (2012) also suggests testing these skills. The Ministry of Education (2015) consequently released a circular to administer these tests in the internal exams in secondary level education. This research intended to study the teaching of these two skills, the practice of tests of these two skills, and the challenges in administering the tests. It finds that the teaching practices of these two skills in the classroom have increased compared to those in the past but not at an optimal level. These tests are not given in the terminal examinations and administered only as continuous assessments. This study finds that 67% help learners develop their listening skills by using English in the class, 60% teach listening activities, and 53% teachers teach speaking skills. However, 30% schools still do not give their students these two tests. Practicing TEFL teachers identified some challenges in administering these tests. Their suggestions for solving these problems are also given.

Keywords: Listening and Speaking Tests, Secondary Level, EFL, CLT, NCTB

1.1 Introduction

In this era of globalization, the popularity of English as a lingua franca has increased rapidly and English is, therefore, taught as a compulsory subject in the curricula of many countries. In our formal education system, English is also taught as EFL (English as a Foreign Language) from grade one to twelve (Islam, 2010; Rahman, 2015). Although language learning involves four skills, listening and speaking are considered the most important for successful communication. The rule applies to learning English as well. Listening is the first language skill acquired by children that provides a foundation for all aspects of language and cognitive development.

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It plays a lifelong role in the process of learning and communication (Yildirim & Yildirim, 2016). Listening also paves the way for all other skills including speaking (Renukadevi, 2014; Silberstein, 1994). Speaking and listening skills are crucial for practising and embedding new vocabulary and language structure and, as such, form the substratum on which literacy is built (Amiryousefi, 2019; Billah, 2005). They also form the basis of social interaction and are skills to be taught, as listening and turn taking do not come naturally to children, even in their first language (Rahman, 2009). So these two skills should be given emphasis and taught in the classroom. Unfortunately, these skills tend to be ignored in Bangladeshi schools and colleges. The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach was introduced in the late 90s in Bangladesh with a view to improving the quality of teaching and learning English and, accordingly, the government changed the curriculum to be communicative (Alam, 2018; Rahman, 2009; Rahman, 2015; Rahman & Pandian, 2018). Consequently, new textbooks and examination formats have been developed in 2012. The new curriculum states that listening and speaking skills will be tested in the internal examinations of class 6 to 10, and, in the future, it will be introduced in the public examinations (National Curriculum, 2012). Later, on 3 March 2015, the Ministry of Education published a circular on their website instructing schools to test these two skills in the internal examinations from class 6 to 10. It is very important to find out at this point whether schools are interested in testing listening and speaking skills in the internal examinations as directed by the curriculum, even if they are not tested in the public exams, and, if they are, how does it affect the teaching of these two skills.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In Bangladesh, though learners are taught English as a compulsory subject for a long period of twelve years, communicative competence of the learners remains unsatisfactory. They are especially poor in listening and speaking skills (Alam, 2018; Akter, 1999). Before CLT was introduced in the 1990s, English was taught as a content-based subject that emphasized only reading and writing skills in teacher-centered classrooms using the Grammar Translation Method (Haque, 1999; Rahman, 2015; Rahman & Pandian, 2018). The Grammar Translation Method (henceforth, GTM) has been replaced by the CLT approach, communicative textbooks have been developed, and quite a good number of teachers have been trained. Khan (2005) and Yasmin (2008) commented that the textbooks were good and highlighted the four language skills, emphasizing natural situations and activities. Then, in 2012, the curriculum and the textbooks, along with the testing system, have once again been changed, suggesting the use of the CLT approach like the earlier one, emphasizing all four language skills. In spite of all these changes and teacher training initiatives, things have not improved much in terms of teaching listening and speaking skills, and the reason is that the teachers are reluctant to teach these two skills to their students using the pretext that these two skills are not tested later (Alam, 2018; Hamid & Erling, 2016; Rahman, Islam, Karim,

Chowdhury, Rahman, Seraj, & Singh, 2019; Yasmin, 2008). However, the new curriculum states that listening and speaking skills will be tested in the internal examinations for classes 6 to 10 and 20% marks are allocated for this purpose. This research, therefore, focuses on the present condition of teaching listening and speaking skills at the secondary education level in Bangladesh after the introduction of testing of these two skills.

1.3 Research Questions

The overall objective of this study was to explore the status of listening and speaking skills test in the internal exams of the secondary level institutions of Bangladesh and its reflection on teaching these two skills. The specific objectives of this research are:

1. How far are listening and speaking skills practiced in the secondary level classroom?

2. To what extent are listening and speaking skills tested in the internal exams of the secondary level educational institutions?

3. What possible problems do teachers and head teachers perceive in administering listening and speaking tests?

4. In what ways can the problems be minimized for successful administration of listening and speaking tests?

1.4 Rationale of the Study

Listening and speaking skills were ignored in the classroom for various reasons, the main one being the absence of testing of these two skills. Now, these two skills have been included in internal tests from class 6 to 10. As this study explores the impact of testing on teaching listening and speaking skills, the findings will help policy makers decide on the next course of action. It will also help the involved teachers make their teaching and testing more effective if they follow the recommendations in this paper. Furthermore, this study will uncover areas for further research in English language teaching and testing in Bangladesh.

2. Review of Related Literature

Kachuru (cited in Rahman, 1999) states that at the beginning of the twentieth century, English became firmly established as the academic and official language of the Indian subcontinent and many colleges and universities were established to teach English. English is a foreign language in our primary and secondary curriculum from class one to twelve, and is taught as a required subject (Haque, 1999; Hamid & Erling, 2016; Rahman, 1999). The teaching approach in Bangladeshi English classrooms, before and after the introduction of CLT, is teacher-centered and students are hardly involved in activities. Also, listening and speaking activities are completely ignored (Haque, 1999; Rahman, 1988; Rahman & Pandian, 2018; Yasmin, 2008).

Although CLT originated in the late 1960s and expanded into the 1970s (Dutta,

2006; Renau, 2016), it was introduced in Bangladesh in 1996 (Alam, 2018; Khan, 2005). One of the most characteristic features of CLT is that it pays systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language, combining these into a more communicative view (Littlewood, cited in Loumbourdi, 2018). Richards and Rogers (1986) claim that CLT marks the beginning of a major paradigm shift within language teaching in the twentieth century whose ramifications continue to be felt today.

With regard to the syllabus for secondary and higher secondary levels, the National Curriculum (1995) states, "the English language syllabus aims to focus on the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing as learner-centered activities within communicative context" (Haque & Baki, 2012; Rahman & Pandian, 2018). After a long sixteen years, the curriculum has again been revised in 2012 and the aim of the revised syllabus is the same as the previous ones (National Curriculum, 2012). However, since listening and speaking skills are not assessed in the public examinations, they are not emphasized on in the classroom (Alam, 2018; Haque & Baki, 2012).

Teaching and testing are inter-related: one influences the other. In this regard, Hughes (1989) says that the proper relationship between teaching and testing is that of partnership. Therefore, in order to foster positive backwash effects that will improve language education, tests must be integrated in all parts of language competence (Hughes, 1989). A good test can be supportive of good teaching and exert corrective influence on bad teaching (Hughes, 1989). Besides, one of the functions of testing is to encourage students to learn something. For example, when students know they will be tested on particular skills, they will be motivated to learn that skill to do better in the test and the visible progress they make in the test will increase their motivation to learn (Heaton, 1990).

The success of the CLT approach and training largely depends on the efficiency of teachers, but there is a huge shortage of qualified English teachers throughout the country and many of the existing ones are not efficient (Ahmed, 2005; Karim, Ahmed, Shahed, Rahman & Mohamed, 2019). Ara (2005) and Hamid & Erling (2016) point out that the standard of English teaching in our country is anything but satisfactory due to the dearth of adequately qualified English teachers.

Teaching and testing are interrelated, and teaching may be ineffective if it is not reflected in testing. Heaton (1990) defines testing as a tool used to find out how well students have mastered the language areas and skills which have just been taught. He also stresses that a test should be reliable and valid. Teaching in one method and testing by another frustrates the students as happens in our examination system which measures something else rather than communicative competence (Akter, 1999; Rahman & Pandian 2018). In Bangladesh, testing is dependent on rote learning; language tests are tests of memory, not tests of language proficiency or communicative competence (Ali & Sultana, 2016; Shahidullah, 1999). Though

the syllabus objectives demand that students' ability to use the language skills for communication be tested, in reality, students' ability to memorize and copy the textbook contents is what is required to acquire high marks in the examination ((Ali & Sultana, 2016; Shahidullh, 1999). In the textbook, all the four English language skills are integrated and equally emphasized, but in the testing system, both internal and public examinations, only reading and writing skills are tested while speaking and listening skills are completely ignored (Ali, Hamid & Hardy, 2020; Barman et al., 2006). Though the existing examination system tests students' reading and writing skills, it is not effective as it tests their memory and not their ability to use these two skills (Ali, Hamid & Hardy, 2020; Barman et al., 2006).

3. Research Methodology

This study is descriptive as well as analytical in nature. The data collected for this study were both quantitative and qualitative. The data were collected from 50 students, 5 English teachers, and 5 head teachers from 5 schools in Dhaka city. Apart from these, 5 English classes of grade 7 were observed with an observation checklist to see the present scenario of teaching listening and speaking skills in the schools.

Four types of tools were used for data collection. These included separate questionnaires for students and teachers, observation checklist, and interview protocol for head teachers. The questionnaire for the teachers had both close- and open-ended questions whereas the student questionnaire consisted of only close-ended questions. Semi-structured questions were used for the interview. After the collection of data, they were analyzed and interpreted. At first the data were compiled and tabulated. Then the tabulated information was summarized and interpreted separately using tables and charts. Finally, the data were interpreted and discussed on the basis of the central research questions.

Backwash effect theory was used for this research as the main purpose of this study was to find out if the test of listening and speaking has any influence on teaching. Backwash effect is usually defined as the influence of testing on teaching and learning; it can be positive if the test result is favourable in teaching and learning strategies and negative if the result is undesired and discourage students from learning (Hughes, 1989).Backwash effect theory is related to this research as it tried to find out the relationship between testing and teaching of listening and speaking skills on the basis of data.

4.1 Findings and Discussion

This research tried to explore the present scenario of teaching listening and speaking skills after the introduction of tests of these two skills in the internal examinations. This section deals with the background of the respondents who participated in this research and provided valuable information regarding teaching and testing of listening and speaking skills. It also presents the interpretation of tabulated data,

comparison of the data provided by the different types of respondents, and general discussion of the data based on the objectives of this study.

4.2 Comparison of the Findings

It should be noted that the variables used in the classroom observations, the student and teacher questionnaires, and the interviews with the head teachers are not the same, and only the major responses obtained about similar types of variables have been compared using the chart. Here, the X-axis of the chart represents the frequency of variables and the Y-axis represents data of the respondents in the form of percentages.

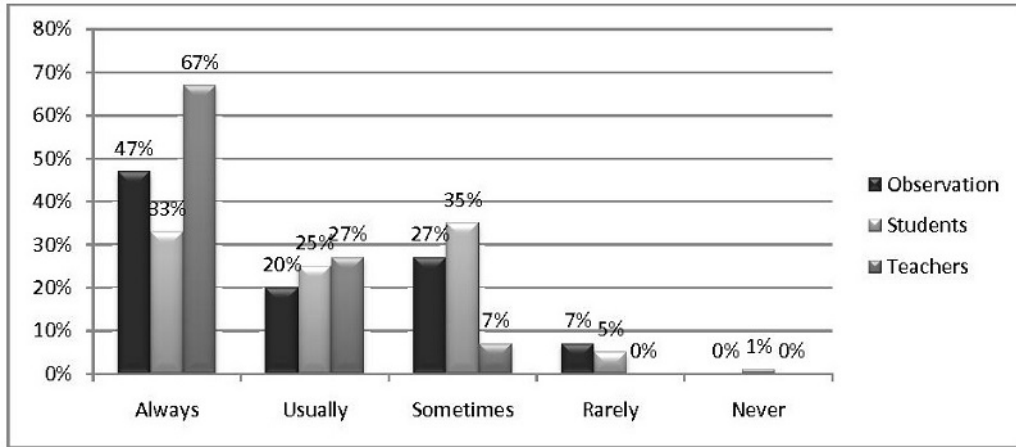### 4.2.1. Using English in the classroom

Figure 4.2.1: Using English in the classroom

It is very important for teachers to use English to give instructions, teach new words, and explain or clarify in CLT as it creates an appropriate linguistic environment which helps the students improve their listening skills as well learn the language. Figure 4.2.1 shows the responses found from classroom observation, and the student and teacher questionnaire surveys. From observation, it is found that 47% of the teachers use English always, 20% usually, 27% sometimes, and 7% of them rarely use it while 33% of the students said that teachers use it always, 25% usually, 35% sometimes, 5% rarely, and 1% students said that teachers never use English in the class. On the other hand, it is found from the teachers' survey data that 67% teachers use English always, 27% usually, and 7% sometimes.
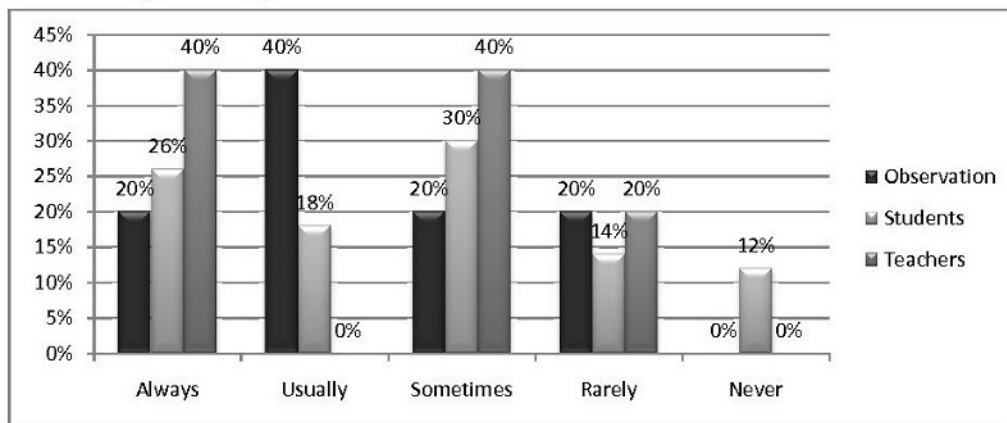
4.2.2. Doing listening activities

Figure 4.2.2: Doing listening activities

Apart from using English in the classroom to create an appropriate linguistic environment for learners to develop their listening skills, teachers are supposed to do the listening activities from EFT. Data were collected to find out how many of these activities are done. It was found in the observation that 20% of the teachers use listening activities always, 40% usually do so, while 20% use these activities sometimes or rarely. In the students' survey questionnaire, 26% of the students responded that their teachers use listening activities always, 18% said usually, 30% sometimes, 14% rarely, and 12% said never. On the other hand, 40% of the teachers said they use listening activities always, 40% sometimes and 20% of them said rarely.
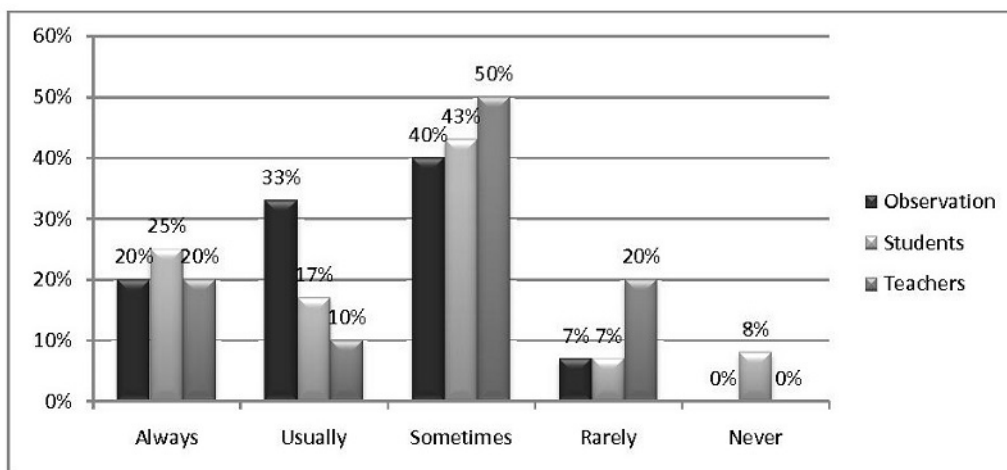
4.2.3. Doing speaking activities

Figure 4.2.3: Doing speaking activities

In almost every lesson in the textbook there are speaking activities for the learners to develop their speaking skills. It is found from the observation that 20% of the teachers give learners speaking practice always, 33% usually, 40% sometimes, and 18% rarely give learners speaking practice. In the students' questionnaire, 25% of the students said that their teachers use these activities always, 17% usually, 43% sometimes, 7% rarely, and 8% said that their teachers never use these activities. On the other hand, from the teachers' survey data, it is found that 20% use the speaking activities with their learners always, 10% usually, 50% sometimes, and 20% of the teachers rarely use them.

4.2.4. Test of listening and speaking skills in the internal exams
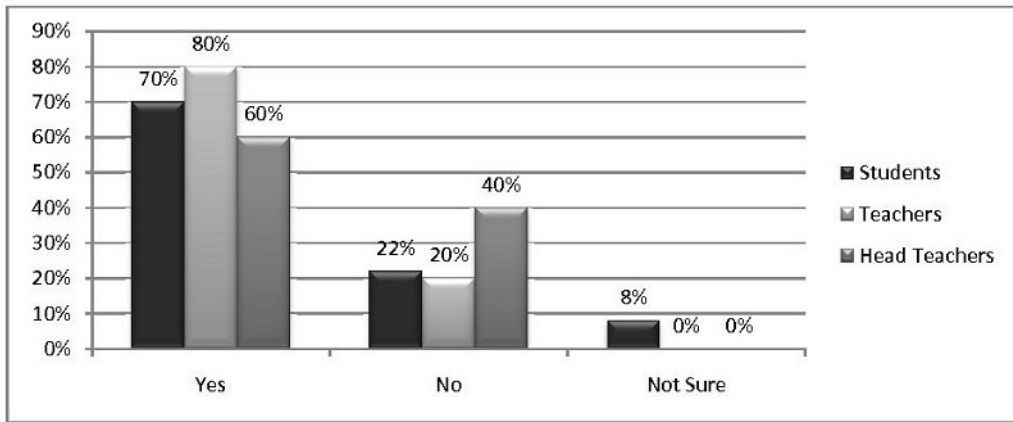
Figure 4.2.4: Test of listening and speaking skills in the internal exams

In response to the question of whether listening and speaking skills are tested in the internal examinations, 70% of the students, 80% of the English teachers, and 60% of the head teachers said that these skills are tested in their schools through monthly class tests. On the other hand, 22% of the students, 20% of the teachers, and 40% of the head teachers said that listening and speaking skills are not tested in their schools.

4.2.5. Introduction of listening and speaking skills tests in the public examinations
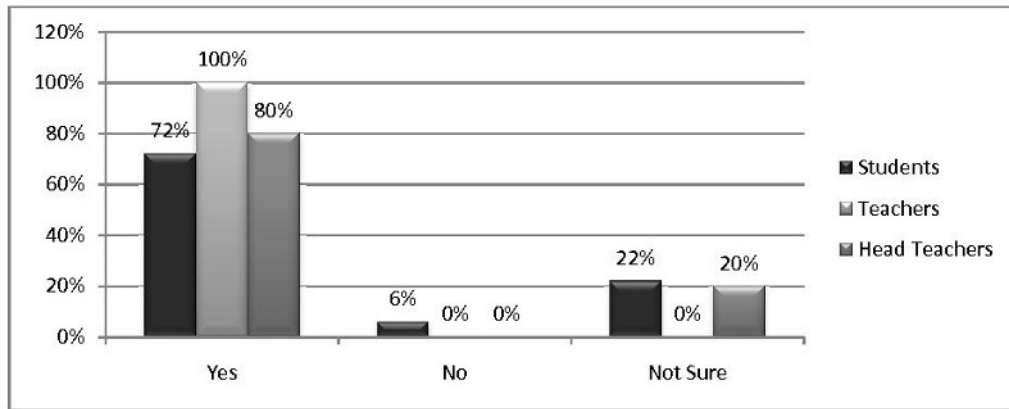

Figure 4.2.5: Introduction of listening and speaking skills tests in the public examinations

In reply to the question of whether testing on listening and speaking skills should be introduced in the public examinations, 72% of the students, 100% of the teachers, and 80% of the head teachers voted for the inclusion of the test in the public exams while 6% of the students are against it while 20% of the teachers and head teachers are not sure whether it should be introduced or not.

4.3 Discussion on the Research Questions

This study has been carried out with four research questions which are (1) to assess the current state of teaching listening and speaking skills, (2) to find out the state of listening and speaking skills tests in the internal examinations, (3) to identify the problems of these tests, and (4) to find out the solutions to the problems. To decide the outcome of the study, some of the variables related to teaching listening and speaking skills were used in the data collection tools to understand to what extent these two skills are taught in the class. Three research tools, i.e., a survey questionnaire each for students and teachers, and a classroom observation checklist, were applied in this study using the same set of variables. Among these three tools, classroom observation has been considered to be more valid and reliable than the other two tools and has therefore been used to show the results regarding teaching listening and speaking skills. There are some reasons behind this consideration. Regarding the questionnaire for teachers, there are more opportunities for the teachers to provide subjective responses as they evaluated themselves and gave their personal opinions about their own practices. On the other hand, the students' responses might have been biased by some internal and external factors. They were most often influenced by the teachers. Their favoritism towards their teachers seemed to affect their responses as students had been given instructions prior to filling in the questionnaire.

To show the results of the exploration of teaching listening and speaking skills in the real classroom, the levels of frequency of *always* and *often* in the observation

checklist were taken as positive whereas the levels of frequency of *sometimes*, *rarely*, and *never* were considered as negative.

From the classroom observations, it is found that teaching listening and speaking skills has increased to some extent after the introduction of tests of these two skills compared to the time before testing was introduced. Classroom observation data shows that 67% of the teachers use English in the class to create an appropriate linguistic environment to give students exposure so that they can develop their listening skills. But the findings from the English in Action Research Report 2011 shows that 62% of the teachers did not use English during their English lessons. That means, earlier, 38% of the teachers used English in the class, but now, 67% are now using English in the class. In terms of using listening activities given in the textbook, 60% of the teachers use them always or usually while 40% use them sometimes or rarely. In case of teaching speaking skills, 53% of the teachers use speaking activities. Though the current status is not very satisfactory in the case of teaching speaking, it is better than the era before the test was introduced when around 87% teachers did not engage students in speaking practice (Roshid, 2008).

Regarding the second objective, that is, the state of listening and speaking skills tests in the internal examinations, it is found that 70% of the schools hold tests on these two skills and, in most cases, these are tested through continuous assessments, which means that marks are given on the students' classroom performance in listening or speaking tasks in the class.

In response to the third objective, it is found that around 30%-40% of the schools are not testing listening and speaking skills of the learners because of various problems. As mentioned by the teachers and head teachers during interviews, there are barriers to implementing the decision and those who do give the tests also face problems. The problems of listening and speaking skills tests are as follows:

- Students are weak in English, especially in listening and speaking, and so they are afraid of these tests.
- Most of the classes in our country are large and it is difficult to arrange tests for them, especially tests on speaking skills.
- There is a lack of materials for testing listening and speaking skills, and most of the teachers are not confident about producing materials on their own.
- Many teachers have not received any training and even the trained teachers have no idea about testing listening and speaking skills as these were not dealt with in the training courses they attended.
- There is a lack of equipment in the schools, such as CDs, CD players, or multimedia devices, for taking these tests, especially for testing listening skills.
- Many students as well as teachers are not interested as these skills are not tested in the public examinations.

- There is a lack of clear instructions or guidelines from the concerned authority asking the schools to implement the decision to test listening and speaking skills.
- There is lack of monitoring to oversee the implementation of the tests at the field level.
- Teachers may be biased in giving marks as happens in the case of science practical examinations.
- Teachers themselves are weak in English, especially in listening and speaking skills, and so they are not confident enough to teach and test these two skills.
- It is time consuming to test speaking skills through individual interviews.

The fourth objective of this research was to find out the possible solutions to the problems of listening and speaking skills, and the respondents, i.e., English teachers and head teachers, have provided the following suggestions to overcome the problems:

- Every school and English teacher should be given clear directions/instructions from the concerned authority about the test.
- Every school should be provided with necessary equipment and materials for teaching and testing these two skills.
- Training should be arranged on how to conduct and assess tests on listening and speaking skills.
- Schools should be monitored to ensure the implementation of listening and speaking skills tests.
- Listening and speaking skills practice should be ensured before giving these test.
- Number and duration of classes should be increased.
- The ratio of teacher to students should be reasonable.
- Subject-based qualified teachers should be recruited.

The Backwash Effect theory has been used in this study to see if the test has any positive or negative effects on teaching and from the findings it can be said that the introduction of listening and speaking skills tests has not influenced teaching these two skills much. On average, 70% of the students, teachers, and head teachers said that their schools test listening and speaking skills but class observation revealed that only 53%-67% teachers teach these two skills by taking class in English and doing listening and speaking activities with learners. Therefore, it can be said that testing of these two skills does not have much influence on teaching. However, the rate of teaching listening and speaking skills has increased to some extent compared to the era before the test of these two skills was introduced. For example, earlier, only 27% of the teachers used English in the class and 13% taught speaking skills involving students in pairs and groups (Roshid, 2008) whereas, according to the findings of this research, 67% of the teachers use English, 60% teach listening, and 53% use speaking activities in the class.

5.1 Summary of the Findings

Though the findings of the research do not demonstrate a very positive scenario of teaching and testing of listening and speaking skills after the introduction of tests of these two skills in the internal examinations, the condition has improved to some extent. It is seen that 67% of the teachers teach listening indirectly by creating an appropriate linguistic environment in the classroom, 60% use the listening activities given in the textbook, and 53% teach speaking skills by doing the speaking activities from EFT. In terms of testing these two skills, 70% of the schools give students listening and speaking tests through continuous assessments. Around 84% of the respondents (students, English teachers, and head teachers) think that this test should be introduced in public examinations which will motivate as well as compel the teachers and students to teach and learn these two skills respectively.

5.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the findings of this research:

- A separate or specialized training on listening and speaking skills tests should be arranged for the teachers. Apart from this, a module or some sessions on listening and speaking tests can be included in the existing training program.
- An online course could be designed by a2i or NCTB or video sessions could be uploaded on the NCTB website to train the teachers on designing and administering these tests, and assessing students' performance in these two skills.
- Each school should be sent a formal letter of order/instructions to compulsorily administer listening and speaking skills tests in the internal examinations.
- An initiative should be taken by the proper authority to send texts for listening exercises in the textbooks or CDs to each secondary institution.
- An immediate step could be taken or a feasibility study should be conducted on how to introduce the test of these two skills in the public exams.
- A bank of materials on listening and speaking skills can be produced and supplied to schools so that teachers can use them for testing as well as teaching if they want to.
- A decision should be made whether the government or the school itself will provide multimedia equipment, CD players, and other devices needed to practice and test these two skills. This should be implemented as soon as possible.
- The government should take initiatives to train untrained English teachers and stop providing training to already trained teachers by establishing a central coordination unit and maintaining a database of the teachers to keep track.
- The government should make it mandatory for every training institute and projects to have their own "Monitoring and Evaluation Unit" to monitor the implementation of listening and speaking skills tests.

- A manual containing detailed guidelines about the tests should be prepared and sent to schools and uploaded on the websites of the Ministry of Education, the NCTB, the Education Board, and other relevant locations.

5.3 Conclusion

Listening and speaking skills tests in the internal examinations at secondary level education in Bangladesh has been introduced with the expectation that it will enhance the teaching of these two skills. This research reveals that around 30% of the schools are not implementing this decision for different reasons. This research also reveals that the practice of teaching listening and speaking skills in the classrooms has increased to some extent after the introduction of the tests.

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Confusion as an Ideological Tool in Malaysian Newspaper Op-Eds

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Abstract

This paper offers an analysis of the lexical item *confusion* in opinion-editorials published by a Malaysian newspaper. The data was collected from *The Star*, a Malaysian English daily, between 1 January 2009 and 30 June 2010. To contextualize, in April 2009, the previous Prime Minister departs and the country welcomes a new leader with an apparently nationalist identity discourse of *1Malaysia* (Malaysia as an inclusive nation). This is also when religious debates surfaced regularly in the country's courtrooms and media. The findings of the study reveal that the authors of op-eds used the lexical item, *confusion*, to articulate normative and non-normative positions regarding various religious issues in Malaysia (e.g., Allah controversy, Islamic jurisprudence and religious conversion). Those who argued for the normative view, *confusion* arose within the discursive space of the religion of Islam; while for those who argued against the normative view, *confusion* arose due to the differences between the religious and the secular positions. It is important to note that the construction of meaning depended on both the semantic field of the lexical item and the context of utterance. However, what is more crucial to follow is that the term *confusion* served as an ideological tool in the Malaysian context to further the agenda of those individuals who are representatives or spokespersons for specific ideological groups within a contested polity.

Keywords: Malaysia, Invariant Meaning, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Language and Religion, Ideology

Introduction

Individuals' interpretations of a social, cultural or political phenomenon have often been characterized as manifestations of their "ideology" in opposition to our "truth" (van Dijk, 2006, 2009, 2015). This binary between *their* inadequate or "false" understanding of an issue and *our* subjectively perceived position as "true" is susceptible to criticism. Such characterizations may serve as the fodder for ideological conflicts or in Laclau's (1990) terms, social or political "antagonisms." In fact, expressions like "oh they don't understand" or "you're confused," which may

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eventually serve as a means to exclude the "other" or to label them as "misguided," are examples of ideological positionings. This paper offers an analysis of the use of the term *confusion*, and its variants (i.e., confuse, confused, and confusing) in Malaysian newspaper discourses by showing how it is used by writers of opinion editorials in this multiethnic Muslim-majority country to "other" their opponents while debating a common issue.

In Malaysia, as in other Muslim-majority countries, one representation of Islam can be privileged over another, resulting in the establishment of normative and non-normative representations of the religion. Analysis of news media, the space where reality is constructed rather than portrayed (Fowler, 1991), often, to meet particular ideological ends, offers insight into how these positions are constructed and contested. While the normative position is articulated in line with the status quo "order of discourse" (Fairclough, 2001, 2010), the non-normative position is framed to "resist" normativity, resulting in two sets of ideological discourses. In Malaysia, the normative position is articulated by those members of civil society who are viewed as aligned to the state or, borrowing the term from Shamsul (1996), are the "bureaucratic intellectuals" of the country. On the other hand, the non-normative position is voiced by those who oppose the status quo.

Although Malaysia has been characterized as a "soft authoritarian" state (Means, 1996), non-normative voices are heard alongside normative voices in the state-sponsored media since they are not powerful enough to dismantle the positions of the state. Thus, an analysis of the interplay between normative and non-normative articulations helps provide a context for the understanding of the use of *confusion* in Malaysian newspaper discourse.

To analyze *confusion* and its variants in a specific socio-political context, i.e., Malaysia, we find it useful to begin with the notion of invariant meaning (Tobin, 1990; Subramaniam & Khan, 2016) that explains the semantic components of the lexical item. This notion is rooted in a Saussurean-inspired sign-oriented approach to linguistic analysis, popularized by the Columbia School of Linguistics (Diver, 1975; Reid, 1991; Tobin, 1990, 2000[1]. According to Tobin (1990), "the same linguistic sign with a *single invariant meaning* can be inferred to have many and *diverse messages* …within different discourse contexts" (p. 51, italics added).

Tobin (1990) defines invariant meaning of a lexical item as being constant and consistent within a language system, and is applicable to all contexts of its use. Messages conveyed by that lexical item, on the other hand, can vary. To put it in other words, each message carries the abstract residue of invariant meaning; while, with different nuances in different contexts. In each context of articulation of the message, the invariant meaning will recur but will take into account the socio-political milieu of occurrence.

Methodology
In order to explain the ideological use of *confusion*, the data was collected from *The*

Star, a Malaysian English daily with the largest circulation in the country at the time of data collection (Nielsen Media Research, 2009). Each issue of *The Star* published between 1 January 2009 and 30 June 2010 was scanned for the occurrence of the lexical item and its variants in opinion editorials. The total number of occurrences of *confusion* and its variants were 49 in the data, all from the domain of religion (i.e., Islam). The field of religion was chosen since a number of debates on religion surfaced around 2009-2010 at the national level (Sankar, 2013; Neo, 2014).

In discussing newspaper texts in which the word *confusion* and its variants are used, we offer a linguistic analysis, interspersed with an "explanation" (Fairclough, 2010) of that analysis. The linguistic analysis follows Tobin's (1990) sign-based lexical analysis. The interpretation looks at the immediate context in which the word *confusion* is used. It also looks at the larger context in which the word is located in order to establish the relation of the word with the text as a whole. These two steps correspond to what Reisigl and Wodak (2009), within the field of critical discourse analysis (CDA), define as co-text and context. Reading the word in relation to its context provides insight into understanding what we call the specific "moments" (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985) of articulation, as they are realized in headings, sub-headings, or in other different strategic locations in the body of a specific text within a larger discourse (e.g., the discourse of religion). In this regard, we share the views of Laclau and Mouffe (1985),

> [We] will call *articulation* any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice. The structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice we will call *discourse*. The differential positions, insofar as they appear articulated within a discourse, we will call *moments* (p. 105, italics in the original).

This paper is rooted in the ideals of CDA (see Fairclough, 2001, 2010; van Dijk, 2009, 2015) and within this particular branch of discourse studies "ideology" is viewed as one of the key concepts. Ideology, in our view, is a "system" of beliefs or ideas in general terms; also, it is a matter of thorough critical investigation by combining a "micro" linguistic analysis with "macro" social concerns (van Dijk, 2006). In other words, since discourse does ideological work (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997), it is necessary to interpret the linguistic construction of a text against its contextual background.

Analytical Tools

In normative and non-normative discourses, the attribution of *confusion* serves to articulate specific ideological positions. We consider first the dictionary definitions of *confusion*:

> CONFUSION [noun]
>
> - When people do not understand what is happening, what they should do or who someone is – e.g., there seems to be some CONFUSION over who

is actually giving the talk; To avoid CONFUSION, the twins never wore the same clothes

- a situation, often with a lot of activity, and noise, in which people do not know what to do – e.g., in the CONFUSION after the bomb blast, I lost my bag and wasn't able to stop and look for it.

- The variants of CONFUSION are: Confuse [verb], Confused [verb+d; adjective, adverb], Confusing [verb+ing; gerund; adjective]. (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, online version, 2010)

Based on dictionary definitions and our analysis of the dataset, we hypothesize the invariant meaning of CONFUSION as a state of mind when some form of *cognitive disequilibrium* takes place.

In technical terms, if X is confused, X is having a cognitive disequilibrium. The disequilibrium is dependent on a few conditions, which are:

If X is a human being, disequilibrium can be self-induced or some Y is causing it for X to experience;

If Y is causing it for X, Y must have some authority to cause the disequilibrium. Y can also do it to misguide X.

While the invariant meaning of CONFUSION can be postulated as, *a state of disequilibrium*, one of the messages can be, X is misguided. Surprisingly no one seems to realize that this *confused* political message could damage the liberalization agenda.

The above statement presupposes that those who do not subscribe to the liberalization agenda are confused, that is, they are misguided. Our contention is, misguided is not the invariant meaning of CONFUSION; rather, it is just one of the messages conveyed in a particular context. Being misguided may not appear in every message, but cognitive disequilibrium is present in the example of misguided.

In other words, the linguistic sign, *confusion*, works ideologically when cognitive disequilibrium (its invariant meaning) and its message (e.g., misguided as in the above example) form a symbiotic relationship.

Interpretation of Data: Linking Invariant Meaning with Socio-political Context
The analysis of data includes the discussion of a set of controversial issues, i.e., the rights of using Allah by the non-Muslims in the country, Islamic theology, and the jurisdiction of an Islamic legal system. Authors of op-eds articulated the issues in the newspaper from normative and non-normative positions that include state funded religious organizations like *Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia* (IKIM, tr. Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia), non-governmental organizations like Sisters in Islam (SIS), and other regular columnists.

Allah Controversy

This controversy involves whether non-Muslims in Malaysia have the right to use the term *Allah* (tr. God in Arabic) when referring to God. The media covered the issue extensively due to the strong emotions expressed by parties for and against the use of the term. The controversy intensified as the debating parties contested whether *Allah* was a generic name for God or was exclusive for Muslims. While the views expressed were both normative and non-normative, they were deemed normative when articulated by an agency endorsed by the state. IKIM's views are normative because it is a government agency; on the other hand, NGOs like Sisters in Islam do not express the views of the state and are hence non-normative. Likewise, individual columnists like Marina Mahathir, Azmi Sharom, or Shad Faruqi, as members of civil society, represent their non-normative personal views, although, in some instances, those views may coincide with the positions of the state.

The first excerpt we consider is an op-ed written by an IKIM senior fellow titled *Understanding the "Allah" controversy*. The somewhat longer sub-heading that follows the heading states in boldface:

> [SB-11-08-2009] The established and verified position of Muslims has always been that the term "Allah" is not an Arabic derivative but is itself revealed by The One and Only God to humankind through His chosen messengers.

The postulation that Allah is not an Arabic derivative is presented as an "established" and "verified" position, in factual terms, which is further intensified by an emphatic marker, "always." When something is established and verified, the presupposition is that it is not to be questioned, that is, the verified *truth* is self-evident. Thus this sub-heading constructs factuality linguistically as the author uses copula verbs (i.e., is, has) instead of modal verbs. Having established factuality, the subheading uses rhetorical figure of allusion, alluding to certain religious tradition. In the above example, the reference to "The One and Only God" in the same sentence that includes Allah locates the discourse within an Islamic tradition. Although similar claims are found in other religious traditions, for instance, in the Old Testament, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one!" (Deut, 6:4, King James Version), this sub-heading confines the semantic field of "The One and Only God" to the Islamic tradition by referring to the "position of Muslims."

Interpretation of the "immediate text internal co-text" (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009) in which a lexical item appears is imperative to understand the item. Our claim is that the framing of the arguments in the heading and sub-heading prepares the reader for the arrival of the lexical item, *confusion*, demanding a specific reading:

> [MZI-19-01-2010] BY NOW, Malaysians are generally aware that there have been disputes between the Muslims and the Christians pertaining to the use of the term "Allah" by the latter. Unfortunately, however, it seems that of the whole controversy most Malaysians can be sure only of that much. The rest,

judging from the many viewpoints and contentions raised thus far, seems convoluted and *confused* to them.

In the above text, the claimant, the author Zaidi Ismail, states that a certain population, i.e., Malaysians, seem to experience cognitive disequilibrium about the specifics of an issue (i.e., controversy around the use of Allah by non-Muslims) which the writer claims is *unfortunate*. The marker "unfortunately" is an example of expressive modality (Fairclough, 2010), a modality that establishes the author Zaidi's representation of reality and understanding or knowledge of it. Here, Zaidi's understanding might be mediated by his agency as a representative of an institution (i.e., IKIM), capable of passing normative verdicts on religious matters.

On the other hand, Marina Mahathir, a regular columnist to the newspaper, presents an alternative reading to the IKIM op-ed. The title for her regular column, *Musings*, suggests a non-normative interpretation of the issues that she writes about in contrast to the IKIM column.

The heading of the Marina op-ed "Mysterious people in need of rules" provides the opening move to her argument that the people whom others claim will be confused do not, in her opinion, exist and are therefore mysterious. This mysteriousness is reinforced in the sub-heading with a reference to "faceless strangers we have yet to meet." The sub-headline states:

> [MM-06-01-2010] There will be those who will be *confused*, others who will act without restraint, rampaging freely and causing havoc … they are faceless strangers we have yet to meet.

In her editorial, she argues:

> [MM-06-01-2010] I don't understand what is so edifying about claiming that we are always weak and easily *confused*. How do we on the one hand claim a superior position for our faith when at the same time we admit that we can be so easily influenced? Are the fortifications that we built for ourselves in our hearts and consciences so fragile?

In the above excerpt, the claimant Marina Mahathir questions the claims of two groups of agents, namely, Malaysians and Muslims, who are susceptible to cognitive disequilibrium. It is noteworthy that Marina presents her argument in the first person, *I don't understand …*, which situates her op-ed in sharp contrast to IKIM. It is important for her to establish individual agency capable of articulating or producing opinion regarding Islam in contrast to the normative position. This is apparent in her question expressed rhetorically, elsewhere in the text "Funny, doesn't it say in the Quran that we all have to answer for ourselves eventually?"

It is equally noteworthy to underscore that Marina shifts between two subject positions: (i) *I*, as an individual capable of speaking about Islamic matters and (ii) *we*, as the Muslim community of which she is a member. This shift between *I* and *we*

makes the act of representation more complex. What is particularly at stake here is not only who is speaking for whom; but also that the normative ways of representing the Muslims in the country is questionable, as expressed in the following excerpt:

> [MM-06-01-2010] Yet, if we polled every single person to ask if they felt *confused*, they would deny it. Thus, on whose behalf do we bust our guts for in these issues?

Another op-ed writer, Azmi Sharom, a law lecturer in a public university, presents arguments similar to Marina's. He asserts that

> [AS-21-01-2010] there is … the argument that if Muslims see Allah being used by non-Muslims they will get awfully *confused* and in their simple-mindedness, they will become Christians. People who make this argument can't have very high regard for Malay intelligence. Rather insulting, I think.

In the axiomatic form of Tobin (1990), a linguistic analysis of the above excerpt reveals the presence of multiple claims and claimants. The three claimants are, author Azmi Sharom, unidentified Muslims, and unidentified Christians. But what are the claims? The first claim is that Muslims would suffer cognitive disequilibrium if certain agents, i.e., non-Muslims, engage in a particular social practice, i.e., using the term Allah. This cognitive disequilibrium, according to the state-supported normative view, has severe consequences for Muslims as they "in their simple-mindedness," which is possibly a "side effect" of being confused, would renounce their faith and undergo religious conversion. Such a position, Azmi claims, is firstly, an insult to the Malays; secondly, it is a remote possibility, because in Malaysia, conversion of Muslims into another religion (i.e., apostasy) is a legal offence (e.g., the apostasy case of Lina Joy; Kirby, 2008). Therefore, the precise nature of disequilibrium, in line with the dictionary meaning, is not present in the above example. Considering the socio-political backdrop of Malaysia, such a use can rather be interpreted as ideologically motivated.

In his next use of *confusion* from the same op-ed, Azmi implores the Muslim community and the leadership to consider if they can really be confused by the use of just one word, i.e., Allah by the non-Muslims:

> [AS-21-01-2010] The Muslim community, particularly the leadership, must ask itself: Is the way Islam is taught in this country so weak that Muslims can get easily *confused* by just one word?

There are two ways of interpreting the above excerpt. First, as an example of irony where the author demands the leaders to explain why they elevate such petty issues as grave and significant unless the question is politically motivated. On the other hand, if the text is read as a "true" interrogative, it articulates a serious question on the mode of teaching of Islam in the country. Hence, it is crucial to understand how someone uses certain linguistic expressions in a context of utterance. The interpretation of the message conveyed by the author of the above op-ed depends

on whether one reads it as an irony or a "true" interrogative instead of a rhetorical question, for instance.

Apart from the Allah controversy, the lexical item *confusion* and its variants also occurred in reference to the interpretation of Islam and Quranic injunction. They appeared under two categories: (1) Islamic theology and (2) Sharia Law or Islamic jurisprudence. While IKIM published their normative views in both the categories of theology and Sharia Law, the alternative interpretation to IKIM only occurs in the latter category, i.e., Islamic jurisprudence.

Islamic Theology

When IKIM interpreted Islam, several presuppositions made by the author, involving different concepts and positions in Islam, remained unexplained. This is because the opinion pieces were intended, primarily, for the Muslims who share common assumptions, if not a common register. The observation is evident in the following excerpts:

> [SB-11-08-2009] *Confusion* and error in knowledge of Islam, as a religion and a civilization, are more harmful to Muslims than mere ignorance.

> [SB-11-08-2009] Indeed, it is easier to teach a person who is aware of his ignorance than a person in error … This is because although the latter is in error about a certain matter, he does not acknowledge his ignorance of it. Satisfied with his condition, the *confused* person thinks and claims he knows, whereas in reality he does not know and only has a clouded mind.

In the first example, the claimant, Sani Badron, postulates that the state of being in cognitive disequilibrium compared to being in the state of ignorance is more harmful for the Muslims. His claim is that "distorted" knowledge (or *confusion*) is more dangerous than the absence of knowledge (or *ignorance*). He explains it further in the second occurrence of *confusion* where he states that although the individual in cognitive disequilibrium thinks and claims that he knows, he is either devoid of knowledge or has distorted knowledge. This assertion raises a further question: what is the origin of *confusion*? When a person is identified as confused, is it because other people see him as confused? To explain this problem of *confusion* we may draw on Reisigle and Wodak's (2009) rendition of Lacan's (2000) concept of "misrecognition" in the field of psychoanalysis. The Lacanian argument is that misrecognition takes place as social agents use a language based on their specific knowledge of that language. It is possible that specific knowledge is limited and thus encompasses partial knowledge of a phenomenon under construction, leading eventually to a condition called *confusion*. The normative argument that Sani Badron, the writer, sought to establish was framed in the sub-heading of the article. This is similar to the earlier example of IKIM views on the Allah controversy, mentioned above. The sub-heading, which establishes the stance for the reading of the IKIM article, states:

> [SB-11-08-2009] True understanding of the Quran cannot be possessed by the one with neither intellectual nor spiritual prerequisites, let alone the one who is impudent and insolent of religion.

The adjective "true" influences the reading of four other lexical items in the excerpt: intellectual, spiritual, impudent, and insolent. The implication is that those who are intellectual and spiritual are able to decipher the true understanding of the Quran, while those who are impudent and insolent of religion are unable to. Thus, the author implies that the readers accept the arguments he offers as intellectual, spiritual, not impudent and insolent of religion. He offers a "true" understanding of the Quran which does not result in *confusion*, as is evident in the following telling excerpt:

> [SB-11-08-2009] Intellectual arrogance and obstinacy stem from *confusion* and error in knowledge, leading to the tendency to challenge, belittle, and reject legitimate views of knowledgeable experts on Islam … This is what we call "learned *confusion*," where stubbornness and stupidity are twins … The mind's efforts in seeking true knowledge face various epistemological stumbling blocks. Since these pitfalls function as the causes of *confusion*, we must be really clear of those sources of error, which must be avoided for us to steer clear of error and *confusion*.

It is noteworthy that the word *confusion* co-occurs with error and is framed in opposition to "true" knowledge and the "legitimate views of knowledgeable experts on Islam." He attempts to build a dichotomy between *our* true knowledge and *their* distorted knowledge characterized by arrogance, obstinacy, stubbornness, and stupidity. Another author from IKIM, Wan Azhar, refers to true knowledge besides claiming that the normative stance must exercise authority. The author states,

> [WAWA-01-12-2009] At the end, *all must abide by the truth*, i.e. *the most convincing and authoritative position* … And those who claim themselves as religious scholars must be careful not to *confuse* the public with petty and trivial things. (emphasis added)

The above statement articulates a normative position in its most simplistic form. The author is urging the social agents, those who claim themselves as religious scholars, not to push the public into a state of cognitive disequilibrium. It is understood that "the public," is an unidentified common noun and that includes everyone in a society. In order to stop the society from being in disarray, the authority deems it necessary to control the dissemination of discourse produced by the "false" scholars. The author suggests that while certain scholars possess true knowledge, false scholars *confuse* people. As a fellow of IKIM and a religious scholar, the author ostensibly belongs to the category of true scholars, thus building a dichotomy of *us* versus *them*.

To establish authority and demonstrate expertise, IKIM writers use religious registers, which can be interpreted as a device to engage the community they theologize for. For instance,

> [SB-14-04-2009] We are referring to subtle, masquerading deviations which seek to undermine the teachings of the Quran, the traditions of the Prophet (*hadith*), and those of his Companions (*athar*) – all of which constitute Islamic religious tradition (*naql*). Knowledge of *i'tiqad,* which is obligatory to pursue, refers to knowledge that is sufficient to eliminate doubt and *confusion* concerning religious beliefs throughout one's life.

In the above excerpt, the author claims that possession of knowledge of *I'tiqad* (tr. knowledge concerning faith) by Muslims will be sufficient to eliminate any form of cognitive disequilibrium. The author also argues in the same article that such knowledge should be based on the "true intention of traditions," which may not be obtained from scholars who are "rigid traditionalists" or "excessive rationalists" as they tend to produce "misleading rhetoric" that "may *confuse* people in general." The author acknowledges that religious scholars fall into different categories; hence, the multiplicity of the positions they articulate can, in his opinion, create or cause *confusion*.

Islamic Legal System

Our data suggests similarities in argumentation in the area of Islamic theology and Islamic legal system. There are similarities in terms of lexical items, as well as the use of dichotomous categories (i.e., A opposed to B) to distinguish a normative position from a non-normative one. Here is an example:

> [MAA-22-12-2009] Some of our *modern* ulama, according to al-Attas, are to be blamed for not teaching people properly, so sometimes there is injustice… This is due to *wrong* teaching and *misunderstanding*, and this can be corrected *by re-educating* the Muslims *properly*, not by declaring *equality* and trying to follow the *West*. We can't abolish any law that is clearly stated in the Quran. This is, sadly, the state of affairs of the Muslims, who have generally become *ignorant* and *confused*. As a result, false leaders thrive among them.

The author constructs a dichotomy between Islamic Sharia Law and Civil Law (in the guise of the West). The linking of "the west" with lexical items of "modern," and "equality" serves a rhetorical purpose to malign the "modern *ulamas*" (tr. religious scholars) that spread *confusion*. The author also argues that there is an absence of knowledge among the Muslim community regarding Islamic jurisprudence. This absence of knowledge makes the community vulnerable to the interpretation by the "modern *ulamas*" causing *confusion*. In other words, the ones holding a counter position are deemed *confused*.

Another fellow from IKIM takes the argument a little further and claims that Islamic

Sharia Law is not meant only for the Muslims, but also for the non-Muslims. This claim should be explained to the citizens of the nation-state so that the Constitution does not stand as an obstacle to the implementation of the Sharia Law for everyone in the country. The author states,

> [WAWA-17-03-2009] The general public is under the impression that Islamic law is strictly meant for Muslims. This is not the case in all situations because non-Muslims could seek justice from Sharia courts during the reign of various Muslim rulers. If this has happened in history, it can still take place today and in the future. Our esteemed Constitution, various other Acts of Parliament and state enactments contribute to the *confusion* by putting forth some legal obstacles concerning the application of Islamic law towards non-Muslims.

In the above excerpt, Wan Azhar postulates that the Constitution and its various Acts contribute towards causing cognitive disequilibrium as they present legal obstacles to the application of the Islamic law on non-Muslims. To legitimize the case for Islamic law, even to the extent of overriding the Constitution, he makes a reference to a non-specific historical past ("during the reign of various Muslim rulers"). His argument is that if it was possible to implement the Law in the past, it is also possible at the present. The problem with this argument is, the author does not provide specific evidence from the historical past but merely alludes to it. A further flaw in his argument is that he equates the "subjects" of various Muslim rulers to the "citizens" of modern nation-states whose rights and obligations to the state are hardly comparable. Thus, his claim that the Constitution of a modern nation-state may cause *confusion* is premised on certain realities that might be consistent only with an Islamic worldview.

The issue of the comparability of the two legal systems is also addressed in controversies involving religious conversion. The debate in the newspapers has focused on custody rights of children: when one of the parents converts to Islam, does the non-Muslim parent have the custody rights over the children? The debate over custody rights has been problematized as a structural issue involving two competing legal systems: Islamic (Sharia) and Civil Law. Here is a view from an op-ed by IKIM,

> [ZK-08-09-2009] As different family laws apply to different communities within the same national legal system, by right, there should be minimal inter-relationship. However, on the few occasions that they intersect, there is much *confusion* and tension is created.

In the above excerpt, the author suggests that when a particular legal domain (i.e., Family Law) is governed by two opposing legal systems, i.e., Islamic Law and Civil Law, this may cause cognitive disequilibrium. The intersection of two value systems – one supported by religion, and the other by secular reason – results, according

to the author, not just in legal conflicts, but in a state of *confusion*. IKIM writers contend that *confusion* may arise not only because of contradictions between legal systems, but also because of statements made by persons in authority, like cabinet ministers. Thus, Wan Azhar, the IKIM writer states:

> [WAWA-18-08-2009] The long existing misunderstanding over the religious status of minors resurfaced when an ill-informed Cabinet minister announced that the religion of minors from non-Muslim parents, upon the conversion of any of the parents to Islam, remains in the religion under which the marriage was solemnized. Such a statement contradicts the Federal Constitution and some religious positions. It worsens the *confusion* among the people and draws criticisms from both Muslims and non-Muslims.

In the above statement, the state of *confusion* occurs because of the opinion stated by a cabinet minister, which the author labels as, being "ill-informed," while no specific evidence has been cited for this ill-informed stance. The writer states that the minister's opinion "contradicts" the federal constitution and "some religious positions," and hence, causes *confusion*. This claim is not supported by any specific articles of the Constitution but is solely premised on Islamic positions advocated by Islamic authorities. On the other hand, Zainah Anwar who represents the NGO Sisters in Islam problematizes the issue of religious conversion by foregrounding the Federal Constitution. In her column, Zainah states,

> [ZA-03-05-2009] Article 12 (4) must also be read with Article 8 (2), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion, race, descent, place of birth or gender. Read together with the Guardianship of Infants Act, which recognises that both parents have equal right of guardianship to their children, a persuasive argument can be made that the consent of both parents is needed to change the religion of the children. The Federal Court judgment was criticised for its failure to read laws holistically and the confusion it caused over jurisdiction … In the above statement, cognitive disequilibrium occurs because of the inability to read different provisions within the Federal Constitution or other laws in the light of the Constitution. This is a sharp contrast to the use of the term *confusion* by IKIM writers, who attribute *confusion* to an inability to understand Islamic legal provisions.

Having established the reason for the state of *confusion* Zainah Anwar proposes a way to resolve the contradictions:

> [ZA-03-05-2009]…What is clear is that at all levels, be it Constitutional, Islamic juristic principles, and lived realities, the solution to the conundrum can be found. But politics, ideology, and *confusion* between personal faith and public policy got in the way. When conflicts arising out of conversion, freedom of religion, moral policing, women's rights, and human rights are viewed only through the religious prism and therefore must be decided

> according to sharia law, it makes the search for solutions even more complicated.

In the above statement, Zainah claims that cognitive disequilibrium occurs when the social domains of personal faith and public policy get into each other's way. While Zainah Anwar's assertion is that that these two social domains (i.e., personal faith and public policy) should not be seen as interconnected; Islam does not distinguish between the two. In fact, Zainah's version of Islam distinguishes between public and private domains, a separation not endorsed by IKIM. In the above examples, where *confusion* occurs, the lexical item has been problematized differently by different agents based on their premises and vantage points. Hence, a linguistic analysis of *confusion* alone may not capture the multitude of nuances implied through the messages. While the invariant meaning of *confusion* (i.e., cognitive disequilibrium) is a useful starting point to see the link across the messages, it is imperative that we study individual messages in their specific discursive contexts.

Discussion

The above analysis has provided a close reading of the use of the term *confusion* and its variants in newspaper opinion editorials about various religious controversies in Malaysia. Our objective for explaining the role of this lexical item that surfaced within a specific discursive field was that *confusion* is more than a lexical item. As it is evident in the data, different individuals used the word to convey different messages about the state of being confused. The invariant meaning, a state of "cognitive disequilibrium," was present in all the examples, however, in a nuanced form in individual instances. Besides, what caused cognitive disequilibrium was different for the agents holding normative or non-normative positions.

The writers who wrote from a normative position (such as, the writers from IKIM) tended to produce "law-like" statements (Glynos & Howarth, 2007) as if the arguments were irrefutable. On the contrary, those who argued against the normative view (such as, the columnists Zainah Anwar, Marina Mahathir and Azmi Sharom) produced a critique of that normative position often questioning their irrefutable status.

In this context, the question arises: how does one argue for or against an Islamic normative view within an Islamic polity? For those who wrote from a normative position, *confusion* arose from the author's perception that the readers would be unable to distinguish between "correct" and "incorrect" interpretations *within* the discursive space of religion (Islam). On the other hand, for those who argued against the normative view, the debate was a means to occupy the discursive space of Malay Muslim identity from a secular position. Thus, when discussing the issue of custody rights of children following the religious conversion of one of the parents, IKIM writers drew solely on religious authorities to make their case; while, writers like Zainah Anwar argued about the discrepancy between the constitution and religious

precepts. In other words, for IKIM writers, *confusion* occurs when individuals are unable to grasp the religious doctrines governing the issue; while, for writers taking non-normative position, *confusion* occurs, when religious precepts contradict constitutional, human rights and other secular arguments. Thus it is apparent that the non-normative arguments are premised on a separation between *church and state* (in this case, Islam and the State); while this separation does not hold for normative arguments. The analysis of data supported that the term *confusion* served as an ideological tool to further the agenda of the agents or the body of authority that they represented. The non-normative understanding of the normative use of *confusion* is that the lexical item could also construct ideological threats. For instance, once a particular position was constructed as having the potential to *confuse*, it followed that others must be protected from experiencing such *confusion*. As the columnist Marina Mahathir suggested,

> [MM-11-11-2009] By invoking the age-old argument of protecting the Muslim community in Malaysia from *confusion*, these groups have exposed their inability to grasp the spirit of Islam and have only created a hole for them to hide in every time they are intellectually challenged.

By characterizing the other as confused the label *confusion* serves to exclude the other. The purpose is not just to exclude the other but to establish them as the most viable alternative within a space of contestation. The data shows that the contestation is between Islamists (those who primarily uphold Islamic Legal precepts or Sharia) and nationalists (those who primarily uphold the Federal Constitution) who may have different political faiths. One must not forget that the above arguments have been contextualized within a polity where the newspaper industry is mostly state-owned or owned by individuals close to the state (Nain, 2002). Hence, there is a possibility that the newspaper may act as one of the "ideological state apparatuses" (Althusser, 2008). There are also legal provisions, (e.g., The Printing Presses Act Malaysia, 1984) that make Malaysian newspapers authoritarian (Azizuddin, 2005). The question then arises: how is it possible that non-normative authors were allowed to articulate their positions vis-à-vis the normative authors? One of the reasons could be that the new media, e.g., Facebook and Twitter, has made this broadening up possible. As the new media can "bypass" censorship, it compels the mainstream newspapers to accommodate topics considered "off-limits" previously (Bose, 2010). Moreover, with globalization, national media agencies may come under increasing scrutiny from international watchdog organizations; hence, local newspapers tend to allow space for non-normative voices to be heard. Thus, there is not only a mere presence of normative and non-normative positions in the mainstream newspapers; but also contestation between the positions.

Note

1. The Columbia School (CS) of linguistics was originally called Form-Content Analysis and

is based on three seminal articles (Diver 1963, 1964a-b). Selected monographs, anthologies and relevant articles include, Contini-Morava (1989), Contini-Morava & Goldberg (1995), Contini-Morava & Tobin (2000), Contini-Morava et.al (2004), Davis et.al., (2004), Diver (1969, 1974, 1979), García (1975), Gorup (1987), Huffman (1997, 2001), Huffman & Davis (2010), Kirsner (1979), Klein-Andreu (1983), Reid (1991), Reid et.al. (2002), Tobin (1990, 1993, 1994/1995). There is a webpage supported by the Columbia School Linguistic Society (www.csling.org) which provides a short theoretical sketch and a more extensive CS bibliography.

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The Impact of Bangla-English Code-Switching
in Advertisement Posters

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Abstract

This study examines Bangla-English code-switching depicted on the advertisement posters in Bangladesh because of their widespread use where the role of language choice and language use carries a major significance in both socio-cultural and socio-economic contexts. A significant number of studies can be found on both code-switching and its impact on advertisement posters but the sociolinguistic impact of code-switching between Bangla and English in the advertisement posters of Bangladesh is yet to be explored. This prompted the researchers to explore the attitude of the stakeholders towards such application in order to define the impact of code-switching from the socio-cultural perspective. The study also investigates the influence of English embedded code-switching, where Bangla is a matrix language, in the relationship between language and economy. A total of 29 participants from all the stakeholders, i.e., the sellers, consumers, and producers, were chosen through judgment sampling to participate in this study. This study applies qualitative structure and introduces carefully designed open ended semi-structured questionnaires for interviewing all the stakeholders. After analyzing the data thematically on the basis of multiple perspectives, it was found that code-switching impacts the language, society, and economy of Bangladesh. Interestingly, a significant portion of the participants connected it with English language learning in both inside and outside of classroom contexts.

Keywords: Bangla-English Code-switching, Language Choice, Social Impact, Linguistic Impact, Language and Economy

Introduction

In an era of globalization and open market operations, advertisements play a very significant role in the landscape of trade and commerce. Poster advertisement culture, one of the oldest and most popular forms of advertising, has been developed in almost all communities including the local context. A poster

advertisement solely depends on its design and the limited portion of language depicted in it. Interestingly, the design and language have a common and prime objective of attracting the consumers to the services/products/announcements from their providers' perspective. Leung (2010) in Hong Kong, Ahn, La Ferle and Lee (2017) in Korea, Zhiganova (2016) in Germany, and many more researchers all over the world investigated the relationship and connection between the choices of language and advertising. Code-switching, which can exist in both monolingual and bilingual language communities, is one of the phenomena which is closely investigated by these researchers. In a monolingual situation, it should indicate diglossic and dialectal switching (Biswal, 2009). The code-switching in Bangladesh should follow this pattern as it is a monolingual country where, except Bangla, no other language has official status because of the history of the language movement in 1952 when the nation shed blood to uphold the status of Bangla as its mother tongue. The Bangla language is "an issue of both sensitivity and pride among Bangladeshis" (Alam 2006, p. 53). However, Bangladesh has moved from the frame of monolingualism as the presence and application of other languages can easily be identified in social and linguistic contexts (Rahman & Hossain, 2012). And, interestingly among those languages, English posits such a strong position that it enjoys the unofficial status of second language (Rahman & Hossain, 2012). The prevailing existence of English language in the daily life of the Bangladeshi people is visual because of the global fact and attitude towards the language. Several studies confirm that the people from Bangladesh consider the English language as one of the means to get "white collar jobs" (Alam, 2006), to raise their income (BBC, 2009), and to grab better jobs and hold important positions (Rahman & Hossain, 2012) in the country. It is utilized almost everywhere "for a considerable length of time and for various purposes and it is slowly turning out to be part of the socio-cultural framework" (Islam 2018, p. 125). In this regard, the presence of English beside Bangla is evident and the available code-switching in advertising, especially in advertisement posters (Appendix A), validates the statement where Bangla-English code-switching is referred to as a common act. These all set a strong background to study this linguistic form to identify its impact on the society, language and language users, and whether is it affecting or contributing in the economy or not.

The Impact of Code-switching: The Literature

English is the most widely used language in the world for code-mixing and switching nowadays (Rahman & Hossain, 2012). The use of code-switching is frequent in both oral and written discourse in Bangladesh. The frequency of such application is increasing day by day. Banu and Sussex (2001) identified the presence of such application in Bangladesh as they stated, "An extensive and varied example of code-switching between Bangla and English should be the English names and phrases often transcribed into Bengali script in business names and commercial signs" (p. 51). It has become a "natural part of the speakers' verbal repertoire in Bangladesh" (Rahman & Hossain, 2012, p. 246). In addition, English got the status of the

"most frequently used language" besides the local language in non-English speaking countries (Piller, 2003, p. 175). The language depicted in the advertisement posters in Bangladesh (Appendix A) acknowledges such statements.

According to McArthur (1998), widespread code-switching often indicates greater or lesser shift towards the more dominant language (cited in Rahman & Hossain, 2012). Advertisement posters in Bangladesh are great examples supporting McArthur's view as the statuses of *lingua franca* and *de facto* language have made English language a dominant one here. The positive attitude of the people towards the English language led the language to have an impact on the code-switched message (Luna & Peracchio, 2005). However, an interesting discovery has been developed by Islam (2018). His study on code-switching on the participants of Bangladesh found that though they (92% of the total participants who acknowledged that they frequently mix Bangla and English in their conversation) use code-switching in their daily life but they consider its negative influence on Bangla language and they also do not possess any positive attitude on the form (Islam, 2018).

Code-switched words not only activate the language schema and social meanings of that particular language but also elaborate the associations and "the valence of those associations [to] influence product evaluations" (Luna & Peracchio, 2005, p. 761). The English words have become apparent in the advertisement texts as different researchers around the world consider the English language as an enhancer of product image (Martin, 2002; Alm, 2003; Ustinova & Bhatia, 2005). Piller (2001) states that the advertisements which are partly or completely involved with English language have the attribution of globalization, internationalism, modernity, future orientation, success and elitism, progress, sophistication, fun, youth, and maleness (p 175). The strong relationship between the English language and globalization, internationalism, and modernism are optical in Bangladesh. Supporting such statements, Hamid (2009) states, "Since the 1990s, however, there seems to have been a renewed awareness of the importance of English … owing to globalization, satellite television, the growth of the IT industry and the Bangladeshi garment industry" (p. 31). It triggers the advertisers to think globally. They become more focused on the global advertising propagated by Levitt (1983).

Rahman & Hossain (2012) point out that "Code-switching can take on several forms including alteration of sentences, phrases from both languages, and switching in a long narrative" (p. 235). According to Olson (2016), "These language switches offer an opportunity to investigate both of a bilingual's two languages, as well as the interaction between those two languages, and serves to provide additional insight into language processing mechanisms that may be unavailable in monolingual populations" (p. 2). Gumperz (1996) defines code switching as "alternation among different speech varieties within the same event" (cited in Kelly-Holmes, 2005, p. 365). And this alternation can occur within a sentence, i.e., intrasentential code-switch, or the code-switch can take place at sentence boundary, i.e., extrasentential

code switch (D'Souza, 1992, p. 218). Similar types of code-mixing are identified by Alam (2006) as well. She isolates some common patterns of code-mixing. They are

i)   Intra-word code-mixing, where a) English root word with Bangla suffix and b) Bangla root word with English suffix can be found;
ii) Inter-word code-mixing, where inserting English word or phrase in Bangla sentences or utterances are labeled; and
iii) Inter-sentential code mixing (p. 62)

And this is what can be seen in the Bangladeshi advertisement posters. The code-switching in the advertisement posters in Bangladesh possesses both intrasentential and extrasentential alternation between Bangla and English. So, somehow a new format is generating though "code-switching is an instantiation of change. It has to do with how change is effected" (Backus, 2005, p. 120). Interestingly, Islam (2018) also indicated the change of forming a new language structure as his participants mentioned and worried about "Banglish" (mixing of Bangla and English), and its emergence in Bangla language. He also identified that "frequent use of code-switching results in unusual accent of some Bangla words" (Islam, 2018). Code-switching has the ability to become an autonomous code in a bilingual context (Hamers & Blanc, 1989) and bilingualism is considered the important social factor which promotes changes because of its internal and external factors (Clyne, 2003). Grosjean (2008, cited in Olson, 2016) in a study also refers to a number of authors who consider language mode to have an impact on speech patterns in a bilingual context. This actually happened in Bangladesh as Ahmed, Nurullah, & Sarkar (2010, cited in Ahmed, 2011) acknowledged that "Djuice (one of the mobile network service providers of Bangladesh) has made a huge impact by bringing slang words and code mixing into advertising with their eye-catching captions" (p. 28). In a study by Rahman and Hossain (2012), participants, who were Bangladeshi students, discouraged the use of code-switching in classrooms with the belief that it corrupts the languages. This issue has become very sensitive as many intellectuals in Bangladesh also consider this very alarming as they apprehend that code-mixing might "eclipse Bangla, which is an essential part of Bangla culture" (Alam, 2006, p. 66).

Kotler (2003) refers to advertising as an important component of marketing. He finds a very close connection between advertising and the tasks of marketing, which has the aim of satisfying the customer regarding goods and services. The contents of the advertisements including the linguistic message serve to achieve that aim. The use of language also carries a significant part of such strategy. Luna & Peracchio (2005) consider the use of code-switched messages as one of the marketing strategies (p. 760). This intrigues the advertising agencies to produce code-switched texts. As the role of advertising is to inform and create the need for the product or service besides encouraging people to purchase, it will be better for the economy and the economic wellbeing of the society when more people will respond to the advertisement (Kotler,

2003). In order to incite such responses, language has always been considered as a tool as it "has economic characteristics, such as value, utility, costs, and benefits" (Marschak, 1965, cited in Zhang & Grenier, 2013). The organizations, especially the brands which have global identity, want to have economic benefit through the use of language. They "choose to use the same campaign or slogan worldwide in order to have a globally consistent marketing strategy and brand image. Some brands also choose to use the same advertisement in different countries in order to cut costs" (Kuppens, 2009, p. 116). Kuppens (2009) also mentions that English is their primary solution as it bears the status of the lingua franca. Global brands need to have a similar appeal for their products or services across the globe.

The increased portion of English language in the texts of the advertisements can influence consumers to come closer to the language and learn it. Ahmed, Nurullah, & Sarkar (2010) in their study on Bangladeshi students find that the students have a positive attitude towards learning new English words which were used during mixing of Bangla and English (p. 123). Forgaliana (2013) in her doctoral dissertation finds the "usefulness of bilingual advertisement for the progress of learning English" (p. 23). She mentions, "The use of code-switching in advertisement can help students to learn English" (p. 24). This motivation has a very close connection with the economy. Zhang (2008, cited in Zhang & Grenier, 2013) identifies that the desire and motivation for language learning take place under economic incentives. Gonzalez (2005) in his study explores the context of the United States where he finds that "the loss of wages and the difference in unemployment rate caused by the lack of English proficiency were estimated to be respectively between 3.8% and 38.6% and between 1% and 6.5%" (p. 207).

Methodology

Research Design
This study specifically focused on the impact of the Bangla-English code-switching in the advertisement posters. To explore effects in the lives of a particular language community, a qualitative research design was implemented to gather data from the focus group as this study is attentive to the social world of the participants and how they undertake, experience, or narrate the application of code-switching in their language community (Heller, Pietikäinen, & Pujolar, 2017). In order to explore the impact of code-switching, the researchers considered the producers of the advertisements, i.e., retailers, sellers, and distributors of those advertised products/ services and the patrons of those products/services as the participants of this study as their physiognomies, roles, knowledge, ideas, sentiments, and even experiences are relevant to the study (Gibson & Brown, 2009). This led the researchers to categorize the participants into three primary categories: i) Producers, ii) Sellers, and iii) Consumers. However, as this study is involved with examining the effects of code-switching in the language community, a qualitative experiment approach was adapted

to a comparatively small sample size (Gibson & Brown, 2009). Among those three categories of participants, 29 participants were chosen through judgment sampling to meet the objective of the study and to encourage participation (Hoffman, 2014). It is important to mention that the researchers also considered the popularity and availability of the advertisements, the reputation of those organizations and their affiliation, connection, and admissibility to the participants (Hoffman, 2014). In order to analyze the data in the end, 29 separate face to face semi-structured open-ended interviews were recorded with their consent.

Instrument
A detailed natural conversation was needed to measure the effects of code-switching in the language community. This led the researchers to choose sociolinguistic interview (Podesva & Sharma, 2018) as a tool to design the interview questions. Considering the different roles of the focus groups, three different sets of questions were designed and the questions in the interview (Appendix B) were adapted from the literature and the framework suggested by Gibson and Brown (2009).

Data Analysis
There were 29 face-to-face semi-structured interviews which were recorded for this study and transcribed by the researchers following the verbatim style as the transcriptions accurately reflect the empirical reality of the language users (Hadley, 2017). It is needed to mention that because of the nature and form of a sociolinguistic interview, the session continued over 45 minutes in some cases which generated a huge amount of data for this study. However, the researchers developed the themes following the four phases i.e., "'initialization', 'construction', 'rectification', and 'finalization' proposed by Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen and Snelgrove (2016, p 103). Later, those themes were labeled based on participants' exact wording and phrasing and then those data were analyzed for multiple perspectives (Creswell, 2012). The analysis explored the impact of Bangla-English code-switching over society and the languages. It also reflected a glimpse of effects on the economy and language learning.

Effects of code-switching
In response to the application of Bangla-English code-switching in the advertisement posters, the participants identified the following effects. The data is represented in the bar chart (Figure 1):
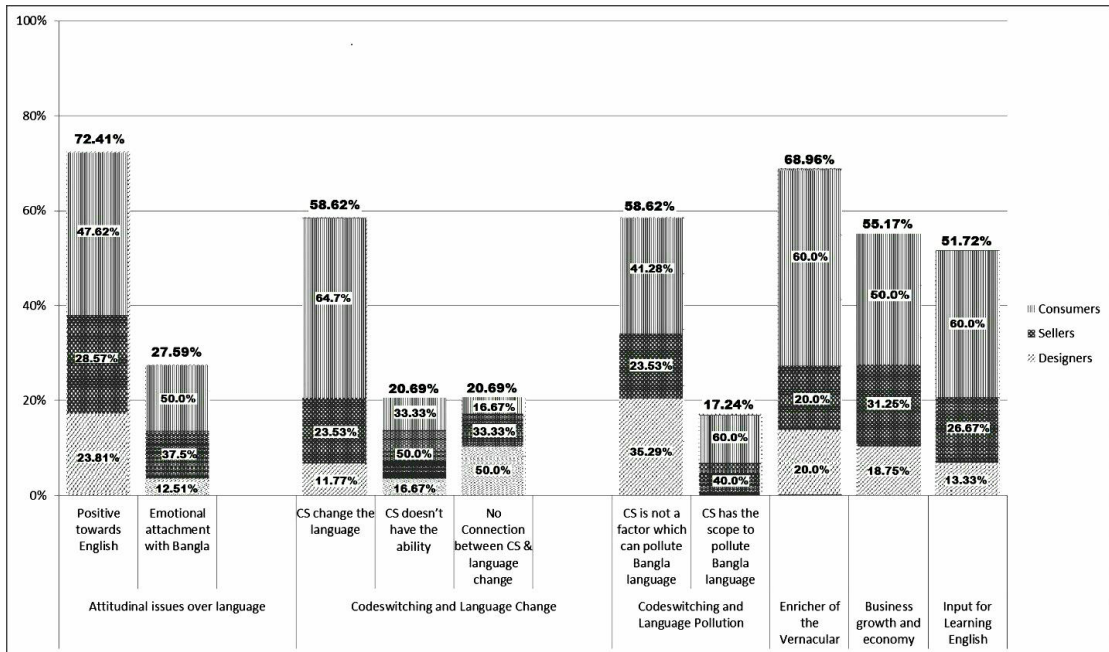
Figure 1: Effects of Code-switching

Attitudinal Issues over Language

Bangladesh is in the list of those few countries in the world where many people sacrificed their lives to save Bangla as the mother tongue during an agitation in 1952 against the then Pakistani rulers. So, glory, pride, and emotion can be found in every heart of Bangladesh. Though the number of participants (27.59%) who raised the issue is not a major portion but it can hardly be overlooked. Those participants recommended not to use code-switching and code-mixing broadly. Though they agreed about the limitations of Bangla language and exposed the need of merging with the contemporary world to enhance communication, they were also worried about the language. One of the participants became emotional and expressed his view in the following words:

> I don't support this. English should be English (with regard to use in advertisements) and Bangla should be Bangla (no mixing or switching).

The participants preferred Bangla in its original form. They were against mixing or switching languages to express feelings. Among those participants, consumers (50.0%) were more emotional than designers (12.51%) and sellers (37.5%). But a sense of emotion could be identified in all the participants. One of the sponsors said,

> I have to use technology to develop my skills. This is the time for self-development but during self-development we mustn't forget our roots.

However other participants (72.41%) did not bring this issue up. Rather, they showed a positive attitude towards the English language. Most of them refused to acknowledge that the English words were a foreign language. They wanted to consider it a part of the Bangla language. The sponsors showed their reluctance to mix this issue with emotion. They considered it from a professional point of view that the presence of English depicts modernization and globalization.

Code-switching and Language Change

The form and structure of a language is not a constant phenomenon. It is always changing for various reasons. Almost 60% of the participants of this study found code-switching as a possibility for language change. Though they were very aware that language change is not an overnight process, they were still worried about the integration of code-switching. The participants expressed that the use of code-switching could form a new dimension or structure in the Bangla language. Some of them referred to *Sadhu* and *Chalit* (varieties of the Bangla language) where *Sadhu* was used as both oral and written form at first. Then *Sadhu* remained only in the written form, like in the newspapers and books while *Chalit* became the norm for the oral. Later, *Chalit* became more commonly used in both oral and written form. Now, *Sadhu* is obsolete and the change is obvious. So, it might also be possible that use of code-switching can reach a standard of use in all forms of the Bangla language. One of the participants explained,

> Look at *The Daily Ittefaq* which was published in *Sadhu* language twenty years ago. Now it uses *Chalit*. But we can't guarantee that *Chalit* will remain in the newspaper because it can change after thirty years. Maybe, after mixing, it can reach another standard.

The participants were worried that with time, code-switching could trigger a new format in the Bangla language. However, it is important to mention that though the majority of the participants expressed their concern over code-switching as a language changer, they did not consider it as an immediate concern for the forseeable future. Among the rest of the participants, 20.69% did not find a connection between language change and code-switching. The other 20.69% expressed code-switching's inability to change the Bangla language because of the large number of native speakers.

Code-switching and Language Pollution

During data collection there was an interesting discovery. Though the participants expressed their concern over code-switching as a language change initiator of Bangla in the distant future, most of them (58.62%) thought that the use of code-switching in the advertisement posters in Bangladesh would not be a factor in polluting the language or deforming the words or meanings. They mentioned the presence of other code-switching in early Bangla literature and their zero effect on the Bangla language. One of the participants stated,

> For example, I heard one song by Nazrul, who created a song mixing Bangla and Urdu: Alga koro go khopar o badhon, dill wahi mera lutgaye. Code-switching was applied here a long time ago. My language has not become polluted … I don't think there is any need for concern about polluting the language.

Though some other participants (17.24%) had different arguments, the uncontrolled Bangla-English code-switching might deform or create new jargon in particular contexts. They also informed the researchers that the use of Bangla-English code-switching in the advertisement posters brought in a format in the written discourse that was limited only to oral discourse before. They referred to a term for this new format: *Banglish*.

Code-switching as Enricher of the Vernacular

Code-switching helps to develop languages and makes them more resourceful. This idea was developed by almost 70% of the total participants. According to them, use of Bangla-English code-switching had opened the resource store for Bangla language. New words, new diction, new phrases, new terms, new structures added a new dimension to the language. One of the participants responded very clearly on this issue. In his words,

> I think it becomes resourceful because more things are being included, more things are being communicated, new things have come, new words have come; complex words have come, so the aim of this is to communicate, and that broadened gradually.

This new vernacular helps copywriters in ad agencies describe their products and deliver the information about them more easily, smoothly, and clearly using more concise language. One of the participants said that the Bangla language became resourceful with the help of other foreign languages. To him,

> But what is the meaning of Bangla? Bangla means words taken from Sangskrit, French, Urdu, Hindi, English. If we list Bangla vocabulary, that (list) will be short. If we list foreign words, then it will be larger than (Bangla vocabulary) ten or twenty or thirty times. That means actually foreign words are many in the Bangla language. We not only have accepted them but also are using them in our everyday lives.

Business Growth and Economy

Consumers and sellers gave strong explanations about the growth of the business sector with a concentration of advertisements and use of code-switching in them. They considered code-switching successful in the advertisement industry as they attracted and influenced consumers to buy the product in its early days. 55.17% of the total participants depicted their views about the successful use of code-switching in the advertisement posters as well as the business sectors. According to them, as

the advertisement posters, containing code-switched texts, got more response, the manufacturers or the service providers became more interested to invest in this sector. One of the sellers acknowledged it as he said,

> Of course, it (application of code-switching) rose. As this type of application has risen, they are spending millions of dollars monthly for the ads. They are spending on the ad-makers and on the channels. They got some definite responses from those. That's why they are spending. Otherwise, they would not spend much.

The main goal of the manufacturer or service provider is to get the attention and responses of the consumers in order to increase the sale of their products or services. The consumers (50.0%) had the same belief as they admitted that code-switching successfully drew their attention which ultimately led them to become curious about the product or service.

Input for Learning English

Using code-switching in the advertisements, particularly in the advertisement posters in Bangladesh, had broadened the opportunity for learning English. At least 51.72% of the total participants explicitly or implicitly mentioned or agreed to such an idea. Some accepted its partial success in the context of learning vocabulary and their use in verbal and oral discourse. The use of English words in the advertisements became very common as the manufacturer or service provider needed to introduce the new terms, facilities, and features to the consumers. And this created a scope for people to become familiar with those words and their associative meanings. One of the participants elaborated his view on this issue:

> We did not know flexi or tab, laptop before. These words, like many words, we have learnt from advertisements. Actually we are not always conscious but I think we learn many words from advertisements.

On the other hand, some of the copywriters (25%) of the advertisement posters did not think in that way. They disagreed that there was any relation with teaching or learning. They explained that they were using words that were already familiar or had been previously introduced to the community. But a number of sellers (75%) accredited that the consumers referred to the same phrases or words displayed by the advertisements when buying those particular products or services. They added that though they did not know the Bangla meanings of those words or phrases but they could comprehend.

Results and Findings

The prime objective of an advertisement is to grab attention and attract consumers and English as a salient feature delivers that in the Bangladeshi advertisement posters through representation in Bangla-English code-switching (Sajib, 2020). Interestingly, the growth of such a linguistic form in the advertisement posters has influenced the lives of the language community, and that is reflected on the social, linguistic, and

economic sectors in Bangladesh. Bangla-English advertisements explicitly reflect the attitude of the language users towards language and culture as they are the "mirror of society" (Martin, 1998). It is a clear sign of adaptation according to the trend of globalization. Graddol (2006) believes that globalization and English supplement each other. The use of English in a Bangla text indicates that the product or service has attained the international standard. The manufacturers are very keen to retain the terminologies or names that originated in English-speaking countries. At the same time, it is taken for granted that those English words/phrases in the advertisements are understood. Besides the dominance of English and the attitude towards code-switching, advertisers' cultural sensitivity also has a major impact on the Bangla-English code-switching (Sajib, 2020). Especially in Bangladesh, the emotional attachment between the Bangla language and the people of Bangladesh cannot be ignored. Their judgment reflects their views, i.e., i) English sentences should consist of English words only and Bangla sentences should consist of Bangla ii) English words/phrases can only take the place of Bangla where Bangla words/ terminologies are absent. They believe that English will play the dislocational role and slowly displace Bangla (Kachru, 1986).

Bhatia (1992) says, "Advertisement authors do not hesitate to sacrifice grammaticality to achieve some high-level socio- and psycholinguistic effects" (p. 210). This is no different in the advertisements of Bangladesh. Still the language users in this community are least worried because of the change Bangla language has gone through over the years. Moreover, the possibility of enriching the Bangla vernacular is inevitable through the exploration of such linguistic forms. But the change in style, format, form, and structure of written and oral discourse can lead to a new genre or a variety like *Banglish.*

The connection between advertisements and selling products or services is undeniable. The popularity of Bangla-English code-switching encourages the manufacturers and sponsors to increase their investment as English-affiliated code-switched text can accelerate the brand image of the advertised services or products (Sajib, 2020). The consumers are accustomed to believing that advertised products associated with English are usually "more reliable and of superior quality" (Masavisut, Sukwiwat, & Wongmontha, 1986, cited in Martin, 1998, p. 162). Besides, code-switched advertisements not only help to grab the attention of the consumers but also shorten the length of a message in order to reach the consumers easily and smoothly; and this leads to an increased sale of the products/services and influence the sponsors or producers to invest more on such modes of linguistic application.

English has become the language of governments, education, advancement, jobs, and a symbol of self-improvement (Sindkhedkar, 2012). Especially in the South-Asian region, it is believed that one can be successful if he/she can use English outside the classroom as it has the ability to provide various choices in life (Rasheed, 2012). This led the community to involve themselves with anything related to English.

The dominance of English and the connection between the English language and economy motivates the inhabitants to learn English.

Discussion

Masavisut, Sukwiwat, and Wongmontha (1986, cited in Kachru, 1986) claim English as "the most potent instrument of social, political and linguistic change" (p. 136). The advertisements containing Bangla-English code-switching supports such a claim and direction to trigger changes in sociolinguistic, socio-cultural, and socio-economic contexts in Bangladesh. The involvement and the attitude towards English cannot be overlooked as the researchers observed that during interview sessions, the interviewees could not help applying code-switching in their speech and most of them went for Bangla-English code-switching. Interestingly, if we exclude from the participants the view of globalization and a strong presence of English in the advertised texts, it would be a problematic one which can be clearly comprehensible through the examples of Frolova (2014) who showed in her study how language could be a critical issue in advertisements. The examples are as follows,

> A well-known company General Motors had a fiasco, trying to bring to the markets of Latin America its new car Chevrolet Nova. Soon it became clear that "No va" in Spanish means "cannot move."

> In the U.S. in the advertising of the beer "Coors" then used the slogan "Turn It Loose!" (Be free). The literal translation of the slogan into Spanish has led to a masterpiece "Suffer from diarrhea."

> A perfume company Clairol has introduced in Germany its dry deodorants using the slogan "Mist Stick." In Germany it was found out that the word "Mist" in German slang means "manure."

> Pepsi has translated literally into Chinese its main advertising slogan "Come alive with the Pepsi generation." Chinese were shocked: the slogan has acquired an unexpected sounding "Pepsi makes your ancestors rise from their graves."

> Coca-Cola Company for a long time could not pick up their name for sale in China. The reason is that Chinese pronounce the name of this drink as "Kekukela" which means "Bite a waxy tadpole." The company was forced to move 40 thousand spellings of its brand before it was set to "Koka Kola," which means "Happiness in the mouth."

> The manufacturer of stationery Parker also tried to translate the slogan into Spanish. Its advertising of pens in English sounds: "It won't leak in your pocket and embarrass you." The translator made a mistake and mixed two Spanish words. As a result, Parker advertising campaign in Mexico was held under the slogan "It won't leak in your pocket and make you pregnant."

> American Airlines installed leather seats in their aircraft and decided to inform the Mexican consumers about it. The English slogan sounded perfect: "Fly in Leather." Literally translated, this expression has acquired a different meaning: "Fly Naked" (pp. 53-54).

However, these semantic and syntactic misinterpretations and misjudgments on Bangla-English code-switching were not observed in this study; so this could be marked as one of the limitations of this study. Besides, this study did not consider the government policy of using English in advertisements in Bangladesh which might have impacts on the political ground as in Thai television the use of foreign languages is restricted by the Thai communication policy (Masavisut, Sukwiwat, & Wongmontha, 1986). And of course, the addition of more participants covering more language communities would enrich the study. Interestingly, this study also developed a relationship between code-switching and economy as a handsome portion of participants accept the connection but an in-depth study would open the avenue not only to the researchers from the linguistics field but also to the researchers from other disciplines like business, sociology, economics, and so on.

Conclusion

The prime objective of this study was to show the effects of Bangla-English code-switching in the Bangla language community where the Bangla language not only enjoys the status of the mother tongue but also the status of the national as well as the official language. In addition, this study implicitly explores the power of the English language. Kachru (1986) refers to the view that "[T]he power of language is intimately connected with societal power of various types" (p. 122). He included the gaining of economic advantage to define the dimension of power. The findings clearly reflect an economic gain through the depiction of code-switching in the advertisement posters. However, the social impact of Bangla-English code-switching comes to the attitudinal issues which are definitely connected to the sentiment, emotion, and expectation of the consumers (Bhatia, 1992; Kachru, 1986). Some consumers made the copywriters and sponsors responsible for generating English-affiliated code-switched texts and suggested that they become more conscious and sensitive towards language choices. Interestingly, this study finds discomfort among the language users who lack a sufficient command of their mother tongue which led them to accept the code-switching form in their lexicon. Islam (2018) also comments,

> It is really a matter of discomfiture to switch codes due to the lack of sufficient command on our own language, Bangla. Consequently, everybody should enhance the knowledge on the Bangla vocabulary and should try to avoid conscious and frequent code switching. (p. 134)

These realizations might intrigue the policymakers to rethink the language policy to redefine the place of English because language does not only represent the economic

attachment but also bears the symbol of identity and culture of that language community (Holmes, 2001).

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Appendix A

Appendix B

Questionnaire for Advertisements producers/Copywriters:
1) How do you react when you see a text mixed with Bangla and English in an advertisement poster?
2) What response do you find after publishing an advertisement poster containing Bangla and English words in a same sentence or phrase?
3) How far do you think the texts with mixed codes have created an impact on commercial gain?
4) How far do the products/services advertised in a mixed language become successful to carry the tag of 'internationalization'?
5) Do you think the mixing of English and Bangla has the ability to change the Bangla language syntactically or semantically? Why?
6) Do you think that the mixing of Bangla and English in advertisement posters can form a threat to the Bangla language? Why do you think so?
7) How far is it possible to learn English from these mix-coded written texts? (Can the user generate meaning from such discourse? Why do you think so?)
8) Would you like to supplement/share any more opinion about the representation of Bangla and English in the advertisement posters?

Questionnaire for Sellers/ Service Providers:
1) How do you react when you see a text mixed with Bangla and English in an advertisement poster?
2) Do you support such form of language mixing in the advertisements? Why do you think so?
3) What is the reaction of the consumers when they see such mixture of Bangla and English words? Would you like to elaborate?
4) How far does this linguistic form influence the consumers to rush towards the products or services? Can you recall any incident where you can connect an advertisement containing the mix of Bangla and English languages relating to selling a product or providing a service? Can you explain it?
5) Does the mixture of English and Bangla words used in the advertisement posters make you interested in using English in your daily life? Why do you think so?
6) How far do you think the mixture of Bangla and English words in the advertisement posters affects the use of Bangla language?
7) Do you think the linguistic form generated in the advertisement posters has the ability to create a new language in the future? Why do you think so?
8) Would you like to supplement/share any more opinion about the representation of Bangla and English in the advertisement posters?

Questionnaire for Consumers:
1) How do you react when you see a text mixed with Bangla and English in an advertisement poster?
2) Do you support such form of language mixing in the advertisements? Why do you think so?
3) Do you think that the application of code-switching (mixing of Bangla and English languages) in the advertisement posters has anything to do with the real-life conversation? / How far

will you evaluate the use of Bangla-English mixed language in a same linguistic context? Is it anyway connected to the advertisement posters in Bangladesh?

4) Do these English words in the advertisement posters help people/you to learn English? / How far is it possible to learn English from such linguistic application applied in the advertisement posters?

5) Do you think that the mix of English and Bangla words in the advertisement posters encourages people to use in their daily conversations? Why do you think so?

6) Do you think the mixing of English and Bangla can restructure the Bangla language in a new form? Why do you think so?

7) How far do you consider the application of Bangla-English mixed narration in the written form of an advertisement poster as a threat to the Bangla Language?

8) Would you like to supplement/share any more opinion about the representation of Bangla and English in the advertisement posters?

Bangladeshi Undergraduates' Attitudes towards Teachers' Feedback on Midterm Scripts

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Abstract

This paper explores different kinds of feedback that teachers give on the midterm scripts and the students' attitudes towards these kinds of feedback. The total number of participants of this study was eighty-one. The participants were randomly chosen from the Departments of English of three private universities in Bangladesh. To collect the data a questionnaire with twenty-three items was used. The findings show that the students received three types of feedback more frequently (oral, written, and explicit) and the students preferred both oral and written feedback at times.

Keywords: Feedback, Attitudes, Midterm Scripts, Preferences, Problems

Introduction

Once, writing in a second language was typically deemed as a "product" that was assessed by a language teacher just to see if the produced write-up matched with the given sample (Karim & Ivy, 2011). However, this notion has changed, and now writing in a second language is viewed as a complex procedure, which involves two significant phrases like "revision and rewriting" (Bayat, 2014). Hence the concept of "feedback" has become pivotal in second language acquisition (SLA). Feedback can be provided in several formats (Ellis, 2008). However, most teachers usually give extensive written comments on students' writing activities in order to help the students improve their writing skills (Chalmers, Mowat, & Chapman, 2018; Higgins, Hartley, & Shelton, 2002; Hyland, 2003).

According to the previous studies, feedback has been proven effective if it is given properly. With constructive feedback, students can understand how to identify the problems and what they need to do next in their learning phase. A study by Rowe & Wood (2008) shows that the learners know and realize the necessity of feedback and they tend to use it for the improvement of their writings. Nonetheless, there is still a problem with teacher feedback. The problem is that a large number of teachers do not understand what specific type of feedback the students require.

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In the Departments of English (in selected private universities of Dhaka, Bangladesh), the undergraduates must sit for a midterm examination every semester (in both six month-long semesters of Spring and Fall) to be evaluated. Each student is given individual feedback on his/her handwritten exam scripts. In the scripts, all the examiners are required to mark the errors and give feedback where needed. The midterm scripts are always shown to the students to let them know how to overcome the errors. However, the effectiveness of feedback depends on how the teachers deliver them and what the learners' attitudes are towards teacher feedback. Hence, it is necessary to assess the major type of feedback, and the learners' perceptions toward teacher feedback.

Considering the above circumstances, this paper aims to examine undergraduate students' attitudes and expectations towards the feedback they receive on midterm scripts from their teachers in the English Departments of the selected private universities in Dhaka.

Literature Review

Several research studies have confirmed that written feedback is a powerful tool to develop students' writing abilities (Khan, 2013), and in tertiary level education, it plays a decisive role (Agricola, Prins, & Sluijsmans, 2020). However, giving feedback is not always an easy task. Giving written comments on the written tasks of every student is a very time-consuming and complicated process (Sadler, 2010) and for some reason, that feedback may prove ineffective. Its efficiency can be enhanced if the teachers ask their students about their feedback preferences beforehand (Agricola, Prins, & Sluijsmans, 2020). Once the teachers know about their students' expectations, they can easily adapt their feedback techniques accordingly (Ouahid & Lamkhanter, 2020).

Studies have shown that the most common type of teacher feedback is giving written comments, and identifying and correcting the errors in the script. Giving grades or marks is also part of the feedback process. Additionally, based on previous reports, there have been two types of feedback and they are formative (feedback is given throughout any course) and summative (feedback given at the end of a course). However, it is essential to mention here that the two major constituents of feedback, assessment and correction, are different from each other. Assessment is where the learner is just told about the performance (good or bad), and on the other hand, correction is where the learners are provided with information, often in-depth explanation (Ur, 2003, p. 242, cited in Karim & Ivy, 2011). Bangladeshi teachers at tertiary levels use both the components of feedback while grading a student. According to Hadzic (2016), teacher feedback mostly means the use of oral and written comments. Hadjic's (2016) paper, "Oral and Written Teacher Feedback in English as a Foreign Language Classroom in Sweden," focused on teacher feedback both in verbal and written form. The total number of participants was 67 and they

were from secondary school. The findings showed that teachers did not correct the learners all the time. They frequently used written feedback for giving both explicit and implicit feedback. Furthermore, teachers motivated the learners by providing oral comments.

Some previous studies have shown that written feedback is difficult to understand by the learners because of unclear written instructions. Zacharias's (2007) study indicates that learners have some trouble in reading written feedback provided by the instructors. In this study, 130 participants (100 students and 30 teachers) participated to respond to the questionnaire while 21 students and 10 teachers participated in the interview. The objective of the study was to figure out the major problems students have when they read teacher feedback. The results revealed three major problems. First, the general feedback was noted as the main problem in student understanding. For instance, if the teacher just wrote "many mistakes in grammar," the feedback would be too general to understand. The second difficulty was that students did not know how to correct the error while the third was the usage of complex words in the feedback.

Regardless, teacher feedback is very important for learners if they wish to progress in learning a target language successfully. Wu's (2003) study had a total of 94 participants including 60 male and 34 female learners who were 3rd year students of a High School. They were examined with two types of instruments including questionnaires and two sets of an individual semi-structured interview. The major finding showed that nearly 60% of the participants considered feedback to be powerful and beneficial for them in the correction of their errors. A similar finding was obtained by Cohen and Cavancanti which indicated that students accept teacher feedback eagerly because it is very helpful for them in understanding their errors and mistakes. Nonetheless, it has been observed that students' preference for written feedback is not usually taken into consideration while providing feedback in higher education (Agricola, Prins, & Sluijsmans, 2020). The literature recommends that written comments will be useful for students if their preferences and problems are not contemplated (Biswas, 2020). There will always be a rift between teachers and students if the teachers do not understand exactly where and why the students need thorough feedback (Sadler, 2010). Hence, this paper asks the following questions:

1. What major types of feedback do teachers provide on students' writing in midterm scripts?

2. How do students react towards teachers' feedback given on their writing in midterm scripts?

Methodology

Participants
This study was conducted on the 2nd and 3rd year students of the Departments of English of three Bangladeshi private universities located in Dhaka city. Eighty-one

participants responded to the questionnaire. Participants were selected from only among 2nd and 3rd year students based on convenience and purposeful sampling. They are taken as our subjects because, although students in the first year of studies in a university start to get feedback, many of them do not know how to respond to it properly. Only from the second year do students gradually understand what feedback means and how to respond to it. The third-year students have a very good idea about feedback and how to utilize it effectively. The fourth (final) year students are not included because, by that time, they fully understand the meaning and the use of feedback to improve their work.

Instrument

This is quantitative survey research. To study the major types of feedback and the learners' attitudes towards teacher feedback on midterm scripts, the researchers developed a questionnaire. A five-point Likert scale (1932) ranging from *always* to *never* and *from strongly agree* to *strongly disagree* was given after each statement. The responses were rated as *always/strongly agree* = 5, *usually/agree* = 4, *sometimes/neutral* = 3, *occasionally/disagree* = 2, and *never/strongly disagree* = 1. The researchers have expanded a technique from Lee's (2008) instrument to investigate the students' attitudes towards teacher feedback on their midterm scripts. This survey did not follow Lee's (2008) instrument completely but rather a modified questionnaire was employed to make it more appropriate to the context. This questionnaire has closed-ended items under 3 groups:

A) SECTION A: Instruction

B) SECTION B: Types of Feedback

      Sub-section 1: Oral Feedback

      Sub-section 2: Written Feedback

      Sub-section 3: Explicit Feedback

C) SECTION C: Attitudes

      Sub-section 1: Effectiveness

      Sub-section 2: Preference

The questionnaire has been provided in the appendix section (Appendix 1).

Findings and Discussion

The results of the questionnaire are presented in the tables and figure below:

B. Sub-section 1: Oral Feedback

Table 1: Teachers' oral feedback on midterm scripts (Percentages)

Statements	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always

1. Teachers tell me about my grammatical problems in the script.	18.00%	47.00%	39.26%	34.82%	54.06%
2. Teachers tell me about my content problems in the script.	24.00%	59.33%	41.67%	33.33%	64.22%
3. Teachers tell me about my organizational problems in writing.	74.75%	31.27%	50.22%	38.91%	31.40%
4. Teachers appreciate my creativity shown in the exam scripts.	58.00%	54.57%	37.00%	38.75%	39.73%
5. Teachers hold individual discussions with all of us to identify the errors thoroughly.	57.37%	42.87%	14.06%	33.78%	17.67%

Table 1 shows that 54.04% of students receive oral feedback in their midterm scripts. With regards to the content problem, 64.22% of students' responses show that they get oral feedback on the content of their writing. However, 74.75% of students opine that they do not receive oral feedback on the organization of answers. On the question of creativity shown in the exam scripts, 58% of students and 54.05% of students opine that they do not receive feedback in detail. 57.37% of students' responses indicate that they do not usually receive feedback through individual discussions. The analysis of this table also shows that most of the students receive oral feedback on grammar and content problems but not on the organization of their writing.

B. Sub-section 2: Students' attitudes on written feedback
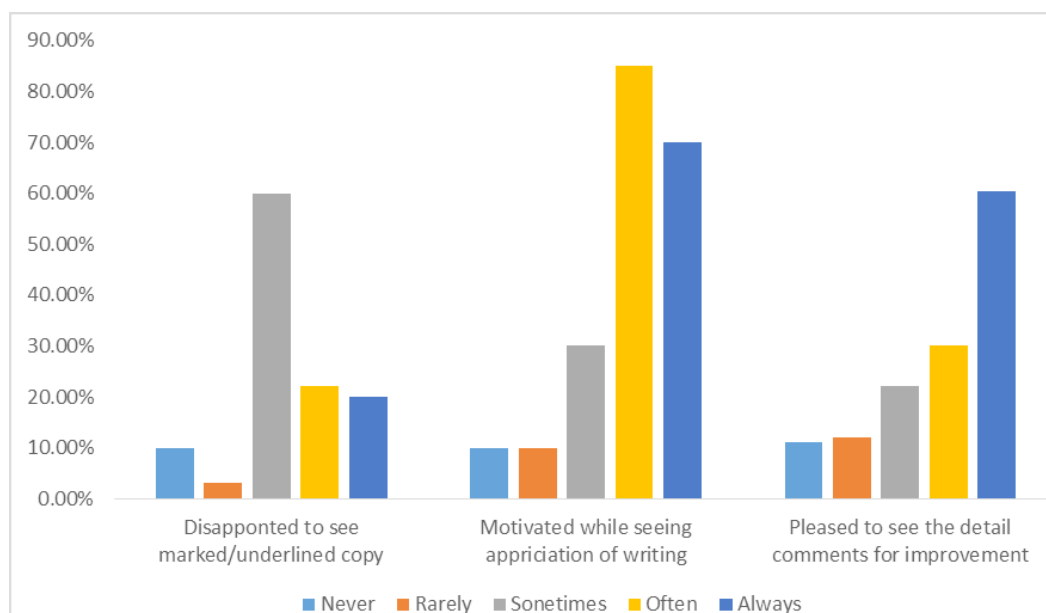

Figure 1: Students' attitudes on written feedback (Statements 6, 7, and 8 are illustrated in this figure)

In response to subsection 2, the analysis shows 60% of the students opine that

they feel quite disappointed to see the red-marked and underlined scripts from the teachers. The result also displays that 80% of the students feel motivated when the teacher appreciates their writing. Figure 1 illustrates that 60% of the students like it when teachers include detailed comments on how to improve their writing.

B. Sub-section 3: Explicit feedback (Students preferences)

Table 2: Explicit Feedback

Statements	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
9. I want the teacher to give detailed feedback on all the errors.	5%	25.75%	15.53%	42.15%	67.74%
10. I do not understand if the teacher gives feedback using signs (e.g., sp, gm, X or √) only.	10%	0%	12.35%	37.48%	70.81%
11. I understand better when the teacher categorizes the mistakes and explains them to me.	0%	0%	59.05%	30.38%	76.90%

Table 2 (three items included) lists the explicit feedback that the students get in their midterm scripts. The analysis shows that 67.74% of the students prefer detailed feedback from the teacher for each error. Furthermore, with regards to teachers' feedback using signs and symbols, 70.81% of the students noted difficulty in comprehension while 76.90% of students prefer teachers to categorize the mistakes and explain them to them while showing the answer papers.

C. Sub-section 1: Students' attitudes after reading the teacher feedback

Table 3: Attitudes (Effectiveness)

Statements	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
12. I feel like I knew how to correct the errors.	36.00%	63.50%	37.64%	36.25%	44.83%
13. I understand the feedback properly.	0%	12.00%	34.78%	32.34%	49.00%
14. I find the teachers' verbal feedback useful.	0%	42.18%	29.86%	38.73%	58.00%
15. I find the teachers' written feedback effective.	0%	36.5%	14.60%	38.10%	71.13%
16. I find the teacher's detailed feedback useful.	0%	8.00%	17.75%	55.31%	51.97%
17. I like it when teacher gives feedback individually.	0%	0%	35.00%	11.00%	42.12%
18. I feel quite embarrassed to discuss my own mistakes.	43.32%	39.89%	55.13%	39.33%	44.17%

Table 3 and its results measure whether the students feel positively or negatively about the effectiveness of the teachers' feedback. It demonstrates that 63.50% of the students rarely know how to correct their errors based on feedback. 49% of the

respondents assured that they understand teachers' feedback properly. It also shows that students prefer written comments over oral feedback. The results demonstrate that 55.31% of them often want detailed and individual feedback. However, some of the students are not hesitant about receiving feedback, but sometimes 55.13% of the learners feel embarrassed to discuss their mistakes in front of the other students.

C. Sub-section 2: Students' preference for better understanding

Table 4: Attitudes (Preference for better understanding)

Statements	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
19. Teachers should grade the scripts only.	55.26 %	42.13 %	37.74%	46.40%	31.17%
20. Teachers should verbally point out the errors and tell the ways to correct them.	0%	20.00%	45.56%	38.60%	57.77%
21. Teachers should give written comments on every question answered.	0%	15.60%	42.60%	47.94%	56.88%
22. Teachers should use detailed feedback on the midterm scripts.	10%	41.50%	34.50%	50.69%	39.67%
23. Teachers should use both oral and written feedback on the midterm scripts.	11.00%	8%	32.70%	57.27%	58.75%

In this section, 55.26% of the students show a negative attitude if the teacher only grades their scripts. Interestingly, 57.77% of the students want their errors to be verbally pointed out and corrected by the teacher. When it comes to the question of written comments, 56.88% of the students responded that they always prefer written comments on every answer. In fact, 50.69% of the respondents want explicit feedback on their midterm scripts. Chen, Nassaji, & Liu (2016) showed similar results among Chinese ESL students and their preference for detailed feedback from teachers.

In the present study, 57.27% of the students often and 58.75% of the students always prefer teachers' oral and written feedback on their midterm scripts. The question divided the participants into two groups, which shows some students prefer only grades and some expect detailed comments on their scripts. The above analysis demonstrates that the students expect detailed feedback in oral and written forms from their teachers.

Discussion and Implications

The data analysis from the above tables reveals that in the Bangladeshi context, students of the selected private universities receive oral, written, and explicit feedback on their midterm scripts, although the difference lies in the way and to what extent students receive the feedback. These findings can help us to figure out a response to the first research question of this paper.

This study reveals that most of the students do not receive feedback on the organizational problems in their writing. They also do not obtain appreciative comments on their creativity and well-written answers. They also demonstrate they do not comprehend the signs and symbols given in written feedback. The students often feel disappointed to see too many corrections on their scripts, and even when they receive oral feedback in front of the class, they often feel embarrassed.

In the Bangladeshi context, students are not usually familiar with the signs and symbols given on their written scripts. They also expect detailed comments on their writings regarding content and grammar. In fact, the result shows that they prefer both oral and written feedback through one-on-one interaction. Another study revealed that verbal feedback has a considerably greater influence on learners (Agricola, Prins, & Sluijsmans, 2020).

The results imply that the students generally have a preference for written corrective feedback on their writings.

Limitation
This study only focused on students' perceptions of teacher feedback. However, it did not take into account the external and internal influences that can affect teacher feedback. Hence, further research on the effects of external and internal factors on teacher feedback can be conducted. Additionally, the researchers designed a questionnaire to find out the students' expectations on the teacher feedback in midterm written scripts. No viva voce was included. Hence, the study could not include the learners' attitude on the teacher feedback regarding the development of the spoken language.

Moreover, according to Wenden (1991), open or semi-structured interviews along with a questionnaire to evaluate attitude make a survey design more appropriate. As the research was conducted on only 81 participants from three selected private universities, those instruments could not be utilized within the schedule. Furthermore, due to time constraints, interviews of the teachers could not be conducted either.

Conclusion and Recommendation
This research tried to focus on the categories of feedback from the teachers on midterm scripts and the students' viewpoints towards it. From the results, it is comprehensible that Bangladeshi undergraduates receive three major types of feedback: oral, written, and explicit. This study also points out that many teachers do not provide all the subtypes of oral, written, and explicit feedback. However, the researchers' experience tells that it may not always be possible to give both oral and written detailed feedback individually. The students should also understand that teachers cannot always provide thorough feedback due to issues like large classrooms, time constraints, and marks-oriented culture. Hence, cooperation between the teachers and the students is required to improve students' writing skills.

It is to be noted that many Bangladeshi language teachers are not well trained in providing feedback to the students, particularly on the examination scripts. Moreover, this study did not investigate whether the teachers arranged any follow-up activities with the students to discuss the feedback in detail. Hence, these limitations of this paper are suggested for further investigation.

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Appendix 1

Scale: Likert Scale:

1 - Never
2 - Rarely
3 - Sometimes
4 - Often
5 - Always

Questionnaire

Dear students,

The purpose of this survey is to examine what type of feedback the teachers use in the mid-term script in the Department of English, and what approaches the students have towards these feedbacks. All of your responses will be kept confidential and anonymous.

Thank you.

Section: A

Instruction: The following statements are about the feedback the teachers give you in your midterm scripts and how you actually feel about them. Please tick the box below for each statement which you think is most appropriate for you. There is no right or wrong answer. Answer according to your actual attitude about the statements.

Section B: Types of Feedback

Sub-section 1: Oral Feedback from Teachers					
Statements	**Never**	**Rarely**	**Sometimes**	**Often**	**Always**
1. Teachers tell me about my grammatical problems in the script.					
2. Teachers tell me about my content problems in script.					

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
3. Teachers tell about my organizational problems in writing.					
4. Teachers appreciate my creativity shown in the exam scripts.					
5. The teachers hold individual discussion with all of us to identify the errors thoroughly.					

Sub-section 2: Students attitude on Written Feedback					
Statements	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
6. I feel disappointed when the teachers underline/circle many parts of the written script.					
7. I feel motivated when the teacher gives thorough comments to praise my own point of view.					
8. I like when the teacher gives detailed comments to improve in my writing.					

Sub-section 3: Explicit Feedback (Student's Preferences)					
Statements	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
9. I want the teacher to give feedback to detailed feedback to all the errors					
10. I do not understand if the teacher gives feedback using signs (e.g., sp, gm, X or √) only					
11. I understand better the teacher categorizes the mistakes and explains them to me.					

Section C: Attitudes

Sub-section 1: Students' attitudes after reading the teacher feedback					
Statements	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
12. I feel like I knew how to correct them					
13. I understand the feedback properly.					
14. I find the teachers' verbal feedback useful.					
15. I find the teachers' written feedback effective.					
16. I find the teacher's detailed feedback useful.					
17. I like when teacher gives feedback individually.					
18. I feel quite embarrassed to discuss my own mistakes.					

Sub-section 2: Students' preferences for a better understanding					
Statements	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
19. Teachers should grade the scripts only.					
20. Teachers should verbally point out the error and tell the ways to correct them.					
21. Teachers should give written comments on every question answered					
22. Teachers should use detailed feedback on the midterm scripts.					
23. Teachers should use both oral and written feedback on the midterm scripts.					

Questionnaire adapted and modified from the instrument prepared by Icy Lee (2008)

The Writing Process and Formative Assessment

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Abstract

The writing process has been an integral part of writing pedagogy for many years. However, both students and instructors in some contexts might be resistant to writing through the process approach because it is unfamiliar and seems laborious and time-consuming. Teachers in contexts with large classes might be especially resistant to teaching writing as a process. However, the writing process can be carried out in any context though some adaptation might be needed, depending on the context. Many researchers and instructors have written about the writing process, and many have written about formative assessment. However, these two constructs have generally been considered separately when they actually work in tandem. The purpose of this paper is to explain the process approach to writing pedagogy and how it can be implemented along with ideas and techniques for using formative assessment. The paper starts with an explanation of the product approach and the process approach. Then it explains each stage of the writing process and how it can be carried out in the composition classroom along with formative assessments that can be used at each stage in the writing process.

Keywords: Writing Process, Formative Assessment, Writing Pedagogy, Writing Instruction, Feedback

Introduction

You return an underdeveloped paper to a student and suggest that they might like to look over it again and revise. The student gives you a puzzled look and tells you the paper *is* finished. You wonder why this student has no interest in doing more work on a paper that so obviously needs it, but this is not the first time you have faced a refusal when trying to get a student to revise. Many of your students have no interest in revising their writing, and are seemingly not aware that their writing needs more work. This is coupled with an inability to tackle a revision on their own. What is it in their background that has led them to believe that a piece of writing can be finished in one session? When students are taught to write through a product approach, they learn writing as a one-shot ordeal. They are taught to write a paper, submit it, get a grade, and move on to the next writing task. However, polished writing is rarely achieved in one go. Students need to learn how to write using a process.

In my experience teaching university composition courses in EFL contexts, I found

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that many of my students were averse to revising their writing assignments. This sort of resistance is rooted in the culture of writing instruction to which they had previously been exposed. While writing practice is important to writing improvement, so is feedback. In fact, Sommers's (2004) research has shown that feedback is one of the most important aspects of helping students learn to write. Product-oriented instruction provides students with minimal, if any, feedback. Some contexts (cultures, countries, institutions) might still approach writing instruction with the goal of having students write a lot rather than helping them improve their writing through a process approach. Tsui (1996), in her now much-cited article, explained her experience of teaching writing as a process in a context focused on a traditional, product-oriented approach to writing instruction. Tsui (1996) ultimately decided that the best approach in her context was a modified process approach. Decisions about pedagogy lie with the instructor but are influenced by the socio-cultural context in which they are enacted. Instructors working in contexts that still favor a product orientation could consider how a process approach could improve their students' writing and find methods and strategies of teaching a process that are feasible within that context. The purpose of this paper is to introduce the writing process, explain why the writing process is an important part of writing instruction, and enumerate ways that instructors can provide formative assessment at each stage in the writing process.

The Current-traditional Approach

Before getting into the writing process and process pedagogy, it is important to have an understanding of the current-traditional approach, or current-traditional rhetoric – also sometimes referred to as the product approach (Kroll, 2001). The current-traditional approach earned its name because of its long history in writing pedagogy and because it is still very much in practice (Anson, 2014; Crowley, 1996; Glau, 1999). In essence, the current-traditional approach maintains a focus on instruction geared toward the final written product over the process necessary to achieve it (Anson 2014; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014; Glau, 1998). The current-traditional approach is often characterized by a literature-based approach to teaching composition whereby students analyze and write about literature (Anson, 2014; Farris, 2014; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014) and emphasizes a focus on grammatical features of language (Berlin, 1987; Farris, 2014; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014; Glau, 1998). Students are often assigned writing in specific discourse modes, namely EDNA: expository, descriptive, narrative, and argumentative (Berlin, 1987; Farris, 2014; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014; Glau, 1998) and expected to diligently follow certain rhetorical conventions, such as the five-paragraph essay with introduction, conclusion, and three body paragraphs (Berlin, 1987; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014). The current-traditional approach often uses model texts (frequently by professional writers) that students are expected to study and then imitate to some degree in

their writing (Anson, 2014; Glau, 1998; Richards, 2015). In the current-traditional approach, feedback on student work is often limited to a final grade and marginal or end comments (Anson, 2014).

The Process Approach

In the sixties and seventies, a paradigm shift in writing instruction came about with the emergence of the process approach. The biggest change from the current-traditional paradigm to the process paradigm was a shift in focus from written product to a focus on both product and process (Anson, 2014; Nation, 2009), i.e., in the process approach, students are provided with steps and strategies that lead from blank page to final product. Although there is no one exact framework for the process approach, there are certain features that characterize it (Graham & Perin, 2007; Nagin, 2006; Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006). In the process approach, writers carry out cycles of planning, writing, and revising. Other common features of process pedagogy include an awareness of audience, context-dependent writing, and student-centered teaching (Carter, Miller, & Penrose, 1998). Students' ownership of their own texts is stressed, as is reflection and feedback (Graham & Sandmel, 2011). While this paper outlines a process approach, it is important to understand that there is no one exact process (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014) i.e., each writer has their own process, and each writing instructor might approach the task of teaching the writing process differently.

Generally, the steps of the writing process are outlined as prewriting, drafting, revision, editing, and publication although names of the steps and the number of steps vary. The writing process is not strictly linear whereby one step always neatly follows the other. In fact, the writing process is usually recursive (Anson, 2014; Harmer, 2004; Lassonde & Richards, 2013; Nation, 2009; Perl, 2008; Richards, 2015) and it is important for writing teachers to help students understand this. For instance, although prewriting is the first step, planning often takes places through the entire process as the writer discovers new ideas and different ways of approaching a task, and revision often takes place continuously as a writer drafts. Although the process approach has been supplanted by other composition and writing theories, marking a social turn in writing studies and instruction, all writing is necessarily produced by some sort of process, and all students should be introduced to writing as a process.

Why Teach the Writing Process?

Most writers do not produce a polished piece of writing the first time they draft, and, in fact, most writers go through numerous revisions before they have a finished piece (Downs, 2016; Perl, 2008; Yan, 2005). Teaching writing as a process can help build confidence and reduce writing anxiety (Bayat, 2014). Product approaches can lead students to falsely believe that they must produce a polished piece of writing the first time they write a draft. For some students, this belief makes writing a painful

experience when they cannot immediately produce what they had envisioned (Perl, 2008). Writing is often much improved when writers create several drafts influenced by reflection and feedback (Downs, 2016). Additionally, guiding students through the writing process can help prevent plagiarism (Hamlin, 2011). Students might plagiarize because they see what good writing looks like (often through model texts or reading assignments), but have not developed a composition process, so they borrow from already published texts. Perhaps, however, the most significant reason to teach the writing process is its potential application for future writing tasks, whether those tasks are for academic or other purposes. It is not possible or even desirable to prepare students to write in every possible genre or rhetorical mode they might need in the future. However, writing instructors can teach students a writing process, a skill that can be applied to any or all future writing tasks. Research on the effects of the writing process has shown positive results. In a meta-analysis of studies on the process approach, Graham and Sandmel (2011) found that the process approach improved the overall quality of writing of students in general education classes, and in her research, Susanti (2013) found that students who had learned to compose using a writing process had a significant increase in the quality of their writing over students who had not been introduced to the writing process.

What Is Formative Assessment?

Understanding formative assessment requires first understanding summative assessment. Summative assessment is assessment of learning, ending with a grade that counts, often at the end of an assignment or course (Benjamin, 2008; Brown & Abedywickrama, 2018). For writing assignments, summative assessment typically means a score on a written assignment (Benjamin, 2008). Formative assessment, in contrast, is assessment for learning; formative assessment is ungraded feedback that lets students know what they have done well and gives them guidance on what they can do to improve. Formative assessments are not only beneficial for students however, they are also important for teachers as they inform instructional changes (Benjamin, 2008; Brown & Abedywickrama, 2018; Nation, 2009; Overmeyer, 2009). Formative assessment in writing can take many forms and might be carried out by the teacher, peers, or fellow student writers (Graham, Harris, & Hebert, 2011). A review of the research on formative assessment in writing instruction has shown that formative assessment improves student writing (Graham, Harris, & Hebert, 2011).

Stages of the Writing Process and Formative Assessment Activities

The prewriting stage of the writing process

Prewriting activities are designed to help writers generate ideas and get them down on paper. According to Graham and Perin (2007), prewriting activities have a positive impact on writing. In particular, English language learners benefit from direct instruction of planning activities and methods (Lassonde & Richards, 2013).

During a prewriting exercise, students should be encouraged to come up with as many unedited ideas as possible. One of the best ways to help students learn how to prewrite is to model prewriting exercises. Modeling can come in the form of doing exercises together as a class (works well with brainstorming), or the instructor can do exercises at the same time as the students (works well with freewriting). Each writer is different, and each writer plans differently (Lassonde & Richards, 2013); instead of expecting students to use certain planning activities for certain writing tasks or to plan the same way for every writing task, it is better to introduce students to a variety of methods for planning and let them decide which ones work best for them (Lassonde & Richards, 2013). This does not have to be done all at once. Different prewriting exercises can be introduced throughout a course. It is important, however, that students understand that there are many different ways to plan a writing task.

Prewriting activities

Some types of pre-writing activities are more generative, designed to bring forth a rush of ideas, such as brainstorming and freewriting, while others have more control and organization, such as graphic organizers or outlines. Because of this, it can be beneficial to guide students in doing a generative prewriting activity before putting writing into the mold of an outline or graphic organizer. For some students, starting with an outline or graphic organizer could inhibit the process of planning rather than fostering it.

Freewriting

Freewriting means writing down everything that comes to mind without concern for errors or the production of a coherent text. Freewriting can be completely open or focused on a particular topic. When introducing freewriting, it is important to emphasize writing without stopping. When stuck for ideas, writers can write sentences such as *I cannot think of anything to write* until ideas come to mind. When students freewrite in class, give them a set amount of time. For writers not familiar with freewriting, start with three to five minutes and later increase the time.

Example of a focused freewriting exercise

Topic: Community service

Community service. What does it really mean? Our teachers and parents say that it is important. Maybe they are right, but what kind of community service is good? I guess there are many different kinds of community service, like working at a homeless shelter, volunteering at an animal shelter, or maybe some other kinds of service. Ah… what else do I want to say? It's something about the right kind of community service… Of course, community service must be about helping the community in some way, but sometimes you wonder if what you do for community service is really helping. If I volunteer to do a park clean-up, I wonder if that is really helping or whether that work would be recognized by anyone. I guess that, the most important part of community service is to find a project that I feel is helping and something that I like to do.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming means to list all ideas that come to mind about a particular topic. Ideas can be written in the form of words, phrases or sentences, or a combination. The emphasis is on getting ideas on paper rather than the form they take. Like freewriting, brainstorming should be quick and uncensored. Brainstorming can also be done very effectively in groups, whereby students share their ideas about a topic and one member of the group writes them down. Tsui (1996) reported that students greatly benefited from the synergy of group brainstorming – even over whole class brainstorming.

Example of a brainstorming exercise

Topic: Why I want to study abroad

List:
- Interact with different cultures
- Improve language skills
- See life from a different perspective
- Meet people from different countries
- Might help me get into graduate school
- Become a global citizen

Recording Ideas

Richards and Miller (2005) suggested allowing students to record ideas on a device (such as a phone or computer). Recording ideas can be especially useful for students who have difficulty writing quickly enough to get ideas on paper. If needed, lower-proficiency students can record their ideas in their native language so they do not forget them. As they listen, students can select and rearrange their ideas (Richards & Miller, 2005). Recording can also be done for group brainstorming activities.

Graphic Organizers

A graphic organizer is a structure that helps writers visualize and organize their content. Graphic organizers are often simple drawings with lines and circles that students fill in with their ideas. You can show students graphic organizers by writing

them on the board and having students copy them in their notebooks or providing them with handouts with graphic organizers.

Sample graphic organizer
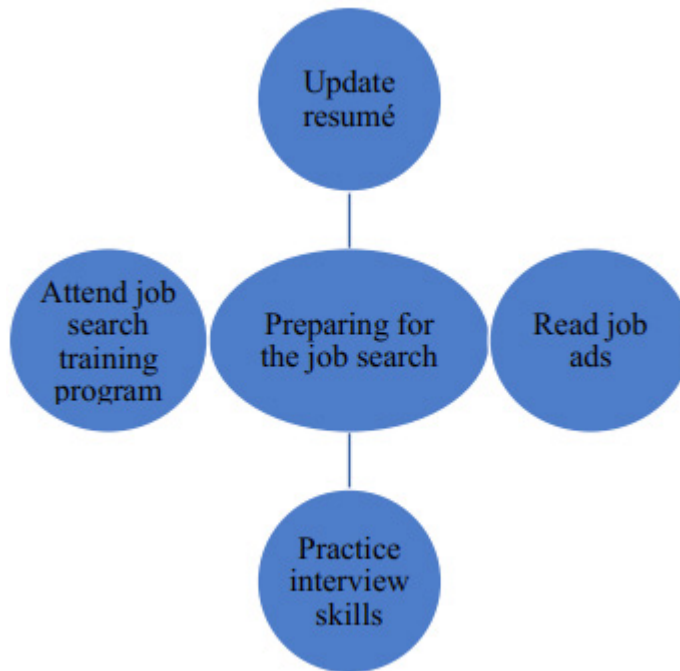
Outlining
An outline is a linear structure of a piece of writing consisting only of main points.

Example:

Topic: Exercise has many important benefits.

- A. Can prevent health problems
    1. Helps maintain proper blood pressure
    2. Decreases risk of heart disease and diabetes
    3. Can help skin health
- B. Makes people happier
    1. Helps relieve anxiety and stress
    2. Can prevent feelings of depression
    3. Fosters a positive outlook
- C. Promotes fitness
    1. Helps maintain a healthy weight
    2. Builds and maintains strong bones and muscles
    3. Improves strength and endurance

It is important that students understand they are not obligated to follow the information from any sort of prewriting activity faithfully. They should understand that it is normal to alter and change ideas as they draft. While graphic organizers and outlines can provide a useful framework for developing a piece of writing, they are guides, not templates that must be adhered to. Personal experiences have shown that some writing teachers deduct points for outlines that do not match drafts exactly. However, this sort of rigidity is counterproductive to teaching the writing process. Many writers make changes to their writing after they start drafting, and outlines are often different from drafts, sometimes substantially so.

Formative Assessment Following a Prewriting Activity

After a prewriting activity, assessment should be broad and open with the focus on whether students were able to generate a range of ideas (Benjamin 2008). If students had difficulty coming up with enough ideas, suggest revisiting a preliminary prewriting activity or doing some research on the given topic. In some cases, it might be important to suggest a topic change. Conversation can be invaluable at this point. Through discussion with a peer or peers, students might be able to narrow down some of their ideas or find out which ones hold the most interest for them. These discussions can be rather free in nature, whereby students simply talk about the ideas generated during the prewriting exercise, or students can read their prewriting exercises to a peer or peers who respond.

Teachers can model how they would use a prewriting activity to narrow down their ideas. For example, students can be shown a piece of freewriting done by the teacher and the changes made to it. Teachers may also model a "think aloud" process to show how they make decisions before starting a draft.

Example of the "think aloud" process

On second thought, I don't think number of shopping centers is relevant to the topic of quality of life in a big city. I'm not so sure the number of parks really has an impact. But high cost of living, crime rates, bad traffic – those seem really important. I think those are my main supporting details.

Drafting

In the drafting stage, students produce a first draft from their prewriting exercise. At this stage, the focus is on creating a complete piece of writing, not a finished work. When drafting, writers should not be too concerned about errors. For most writers, early drafts are often awkward pieces of writing that improve with revision. Proficient writers understand that good writing is rewriting, but often novice writers do not (MacArthur, 2013; MacArthur, 2016; Nation, 2009). Students who are used to a product-oriented approach will need encouragement and direction for understanding that a first draft is a beginning and that further changes can be made in subsequent stages (Harmer, 2004). Although drafting is mentioned as one stage

in the writing process, in fact, drafting can, and often should, happen multiple times at different stages in the writing process. The number of drafts might be determined by the writing task. An email might need one revision, but a research paper might call for numerous revisions. At this point in the writing process, showing students sample drafts for the genre they are writing in can be useful. These samples could come from drafts written by students in previous courses, drafts that the teachers themselves have written, or sample drafts from a textbook. Showing samples of drafts can help students understand that a draft is not a finished piece of writing.

Formative Assessment after Drafting

At this stage, formative assessment often focuses on the macro-features of writing, such as content, organization, and development of ideas. Feedback at this stage is not meant to result in a polished piece of writing but is intended to move the writing forward to the next step in the writing process (Benjamin, 2008). Though the focus is generally on big-picture feedback following a draft, at this stage, teachers might want to point out a couple of patterns of language errors that students can attend to during their revision (Ferris, 2011). Doing so can be effective in helping students improve grammatical accuracy over time. Post-drafting formative assessments can be realized by teacher feedback, classmate feedback (peer-editing), or author feedback (self-editing) (Benjamin, 2008; Nation, 2009). Ideally, the instructor would use all three forms of feedback for each assignment, but, in reality, this is often cumbersome. The instructor might take into account students' proficiency levels and preferences when deciding which feedback types to utilize, or, for each assignment, the instructor might use one form or a combination of two. Benjamin (2008) recommends working in thirds, whereby the class is split into three groups, each group getting one form of assessment. For instance, group A gets teacher feedback; group B does peer feedback; group C does self-editing. For each assignment, the form of feedback is rotated so that students have different kinds of feedback on their drafts and get teacher feedback on a third of their assignments (Benjamin, 2008).

Conferencing

Conferencing is a useful method for giving feedback on a draft. Some of the murkiness in a writer's draft or the vagueness of teacher-written comments can become clearer when student and teacher meet face-to-face (Bean, 2011; Ferris, 2011; Ferris, 2014; Glenn & Goldthwaite, 2014; Maliborska & You, 2016). In fact, conferencing might be more useful than written feedback (Glenn & Goldthwaite, 2014; MacArthur, 2013; MacArthur, 2016; Hyland, 2003) and more efficient (Glenn & Goldthwaite, 2014) as it can reduce the time needed for writing margin and end comments. Conferences should be interactive, whereby both student and teacher speak (Glenn & Goldthwaite, 2014; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014; Nation, 2009). Prior to conferencing with students, instructors should read over the

assignments and be ready to talk about them. It might be helpful to make a few notes while reading. To help students prepare for a conference, Jackson (2013) and Nation (2009) recommend giving students a list of questions. (See sample below.) If individual conferences are difficult due to large class sizes and time constraints, consider holding group conferences of four to five students. In a group conference, focus on common issues that were noticed when reading drafts (Bean, 2011; Hyland, 2003). At the end of a conference, students should have a clear idea of what they will do next to move their writing forward (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014; Glenn & Goldthwaite, 2014; Hyland, 2003; Jackson, 2013; Nation, 2009).

Sample list of useful expressions for conferences

Expressing difficulty
I'm having difficulty/trouble with _____.
I'm not sure how to _____.

Expressing doubts
I'm not sure about _____.
What do I need to improve?
Do I need to cut/add anything from this piece of writing?
Did I follow the assignment correctly?

Getting help
How can I get more help with my writing?
Where can I find more information on _____?

Editing
In the editing stage, a piece of writing is corrected for surface errors, such as spelling, mechanics, and grammatical issues. This does not mean, however, that every error should be corrected. Generally, in a course that is focused on helping students improve their writing, favor selective error correction, which attends to a few errors at a time over comprehensive error correction, which attends to all errors in a piece of writing. Comprehensive error correction can be counterproductive: It can be exhausting for the teacher and overwhelming for the student (Ferris, 2011). There are writing tasks and written products, of course, that need comprehensive error correction, such as an essay for university application or a resume. Additionally, for some assignments, teachers might want students to understand the importance of careful editing of the entire piece of writing (Ferris, 2011) and, therefore, will employ comprehensive error correction, but for most assignments, selective error correction is preferable. Correction codes and mini-guides can be used to help students locate and correct errors. With a correction code or mini-guide, teachers can point out errors, but the students themselves do the work to figure out the mistakes and make corrections. Students can work on their corrections alone or get help from resources such as writing center tutors and peers.

Correction Code

A correction code is a collection of symbols that represent common errors. For example, s-v means subject-verb agreement error, v-t means a problem with verb tense. When using a correction code, teachers underline the error and write the code above it. Before marking student papers with a correction code, a training session may be conducted where students are given the correction code to be used throughout the course and a paper with errors. Students should locate the errors and mark them with appropriate symbols.

Sample correction code

s-v	subject-verb agreement
v-t	verb tense
p	punctuation
wo	wrong word order
prep	problem with a preposition
cap	capitalize
lc	lowercase

Mini-guide

A mini-guide can be created to help students proofread their drafts. A mini-guide is based on the common errors students make and includes rules and examples. In the editing stage, students check their work against the guide and make corrections. The mini-guide can be adapted and updated as the course progresses (Hess, 2001).

Sample Mini-guide

Rule: Capitalize the pronoun *I*.
Example: When I went to the store, I took my handbag.
Rule: Capitalize the names of languages.
Example: I want to study English, French, and Chinese.
Rule: Capitalize the first word of a sentence.
Example: We will leave at five today.

(Truncated mini-guide, adapted from an idea by Hess, 2001, p. 104)

The Publication Stage

In the writing process, publication means that a final product is presented to an audience of some sort (Bayat, 2014; Benjamin, 2008). Some possible forms of publication are books of student writing, class newspapers or magazines, videos of students reading their writing, student blogs or other online publications, posters of student writing displayed on classroom walls, or students reading their writing in small groups or to the class. Although publication suggests finality, all writers are continuously learning. Publication of student work not only serves to motivate; it can also help students with ideas and direction for future writing when they see how their classmates approached a writing task.

Formative Assessment Following Publication

Feedback following publication is feedback for future writing. At this stage, the focus is on content (Benjamin, 2008). As with other forms of feedback, it is important to provide students with guidance so that they have direction for providing feedback. This can be with a structure – a rubric, a checklist, or guided questions – and can be executed in written or oral form or both. The focal points for this formative assessment were likely already covered in previous assessments; e.g., if the assignment focused on a persuasive essay, then the focal points in the formative assessment following publication will still relate to the important elements of a persuasive essay.

Sample formative assessment structure for published writing

The writer's position is clearly stated. _____ Yes _____ No
The writer gave sufficient support. _____ Yes _____ No
The writer's arguments were convincing. _____ Yes _____ No
From this piece of writing, I learned _____.
What I like most about this piece of writing was _____.
The questions I have for the writer are _____.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have outlined the steps of the process approach and formative assessments that can be used following each step in the process. I believe that teaching writing as a process is important for students' future academic and professional writing. It is important to keep in mind that there is no one exact process and that each individual writer will develop their own unique process. Nonetheless, because of the many benefits of the process approach, helping students develop process-writing skills is an important part of writing pedagogy that writing instructors need to enact. Process writing can help students no matter what type of writing tasks or assignments they might have in the future as it is applicable to any kind of writing. Teachers of large classes might have to think differently about how they organize their classes (classes, lessons, curriculum), but the process approach can be carried out in any writing classroom.

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Book Review

Adventures of a Scholar Gypsy:
## The Life and Work, So Far, of Bruce King

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An Interesting Life, So Far: Memoirs of Literary and Musical Peregrinations
Bruce King
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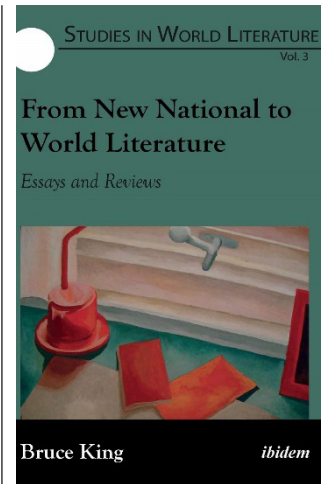
From New National to World Literature: Essays and Reviews
Bruce King
Studies in World Literature, Vol. 3
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Bruce King became a literary celebrity in India with the publication of *Modern Indian Poetry in English* (OUP, 1987). The book is only the tip of the proverbial iceberg. The two books under review offer a broad view of what lies underneath.

After several false starts to the memoir, King pulled out all the stops and just let it flow. The result is a rambling narrative combining reminiscence, portraits – often waspish – of diverse personalities, confession, humorous anecdotes; out of all this the serious student of literature can extrapolate a fascinating history of modern literary studies and contemporary – mainly postcolonial – writing.

Born in 1933, of Russian Jewish stock, and named Alvin G (for Gilbert) King, he later chose to be Bruce, dropping the G altogether. At twelve he lost his father to a serious illness, and never found out what the original family name was; "King," he surmises, was an immigration official's gift.

His relations with his widowed mother were fraught with tension, her possessiveness pitted against his desire for freedom; but she did pay for his higher education and helped out when he married while a doctoral student. Childhood and adolescence were dominated by reading, jazz, and dreaming of escape. After a colourful academic career teaching and researching for decades in four continents, all the while keeping up his musical interests, playing the drums in various places, writing on jazz, dancing – wife Adele an enthusiastic and graceful partner – he longed for a secure professorship in America, but no university would have him; his peregrinations seem to have ended, leaving him a contented Parisian.

First step towards freedom: Columbia College, 1950-54. The faculty included such academic stars as Lionel Trilling, Richard Chase, Eric Bentley, whose attitude towards the rising New Criticism was dismissive. Trilling, great critic though he was, tended to be "haughty, pretentious," with a "vicious tongue," a volatile temper, and, it later came to light, a drink problem. King "asked in class for him to explain what he meant by saying something in a Wordsworth poem was 'basic' like an episode he alluded to [sic: in] was 'basic' and was told that if he threw me down the stairs and jumped on me that would be 'basic'."

"From the threat of throwing me down the stairs," King wryly comments, "I learned something important about life, my literary and cultural heroes could be awful in real life, and it was time I grew up and stopped thinking of myself as unique. That might have been the most important lesson I learned at Columbia."

To everyone's surprise, King chose to pursue graduate studies in a red brick university in bleak, industrial northern England. The initial attraction of Leeds was the presence on the faculty of G. Wilson Knight, perhaps the most original Shakespearean critic of his generation. His first year-long stint at Leeds was spent taking advanced undergraduate courses, taught by Wilson Knight, Arnold Kettle, and the department head, Bonamy Dobree. Lectures could be unexpectedly entertaining: "Wilson was endearingly hopeless. His lectures on Tragedy brought out paradoxes and absurdities; he would start laughing and tears literally rolled down his cheeks. Lectures on Comedy were tragic, no one laughed or smiled or even found anything amusing." King's life would also change in a more intimate way when on board the trans-Atlantic ship he met his future wife, Adele, a first-rate scholar in her own right, specializing in Francophone literature.

But there was more: Leeds was about to revolutionize English studies, and King would enthusiastically join the revolutionaries when, newly married, he went for doctoral studies (1957-60). The head of the newly formed School of English,

result of a merger of the Literature and Language departments, was headed by the dynamic Yeats scholar, Norman "Derry" Jeffares. He expanded the curriculum to include Irish and American and Commonwealth literature, a pioneering move, and later, "Bibliographical Studies, Folklore, Stylistics, and Performance Theatre." The Leeds School of English became an academic powerhouse, attracting international students, many of them from the new Commonwealth countries, and including both literature students and those interested in language teaching. This was long before Postcolonial Theory reared its head, or ELT and TESOL became a lucrative global industry. My colleagues will remember that in the sixties a number of young college and university teachers from this country took postgraduate diplomas from Leeds. Celebrity alumni included Wole Soyinka, Tony Harrison, and James Simmons, who was also a recipient of the Gregory Award, instituted at Leeds, as were Jon Silkin, John Heath-Stubbs, and Thomas Blackburn.

At the same time, Leeds sent out alumni to teach in far-flung postcolonial institutions. King's doctoral dissertation was on Dryden's plays, on which he published a book; his other studies of mainstream English Literature included books on *Coriolanus* and Marvell, a *History of Seventeenth-century English Literature,* and, among moderns, a biography of Robert Graves, whom he got to know in Deia, Mallorca, for years the Kings' holiday destination. But he had imbibed a great lesson from Jeffares who was keenly "aware that English studies had to change to keep up with the new cultural and political world that was coming into being with the Cold War and decolonization" (*An Interesting Life,* 99).

After two unhappy years at Brooklyn College and the University of Calgary, King was hired by the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, for three years (1962-65), the first of several Commonwealth stints: he was Professor and departmental Head at the University of Lagos (1968-70); professor at Ahmadu Bello University, Nigeria (1973-76); and at Christchurch, New Zealand (1979-83). Other teaching stints took the Kings to Bristol; Windsor, Canada; Columbia, Missouri; twice to Paris; Stirling, Scotland; Florence, Alabama; Israel; and there were four research visits to India. Their daughter Nicole's transnational upbringing made her "emotionally stateless," certainly not an undesirable existential condition. Adele had the steadier academic career of the two: from 1986 to 2003 she rose from assistant to full professor at Ball State, Indiana, and was then made professor emeriti. By then, tragedy had struck the family twice: Nicole, a Bryn Mawr graduate, found work in a Paris art gallery, and was well settled there when her apartment block burned down, and she was one of those trapped in the blaze. Some years later, Adele was diagnosed with lung cancer; given just months to live, she commented wryly that she had had an interesting life, whence derives the title of Bruce's memoir. She lost a lung in the prescribed surgery, but recovered to soldier on, genial and full of charm, for another twenty-three years. At the beginning of the present century, the Kings bought a newly

renovated flat in a quaintly attractive part of Paris, by the Canal Saint Martin in the 10eme arrondisement, and made it their permanent home.

Bruce King had become a prolific producer of critical and scholarly studies on postrcolonial writing: a biography of Derek Walcott and a book on his work in the theatre; *V. S. Naipaul* (1993, enlarged 2003); three books, all on Indian writing: the second, *Three Indian Poets: Ezekiel, Ramanujan, Moraes* (1991, enlarged 2005), and the third, *ReWriting India: Eight Writers* (2014); a general study, *The New English Literatures: Cultural Nationalism in a Changing World* (1980); and eight edited volumes on postcolonial literature. He thought a secure tenured professorship in a prestigious university would naturally come his way, but to his dismay, he found that the narrow politicization of literary studies had rendered him a misfit.

There is certainly a marked tension between the kind of criticism of New National or Postcolonial or World Literature produced by Bruce King and others of his ilk. For instance, the former Leeds lecturer and high level cultural functionary, Alastair Niven, whose doctoral thesis on Commonwealth Literature King had examined, and the postcolonial criticism that has appeared in the wake of Edward Said's critique of Orientalism. Scanning the Index pages of the two books under discussion, one is struck by the absence of any name associated with Postcolonial Theory other than that of Edward Said, in *From New National to World Literature: Essays and Reviews,* and that too for a summary dismissal of "simplicities based on Edward Saidian assumptions" that lead one to see "all forms of Western education, culture, and Christianity … as imperialism." Said's work is of course much more complex than that of simplistic Saidians; and some of King's attitudes are somewhat contradictory. He complains that "Postcolonialism meant a Marxist, New Left, criticism of America and Western colonialism," while admitting that "The indirect support of the CIA for the new post-colonial literature in their early stages is well-known." Clearly, the CIA's shenanigans in the cultural sphere, not to mention the political sphere, can be deemed ample justification for criticism of America and the West. But King need not go into ideological criticism, for which he is ill equipped, to establish the value of the kind of "pure" lit crit he believes in. Such literary criticism is vindicated for the simple reason that it offers the reader a clearer impression of the qualities of a text examined in its specific context rather than in terms of an abstract theory. Theorizing has its own excitements, but if one wishes to get into the work of a writer, say, Naipaul, King's book's unassuming exposition would be a more useful introduction.

From New National to World Literature (henceforth, *FNNWL*) supplements King's other studies in the area. There is a neat historical and quasi-theoretical framing of the subject. He makes a clear distinction between the "old" criticism of New or Commonwealth Literatures, and the situation after the theoretical turn, with increasing numbers of scholar-critics from minority groups accommodated in their respective academic ghettoes. A parallel development has been the supercession

of the Diasporic sensibility by transnationality fostered by globalization: "In a globalized world of easy transportation and communication and nations without high barriers to employment by foreigners there should no longer be diasporas in the sense of those who look back with nostalgia on a place of origin" (*FNNWL*, 503). One could add that with the growing interest in World Literature or Global Literature, in which degree programs are offered by numerous Western universities, literary studies will rely increasingly on the use of translations. This is a subject King has not gone into though.

FNNWL is divided into eight sections. The first overlaps with the section in the memoir about Leeds and Norman Jeffares. The eleven essays in the second cover both individual authors like Gabriel Okara and Soyinka alongside general topics like "The Emergence of African Fiction" and "African Literature and Aesthetics." The third section, "New English Literatures," deals with four broad topics. The six essays in the fourth section, "Australia, Canada, New Zealand," deal mainly with individual authors, e.g., A D Hope and Margaret Atwood. Six of the nine pieces in the section, "West Indies," are devoted to Derek Walcott, on whom King spent a number of years. The four pieces in the sixth section, "Internationalizing British Literature" deal with Rushdie, Hanif Kureishi, David Dabydeen, Abdulrazzak Gurnah, and Mike Philips. Seven essays in the section, "Indian Literature," mainly cover poets, but also Jeet Thayil's celebrated novel, *Narcopolis.* The final section, "Muslims and Pakistan," salutarily discusses novels that deserve more attention than they have so far received, e.g., Ahmed Ali's *Twilight in Delhi* (1940) and Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961), alongside well-known contemporary writers like Kamila Shamsie and Jamil Ahmed, and the talented poet, Alamgir Hashmi. But King makes a gaffe in linking Ali to the Pakistan movement. As Dalrymple's essay on Karachi in *City of Djinns* reveals, Ali did not want to go to Pakistan. On a British Council sponsored teaching stint in China at the time of Partition, he wanted to return to Delhi in 1948, but the Indian ambassador, K P S Menon would not let him on some flimsy pretext, forcing him to go to Karachi.

Readers will benefit from the generous bibliographies appended to most of the essays and reviews. More broadly, reading the criticism alongside the memoir will enhance one's understanding of the way literature is produced out of milieus in which writers can rub shoulders, argue, and chat. King got to know most of the contemporaries he has written about. At times, he found himself caught up in the rivalries and animosities of writers. He found Ezekiel and the Bombay literary scene the most vibrant in India, and so when he asked P Lal, who ran Writers' Workshop in Kolkata, for information, he was snubbed. But that does not forgive King's mistaken reference to Lal as a Bengali Brahmo. Lal was a Punjabi who had settled in Kolkata and married a Bengali. Mention should also be made of what King's memoir reveals of the political and social turmoil in postcolonial situations, particularly in Nigeria, where he was living at the time of the Biafran war. The conflict split writers into rival camps, caused the death of a few, and impacted their literary work.

Readers and scholars of postcolonial writing will welcome these two books, and wish the copyediting and proofreading had been less atrocious. Even after suffering a stroke, and bereavement – Adele passed away in 2018 – King, "grossly overweight" in his own description, remains clearheaded and full of life. The last time I met him, he was planning a book on the sea-change wrought in English writing by writers with a Third World background. I hope he finishes it soon.

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