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EDITORIAL NOTE

The editors of *Crossings* are happy to see the journal's gradual recognition in the international realm. This issue contains essays by a wide range of authors from different corners of the world writing on topics that matter for those who take active interest in English Studies.

The co-existence of issues related to language, literature, and cultural studies highlight the inter- and cross-disciplinary nature of the journal and its commitment to readers in universities and colleges. Instead of turning its focus on a skill-oriented language studies, *Crossings* pursues a policy that promotes a discursive function of texts where the disciplines concerned can exist side by side and cross-fertilize each other.

The volume is enriched by two occasional papers. The first piece was read out by Professor Emeritus Serajul Islam Choudhury at the inauguration of the Jane Austen bi-centenary event at ULAB. In his characteristic lucid and engaging style, inarguably the most respected professor of English in Bangladesh offers a useful introduction to Jane Austen. Oxford based poet-scholar Adrian Husain has written an insightful scholarly article on the end of meaning in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*. The essay details how Woolf can be revisited for alternative interpretations.

Crossings remains committed to providing space for new researchers and promising scholars. It is heartening to see some fresh names finding their niche alongside established scholars.

The book review section is substantial as it contextualizes and theorizes the books under review in an exciting manner.

Please visit our departmental website at sah.ulab.edu/crossings/ to take full advantage of the open access journal.

On behalf of the Editorial Board,

Shamsad Mortuza, PhD
Editor, *Crossings* Vol. 8

OCCASIONAL PAPERS

On Jane Austen, Very Briefly

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Jane Austen was great, quietly great; and gently mischievous. Her greatness is known to the world, and the greatness is added to by her sense of humor and irony which she makes use of to hold the supercilious and the dull up to ridicule, and more importantly, to question, the adequacy of the patriarchy under which she was obliged to live and write.

I remember when I was a student, decades ago, I was struck by an observation made by a discerning critic that Jane Austen was a Marxist even before Marx was born. The critic was not particularly enamored of Marxism, but had noticed, tongue-in-cheek, how decisive money and property were in the life of men, even more in that of a woman. Money and property not only determined the status of people, but also contributed effectively to their nuptial prospects, which, for women, was almost the only gateway to a comfortable living. And comfort was a more sensible proposition than happiness in Jane Austen's culture. It is not without significance that most of her characters have an income sixty times, some even a hundred times, above the national average. This is a fact that Thomas Picketty, an economic historian, has pointed out in his book on *The Capital*. This French economist finds Jane Austen as dependable on early nineteenth-century European economy as Balzac, although Balzac wrote about the whole spectrum of social life and Jane Austen confined herself to three or four families in a country village, to what she famously called "a little bit of ivory, two inches wide."

She was, as we know, a contemporary of the Romantics, but was wide apart from them. Born in the year of the American War of Independence, she lived through the French and the Industrial Revolutions, and was aware of the Napoleonic war, two of her brothers having been in the Royal Navy and one in the Militia. Unlike her Romantic peers, she was indifferent to children and did not care for nature, unless it added value to private property. Like her very dear creation, Elizabeth Bennet, she was full of feelings, but had the Augustan good sense not to be carried away by sentiments, and, as a novelist, she never missed an opportunity to poke fun at sentimental girls whom she found, invariably, silly. Romance was beyond her, and she told a member of her family:

> I could no more write a romance than an epic poem. I could not sit seriously down to write a serious romance under any other motive than to save my life.

Her letters tell us that the world she lived in and the happenings she was familiar with were dull and trivial; but she had transformed these unpromising materials into living works of art using her power of imagination. Refusing to be fanciful, she was vitally imaginative in the Coleridgean sense. Jane Austen held on to the neo-classical tradition of wit and urbanity, and remained an unassuming but unflinching moralist, separating the sheep from the goats. And what is meaningful is that the moral quality of her characters is not unconnected with their economic strength. Who can forget the opening lines of her very first novel, *Pride and Prejudice*?

> It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in need of a wife. However little the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well filled in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters.

And she knew that the rightful source of property was rent from land, and was also aware that the more powerful of the families in the countryside had profitable investments abroad. That the rent-receiving Darcy's ancestral Permberly Hall will decline, yielding place to the plantation entrepreneur Sir Thomas Betram's Mansfield Park is dutifully acknowledged by her, despite her native inclination to refuse to bring the unpleasant truth of the slave-trade component of Sir Thomas's enterprise to the fore.

Calling Jane Austen a Marxist will not be complimentary either to Marx or to her, for she was comfortably ignorant of class struggle, and would not accept, heaven forbid, working-class seizure of state power. And she was fully assertive of the dignity of the middle class into which she was born. Elizabeth Bennet's refusal to be brow-beaten by the supercilious Lady Catherine and her firm declaration that she was as much a gentleman's daughter as Darcy was a gentleman is certainly backed by Jane Austen's full approval and warm admiration.

And it is this unwavering affiliation to the middle class that D.H. Lawrence found particularly detestable. Lawrence's words are quotable, for they indicate the working-class view of middle-class social affiliation. Lawrence says in his *A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover,*

> In the old England the curious blood-connection held the classes together. … We feel it in Defoe or Fielding. And then, in the mean Jane Austen, it is gone. Already this old maid typifies 'personality' instead of character, the sharp knowing in apartness instead of knowing togetherness, and she is, to my feeling, thoroughly unpleasant, English in the bad, mean, snobbish sense of the word, just as Fielding is English in the good generous sense.

It is equally revealing that Joseph Conrad, belonging as he did to Polish aristocracy, found it bewildering to hear of the praise of Jane Austen and did not understand what was there in her novels.

But that Jane Austen is artistically great is admitted even by Lawrence in spite of his hatred of her social attitude. He would put her alongside Dickens. In a review of a novel by the Italian writer Grazia Deledda, Lawrence writes,

> We can hardly bear to recall the emotions of twenty or fifteen years ago, hardly at all, whereas we respond again quite vividly to emotions of Jane Austen or Dickens, nearer a hundred years ago.

I recall that one of my early attempts at literary criticism was on Jane Austen, wherein I had tried to confront the question whether her heroes were adequate. What I found, as any reader would do, was that her heroes were quite adequate in relation to the social and political world

in each of her six novels, particularly because the women needed them as persons to depend on; but the heroes were not as lively as the anti-heroes for whom she had a subterranean liking.

The fact of the matter is that her acceptance of the patriarchal system was not uncritical. Most of her fathers fail in the discharge of their duties. Her submission to patriarchy was due to her knowledge that male support was indispensable for the provision of comfort and protection of stability of the family. She herself had not married; not because she did not want to, but because no likely suitor was available. In fact, it is known that, taking advantage of her father's office as Rector, she had entered her name in the Church Register, not once but twice, as engaged to marry. The girl called the imagined grooms Fitzwilliam and Edmund who were to become Jane Austen's favorite heroes, novelistically.

In the English language, women have been more readily drawn to the writing of fiction than to poetry. Perhaps, this was due to their sense of realism made effective by material circumstances. Even when they are romantic, as Emily Brontë is, the economic and social reality is accepted by them as the base of the happenings. Emily Brontë's hero, Heathcliff, was a dark child, picked up from a street in the port city of Liverpool, where slave-trading was in practice during the time reported in the novel. Heathcfiff has all the qualities of a romantic hero but is doomed because of his lack of inheritance and respectability. Setting him aside, Cathy marries Edgar who has the advantage of a rich inheritance. Emily Brontë disapproved of class difference, but was unable to ignore it. That made her a great novelist, and not a writer of cheap romance. Emily Brontë might have found, as her elder sister Charlotte did, that Jane Austen's women were fine as ladies but incomplete as human beings; and yet she shares with Jane Austen the sense of realism that bases itself on economics.

There is yet another circumstance that brings them together. Socially, neither Jane Austen nor Emily Brontë was encouraged to write. Of Jane Austen's six novels, two were published posthumously, and two did not bear her name on the title page during her lifetime; they were known to have been written by "a certain lady." Emily Brontë, who came four decades later, was also obliged to appear in public pseudonymously. And, one recalls, Mary Evans had to disguise herself as George Eliot to make her appearance as a writer.

Emily Brontë's world was even more circumscribed than Jane Austen's; but, unlike her more famous predecessor, she was rebellious in temperament. The difference is reflected in their choice of subject, use of language, and method of presentation. Jane Austen wrote in the neo-classical tradition. Emily Brontë is akin to the Romantics – in content as well as style. Jane Austen's plot construction is deliberate; her stories move to a logical conclusion. Emily Brontë's story of passionate love and unbearable anguish needed, almost in contrast, a complicated yet vibrant narrative which could not be accommodated within the conventional well-constructed plot.

Writing four decades after Emily Brontë, Virginia Woolf found the established notion of the form even more difficult to put up with. Virginia Woolf's world was metropolitan and much more complex and advanced than both Jane Austen's and Emily Brontë's. Her concern with the

world within was deeper than Emily Brontë's. Virginia Woolf has a metropolitan informality and her prose is fluid and poetic, being at several removes from that of Jane Austen. True, she was not required to write anonymously or pseudonymously, but she found the middle-class tension of a war-devastated England intolerable and killed herself by drowning. Whereas Jane Austen was able to laugh, even if gently, at the follies and incongruities of patriarchy, neither Emily Brontë nor Virginia Woolf was prone to do that. They suffered, and paid for their suffering. Emily Brontë did not live beyond thirty, and Virginia Woolf escaped through self–annihilation. Patriarchy's accomplishments are many and indeed various.

Like all works of art, Jane Austen's novels demand close attention; and the more we pay that the more significant they become, artistically as well as historically. Her novels have endured, and her readers will have many reasons to be grateful to her.

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Spoken at the second death-centenary celebration of Jane Austen at the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh

To the Lighthouse: End of Meaning

Adrian A. Husain
Poet and Scholar

Abstract

The study, diverging from current critical discourse on Virginia Woolf as eccentric author, sets out expressly to look at Woolf as enigmatic text. In so doing, it explores largely untapped Woolf terrain. Its broad focus is on Woolf's two major novels, Mrs Dalloway *and* To the Lighthouse *though it concerns itself more particularly with the latter – and more mature – work. It takes in Woolf's distinctive angle on modernism, as evinced by her first short story, "The Mark on the Wall," besides considering her unique aesthetic, as laid out in her quasi-memoir, "A Sketch of the Past." The discussion likewise engages with Woolf's understanding of the tensions and disjunctions inherent within fiction and the nature of fiction as a deconstructive mode. Principally, it engages with Woolf's individual understanding of time and her ostensible resolution of the conundrum of time's slippage. Equally significantly, the essay looks at the impact of the revolution in pictorial art, especially Picasso, on the shape of fiction, as conceived of by Woolf. It considers the possibility, in the light of this revolution, understood as pivotal to modernist thought, of a transition from theme to form taking place, for instance, in* To the Lighthouse*.*

One of the curious things about Virginia Woolf studies today is the fact that critics seem unable to separate the woman from her work. Biographical factors appear to play an important part in any assessment of Woolf's writing. This is understandable, to some extent, given her peculiar persona or what Hermione Lee refers to – in Woolf's own words ("A Sketch of the Past" 80) – as her "life-writing"(Lee 12) (including diaries, letters, journals, memoirs, even novels) and the unusual circumstances of her private life. However, that life became public property long ago. We know it – the Bloomsbury perspective, St. Ives childhood, premature mother-loss, homoeroticism, manic depression, suicide.

So one wonders – given all the givens about Woolf – why biographical crutches continue to be required in discussions of her fiction. There is similarly a concern about the increasingly anecdotal comment on Woolf which often amounts to little more than gratuitous chat. Admittedly, there are critics like Maud Ellmann, for instance, who have avoided the practice and given preference to psychoanalytical comment instead. There are also inter-textual modernist studies of Virginia Woolf (see Parsons) besides feminist readings (see Snaith, Simpson, etc.). But the majority of commentators still appear to resist grappling independently – simply as great art – with Woolf's individual texts.

"Contexts"– historical, political, social, literary and, of course, critical – come in the way. Awkward questions arise. Are we, for instance, to take it that we are not in a position to interpret texts such as *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* without reliance on biography or, for that matter, as mere adjuncts to the work of Joyce? Is Woolf merely an English Proust, bent on recuperating her own personal past or self or a vaguely "humanist" aesthetician in "modernist" disguise? Are these texts otherwise indecipherable? This is not to propose a

taboo on biographical testimony – and certainly not on a modernist format – in support of critical argument, simply to advocate a less restrictive approach to Woolf's hybrid fictional texts.

Partly with a view to upholding the primacy of the text rather than the author as fetishistic object, this paper aims at considering one of Woolf's more mature novels, *To the Lighthouse*. It is, we know, a text rooted in elegiac childhood memory. It also, as is not often remembered, purports to tell us how, as a fiction, *To the Lighthouse* actually comes about. First, it seems relevant that *To the Lighthouse* is similar to its forerunner, *Mrs Dalloway* in the peculiar nature of its aesthetic. Like *Mrs Dalloway*, it combines a characteristic sense of ecstasy and terror – ecstasy in the sense of a lifting into a pristine mode of perception and terror in the face of transience, war, and death. We see something quite like this aesthetic, painfully dissected and put together in Woolf's makeshift memoir, "A Sketch of the Past."

Woolf explores the "ecstasies and raptures" which date back to her childhood at St. Ives together with a sense of horror in the face of the "other" in the looking glass and the molested body and death. Fumbling, as she tries to explain the complexity of the feeling, she confronts a suicide, a particular death – the death of Valpy, a family friend – and her resultant sense of disintegration. This leads to a kind of writerly resolution through a quest for wholeness:

> … a man I had seen had killed himself. The sense of horror held me powerless. But in the case of the flower I found a reason. And was thus able to deal with the sensation. I was not powerless. I was conscious – if only at a distance – that I should in time explain it. I do not know if I was older when I saw the flower than I was when I had the other two experiences. I only know that many of these exceptional moments brought with them a peculiar horror and a physical collapse; they seemed dominant; myself passive. This suggests that as one gets older one has a greater power through reason to provide an explanation; and that this explanation blunts the sledge-hammer force of the blow. I think this is true, because though I still have the peculiarity that I receive these sudden shocks, they are now always welcome; after the first surprise I always feel instantly that they are particularly valuable. And so I go on to suppose that the shock-receiving capacity is what makes me a writer. I hazard the explanation that a shock is at once in my case followed by the desire to explain it. I feel that I have had a blow; but it is not, as I thought as a child, simply a blow from an enemy hidden behind the cotton wool of daily life; it is or will become a revelation of some order; it is a token of some real thing behind appearances; and I make it real by putting it into words. *It is only by putting it into words that I make it whole;* this wholeness means that it has lost its power to hurt; it gives me, perhaps because by doing so I take away the pain, a great delight to put the severed parts together. Perhaps this is the strongest pleasure known to me. It is the rapture I get when in writing I seem to be discovering what belongs to what; making a scene come right; making a character come together. From this I reach what I may call a philosophy; at any rate it is a constant ideal of mine; that behind the cotton wool is hidden a pattern; that we – I mean all human beings – are connected with this; that the whole world is a work of art; that we are parts of the work of art. ("A Sketch of the Past" 70, my italics)

The extract affords a valuable insight into the precise nature of the aesthetic that informs Woolf's two novels and gives them their "wholeness" and coherence. Ecstasy and horror are key to an understanding of *To the Lighthouse* and *Mrs Dalloway*. The rapture in each is, for instance, matched by horror in the face of death. The two are blended, forming part of a composite whole. The death of Septimus Smith may take place in the wings in *Mrs Dalloway*, yet it inexorably cuts across the celebratory evening at the Dalloways' home. Mrs Ramsay's death, quietly but irrevocably, terminates the revels at the cottage at Skye.

Of course, *Mrs Dalloway,* which covers a day in the life of Clarissa Dalloway, is more simply "social" whereas *To the Lighthouse* takes, like Woolf's first short story, "The Mark on the Wall," a rather more philosophically questioning position. "The Mark on the Wall" is relevant in that it sheds light on *To the Lighthouse*. It contains Woolf's *pensées* in typical stream of consciousness form. But, above all, it sets out her personal – and highly individualized – understanding of modernism together with a kind of theory of fiction. In effect, it announces a "new' fiction," a fiction arising out of the everyday but engaged in a tension with the "disconnected"[1] self or consciousness:

> … the novelists in future will realize more and more the importance of these reflections, for of course there is not one reflection but an infinite number, those are the depths they will explore, the phantoms they will pursue, leaving the description of reality more and more out of their stories, taking a knowledge of it for granted, as the Greeks did and Shakespeare perhaps …. ("The Mark on the Wall" 32)

Less of a "story" and more of an informal discourse or even "essay" or a prototypical exercise in the production of an "inner" voice, "The Mark on the Wall" explores the nature of thought and the way in which it flows or connects – often in terms of the personal or historical past – or breaks off and diverges. It speaks of thoughts assembling, in a moment of focus "on a new object," in the manner of ants carrying "a blade of straw" ("Mark" 30) before they abandon it. The natural analogy is meant to tell us that thought is self-sustaining and has a life of its own – indeed that the self, which is the sum of its thoughts, has a life deep "below" the "surfaces of facts."

There is a strange defiance with which Woolf, in this story, addresses the issue of literal reality or "fact" versus the imagination. We observe an assault on comfortable notions of "solidity" and "stability" and a readily known world. According to Woolf, the grounds of knowledge are questionable. There can be no certain knowing, no conviction : "Nothing is proved, nothing is known" ("Mark" 33). Albeit tinged with Woolf's characteristic humor, a fundamental anxiety pervades the text. Where, for instance, the narrator asks, pointing to the transience of life and the world of things, did the "many remembered possession" go? "Opals and emeralds … lie about the roots of turnips ("Mark" 30). It is in this spirit that Woolf explores the issue of "modernism" and, with it – as a sort of pivot – of meaning and the nature of meaning. The question that Woolf raises – teasingly, cryptically – about the mark on the wall of the story has to do, precisely, with meaning.

From the very outset, "reality" in the shape of the mark on the wall is mystified. Is it, the narrator asks, a mark left behind by a nail? Possibilities are considered. Woolf presents us with variables of meaning. The mark, Woolf seems to be saying, is a wandering signifier. What is it, she asks: "a nail, a rose leaf, a crack in the wood?" ("Mark" 33).

By the end of the story, the enigma has been resolved. We are told it is a snail. The point has to do with life and its unreality and insubstantiality or in fact – since snails are earthworms – with death. The ending of "The Mark on the Wall" is subtly executed. There is a deceptive simplicity – and irony – to the moment when the narrator is interrupted in her thoughts by an interlocutor (evidently her husband) and the truth about the mark on the wall is revealed. There is minimal dialogue. The stream of consciousness breaks as in Woolf's novels. The narrator is informed by the person in question that he is going out to "buy a newspaper… though it's no good buying newspapers. The reason follows: "Nothing ever happens." Literal reality is shown as diminished and empty, a mere shell. At the same time, given the testimony of World War I, it is seen as violent, abhorrent: "Curse this war! God damn this war!" ("Mark" 35).

All these themes or concerns would later be virtual articles of faith to Woolf. Horror in the face of a war-stricken present, a persistent sense of transience, insubstantiality, epistemological uncertainty, freedom from the male principle, the higher reality of art (the "mark") as compared to given reality (the "snail") and – as in *Prufrock* – a crushing sense of indeterminacy are revisited in *To the Lighthouse.*

Mrs Ramsay, with her whimsy, and Lily Briscoe with her angst, for instance, both have their ultimate origins in "The Mark on the Wall." Mr Ramsay can similarly be located within the caricature of the male principle as exemplified by Whittaker's Table of Precedency. Woolf's evocative triple cadence ("a nail, a rose leaf, a crack in the wood") is likewise echoed at various points in *To the Lighthouse*. So is Woolf's irony. The parallels, as will be seen, are ample.

At one level, *To the Lighthouse* presents, in the section titled "Window," an idyll, short-lived enough, at Skye, involving Mr and Mrs Ramsay, and their children and house-guests. Subsequently, in the two later sections, "Time Passes" and "The Lighthouse," it savagely enacts the destruction of that idyll by Nature – and the War – followed by an act of understanding and atonement.

In the second section, mortality unaccountably intervenes: the text commits "matricide." Mrs Ramsay, the central character and presiding deity of the text, as well as the fountainhead or source of "sympathy," is suddenly no more. Other lives too are erased. Andrew is killed by a shell. Prue dies in childbirth. The deaths are seen to take place, without ceremony, on the sidelines. Mr Ramsay stretches out his arms "one dark morning" only to discover, with a chilling irony, that his arms are empty and his wife, "having died rather suddenly the night before" (122), is not there. We get the impression that she has melted into thin air. The deaths of their children Andrew and Prue are similarly reported, parenthetically, as more or less surreal events. Life is shown as curiously insubstantial or a scant, hastily concluded episode.

"The Lighthouse" accordingly opens, with an almost implacable logic, to house-guest and painter, Lily Briscoe's distraught question: "What does it mean, what can it all mean?" A little later we are offered a kind of answer:

> And, resting, looking from one to the other vaguely, the old question which traversed the sky of the soul perpetually, the vast, the general question which was apt to particularize itself at moments such as these, when she released faculties that had been on the strain, stood over her, paused over, darkened over her. What is the meaning of life? (153).

The text points to a mystification and at the same time offers a means of decoding it. What it appears to be saying is this: *To the Lighthouse* is not merely symbolic but operates at two distinct, clearly formulated levels, particular and general, as allegories do. What it further suggests is that the novel is an allegory, in keeping with modernist thought – as, for example, in Eliot and Forster – relating to meaning. So, if we are to make sense of *To the Lighthouse*, it must clearly be approached in this way.

As already partly suggested, meaning is subjected to a curious form of complication at the very start of the novel. It is called into question in the shape of an apparently innocent domestic conflict between Mr and Mrs Ramsay over the weather at Skye and the possibility (or otherwise) of a journey to the lighthouse. However, as we see, the bickering is anything but innocent. It is central to the narrative and appears to constitute a radical disjunction between two distinct modes of belief:

> "Yes, of course, if it's fine tomorrow," said Mrs Ramsay. "But you'll have to be up with the lark," she added. ... James Ramsay, sitting on the floor cutting out pictures from the illustrated catalogue of the Army and Navy stores, endowed the picture of a refrigerator as his mother spoke with heavenly bliss ...

> "But," said his father, stopping in front of the drawing room window, "it won't be fine." (3-4)

The difference is too subtly delineated and routine in conception, too "domesticated"– too much a part of a perennial sparring between the Ramsays – to be instantly appropriately identified. Yet, for all the naturalism and lightness of touch – and musicality – with which it is conveyed, it is inescapably there. Discord between husband and wife over the weather is more than just domestic or meteorological. The dispute has to do with humanist-modernist tensions which pervade the text. There is a gap between the Ramsays that is irreconcilable: "Strife, divisions, difference of opinion, prejudices twisted into the very fibre of being, oh that they should begin so early, Mrs Ramsay deplored" (8).

However, it is less a gap in temperament than vision. It is a gap we first perceive through James since it is for him that a trip to the lighthouse is intended by his mother. To James, oedipal ally of his mother, dreaming of killing his father who throws cold water over the proposed visit, Mr Ramsay represents the spirit of negation, the negative principle, the great "no" of the universe, the other, with his eye on givens and "facts uncompromising." We learn how

the Ramsay family are knit together: through the negativity of Mr Ramsay, the purveyor of factuality or scientifically verifiable "reality" (the "phantom kitchen table … whose virtue … had been laid bare … which stuck there, its four legs in the air" [21])[2] on the one hand and the transforming and healing imagination of Mrs Ramsay, with her dreams and desiderata – and classical "sympathy" – on the other. Interestingly, to James, as to Mrs Ramsay, the lighthouse seems already to possess a symbolic significance.

Consequently, letter, as embodied by Mr Ramsay – the smug logical-positivist to whom the lighthouse is merely a literal place and rain an equally literal obstacle – and symbol are seen to be strangely at odds[3]. This is the stuff of which life, for Mrs Ramsay, seems to be made. Fact or literal reality, the narrator appears to imply, is an inescapable alloy of fiction. It is the outsider which has somehow found its way *in* and must be reckoned with. Presence, as Mrs Ramsay is painfully aware, is not possible without representation. The creative principle cannot – this is a fundamental irony of the text – come into play in the absence of the "arid scimitar" of the violative Freudian other.

The issue is made more explicit still in the context of Mr Ramsay's acolyte and a house-guest at the Ramsays', Charles Tansley. There is, for example, as recounted by her, a revealing exchange between Mrs Ramsay and Tansley:

> She could not help laughing herself at times. She said, the other day, something about "waves mountains high". Yes, Charles Tansley said, it was a little rough. "Aren't you drenched to the skin?" she had said. "Damp, not wet through," said Mr Tansley, pinching his sleeve, feeling his socks. (7)

What we perceive here is a quite extraordinary deconstructive mode. Mrs Ramsay is seen, in a moment of euphoric explication, breaking down language into its verbal and proverbial components so as the better to account for her own aesthetic or the fiction of which she is a part. Her laughter is ironic and caused by her sense of a peculiar breach within thought itself. The matter is, at some level, one of imagination and faith. But it is also more than that. What is suggested is that, in keeping with his sobriquet – "atheist" – Tansley is not just, with the "first pages in proof" of his "Prolegomena" (10), devoid of faith but also altogether exempt from a capacity for metaphor. Mrs Ramsay's laughter is, therefore, equally a symptom of her awareness of a crucial lack in the guise of a spirit run dry.

The point to note is that figure or metaphor here is shown, in its sheer versatile scope – or sweep – as being proper to the female rather than male. It comes naturally, in other words, to Mrs Ramsay, as a woman, to speak quite as she does – with provocative extravagance, in hyperbolic terms, figuratively. However, this is clearly not true of Tansley whose language, at least for Mrs Ramsay, cannot, like that of Mr Ramsay who is unable to make it beyond the letter "Q," climb out of its complacency and is clinically exact, literal, dead[4]. One is reminded, inevitably, of the Pauline conception: *the letter killeth*:

> it was not that they minded, the children said. It was not his face, it was not his manners. It was him – *his point of view.* When they talked about something interesting,

people, music, history, anything, even said it was a fine evening so why not sit out of doors, then what they complained of about Charles Tansley was that until he had turned the whole thing round and made it somehow reflect himself and disparage them, put them all on edge somehow *with his acid way of peeling the flesh and blood off everything,* he was not satisfied. (7, my italics)[5]

Tansley, then, to Mrs Ramsay and her children, represents denial and, in a way, death.

Apart from being a source of momentary mirth, communication at Skye inevitably proves a casualty. However, Mrs Ramsay, the source of beauty, "with stars in her eyes and veils in her hair, with cyclamen and wild violets" (13,) has to make her way forward, overflowing with indignation and humanity, contemplating loneliness and Empire[6], incomplete stocking in hand, in the faintly *distrait* style that is her hallmark, part compassion and part irony, in a straight line from Jane Austen and George Eliot. The lighthouse which is, in a sense, a place of illumination, is, for the moment, necessarily, off limits. And meaning, which we are directed by the narrator to consider later in the text, already confronts a sort of impasse.

The portrayal of Mr Ramsay as a pompous, bungling Tennysonian hero represents a further, no less deliberate tangling of meaning. Woolf's putdown of the male of the species in the savagely ironic terms of "The Charge of the Light Brigade" is classic. We see the myth of the power of male over female exploded with a curious persistence during the course of the text. Mr Ramsay is shown as patriarchal yet weak inasmuch as, despite his heroic bluster and show of authority – a bizarre mix of boots and brains – he nevertheless hankers unremittingly after "sympathy" from his wife. The quote from Tennyson, "someone had blundered," turned into a mocking refrain in Woolf, points, on the face of it, to a confession (and simultaneous disclaimer) by Mr Ramsay about his fallibility as a male and, by inference, the "mistake" or contradiction underlying the all too inflated male project. It is on this idea – of a generic flaw – that the Tennysonian analogy in Woolf may be said to turn.

This is developed further in the course of the narrative. We see, for instance, a fairly explicit analogy drawn in the text between a shot fired from a gun by Jasper and the perceived "blunder":

> (A) shot went off close at hand, and there came, flying from its fragments, frightened, effusive, tumultuous, a flock of starlings.

> "Jasper!" said Mr Bankes. They turned the way the starlings flew, over the terrace. Following the scatter of swift-flying birds in the sky they stepped through the gap in the high hedge straight into Mr Ramsay, who boomed tragically at them, "Someone had blundered!" … and, Lily Briscoe and Mr Bankes, looking uneasily up into the sky, observed that the flock of starlings which Jasper had routed with his gun had settled on the tops of the elm trees. (23)

The point seems clear enough. Jasper, no less male than his father, is seen suddenly to disturb the peace. As a result, the conversation between Lily Briscoe and Mr Bankes comes to a halt. The starlings are scattered. Mr Ramsay is described as, in a moment of recognition, voicing

the Tennysonian mantra, "tragically." The moment is emblematic. We are alerted to the interventionist – and wanton – nature of the typical male. At some level, albeit harmless, Jasper's is shown as a mild act of war, an assault on Nature or a mysterious violation. We are implicitly pointed to Mr Ramsay's (and Mr Tansley's) own earlier mindless interventions in connection with the visit to the lighthouse and also to what grimly looms ahead in the text: the World War.

It is the text's – or narrator's – way of telling us where the "blunder" in fact lies and also explaining that it is fundamental. The narrator seems to be at pains here to give her view of the precise nature of things while also positing an original cause or aetiology. Interestingly, there is a similarity between the shot fired by Jasper and the "bang" heard in *Mrs Dalloway*. In each case, we see a peculiar moment of kinesis, one that is kinetic as much as it is kinesthetic and can be said to set the world of each text in motion. It is therefore, in a way, necessary – and, in the case, at least, of *To the Lighthouse* – a necessary evil.

That does not mean that Jasper's act is "bad" in itself – since it is also merely the innocent act of a young person – but that it hides a basic ill or *culpa i*n Nature's or the world's origins. Meaning is, of course, once again called into question. The suggestion is that the world or life in its beginnings is a mere shot in the dark, the result of an arbitrary intervention, strangely random and unmeant. That is why, to Woolf, while it is aesthetically ample, life is also ephemeral. More properly perhaps, it lacks in concreteness and depth – indeed tends towards abstraction – and fails to afford a sustained and substantial experience.

The reason is partly that Woolf seems to see time, in line with Bergson and his theory of *durée*, as perceptibly in flow yet somehow also constantly reneging on itself (*The Creative Mind*). The theory appears to envisage a strange breach in time, taken as lending itself to a retrospective differentiation or individuation. The space of memory or of individual moments as they pass is consequently seen in Woolf as intricate and vast. This is what *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* seem specially to explore. We come upon it too in Woolf's *Jacob's Room* as also *The Waves*. Let us see for a moment how time and memory come about, for example, in *To the Lighthouse*:

> She had a dull errand in the town; she had a letter or two to write; she would be ten minutes perhaps; she would put on her hat. And, with her basket and her parasol, there she was again, ten minutes later, giving one a sense of being ready. (9)

Time is perceived here in the moment of its passing, poised between conditional future and past. There is an errand to be performed but, prior to that, letters to be written and a hat to be worn. The question the passage poses has to do with the mysterious "ten-minute" gap between the "earlier" and "later" moments of Mrs Ramsay's personal time. It is as if the text is trying to determine where time "goes" or how it behaves at such moments and how the present actually occurs. Woolf seems to perceive time precisely as made up of such fortuitous intervals and the present as a function of memory and intention and a possibility, as in Eliot's "Burnt Norton," of future and past[7].

While there seems, in Woolf, to be no present as such – or a present that is there merely by default and a memory that is simply a sort of hole[8] – a temporal renewal is nevertheless achieved in the above extract, with Mrs Ramsay distractedly gathering basket and parasol and returning ("there she was"), having forgotten what she expressly went for: her hat. The idea of renewal – of time, through its various moments – is, of course, central to Woolf and her aesthetic and informs both her better known texts, *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*. This can be seen to occur in the later work, for example, in terms of a recurrence. It may simply be a case, as in the context of quotidian time, of difference within sameness: "'And, even if it isn't fine tomorrow,' said Mrs. Ramsay, raising her eyes to glance at William Bankes and Lily Briscoe as they passed, 'it will be another day'" (24).

Alternatively, renewal can also be more complex as in the context of Nature or, more specifically, the sea:

> Then, up behind the great black rock, almost every evening spurted irregularly, so that one had to watch for it and it was a delight when it came to a fountain of white water; and when, while one waited for that, one watched, on the pale semi-circular beach, wave after wave shredding again and again smoothly a film of mother of pearl. (19)

It is a given that the sea is paradigmatic in *To the Lighthouse*. It forms part of the perspective of overall flux and renewal in the novel. In the present instance, the sea is seen as sustaining itself through a continual process of return or recall. It represents a mysterious form of time in motion. The waves are emblematic of individual (marine) "moments." As in *The Tempest*, a process of magical transformation is in evidence. Lily Briscoe and William Bankes are treated to a spectacle both "rich and strange." We are exposed to the esoteric experience of the creative moment or fiction becoming fiction. The "fountain of white water" of the literal sea is seen giving way, over and over, by virtue of a kind of synaesthesia, to pure symbol in the shape of a renewed and poetically enriched "film of mother of pearl."

Time is among the great secrets of Woolf's work. She appears to have understood time and its workings as profoundly as, if not better than, Proust. The narrative of both her chief texts certainly suggests this. It is possible that this was facilitated by the "stream of consciousness" technique that she had access to and that allowed her to achieve what Proust, in his mnemonic manner, never did. Time may be seen to return in Proust but it does not, as in the case of Woolf, become present. It is recovered – and memorialized – but that is all. To read Proust is in effect to get lost in time. It is to go by train, after much soul-searching, to Balbec with the narrator's grandmother and the *Lettres* of Mme de Sevigne (*Within a Budding Grove*). It is to lose direction with Francoise and inadvertently speed to Nantes. On the whole, it is to remain rooted in the past – on a permanent pilgrimage – in the virtual absence of a present.

Woolf's aim was clearly different. She seems to have sought to place her narrative *in* the present by mixing "memory and desire" and also, in a way, her tenses. Time in Woolf is reflected in an evocative hodge-podge of happenings made simultaneous in a coherent aesthetic whole. That may be a by-product of the stream of consciousness technique. But it is of course more than that.

Woolf's narrative comes to life as no other novelist's does. It brings together possible and actual, dreamed of and real, near and distant as only poetry perhaps can. The "feeling" that is normally attributed to the protagonist of *Middlemarch* is more properly in evidence here. Woolf's run-on sentences with their complex structures betray an apprehension of an intensely felt existence, bodying forth a fragile dialogue of the self, replete with moral questioning and rich layers of sensory experience. The sense of nostalgia and evanescence in evidence is entirely Woolf's own:

> Disappearing as stealthily as stags from the dinner-table directly the meal was over, the eight sons and daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay sought their bedrooms, their fastnesses in a house where there was no privacy to debate anything, everything; Tansley's tie; the passing of the Reform Bill; sea-birds and butterflies; people; while the sun poured into those attics, which a plank alone separated from each other so that every footstep could be plainly heard and the Swiss girl sobbing for her father who was dying of cancer in a valley of the Grisons, and lit up bats, flannels, straw hats, ink-pots, paint-pots, beetles, and the skulls of small birds, while it drew from the long frilled strips of seaweed pinned to the wall, a smell of salt and weeds, which was in the towels too, gritty with sand from bathing. (7-8)

There is a strange fugitive quality here. Not only are the Ramsay children shown to be in stealthy, "stag-like" flight. Their subjects of discussion – "sea-birds and butterflies," the "passing of the Reform Bill" and "Tansley's tie" – are no less volatile. The sunlight is pouring into "those attics" and "lighting up" what is animate (bats, beetles) and inanimate (flannels, straw hats, ink-pots, paint-pots, bird-skulls) and what may be said to be slipping through one's fingers (sand). In effect, what we see here are images of a time that is fleeting, a world that, despite being visible, audible and tactile, seems to be swiftly and irrecoverably slipping away.

So what is it that synthesizes all this and lifts it out of the narrative past and renders it present? Critics have mostly disregarded the ingenious device which enables Woolf to achieve this. This has to do with her special understanding of rhetoric and time. It is a device that Woolf has recourse to in both her major texts. If we look carefully, for instance, at the above quote, we will see that the typically long sentence is divided into two. The first part – or independent clause – relates to the elusive Ramsay children. The second part – or dependent clause, connected by means of the marker "while" – has to do with the curious minutiae of life in the Ramsay home. In both parts we see the use of the past tense in its simple form. However, two syntactical features make the sentence more than a little unusual. First, the two predicates in the second part of the sentence of which the subject is "the sun" – "poured" and "lit" – are somewhat idiosyncratically separated from each other.

The intervening phrase is as follows: *and the Swiss girl sobbing for her father who was dying of cancer in the Grisons*. This phrase is, of course, participial, the noun "girl" being modified by the present participle "sobbing." Interestingly, the phrase appears to be thematically and syntactically the outsider in the passage. It stands isolated, reflecting both the foreignness and aloneness of the girl with her plainly audible grief made the more poignant by the searching sunlight.

Of course, there is a good reason for the phrase being there. It has clearly been put there to highlight the irony of the moment. Above all, what the present participle – "sobbing" – does is to show the girl's grief for her dying father as not just unbearable but unbearably present. Tragedy is seen to lie at the heart of the passage as a terrible, ineluctable fact. The episode of the Swiss girl consequently seems to represent a focal point of the passage while the remaining detail comes across as merely incidental. Death is shown as both central and present. It constitutes the coda of the moment. It is overriding. The effect of this – and of the present participle here – is magical. The entire scene is transformed. By a process of poetic transference, it is returned to us out of a continuous past in terms of a consistent dramatic present. This is among the most compelling features of Woolf's style. It is equally in evidence in *Mrs Dalloway.* There too we are confronted – far more extensively in fact than in *To the Lighthouse* – with a curious interplay between signifier and signified as well as present and past. There is no dearth of examples. Present participles pervade *Mrs Dalloway.* It is riddled with them. Woolf seems to have gone out of her way to produce not just a new fiction but a novel temporal mode.

The opening of *Mrs Dalloway*, for instance, subtly blends Clarissa Dalloway's past and present. Her admirer of yore, Peter Walsh is due to return so he is shown as not just of the stuff of memory but also – since he is actually heard to "speak" – a vital part of Clarissa Dalloway's present. The past, to her, is not just figuratively "there" but palpably present:

> What a lark! What a plunge! For so it had always seemed to her when, with a little squeak of the hinges, which she could hear now, she had burst open the French windows and plunged at Bourton into the open air. How fresh, how calm, stiller than this of course, the air was in the early morning; like the flap of a wave; the kiss of a wave; chill and sharp and yet (for a girl of eighteen as she then was) solemn, *feeling* as she did*, standing* there at the open window, that something awful was about to happen; *looking* at the flowers, at the trees with the smoke winding off them and the rooks *rising*, *falling, standing* and *looking* until Peter Walsh said, '*Musing* among the vegetables? – was that it? (3, my italics)

The feat is largely accomplished through the use of the past perfect and simple past in combination with a spate of present participles (including a gerund) which, as in *To the Lighthouse*, draw the remembered past – through a sort of sleight-of-hand – compellingly into the present. The fusion of the two is perfect. On the face of it, of course, the past necessarily remains formally in the past or "in the mind." But an unusual effect has nevertheless been achieved. A new – or renewed – time is in place. Woolf's purpose was clearly to keep time open or to preserve a sense of flow in her narrative. And here, as elsewhere in *Mrs Dalloway*, she succeeds magnificently. We get a hint of Woolf's awareness of the creative process and how her own fiction comes about – "fresh" and new – from the words of Clarissa Dalloway on the subject of "life": "Heaven only knows why one loves it so, how one sees it so, making it up, building it round one, tumbling it, creating it every moment afresh" (4).

Woolf's writing has the quality of hand-blown glass, at once fragile and fey. Albeit different from that of *Mrs Dalloway*, the world of *To the Lighthouse* comes across as elusive and tenuous – and disappearing – like the Ramsay children or the sea at Skye taking on new hues as it becomes foam. It is also shown as subject to an inexorable destiny. Destiny is perceived in *To the Lighthouse*, as in *Mrs Dalloway*, as a function of time. As in Bergson, the experience of time consists, at one level, in a forward movement towards death (*Time and Free Will)*. That movement is present in premonitory fashion throughout *Mrs Dalloway.* Big Ben's "leaden circles" and the "tolling" at "St. Margaret's" are among recurrent auguries. World War I and death are similarly prepared for in *To the Lighthouse*. The most powerful image of destiny here is possibly that of the dining room door closing for good behind Mrs Ramsay after a sort of "Last Supper" in the novel:

> With her foot on the threshold she waited a moment longer in a scene which was vanishing even as she looked, and then, as she moved, and took Minta's arm and left the room, it changed, it shaped itself differently; it had become, giving she knew, one last look at it over her shoulder, already the past. (103)

Meaning becomes oddly uncertain at this point. At what seems to be the tail end of time in the text, we see it as inevitably compromised. We get a sense of the onset of a strange interval: a break, an ominous pause. We are constrained to ask: what might seem to have become of the present in the text? Is there such a thing? Does time present exist in *To the Lighthouse*? Or is it, as in Proust, merely remembered? The point Woolf seems to be making is this: time always merely announces its own end, it always only predates death. As we know, World War I is seen to follow shortly after this and Mrs Ramsay to die prematurely.

The fact is that, in the absence of Mrs Ramsay, meaning disappears. The death of Mrs Ramsay, the principal character of *To the Lighthouse*, seems, in other words, to represent a curious terminus and to symbolize the end of meaning in the text, which is why, in the last section, we come across the amanuensis-cum-artist, Lily Briscoe, asking the anguished question: "What does it mean?" To some extent, Lily Briscoe with her "Chinese eyes," whose purpose it is to record the aesthetic moment – the moment of "the wall: the hedge, the tree"– is left to "fill in" for Mrs Ramsay against an irremediably fractured perspective. "Multiplicity"– with the narrative later being shared equally by Cam and James – no longer seems relevant or of value. The narrative itself appears to go suddenly awry. Questions get asked of a kind not seemingly necessary before. The most trifling questions acquire an almost fundamental status. Incomprehension and terror reign:

> What does one send to the Lighthouse indeed! At any other time Lily could have suggested reasonably tea, tobacco, newspapers. But this morning everything seemed so extraordinarily queer that a question like Nancy's – What does one send to the Lighthouse? – opened doors in one's mind that went banging and swinging to and fro and made one keep asking in a stupefied gape, What does one send? What does one do? Why is one sitting here, after all? ... How aimless it was, how chaotic, how unreal it was, she thought, looking at her empty coffee cup. Mrs Ramsay dead; Andrew killed; Prue dead too. (140)

There is a bewildering rift in time that Lily Briscoe seems to have to confront. This is the rift brought about by Mrs Ramsay's disappearance from the scene. Her healing hand has been withdrawn. Above all, Mr Ramsay has to be placated. It is not, given his persistent need for "sympathy" and the urgency of Lily Briscoe's own painting from "life" (after a decade has elapsed and she is already forty-four), the easiest of tasks.

Deeper questions also arise. What, for instance, Lily Briscoe asks, when faced with Mr Ramsay's obsessive intoning of words from the "Charge of the Light Brigade," is the Tennysonian code? What is the "truth of things"? Is it more than literal? Is it symbolic? To Lily Briscoe, stricken by bewilderment and groping for a foothold, the Ramsay house is "full of unrelated passions." This is because oneness in the shape of Mrs Ramsay appears to have gone. Bit by bit, the construct of a multiple perspective is seen, in the absence of the harmonizing presence of Mrs Ramsay, to implode. The idea or Joycean project of a discontinuous or dismembered narrative itself is seen to fail. We cannot ignore the implications. They are crucial.

What Woolf seems to be saying, after allowing her central character to die, is that classical unity or Mrs Ramsay's "sympathy" that knits the matter of *To the Lighthouse* together – and should be but is no longer there – is all-important. This is an inference that obviously has to be drawn. In the section prior to this, "Time Passes," chaos and night descend on the Ramsay home at Skye. War is shown to arrive and its onslaught symbolized by the devastation, at the hands of a pestilential Nature, of the all but deserted Ramsay home. The moment is apocalyptic. It is also cathartic. Noteworthy – apart from the deaths at this point – is the dehumanization that we observe. Besides the barbarism of Nature and a sense of an anarchy loosed on the world, we find ourselves in face of a terrifying, desolate, depersonalized space:

> What people had shed and left – a pair of shoes, a shooting cap, some faded skirts and coats in wardrobes – these alone kept the human shape and in the emptiness indicated how once they were filled and animated. (123)

Vacuity and nullity – and a miscreation – inform the text. The human form is known only by its residual sartorial shape. We glean the beginnings of a movement towards abstraction even as we confront the outermost limits of fiction. The living form – the reality of life itself – seems to be in question. We are shown everyday accessories emptied of human content. There are signifiers but no signified. There is a pictorial perspective with pure abstract images. The question of the reason for – and meaning of – Lily Briscoe's painting is inevitably begged. So too, again, is the issue of a multiple perspective and coherence as a literary value.

We know that Lily Briscoe's painting is abstract. We are told as much from the outset where the verisimilitude of Mr Paunceforte's "pink women on the beach" is contrasted with the formal relations in Lily Briscoe's art:

> It was a question, she remembered, of how to connect this mass on the right hand with that on the left. She might do it by bringing the line of the branch across so; or break the vacancy in the foreground by an object … so. (49)

It is possible – given that, to Woolf, "human character" changed as of 1910 (*"Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown"*), the year that saw (thanks to Roger Fry) Picasso's work on display at a Post-Impressionist exhibition in London when she is bound to have heard of his epochal *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* – that there is an implicit connection between Lily Briscoe's painting and Picasso's art. It is relevant that it was in the latter's work that, along with perspective, the human figure, as we know it, suddenly and momentously disappeared, verisimilitude went by the board and form took over from theme as the new "reality." We certainly seem to be looking at what Picasso had scrupulously examined and what Lily Briscoe also, in her curiously irresolute yet instinctive way, appears to confront: the problem of pictorial space:

> "Is it a boat? Is it a cork?" she would say, Lily repeated, turning back, reluctantly again, to her canvas. Heaven be praised for it, the problem of space remained, she thought, taking up her brush again. It glared at her. … Beautiful and bright it should be on the surface, feathery and evanescent, one colour melting into another like the colours on a butterfly's wing; but beneath the fabric must be clamped together with bolts of iron. (163)

Lily Briscoe's quandary, echoing that of Mrs Ramsay, is seen to persist till the end of *To the Lighthouse*. For us, as readers, it actually assumes the form of a crippling enigma where thematic meaning has been jettisoned and we are confronted with a sense of anguish over the question of achievable form. With the death of Mrs Ramsay, the nature of space – or "reality"– has changed and calls for a new mode of perception. However, we see a kind of resolution in the last four lines of the novel. Lily Briscoe says, "I have had my vision." Understanding dawns at last and the painting, which has been in gestation for ten years, is suddenly and dramatically completed. We are told that Lily Briscoe "drew a line there, *in the centre*" (198, my italics).

There is a strange purity to what Woolf, through Lily Briscoe, seems to be saying. While, on the one hand, Woolf sees multiple perspectives as failing in the absence of a "sympathetic" center and this is, at the same time, marked down by her, however ironically, as a failure of the humanist tradition with its emphasis on centrality, she appears, on the other hand, to perceive this position as being redeemable or retrievable in art. Lily Briscoe's "vision" suggests, almost magically, that, the death of Mrs Ramsay, or what is, in effect, an audacious sacrificial gambit notwithstanding, something of Mrs Ramsay can nevertheless be retained or recovered in the context of abstract art. It is a very fine point but – with Woolf staking her all on it – we are meant to glean something akin to a hard-won classical truth. As Woolf appears to see it, whereas, in abstract art, perspective may have been flattened out and gone, the center has *not.* In other words – it is something Woolf doggedly sets out to prove – there will, to her, in art, always *be* a formal center.

There can, Woolf seems to claim in *To the Lighthouse*, be no rushed or ill-considered departure from the critical classical format. As we can see, there is a highly complex paradox at play in the novel in this regard. Partly because Woolf seems, like Forster in *A Passage to India* and Eliot in *Prufrock*, to have regarded modernism as part of an interval where meaning was in abeyance and the issue of a "destination" had still not been resolved, her novel appears to

pull in two different directions, humanist and modernist, at the same time. On the whole, however, it appears to be the experience of *To the Lighthouse* that the modernist project is bound to hold fire – that it *cannot* be resolved – and that humanism or classicism has, to some extent, to be accommodated, being logically and historically inescapable.

Oddly ambiguous, Mr Ramsay's trip to the lighthouse along with his two children, James and Cam, in the last section of the novel, suggests something similar. We find ourselves in face of a peculiar kind of "stutter" in the direction of a classical *telos* such as Woolf appears to have in view from the very beginning of the novel. As we know, journeying to the lighthouse is shown as one of the novel's prime goals or desiderata or among the principal concerns of Mrs Ramsay while alive. Talk of the lighthouse and a possible visit to it are seen as high points in her son, James's boyhood.

We have also already observed that, to Mr Ramsay, the lighthouse constitutes, at least to start with, a merely literal destination that his wife seems, from purely womanly caprice, to harp on for the sake of her son when the "weather" simply does not permit. That Mr Ramsay sets out to atone, after his wife's death, for his persistent opposition to her wish to take their son, James to the lighthouse, is, of course, of the essence. There is a singular irony about this. Not only is Mr Ramsay's visit to the lighthouse curiously belated – a decade has intervened – but it is also depicted as more than a little ham-handed. Above all, it is carried out in the wrong spirit. It is "commandeered" or authorized in blundering "Ternnysonian" fashion. So far, at least as his children are concerned, Mr Ramsay despotically enforces the visit. We see James and Cam accompany him under duress.

Besides this, the trip to the lighthouse is oddly misguided, coming about for all the wrong reasons. It is seen as self-piteously motivated and undertaken by Mr Ramsay in pursuit of a "sympathy" no longer available. It is a pilgrimage of sorts but also purely literal – a boat trip *tout court* "in memory of dead people" – and shows us the "Tennysonian" hero not just nurturing his grief as he recites lines from Cowper but pampered and thoughtless, as before, and characteristically dependent on a conducive setting: a favorable breeze, a smooth sea.

The relevant passages are playful and contemplative, grave and ironic and seem deftly to balance the odds – the tensions between father and daughter, on the one hand, and son, on the other, and at the same time, the intervals between the island where the Ramsay house stands and the lighthouse and between immediate apprehension and memory, present and past. We are made to understand that the journey takes place in an in-between space where time is perceptible and yet suspended, where it is present yet undergoing, as it travels through the minds of those on the boat, a subtle transformation. It is in this way, against the "chuckling" and "slapping" of water and between prolonged silences and fragments of speech, that the aura of Mrs Ramsay, as a mysterious link between future and past, is preserved and the present in the text's world made bearable. There is also a sense at this point that thematic space, the known space of Skye has given way to a rather more fluid *formal* space where moorings have to be taken afresh and understanding hangs in the balance.

To James and Cam, Mr Ramsay is the "enemy." There is a "compact" between them to resist paternal "tyranny," though this is seen as firmer on James' side. Cam is wooed by Mr Ramsay for the sake of "sympathy" but this elicits a somewhat mixed response. On the one hand, she is deeply moved: "For no one attracted her more; his hands were beautiful to her, and his feet, and his voice, and his words, and his haste, and his temper, and his oddity, and his passion, and his saying straight out before everyone, we perish, each alone, and his remoteness" (161). At the same time, she is shown as no less aware of the "dark" side to her father – "that crass blindness and tyranny of his which had poisoned her childhood." We are not allowed to forget that Mr Ramsay, though vaguely majestic, is strangely lacking in self-awareness. Consequently, the expedition, in his case, represents no classical moment – no great "end" as such – being, at best, a self-indulgent ritual. If anything, Mr Ramsay comes across as the glorified bearer of his wife's offerings to the occupants of the lighthouse including the stocking, completed at last, for "Sorley's little boy." The moment is, however, ultimately shown as open-ended. It is left to the reader to decide whether Mr Ramsay is still in denial or whether he has at last – having looked back at the island for some signal, some hint – made the requisite leap of faith:

> What could he see? Cam wondered. It was all a blur to her. What was he thinking now? she wondered. What was it he sought, so fixedly, so intently, so silently? ... He rose and stood in the bow of the boat, very straight and tall, for all the world, James thought, as if he were saying, "There is no God," and Cam thought, as if he were leaping into space, and they both rose to follow him as he sprang, lightly like a young man, holding his parcel, onto the rock. (198)

Interestingly, it is James who is destined to have, like Lily Briscoe, his own vision and to be given a special classical and moral "end." It is he who is granted the gift of understanding in an inadvertent moment when he catches sight of the lighthouse:

> He could see the white-washed rocks; the tower stark and straight; he could see that it was barred with black and white; he could see windows in it; he could even see washing spread on the rocks to dry. So that was the Lighthouse, was it?
>
> No, the other was also the Lighthouse. For nothing was simply one thing. The other Lighthouse was true too. (177)

In a sublime moment James is seen to receive, like the sacrament, a complex and complete vision. He perceives the lighthouse as it *is*, concrete and real. But he also understands its symbolic nature, its otherness, its sheer transcendence. The moment is simple and classical. The narrator does not make as much of it as of Lily Briscoe's epiphany. Yet the lighthouse is nevertheless there for James, "stark and straight"– and also other and true. In this way then, we see Woolf bring together, in a sort of mutual mimesis involving fiction and art – where the former casually commandeers or at least allows for the latter ("Lily's picture! Mrs Ramsay smiled ... remembering her promise, she bent her head ...'') and the latter somehow caps the former, making it good – the different humanist and modernist strands of her great work.

The statement about modernism, deeply thought over as it is, shies away – as it has to in keeping with the dubiety underlying modernist thinking – from assertion or dogma. There is too much at stake, or so Woolf seems to suggest, for any ultimate formula to be applicable to art in general. This accounts for Lily Briscoe's extreme hesitation prior to making a conclusive move. What we see here is Woolf urging a measure of skepticism with regard to the Joycean mantra and a prescribed modernist mode. *To the Lighthouse* is a *tour de force* that confronts us with an ambivalent aesthetic and, while upholding modernism, harks back, albeit with unrelenting honesty, to the canons of classical critical thought. It shows us Woolf, the philosopher no less than artist and seer, pitted for a moment in a kind of ecumenical was against Joyce, the "heretic," and yearning for a return to a meaning that seems to have gone.

Notes

1. The term is used by Woolf to describe her peculiar sense of being in "A Sketch of the Past": "this did not prevent me from feeling ecstasies and raptures spontaneously and intensely and without any shame or the last sense of guilt so long as they were disconnected with my own body" (68).

2. Both Virginia Woolf and Forster seem to have had grave misgivings both about Britain's empirical tradition and the empirical nature of logical positivism and its implications in the context of art.

3. We see humanism in its encounter with modernism. Art is perceived as struggling to preserve its privileged status in the face of literal reality or history. This is clearly symbolized by the persistent dispute of the Ramsays over the "weather." We likewise see symbol and letter at loggerheads elsewhere. Mrs Ramsay is, for instance, shown, during her visit to town with Tansley, as no less "imperial," in her own way, than Queen Victoria. That, of course, has to do with the empire of the mind contending with Empire proper.

4. The world of things had been replaced by Wittgenstein in his *Tractatus* by the world of facts and philosophy by logic. The conflict between the Ramsays may, at some level, be said to symbolize this. The letter "Q" in Woolf has to do with the "propositions" put forward by Wittgenstein (e.g. "All is the world that is the case," etc.) and the reductionist ("QED") "proofs" afforded by his *Tractatus*. Woolf plainly delights in her own *reductio ad absurdum* of Wittgenstein's "philosophy."

5. Woolf is once again pointing to Wittgenstein's "analysis" of the "world" and the reduction of philosophy to mere atomism.

6. Refer to quotation from "A Sketch of the Past" on the quest for wholeness.

7. Implied in Bergson, we see the idea in Eliot and also in Heidegger's *Being and Time*.

8. Woolf speaks, in "A Sketch of the Past," of moments akin to this which she refers to as moments of "non-being" where the "cotton wool" of the day is all-enveloping and there is a sense of discontinuity in time.

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LITERATURE AND CULTURAL STUDIES

Subaltern of the Subalterns: Caste in Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*

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Abstract

In India the complex social structure demands that it be divided into heterogeneous classes. This division produces class discrimination as well as caste discrimination. The latter has been institutionalized in the name of religion; and the upper castes, using religious dogma, assume hegemonial power to exploit the lower castes to suppress them economically, socially, and politically. Mulk Raj Anand has shown the pathetic condition of the outcaste/ untouchable in colonial India where the whole of India is subjugated to their colonizers, and because of the division and subdivision, the lower castes are subjugated at the hands of the upper caste Hindus. The condition of the untouchables cannot be recognized by generalizing them as subalterns; rather they demand a critical study beyond the accepted notion regarding the synonymous use of "people" and "subaltern." This paper argues the possibility of reviewing the untouchables in a double subalternized position in the context of Mulk Raj Anand's Untouchable.

Keywords: subaltern, elite, untouchable, caste, outcaste

The sweeper is worse off than a slave, for the slave may change his master and his duties but the sweeper is bound for ever, born into a state from which he cannot escape and where he is excluded from social intercourse and the consolations of his religion.

– E.M. Forster (vi)

Mulk Raj Anand is one of the 20th century Indian writers who shows the heart of India in its darkest color. Anand deals with the lowest strata of the society whose members are economically and socially lower than the mainstream and are considered as "Others." The setting of the novel *Untouchable* is colonial India where the Indian society is under hegemony of British rule. Within this hegemonic structure the "untouchables" stand at the lowest step of the social ladder. Anand advocates for those downtrodden people, and gives a fiery voice to the voiceless untouchables. It is valor on Anand's part that he has chosen an untouchable as his hero when the colonized Indian society was strict to mark the boundaries among hierarchical castes.

The word "caste" is not an Indian word "but is derived from the Portuguese *casta* meaning pure breed" (Sharma 5). In Hinduism, there exists four hierarchical castes and anyone who does not belong to one of those castes is an outcaste. Each "Varna" or caste is allowed to do their predestined work that has been fixed by religion. Brahmins are the priests and educated people of the society. The next hierarchical upper caste are the Kshatriyas, who are the rulers or warriors. Vaishyas are the landlords and businessmen while the lower caste Shudras are peasants or work as laborers. Outside of these four castes, all are outcastes and untouchables. These untouchables do menial jobs like cleaning or washing. Because of the nature of their occupation, the untouchables are not considered as members of any specific class of Hindu society. By addressing this caste system as unique in Indian society, "most India specialists

have overlooked the ability of the caste system to change drastically in its form, content and meaning in spite of historic changes which take place in the modes of production in South Asia" (Bahl 369-370) and "[i]n its nearly six thousand years of origin and evolution, Varnasharam\ casteism has shown little loosening of grip even at the time of Anand" (Basak 63).

Apart from this religious doctrine, the origin of caste has close relations with the incursion of the Aryans who migrated from Europe and established themselves in India: "… the Varnas represent the efforts of the Aryans to create a social order in which they came to terms with pre-Aryan (including Dravidian) India but simultaneously asserted their apartness and moral, political and economic superiority"(Mendelsohn, Vicziany 7). The untouchables were not allowed to touch people of the four Varnas. They were not even allowed to use the same wells. In some Indian regions, the attitude towards the untouchables was so severe that the sight of them was considered to be polluting. The sociopolitical suppression of the untouchables affects and influences their economic condition. In their book *The Untouchables: Subordination, Poverty and the State in Modern India*, Mendelsohn and Vicziany portrayed the pathetic condition of 20th century India: "In 1977-8 about 70 percent of the Untouchable population rated 'poor,' relative to some 56 percent of the overall population"(29). This class division by the caste system along with the economic inequality creates heterogeneous classes in Indian society. Mahatma Gandhi had stated this social evil as "a disgrace on Hinduism" (qtd. in Agrawal 130).

In Anand's *Untouchable* we get a portrayal of the pathetic lives of outcastes. The protagonist of the novel, Bakha, a sweeper, belongs to the lowest level of Hindu society where he neither has any opportunity to be elite nor stand equally with other subalterns subjugated under colonial rule. His position and occupation have been predestined by religion, and later this religious dogma has been used by the upper castes to subjugate "polluted" people like him. The people who clean the upper castes' dirt live in the most horrible dirt. In *Untouchable*, the outcastes are not allowed to mount the platform of the well nor allowed to go to the nearby stream. It is believed that their touch will pollute the water. They have only one way to get the biggest means of survival – wait for a high caste Hindu. They have to wait a whole day sometimes to find a high caste, kind enough and with time, to help them.

Sohini, Bakha's beautiful sister, has been defiled by a Brahmin which shows the hypocrisy of the upper caste Brahmins and "pollution." Her brother knows this, and yet is helpless. He can only curse his sister's beauty and think, "Oh, God, why was she born, why was she born"(Anand 57) as if beauty is not for the outcaste. A contrary picture can be found if an untouchable goes against the institutionalized socio-religious dogmas. The society unites and becomes the judge of that helpless creature, as we have seen in *Untouchable* when Bakha unconsciously touched an upper caste man. The polluted Hindu is enraged when touched by Bakha and responds as a representative of the orthodox upper caste Hindu: "They ought to be wiped off the surface of the earth!"(41). Bakha hates his work but he has no option to escape as it is his inherited disgrace. He finds that only the Muslims and the "sahib" do not mind being touched by him. It is the Hindus and the outcastes who are not sweepers who create the barrier around Bakha's untouchable life: "For them I am a sweeper, sweeper—untouchable! Untouchable! That's the word! Untouchable! I am an Untouchable!" (43).

There were degrees of caste even in this outcaste society. There is a fascination among the outcastes to be the superior to the other outcastes; this fascination is clear in Bakha's character as well as in the washerwoman who thinks herself superior to the other outcastes. The outcastes include scavengers, the leather workers, the washermen, the barbers, the water carriers, the grass cutters, and other such people. Bakha and his family are sweepers and therefore, they are inferior to other outcastes. He has three friends who, together, comprise three hierarchical positions in the society: "Ram Charan was admitted to be of the higher caste among them, because he was a washerman. Chota, the leather-worker's son, came next in the hierarchy, and Bakha was of the third and lowest category"(87). Sohini is insulted by the washerwoman only for being of the lowest social rank. Sohini is not ready to take the Brahmin's favors only because she is afraid of the other outcastes. Bakha's friend Ram Charan (a washerman), on one occasion, has stated his superiority by declaring himself a Hindu and Bakha a mere sweeper. This declaration denies Bakha's position in the superstructure of Hindu society. Like a street vendor who wants everyone's attention, Bakha shouts "posh, posh, sweeper coming!"(44), declaring his identity and warning people so they can move or keep away. This clearly shows the Indian hierarchical society where sweepers are not only outcastes but the outcastes of the outcastes.

The condition of the Untouchables cannot merely be defined as subaltern to the elite. Their position in the society is more complex than the other hierarchical castes. The meanings of the words "subaltern" and "elite" are fragile. Ranjit Guha in his essay "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India" has stated:

> The term 'elite' has been used in this statement to signify dominant groups, foreign as well as indigenous. The dominant foreign groups included all the non-Indians, that is, mainly British officials of the industrialists, merchants, financiers, planters, landlord and missionaries. The dominant indigenous groups included classes and interests operating at two levels. At the all-India level they included the biggest feudal magnates, the most important representatives, of the industrial and mercantile bourgeoisie and nature recruits to the upper-most levels of the bureaucracy. (44)

Guha pointed out the last categories of the elite as heterogeneous. The same class which dominates in one area can be dominated in another area. This heterogeneous group creates ambiguities among the lowest strata — rural gentry, rich peasants, and upper middle peasants, all of whom belong to the subaltern classes, but in some circumstances, act as elites. In Guha's definition, the terms "people" and "subaltern classes" have been synonymously used. Guha addressed the difference between "elite" and "subaltern classes" as "demographic difference between total Indian population and all those whom we have described as the elite"(44). Gayatri Spivak named the third group (dominant indigenous groups at the all-India and at the regional and local levels) as "the buffer group" (Spivak 32) because of its in-betweeness, between the people and the great macro structural dominant groups. Both Spivak and Guha declare the hierarchical position of the subalterns and elite in the society. A leading French anthropologist, Luis Dumont has pointed out the nature of the relations between castes. According to Dumont "the caste system is a hierarchy not just in the sense

of system of superdination and subordination achieved by the exercise of power but also in the sense (according to Dumont the authentic sense) of system ordered by an encompassing set of values" (qtd. in Sharma 21). Dumont emphasized the caste hierarchical society not only on the basis of subordination but also on the basis of value system. He opines that "caste cannot be conceived independently of the caste system, and the nature of this system is that the Brahman is at the apex of the hierarchy. The secular power of the Kshatriyas (ruler-warrior) castes and other castes exercising practical political dominance is encompassed by this value system" (qtd. in Sharma 22). This Indian hierarchical society draws its power from the outcastes – which is enjoyed by the Brahmins or all other middle ranks.

Hence, if we ask the question of whether Bakha, or his fellow Untouchables, can belong to Spivak's "buffer group" or Dumont's "middle ranks," we see that, because they belong to the lowest strata of society, the Untouchables, and the sweeper boy, Bakha, have no possibility of placing themselves in either category. The Untouchables are outcastes and always subaltern under other elite and subaltern groups. We may also ask whether we can marginalize the outcastes from the overall Indian population who are termed as "people" or "subaltern." If we do, there will be no difference between outcastes and caste Hindus who are socially, economically, and politically subaltern and degraded by the elite. Defining the kind of inequality inherent in the caste system, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar called it "graded inequality" (102). Ambedkar defines the hierarchical castes as the highest (the Brahmins), the higher (the Kshatriyas), high (Vaishya), and "below the high are the low (Shudra) and below the low are those who are lower (the Untouchables)" (101-102). Ambedkar points out, "In the system of graded inequality there is no such class as completely unprivileged class except the one which is at the base of the social pyramid. The privileges of the rest are graded. Even the low is a privileged class as compared with the lower" (102). Every caste, according to Ambedkar, has a grievance against the highest and would like to bring about their downfall. But these classes will not unite with each other. The higher will not join the high, low or lower lest they should demean themselves and be considered their equals: "Each class being privileged, every class is interested in maintaining the social system" (Ambedkar 102). Being at the base of the social pyramid, the lower Untouchables are deprived of all kinds of social privileges and, as all other castes are interested in maintaining this social system, the lower do not have any opportunity to be equal with the upper castes.

In the article, "Jitu Santal's Movement in Malda, 1924-1932: A Study in Tribal Protest," Tanika Sarkar shows that it was not only through the negation of the signs of elite authority that Santal moved towards a sense of his own identity. Jitu, the Santal leader who protested against the British Raj, also showed a strong hostility towards Muslims and Hindu low castes and Untouchables. In this connection, Rosalind O'Hanlon says,

> Thus the "Other" that defines the subaltern's self-consciousness need not then only be the elite groups exerting dominance; it may equally be the classes and groups that lie even lower in the hierarchy, and the striving to maintain a distance from them may be the most important content of his self-image and self-respect. (157)

This "striving to maintain a distance" from the elite as well as from "others" who belong to the lowest strata defines the self-identity of the subalterns. The Untouchables are always subjugated not only by their immediate upper caste but also by all the hierarchical groups. The Untouchables' world is "a pie-bald colonized world with caste Hindus as indigenous colonizers under that foreign colonial tutelage" (Basak 64).

Besides the socio-religious class created by caste system, Bakha's position can be defined from his economic condition. The mutual reinforcement of class and caste creates enormous disparities in the Indian society. Amartya Sen, in his book *An Uncertain Glory*, argues that "Caste divisions make it much harder for the economically underprivileged to organize and bargain for the better deal" (214). Bakha knows that he is going to be cheated by the shopkeeper but unable to do anything because of his inferior rank. The occupational stereotypes obligate the Untouchables to remain in the grip of others and render them unable to improve their position. According to Ramnarayan Rawat, "The factor that has contributed most to the continued subordination of Dalits has been the ghettoization of their communities into so-called 'traditional' and 'ritually impure' occupations" (3). We find this scenario in Bakha's case. Bakha is not allowed to study in school because in his caste-based society, schools are not for lower Untouchables whose touch can pollute others; schools are for babus only. Food is an obsession for the Untouchables, because even after hard labor, they are not able to buy a piece of bread. Bakha has to go door to door to beg for bread: "Bread for the sweeper, mother. Bread for the sweeper" (Anand 59). Lakha, the father of Bakha, passes his days in sweet reminiscence of pleasant food which he enjoyed in his early years. On receiving the news of Bakha and Sohini's humiliation at the hands of the upper caste Hindus, the father responds paradoxically, "They are masters. We must respect them and do as they tell us" (71). His submission to the upper castes and classes does not merely stand on his identity as a sweeper, rather it is also caused by his economic condition. From a Marxist perspective, the real battle line is between "the haves and the have nots," the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The bourgeoisie are those "who control the world's natural, economic and human resources – the proletariat, the majority of the global population who live in the substandard positions and who have always performed the manual labor" (Tyson 52). From an Indian perspective, laborers or the proletariat are not united; rather they are divided into diverse classes according to their jobs. B.R. Ambedkar remarked: "The caste system is not merely a division of labourers which is quite different from division of labour – it is hierarchy in which the divisions of labours are graded one above the other"(qtd. in Sen 214-15).

The Untouchables/outcastes of India, though they inherit the lowest strata and in spite of being a social enigma, were a matter of great interest among the different groups of colonial India. Colonel Hachinton in *Untouchable*, a member of the Christian missionaries, for example, is very interested in the group. He mixes freely with the Untouchables not because he is a generous man but because he has a special mission, the mission of converting the natives into Christians. Along with the Christian missionaries the upper caste Hindus used them for their political purposes: "… high caste Hindus did not want to recognize untouchable caste as belonging to the Hindu religious community at all" (Mendelson and Vicziany 27), but when it

is a matter of political interest, the same upper caste Hindu community act differently towards those outcastes: "The spur to the change was the arithmetic of parliamentary representation that was begun under the Morely-Minto reforms of 1909-10: the Muslim League had sought to argue that the Hindu population was artificially inflated by inclusion of the untouchables and in response the Hindus now laid vehement claim to these their people" (28). The coalition between Hindu-Muslim leaders gave fuel to the British mission, the mission of "divide and rule." The British Census Commissioner Gait issued a preparatory circular on the question of drawing the border between Hindus and others who were dubiously Hindu. By this circular the Census Commissioner carved out a separate ideological space for the Untouchables and named them the "depressed classes" or "exterior caste" and thus the outcastes were segregated from the mainstream Hindus. By this British interference the outcastes who were socially outside the mainstream became legally apart from the superstructure of the society. In *Apology for Heroism*, Anand asserts, "The British professed tolerance for the religious beliefs, castes, creeds and customs of the people, a tolerance, of course, which worked in their favour because it allowed the sores of old superstitions to fester and kept the country divided (qtd. in Basak 71). Anand pointed out the mission of the British government using the speech of Gandhi: "the British government sought to pursue a policy of divide and rule in giving to our brethren of the depressed classes separate electorates in the Councils that will be created under the new constitution" (Anand 136). Gandhi further declared, "I shall only speak about the so-called 'Untouchables' whom the government tried to alienate from Hinduism by giving them a separate legal and political status" (136). Gandhi's speech focuses on the harsh reality of British colonial policy but even Gandhi himself creates a barrier between castes and outcastes through his speech. He says that the outcastes are the "cleaning Hindu society" (138) and asked the Untouchables to "cultivate the habits of cleanliness" (138). By supporting the taboo of purity and impurity, Gandhi repeats the grand narrative of Indian society. An offended Bakha failed to get any resolution from Gandhi's speech. He thinks, "But now the Mahatma is blaming us" (139).

The double subalternized position of Bakha directs him to mimic not his immediate hierarchal class, but the colonial elites through whom he can forget his subaltern identity in the Hindu society. Bakha, as well as every outcaste child, has a desire to wear western dresses and since most of the boys are from poor families and unable to afford the luxury of a complete European outfit, "they eagerly stretched their hands to seize any particular article they could see anywhere, feeling that the possession of something European was better than the possession of nothing European"(92). Bakha's mimicry of British people is nothing but an escape from his own identity. He understands the notion of the colonizer's superiority to the native people which gives him the desire to be like those "sahibs." He knows from others that he cannot be a sahib but a "pilpali sahib," but still he never gives up his mimicry as it is the only way to escape his Indianness. He feels safer with the foreign colonizers than with his native colonizers.

Colonial India is a doorway to seeing its inhabitants under a dominant foreign group. The upper caste Hindus (elites) who can be classified as "haves" because of their economic condition are also under foreign subjugation. Under this vast dominant group, the last layer of the Hindu

society, the outcastes/Untouchables, falls under several shadows of their upper castes. Their voice cannot reach that dominant group and thus they remain subalterns until and unless someone appears to represent them. Bakha the sweeper and other outcastes have to wait for that someone who will release them from their subaltern identity along with the shadows of other subalterns. E.M. Forster in his preface to *Untouchable* rightly turns to the conclusion of Bakha's pathetic day: "Bakha returns to his father and his wretched bed, thinking now of Mahatma, now of the machine. His Indian day is over and next day will be like it, but on the surface of the earth if not in the depths of the sky, a change is at hand"(viii). Bakha remains with this hope of change; maybe, some day, he will raise his voice and liberate himself from the double subaltern identity but Anand has not given us the scope to think so far. At the end of the day, Bakha is lost in the hierarchical layers of caste and class in colonial India.

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Dissent in *Things Fall Apart*: The Case of Okonkwo

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Abstract

Widely read and discussed author Chinua Achebe (1930-2013) has created dissent in Okonkwo out of the cultural clash between native African and traditional white culture of the archetypal colonialists — the British traders, missionaries and government officers – in his groundbreaking novel Things Fall Apart *(1958). From the very outset, Okonkwo is placed as an acute follower of his tribal customs and norms while dissenting against everything that disagrees with his Igbo heritage. This study aims to ascertain the route of a dissenter by rationalizing Okonkwo's suicide as an act of ultimate rebellion to remind his people of their traditions and to inspire resistance in the face of impending colonization. The study intends to show Achebe's projection of Okonkwo as a gradual uprising dissenter, setting up other characters like Unoka, Nwoye, and Obierika and their deeds as a foil to Okonkwo. Through Okonkwo's resistance, the author insightfully claims that the fall in the title is not the fall of a dissenter, but the rise of an undying rebellious spirit who embraces death instead of accepting British subjugation.*

Things Fall Apart is set in Igboland in the second half of the 19th century, when the Igbos and other African territories experienced colonial penetration by the West Europeans. Achebe wrote it "to teach other Africans that their past was neither as savage nor as benighted as the colonizer represented it to be" (Okpewho 172). The first two-thirds of the novel is the synchronic presentation of Umuofian culture and society, of which Okonkwo is a product. Okonkwo, an integral part of this society, has grown up embracing its norms, values, and outlook where "Age was respected among his people, but achievement was revered" (Achebe 6). Okonkwo had achieved reverence by revolting against every weakness, cowardly act, compromise, submissiveness, and passivity as it would lower both his status and that of his tribe. As a consequence, Okonkwo is acknowledged as a dissenter from beginning to end, even when no one supports him.

In most of the studies conducted on *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo's end seems to be considered as not only his demise but also the fall of African culture. Articles by Rhoads, Foley, and Galvan have thrown light on the broken order of Igbo culture due to colonial confrontation and presented Okonkwo as a part of that collapse. Diana Akers Rhoads in her article "Cultures in *Things Fall Apart*" analyzes British and African culture side by side. Rhoads aims at revealing Achebe's intention to depict Africa's past truthfully. She analyzes Igbo religion and government systems along with their flaws, reaching a conclusion that these are not flawed enough to be replaced with the British system. In case of Okonkwo, Rhoads thinks that both Okonkwo's flawed character and unjust British system are responsible for his destructive and tragic end. Okonkwo's suicide is viewed as the final surrender of Umuofia by Enrique Galvan and Fernando Galvan in their article "God(s) Fall(s) Apart: Christianity in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*." This study shows how Ibo culture is undermined, due to Umuofia's inclination for a new religion, not for the loss of their belief in their own religions.

Okonkwo's suicide is the outcome of the European dominion under the mask of a civilizing and a Christian mission. Andrew Foley's article "Okonkwo's Fate and the Worldview of *Things Fall Apart*" shows Okonkwo as a tragic figure whose downfall occurred due to his tragic flaws. He identifies Okonkwo's inflexibility to adapt to the new rules as his tragic flaw, and Okonkwo's pride and ambition as his hubris. On the other hand, studies by Friesen, Iyasere, and many others have contributed to uphold Okonkwo and his actions in a positive light, but Okonkwo as a dissenter never crosses their minds. Solomon O. Iyasere's article "Narrative Techniques in *Things Fall Apart*" illustrates Okonkwo's killing of Ikemefuna not as a brutal act but one that shows his sentimental reactions. Okonkwo's flaws are viewed from different perspectives. Alan R. Friesen in "Okonkwo's Suicide as an Affirmative Act: Do Things Really Fall Apart?" demonstrates Okonkwo's suicide not as the result of a failure to adjust to a new worldview, but as an act of rebellion designed to remind his people of their traditions in the face of colonization. This act has empowered Okonkwo instead of making him a powerless and passive character.

The observation of Okonkwo as a dissenter has received little attention in postcolonial studies. Okonkwo's ideas of his own worth and masculinity, reactionary attitude towards his sluggish father and son have never been seen as the radical spirit of a dissenter. Okonkwo's suicide has never been seen as a part of his dissent before. Hence, this study focuses on the central character Okonkwo and his reciprocal affiliation with Igbo society to show how he is not a disciple but a dissenter.

The nature and definition of dissent have changed with time. Historically, dissent indicates the English religious dissenters of the 16th and 17th centuries who separated from the Church of England. But the nature of dissent has been broadened to include secular issues in its concept. Dissent may simply indicate "disagreement with or difference of opinion from the prevailing position" (Mitra 5). Frederick C. Giffin and Ronald D. Smith, in their preface to the volume *Against the Grain,* define dissent as an "opposition to the status quo" (Mitra 5). To them, dissent means opposing the present existing state of affairs as it denies one's own convictions and principles.

Dissent may include both intellectual and physical actions. The notion of dissent firstly takes birth in the mind. Then it is nourished in an individual's conscience. This individual awakening may form opposition alone without waiting for others. But when it requires physical resistance or broader movement, organized followers or united thought are needed and thus "dissent may lead to reform movements and even revolution" (Mitra 6-7). This process can be articulated through the following theoretical framework:
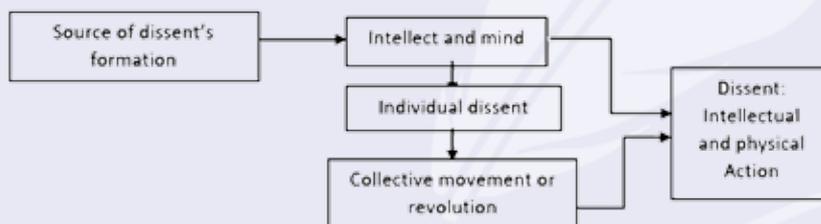
Albert Camus' *The Rebel: An Essay on Man* terms a "dissenter" as a "rebel," since it has been a convenient synonym. Camus acknowledges dissent as one of the essential dimensions of mankind because it is a question of preserving one's own existence as "I rebel — therefore we exist" (Camus 15). Accordingly, Camus' rebel "is an individual who refuses to obey an oppressive authority … in defense of his own rights" in order to retain freedom and justice (Mitra 7-8).

An individual defends himself when the oppressive authority is about to cross a borderline, as "there is a limit beyond which you shall not go" (Camus). If the authority crosses the borderline of tolerance through injustices and torture, oppressed people cannot bear humiliation. At this moment, the seed of rebellion blooms in "a feeling of revulsion" (Camus 10) and the individual understands his own worth and right: "In every act of rebellion, the rebel simultaneously experiences a feeling of revulsion at the infringement of his rights and a complete and spontaneous loyalty to certain aspects of himself" (Camus 10). Moreover, Camus claims that rebellion does not arise only and necessarily among the oppressed, it can also be caused by the mere spectacle of oppression of which someone else is the victim. Camus gives an example of Russian terrorists in Siberia who committed suicide to protest against the whipping of their comrades. This kind of sentiment is called human solidarity that forms an awareness in a rebel's mind, discarding any space to be a disciple: "Awareness, no matter how confused it may be, develops from every act of rebellion: the sudden, dazzling perception that there is something in man with which he can identify himself, even if only for a moment" (Camus 11).

Silence, on the other hand, indicates one's lack of want and opinions making one an adherent to ongoing injustices. But a rebel or dissenter cannot be a follower as he or she has egoistic motives: "Moreover, the rebel – once he has accepted the motives and at the moment of his greatest impetus – preserves nothing in that he risks everything. He demands respect for himself, of course, but only in so far as he identifies himself with a natural community" (Camus 12). Camus' view on dissent can be structured in this way:
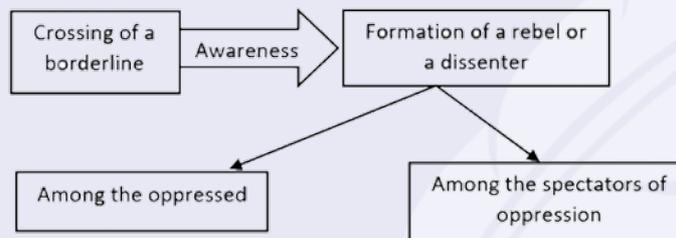
Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* emerges as an individual dissenter who starts to rebel against his father, Unoka, and develops gradually, gaining momentum from events like Nwoye's conversion and the sacrilegious deeds of the convert Enoch, leading him to revolt ultimately against the Christian missionaries and the government agents. Okonkwo gains awareness by being a spectator of oppression in his exile and being a victim of the head messenger's

oppression. However, Camus' notion of crossing the borderline can be applied here. The borderline of tolerance is crossed when Okonkwo and other leaders are physically assaulted by the District Commissioner and head messenger. This culminates in the killing of the messenger and Okonkwo's suicide, projected as the latter's physical resistance. Thus Okonkwo appears as an absolute and solitary dissenter who can even stand alone in the battle for existence.

Okonkwo's rebellion is indissolubly bound to the traditional values and institutions of Umuofian culture. He is proud of his accomplishments in life and of his being an Igbo authority figure. He has multiple wives and children as it is practiced in their culture. He has earned the respect of the villagers through his strength in battles. The novel's opening gives an image of the hero as an archetypal wrestler and leader: "Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. As a young man of eighteen he had brought honor to his village by throwing Amalinze the Cat" (3). Killam regards Okonkwo as "one of the greatest men of his time, the embodiment of Ibo values, the man who better than most symbolizes his race" (qtd. in Iyasere 178). This statement reveals the pre-colonial harmony of the society and Okonkwo's ability to bring order by fighting against chaos. It also suggests Okonkwo's ability "to establish a civilization without the help of the European civilizing mission" (Chidi 85). Their ancestral heroes are strong enough. Their cultural records are rich enough. Any kind of outer influence is not sought after. Unfortunately, though Okonkwo's society is culture-conscious, it is vulnerable to acculturation as is seen in the third part of the story.

Okonkwo belongs to a society where there is a hierarchy in the socio-political organization as represented by the following pyramid:

-Chiefs
-Secret society
- Society of priests
- The people
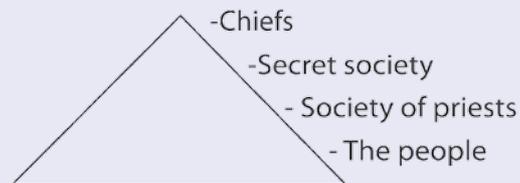
The Igbo social classes (qtd. in Ndiaye 17)

Despite the hierarchy, democracy is practiced in this organization. In this democratic process, decisions are taken in a legislative assembly. Sometimes open-air meetings are held where everyone is free to give their opinions. In the novel, Achebe states, "So if the community says we will have a meeting tomorrow … everyday … could go there. And everybody could speak" (Ndiaye 18). The pyramid shows that there is no king. The same scenario is found in the novel when the villagers answer the missionaries: "They asked who the king of the village was, but the villagers told them there was no king. 'We have men of high title and the chief priest and the elders,' they said" (105).

As an influential leader and decision-maker, Okonkwo earns two of the four titles. He is also a member of the masked "egwugwu," a secret society, who settle disputes that cannot be resolved in other ways. Social dispute is not resolved by means of war all the time, but rather, compensatory offering is considered a better option. The same happens in the conflict

between Umuofia and Mbaino, where Okonkwo is chosen by the nine villages as an emissary. Electing Okonkwo as an emissary reveals the terrifying image he projects across the tribes and "He was treated with great honor and respect" for it (9).

As a highly respected Umuofian, Okonkwo is asked to look after a young boy called Ikemefuna, who is brought from Mbaino as compensation. Occasionally, orders or decisions are given by the Igbo Oracle. These are feared and obeyed by the people of Umuofia on all terms. Okonkwo is a strict adherent of these oracles. When Okonkwo's adopted son Ikemefuna is sentenced to death by the Oracle, he murders Ikemefuna on his own to prove himself a disciple to the Igbo norms and values. He did it to "prove the fidelity to the oracle" and placed "divine authority above personal sentiment" (Kortenaar 47). Ezeudu, the respected elder of the clan, considers it a crime as Okonkwo is not ordered to carry out the deed — "Yes, Umuofia has decided to kill him. The Oracle of the Hills and the Caves has pronounced it. They will take him outside Umuofia as is the custom, and kill him there. But I want you to have nothing to do with it. He calls you his father" (40). In spite of this warning, Okonkwo "drew his matchet and cut him down" (43).

According to Basak, this crime is committed out of "Okonkwo's pride and ambition of reaching the peak of social hierarchy" (18), not out of loyalty. It is "an act of murder, not an act of sacrifice" (Njeng 4). But there is no option for Okonkwo except to kill Ikemefuna. Being one of the leaders, he must go to the execution. Okonkwo's attitude becomes more evident when he scolds Obierika: "You sound as if you question the authority and the decision of the Oracle … But someone had to do it" (46). So, Okonkwo could either save Ikemefuna or hand him back to be killed when he runs towards him crying, "My father, they have killed me!" (43). The former stance would be against the Oracle while the latter would be being neutral. This neutral position is articulated by Okonkwo's friend Obierika's comment — "if the Oracle said that my son should be killed I would neither dispute it nor be the one to do it" (47). It indicates a situation where one would not do the morally conflicting deed, but not prevent others from doing it. Okonkwo, of course, cannot be neutral and so he kills Ikemefuna himself. The aftereffects, however, are interesting. Okonkwo is found "brooding over this violent deed for three full days" (Iyasere 185). Therefore, the homicide proves Okonkwo as neither a brutal nor an egocentric person but rather a victim of circumstance. Okonkwo, torn between his devotion to ancestral principles and private emotion, ultimately proves himself a stern disciple of the Oracle as well as Igbo norms, obeying the Oracle without a second thought. Okonkwo's unquestionable loyalty sets him apart from Obierika who is a consistent critic of tradition. He questions the will of the goddess in excluding Okonkwo from society for seven years because of an accidental killing at Ezeudu's funeral: "Why should a man suffer so grievously for an offence he had committed inadvertently?" (88). He also questions the legacy of throwing away twin children. On the other hand, Okonkwo obeys all the punishments decreed against him. His animals are slaughtered and his property is destroyed by his clansmen.

The Umuofian community, including Okonkwo, cherish courage and manhood above everything. Due to this, he hates all persons lacking manliness, including even his father,

Unoka, and his son, Nwoye. Umuofia emphasizes personal worth and achievement, and Okonkwo is living proof of this as "he had won fame as the greatest wrestler… [was] a wealthy farmer and had two barns of yams … two titles and had shown incredible prowess in two inter-tribal wars" (6). From the above, Okonkwo can be seen as the ideal Igbo man. Being an ardent follower of ancestral and cultural values, he rebels against the ignominies done by others. Okonkwo's life is reciprocally related to Igbo society as earlier discussed. Okonkwo's utmost effort to hold Umuofia above everything, determines him as a disciple to Igbo values and norms. It also ascertains Okonkwo's life-long dissent against everything that might tarnish the honor of Igboland.

The seed of dissent is sown first in his mind. For Okonkwo, it originates with the hatred that he feels towards his indolent father, Unoka, as Okonkwo has no tolerance for the unsuccessful man who "was a failure. He was poor and his wife and children had barely enough to eat. People laughed at him because he was a loafer and they swore never to lend him any more money because he never paid back" (4). The beginning of dissent is evident too when the narrator reports, "Even as a little boy he had resented his father's failure and weakness" (10). Being effeminate and possessing no title, Unoka was considered an "agbala" in Umuofian terms. It affected Okonkwo's mind and infected his soul with the fear of becoming another Unoka. So Okonkwo kept himself aloof from any sort of emotion except the emotion of anger. The only emotion worth demonstrating was strength, since affection was a sign of weakness and "[h]is whole life was dominated by fear, the fear of failure and of weakness" (9). Thus, his life-long dissent was in progress because he "was ruled by one passion – to hate everything that his father Unoka had loved … gentleness and … idleness" (10). These things motivated him to become hardworking. This subsequently led to Okonkwo's response in killing Ikemefuna. Since he was a dissenter against weakness, affection, and a devotee of the manly valor that Umuofia esteemed, he ignored Ezeudu's advice and Obierika's wisdom.

The root of Okonkwo's dissent goes deeper through his son, Nwoye, who resembles Unoka. Nwoye lacks masculinity and Okonkwo struggles to teach him how to be a proud, stoic, and unemotional man, qualities that he values. Okonkwo says, "I have done my best to make Nwoye grow into a man, but there is too much of his mother in him" (Achebe 46). He adds, "Too much of his grandfather" (46). This creates a huge gap in the father-son relationship which later becomes intense due to the effect of Ikemefuna's death on Nwoye. Okonkwo is furious when Nwoye converts to Christianity, being influenced by the missionary activities. It is unbearable for him that his own son not only proves himself an "agbala," but is also defiant of tradition. He could not understand how "living fire begets cold, impotent ash" (109). Like a "[r]oaring flame" (108), Nwoye should have proved himself a deserving successor and keeper of Igbo values. Hearing about Nwoye's visit to the church, Okonkwo beats him with a heavy stick. This is symbolic of Okonkwo's retaliation against the missionaries and, in turn, the British colonizer as well as the converts.

Nwoye's conversion is the striking moment. The white men have not crossed Okonkwo or slighted his honor before, but Nwoye's betrayal of his own religion as well as community heralds Okonkwo's defeat. Okonkwo has only heard about the destructive activities done by

the whites in other territories. He never experienced it directly. With his son's conversion, Okonkwo is no longer a spectator or aggressor. Rather he becomes one of the oppressed. This suggests how oppression starts to cross the borderline of tolerance about which Camus wrote in *The Rebel.* Like Camus' Rebel, Okonkwo too physically revolts when repression goes beyond that borderline. And the borderline is crossed at the moment when the Umuofian leaders, including Okonkwo, are humiliated by the British colonizers.

Returning home from exile, Okonkwo found a different Umuofia where a new government had been established with a District Commissioner and court messengers. He was shocked at the changing view of Africans who had begun to follow the white men's ideology, considering others as uncivilized and lesser beings. Respected Umuofian clansmen were in prison for disobeying British law. This miserable collapse of his clan led Okonkwo to question Obierika, "Why have they lost the power to fight?" (124). In reply, Obierika reminds him of the havoc wreaked by the whites out of revenge, as people of Abame killed one white man. Okonkwo reacts by denouncing the Abame people as "weak and foolish." They should have fought back: "Had they no guns and matchets?" (124). As Abame was always considered cowardly in comparison with Umuofia, Okonkwo does not expect to remain passive like them. He makes up his mind to rebel: "We must fight these men and drive them from the land" (124). Okonkwo's determination is initially successful when they go to burn the church together. After this revolt, "Okonkwo was almost happy" (136). This was similar to Mitra's notion of revolution as Umuofians were united at a single point of thought. This resolution was to protest the ignominy that Enoch, an overzealous convert, had done by unmasking an "egwuwu" in public and by eating a sacred python, sparking off a conflict between the church and the people. And Okonkwo would let no one get away with dishonoring Igbo customs.

The District Commissioner and the head messenger cross the borderline when Umuofian leaders including Okonkwo are called for a meeting after the burning of the church. This is a conspiracy and they are tricked into submission. Their hair is shaved off, they are hit with large sticks on the head and back, and fined. Choking with hatred, Okonkwo's mind is stimulated by a rebellious spirit. After the incident,

> Okonkwo slept very little. The bitterness in his heart was now mixed with a kind of child-like excitement. Before he had gone to bed he had brought down his war dress, which he had not touched since his return from exile. He had shaken out his smoked raffia skirt and examined his tall feather head-gear and his shield. They were all satisfactory, he had thought. (141)

Okonkwo decides he would fight single-handedly and alone if others "chose to be cowards" (141).

Okonkwo indeed fights alone, as seen at the great assembly. Messengers of the court come to suspend the meeting and all men at the meeting become silent and passive. Okonkwo breaks the silence by drawing his matchet and beheading the court messenger. And in that moment, Okonkwo realizes the loss of unity among the Umuofians, and that "Umuofia would not go to war. He knew because they had let the other messengers escape. They had broken

into tumult instead of action" (144-145). This broken unity reminds Okonkwo of the parting feast which he himself organized. Anxious to preserve his family's heritage in the face of the colonizing missionaries, Okonkwo had said, "I have only called you together because it is good for kinsmen to meet" (117). Okonkwo mourned for the apparent loss of unity evident from his conversation with Obierika. He could not bear the change that had taken place in his Igbo culture and values. As Foley states, "The degree of social change may be measured by contrasting two great assemblies, which take place in the novel" (43). Earlier, Umuofia had decided over the inter-tribal dispute peacefully and jointly in the assembly where Okonkwo took the responsibility of a war emissary. The great assembly held after the humiliation of the leaders by the British commissioner and court messengers, however, presented a different scene. The presence of the clan was not satisfying as many former members "have broken the clan and gone their several ways" (144).

Okonkwo could not understand how an alien culture had done this as he questions Obierika, "Does the white man understand our custom about land?" (124). How could they when they did not even know the Igbo language? How could they claim that Igbo customs were bad and influence others with their view? Obierika's speech perhaps explains why Okonkwo has to fight alone: "How do you think we can fight when our brothers have turned against us? The white man … has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart" (124). But that fall was not for Okonkwo. Okonkwo dissented from accepting that fall like a one-man army. But, standing alone, he could neither drive the whites away nor remain an audience to the decline of his beloved Igbo culture. He thus decides to end his life to demonstrate his sheer hatred and defiance towards the "present status quo" (Mitra 5), to show his extreme dissent.

Alan R. Frieson's study shows the possibility of the positive effects Okonkwo's suicide might have on the Umuofian people. Okonkwo's act would remind them of the customs they were throwing away. This may not achieve greater things but would force them to think about Okonkwo, once a great man: "The very act of remembering these values presents a powerful affront against the missionaries who encourage Umuofia to forget their culture and history" (Friesen 8-9). Okonkwo would rather sacrifice his rightful burial than do nothing. His passivity could result in "total colonisation" or "lead to total annihilation" (Friesen 10).

Eric Sipyinyu Njeng's study took a neutral stance showing both the positive and negative sides. Obierika explained Okonkwo's suicide as an offence against the earth, an abomination. The Igbos considered those who committed suicide so despicable that they were not mourned and had to be buried by strangers. In accordance with this norm, Okonkwo descended "even lower than his father" (Njeng 4). Alternatively, Okonkwo's suicide could be considered a kind of sacrifice, as he gave up the right to be enshrined along with his ancestors. Since death was the main end, he could allow himself to be killed. In that case, it would not be sacrifice, not even suicide itself. It would have added more ignominy to Okonkwo's image. Emily Durkheim defined suicide thus: "Suicide is applied to all cases of death resulting directly or indirectly from positive or negative acts of the victim himself, which he knows will produce this result" (qtd. in Keat and Urry 120). Okonkwo's suicide was thus altruistic recalling Emile Durkheim's notion of suicide:

> Where the individual's life is rigorously governed by custom and habit, suicide is what he calls altruistic; that is, it results from the individual's taking his own life because of higher commandments, either those of religious sacrifice or unthinking political allegiance. (Durkheim 15)

The individual felt that something larger than himself was causing him to take his own life, such as religious or military martyrdom. Similarly, Okonkwo chose to take his life rather than live to see the traditions of his land desecrated. He died for something that was above the self.

Okonkwo's suicide was the brave act of a solitary dissenter who was always ready to give his life to protect his own ethics of manhood, pride, as well as his existence. He sacrificed his life to make others realize their mistake and turn back to their gods. Consequently, this was neither an act of shame nor a taboo. A sacrifice could not be the "fall" that the title of the novel suggests. Society might fall apart along with its values, but the spirit of a dissenter could never fall. A dissenter's image could never fade as Okonkwo was still valued as "one of the greatest men in Umuofia" (147) by Obierika in the last chapter. His undying spirit would seek a path to existence even in the world of *Things Fall Apart*. This view contrasts with Unoka's remark, "It is more difficult and more bitter when a man fails *alone*" (18). In case of Okonkwo, it is more glorious and incredible when a man fights alone.

The study ends with justifying Okonkwo as a dissenter in relation to the above mentioned framework. Okonkwo is judged with respect to his relationship with other Igbo men like Unoka, Obierika, Nwoye as well as Igbo society as a whole. Okonkwo proves himself a disciple of the social values and norms as it is seen in events like Ikemefuna's death, his unquestioning obedience to the ordained punishments, and mostly in his attitude towards Igbo values. Okonkwo is also judged as a dissenter in the context of his actions like destruction of the church, killing of the messenger, and his own suicide. The destruction of the Christian missionary is evidence of collective movement, which is the sole instance of Umuofian unity after Okonkwo's exile. Afterwards, the unity of the clansmen is broken, as is wholly realized by Okonkwo in the Great Assembly where he killed the head messenger. He fought like a one-man army while others broke apart. Okonkwo's suicide is analyzed as his final physical resistance, since it is the best choice for him.

A dissenter initially revolts intellectually, developing a kind of awakened conscience in himself or herself. In the midst of that process comes the defending point when oppression crosses the limit and the oppressed people raise their voices and physically resist. It may take the form of a collective movement or a dissenter may even stand alone. The Umuofian community nourished both dissenters and disciples. Dissenters like Okonkwo were by no means influenced by the District Commissioner or the Christian missionary, rather they made his nationalistic spirit stronger. The practices and actions of British colonizers incited his rebellious spirit. The opposite was seen in Nwoye, Enoch, Unoka, and other characters. They could better be labelled as disciples, as they were indifferent to their own cultural heritage and submissive to the British oppression. Okonkwo's life-long battle as a dissenter was not only against outsiders, but also against his own clansmen who denied their own identity and thus endangered the existence of Igboland as a whole.

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Life in the Diaspora:
Growing up Cosmopolitan in Divakaruni's *The Mistress of Spices*

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Abstract

A tale about duty and desire, conflict and reconciliation in the lives of the diaspora, is molded in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's The Mistress of Spices. *The present paper demonstrates the unevenness in the diasporic life showing the difficulty of the diasporic community, in a cross-cultural ambience, to reconcile with the conflicting entities of their life. Divakaruni epitomizes the spices, appearing emblematic throughout the novel, as the treasure of India, "a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination." This research focuses on how the author depicts an altruistic character like Tilo, who struggles to harmonize herself with the shifting priorities of her life. Her ambivalent soul sways between her egalitarian sense of duty and bodily desire for love. In the midst of turmoil, Tilo settles her mind to "acknowledge the suffering" of all, substantiating that "the smell of charred flesh is the same everywhere." Finally, the paper concludes with showing how pertaining to "a double consciousness," the characters, negotiating with the nuances of their inheritance, grow up cosmopolitan, that is "vernacular" in nature, allowing "the local, parochial, rooted, culturally specific" one to live together with the one who is "transnational" and "transcendent."*

Keywords: diaspora, cultural, cosmopolitan, hybridity

"I Tilo architect of the immigrant dream"

– *The Mistress of Spices* 29

The story of human migration is an age-old one. Either to search for food or for shelter, human beings have migrated from one place to another. Making their home in an unknown terrain is a phenomenon that our ancestors have followed and what we do even today. Perceivably, it is a never-ending process. In Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Mistress of Spices*, Tilo is an imagination of diasporic identity. She is from India but lives in Oakland. According to Michele Verna, Indians constitute a very large number among other diasporic nations because of their legacy of colonial migration. However, the Indian community has migrated to different parts of South East and far Eastern countries even during the pre-colonial period to spread religious beliefs, especially Buddhism and Hinduism. James Procter observes that, in developing the idea of diaspora, many postcolonial critics have contributed to and challenged the "supremacy of national paradigms." From former colonies, people move towards the center of their colonial masters. Their identity is shaky, but they find the places of their former masters quite comfortable since they talk and behave like them. Therefore, this diasporic identity does not include the diaspora in spatial politics, rather they are being acculturated in the new cultural terrains. The second generation of immigrants forget their parents' cultural identity, find the confluence of heterogeneous cultures, and grow up speaking creoles. Then, the diasporic identity is a hybrid one.

Divakaruni's *The Mistress of Spices* is a narrative wrought with diasporic detail that reflects on the protagonist's duty in a foreign land. She serves as a spice mistress in "Spice Bazaar." Apart from that identity, she has others too. Though Tilo loves Raven, she is dutiful to others as well. She treats all equally and she cares about her duty. Her sense of responsibility binds her in an obligation to be less impulsive in fulfilling her dream. Tilo is placed in Oakland by the choice of "First Mother" and she caters to people of different communities there. People come to her to buy spices. Sometimes she suggests to her customers the spices that are conducive to the cures of their problems, and sometimes they look for spices to use as condiments. To Tilo, this catering of spices is a sublime duty that is considered a sacred one. She thinks that she has been blessed to assume the responsibility conferred on her by "First Mother." She has promised "First Mother" not to relinquish the spices at any cost. She will be profaned if she defiles the promise. Like an ordinary human being, Tilo also faces ups and downs in her life but she does not dishearten anyone, nor neglects the spices. She is not concerned for her own desires and pleasure; rather she takes care of the sorrows of others. She finds happiness amidst people. She hails from a rural India; however, the universality she imparts through her attributes accommodates her among the global community in a metropolis like Oakland. From a deplorable situation, she stands upright and makes Raven feel the pain of others. Both of them accommodate themselves with the imbalances of their lives and find their "earthly heaven" in a dilapidated city.

Nowadays, metropolises around the globe are becoming more diverse and multicultural. People from all spheres of life are there. Immigrants have found their homes there, particularly in the metropolises of Europe and America. The concepts of homeland and cultural identity have been obliterated due to the intrinsic nature of globalization. People, who are enjoying all amenities, often forget that they are deprived of the natural aspects of their indigenous way of living. Machines and devices operated by artificial intelligences are there to serve comfort and luxury in their lives. Observing the technological advancement, one may assume that human beings would soon be replaced by robots and algorithms. The inhabitants in these metropolises grow up transnational. Besides the native population, immigrants in those cities are also contributing to almost all sectors. In big cities, immigrants have little to do with their ancestral past; rather they assume a new identity. Far away from their homeland, they rebuild their home. Fluidity in their identity makes them transnational. Migration, once begun, never ends. They move from one city to another, moving their homes with them. Therefore, the idea of home becomes a constantly moving object and it is perceived that home can be built anywhere at any moment.

In today's literature, especially in Anglophone writing, the narratives of migration, displacement, loss of home and identity, nostalgia and isolation, are revisited constantly. Writers like V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Agha Shahid Ali, Amitav Ghosh, Jhumpa Lahiri, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Hanif Kureishi, Monica Ali, Amit Chaudhuri, Zia Haider, and many others like them are contributing to creating new dimensions in their narratives. They are immigrants or children of immigrant parents, and their writings have created what is now known as "migrant literature." This particular stream of writing incorporates narratives of angst and

struggle of first generation immigrants and the cultural fluidity of their children. Referring to Park and Rajan, Phillips, and Henry, Elleke Boehmer points out that "migrant literatures" show an inclination to gain the attention of readers because they "[bear] all the attractions of the exotic, the magical, and the other" promisingly in the discourses favored within a "globalized Anglo-American culture." Boehmer also observes that the second generation of diasporic writers has "produced definitions of the postcolonial as almost invariably cosmopolitan" and this group of writers is contributing to a particular type of literature that is "conversant with the cultural codes of the West." She has further stated that "the emergence of migrant literatures in many cases represents a geographical, cultural, and political retreat by writers from the new but ailing nations of the post-colonial world 'back' to the old metropolis." The writers of migrant literatures have "developed what was anyway a cosmopolitan tendency" and their connections with their "Third World background have become chiefly metaphorical."

These writers are "post-colonial intellectuals" and create such "themes" that consist of "postcolonial discourse." However, in *The Empire Writes Back*, referring to Arif Dirlik, the authors say, "it is participation in the discourse that defines them as postcolonial intellectuals" (Ashcroft, et al. 196-7). This group of intellectuals, as Bill Ashcroft, et al. observe, continues to "engage the social, cultural and political effects of colonial discourse." However, according to these scholars, there are two controversial features of postcolonial theory and they are "ambivalence" and "hybridity." To them, moreover, both features have a particular relation in the centers of metropolises and in the postcolonial world. Bill Ashcroft, et al. further posit that "ambivalence and hybridity have continued to be useful amongst post-colonial critics because they provide a subtler and more nuanced view of colonial subjectivity and colonial relationships than the usual 'us' and 'them' distinctions" (206).

Postcolonial writers are dispersed both in the centers of metropolises and in the countries of their origins. They bring aspects of their third world background and feel associated with the cultures of the "Other." They form a collective to preserve the culture of their native land. Nevertheless, they also embrace the cultural traits and linguistic aspects of their adopted land. Homi Bhabha includes his experience of migration in one of his critical essays titled "DissemiNation." According to him, this dispersion of people from different identities is a gathering. Bhabha observes,

> I have lived the moment of the scattering of the people that in other times and other places, in the nations of others, becomes a time of gathering. Gatherings of exiles and émigrés and refugees, gathering on the edge of 'foreign' cultures … gathering in the half-life, half-light of foreign tongues, or in the uncanny fluency of another's language; … the gathering of the people in the diaspora: indentured, migrant, interned. (291)

As Bhabha has pointed out, this gathering of people in foreign countries has diverse attributes. People, whatever their skills are, have started gathering in other nations for multitudinous reasons. They have left their countries of origin for their adopted homeland either for work or asylum. At present, a massive influx of people, especially of scholars, researchers, writers, and contributors in knowledge society, has occurred in the hubs of great educational and research

organizations. The differences in this gathering of diverse people have added a new dimension to the lifestyle of the Western world. Over the years, this gathering has formed a collective to give a multicultural identity to these people that have grown multiplicatively. Their next generation finds a home in the foreign land. In Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*, for example, the name "Gogol" has not been adopted from any Bengali. Characters like Gogol, Sonia, and Moushumi intend to be bound with America. They have less connection with India, the home of their ancestors. Sometimes, many of the immigrants' progeny have not even seen their ancestral homes back in India. Their parents and grandparents recount the stories of a mythic ancestral land. From those narratives, they try to create images of their native lands, but those images are fragmented. What they could sense, therefore, has a two-fold effect on them: they see the ancestral land as mythic and exotic, but also a place of beauty and reality. As a result, a perfect orientation with their native, indigenous culture never takes place.

Referring to Stuart Hall, Bill Ashcroft, et al. has pointed out that "subjectivity" is not the important concern of diasporic identity but rather "subject position." Hence, diasporic writers tend to show the possibility of a change of identity. Divakaruni, who has authored a good number of fictions, is one of the prolific South Asian Anglophone writers. Like Ghosh and Rushdie, though she lives abroad, she has her origin in India. Her Indian past shapes her diasporic experience that helps her outline wonderful tales like *The Mistress of Spices*. In this narrative, Divakaruni recounts the nuances in the lives of diasporic people like Tilo, Jagjit, Geeta, Haroun, and Geeta's grandfather. Most of these characters are diasporic people and they have an ancestral origin in India. In *The Mistress of Spices*, Tilo, the raconteur of a diasporic past, is a spice mistress. She talks about her spices that have the magical, healing power. Her name "Tilo" is shortened from "Tilottama." In Hindu mythology, Tilottama is the "chief dancer in Indra's court" and Indra warns her not to "give her love to man – only to the dance." The name Tilottama derives from "til," that is "life giver." The spices that Tilo renders are not ordinary; rather they are special as each of the spices has a remedial value, and is not just a condiment for the foods of the people of different communities. The spice mistress is sincere to her duty and she is committed to serving the people. Through the rituals of "Shampati's fire," Tilo devotes herself to the welfare of the society. The Old One warns Tilo, saying, "Not cold and dry as the snake's belly, for a Mistress of spices must feel the other's pain … for a Mistress must leave her own passions behind" (33).

The First Mother reminds her to emphasize on duty over everything. She warns Tilo that her desire must not triumph over duty. The foremost thing is to serve humankind. Responding to the First Mother's warning, Tilo promises, "I will not fall, Mother … My heart is filled with passion for the spices, my ears with the music of our dance together … I need no pitiful mortal man to love. I believe this" (45). Tilo's commitment reminds us that what we do in our life is sacred and deviation from that is profane. This is why Tilo surrenders herself to a sublime cause. She serves society for its betterment. People come to her with problems and she tries to find the solution. In some cases, she applies spices to remedy problems. Among her customers is an immigrant old man and his American-born granddaughter, Geeta. Ancestral culture, represented by the grandfather, and the culture in which Geeta has been raised cannot

be reconciled. Geeta's lifestyle is misconstrued by her grandfather and conflicts arise between the two as a result. In *The Mistress of Spices*, the bipolarity of shaping cultural identities is apparent. However, the convergence of cultures is not appreciated by the grandfather. In India, Geeta's lifestyle would have been circumscribed by patriarchy.

Bill Ashcroft, et al. point out that women "as colonized subjects" are subject to double colonization. "Patriarchy" is one of the forms of domination in third world countries where women are oppressed in all spheres. Geeta shares that cultural ancestry. In India, women have little to decide about their life. Culture influences one's lifestyle. According to Pramod Nayar,

> Lifestyle is the distinctive style of life of particular social groups in a given age … an individual's preference in clothing, food, leisure activities, automobile and housing … the choice asserted by an individual is a symbol of her or his individual identity. (121)

The consumer culture and consumption behavior make people cosmopolitan. In western society, Geeta has an orientation with the cosmopolitan lifestyle. In this novel, the Orient meets the Occident, and Oakland becomes the place where Eastern and Western cultures mingle. Amidst that convergence, there is a conflict. Geeta finds a non-Indian friend, Tilo meets Raven, Jagjit accommodates himself with the boys who used to trouble him. However, there is a mystery and a lot of misgivings about how accepting of each other's cultures people are.

Referring to Chirol, Edward Said observes that "Orient and Occident are irreducibly opposed to each other, and that the Orient … is one of 'the great world-forces' responsible for 'the deepest lines of cleavage' in the world"(253). This Eurocentric mindset is, however, perhaps one of the main reasons of the split between East and West. The contrast between the people of the East and the West is latent in body colors: "White Occidentalism" and "colored Orientalism." Thus, to Raven, Tilo is a "mysterious Indian beauty." Then Tilo says,

> American, it is good you remind me, I Tilo who was at the point of losing myself in you. You have loved me for the color of my skin, the accent of my speaking, the quaintness of my customs which promised you the magic you no longer found in the women of your own land. In your yearning you have made me into that which I am not … Perhaps I have done the same with you. But how can the soil of misconception nurture the seedling of love? (309)

What Elie Faure says is derogatory and shows a condescending view to the people of the Orient. According to Faure, Said notes,

> Orientals' bodies are lazy … the Orient is essentially mystical … unless the Oriental learns to be rational, to develop techniques of knowledge and positivity, there can be no *rapprochement* between East and West. (253)

In *The Mistress of Spices*, Divakaruni delineates the unevenness in diasporic life. According to Joel Kuortti, diaspora is a "loaded term" and "popular term." The term attracts diverse "phenomena" and Kuortti points out that diaspora indicates a "matrix of diversity" and, therefore, is a place of "hybridity." Therefore, hybridity constantly interrupts the longstanding

binaries, East/West, colonized/colonizer, dominated/dominant, suppressed/suppressor, and so on. People from ex-colonies are moving towards the center of their rulers. This migration from eastwards to westwards and vice versa obliterates the distinction between the people of two distinctive cultures. The modern migration, therefore, gives the people in perpetual flux a diasporic identity. Stuart Hall says that "diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (qtd. in Kuortti 4). The diasporic people have influence of their native cultures even in their adopted lands. They cannot completely assimilate themselves into the culture of their adopted homeland, nor can they embrace all aspects of their native culture. As a result, they are always in search of a new identity that will define them, yet make them distinctive. They attempt to forget their colonial past and reshape their mind with the values of their native cultures. The diasporic writers reflect on the values of their native cultures and bring the artifacts produced at the location of their origin. Thus, they try to get rid of the influence of the cultures of their adopted one. Mentioning Fanon, in this regard, Boehmer observes that "the colonized had to 'insult' and 'vomit up' the white man's values." Boehmer has pointed out:

> Culture … was chosen by Fanon … as a foremost arena of transformation, a site where psychological and spiritual freedoms might be won. … Mobilizing the enduring strengths and insights of their own communities, those which had withstood invasion and occupation, they would be able to eject the colonizer's presence and change their lives. (175)

Diasporic South Asians are very large in number in Europe and America. Among the South Asians, the Indian diaspora has outnumbered other South Asians. These Indians in faraway lands have shown their multicultural identities through their culture, food, languages, lifestyle, and so on. However, they are identical in many ways. Many of them, though taking many aspects from their adopted countries and enjoying all the splendor of first world countries, feel a connection with their native land. This Indian diaspora is at the juncture of advancement and success since the Indian community is contributing significantly to different sectors. To accommodate them in the cultures of their adopted countries, they sometimes have to comply with some aspects their adopted countries' cultures. In this regard, Kuortti claims that they are not simply absorbing themselves into the cultures of their adopted countries, they are rather "reshaping them through their own, new voices." Thus, the author asserts that these diasporic writers and their writings deal with the issues of "violence, adaptation and racism" (6). Like other diasporic writers, Divakaruni also deals with the issues of conflict and adaptation in *The Mistress of Spices*. In this narrative, it is manifest that Geeta's grandfather, who is orthodox in his belief, is shattered by the western lifestyle and he has some reservations in accepting everything. As a result, both Geeta and her grandfather quarrel over petty issues. Therefore, the grandfather's life is stressed in America since it is bifurcated into two streams. Moreover, Geeta's grandfather is so obsessed with his native Indian culture that he wishes to keep Indian traditions intact in a foreign land which makes their familial life more complicated. The intensity of unhappiness in the grandfather's life is evident in the following conversation with Tilo:

> If a young girl should work late-late in the office with other men and come home only after dark and sometimes in their car too? ... back in Jamshedpur they would have smeared dung on our faces for that. And who would ever marry her?
>
> But *dada*, this is America after all, and even in India women are now working, no, even in Jamshedpur.
>
> That girl, this Sunday she cut her hair short-short so that even her neck is showing ... how much makeup she is using all time. *Uff,* in my days only the Englishwomen and prostitutes are doing that. Good Indian girls are not ashamed of the face God is giving them. (88-89)

Geeta's grandfather possesses a traditional view of her marital affairs as well. He conforms to Indian customs so rigidly that even thousands of miles away from his homeland, he cannot accept his grandchild talking about her love in front of her parents. In Indian society, it is taboo for children to talk about their own marriage and love in front of their family members. This tradition is entrenched so deep in Indian culture that a change is almost impossible even so far from their ancestral land. Behdad writes, "diaspora identity is celebrated ... while ethnic identification is devalued as a monolithic and static phenomenon incapable of variation and transformation" (396-409).

Tilo helps in reconciliation. Sensing the stalemate situation between Geeta and her family, Tilo meets Geeta. The encounter between them is interesting.

> Your grandfather loves you a lot ...
>
> Love, hah ... He doesn't know what the word means. For him it's all control. Control my parents, control me ... What the hell did he think you could do, anyway?
>
> Nothing really ... Just let you know that angry words like buzzing bees hide the honey underneath. Just see you so I can go back and tell them 'Don't worry so much, she's well.' (143-4)

Like Geeta, Jagjit also struggles as a lonely boy in a foreign culture in America. The son of Punjabi parents, he has learned his first English word: "idiot." Moreover, he is "shy-eyed" and a victim of teasing at school. In the playground, kids pull his turban off his head and make fun of his long, uncut hair. He is humiliated and hurt, but he does not make any sound when he cries, suppressing it by biting down on his lips. The humiliation discourages Jagjit from going to school. Tilo, the spice mistress, selects cinnamon for him because it has the quality to make friends and give him the strength to intimidate his enemies. She explains it is

> to find you someone who will take you by the hand, who will run with you and laugh with you and say See this is America, it's not so bad ... to give you strength, strength which grows in your legs and arms and mostly mouth till one day you shout no loud enough to make them, shocked, stop. (42)

Here, Divakaruni intends to carry the message that America is a country which embraces people of diverse cultures and identities. Like her characters, Divakaruni is also an immigrant and has perhaps gone through some of these experiences. Jagjit, a Punjabi boy, has come to America with his family and the new home has a multicultural background. America's metropolises have the quality to embrace people regardless of their cultural identities. All inclusiveness of this country gives spaces to both good and ugly things of life. Thus, the transformation of Jagjit is common. He transmutes himself into a different person. He makes friends in school. Then he says,

> They're like my brothers, better than my brothers … They listened when I talked and didn't laugh. They taught me how to fight. Pointed out the soft fleshy parts where it hurts most. Showed me how to use elbow knee fist boot keys and yes, knife. And in return, so little. Carry this packet here, drop off this box there. Keep this in your locker for a day. Stand on the corner and watch for. (127)

This indicates that America has everything to spoil a meek and mild kid like Jagjit as well. Therefore, the writer says that he is captured in "the gold jaws of America" (257).

Tilo has a mission, an assignment given to her by the First Mother, to serve the community. She promises the spices, "In spite of America, in spite of love, your Tilo will not let you down" (152). However, Tilo surrenders herself to her desire for love. She can read minds and thus she can see what Raven is thinking. Raven does not say anything to her, but Tilo reads his eyes that speak all of his words:

> Only the gladness in his eyes telling me he saw something more important than my wrinkles … And for the first time inside his mind I caught a swaying, like kelp deep undersea, almost invisible in salt shadows. A desire. I could not read it yet. I knew only that somehow it included me. (156-7)

The culture of immigrants' country of origin is different from that of the adopted country. Mentioning Jan Mohammed, Nayar says that immigrants are "standing at the border of two cultures, looking critically at both, neither assimilating nor combining either of them" (179). According to Galvan, the identity of these diasporic individuals is "the hyphenated" or hybrid one. It is formed just like "a peasant or farmer sowing the land, dispersing seeds at random, these seeds falling in different places and producing hybrid fruits." Thus, almost all the big cities in the West are a hybrid society. Galvan also mentions that this dissemination of people in different geographical locations is a recent phenomenon, especially triggered immediately after the Second World War when many colonies became independent. Referring to Bhabha, Galvan notes the number of that population living outside their homeland is 100 million. Thus, the migrant population is segmented and dispersed in different geographical locations. Galvan also points out:

> Diasporic migrants are necessarily fragmented, as they have been dispersed and torn away from their country and fellow citizens … What the Indian writer in the diaspora to Britain does, then, is to 'create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible

ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind'. Fragmentation, which initially might be seen as a weakness, thus turns into strength, allowing the writer to imagine his past, giving him more freedom to create and to recover the lost time, the lost home. (116)

Thus, in *The Mistress of Spices*, most of the characters have a Third World background. With their background, they try to flourish. To prosper, they need to assume diverse situations. They have to go through changes in life. Like others, Tilo has to go through changes. She has four names in four different stages of her life, from "Nayan Tara" to "Maya," and her cultural background with a description of rituals like "Shampati's fire" set a connection between Tilo and a land of mysticism. That land of mysticism is India, one of the cultural hubs of the Orient. In India, people worship the snake goddess, Mansha, and, therefore, the narrative yields to a description of snakes. Even though Tilo grows up cosmopolitan, she is a nature lover and she loves creatures like snakes as well. The presence of primitiveness in that description leads the readers to a state of mind that helps them draw a contrastive picture between the East and the West. The benevolence of the snakes saves Tilo's life. A nature-loving Tilo is caught by the dream of love and later she comes back to the dilapidated city with Raven to reform it after the havoc takes place. The First Mother persistently warns Tilo not to dream of love: "Don't let America seduce you into calamities you cannot imagine. Dreaming of love, don't rouse the spices' hate" (148). Though Tilo makes a promise to the spices, she breaks her word. However, Tilo loves Raven and Raven loves her. At the end, though Tilo's soul sways between her egalitarian sense of duty and bodily desire for love, she maintains a good balance between them. In the midst of turmoil, Tilo settles her mind. She realizes that "the smell of charred flesh is the same everywhere." Thus, pertaining to "a double consciousness," the characters, negotiating with the nuances of their inheritance, grow up cosmopolitan that is "vernacular" in nature, allowing "the local, parochial, rooted, culturally specific" one to live together with the one that is "transnational" and "transcendent" (Werbner 109).

This paper finds that characters like Tilo, Jagjit, Geeta, Haroun are of "hyphenated" identities and they grow cosmopolitan in their nature. Though, initially, they face difficulty in maintaining congruity with the nuances of their inheritance, they flourish at the end. Assimilating two cultures simultaneously is challenging for Tilo since devoting herself only to spices carries her Indian identity that discards her present one. Thus, declining her American identity is imperceptible to her; rather she assumes an Indian-American identity. Hence, despite her promise to the First Mother, she prioritizes Raven over spices. At the end, the paper has found that Divakaruni unveils the dream of immigrants in this novel. East meets West and the confluence of both is a reality. This paper concludes with the assumption that this convergence is a promising one. Oakland, a metaphoric place in this novel, is compared with heaven where Tilo and Raven consider living to ignite their most humane spirit.

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Homer's Threshold:
The Liminal Text and Loss of Ecolinguistic Diversity in Early Literature

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Abstract

The earliest literary texts provide us with a glimpse of the beginning of literature in mythology. The oral tradition in which these myths were preserved were later collected into the primary epics such as Homer's The Iliad*. As transitional texts that bridge the oral tradition and a culture informed and molded by written language, these texts demonstrate the quality of liminality. This paper therefore seeks to place Homer not in the Oral-formulaic school, limited to stock-epithets, but to a transitional period between the oral and the written, with references to language that suggest an inherently written quality in epic poems. Homer exists in such a threshold between two points: mythology and literature,* mythos *and* logos*, the sacred and the profane, and ultimately between oral and written language. By applying the theories of ecolinguistics, this paper examines the liminal texts of Homer in the context of Bronze and Iron Age narratives, and concludes how such early literary texts with myths of heroic city-builders, divine architects, and the politics of establishing an urban language, ultimately sacrifice linguistic diversity. This paper is therefore ultimately about what is lost in translation between the oral and written, and concludes that such loss of ecolinguistic diversity is characteristic of the threshold that Homer occupies as evident in the language of* The Iliad*.*

Keywords: *liminality, ecolinguistic diversity*

The development of written language had altered the way narratives were told. Not only did the shift from an oral tradition to a written culture recontextualise existing mythology, but in Ancient Greece that shift resulted in the very foundations of Western literature. Such a threshold is often the concern of ecolinguistics, which seeks to recontextualise the study of language and its development with the larger ecological context in which the language develops, often by focusing on the materials with which languages are expressed. Despite having roots in oral mythology, narratives such as Homer's *Iliad* cannot be separated from the very material medium on which they are written. Such narratives need to be read in the context of the new written mythology, and the preoccupations of early written literature. Literature that is created during this period of human development feature narratives that revolve around city-building, architecture, and a glorification of the written text itself. As a result, such liminal texts show how the emergence of early literature resulted in a drastic loss in language and cultural diversity.

Development in ecolinguistic research allows us to explore these earliest forms of literature in their relation to storytelling customs, and in particular, analyze Homer's primary epics in the larger context of other oral narratives that were written down. The anthropological term "liminal" is used to discuss the role of Homer and such texts as a "threshold" between mythology and literature, and how such languages struggle to maintain their oral roots while

still trying to cope with the possibilities of a new medium. The paper is divided into three subsections that explore Homer's mythology through the concept of liminality and through the lens of ecolinguistics. The first section explores an account of language and liminality in Homer's text, particularly by defining the concept of "the liminal text" and how ecolinguistics traditionally views the threshold between oral and written literature. The second section puts Homer's epic in the context of other forms of early literature; it examines the relationship between a loss in ecolinguistic diversity and the emergence of early literature during the Bronze Age, with a discussion on how both literary and the anthropological sources describe the "early" periods in human history, before drawing comparisons between *The Iliad* and Ancient Mesopotamian texts. Finally, the paper concludes with a third section summarizing the inferences made in the arguments.

Language and Liminality in Homer's Text

In order to appreciate the linguistic politics underlying *The Iliad*, we must treat its narrative as a post-Bronze-Age, urban mythology. Such narratives are concerned with not only nation-building, but with the invention of the written alphabet to unify language itself. However, traditional scholarship treats Homer as purely an oral poet. Such a reading disconnects the composition of *The Iliad* by misplacing Homer in a pre-literate culture. As a liminal poem, *The Iliad* cannot be completely divorced from the language in which it was composed.

The Iliad collects the myths, histories, and concerns of the people of the Greek Heroic Age, largely considered to be during the Mycenaean era. As an epic poem, it presents to us with a definitive tone the origins of Western civilization. Contemporary critical consensus remains strongly in favor of the Oral-formulaic theory, first proposed by Milman Parry and Albert Lord, that Homer's epic poems were conceived in an oral tradition and thus belong to a culture that had yet to develop, or establish, a language that could be written down. As primary epics, they are believed to be part of a tradition where stock-phrases, epithets, and epic-similes favor improvized-recitation through their alliterative and mnemonic verse-structure. Thus, the Oral-formulaic approach to Homer postulates that the Homeric "text" is not a part of the language with which it was originally composed. The extant text is recorded in an Ionian Greek dialect, which has since come to be regarded as Homeric Greek. However, many of its maritime terminology has traces of an Aeolian dialect, thus allowing the poem to be communicated across different Greek dialects, adding to the poem's accessibility (Knauth and Liao 208).

The language of *The Iliad* contains onomatopoeic words that suggest the maritime sounds for its seafaring voyagers. Words translated as "roaring-sea" and "the wine-red-sea" are onomatopoeic in nature. Such language usage points to the conscious use of words for the unique use of the poem itself and are said to "contribute to an aquatic polyphony whose original sound is transmitted throughout European literature" (Knauth and Liao 210). Moreover, the question as to whether Homer composed the poem at different Greek localities also arises, thereby making him akin to a wandering-bard, with each local environment inspiring different aspects of the various books of the text, and thus becoming a song that ultimately brought a sense of national unity to his audience.

The authenticity and survival of *The Iliad* has given rise to two general approaches: analysts, such as F.A. Wolf, who believed that "Homer" is not a single individual, but many poets whose collective work is *The Iliad*. These poets added to the epic as written practices became available; and unitarians, such as E.V. Rieu, who accepted Homer to be one man and the progenitor for their theology (Jones xxxix-lvii). Logic dictates that since Homer's epics were originally oral performances, they must have at one point been written down, and the oldest Greek texts mention the need to establish a standardized Homeric text for bards, and Greek education as late as 600 BCE (xl). It is known that nearly all surviving texts of ancient Greek literature were collected and copied by Greek scholars in Egypt c. 300 BCE, and it is these texts that form the basis of our translations. Still, these early Greek scholars raised the issue of "many Homers" due to the repetitive, oral nature of the text itself (Jones xli). English translations began in 1539 CE, and the most influential translation has been by George Chapman in 1559 CE.

In recent years, Parry and Lord's conclusion that the Homeric epics originated in a completely oral context has been brought into question. Jack Goody, in his works *The Myth of the Bagre* and *The Interface Between the Written and the Oral*, discusses how the Greek epics were sung in cultures that had some minimal contact with literacy. Moreover, they are more formal and tightly composed than poems which had no contact with literate societies, such as the myth of Bagre in Ghana (Abram 285). Goody also argues that the culture represented in *The Iliad* should not be considered to be a "pristinely oral culture" since it was likely to have been indirectly influenced by writing systems which "existed for economic and military accounting by the Minoan and Mycenaean cultures on the island of Crete and by the literacy of the neighboring societies of the Near East, societies with which the Greek merchants must have been in frequent contact" (Abram 286).

Evidence of written texts exists in Book VI of *The Iliad*, when Glaukos and Diomedes confront each other on the battlefield, and the former reports the myth of Bellerophon:

> Proteus was enraged at what he heard. He stopped short of putting Bellerophon to death – he did not think it right to do so – but instead sent him off to Lycia carrying a fatal message, a folded tablet on which he had written signs with a deadly meaning. Proteus told Bellerophon to hand this tablet to his father-in-law, the ruler of Lycia, thus ensuring Bellerophon's death. (Jones 104)

The original Greek word used for "tablet" and "written" is πιναξ πτυκτος (*pinax ptyktos*), and πτυκτος is a homonym of the Greek word for "wall," τείχος, which in turn is derived from the Proto-Indo-European word "tek-," to weave or to make. The walls of Ilium, that is the Trojan walls, are impenetrable, but they are architectural feats, created by Poseidon and Apollo at the order of King Laomedon of Troy. Later in the poem, the tide of battle revolves around Hektor breaking the Greek wall erected on the Trojan shoreline, thereby gaining an advantage over the Greek forces: "there was a great roar from the gate as the planks were smashed to splinters by the impact of the stone and the bars gave way … the panic-stricken Greeks fled back to their hollow ships, and all hell broke loose" (Jones 215). Hektor is able to break a man-made wall because "the wall was built without the goodwill of the immortal gods, and

it did not last for long" (203). In contrast, the Trojan War continues because of the walls of Ilium. The significance is between the wall and the written text – both are examples of urban, human constructions that last only when they are divinely inspired. *The Iliad* is named after the famous walled city, as though the very architectural integrity of the poem and the city are meant to preserve the myth.

With Homer, we glimpse a culture near its end, at a mythology that has passed through the centuries and reached a decadent point when it is undergoing a change. In his introduction to E.V. Rieu's revised translation of *The Iliad*, Peter Jones writes:

> Homer comes at the end of a tradition of oral storytelling going back hundreds of years (so that he has, in a sense, inherited the work of hundreds of earlier oral poets); and that his art consists in the unique way he has reworked these traditional, typical materials devised to enable the oral poet to recite in the first place – from phrase and sentence at one level to 'theme' and story-pattern at larger levels – into the masterpieces we have today. (xxxix)

This divide, between the oral and the written, marks one of the most contentious moments in the development of human language as far as ecolinguists are concerned. In 1996, in one of the earliest scholarly books on ecolinguistics, titled *The Spell of the Sensuous*, David Abram explores the significance of breath and air in oral cultures. The spoken utterance, both in recited poetry and in everyday language, was uniquely a part of the ecosystem. However, when the ancient Greek alphabet emerged, the advent of the written vowel "was obtained at a high price. For by using visible characters to represent the sounded breath, the Greek scribes effectively desacralized the breath and the air … negating the uncanniness of this element that was both here and not here" (252). This leads to the emergence of a Western "alphabetized" urban civilization where "lacking all sacredness, stripped of all spiritual significance, the air is today little more than a conveniently forgotten dump site" (258).

Thus, Homer's status as a poet between the oral and the written world exposes that loss in language. This is his threshold: a poetry that exists between the oral tradition and the individual text; the sacred and the profane; *mythos* and *logos*; the agricultural society and the urban civilization; and between mythology and literature. This is only increased further whenever we read these texts in translation. These early "proto-literate" texts are transitional, and thus they are liminal.

The term "liminality" has its roots in anthropology, derived from the Latin word *limen*, to mean "threshold." First developed in the 20th century by Arnold van Gennep and later by Victor Turner, the term is used to describe the middle-stage of any sociocultural ritual, where during a "liminal stage" the participants exist in ambiguity, where their pre-ritual status is lost while the fulfilled state of their post-ritual state is yet to be accomplished. Turner explains:

> The attributes of liminality or of liminal *personae* ("threshold people") are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal

entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. (359)

In oral cultures, the liminal being exists as an outsider, whose status as someone both inside and outside the norm allows for the role of a storyteller. As written culture evolves and the poet assumes a similar role, it is the written text that becomes liminal. In *The Iliad*, this constant flux on the text can be seen in several degrees of liminality. All the heroes of the poem are liminal beings: they are essentially demigods and treated as Olympian-bred or Olympian-born. The precarious state of Homer being either the definitive author of *The Iliad*, or merely an amalgamation of diverse voices makes his role in the poem an example of liminality. Whether a single poet named Homer composed the *Iliad* or not, what remains important for the liminality of its text is that for, all intents and purposes, the narrator of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* has been given a name, and we call him Homer. It is this narrator who invokes the Muse:

> Achilles' baneful wrath – resound O goddess – that impos'd
> Infinite sorrows on the Greeks, and many brave souls loos'd
> From breasts heroic; sent them far, to that invisible cave
> That no light comforts; and their limbs to dogs and vultures gave (Chapman 1.1-4).

The liminality of Homer comes from being projected onto the poem as its driving voice: he maintains a presence within the language of the poem as a liminal narrator. He is both present and absent, as he is channeling the Muse, and channels all of mythology into the literature of poetry. It is a deeply ritualistic recitation, and hence gives the text itself the quality of a liminal text. Not only does the poem begin *in medias res*, but it begins with a ritual.

Jones describes Homer's narrative presence as both "subjective" and "restrained" as though "he were nothing but a camera, dispassionately surveying the scene without making any judgements upon it" (xxix). Jones continues the comparison with authors such Virgil – who is "constantly alerting us to the 'correct' view of matters," and to modern novelists – who "can rarely resist the temptation to tell us how to interpret a character or scene" (xxx). But in oral poetry, where a poem is recited in public, the presence of the bard is never denied. Thus, this dichotomy of presence in absentia, not unlike that of Achilles himself, is yet another example of Homer's liminal presence in the text. With time, Homer as a narrator has become just as much a part of the text as his characters.

Ecolinguistic Diversity and the Emergence of Literature

The development of ecolinguistic research in the past two decades has allowed us to apply its assessment of language to varying forms of literature. In ecolinguistics, the relationship between languages and their ecology is explored, and as such, ecological diversity is believed to be reflected in linguistic diversity. Just as we cannot truly separate a liminal text from the medium in which it is written, so too we must not separate a physical manifestation of language from its natural ecology. According to an ecological perspective on the emergence of language, language is sensate. It originates from the human body's physical perception of its surrounding environment. Thus, we may say that onomatopoeic expressions and

analogic epithets, like dialect, are highly dependent on its natural environment. In 1996, Abram established this relationship between an ecology and the corresponding language that emerges from it, and conversely, he cautioned that the loss of such an ecosystem corresponds to a loss in language itself:

> As technological civilization diminishes the biotic diversity of the earth, language itself is diminished. As there are fewer and fewer songbirds in the air, due to the destruction of their forests and wetlands, human speech loses more and more of its evocative power. For when we no longer hear the voices of warbler and wren, our own speaking can no longer be nourished by their cadences. As the splashing speech of the rivers is silenced by more and more dams, as we drive more and more of the land's wild voices into the oblivion of extinction, our own languages become increasingly impoverished and weightless, progressively emptied of their earthly resonance. (86)

In 2003, Nettle and Romaine developed Abram's theory further and found that extinctions in biodiversity in certain areas correlate to the extinctions of highest linguistic diversity, and thus their combined attempt explores the causes for loss of diversity in not only nature, but human culture as well (13).

Such an ecolinguistic diversity is lost at the very moment that the earliest forms of written culture emerged. Literature and written languages emerged alongside the creation of urban civilizations, and as dynamic and diverse oral myths faded into a relatively singular, unchanging written language, the ecolinguistic diversity of that area too was lost. This is evident in the myths expressed through such liminal texts as discussed above.

The earliest evidence for written language is c. 3000 BCE in the Near East. Written records in the ancient world corresponds to the development of complex social systems where administration and trade, along with systematic rituals and religious practice, existed. This was the Bronze Age (c. 3500-1200 BCE), which was followed by the Iron Age (c. 1200-800 BCE). Karen Armstrong combined the two periods under the broader umbrella term of "Early Civilisations," starting with the earliest cities, through to the writing of *The Iliad.* After the Neolithic period, she regarded it as one historical epoch for myths (21).

Mesopotamia marks the beginning of written history in the region, and its earliest written accounts speak not only of recording trade-contracts, receipts, and practical expenditures, but also a literary and religious tradition expressing existing mythology as well (Biggs 13). These early Sumerian literary compositions were done in cuneiform texts on clay tablets which speak of the origins of human beings, as well as record the divine-inspired dreams seen by kings. In Book 2 of *The Iliad*, the description of Agamemnon's dream is similar to such literary forms.

Both the Mesopotamian and Mycenaean civilizations were based on agricultural communities which had evolved into urban cities. The corresponding mythology celebrated such themes as preservation, human creativity, and immortality. This relatively advanced development comes near the end of the Neolithic period and at the beginning of the next, which is marked by the city and by human architecture. In other words, written language was developed

during an advanced Neolithic or agricultural stage of human civilization – the mythology of crops, fertility, and vegetation was expressed through a literature of ziggurats, pyramids, and acropolises, often under siege.

Greek mythology begins as an agricultural mythology. This is true both in theme and content; it begins as an oral tradition. The advent of agriculture is marked by the beginning of the cultural period known as the Neolithic era (c. 10,000 BCE). Greek language itself developed its own identity through Greco-Armenian speakers from the Near East diverging from a Proto-Indo-European language family around 5000 BC; this in turn corresponds with the Neolithic spread of agriculture from Asia Minor to Greece before 4000 BC (Atkinson and Gray 91-93). Settlers from the Near East brought the archetypal cognates of the Greek pantheon from the hypothetical Proto-Indo-European culture, and furnished it once their own language evolved. Mycenae is historically considered to be the age of heroes, and the great king of *The Iliad*, Agamemnon, is the king of Mycenae. The Mycenaean civlization and its corresponding Dark Ages make up much of the setting for Greek mythology. The presence of Linear B in Homeric Greek is a clear indication that Greek mythology has had some incarnation in the Mycenaean culture.

Greek mythology is about agriculture, whereas Greek literature is about urban culture; second, Greek mythology follows an oral tradition, whereas Greek literature begins a literary tradition; and third, Greek mythology in its earliest form stems from the Neolithic era, whereas Greek literature in its earliest form originates in the Iron age. These mark distinctive differences in the very personality of the ancient narratives by the time we discover them. Homer unifies the myths in *The Iliad* in c. 1000-800 BC. A period of nearly 9000 years separates the beginning of agriculture, and its equivalent myths, to the beginning of Greek literature which records those myths. Additionally, a period of at least 3000 years separates the origin of a writing system to the first written expression of it. Homer was as distant from the Greek myths as we are distant from Homer.

Nearly all of the dominant myths of these Early Civilizations revolved around the holy city. The heroes emerging from this period are all either divinely-inspired architects or city-builders. Gilgamesh is an epic-hero, a city-king, and someone who seeks immortality. Similarly, both Achilles and Hektor are confronted with a choice between heroic valor, glory, or death. In Book 5, Diomedes proves his strength so well that he represents the sort of affront mortals, with the security of cities and the written text, could challenge the immortals themselves. A wounded Aphrodite cries: "The son of Tydeus, dauntless Diomedes, stabbed me … This war is no longer a struggle between Trojans and Greeks, the Greeks are fighting against the gods as well" (84).

Odysseus is similarly an architect at the end of the Trojan Cycle; Oedipus is a savior of Thebes upon outwitting the Sphinx; Aeneas is the founder of Rome; Moses is an architect at first and later the one who brings the "Ten Commandments" – the writings of God, before leading the Hebrews to the "Promised Land." In *The Iliad*, too, we see this preoccupation with city-builders: Laomedon, the ancestor of Priam, is said to be a corrupt king who duped the god Poseidon into building the impenetrable walls of Ilium, before which the entire Greek fleet

have struggled for ten years in *The Iliad* (Chapman 441-460). It should also be noted that myths of the flood were a recurring motif, and Laomedon's contract is with the earthshaker Poseidon. Catastrophic deluges and flooding echoed the plight of the city. As Armstrong argues: "The maintenance of civilisation seemed to require a heroic effort against the wilful and destructive powers of nature. These fears are especially evident in their flood myths" (22). The entirety of Book 21 in *The Iliad* is devoted to a maddened, Gilgamesh-like Achilles fighting the personification of the river Scamander.

But the same cityscape had an emerging class system that was marked by inequality: the fact that it was a community that evolved from farming to one that was based on trade, shows that economic surplus existed that lead to such things as income inequality. Slavery and wealth appropriation were common in these ancient cities – a community evolved out of the necessities of survival to one where the environment was not simply exploited, but ruled. Mythology served to solidify such propaganda much as it does today. The emergence of a writing system in itself would separate the literate elite from the illiterate poor: written mythology and texts were thus the concerns of the privileged who could take their time to contemplate spirituality, morality, and art. The politics behind cosmic order, citywide natural disasters, written laws, the rites of priest-kings, the morality of soldiers, and conquests of the radical Other, are prevalent in urban mythology.

The advent of written language corresponded with the advent of city-building, and both literature and architecture, indeed the very notion of human creation – sanctioned by divine beings – is central to the myths themselves. The fact that we are reading *The Iliad* is in itself a part of the story, and thus its themes of creation are able to cross the threshold we call liminality. In fact, it was perhaps intended to be the medium with which a myth is written and which determines its content. We ignore the significance of the form and the medium in which the texts are preserved at the risk of losing semantic context.

Myths, in their original form, were meant to be dynamic, and the foundation for that was that they allowed room for further reinterpretation. By contrast, a literary text is meant to be definite with a close emphasis on its structural integrity. In other words, one may liken a cultural myth to an organism in nature, and a literary text to the foundations on a work of architecture. Ecolinguists consider this to be a form of urban-propaganda that leads to a loss of diversity among indigenous languages. The diversity of indigenous languages become either condemned or annihilated in favor of the language of the new city-nation, the multilingualism of an indigenous locality is silenced in a reverse Tower of Babel effect "where multilingualism is a debilitating punishment visited upon humanity" (Nettle and Romaine 190). Such a loss in ecolinguistic diversity continues in modern nation-building as well, where language is considered "the pedigree of nations" and standardized linguistic models are imposed:

> The extension of Greek national sovereignty over parts of the territory of Macedonia was accompanied by particularly aggressive measures aimed at Hellenization of the Slavic speaking population, among them the prohibition of the use of any language but Greek in public. People were fined, sent to prison, or forced to drink castor oil, and

children beaten at school, if they were caught speaking their own language. (Nettle and Romaine 174-175)

While the Greeks mentioned refers to a post-Iron Age Greece, the sentiment remains that nation-building often led to a politics of language, where diversity was quenched with an authoritarian thumb:

> Environmental damage, like language death, has global effects, but the burden at the moment falls most heavily on the developing countries, which have some of the highest rates of biolinguistic diversity. This is yet another reason why the extinction of biolinguistic diversity has been ignored: it is seen as largely a Third World problem. (Nettle and Romaine 24)

The same is true of ancient Greeks: "Being linguistically different condemns the Other to being savage" (58). *The Iliad* is particularly expressive of this sentiment in its representation of several Greek city-states, each with different languages that are ultimately unified under the fleet of Agamemnon.

This unification of language is one of the central points of difference between the Greeks and the Trojans. The Greeks under Agamemnon had a sort of unity that the multilingual and diverse group represented by the Trojans lacked. In Book 4, the narrator of *The Iliad* remarks:

> As for the Trojans, like sheep that stand in their thousands in a rich man's yard, yielding their white milk and bleating incessantly because they hear their lambs, so a hubbub went up through the great army. Their speech and dialects were all different, as they spoke a mixture of languages – the troops hailed from many parts. (Jones 72)

In contrast, the simile used for the Greeks is different: "Agamemnon shepherd of the people … It is he who will get the credit if the Greeks beat the Trojans and capture sacred Ilium" (Jones 69).

Ecolinguistic diversity is a characteristic of this unification:

> The narrators of the *Odýsseia* and the *Ilias* are aware of human heteroglossy and even polyglossy, but they consider non-Greek idioms as inferior or even barbarian … though the Trojan war is not presented as a war of languages. The variegated idioms of the allied forces of the Trojans in the siege of Troy are rhetorically very impressive … but they contribute above all to the glory of Greece and Greek language. (Knauth and Liao 208)

The passage from Book II, Chapman's translation of the aforementioned line 807 reads "The rude unletter'd Caribae, that barbarous were of tongue / Did under Naustes' colours march." The Caribae were an ally of the Trojans, and their foreignness is defined as barbarous. By extension, their association with the Trojans render the heroes of Troy just a language away from barbarity.

In his notes on the revision, Jones mentions that Homer's historical time period did not allow him to use a unifying word for all of Greece, but rather that he used three terms – Achaens, Argives, and Danaans:

> Homer does not call Greece or the Greeks by their received anient and modern names, Hellas and Hellenes … but since Agamemnon's expedition did in fact consist of Greeks from what we know as the central and southern Greek mainland and islands (Mycenaean Greece) … [they] have all been called 'Greeks' throughout this translation. (lxiv)

The depiction of Troy in *The Iliad* itself brings this to mind. The Greeks and Trojans in Homer's epic are culturally homogenous: they worship the same gods, share similar cultural values, and most importantly, speak the same language (Jones xii). Helen, as a demigoddess herself, has her identity torn between two empires: Spartan and Trojan. Yet, by removing any true cultural demarcations of the Trojans, Homer is appropriating them as Mycenaean figures, belonging to the Mycenaean "Age of Heroes." This is the Helen we see, not an historically exotic, linguistically diverse Helen or Achilles, but a Homeric one. Knauth and Liao note:

> Heteroglossy concerns only the allied forces, whereas the Trojans are supposed to speak Greek or a Greek dialect. In the *Ilias* [sic.] – neither on the narrative nor on the discursive place – they are surely not represented as Luvian speaking people, since only the allied Carian troops, who belong to the Luvian linguistic area, are characterized as "barbarophon". In Aristotle's *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*, the Greek dialects are designated as foreign glossai; their moderate use in poetry is recommended, they become "barbarisms", if their use turns excessive. (208)

In other words, ecolinguistic diversity was eradicated in favor of a more coherent literature that reflected the very Greek history of heroes of the Mycenaean civilization.

Conclusion

A literary text that seeks to present an existing mythology is inadvertently about preservation: even holy texts seek to save or record that which can otherwise be lost. Oral narratives about heroes and cosmogonies, on the other hand, were creative endeavors. Rather than being driven by a desire to preserve, they sought to add to the community knowledge. The mythopoeic minds that speculated about the nature of the cosmos would not condescend to capture or preserve the wisdom of the gods – human beings, by their very transient and mortal limitations, would be considered unqualified to mimic the cyclical rhythms that were visible in nature. Hence a Muse is invoked; her language channeled; her voice borrowed. In other words, the concept of a singular authority to something as wide and vast as cultural mythology, did not exist. It perhaps did not exist until written languages were invented.

In liminal texts, there is an active theme working to emphasize the very fact that myths are now being written down. From celebration of divine architecture to the preoccupation with the Holy City. The great cataclysms of urban mythology feature great floods that inundate man-made civilization as it falls under the weight of its own hubris or affront to nature; heroes are celebrated who sacrifice themselves for the betterment of the city; and the record of history comes to the foreground as the most important achievement of that culture – be it a history of war or a history of the gods themselves. The great fear is impermanence, and a loss of all things: Morality, Nature, and Life, because in the end the ultimate loss is Spiritual. The

unification of cultural myths is initially done by bringing them together under a single dialect, or in this case, under a single language. The Oral-formulaic approach to Homer's epic poems gives only a limited view of the rich and diverse, proto-literate threshold in which these poems exist. By reading them as merely oral constructions, we run the risk of ignoring the kind of linguistic-thought formations that the advent of literacy encouraged in human mythopoesy.

Unfortunately, the very act of writing down narratives which were meant to be dynamic, contributes to the loss. Perhaps the authors and poets of the urban myths felt that such a loss was inevitable, but as we sit today with a tradition of written literature informing us, we must stop to think about the cost at which such a tradition has come into existence.

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Comics and Graphic Novels: Counter Narratives to Cultural Products

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Abstract

Adapting either comic stories or graphic novels for the big screen with their spate of sequels has proved lucrative for the film industry. A myriad of images have sprung out of this current surge in comic or graphic characters and stories associated with popular demands for an alternative source of entertainment – one that has hitherto been undermined by the mainstream genres. This attraction towards comics and graphic novels has skyrocketed as a recent phenomenon, thanks to Hollywood's commercialism. Paradoxically, too, the strength of burgeoning fandom is what boosts this industry to generate more profit while the industry itself remains morally equivocal in the way it responds to the committed viewers. But what panders to the endless promotion of entertainment has already been damaging to the core principles of this medium. In capitalist economy movies created based on comics or graphic novels become cultural products. Before reaching the consumers these are intercepted by the intermediary groups, namely the studio conglomerates. Thus the artists'/creators' rights are violated and talents frequently go unacknowledged. What matters in the process of being so is the devaluation of comics or graphic novels as works of art or aesthetic creations. The premise of this paper is to investigate the nature of graphic novels and how they retain the transcendence of art as the primary function. The secondary role of the graphic novels is not to be ignored, given that numerous examples are available to validate their insightful probing of ideas. The paper will also seek to determine the factors that transform art into mere commodities.

Keywords: comics, graphic novels, superhero movies, media conglomerate, aesthetics

In the postmodern era, society is being consumed by mass production of cultural products. Under the sway of late capitalism, everything gives into the deceptive aura of consumer culture. Big corporate houses work as giant machineries churning out lucrative but imitative commodities that are designed to accrue profit and disseminate pop history. This beguiling history seems to be lingering for a much longer period, and its anticipated longevity perpetuates threats unbeknownst to its passive consumers. Fredric Jameson succinctly encapsulates the trajectory of this confusing miasma in his seminal work *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. In his evaluation of the postmodern phenomenon, he evokes a sense of loss in that the status of cultural art or aesthetic production fails to sustain its inherent attributes of authenticity, depth, and dimension (Jameson 61-62). Instead, a new form of aesthetic production emerges which replicates or mimes its precedent. Dubbed as pastiche by Jameson who sees its ubiquitous presence all across the media and spheres of cultural production (64-65), his assumptions are justified when the latest trend in Hollywood franchise filmmaking reveals these elements of pastiche. The conglomerate culture poised in its strong foothold dictates the future of Hollywood's fame and ceaseless manufacture of movies for enthralled audiences worldwide. By critics derided and vilified, these franchise films have suffered critical defeats and humiliation; conversely though, they have garnered a massive

response from the mainstream audience – a fact buttressed by box office earnings and hits. Of the prevailing genres, the superhero genre has climbed to the top rung in the list of preferred genres to be targeted for franchise filmmaking. The superhero genre is basically derived from one such contentious format, namely comics or graphic novels, which are primarily seen as a mode of entertainment for young readers. Movies are being made based on the adapted stories borrowed from this format in print medium. The originality of the story loses its charm when mindless repetition of its storyline gets regurgitated through countless reproductions sans novelty and innovation. However, despite some stigma attached to the comic format and graphic novels with respect to their "hybrid" (Meskin 219) conception, mingling traits of high and low culture and resulting in being a product of consumer culture, comics and graphic novels are aesthetically superior to their counterpart, namely movies (albeit of a different medium). In the words of Hillary Chute and Marianne Dekoven, "(C)omics is a mass cultural art form drawing on both high and low art indexes and references" (qtd. in Meskin 234). Unfortunately still, the format or medium has failed to retain its former glory. Moreover, it has gradually faltered in the domain of other high arts like novels, poems. Critics have denounced the status of comic books and the role they play, remarking, "A comic book that is a work of fiction and has aesthetic merit may be a work of art but not a work of literature" (John and Lopes, qtd. in Meskin 223). This has added grievances to the creative heads behind the format. The purpose of this paper is to elicit the efficacy of this much neglected format not to be confused with the notion of treating the format as fodder for pastiche and uphold the artistic merit of the creator-artists.

Superhero Movies and Recipe for Blockbuster and Franchise Films
Superhero movies are fun to watch – the statement is the most uncritical and blunt appraisal of a genre of movies that are currently dominating the entertainment industry. In massive numbers across the US and the world over, strings of superhero movies are released, distributed, and later perpetuated as franchise films, thanks to the media moguls and patron conglomerates. According to Reddit Post and Wikipedia's box office statistics, apart from *Interstellar* which was the only original movie to surface in the world wide box office top 10 in 2014, the other 9 were either in longer series like reboots, remakes, sequels, or individual entries. Out of them, half belonged to the superhero genre (Vego, *Clusory Connections*). Besides, the deluge of audiences throughout the globe going into movie theaters contributes to the success and further manufacture of umpteen movies which Mark Harris, the executive director of *Entertainment Weekly*, sums up in his insightful observation on the film industry: "franchises are not a big part of the movie business. They are *the* movie business. Period. Twelve of the year's fourteen highest grosses are, or will spawn, sequels" (qtd. in Vego, my italics). Thus, the very nature of franchise filmmaking creates a recurring pattern. Taken at face value, the above observation appears to be denoting a harmless appreciation of "visual spectacle" (Pagello 5) evoking a "'soft and fuzzies' feeling of experience" (Meehan 61) – a common phenomenon quintessentially attributed to the postmodern condition where only special effects accorded by digital media prolong audiences' enrapture (Pagello 5). However, this experience, as examined by Adorno and Horkheimer, actually reflects a passive participation of the audience surrendering to light entertainment which has always been decried for its superficiality in

content materials (95). This highlights the degraded status of the genre and reinforces its cheap entertainment value. No one can deny the magic of technological feats that these movies employ to a mind-boggling extent and at the expense of seriousness and depth of originality, as Peter Lamarque criticizes the genre for lacking in "rich characterization, theme, language and plotting" (qtd. in Meskin 220).

Nonetheless, the superhero genre has proved to be phenomenally successful, and its longevity is anticipated to span more than another decade or so unless the tide of popularity recedes. This looks somewhat unlikely given the fact that the range of audiences is ever escalating all over the globe. The appeal of superhero movies has been irresistible to many, irrespective of age and gender. Although it is purportedly the youth that this genre is supposed to cater to, grown-ups and adult fans also throng the theater contrary to popular belief. Together, the wide range of audience contributes to the industry's profits. As a genre, traditionally superhero movies are a medium of respite and redemption for many. Attributed with mythical capacity and grandiose stature, these characters take the audience to a diegetic world through a conspicuous flight of fancy. The illusory nature is a welcome break from the gritty nature of many realistic films. And also the cathartic effects afforded by this genre prove wholesome at the end. Moreover, it propagates universal American moral values (Arndt, qtd. in Gagliardo 29). Therefore, suffice it to say that this genre spikes more interest in its avid followers. Consequently, this genre has assumed blockbuster status over the years.

The blockbuster mentality of Hollywood goes back to the '70s when its major studios plummeted. This also saw the concurrent rise in the franchise filmmaking. Following the footstep of the erstwhile franchise filmmaking, Hollywood in the 21st century still practices the common formula as it promises commercial success, drawing in big earnings through the box office. There are some characteristic attributes of blockbuster films, like indulgence in commercial elements, focus on youth audience, saturation of market, and emulation of the successful endeavors by Spielberg and Lucas (Owczarski 203). Most superhero movies are based on superhero comics. Almost immediately after superheroes rose to prominence in comic books, they were adapted. However, in the decades following the '30s and '40s, their production declined. With intermittent gaps in the production of superhero movies, the genre resurfaced again at the turn of the 20th century, riding a wave of a new interest in fantasy and sci-fi. Lately, the franchise films have been banking on comics for content materials which are basically about a vigilante or group of vigilantes fighting against all forms of injustice. As of now, Marvel, in conjunction with its patron distributor, has yielded the highest amount of profits, surpassing DC and Time Warner, Inc. This is owing to properties that are crowd-pleasing – mostly leaning on "generous dose of action, violence, and PG rated content" (Dirks). Hollywood has managed to steer clear of the scathing allegations like "less reputable or artistic genres" by relying on these formulas (Neale, qtd. in Owczarski 209). Being the creator and publisher of comics with superhero characters and elements, Marvel and DC have been owned by companies which have been producing and distributing movies with exploits and heroism of superheroes in storylines. Thus, after a hiatus the superhero movies have been revived through rebooting, retelling, and remaking – all centering on the "endless variations

of the same motif"(Pagello 13), and now the genre has found a firm footing in Hollywood, reinforcing the postmodern condition of phantasmagoria.

Capitalist Economy and Cultural Products

In order to unearth the success of contemporary superhero movies – the film industry and digital media contributing to its dominance over other industries and media – it is pertinent to speculate on the nature and dynamics of the existing economy. One of the key components of capitalist economy is accumulation of profit. The capitalist maxim is to invest money to generate more money. It is a highly competitive economic system where big companies or corporations hold sway over the production and manufacture of products. Consumers here are a vital part of a mechanism that determines the demands or needs of the consumers. This mechanism is aimed at benefitting the sellers as they manipulate latest technological advancements through mass marketing. Cultural products are verily such results of an economic system where everything ranging from print to audio-visual industries including movies, TV, radio, music, and publishing are seen as commodities (Rauschenberger 2). In most cases, as bitterly derided by postmodern critics, cultural products are deemed as standardized and trivialized according to the manipulation of the media (Adorno and Horkheimer 95). In a capitalist society media plays an instrumental role in shaping people's minds. For instance, movies target a large populace. They are the passive recipients of the products otherwise known as "industrial product of fiction" (Dorfman, qtd. in Rauschenberger 23). Since in the postmodern era it is the culture industry that takes the helm in promulgating false needs and consciousness through homogenization (Adorno and Horkheimer 97), it is all but evident that consumers will meekly accept what they are fed with, be they entertainment or advertisement. The culture industry, otherwise known as media conglomerates, thus flex muscles to ensnare unsuspecting and gullible consumers into meek acceptance of false reality (Adorno and Horkheimer 100). However, the machinery responsible for this takes the upper hand, for "mass-produced culture is a business, governed by corporate drives for profit, market control, and transindustrial integration" (Meehan 49).

Besides, the wholesale commercialization of culture ensures accumulation of maximum profit aligned with the prevailing rules of the market at the expense of the artistic content (Eco, qtd. in Sokolowski 310). Hollywood is an industry which runs like capitalist media business whose main goal can be seen as "shap(ing), construct(ing), recycl(ing), break(ing), and distribut(ing) the show for profit" (Meehan 62). The major studios as part of a larger media conglomerate are a principal source of revenue. The conglomerates own or acquire publishing houses like Marvel and DC as a source for generating more materials by licensing revenues. Interestingly, these corporations do not merely sell movies, they also promote ideologies to the consuming audience (Meehan 61). Hence, these giant companies have since then held captive the media. Big conglomerates have always been accused of dishonest practices of domination against media. It underscores how, despite having access to a rich repository of artists and writers for an authentic measure of success or failure, the conglomerates manipulate and control consumptions. In contrast, the comics and graphic novel format applies authenticity.

Comic Books and Popular Entertainment

Unlike superhero movies, comic books have not flourished in the same manner. Ironically though, the same content had proven to be a potent source for the adapted movies. Comics are "not accepted by society at large as an art form with the same rights to freedom of expression as other art forms" (Sabin, qtd. in Gagliardo 30). In *Understanding Comics*, Scott McCloud defines comics as "juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence" (199). Primarily originating in the pulp publishing business, comic books expanded its market by establishing its stranglehold among readers ranging from pre-teens to adults. During its golden era in the '40s, the comic book was the most popular form of entertainment in America. It was a time when comic book sales soared, attracting a lot more people than movies, television, radio, or magazines for adults as reading of comic books was gradually becoming a cultural practice (Gagliardo 26). However, towards the end of the decade and at the beginning of the early '50s, perceptions towards comic books took a downturn. In fact, there was a prevailing notion amongst the cultural elitists that comic books were low brow. The hitherto emerging popularity of this mass medium also took further blows when there was bitter outcry in the public as their perception veered negatively. Many pejorative tags like obscene, funny, puerile, and infantile were given to the form itself and its creators. They were dubbed as "the marijuana of the nursery" and vilified for having aspects in them meant "exclusively for children" (Nyberg, qtd. in Gagliardo 27). On the whole, comics/comic books were regarded as "conductive to wrongdoing of all sorts" (Hadju, qtd. in Gagliardo 27).

Moreover, since the imposition of stringent prescriptive standards curtail "creative endeavor," the comics industry badly suffered from limitations unlike "other media" (Sabin, qtd. in Gagliardo 31). The readers too were not spared from the severe lambasting. Wertham, an anti-comic book crusader, classified the readers as having "the brain of a child, the sexual drive of a satyr, and the spiritual delicacy of a gorilla" (Hadju, qtd. in Gagliardo 27). The artists solely responsible for being the creative heads behind them were consequently relegated to an ignominious position no matter how professionally they were engaged to elevate the art form. The loss incurred by those working in the comics industry as professionals in terms of social status, the plight, and the dire circumstances were harrowing as reflected in the following comment made by Wright: "In the artistic profession, comic books ranked just above pornography" (qtd. in Gagliardo 29). "Freak" (Wolk, qtd. in Gagliardo 29) was a frequent appellation for those whose vocation was also regarded as "shameful" (Arndt, qtd. in Gagliardo 29). The repercussions continued unfortunately with its legacy in the 21st century as artists are "punished for having and using two skills and not only one" (Eggers, qtd. in Gagliardo 29). The practitioners of comic arts have shied away from the masses and opted for terms like "illustrators, commercial artists, and cartoonists" because of these negative connotations (McCloud 18). These professional artists and creative writers experienced massive losses in terms of income as well. As an industry it spiraled downwards in terms of sales too. Even in 2003 the bestselling comic books found it extremely difficult to surpass the 100,000 copies per issue milestone (Wright, qtd. in Gagliardo 30).

However, even though the form failed to attach any appeal to the mass audience, it proved to be by the '80s and '90s a compelling fodder for the biggest entertainment industry in America – Hollywood. This aggravated the decline in comic books readership but inclined more and more people towards the new form of entertainment. From the eighties onwards, Hollywood sustained its big budget productions, incorporating comic book properties. Thus, the old superhero genre was recast and revived, if not glorified.

Maturation, Coming of Age of Comics and Graphic Novels

The historical trajectory of comics shows how the format has gone through formative and evolutionary phases. With the implementation of self-imposed or self-inflicted censorship of the contents and production of comics, many publishing houses, authors, and artists sought to find their niche in the underground business, with contents verging on edgy subject matters like explicit depiction of sex, drug abuse, and violence epitomized in the Silver Age of comics. These were an attempt to subvert the complacency of the conservative mindset of the then society. After their revival again at the outset of their emergence from the underground, comics seemed to have focused on the delineation of reality through dark humor and sarcasm, the prominence of which testified to the ability of the comics to foil and disrupt the standards and naïve expectations of pliant society (Pagello 4). Gradually, comic books grew out of their so-called juvenile mode, trying to transcend the superhero genre and market domain hitherto targeted at the adolescents. There were obvious shifts in the artwork, approach, and thematic concepts (Gagliardo 28). By the '70s, which is known as the Bronze Age of comics, the major academia were eager to acknowledge the role of comics books, although an altogether new terminology came to be associated with the format.

According to Charles Hatfield, "(T)he graphic novel in particular has become comics' passport to recognition as a form of literature" (qtd. in Meskin 223). This assertion is also echoed in Will Eisner's words since he too regards it as literature "because the images are employed as language" (qtd. in Meskin 223). By definition, a graphic novel is a longer fictional work than comics. It is a book-length narrative as opposed to comics; but like comics, graphic novels are a combination of visual and verbal forms of communication. The term, graphic novels, has also attracted much criticism to the way the terminology is applied. To some, a graphic novel is synonymous to comics. However, with the publication of *A Contract with God* in 1979 written by Will Eisner, the term found much currency. In 1983, when Art Spiegelman's graphic novel, *Maus*, was published, it got firmly imprinted in the mind of the mainstream audience that the graphic novel is another authentic format in the print medium. With the term is implied a lot of seriousness of intent and complexity in terms of plot construction, narrative technique, and other stylistic aspects which are exclusive to the format. Although known for its close affinity with the superhero genre, the format runs a wide gamut of other genres like non-fiction and autobiography as well.

On the whole, the term "graphic novel" seems to have done justice to the notion of blurring the division between high-brow culture and low-brow cultural products. This in effect leads to the potent question of whether comics or graphic novel is equivalent to other literary works or works of art by dint of its aesthetic properties. In a postmodern context, resolving queries

like this arouses a string of questions relating to the preeminence of the notion of cultural capital. Comics and graphic novels, in fact, play a cultural role and their status also determines the status of their readers. Will Eisner in his seminal book *Comics and Sequential Art* claims that "the reading of the comic book is an act of both aesthetic perception and intellectual pursuit" (8). This assertion in a definitive manner replaces any signs of inferiority on its part. Like any work of literature in prose, arts in comics shares the same structure as Eisner further negates the inherent assumptions misconstrued around the format by stating that "in the skillful employment of words and images lies the expressive potential of the medium" (13).

Aesthetic Value of Comics and Graphic Novels

Terry Eagleton, decrying the comic format as lacking any aesthetic value attributed otherwise to true works of literature, has stated, "Superman comics and Mills and Boon novels are fictional but not generally regarded as literature, and certainly not as Literature" (qtd. in Meskin 223). Since comics and graphic novels are basically multi-modal with a prominence of images, many might undermine this as aesthetically not up to the mark. However, images are embedded with subtle meanings and symbols as Eisner says, "the codification becomes, in the hands of the artist, an alphabet," which the readers have to fathom and decipher (16). Comics channel the authors' thoughts which are reconverted through the readers' senses into thoughts again which Scott McCloud analyzes in the following manner: "(C)reators and readers are partners in the invisible creating something out of nothing, time and time again" (205). This assertion is reiterated in Eisner's assessment of the artistic and aesthetic dimensions of comics and graphic novels because comprehension "demands of the sequential artist an understanding of the reader's life experience if his message is to be understood" (13). For example, there are a number of elements like gutter, panel, mise-en-scène which "work together as clues from which readers draw inferences as they make sense of what they see on a page" (Karin Kukkonen 2). One of the elements like panels creates a phenomenon called closure (10). Scott McCloud sees this phenomenon as perceiving the whole through observing the parts which is basically a mental process (63). Will Eisner has also identified the regimens of art comprising of perspective, symmetry, brushstroke along with the regimens of literature like grammar, plot, syntax which, according to him, draw a parallel between both the structure of illustration and prose (8). Like films where the story unfolds in front of the viewers, comics and graphic novels both share the same principles of mapping out the imagination for the readers (Eisner 122). It can be assumed that comics and graphic novels as a format, if not more, is no less a complex medium than films. And as to the contours and components of comic arts and other prose works of literature, they share similar characteristics. Moreover, the diegetic world of comics is not linear or flat; the narrative resembles "weaving of a fabric" (122) because it entails "conception of an idea, the arrangement of image elements and the construction of the sequence of the narration and the composing of dialogues" (122).

Therefore, it is a gross misconception to consider the superhero genre as the only predominant category that does not justly appraise formats like graphic novels and comics. These presumptions wrongly mislead critics like Terry Eagleton to subscribe to faulty notions. Superheroes are no longer seen as indefatigable; there are anti-heroes with their persistent

failures, naïve Samaritans with finite possibilities – all of them are of human proportions and they bespeak of their ordinary ordeals of no lesser importance. Additionally, "Mainstream superhero comics typically possess much in the way of substantive literary values" (Meskin 222), contrary to the misapprehensions of the dominant ideology. Aside from this typical foray, there are plenty of subject matters with wide ranging thematic concepts touching upon darker and more life-like representations and associations. David Carrier has aptly grappled with the aesthetics of comics for their "inventiveness, originality, and consistency" (qtd. in Brandl). After all these analyses it will not be too far-fetched to justify the claim that the format of comics and graphic novels stands on its own right. Firstly, it is a unique form of literature that flaunts various stylistic features. Secondly, the comic book buries deep within it elements that have moral dimensions – the history of comics reveals that it has oftentimes been used as instruments of chastisement and correction as a means to fight ills of any given society (Topffer, qtd. in McCloud 17).

Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* departs from the conventional hero narrative and instead focuses on caricaturing its main protagonist as she transitions from the pre-pubescent phase to post-adolescent phase against the backdrop of the Islamist revolution sweeping across the entire Iran. Although the graphic novel takes issue with the then socio-political unrest in Iran, it successfully retains a casual and tongue-in-cheek approach to critiquing the radicalization of Iranian politics and gradual descent toward religious bigotry. Not unlike a bildungsroman, the narrative traces the author's namesake through her journey in simplistic style – mostly a black and white illustration as opposed to the vivid and gaudy colors of other comic series. Her follies, flaws, and ambitions are made objects of both ridicule and hilarity resembling an everyman. It seems as though Satrapi is trying to redeem in retrospect the formative years of her younger days by fondly recalling the naiveté and guilelessness. Her plain illustration style accompanied with the comic elements offsets and counterbalances the serious contents. However, Starapi's retelling of history by ingenious amalgamations of images and words enables her readers to partake directly in adventure, fantasy, and memory as experienced by the author herself. The very limitations of the graphic novel as opposed to its literary counterpart, namely a pseudo-autobiographical fiction, here play an adventitious role, for it allows the reader to vicariously and visually feel hooked to the events. Likewise, Alan Moore and David Lloyd's *V for Vendetta* is also unconventional in its aversion to regular hero narrative or superhero genre and affinity to subversive issues dealt with in film-noir style. Moreover, the application of paler colors and surreal presentation make the graphic novel an outstanding accomplishment of genuine merit. If unaided by images, the words alone could not evoke or elicit responses from its readers, for the entire narrative is indebted to the way images bring immediacy and authenticity of emotions. The protagonist remains elusive throughout and becomes an embodiment of pure abstractions. A symbol of anarchy against totalitarianism, the leading character fights an ideological warfare against all kinds of ominous power that threaten to arrest humanity and its characteristic attributes. Both the aforementioned graphic novels have been adapted to the big screen and have been accorded critical approval. However, both as movies were departures from the superhero genre, and hence eschewed the oft-tried formula.

Conclusion

Late capitalism and cultural dominance of the postmodern era invalidate the distinction between high and low culture. In this era, aesthetic productions are merely seen as consumer goods. Does this imply graphic novels and comics are solely hybrid and pastiche? By that association, does this also mean that the artists, creative heads behind the creation of comics and graphic novels, are also mercenary professionals? Are they experiencing what Jameson has identified as loss of subjectivity, a quintessential postmodern phenomenon? To some extent, his argument holds true; however, it must be argued by refusing to bluntly accept the criticism that, unlike franchise films which are appropriated as end results of cultural production, graphic novels and comics are not subject to such mechanism leading to mindless replication of the original/prototype. Those who are complicit in this corroding destruction of transcendental art are called custodian players like art collector, the critic, the journalist, the manager, and the curator in the context of modern market paradigm (Jalbuena *Business Mirror*). Deresiewicz is quoted as saying, "The new paradigm displaces the preeminence and importance of the artist who, it turns out, is only one among a number of players who determine the value of art and what it is" (Jalbuena *Business Mirror*). However, with some exceptions, where modern artists appear to have fallen under the spell of market culture, most artist-creators of comics and graphic novels apply their visionary perspectives. Their work has transcendental value and hermeneutic dimensions. And it is the artists' den that produces true art, without any culturally defined value ascribed to it (Clow 27).

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Translating Drama: Speaking the Unspeakable in Other Words

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Abstract

A play is meant for stage performance. Translating a dramatic work is, in many ways, different from translating the other genres of literature, for the language spoken in a play is colloquial and not necessarily formal. It is not simply an act of transferring linguistic or verbal rhetoric per se; it is an act of cultural shift and remaking, involving cross-cultural interaction of homogeneity, and adaptation of cultural heterogeneity. It is both a linguistic and cultural exchange of conversations and dialogues. Drama translation involves actability of the characters, performativity of the roles, clarity of thoughts, and brevity of speeches. Time, place and action, as well as the stage and the audience, are to receive special consideration as far as drama translation is concerned. The paper investigates the extent to which translation theory gives rise to the strategy of "intentional betrayal" to attain the "translatability" of the "untranslatability." The paper again attempts to validate the analogical dichotomy between theory and practice in translation studies, focusing on the dynamics of translation based on a translational process of loss and gain.

Keywords: *drama translation, loss and gain, translation shift, translatability, untranslatability*

Literature written in any language is a mode of communication. It is a communal event experienced by a particular agent(s) of an individual culture and shared by the rest of the agents of other cultures. It is a tool for creative exploration in knowledge and culture expansion. This expansion covers a wide range of space in every field of human activity, be it education, discovery, or entertainment. But this spread, for the most part, depends on different modes of translation or interpretation. The process through which literature of any genre crosses the native borders of the language of its origin is absolute translation or "the transformation of cultures" (Alam 3). Any literary text – be it Greek, Latin, French, German, Italian, English, Bengali, or of any other languages, dominating or dominated – experiences the borderless expansion of its fictional, factual, historical, or cultural identity through, first of all, translation. We translate from any language into any language and on any specialist subject. Through translation there happens a cultural adaptation.

Translation, as a cultural shift and exchange, helps a product of one culture suit another culture. Drama, like other genres of literature, thus undergoes the linguistic and cultural exchange of conversations and dialogues. This is translation that helps a text written in one language survive in another language. Translation connects "our world" with "their world," making the private public, the local global, the unknown known, the unseen seen, the unexperienced experienced, and the unshared shared.

Methodology

The article has been written in accordance with some of the theories about translation studies. In order to show the dichotomy and analogy between theories and practice of translation studies, I have referred to one source text (ST) and one target text (TT). The source text is in English and the target text is in Bangla, the translation of the ST.

The corpuses that the article includes as ST and TT are Harold Pinter's play *The Birthday Party* (1957) and its Bengali translation by Mohammad Shahadat Hossain.

Translation and its Studies

The Concept of Translation: Translation, in its general sense, may carry more than one meaning. It is both a product and a process. As the latter of the meanings is concerned, translation simply refers to the act of rendering or transferring a written text from one language into another. The language of the original text which is rendered into another language is called a source language (SL), while the language in which the original text is translated is called a target language (TL). In this way, translation is an act of rewriting and remaking. As a product, translation refers to a piece of text written in a language other than that of the original text. This is also called text in translation – a product which is read. Translation as a product may also include other productions like "cinema, television, DVD or computer game" (Hatim and Munday 4).

Broadly speaking, translation is a process of "intercultural communication" (Bassnett 1), involving cross-cultural interaction of homogeneity, and adaptation of cultural heterogeneity. It is both a linguistic and cultural exchange of conversations and dialogues. Importantly, it also involves the conversion between different mindsets, characterized by different kinds of cultural psychology.

Linguistic equivalence makes the process of translation translatable. Therefore, translation, as a process of shifting equivalent semantics from one language to another, transforms or substitutes the phrases or idioms of a source language text to or for the other equivalences (phrases, idioms, etc. functioning equivalently for the SL) of a target language through a linguistic process, i.e. *Decoding and Recoding*[1]. It is the process of replacing or interpreting a text and its grammatical and lexical items between languages – written or verbal.

However, Octavio Paz's definition of translation can certainly help a translator reduce concerns about translation, as he says that all texts are "translations of translations of translations" (154). Therefore, a translated text can never be the exact text; it is rather the versioned text of the translator.But the common thing between the two texts – the original and the translated – is the invariant core.[2]

Dynamics of Translation: The creativity and the creative energy translation involves are intellect, knowledge, imagination, negotiation, interpretation, commonsense, loss and gain, independence, analysis, and the detailed knowledge of a source language (SL) and a target language (TL). Translation, which is an act of producing a new version of an SL text into a new TL text where a negotiation takes place between texts and cultures, is viewed by some as a

secondary mechanical work, and as an inferior activity of one kind or the other. Nevertheless, the most important act a translation does is that it ensures the spread of a text in other languages and cultures. Since translation helps the survival of languages and texts, it involves cultural influence and hegemony too. We cannot, however, underrate that translation is a valuable job in the hands of an efficient translator.

The Purpose of Translation: There always lies a communicative relationship between an author, reader, and a translator. The translator is both a receiver and a sender. The end is the beginning. A complete text is the end of the writing process done by the author, and this end (the complete text) is the beginning of the translation process done by the translator. In this connection, the translator functions both as a receiver and a sender of a text:

> Receiver: The translator receives a text written in its source language.
> Sender: The translator translates the SL text into a target language and sends it to the readers of the TL.

The following diagram will make clear the process of how a translator can function both as a receiver and a sender:
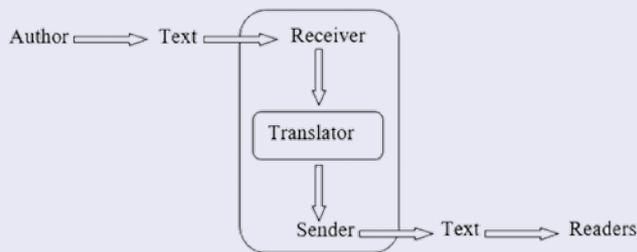
Figure 1: Communicative relationship in translation, showing the translator as receiver and sender of a text

Translation reduces the linguistic discrimination between two nations. A good translation can bridge nations that are linguistically or culturally apart, as it happened with the world poet Rabindranath Tagore. Translation liberates a culture, nation, and, above all, people with outstanding intellectual possessions from the habit of linguistic restrictions. When Tagore translated *Gitanjali* – a collection of verses – he was recognized by the west as a world poet, earning him the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913.

According to Shuttleworth and Cowie, translation is taking the original or source text (ST) and turning it into a text in another language, that is, target text (TT). Roman Jakobson, the Russian-American linguist, defines translation as the "interlingual translation"[3] (qtd. in Hatim and Munday 5) which he calls "translation proper" (5), "an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language" (Bassnett 22). Jakobson says, "Translation is only an adequate interpretation of an alien code unit and equivalence is impossible" (23). Translation, according to Hatim and Munday, is both a "product" (3) and a "process" (3), but to Holmes, it is a process, a product, and a function (95).

Developments in Translation Studies

Trends of culture and cultural studies are growing rapidly, and so is the commercial and literary value of translation. Translation Studies has thus become an interdisciplinary field "interfacing with a whole host of other fields" (Hatim and Munday 8). As regards the notion of translatability, the field continues to become phenomenal. Again, the possibility of research into translation has made the studies even more all-encompassing from such perspectives as "scientific to literary, cultural and political" (9). The following illustration will focus on the breadth of knowledge that translation studies includes:
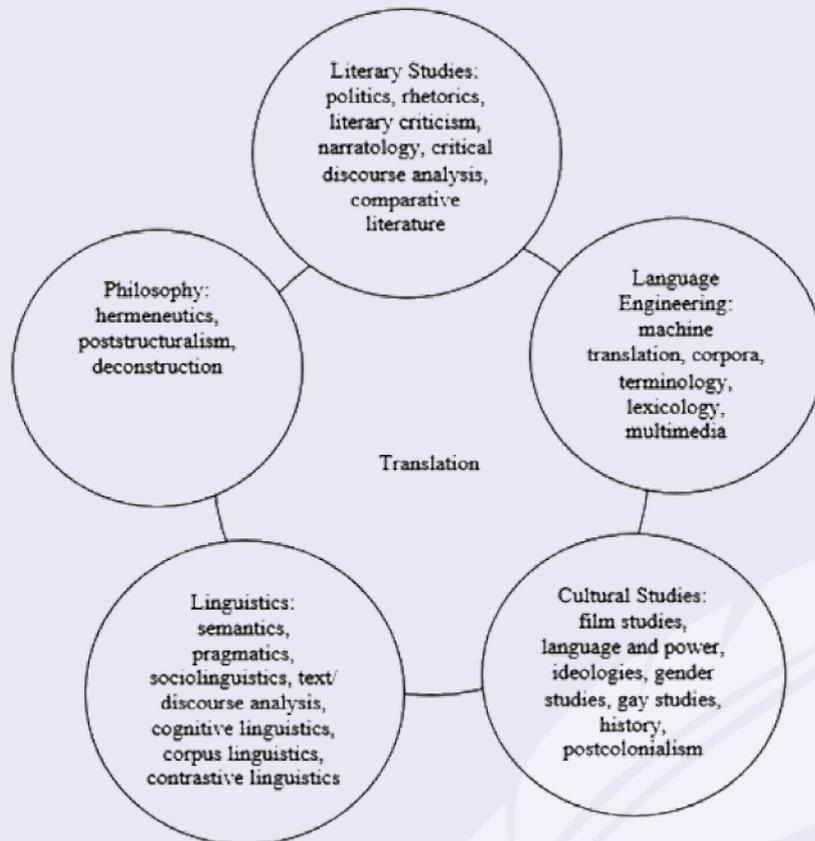
Figure 2: Disciplines interfacing with Translation Studies (Basil Hatim and Jeremy Munday 8)

The Process of Translation

Decoding and Recoding: A translation does not mean merely the rendering of a single word. Despite the transformation of the linguistic elements, the whole process of translation entails the conversion of culture, mood, tone, setting, environment, etc. in an SL text to a new culture, mood, tone, setting, environment, etc. in a TL text. This complete job is done through a method called decoding and recoding. Language is a tool of complex-words game. As the exact equivalences of some phrases or words in one language are not or may not be

found in another language, there appear complexities in interlingual translation. As such, the translator must accept the notion of untranslatability, the lack of similar cultural convention in the TL, the range of TL phrases available, etc. The following diagram of translation procedures shows how the translator's decisions involve problems with equivalences:

Decoding and Recoding
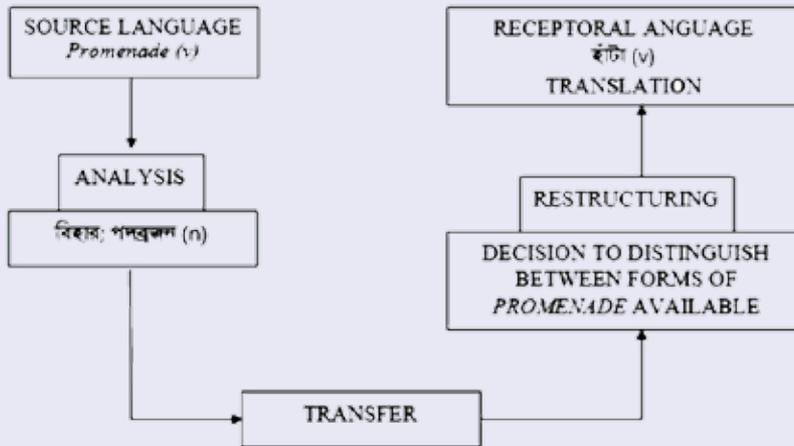
Figure 3: Process of Translation (Susan Bassnett, 2002)

What happened here in this process is that the notion of বিহার; পদব্রজন (a form of walk) has been isolated and the word *promenade* has been replaced by হাঁটা, carrying the same notion and meaning "to walk about in or on." The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines *promenade* as "to take or go on a promenade," "to perform a promenade in a dance," and "to walk about in or on" while the *Bangla Academy English-Bengali Dictionary's* definition of the word is "ব্যায়াম বা বিনোদনের জন্য পায়ে হেঁটে বা ঘোড়ায় চড়ে ভ্রমন; বিহার; পদব্রজন". As no exact equivalence is available in the TL, the translator, based on the analysis of the word in the TL and the SL as well, had to depend on the second port of call (dynamic equivalence) and substitute the ST, *promenade*, for the TT হাঁটা – a type of "walk" really comprehensible to not only the target readers (TR) but the source readers (SR) too. This is how the overall process of translation works out.

Translating Drama: A play is meant for stage performance. As regards the nature of a theatrical discourse, that is, playability, "dramatic text cannot be translated in the same way as the prose text" (Bassnett 119). Drama translation involves actability of the characters, performativity[4] of the roles, clarity of thoughts, and brevity of speeches. Time, place and action, as well as the stage and the audience are to receive special consideration as far as drama translation is concerned. Words, speeches, and dialogues are not all about a play-script; there is a lot behind these lettered communication that must be understood to transfer the actable dramatic communication from one language to another. Accordingly, translation theory gives rise to the strategy of "intentional betrayal" to attain the translatability[5] of the untranslatability[6].

"A contested notion in Translation Studies" (Fernandes 120) is *performability*. The idea of "*performability*, which, invariably, goes hand in hand with *speakability* and *playability*" (120) is, however, problematic as far as drama is concerned. Bassnett-Mcguire calls drama translation a paradox: "The two texts – written and performed – are coexistent and inseparable, and it is in this relationship that the paradox for the translator lies" (87). Nevertheless, theatrical texts reflect a certain cultural psychology and mindset, so the transliteration of it also requires an explicit conversion of the source text's culture. Consequently, it becomes a dilemma for the translator whether to retain the source culture or relocate it to the target culture. The dilemma is, however, dissolved through a formative negotiation, for the objective of the translator is to expose the vices and virtues of the characters through this play redrafted in a new language.

Other elements that make the theater translation more of the performable are *rhythm, intonation, patterns, pitch*, and *loudness*. In theater translation, a translator tries to stick to conversation, rendering the SL text in a way which is capable of retaining the interest of the audience and the intention of the dramatist too. In drama translation, the translator decodes not only the meaning, but also the entire dramatic situation – light, scene, plot, and action, as theater translation is quite different from that of the other types, for the language spoken in a play is colloquial and not necessarily formal.

Of the translation types – literal and free – drama translation belongs to the latter, for it involves dialects, dialogues, commonsensical elements, culture representation, action, and such related to the stage performance. Drama translation can never be a sort of word for word translation, since word-for-word translation is not capable of creating dramatic effects on the stage with either the actors or the audiences. If a play-script undergoes a literal method of translation, the effort will turn into a complete failure as a result of its inability to being actable. Theater translation shows how "acting styles and concepts of theatre also differ considerably in different national contexts, and this introduces yet another element for the translator to take into account" (Bassnett 122).

The translation of a script text is literal by genre, but it requires the use of "the source language's cultural context as a *frame text*" (Fernandes 121) to ensure "fluent speech rhythms and so produce a text that TL (target language) actors can speak without too much difficulty" (Bassnett-Mcguire 90-91).

Problems of Equivalence: Whatever the genre of translation is – poem, play or prose – there is an interrelation of almost all such terms as comprehensibility[7], translatability, correspondence, equivalence, shifts, untranslatability, negotiation, and loss and gain. Of them all, equivalence[8] holds the central importance in translation. Next comes negotiation and after it, loss and gain[9]. The translation of any genre entails problems of equivalence; there are certain words or phrases in one language of which no exact equivalence is found in another language. In such cases, a translator has to resort to formal equivalence[10], dynamic equivalence[11] or referential equivalences[12] for the effective reproduction of an SL text. Let us look at the following rendition from the *The Birthday Party*:

> STANLEY: Evening.
> MCCANN: Evening.
> STANLEY: গুড ইভনিং
> MCCANN: গুড ইভনিং (Pinter 47)

Here *evening* is used as a form of greeting which actually refers to *Good Evening*, but in Bangla the literal translation of these two lines as ইভনিং and ইভনিং does not create any dramatic impression; therefore, a dynamism was implied here based on the borrowing[13] type of translation to make the similar dramatic effect like that of English. Again, the question "What's it like out today?" does not mean what it is really intended to. It does not necessarily say that it is "nice," rather it is spoken in a way that produces a communicative effect "how," implying a question like "how is the weather outside?", demanding an expected answer like "fair" or "foul":

> MEG: What's it like out today?
> PETEY: Very nice. (Act 1, pp. 8)
> মেগ: বাইরে আবহাওয়াটা কেমন?
> পেটি: চমৎকার।

Here, the translator has imposed the referential equivalence of the sentence, so that it reads in Bangla as বাইরে আবহাওয়াটা কেমন? introducing the "communicative dynamism" (Hatim and Munday 22) to represent the colloquial expression. The following translation also marks the same dynamism and a stylistic aspect to find "a rhythmical solution that enables speakability and stylistic marking/significance to co-exist" (Johnston 67):

> STANLEY: What a wonderful surprise. (Act 1, pp. 10)
> স্ট্যানলি: অবাক কান্ড তো!

The words *wonderful* and *surprise* in *Bangla Academy English-Bangla Dictionary* are rendered as some other semantic elements like অদ্ভুত, চমৎকার, অপূর্ব and অবাক, চমক, বিস্মিত than the ones rendered, posing the issue of untranslatability. Although a translator has to "accept the untranslatability of the SL phrase in the TL on the linguistic level" (Bassnett 29), he has also, at the same time, to accept "the notion of translatability" (Hatim and Munday 7) as Mounin observes that communication through translation despite the dogma of untranslatability "is never wholly impossible either" (qtd. in Bassnett 42). Therefore, the translator has come up with the "*natural* unit of translation" (22), substituting *surprise* with কান্ড – a text normative equivalence – aiming for the full attainment of the "pragmatic" (51).

Transliteration[14] is utterly ineffective in translating drama. Let's look at the following excerpt:

> MEG: You mind your own business (Act 1, pp. 10)

If we literally translate the text into Bangla, it will face transliteration. So the translator has to think of the loss and gain procedure of translation. For example, when we talk to a second person in Bangla, we do not mention the pronoun "you" to indicate that "I/ We" is talking to "You." Here the subject is understood, and so, left out. We simply say: "Mind your own business." In fact, the literal one, as a language of stage, has no dramatic appeal to the readers, whereas the free one is much more catchy, tangible, and actable, and so sustains the actability of the original text in the target language. If we compare the two texts, we see the free one involves loss and gain. Though on one hand, the free translation loses the extreme literalism of the ST, on the other hand, it gains effectiveness, and retains the performability, regarding drama translation in particular.

The phrase "Enough to scuttle a liner," which appeared in Act Two of *The Birthday Party* (Pinter 47), does not correspond to any equivalent expression in Bangla. Among the meanings of "scuttle" found in the TL dictionaries are (a) কয়লার পাত্র বা হাণ্ডা (www.bdword.com), (b) আলো বা জলপ্রবেশের জন্য জাহাজের পাটাতনের ফোকর (www.english-bangla.com/dictionary/scuttle) and (c) ফুটা করে জাহাজ ডোবানো (Bangla Academy English-Bangla Dictionary), and the meanings found in the SL dictionaries are respectively "to cut a hole through the bottom, deck, or side of (a ship); *specifically:* to sink or attempt to sink by making holes through the bottom" and "a shallow open basket for carrying something (as grain or garden produce)" and "a metal pail that usually has a bail and a sloped lip and is used especially for carrying coal" (Merriam-Webster), "destroy; abandon; sink" (Theasurus.com), and "to run with quick short steps; to deliberately cause something to fail" (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary), none of which communicate the cultural context of the phrase used in the play. Therefore, the translator has rendered the context by means of cultural psychology and contextual denotation: "Enough drinks," meaning "we have got enough alcohol to get ourselves properly drunk," for the aim of the translator is to "describe the indescribable" (Bassnett 102) with the idea of explicit performance in mind. This act of negotiation has helped the original text lose its literalism, but gain the rhythm in articulation.

Translation Shifts[15]**:** The problem of equivalence or what John Catford calls "translation shifts" (73) is crucial in translation studies. Translation shifts are an inevitable phenomenon in the process of translation. In the cases where no exact equivalences are found in a TL, the translator has to depend on either dynamic or referential equivalences, or on borrowings. For instance, no exact equivalence of the word *whoo* (Act 1, p. 10) is found either in Bangla or English. In these circumstances, with the idea of stage performance in mind, it was the translator's duty to decide the actable equivalence to cater the purpose, so he rendered the phrase as "ও, তাই নাকি!" However, although an effective drama translation undergoes translation shift between source text and target text, what is common, in Popovic's words, is the "invariant core" (qtd. in Bassnett 33).

Translation shifts involve problems of equivalence and give rise to the question of the size of a translated text. A target text (TT) normally becomes larger than a source text (ST); however, certain parts of the TT may be shorter than an ST. It depends on the nature and exactness of the equivalences available in a TL. The following is an example of how a TT can become shorter than an ST:

> No. Just stacked a few of the old chairs. Cleaned up a bit." (Act 1, p. 4)
>
> আরে না । কিছু পুরনো চেয়ার বের করে একটু গোছগাছ করলাম মাত্র ।

Here the line length of the translated text is shortened, and made crispy and colloquial. Such colloquialism in a TT makes, in one hand, the stage language playable to the actors and the spectators, and on the other hand, connects the verbal with the non-verbal.

The Unit of Translation: Another phenomenon that holds remarkable significance in translation and is inevitable to any translation is the unit of translation.[16] Play-script is expected to be

short, crispy, open, spontaneous, and colloquial, and so is the translated text of a play. But it is, at times, impossible to stick to the exact or literal meaning of the SL. In this case, the unit of translation is sure to include shifts:

> *Silence. He groans, his trunk falls forward, his head falls into his hands* (Act 1, p. 15).
> নিরবতা । স্ট্যানলি আর্তনাদ করে, সামনের দিকে ঝুঁকে পড়ে, হাতের উপর মাথা রেখে ঝিমায় ।

In the translation of the above text we see that the word নিরবতা is the simple unit of translation – one single word in the ST corresponding to another single word in the TT, whereas the rest of the text belongs to the diluted form of translation – one word substituting for several words.

Sometimes the "source-language word may express a concept which is totally unknown in the target culture" (Baker 21). This type of concept is "often referred to as *culture-specific*" (21) and may be related to areas like food, habit, religion, way of behavior, or social practices. The rendition of the word "whoo" (Pinter 10) is one such culture-specific concept, and it involves a diluted unit of translation. No single or double equivalent of this word is found in Bangla dictionaries. Merriam-Webster defines the word "whoo" as "used to express sudden excitement, astonishment, or relief" and as "the cry of an owl," and the only near substitutions found in the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary are "tu-whit tu-whoo" meaning "used to represent the sound that an owl makes," which in this context do not make any sense. So, this single word has had its expression in Bangla as "তাই নাকি," an everyday colloquial expression.

Translating Cultures: Translation for the stage is predominantly a cross-cultural communication in which biculturalism plays more important roles than bilingualism as Eugene Nida points out, "For truly successful translating, biculturalism is even more important than bilingualism, since words only have meanings in terms of the cultures in which they function" (qtd. in Popescu 77). Nida realizes that only lexical substitution "can never take the place of personal involvement in a foreign society" (82), so cultural domestication turns out to be an essential aspect of drama translation "in which a transparent, fluent style is adopted in order to minimize the strangeness of the foreign text for TL readers" (Shuttleworth and Cowie 43-44).

The process of translation involves replacement and substitution of the linguistic elements in a T.L. Dingwaney says that the process of translation makes another culture comprehensible, but it entails various degrees of violence (4). Translating drama is an act of "cultural transfer" (Munday 32). It experiences the process of "foreignization and domestication" (Schmidt 537) to be adapted with the suitable elements in the target culture. This adaptation makes it possible for a translator to transfer the psychology and mindset of one culture into another. The following translation of Pinter's text shows how an alien cultural object (source culture in this context) is represented with a native nearly-equivalent element (target culture):

> GOLDBERG: You look like a Gladiola." (Act 2, p. 48)
> গোল্ডবার্গ: আপনাকে একেবারে রজনীগন্ধার মত লাগছে ।

Gladiola is a type of flower almost like রজনীগন্ধা (tuberose) which, though found in certain places in our country, is not quite familiar to the target audience. Therefore, রজনীগন্ধা has been substituted for *gladiola* in order to bring the cultural clarity of the TT, and to create a visual impression in the minds of the readers. The same is the case with the translation of "gefilte fish" (Act 2, p. 37), which has been translated as কার্ফূ, a type of fish of the carp family.

Agents of Power in Translation: Agents of power in translation are another inevitability, playing a vital role in the overall process of translation. Power play is an important logicality in "translating texts and translating cultures" (Hatim and Munday 200). Hatim and Munday asserts that in the acts of translations, the power of including or excluding a particular kind of reader, a certain system of values, a set of beliefs and opinions, or even an entire culture, is inherent in the use of language (200). Certain words, expressions, phrases or idioms which are culturally untranslatable in a TL become translatable through agents of power in translation. An example is the phrase "That's a Black and Tan fact," (Act 2, p. 42) that does not correspond to any exact equivalence in Bangla, so, based on its referential corresponding connotation, it was translated as "ওটা এখন বেশ পরিষ্কার।"

The exclusion of some words is the ultimate result of the exercise of power in translation – the consequence of the unavailability of proper equivalences or formal correspondence[17] in a TT. Though power in translation causes the exclusion of a word(s), this exclusion serves the purpose of sustaining fluency and combating boredom in a TT. This is how translation shifts work out through the whole gamut of a complete translation process.

Functional and Referential Equivalence: As opposed to connotation, referential equivalence means the denotation, the actual idea which the word refers to. When Stanley says, "I can't drink this muck," (Pinter 12), he does not necessarily mean গোবর – the literal meaning of the word *muck*. The word has a special functional property here. By referring to *tea* as *muck*, he actually means it is undrinkable – something like *rubbish*. Here the translation shift is that of a borrowing. Again the line "Am I really succulent" (13) is essentially referential. In fact, by the word *succulent*, neither Stanley nor Meg wanted to mean anything like *juicy*, but something having a sexual connotation, that is to say, *sexy*.

Borrowing: Borrowing means the use of a source language item in the target language. When an item in a source language is substituted for another item of the same language to retain the flavor of the original text, it is called borrowing. The need for borrowing becomes crucial only when formal correspondence in a TT does not properly serve the communication purpose of an ST. Expressions like *The fried bread* (Act 1, p. 11) and *"I trust you"* (Act 2, p. 53) involve direct borrowings. *The fried bread* does not necessarily carry its literal meaning "ভাজারুটি" and neither will it cater to the readers' expectations; rather, it means "টোস্ট. Again, *I trust you* means *I love you*. Therefore, the substitutions for *I trust you* is *I love you*, for the target audience is accustomed more to using expressions like *I love you* than *I trust you*.

If a formal equivalence is proved either unattainable or insufficient, the translator should aim for the next level of referential or denotative equivalence which may or may not entail borrowings. Words like *Judas* that appear in *The Birthday Party* (Pinter 53) impose numerous translational problems, as no formal equivalence is available in Bangla. In such a case, the phrase must be rendered based only on the sense referred to as happened here "তবে-রে পাপী।"

Langue and Parole: Langue[18] and Parole[19] are two important facets of linguistics. Formal equivalence, or what Saussure calls *Langue*, is our first port of call in translation. In this system of translation, "we are concerned not so much with the systemic similarities and differences between languages as with the communicative process in all its aspects" (Hatim and Munday 27). The following two examples will make the idea about the effectiveness of *Langue* (formal correspondence) and *Parole* (dynamic equivalence) clear:

STANLEY: ... It needs sweeping. It needs papering. I need a new room!" (Act I, p. 13)

স্ট্যানলিঃ ... রুমটায় একটু ঝাঁড়ু দেওয়া দরকার । ওয়ালপেপার লাগানো দরকার । আমার আসলে একটা নতুন রুম প্রয়োজন!

STANLEY: Get out of it. You succulent old washing bag" (Act I, p. 12).

স্ট্যানলিঃ দূর হও । নির্লজ্জ মহিলা ।

Conclusion

A translated text creates a communicative relationship between the author, the translator and the readers. Practice and theory are closely linked with each other in translation. Clarity of the ST and the possible varieties of the TL equivalents, and the understanding of the overall process in particular, can only be helpful for a good reproduction of a source text (ST). Here it is important to note that the product of a translation is the result of a complex system of decoding and encoding at the semantic, syntactic and pragmatic levels.

Translation, which is a shifting phenomenon, contributes greatly to cultural diversity and cross-cultural communication. The globalization of commercial enterprises heavily depends on the process of translation – verbal or written. Fields like education, foreign services, international business, cross-border education, etc. are in great need of efficient translators and of effectively translated documents.

Absence of linguistic peculiarities is a common phenomenon in translation, and may pose the threat of untranslatability. Nevertheless, it is the act of a translator to give the translation life – life, in the sense that the reproduction is very much close to the original production, despite the deficiency of the linguistic equivalences. A translator is, thus, the creator of a text in a new language; he liberates a text from the restrictions of linguistic monopoly (one language domination), and so makes it universal and accessible in many other languages. As Kelly states, "The translator first enters a text, and then produces a second text which is essentially an interpretative recreation of the first one" (50). He frees a text from the fixed signs of its original shape in order to make it known to the readers of other target languages (TL).

Drama translation, in this regards, is something like painting the life in action. Let me end with Lawrence Venuti's views on the act of a translator as a transparent appearance of the original text:

> A translated text, whether prose or poetry, fiction or nonfiction, is judged acceptable by most publishers, reviewers, and readers when it reads fluently, when the absence of any linguistic or stylistic peculiarities makes it seem transparent, giving the appearance that it reflects the foreign writer's personality or intention or the essential meaning of the foreign text – the appearance, in other words, that the translation is not in fact a translation, but the "original." (1)

Notes

1. Decoding and Recoding: The process of converting an SL word or phrase as a coded message into an intelligible form to a TL. This is the process of converting a text as a body of information from one language into another for a particular group of readers.
2. Invariant Core: The main theme of a ST despite translational changes (Popovic).
3. Interlingual Translation: Translation between two different languages.
4. Performativity: The pragmatic language or performable utterances. It is the speech act. Many define speech act with reference to examples like *stating, asking, commanding, promising,*

and so on (see Wikipedia). By saying anything we are actually doing something.

5. Translatability: The possibility of translating a linguistic element from one language to another. Anything which can be said in one language can be said in another (Hatim and Munday 352).

6. Untranslatability: Untranslatability is a property of a text or of any utterance, in one language, for which no equivalent text or utterance can be found in another language (Wikipedia). This is the state of certain words/ phrases that cannot be rendered or translated in another language.

7. Comprehensibility: The accessibility and transparency of a TT in conveying ST meaning efficiently, effectively, and appropriately (Hatim and Munday 336).

8. Equivalence: Equivalence refers to the relationship of similarity between ST and TT segments (see Hatim and Munday). It refers to a word, phrase, idiom, etc. in a TT that exactly replaces a word, a phrase or an idiom in a ST.

9. Loss and Gain: An adjustment technique with the aim of making up for the loss of important ST features in translation with a gain at the same or other points in the TT.

10. Formal Equivalence: Formal equivalence, also known as structural correspondence, is purely the formal replacement of a word or phrase in the source language by another in the target language. It is the translation that adheres closely to the linguistic form of a source text.

11. Dynamic Equivalence: Dynamic equivalence is the replacement of words or phrases in the ST with another in the TT. Dynamic equivalence attains the promised "fluency" without necessarily sacrificing the authenticity of the ST. It retains the naturalness and fluency.

12. Referential or Denotative Equivalence: As opposed to connotation, denotation is the actual idea which the word refers to.

13. Borrowing: The use of a source language item in the target language. When an item in a source language is substituted for another item of the same language to retain the flavor of the original text, it is called borrowing.

14. Transliteration: It is the letter-by-letter rendering of a source language word in the target language.

15. Translation Shifts: "Departures from formal correspondence in the process of going from the SL to the TL" (Catford 73). The small linguistic changes that occur between ST and TT are known as translation shifts.

16. The Unit of Translation: "The smallest segment of the utterance whose signs are liked in such a way that they should not be translated individually" (qtd. in Hatim and Munday 18).

17. Formal Correspondence: Formal correspondence, according to Catford, is such a TL category as unit, class, structure, element, etc. It is a piece of systemic relationship between an SL and a TL element which plays the same role in the TL system as an SL piece of language plays in the SL system.

18. Langue: Language viewed as a system including vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation of a particular community. (for more, see *www.thefreedictinary.com*). It is equivalent to the formal equivalence of a ST.

19. Parole: The act of speaking; a particular utterance or word (see *www.thefreedictionary.com*). It is equivalent to the textual equivalence of a ST.

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Diaspora and Identity in Jhumpa Lahiri's *Unaccustomed Earth*: A Feminist Analysis

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Abstract

Women in Jhumpa Lahiri's works are often found isolated in a diasporic world. They fall into a complicated situation when they begin their life in a new country. They are mostly identified as complex, intelligent, and questioning women who are not happy with the status quo and turn rebels against the established order. Lahiri presents women's subjugation, motherhood, quest for identity, cultural and generational conflicts, marital tension, and the lack of communication between people in Unaccustomed Earth. *Indian women immigrants in America are caught between the Indian traditions they left behind and the different alien world that they have to face. They are subjugated under patriarchy and are forced to adopt diasporic culture. In a new diasporic culture, they form a new identity – their daughters, who represent the second generation, experience the same hurdles as their mothers. This paper seeks to explore the status of Indian immigrant women's identity in America, the identity crisis of their daughters, and the uncertainty of American women.*

Keywords*: feminism, diaspora, double subjugation, motherhood, subaltern*

Unaccustomed Earth is Jhumpa Lahiri's third book and second short story collection in which the author portrays the lives of different categories of immigrant women who face a diasporic world and search for identity. Women from the first generation of immigrants go to America after their marriage and endure conflicts between traditional Indian values and the modern western lifestyle. Their Indo-American daughters are American citizens by birth who adjust with the host culture, but the immigrants' deep attachment with "home" make them sad and nostalgic. Salman Rushdie asserts, "Exiles or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being muted into pillars of salts" (*Imaginary Homelands* 10). Immigrants or expatriates weep for their lost home and look back for their past memories. At the same time, they silently tolerate all hurdles in the new land. Lahiri shows the male characters in a leader-like position both among the first and the second generations, and the women experience patriarchal domination. Women in the diaspora face crises like culture shock, displacement, rootlessness, sense of unsettling and in-betweenness, conflict in the notion of "home," nostalgia, and identity crisis. The diversity of cultures creates new identities that change in the new situations. And within these situations, diasporic, American-Indian, and American women must often raise their voice against patriarchal systems.

In *Unaccustomed Earth*, the immigrant women include Ruma's mother, Bagchi, Aparna, Sudha's mother, Shibani, and Kaushik's mother, stepmother, and stepsisters who face challenges to adjust with the new cultures. They immigrate to the US as the first generation after marriage and try to change their identities from Indian to Indian-American. They struggle against diverse

cultures and a patriarchal society. They keep an idealized memory of their homeland, aspire to transit Indian culture to their daughters and form a new cultural fashion with the notions of "hybridity." As a result, to preserve traditions, they attempt to disseminate Indian culture to the second generation who have assimilated with American culture. Some of them are afflicted with the trauma of national, ethnic, cultural, and gender identities.

The second generation identifies itself more with the Western community. Ruma, Usha, Sudha, and Hema represent the second generation who put up with patriarchal norms and are caught between the culture imposed by their parents and American culture. American women Megan and Deborah also face patriarchy and try to adjust with Indian culture as their husbands are Indians. Women's identities are in a process of transition, transformation, and reposition. In his essay titled "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," Stuart Hall illustrates identity "as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (110). Identity is an incomplete production and is in a process of formation. America, a place of diversity and hybridity, transforms identities of immigrant women.

Feminism and diaspora share a common goal of challenging the forms of oppression. Diaspora derives from the Greek word *diaspeiro*. Hall explains, "Diaspora refers to the scattering and dispersal of people who will never literally be able to return to the place from which they came" (qtd. in Woodward 63). Due to globalization, different groups of people scatter and immigrate to a "Promised Land" hoping for better opportunities. In *Unaccustomed Earth*, Lahiri shows the anxieties of such immigrant women. These women have come to the US with their husbands and, often, they find themselves isolated in the new culture as well as within their marriage. Their daughters, the second generation women, also, in turn, endure the oppression of patriarchy and the conflict between Indian and American culture.

Women in the different stories of *Unaccustomed Earth* struggle to survive in the strange surroundings they find themselves in and are suppressed even within their family by male partners. Males and females are identified as different only biologically, but have similar roles to play in modern society. Unfortunately, we see the opposite picture, and Simone de Beauvoir's remark is relevant here, "Males and females are two types of individuals that are differentiated within a species for the function of reproduction; they can be defined correlatively" (35). Males and females can work together and lead their lives correlatively. But in the stories of *Unaccustomed Earth*, Indian men cannot change the traditional outlook of patriarchy that they inherited from their forefathers. They treat their wives as inferior – women are sentenced to patriarchal oppression, and they are unable to find a way out of its asphyxiating labyrinths. Unconditional surrender of Indian women is a vital part of the feminine psyche. Lahiri addresses women's supreme sacrifices for family and their sufferings due to patriarchy, and for phobia of pregnancy and loneliness. They reconstruct their individualities and reassert their activities to discover their identities through silence, fight, compromise, acculturation, and assimilation.

America is a multicultural country and people experience cross-cultural crises due to the clash between cultures. Homi K. Bhabha points out, "The enunciation of cultural difference

problematizes the binary division of past and present, tradition and modernity, at the level of cultural representation and its authoritative address" (51). In diaspora, cultural difference makes divisions between past and present, tradition and modernity. A wide gap between "Self" and "Other" suggests a hybrid version of identity. In the title story, "Unaccustomed Earth," Lahiri portrays female characters such as Ruma's mother, Ruma, and Bagchi. The writer shows maladjustment between Ruma's parents, and between their present and memory. Ruma's mother immigrates to America after marriage, carries her Indian culture with her, and partially adopts the new culture. While her identity changes, she is compelled to live in America with her husband.

Ruma's mother's homesickness and memories of home and relatives make her nostalgic. Nostalgia adds to the agony of immigrant women as Rushdie claims, "The broken glass is not merely a mirror of nostalgia. It is also a useful tool with which to work in the present" (12). Nostalgia is like a broken mirror which is irreparable, butit helps women adjust with the present. Instead of returning home, Ruma's mother carries more than one identity and tries to speak more than one language. Social and cultural matters are relevant to analyze the psyche of Indian women in the US. They cannot enjoy equal status as they are subjugated outside and at home. Ruma's mother unconditionally depends on her husband in America. Mary Wollstonecraft asserts in chapter xi of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, "Women would not then marry for a support, as men accept the places under government, and neglect the implied duties" (184). Women would never marry if they would know that their husband would govern and neglect them. Ruma's mother psychologically and economically depends on her husband who is busy with his work. Her husband is indifferent to her psychological crises, and she spends time doing household chores and remains confined within.

An American by birth, Ruma lives with her American husband, Adam, and child, Akash. In light of diasporic and feminist perspectives, Ruma's identity as a woman, both Indian-origin and American, mother and daughter, wife and professional, affects her overall sense of identity and womanhood. Second-generation immigrants share their views and their feminist choices in the context of their Indian identity. Indian identity blends into other social identities. Amartya Sen notes in *The Argumentative Indian*, "As is frequently the case with emigrants in general, the Indian diaspora is also keen on taking pride – some self-respect and dignity – in the culture and traditions of their original homeland. This frequently takes the form of some kind of 'national' or 'civilizational' appreciation of being Indian in origin" (73). Indian identity is important not only for Indians who are living in India but also for those who have immigrated to other countries.

A sense of Indian identity reminds Indian women of their past and lost home. Ruma's mother unintentionally adopts American culture and tries to practice her own cultural values simultaneously. She feels threatened by her ethnic identity and the culture of the "Other." She recollects her past by cooking Indian foods like *dal, chorchori, beguni, mishti, syrapy*,and so forth. She never raises her voice against her husband who represents patriarchy and never appreciates his wife, never giving her time. Indian traditional norm has chained Ruma's mother at home. Ruma's experiences as the "Other" under American culture and patriarchal

society are terrible too. She demonstrates disparity between traditional Indian expectations of a female and the simultaneous pressure of the suburban American lifestyle. Her husband's work lets her family settle in Seattle. She is determined to rise above her mother's position but "moving to a foreign place for the sake of marriage, caring exclusively for children and a household" brings her to the same exact place because "this was Ruma's life, now" (Lahiri 11). She is isolated and plays the role of mother, wife, and daughter. Before marriage, she was a doll in her father's house, and after marriage she becomes a doll of her husband as Henrik Ibsen had shown through Nora in *A Doll's House*. Nora considers herself a doll of her father and her husband's house. Similarly, Ruma selflessly sacrifices her life to soothe, to flatter, and to give comfort to family.

Interconnection between feminism and diaspora focuses on women's subordination firstly by patriarchy and secondly by adopted culture. Women of the second generation are unable to understand the first generation's psychological crises. Ruma's mother's fascination in following the mother culture and language does not encourage Ruma. Her mother strongly opposes her daughter's decision of choosing Adam, but later she decides to let her marry him – it is a sign of adoption of American culture. Oppressed by her dominating husband, Ruma suffers due to marked differences between her culture and that of her husband's. Ruma is financially dependent on her husband and has no freedom. She is convinced by Adam to leave her job and to engage herself in the family. Virginia Woolf writes, "The history of men's opposition to women's emancipation is more interesting" (62). As far as the legacy of patriarchy is concerned, men oppose the independence of women. Adam opposes Ruma's freedom, and her identity is determined by her husband. Maladjustment occurs as "she and Adam were separate people leading separate lives" (Lahiri 26). They are separated culturally and psychologically. Said marks the differences between East and West in his famous book *Culture and Imperialism*, "studying the relationship between the 'West' and its dominated cultural 'others' is not just a way of understanding an unequal relationship between unequal interlocutors, but also a point of entry into studying the formation and meaning of Western cultural practices themselves" (230). There is both a geographical and a cultural distinction between East and West. Adam perceives himself as superior, firstly as a man and secondly as American, and Ruma is placed as the "Other."

Lahiri portrays another female character named Bagchi who immigrates to America after her husband's death and faces numerous challenges in the new place. She adopts American culture, leads a lonely life, and remains unmarried forever. She, a modern Indian-American, leaves India to get rid of her inferior position as a widow. Her identy is in the process of being made and remade. She gradually assimilates with diverse cultures to achieve freedom, travels to different places with Ruma's father, and likes to lead a lonely life. When Ruma's father wants to marry Bagchi, she refuses. Lahiri writes, "She had loved her husband of two years more than he had loved his wife of nearly forty" (Lahiri 30). Bagchi with her confidence, infinite zest for life, her dreams of the future, emerges as a *new woman* who does not like to surrender her individuality. Ruma's father's love for her mother decreases after her death whereas Bagchi's love for her husband never falters. Ruma's mother is a victim of patriarchy and cross-culture.

Diasporic crises emerge as a direct result of the clash between different cultures. The second story, "Hell-Heaven" deals with three female characters: Aparna, Usha, and Deborah. Aparna searches for identity in America as a wife, an Indian, and as a mother. Her daughter, Usha is just a teenager and her ideas and ideologies contradict with her mother's. Aparna faces inequality at home and outside after her marriage with Shyamal. Feminism determines a process to change the discrimination between men and women. As an Indian woman, Aparna accepts the arranged marriage for a secure life because, as Beauvoir writes, "Marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to women by society" (445). Marriage is a social celebration, and in a patriarchal society, women do not have any choice regarding marriage. Therefore, women are oppressed after marriage by the male-dominated society.

Aparna's cross-cultural experiences may be explored from a feminist standpoint. Shyamal marries Aparna to "placate his parents" (Lahiri 65) and settles in Central Square, America to explore his own future. The writer portrays the extent of women's oppression within marriage in which the wife is uncared for and unnoticed by the husband. Aparna becomes a victim of marital rape. As Wollstonecraft points out, "Man, taking her body, the mind is left to rust; so that while physical love enervates man, as being his favourite recreation, he will endeavour to enslave woman" (98). In patriarchy, men fulfill their desire and do not give importance to the psyche of their wives. They treat physical love as recreation and like to turn women into slaves. Aparna's husband is unwilling to understand her desire for space and autonomy, because to him physical desire is more significant. Beauvoir rightly observes, "woman is subjugated. Man in his sovereignty indulges himself in sexual caprices" (85). Convinced that she cannot enjoy independence in her conjugal life, Aparna begins to share everything with Pranab, an immigrant student. She enjoys Pranab's company more than her husband's – her husband dominates her and remains indifferent. As part of a transnational society, Aparna shares her depression with Shyamal. Instead of placating her, Shyamal says, "If you are so unhappy, go back to Calcutta" (Lahiri 76). This shows the futility of Aparna's existence in his life, but one positive side is that she speaks and expresses her lonesome position.

Pregnancy is a trying time for all women, but in a diasporic situation, the tension heightens. Aparna becomes pregnant for the fifth time since Usha's birth, but Shyamal is not concerned. Such a pattern of living brings more frustration and resentment to her life. Beauvoir, in this regard, speaks about marriage, "Marriage is not only an honourable career and one less tiring than many others: it alone permits a woman to keep her social dignity intact and at the same time to find sexual fulfillment as loved one and mother" (352). In patriarchy, marriage brings honor and social status to a woman. This is strengthened when she can fulfill the demands of her husband and family. In Aparna's case, it is the opposite – her identity is marked with isolation, insecurity and sexual exploitation.

Usha grows up in America, mixes with different men freely, and feels irritated when her mother reminds her of her Indian identity. Aparna cannot accept the culture of free mixing of man and woman at a young age. Later, she reconciles with American culture when she realizes that Usha "was not only her daughter but a child of America as well" (Lahiri 82). She accepts Usha's dating with many American men and welcomes them in their house. Here Hall's assertion

is relevant, "Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" ("Cultural Identity and Diaspora" 120). Identity always changes and transforms into a new form in diaspora culture. Aparna is compelled to adopt a hybrid identity through assimilation with American culture. Due to the synthesis of Indian and American identities, Usha cannot stand the situation easily when her heart is broken by a man. Aparna's psychological clash with the American Deborah is obvious. Usha is drawn to Deborah as both are Americans and speak English fluently. But Aparna is an outsider as she is not an American, nor can she speak English like them. The connection between mother and daughter, thus, is hampered.

These women in America then are like Edward Said's "Other," who struggle to create new identities. Said contributes much on the issue of East-West relationships and diversities in *Orientalism*. He writes, "The Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, 'different'; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, 'normal'" (40). During the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Indians are treated as inferior when they are in contact with Western culture. Deborah, an American woman, gets married with an Indian named Pranab, but their relationship is maladjusted. Pranab follows Indian culture and Deborah follows American culture. Deborah's affair with Pranab signifies confrontation between the native self and the immigrant Other. Deborah's fascination with Indian culture after engaging with Pranab indicates the native Self's interest to know the immigrant Other. Marriage between Pranab and Deborah is doomed from the outset. After their engagement, Deborah learns some Bengali expressions like "khub bhalo" and "accha" (Lahiri 68), learns to eat spicy food. This suggests surrendering to patriarchy and losing individuality with the adoption of Indian culture. Her American identity cannot stop her from being subjugated by patriarchy. Pranab is irrational and childlike, and he falls in love with another Bengali woman and divorces Deborah after twenty-three years of marriage. But she does not break like other traditional women, but rather gives importance to individuality and resumes her normal, everyday life.

In the third story "A Choice of Accommodations," Lahiri describes interracial marriage, compromises, and adjustments between Amit and Megan. Amit, in-between two cultures, psychologically craves his parents' love during his student life in Langford. To enjoy a more privileged life, his parents return to India, leaving Amit alone in Langford. Amit's mother has short hair and wears trousers, wearing saris only for special occasions. She gives more importance to Amit's future career than motherhood. Motherhood is one of the causes for oppression of women from both generations – mothers sacrifice their own choices for their children. But sometimes they reject traditional ways of life to rediscover a new identity. The postcolonial feminist Gaytri Chakravorty Spivak shows her feminist concerns for the Othering process in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" when she says that female subjects are subalterns silenced by dominant discourses. This question of Spivak motivates women to speak and to deal with their subalternity and identity crisis. Megan, as an American, represents modern woman. Amit's choice of Megan is unexpected to his parents and Megan feels insecure in their relationship. Here, Lahiri shows maladjustment between Indian and American cultures. Megan misunderstands the relationship between Amit and Pam, Amit's school friend, whom they meet at a marriage ceremony, suggesting how a woman feels inferior in a patriarchal society.

Amit drags Megan to an unknown place to join Pam's marriage ceremony. Pam's preference for traditional family life surprises Amit. Megan says, "You don't know. A lot of women do things that are out of character on their wedding day. Even women like Pam" (88). However, not only Pam, but many modern women also prefer marriage. Pam's modern identity cannot change her biological position. Wollstonecraft asserts, "A king is always a king and a woman is always a woman" (73). A woman's identity as woman is the same universally, and Pam cannot establish an entirely unique identity as she is aware of how she is being defined as a woman, whose group identity has been determined by a dominant male culture. Even modern women cannot remain unmarried and move freely in a patriarchal society. Though Pam spent time with many male friends in her student life, her marriage is fixed with a married man with children. As a mother, she faces challenges in adjusting with new relationships but strives to give love and affection like a real mother. Megan argues that many women become *subaltern* after their marriage. Lahiri shows that even in the US, women cannot escape subjugation. Men have historically exercised enormous power over women's bodies. Western education does not change Amit's Indian identity. He feels that he is superior to Megan as he says, "Do you really think you can survive a whole evening without leaving my side?" Megan throws a note of challenge as "I can if you can" (Lahiri 93). Through this challenge, Lahiri shows the beginning of the break down of Amit and Megan's relationship.

In the story, "Only Goodness," Sudha's mother, Sudha, and Elena are important women characters. Sudha's Indian mother, who is busy cooking, washing, and cleaning, depends entirely on her husband. She feels lonely at home and is unable to adjust with American culture. She feels unlucky when Rahul, her son, becomes addicted to drugs. Sudha's parents rely mostly on Sudha who understands their psychological condition. Rahul does not have any sense of responsibility, and he feels that his mother does nothing. He thinks that his mother does not have any quality except for marrying his father. Though he was born in the US, he cannot get away from thinking traditionally. He insults his mother and thinks that men are superior. Beauvoir's words, "He is a male!" (35) are fitting here. Man consciously feels proud of their male identity. Rahul, thus, observes his father's power over his mother as a man and carries this idea in his mind.

Motherhood is defeated through assimilation with American culture. Sudha has chosen Rodger, and like her mother, she is devoted to domestic work. Her relationship with her husband also questions her adjustment as she is Indian. Rahul's mother's over-involvement with Sudha makes Rahul believe that she is not concerned at all about her son. He becomes frustrated and chooses a foreign woman Elena, an older girlfriend, who is of his mother's age, to be his wife. His father's voice is more severe than his mother's when he chooses an aged foreigner with a child as his life partner. His father comments, "This woman is practically old enough to be your mother" (Lahiri 155). Lahiri portrays that even an American woman is not safe from the insults of patriarchy. In this regard, his mother does not play any role as she is a "domesticated woman" (Rubin 770) and is dominated by her husband. During Sudha's pregnancy, she remembers her Rahul's childhood and feels lonely. After the birth of her son Neel, Sudha works outside from morning till evening but she knows that two hours of the

day are not enough for her son. Though Sudha is from the second generation, she celebrates Indian culture through ceremonies like the *annaprasan* and teaching Neel to call her parents *dada* and *didi*.

"Nobody's Business" is an entirely different story from the others in the collection. The main female character is Sang, short for Sangeeta, who lives with Paul and Heather. Sang never feels troubled by her immigrant identity. She prefers English, and her Bengali sounds strange. Paul, an American graduate student at the center, pines for his Bengali-American roommate Sang, a graduate school dropout, who entertains no romantic feelings for him. Sang's perception of her modern identity sets her across the barriers of culture. She mixes with many men, the kind of life unusual to Indians. After the death of her parents, she goes through a critical phase in her life, and so she visits her sister in London. She carries an extreme sense of individualism and tries to follow American culture. Sang rejects polite advances of "prospective grooms" from the global Bengali singles circuit and considers herself engaged to a selfish, foul-tempered Egyptian named Farouk who has broken her heart by having an affair with another woman. After a confrontation with Farouk, Sang returns to London with a broken heart. Lahiri's immigrant women and women of Indian origin are subalterns, but they sometimes can speak and confront with patriarchal society as well as the adopted culture.

Lahiri's final three stories in part two of *Unaccustomed Earth* mark a search for memory by Kaushik and Hema, representatives of the second generation. Lahiri discovers that generational conflicts, waves of admiration, competition, and criticism flow between two families. There is also a fight for connection and control between Hema and Kaushik as both children and adults. In "Once in a Lifetime," Kaushik Choudhuri and his parents leave Cambridge to return to India in 1974. The Choudhuris return to Massachusetts after seven years and Hema's parents are perplexed to find that Bombay made them more American than Cambridge did. In this story, Hema's mother, Shibani, is busy with household work, but Kaushik's mother, Parul, is not used to cooking, washing, or cleaning. Shibani is home-centered and Parul likes to drink, gossip, and smoke. Shibani complains that Parul "did not help clean up after dinner, how she went to bed whenever it suited her and slept close to lunchtime" (Lahiri 245). Both originated from Calcutta but Shibani is like traditional Indian women and Parul like Western women. In Cambridge, both are "equally lonely" (225) as immigrant women suffer from loneliness. They are forced to live in and mix with multi-cultures and "negotiate and translate"… "between the cultures" (Bhabha 17) and struggle within themselves. But immigrants turn to memories of their homeland, which sustain them.

Shibani is tortured by American culture where small children do not sleep with their parents. Parul's migration in different cultural spaces helps her realize her perfect individuality irrespective of geographical locations. She is a different type of "new woman" who is conscious of her self-dignity. When Hema sees Parul smoking, she smiles, "One cigarette a day can't kill me, can it?" (Lahiri 244). Parul smokes like men and adopts the new culture. Kaushik's family is cordially welcomed in Hema's house. Shibani believes in patriarchy and says, "Kaushik must practically be a man by now. He needs his privacy" (228). Shibani thinks that Kaushik needs a room to himself and wants to give Hema's room to him. Hema, however, protests, "This is

my room" (234). Hema's fight with Kaushik on possession indicates her consciousness about her right as a human being. Virginia Woolf emphasizes in *A Room of One's Own* that women's privacy is important too, that a woman should have a room to think and to write. In other words, just as Kaushik may need privacy, so does Hema.

In "Year's End," Parul's death changes Kaushik's life as his father remarries to escape loneliness. Kaushik's father's marriage to Chitra with two daughters is shocking to him and his resentment of Chitra and her daughters becomes inevitable. Chitra is half Kaushik's father's age, and she does the household work. Second marriages are also another dimension of patriarchal society. Kaushik's father's second marriage makes him lonelier and an alien in his own house. Kaushik's stepmother and two stepsisters Piu and Rupa represent the first generation diaspora. Living in America from his very early childhood, Kaushik has already adopted American culture, and they are old-fashioned to him – he mentions this several times. Sometimes they are reluctant to change the native culture and to adopt the host culture. Chitra tells Kaushik to call her *Mamoni* though she does not have any right to apply motherhood over him. He feels that her way of serving other is old-fashioned and his lashing out seems fitting in Lahiri's world.

In "Going Ashore," Hema spends a few months in Rome before entering into an arranged marriage with a parent-approved Hindu Punjabi man named Navin. Hema runs into Kaushik, a world-roving war photographer, and their deep connection is irresistible. Yet she chooses to marry in the traditional Indian way. Navin's traditionalism and respect for her impress her, "it touched her to be treated, at thirty-seven, like a teenaged girl" (297). What she does not see is that she is being treated like a little girl, perhaps incapable of looking after herself. So, despite being a second generation immigrant, Hema perpetuates both traditionalism and patriarchy.

Three major influential postcolonial theorists, Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Homi K. Bhabha, are concerned with postcolonial cultural identity crisis, cultural hybridity, and subalternity. Bhabha and Spivak consider the task to be deconstructive. Their key critical terms are "hybridity," "liminality," "stereotype," "mimicry" and "subaltern." Women are in a tongue-tied paralytic position about their own identities at home and outside in their diasporic world. In *Unaccustomed Earth*, America as a dreamland builds new identities for third world women who marry Indian-American men. Traditional canons have been rightfully deconstructed according to the situation. The concept of gender difference is not wholly determined by biology as Beauvoir claims, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (295). Men are identified as active, dominating, adventurous, rational, creative, and women are treated as passive, acquiescent, timid, emotional, and conventional.

McLeod claims succeeding generations' sense of identities "borne from living in a diaspora community will be influenced by the 'past migration history' of their parents and grandparents" (207). "Diaspora identity" lets immigrants share emotions both for the old country and the new one. Their succeeding generations are greatly influenced by past memories of their forefathers. Indian women like Ruma's mother, Usha's mother, Sudha's mother, Hema's mother, Piu and Rupa's mother, and Kaushik's mother do not enjoy a respectable status in America. They struggle to liberate themselves and to form a new identity. In the divergent culture, they

are the "silent" victims of different forms of oppression by men. Lahiri's Indian and Indian-origin women in *Unaccustomed Earth* are psychologically absorbed in creating identities, and they "have been living normal lives and adjusting to everyday America quietly but feelingly" (Alam 368). Feminism discovers that women under patriarchy are inferior; power is in the hands of men. "A feminist reader is enlisted," Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore argue, "in the process of changing the gender relations which prevail in our society" (qtd. in McLeod 173). Though feminists reject the inequality between men and women, women are treated as ignorant, poor, uneducated, traditional, victimized, and family-oriented.

In *Unaccustomed Earth*, Lahiri shows three categories of women: women who immigrate after marriage, second generation women, and American women. Women of all these categories undergo challenges imposed by patriarchy and by the culture of the new country. They cannot keep fixed identities. According to Bhabha, "*hybridity* is the rejection of a single or unified identity, and preference of multiple cultural locations and identities" (qtd. in Nayar 179). To Bhabha, *hybridity* is an idea where cultural differences come into contact and conflict. Notions of "hybridity" are relevant in exploring Lahiri's stories in *Unaccustomed Earth*. Immigrant women are in-between many cultures, and they seem to lead isolated lives. They have to face the conflicts of cultures and struggle against their male partners at home; second generation women fight patriarchy as well, and even American women have to face traditional systems. Women's identities change across generations in diaspora amid the many challenges.

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Representation of the Voiceless: Nissim Ezekiel's Selected Poems

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Abstract

Nissim Ezekiel (1924-2004), a major figure in the history of Indian English poetry, deals with a wide range of themes including the representation of the voiceless in his vast oeuvre of poetry. His poetic world is suffused with a variety of images, both urban and sylvan, and his poetry presents readers with people of different backgrounds from around the whole country. The poet depicts individuals from different strata of society who represent a great part of India. Some of his poems highlight distresses of the underprivileged people in various communities of India. Ezekiel shows that these people go through difficult times without having attention or empathy of the elites. Treated as the "other," the poverty-stricken people cannot raise their voice though their struggle for survival continues. Ezekiel, a leading post-independence poet, represents his locale – many of his poems portray the actualities of Indian life. This article is an attempt to explore a selection of Ezekiel's poems in order to find out how the marginalized people in India are exploited and oppressed, how they are deprived of their basic rights, how they suffer psychologically, how they are silenced, and how the poet strives to give voice to the voiceless.

Keywords: *voiceless, subaltern, postcolonialism, exploitation, humanity, identity*

Nissim Ezekiel, a pioneering Indian poet writing in English, represents India in a great many ways through his invaluable works of both poetry and prose. He was the first Indian English poet who brought modernity into the Indian English poetry scene. Despite his orientation with and sojourn in the western world – Europe and America – he remained deeply attached to his country of birth. Wherever the poet stayed during his active years of studying, writing, and teaching, his love for India did not diminish as its beautiful landscape always reminded him of his roots – he was deeply rooted in Indian nature and culture. But as a modern poet, he sometimes showed his aversion to the squalid pictures of Indian cities. However, he possessed a strong bond with India, the place in which he was born and grew up. Bruce King rightly points out, "With each decade an increasing immediacy and heightened awareness of actual Indian experience is noticeable" (5) in Ezekiel's work. King observes that Ezekiel proves his elevated kinship with his birthplace. Very few Indian poets writing in English, such as A. K. Ramanujan, Dom Moraes, Kamala Das, and Jayanta Mahapatra, have this quality of delving deep into the actualities of Indian life.

Ezekiel deals with the lives of the common people, their lifestyle, their hopes, and their struggles in his poetry. As the Indian subcontinent has a long legacy of oppression through colonization of thecommon people, struggles and exploitation occurred in innumerable ways and many writers and poets of the period addressed them in their works. Ezekiel was a young man and a keen observer during this period, and his poetry reflect his consciousness about the injustices occurring all around him. Above all, the poet extensively incorporates Indian content, both past and contemporary, in his work. A. Raghu states that, "Perhaps Ezekiel's

greatest achievement has been his success in encouraging the Indian content in his poetry to sprout roots into the physical reality of the country" (132). A realist poet, Ezekiel does not let incidents happening in society go unnoticed and readers get a glimpse of the real world, to be specific, the actual India, when reading his work.

The post-independence period is significant for literary developments in India, as well as other parts of South Asia, because many changes took place in the literary scene during this time. Writers, especially those who were inspired by contemporary western literature strove to bring modernism into Indian English literature. Traditional Indian literature in English, no doubt, is highly influenced by romanticism and mysticism, but most of the post-independence writers and poets rejected romanticism and incorporated the themes of modernity into their writings. In this respect, Ezekiel, along with Ramanujan, Moraes, Kamala Das, and Jayanta Mahapatra, led the way; contemporary and later generation poets followed him to make Indian literature modern. Among Ezekiel's predecessors, Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo earned fame writing in English, but critics claim that their works were mostly romantic and mystical.

Ezekiel revolts against the poetic tradition of high romanticism and mysticism in India. King asserts that "He aimed at a contemporary manner which would voice modern concerns" (91). One of the prominent features of modern poets is that they focus on their observations of daily life and deal with real incidents. Unlike the high romantics and mystics, they do not write about any place or people existing somewhere outside of this world – they strive to portray images from a realist standpoint. A major portion of Ezekiel's poetic work addresses the problems and crises of modern India. Ezekiel's observations are acute because "his work is centrally concerned with perception and his poetic persona is both that of an observer who regards his social world and his own behavior with a degree of amused detachment, and that of a complete insider" (Thieme xxi). Ezekiel has a deep kinship with India, but we notice ambivalence in him too – he felt alienated from but committed to India, especially in his early career. But he did not hesitate to make bold pronouncements of his affinity with Indian culture and landscapes. Instead of fantasizing about life and bringing high-voltage dream effects into poetry, Ezekiel describes actualities with which human beings are closely associated in their everyday life. Unlike early Indian English poets who would romanticize life, he highlights Indian life and landscapes to which, he believes firmly, he truly belongs.

Ezekiel, certainly a modern poet, projects city life showing its grim pictures in his poetry. He also focuses on people, representing different classes in India with their acute sense of belonging, pride, success, failure, weakness, demeanor, idiosyncrasy, as well as the indifference of the elites to the sufferings of subalterns. King aptly points out, "With him a post-colonial poetry started which reflects the lives and identities that an increasing number of educated Indians knew or would seek" (92). The most influential among the post-Independence poets, Ezekiel initiates the school of postcolonial poets in India. Postcolonial perspectives permeate his volumes of work: Ezekiel as a postcolonial poet deserves in-depth exploration. Before analyzing a selection of his poems as postcolonial, it is important to shed light on postcolonialism in the context of the poet's time, place and his aims.

First, to give a theoretical framework to this article, the concepts and ideas of postcolonialism related to the condition of India after the departure of the colonizers are taken into consideration. It is important to note that this article refers to a few scholars and theoreticians out of many who have identified postcolonialism in context to once-colonized countries. John McLeod, a professor and critic of postcolonial literatures, also working on once-colonized locations, argues that, "postcolonialism recognises both historical *continuity* and *change*" (33). During the colonial period, colonized people suffered oppression, but the legacy of domination, exploitation, and oppression continued even after the colonial period ended – and still continues in numerous forms. Postcolonial critics and intellectuals intervene and attempt to give voice to the unspeaking people, and describe the true picture of the subalterns in a postcolonial condition.

Problems of postcolonial nations vary from country to country. From time to time, new crises arise, and scholars add new thoughts and contribute sundry ideas to the existing theories. Elleke Boehmer, an acclaimed critic and professor of English at Oxford University, writes, "Postcolonialism … refers to those theories, texts, political strategies, and modes of activism that engage in such questioning, that aim to challenge structural inequalities and bring about social justice" (341-42). The features integrate many aspects of social realities, and they are relevant to examine the postcolonial condition of India through an exploration of Ezekiel's selected poems. Postcolonialism questions and challenges discriminations existing in society, criticizes "structural inequalities," and also aims at establishing equality and justice. Boehmer further claims that "some of the key concepts in postcolonialism in its first meaning derive from an anti-colonial politics and world-wide struggles for rights …" (340). The second concept in Boehmer's remarks, "world-wide struggles for rights," is one of the most significant ideas of postcolonialism that scholars in different parts of the contemporary world put emphasis on because struggles are ubiquitous around the world, especially in once-colonized countries. Certain groups of people almost everywhere in the world suffer discrimination in their own countries and struggle for the rights that they are illogically and illegally deprived of.

Marginalized people in once-colonized countries still experience the oppression of dominating forces. Agents of colonialism are still active in enforcing ills of colonialism – oppression, domination, exploitation and deprivation – in those countries. Modern societies seek to establish justice for all and inspire everyone to be guided by humanism, but still there are appalling pictures of suffering in society that the disadvantaged people undergo in various parts of the world. Internal colonialism still exists, which is why "colonial oppression is far from over" (McLeod 33). Colonial oppression has not disappeared completely as many countries still harbor the shadows of colonizers. McLeod points out, "colonial ways of knowing still circulate and have agency in the present" (32). Since the legacies of colonialism still exist, people are marginalized in postcolonial countries – they have to endure oppression by dominating forces in their own countries. The subalterns in this case cannot raise their voice to let the world know what their actual state is, or how pitifully they are treated. As they do not have access to the power structure, they are prohibited from speaking, and forced to remain silent. The process of silencing the subalterns in society is common in the postcolonial

world, and the more pathetic picture is that "the subaltern has no history and cannot speak" (Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 2203). The postcolonial condition works in favor of the agents of colonialism, and in this condition, the subalterns are compelled to silently suffer, and so they cannot speak of their rights or choices. Oppressors have also snatched away the rights of the subalterns to speak. Spivak's most read essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" reveals the stark truth that the subalterns cannot speak.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, one of the influential theorists of postcolonialism, discusses the term "subaltern" in many of her writings. Coined by Italian theoretician Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), the term subaltern, in traditional meaning, resonates with terms such as other, oppressed, subjugated, weak, inferior, or voiceless – to be a subaltern is to remain detached from the power structure in society. Always sidelined, subalterns are not given any space to speak even of their basic rights. Spivak who has distinct views about the term "subaltern" gives a clear explanation thus, "everybody thinks the subaltern is just a classy word for oppressed, for Other, for somebody who's not getting a piece of the pie. … everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism is subaltern – a space of difference" ("Interview" 45). The term subaltern refers to people who do not have access to the mainstream cultural heritage, and who are marked as different from the typical elites of society. These people are deprived of the space that they deserve, but they are, however, provided "a space of difference" that identifies them as inferior. It is, therefore, a responsibility of intellectuals to intervene, so postcolonialist critics attempt to give the unvoiced a voice so that they can speak of their pains and sorrows. One of the crucial questions that this article asks is: Do intellectuals and authors address oppression, discrimination, and exploitation in their work and play any role to redress them from society? The article then explores Ezekiel's poems to find out how the poet speaks for the subalterns, in keeping with Spivak's belief that writers should give voice to the voiceless as the oppressors are actively attempting to silence them.

With their compassion for the subalterns, postcolonialist writers play an essential role in speaking for them. In so doing, they perform their moral responsibilities, and fight for the rights of the subalterns including their right to speak. Spivak claims, "No activist wants to keep the subaltern in the space of difference. To do *a thing*, to work for the subaltern, means to bring it into speech" ("Interview" 46). Neither activists nor intellectuals stand in the space of difference which the exploiters fix for the subalterns. It is important that the issues of the subalterns be brought into focus so that the world knows more about existing disparities among human beings and votes for a change. This argument resonates with the aim of this article as it shows how Ezekiel designates the subalterns in some of his poems and stresses on the necessity of the voice of the subalterns.

Ezekiel in his long poetic journey never backs down from his main objectives: he has always given emphasis to everyday affairs of human beings, social injustice, discrimination, and the domination of the landowning class. The poet writes about the plight of the common people of his country showing his empathy to them. He becomes concerned with the sufferings of the marginalized people who cannot speak of the intolerable levels of hardship with which they lead their everyday lives. Sanjit Mishra argues, "Ezekiel's vision … is limited to the material

and mundane concerns of his fellow inhabitants," (76) and this argument bears witness to the poet's attitude to the struggle of the common people of India. Many of Ezekiel's poems feature individuals from the working class, their sorrows as well as their endless struggles to live from hand to mouth. In these poems, Ezekiel delineates the actual images of the subalterns and strives to give them a voice to speak so that they can wrest their rights. The poem "The Truth about Dhanya" tells the sad tale of Dhanya, a subaltern, for whom it is hard to make ends meet:

> His old skin
> is like the ground
> on which he sleeps,
> so also, his rags. (1-4)

Dhanya does not have a place to sleep, except the ground – his skin is compared to mud, and his existence is worth rags. The metaphor of skin and ground or skin and rags suggests the miserable existence of a human being, exhibiting Ezekiel's compassionate attitude to a common man like Dhanya who represents the working class in India. The poet writes more about this struggling man:

> He cannot
> stand upright
> or walk without pain,
> does odd jobs
> …
> Given food, he eats,
> otherwise, he goes without. (5-8, 14-15)

The lines describe his physical feebleness and his excruciating struggles to lead his standard everyday life. He is physically so weak that he cannot walk properly, still he has to do "odd jobs" whereas thousands of his countrymen known as "elites" enjoy innumerable advantages. If he can somehow manage food after doing the hard work, he lives the day, but remains unfed most other days because he does not find any work those days. Dhanya's identity as a subaltern has pushed him into living a subhuman life. The poet uses the third person in the poem to give a description of a man's struggle, his feelings, and aspirations. The language of the poem is lucid, but the power of description and the poet's selection of diction correlate with the theme of the poem.

Lower-class people doing small jobs suffer in countless ways, but they have to adjust their daily life with painful experiences. It sometimes happens in their job locations that their employer treats them badly, but they cannot say anything against them. When they undergo psychological sufferings for a wrong that they have never done but are held responsible for, no one stands by them. Sometimes they are punished for an offense that they have never been part of or never attempted to do. Ezekiel speaks about such a man in his poem "The Railway Clerk": "It isn't my fault. / I do what I'm told / but still I am blamed" (1-3). A railway clerk's life in India depicted in the poem is a kind of life that almost all Indians in his position lead. The

clerk follows every command of his superior in the office, but he is scolded every now and then and blamed for whatever faults are found in the office. There is a sad tone in the voice of the clerk as he says "still I am blamed." This is common in the offices of South Asian countries where high officials fault individuals in lower ranks for everything that goes wrong. The clerk also earns very little, not enough for him to provide for the family. He shares his everyday life thus:

> Every day there is so much work
> and I don't get overtime.
> My wife is always asking for more money.
>   Money, money, where to get money? (6-9)

The clerk faces many challenges to meet the basic needs of his family. Though he works hard without rest, he is not given anything extra. His family members, on the other hand, puts pressure on him to earn more so that they can live a better life. People of such families, especially lower class or lower-middle class families, have more demands, but they are fated to live in poverty. Tired of this struggling life, the clerk expresses, "I wish I was bird" (13). No one even acknowledges or appreciates him for what he does, so he feels like flying away from the pangs of reality in life. Ezekiel is also well-known for his use of Indian English in poetry, and he sometimes uses such structures for satirical purposes. Ezekiel's poems written in Indian English serve two purposes: the poems represent the real life of a certain class of people, and they parody their peculiar lifestyle or idiosyncrasies. The above line, "I wish I was bird," is an example of the poet's use of Indian English, but it is important to note that this is an utterance of a subaltern. In this poem, the poet strives to have the clerk speak and throughout the poem, we listen to him as he speaks of his hardships. Here is proof that the poet strives to give voice to a subaltern like the clerk in this poem.

Even the representatives of religious communities, saints in India, whom Indians respect highly, are "hard with servants and the poor," ("Guru" 15). Servants who are treated as subalterns as far as their social identity is concerned cannot raise their voice though they are frequently ill-treated by their masters. How the servants are deprived of their basic rights is well located in many poems including "Ganga." This poem highlights the life of a maidservant who is a victim of discrimination:

> She always gets
> a cup of tea
>
> preserved for her
> from the previous evening ("Ganga" 7-10)

In this poem, the poet introduces a woman who works as a maidservant – very pathetically, this kind of a woman is treated as subhuman, to whom the master showsno respect, and she is served a little food in the form of stale bread or rice. Women like them are served, now and then, rotten foods which are not worth eating. They sometimes pass day after day without any food, but they are not able to raise their voice against maltreatment of the people who enjoy limitless luxury in life. Ezekiel's use of English in these poems deserves commendation as his

English is idiomatic and represents real life. He displays his craftsmanship by using modern and conversational English in his poetry.

Struggle for survival seems to be unending for the underprivileged Indians who continue suffering silently, and the affluent people, as usual, remain unsympathetic to them. We discover another lower-rank service man whose everyday life is extremely miserable. Here is the description of a typist working in a bank:

> He works all day in a bank,
> then comes to me
> for another hundred rupees or so a month.
> Three children, a mother to support,
> invalid wife, how do these people live? ("Occasion" 7-11)

A friend of the poetic persona in the poem, a freelance journalist, speaks about the man working the whole day in the bank. The man is not paid an amount with which he can support his family well, so he tries to do some extra work at the end of his scheduled office time. He has to support a big family consisting of his old mother and sick wife, among others. This is, however, the picture of many families in South Asian countries where one person has to support a big family. The poet writes more about his struggle:

> Half an hour in a queue,
> fifteen minutes in a bus
> forty minutes in a train,
> a long walk from the station to a slum.
> Poor fellow, what a life! (17-21)

The man waits a long time in a queue, avails a bus journey, then a train journey, and then has a long walk – this way he goes to office and returns home every day. He does this to save money as he cannot afford to stay near the bank with his family, so he is fated to struggle this way. The persona of the poet feels sad about the miserable life of the typist, and disappointingly declares, "There's no future for us" (26). Silenced, the poor fellow endures sufferings – as a subaltern, he yields to this kind of lifestyle without complaining to anyone as he knows his words will remain unheard. The subalterns know well that they are exploited, still they are destined to be deterred from speaking as their "space" is confined.

Art and literature are common platforms where artists and authors speak on behalf of those whose voice does not come out of their restricted boundaries. Ezekiel, a humanist poet, features the exploited people of his country and speaks for them in his poetry. His poetry speaks for the voiceless, and he strives to draw attention of the exploiters writing lines such as, "It's a shameless exploitation / of the people's ignorance" ("Rural Suite" 33-34). The poet terms the exploiters as "shameless" as they abuse the common people, making them fools of their ignorance. The people who struggle, the poet hints, are exploited, and it is the privileged class who continue to silence their voice shamelessly. The poet declares his stance on the necessity for the oppressed to establish their existence as the men of God:

> To own a singing voice and a talking voice,
> A bit of land, a woman and a child or two,
> Accommodated to their needs and changing moods
> ...
> Is all the creed a man of God requires. ("A Time to Change" 46-48, 53)

The poet believes that people should have a voice to speak of their rights, of necessities to survive and also of their sufferings, or else they begin to lose their identity. Identity is what gives people a sense of belonging to a country or community or belief system. Without identity, people cannot think of their existence on earth. Amartya Sen, who has written extensively on identity, asserts, "We belong to many different groups, in one way or another, and each of these collectivities can give a person a potentially important identity" (24). Sen champions the necessity of multiple identities of individuals in society. He has valuable contributions on the issue of identity in South Asian perspectives.

In the poem "A Time to Change," Ezekiel hints at the necessity of identity in people's social life. Speaking of their due rights, they can let others know that they also belong to the greater humanity. As the poem suggests, to live a humble life, they need to make a family, live in peace and harmony – that is what people seek all their lives, but, in most cases, in vain. The poet underlines the issue of human voice in his rhetorical question "Is it enough for us to be what we are?" ("Happening" 24). It is a question asked to all human beings on earth to stand straight during the moments of crises. It is a call for speaking for humanity, and the poet likes to see a human world as he writes "Let me dream the dream of Man"("Prayer II" 17). The word "Man" in this line includes all human beings – colonizer or colonized, rich or poor, white or black, high or low, elite or subaltern. "In his humanist phase, Ezekiel is," Mishra stresses, "obviously preoccupied with perennial values which defy barriers and discriminations" (130). The poet reveals his humanist stance in a variety of ways that justify his position against injustice to the poor or the weak. Barriers and discriminations are what people should fight against and fight hard to eradicate them so that they can build a classless and more humane society. Identity, an important element in human life, is a matter of great concern to Ezekiel – his concern for identity permeates his poems. A restricted sense of identity creates a division among the people of the same society, but Ezekiel emphasizes identity as part of a greater humanity.

The poet invites all human beings on earth, especially the ones living in the world of luxury, to think deeply about their responsibilities to common people. He seeks their attention, "Listen to the voice / That is not your own" ("Counsel" 23-24) and sees a dream of a human world in which there is harmony between the elites and the subalterns, as well as among the people of different religions. He puts emphasis on the voice of individuals because if they do not speak and privileged people do not listen to them, sufferings of the common people will never end. He also believes that to speak is to receive blows from various corners, but raising voices is important as only by speaking can people wrest the rights and privileges they are entitled to. The poet stresses on the importance of speech in many poems, including "The Poet Contemplates His Inaction": "Speak out / every time and lose / your life to gain it" (10-12). As far as the above lines are concerned, raising voices come with risks, but the poet lays emphasis

on the fact that the voiceless should come forward to let the world know how they are exploited. If they do not speak, the world will never know about their subhuman life, about exploitation, and about oppression. By speaking, they may even lose their life, but the poet believes that at the end, they may attain what they have sought if their "Suffering is made to sing" ("Something to Pursue" 130). The line implies that the world ought to know the common people's suffering – the act of letting the world know is not possible if the victims do not speak.

Ezekiel dreams of a balanced world where every human being may live with dignity, where their due rights are properly given, where they respect one another, where they can live without fear or anxiety, and where no one weeps in deep sorrows for the violation of human rights. He believes that the world should be a human world where peace and love prevail. A staunch humanist, Ezekiel makes it clear that he values the dignity of humankind above all:

> I do not want the yogi's concentration,
> I do not want the perfect charity
> Of saints nor the tyrant's endless power.
> I want a human balance humanly
> Acquired, fruitful in the common hour. ("A Poem of Dedication" 29-33)

The poet demands that anything that fails to contribute to establishing a balanced society be avoided. In this case, all individuals ought to show their positive outlook toward society. The poet believes that it is not necessary for people to be obsessed with religious acts or be meditative like yogi practitioners; rather, they should be more concerned about establishing a human society. Just as Saints' blessings are not required, neither is the unlimited power of dictators acceptable. What is most important, and a compelling need, is a strong and bold assertion on acquiring "a human balance" so that every individual can live a sound and harmonious life. It is one of Ezekiel's strongest articulations in favor of humanism. "In all of his writings," argues Ramakrishna, "Ezekiel stresses the centrality of man in the universe" (22). The poet puts emphasis on humanity, and his poetry makes a call for peaceful and harmonious existence of all human beings, irrespective of color, caste, nationality or property.

Ezekiel is heartily attached to India, its natural vista, urban pictures, landscapes, and, foremost, the people whom he meets every day. As far as his poetic outpourings are concerned, he is deeply associated with the sounds and scenes of India from which he does not want to go anywhere. Some of his poems reflect his strong sense of patriotism – the following lines bear testimony to his love for the country:

> Confiscate my passport, Lord,
> I don't want to go abroad.
> Let me find my song
> where I belong. ("The Egoist's Prayers" 41-44)

The poet was educated in England and travelled widely, but his love for India remained profound. The beauty of his country captivated him, which is why he never sought any other source of happiness – the root of his happiness was the land that he deeply belonged to.

He was also enthralled by the music of his country. Above all, the poet strongly felt that he belonged to the people of India, including the struggling voices, and his sense of belonging, in this respect, is intense. Talat and Khan rightly observe, "Nissim Ezekiel continues his poetic practice with the prime purpose of making a balance between poetry and life" (31). Talat and Khan's comment justifies Ezekiel's prime objectives as a poet. The poet paints Indian life exactly as he observed it, and at the same time maintained an artistic quality that is required for true poetry. There is no denying the fact that Ezekiel, a great craftsman, does not compromise with the artistic quality though he draws actual pictures of India in his poetry.

Ezekiel is found to pay special attention to the predicament of the common people whom he has seen struggle for survival. So many of his poems feature their sufferings. The poet sometimes inspires common people, through his poetry, to wake up and speak for what they deserve. He also calls upon the powerful and affluent people to listen to the voices of the downtrodden who live subhuman lives around them. He believed that people risk losing their identity if they do not speak:

> And yet to speak is good, a man
> Is purified through speech alone,
> Asserting his identity
> In all that people say and do. ("Speech and Silence" 17-20)

The lines indicate that people can establish and protect their identities by speaking up against injustice and exploitation – continued silence leads people to the loss of their identities. It is graceful to have the capacity and courage to speak, and without this quality, people are destined to suffer atrocities at the hands of the elite and powerful people in society. People are what they speak or do, their identity is asserted through speech, and problems can be solved only when they prove their presence with their voice.

Ezekiel incorporates many significant issues, both local and international, in his poetry, and the issue of the representation of the voiceless people who continually struggle to survive takes a good space in his voluminous work. He is sensitive to the sufferings of the common people not only from India but from around the world as well. His powerful weapon is poetry, and through poetry, he stands by the struggling people inspiring them to have courage and confidence in order to live with dignity. He also condemns the indifference of the elite in society. A leading representative of modern Indian poetry, Ezekiel does not deny urban and rural realities, and he uses all these as the raw material for his poetry. Through his powerful poetic eyes, he observes how the upper class exploits the subalterns, how the latter are made to believe that they have to work hard, serve their masters, put up with oppression silently, and continue living in poverty. This picture is prevalent in postcolonial societies, and the poet feels sad about the miseries of these common people – he invites everyone to sing the song of humanity and stand together for the greater cause of the human world. Ezekiel expresses his hope that those who are now voiceless and powerless will wake up someday, they will raise their voice against discrimination and incongruities, assert their identity, establish an exploitation-free society that they can feel attached to, and live in peace and harmony.

Note:

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Nawab Faizunnesa Chowdhurani's *Rupjalal*:
An Unabashed Portrayal of Female Sexuality

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Abstract

Rupjalal (1876) is considered to be the first novel by any Muslim woman. Reading this one hundred and forty-one year old novel reveals many buried expressions of women's sexuality. This paper tries to read Nawab Faizunnesa Chowdhurani's Rupjalal *in the context of the then Bengal and tries to explore how the author boldly, yet subtly, portrays female sexuality through the aesthetic quality of her craft. Chowdhurani brings in almost every possible sphere of women's sexuality in her narration through the love story of Jalal and Rupbanu. In a time when the Victorian morality imposed on Indians was trying to ban frank sexual expression in literature, Chowdhurani writes about female sexuality, desire, female gaze, and even raises a voice against the patriarchal notion of chastity in women. Chowdhurani also plays with narrative technique and incorporates many genres in her fiction. This paper shows how* Rupjalal *is a feminist text in many ways. However, the paper does not aim to place Chowdhurani or her text in favor or in opposition to patriarchal or colonial contexts. It tries, instead, to unearth the expression of women's sexuality which is buried by the intervention of Victorian imperialist and reformist culture of the nineteenth century.*

Keywords: *sexuality, desire, free sex, female power, Victorian moralities, phallocentric narration, narrative technique*

In woman, personal history blends together with the history of all women as well as national and world history.

– Cixous,*The Laugh of the Medusa* 298

The first full length novel written by any Bengali Muslim woman is Nawab Faizunnesa Chowdhurani's *Rupjalal* (1876). A close reading of *Rupjalal* reveals that it is a groundbreaking feminist literary piece in Bangla where almost all key aspects of feminist discourse about female sexuality are present: female gaze, female desire, female voice, women in marital sexual relationships, and women as angels and monsters. However, this paper will elaborately discuss only a few issues such as female desire, female power, gender role, sexual freedom of women, and female voice as a protest against patriarchal norms. I have chosen these particular aspects of female sexuality because, among many other issues, these aspects of women's expressions have been silenced by Victorian moral values. In *Rupjalal,* Chowdhurani does not limit herself only to women's issues in her narration but also plays with the writing style. This paper will show how Chowdhurani's early modern text, *Rupjalal*, portrays different aspects of female sexuality through both content and narrative technique.

The expression of unabashed female sexuality was buried and tarnished as inappropriate through double oppression by Victorian moral values and the *bhadralok* culture in colonial Bengal. T.B. Macaulay took the initiative to "stop the printing of Arabic and Sanscrit books and abolish the Madrassa and the Sanscrit College at Calcutta … to form a class of persons

– Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" (Macaulay 9). Thirty years after Macaulay, Mary Carpenter narrowed down the focus of education on Indian women. In her book *Six Months in India*, Carpenter condemns vernacular literature to be "replete with superstition" and "ordinary language of lower class is so full of what is essentially coarse" (132), and thus advised that just like the Victorian girls of her school back in Europe, the Indian girls should refrain from singing "coarse songs" (Carpenter 230). Carpenter also mentioned in her book that she had not seen many "Mahometans" and came to a conclusion that "they probably did not sympathise with the object of my visit, not having yet taken any interest in female education" (Carpenter 101). However, the distrust and aversion was mutual. Meer Mosharraf Hossain, the writer, famous for his *Bishad Shindhu* (a contemporary to Nawab Chowdhurani), remarked against learning English and said, "It is a sin to learn English. One becomes a little satan learning English as he will soon forget how to say namaz and will become uncivilized" (Kuddus 14). Remarks of this kind against colonial influence were taken seriously by Hindu reformers as well as by British officers and even Hindu *bhadramohilas*. In her article "Muslim Women and the Politics of (In)visibility in Late Colonial Bengal," Mohua Sarkar discusses how "modern" Hindu/Brahmo had to portray Muslim women as "backwarded," "uneducated," and how by "advocating purdah" makes the Muslim women of "loose moral" (Sarkar 237) only to justify their situation as enlightened and civilized and thus everything else the Muslim women did "simply [became] invisible to a Hindu-dominated normative histography" (Sarkar 242). Therefore, in a word, if art and literature work as historical artifacts, they represent women's history in a censored way. It is in this unfavorable context Nawab Chowdhurani writes her novel, *Rupjalal*.

Interestingly, while reading *Rupjalal*, now one hundred and forty-one years old, one would find an unabashed, free, direct, and strong portrayal of a female world. Chowdhurani was writing at a time when she did not have to conform to W.T. Webb's advice that "words and subjects, such as adultery, fornication, childbirth, miscarriage, etc., of which mention should not be made in the general intercourse of polite society" (Webb 1888). This advice about hushing sexual expression was already prevalent in the culture of colonial Bengal even before their publication. Yet, Chowdhurani's *Rupjalal* does not suffer from the lack of passion that is very common in women's literary tradition that Elaine Showalter complains about in her book *A Literature of Their Own*. "When … sexual initiation, pregnancy, childbirth, … – the entire female sexual life cycle – constituted a habit of living that had to be concealed" (Showalter 275), Chowdhurani boldly explores female sexuality throughout her novel, something that was very rebellious for a woman writer writing from a Bangalee Muslim family.

To celebrate female sexuality, Chowdhurani gives special importance to female desire in *Rupjalal*. Expressions of female desire was not uncommon in *Vatsyana Kamsutram*, *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, and other scriptures of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, where female sexuality was celebrated and acknowledged. Following this trajectory, in *Rupjalal,* Chowdhurani also makes the male body a subject of female desire. Jalal's beauty seems erotic for women characters in the fiction unlike the male gaze that was just beginning to appear in the contemporary art and literature of colonial Bengal. In *Rupjalal* women fall in love with the hero as soon as they see him. There is an interesting stanza where the wives of the monsters

are lamenting the ugliness of their husbands as "another says, 'If I could get this young man then killing my old husband I would have dedicated my youth to him.' One says, 'If I could get this honey-prince, then I would have appointed my heart-bee in his feet forever, leaving behind my crippled husband'" (Chowdhurani 192). Moreover, Chowdhurani makes the beauty of a man an important criterion to get married to a Princess. The Gandharva king, proud of the beauty of their community, refuses to marry his daughter off to a prince from other communities of ugly-looking demons. He tells the messenger demon "Look, messenger! How can this be possible? No demon community other than us, the Gandharvas, are handsome and good-looking. I can never let my daughter marry a demon prince." But when the messenger convinces him of the prince's beauty, he writes to the prince's father, "We would be delighted to behold the beauty of your son. If it is troublesome for you to send your son here, then we will send our messengers to see him" (Chowdhurani 216). In the same way, modern Bangla fiction by Rabindranath Tagore or Sarat Chandra Chatterjee depicts a groom's family coming to see a bride. Thus, the importance of male beauty is not seen only from the point of view of an individual woman but as a social perspective of women in general.

Secondly, Chowdhurani sounds extremely frank when she portrays the desires of the prince's women friends as they give him the nuptial bathing ceremony. She narrates:

> With heart's content, they massaged his body.
> The maids, mystified by the prince-beauty,
> Consoled their own hearts by stroking and tactility.
> Though touching him cooled their hearts
> Double became the fire inside their guts.
> Making chest-cleansing a somber occasion
> Pressed her nipples, embracing him, one.
> While cleansing his fair face
> One failed to steady her gaze.
> Rubbing his back, breaking the attachment –
> One found her anima leaving the oubliette.
> Holding his derrière, one felt spasms of pain
> O! Who'd be fortunate to carry this burden! (Chowdhurani 248)

Finally, in accordance with sex norms depicted in *Vatsyayana Kamasutram*, on valuing women's desire and pleasure in a sexual union between men and women, Chowdhurani gives women's pleasure much importance and portrays it thus:

> The new bride with the prince lover
> Passed the day in festive delight
> The night passed by making love
> At the dawn both took a shower. (Chowdhurani 265)

In another place, Chowdhurani narrates the consummation of Rupbanu's marriage with Jalal:

> Finding the bride alone in the chamber
> To rest on the bed with him, he pleads her.

> Opening up their hearts to each other,
> Each gratifies the other's sensual desire.
> Lost in the enjoyment of milk and honey
> They relish the pleasure already.
> At last, satiated with multifarious congresses
> In peaceful sleep, they lose consciousness. (Chowdhurani 255)

In these last two verses, wives are not portrayed as coy or just as objects of male desire but rather as sexual partners equally enjoying the pleasure. Thus, women are seen to have power and control over their sexual desire.

Furthermore, it can be seen in *Rupjalal* that Chowdhurani reverses the gender roles to express female power. The depiction of the recurrent abduction of the prince when he is lost in a cave, wood, or hell shows again the overwhelming strength of female power over men. These waywardness and confinements of male heroes are considered by Sanda M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar as a man's defeat by female power. In their book *The Madwoman in the Attic*, they explain:

> The womb-shaped cave is also the place of female power, the *umbilicus mundi,* one of the great antechambers of the mysteries of transformation. As herself a cave, every woman might seem to have the cave's metaphorical power of annihilation, the power – as de Beauvoir puts it elsewhere – of "night in the entrails of the earth," for "in many a legend," she notes, "we see the hero lost forever as he falls back into the maternal shadows – cave, abyss, hell." (Gilbert and Gubar 95)

Now, though in most gothic fiction, folklore, and fairytales we see a man as the rescuer of a captive woman, in *Rupjalal* we see that out of four abductions, the prince was rescued thrice by women. First of all, from the fairy, the fairy's mother rescued him. Then the witch's female slave teaches him the chants, which helps him escape from the woods of the witch. And lastly, The Princess of Kayser gives him three magical gifts by the help of which he not only escapes from hell but also rescues Rupbanu from the Fortan Giant. Thus, Chowdhurani makes her male protagonist a perpetual subject of female power from where he cannot escape unless the women themselves allow him to do so.

Then, Chowdhurani makes a parody of *One Thousand and One Nights* in *Rupjalal* by reversing the gender role. In her narration, she creates a female character who abducts every handsome man around to satisfy her sexual pleasure. One who can make her happy can live, otherwise he will lose his life forever. The way the Persian King Shariyar kills every woman of his country after marrying them for a night in *One Thousand and One Nights*, Chowdhurani's wizard princess too has captured a hundred princes, sleeping with each for just one night.

> Let me admit, at midnight
>   I would take your leave
> She adds, "each one night
>   With a new man I sleep."

> Vast wide suite all ninety-nine
>> Chambers are here
> In each one, lives one man –
>> Handsome and fair.
> Days ninety-nine if pass they well
>> And the hundredth comes
> Keep in mind you would find
>> Again my entrance. (Chowdhurani 150)

Another example of gender role reversal can be noted when she makes her hero faint almost every time she encounters the beauty of his lover which portrays the vulnerability of the prince:

> Curving eyebrows, each cast a glance at the other
> Unbearable seemed that touch of the gaze!
> Fainted the valiant prince at the feet of the other
> She too then fainted, falling on the base. (Chowdhurani 17)

From Carpenter's observation, it is found that "men of influence allow their sons to consider feebleness of body an indication of high social rank" (Carpenter 123). So, in *Rupjalal,* we see that the vulnerability of the abducted prince also portrays his noble birth and thus his masculinity is not questioned but rather is confirmed by his sensitivity. Therefore, it is not the effeminate man who faints, but actually the masculine man of influence who becomes bewitched by women's beauty.

In spite of celebrating female desire, Chowdhurani cannot help showing the difference in sexual freedom enjoyed among women of different classes. Gilbert and Gubar say that male authors have created a myth of the angel/monster dichotomy for women in such a way that many women authors fall in the trap and kill either the monster or the angel in their writings. This expression of angels and monsters is depicted as real characters in Chowdhurani's text, only here the angels are shown as human beings. Chowdhurani shows that free sex can be enjoyed only by female monsters but not by virtuous women. In Chowdhurani's *Rupjalal*, we see women who are non-human, like the giants or fairies or witches, find and seek pleasure in men out of wedlock. But it is only the women of noble birth who feel content in the pleasure from marital sex. When a witch abducts the prince, he gets sexual offers from both the witch and her fairy slave. The witch threatens to kill him if he does not sleep with her. Though he manages to save himself from the witch, he cannot save himself from sleeping with the fairy when she says, "Dare you leave my desire unfulfilled, /Truth is – certainly I will get you killed" (*Rupjalal* 112). Interestingly, the prince does not feel dishonored or captive, and rather finds equal pleasure in these coerced sexual relations:

> As if the ill has found the amaranth
> Both sunk in the pleasure-river.
> Washing hands and face, they went to bed
> Rising at dawn both showered again. (Chowdhurani 12)

This stanza shows clearly the sexual consummation with mutual consent between the fairy and the prince.

On the other hand, we see that both the abducted sage-daughter Rupbanu and the Princess Nurbanu remain as pure as Sita even after the abduction. However, this sexual chastity is important not only to fulfill social expectations but for the women themselves. When King Jham Jham decides to kill his second daughter, believing she was misguided by her elder sister, the daughter does not plead for her life but protests the false accusation of defilement by her father. She says:

> O! Father, listen to my prayer
> Why kill the innocent heir?
> The Queen has only me and no more
> To address her as a loving mother.
> Sister Nurbanu was unblemished
> She's unjustly doomed and punished.
> The giant abducted her
> Her sin in it can't be anywhere.
> You are my father, I'm your girl
> Your deal to kill me, I won't annul.
> I have no sorrows that I would be killed
> Just my heart breaks to be falsely stigmatized. (Chowdhurani 78)

In *The Second Sex,* Simone de Beauvoir says that patriarchy established the rights of the patrilineal family structure and the myth of virtuous women so a man could be sure that the infant his woman is carrying is a part of him. So, King Jham Jham goes to the Queen, and by accusing her of bringing dishonor to his chaste life, he questions her chastity. He says:

> Queen, from your womb, taking her birth
> Our daughter has inherited all degeneracy.
> You yourself are fallen so gave birth to another
> Thus, you stigmatized my moral aristocracy.   (Chowdhurani 76)

The Queen, like her daughter, protests the accusation but, unlike the daughter, she protests against the patriarchal notion of women's chastity. And this is how Chowdhurani seems to raise a voice against the patriarchal burden of moral values placed on women:

> You are the seed-originator being only the bearer
> I am now the perpetrator!
> Sowing a good seed one gets the good deed
> Bad ones result in fruits decayed.
> Your own heir allowing in my center
> I am now as condemned as defamed!   (Chowdhurani 77)

Here, the queen is playing with the same patriarchal idea that if a child is born by the father, then he should be responsible for the child's outcome.

However, she also reasons with him, saying:

> Lakkhi was the mother Chakrapani, the father
> But Kama was not welcome in nature.

> Bishwasrova was calm but the son was a giant –
>> The Ravana, a horrific and cruel feature.
> …
> Noah the prophet was the best, his son was the worst
>> Everyone knows this on the earth
> Father was inferior but Ibrahim became superior
>> Khalil was titled by people's mirth.   (Chowdhurani 77)

So, we see the queen's benevolence as she does not accuse her husband for his mistrust and cruelty. These stanzas of reasoning by the queen, however, appears to be Chowdhurani's critique of the earliest text *Ramayana*, where Sita had to prove her *satitta* (purity) through several tests. Thus, the protest in *Rupjalal* against the patriarchal notion of chastity in women is approached from a very rational standpoint.

Chowdhurani also frankly gives expression to female sexuality in her text. She was writing at a time when the Victorian moral values had started to influence the liberal Indian attitude towards sexuality; female sexuality, especially, was gradually dissociated from the historical artifacts of India. An imitation of Victorian moral values emerged in the name of Bangalee *bhadralok* culture, which started to treat women in a more conventional way. Sumanta Banarjee says in "Marginalisation of Popular Culture in Nineteenth Century Colonial Bengal" that new books and arts were crafted to show women as the subjects of men's desire. He describes how "Tagore's family's male members, eager to emancipate their women from the influence of the lascivious stories of Radha and Krishna, had barred their doors to the Vishnavite kathakata reciters" (151). *Rupjalal*, however, goes against this norm and shows men under a female gaze. In another article, "Bogey of the Bawdy: Changing Concept of 'Obscenity' in 19thCentury Bengali Culture," Banarjee explains that colonial *bhadralok* culture gradually caused the disappearance of frank expression of sexuality from literature. The emergence of a patriarchal nationalist *bhadromohila* class also resulted in distancing women of high class and those of the working class; but Chowdhurani's erotic descriptions using both standard and colloquial Bangla in *Rupjalal* seems to be defying the nationalist *bhadralok*'s initiative to separate the two classes of women. Yet, following a tradition that was gradually coming under scrutiny was a bold choice for an aristocratic Nawab, a Muslim woman zamindar.

Chowdhurani, then, makes an intertextual connection between her text and other ancient literary texts. To parody the *One Thousand and One Nights* which was translated into Bangla around 1830 and became a popular source material for Muslim writers cannot be just a coincidence. Chowdhurani has chosen a text that has a very hybrid quality, as the Arabian tales are a collection of stories and folktales from various parts of the world. She also brings in allusions from old Sanskrit epics like*Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, also known as historical texts, together with references from the Quran. She imitates the *puthi* and charyapada style too and her presence, as author, is seen in the text sometimes.

Moreover, Chowdhurani also uses many different genres to narrate the love history of *Rupjalal*, such as poems, songs, letters, and prose. Thus, many narrative voices tell the readers the story of Rupbanu and Jalal. Why was Chowdhurani so interested in a multi-faceted narration through a hybrid literary tradition? Women writers, more than male writers, tend to give voice to many

characters and even among women writers. In Chowdhurani'a case, it is not only gender but also a deep truth about being a Bangalee writer, as she originates from *Shankar jati*, a mixed cultural nation. Therefore, the Bangla literary tradition has adapted traditions of Buddhist, Hindu, western as well as middle-eastern literature. And Bangalee literature has an ancient tradition of women writers as the first traces of Bengal are found among the verses recited by Buddhist nuns in the Pali language. On the other hand, her perfectly written prose which itself is a complete story with a beginning, climax, and ending seems to be born out of her informed choice of representing a prose text to prove to the contemporary male novelists that she is also capable of writing like male canonical writers. Thus, while Chowdhurani incorporates the myriad literary traditions, she cannot be condemned for following the male tradition as she has a very androgynous approach to the technique she uses for her *Rupjalal.*

Therefore, Rupjalal is an eclectically feminist landmark for the readers of Bangla literature and a literary piece by a mother precursor who shows that it is possible to retain the lost lineage of women's artistry while following the new literary terrain and breaking the gender boundary in literature. It was truly inspiring to unearth the artifact of female sexuality from such an ancient text, *Rupjalal* written by a Muslim woman author from the periphery of patriarchal colonial Bengal of Victorian era.

Note
Translations of the excerpts from the original Bangla text of Nawab Faizunnesa Chowdhurani's *Rupjalal* are the author's own.

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Pink and Blue: Gendered Consumerism

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Abstract

This paper deals with the large scale usage of gender-specific colors in media representation and promotional activities of several products in the consumer world. Irrespective of region and race, the association of the color pink with females and blue with males has become a part of consumer culture worldwide and, consequently,has resulted in a consumerism conditioned by gender. Such a trend is eventually leading to gender stereotypes and sexism among consumers. In this paper, the author gives a brief historical account on gendered consumerism followed by an analysis of the current consumer culture where trends in the entertainment and cosmetics industries are analyzed. The paper discusses the impact of gendered consumerism by presenting an online survey conducted among 200 consumers. It also attempts to propose a few solutions like androgyny and alternative marketing promotions to subvert the fixated color representation.

On July 22, 2013, all the fountains of Trafalgar Square had a blue glow and remained blue for the next seven days. The London Telecom Tower also flashed a dark blue digital display, saying "It's a Boy." The reason behind these flashing blue lights was to welcome the birth of a baby boy to the royal couple, Prince William and Kate Middleton. Two years later, on May 2, 2015, the landmarks of London, like the Parliament building, Westminster Abbey, and the Big Ben Tower, blazed pink as the royal couple gave birth to their second child, and since it was a girl, the welcome greetings were in pink. These royal celebrations fed into the ubiquitous idea of blue for boys and pink for girls. However, this tradition of associating colors with gender is not new, having started to take shape around the 1940s.

This paper gives a detailed analysis of how the advertising world and media are yielding to a norm that does not have any rooted cultural history either in the West or in the East. Even though the history of associating specific colors to gender is considerably new, the consumer world has taken this trend to a whole new level, equating pink with feminine qualities and blue with masculinity and giving a gendered dimension to the current consumer society. Branded cosmetics industries, giant cinema industries like Hollywood and Bollywood, and even the entertainment features for children, like popular cartoon characters, toys, and animated series, are exhibiting the idea of gender-specific colors. The idea of associating certain colors with specific genders in the consumer world is thus leading to a practice of gendered consumerism where the end users are consciously and subconsciously linking colors to their genders. As a result, such representations are eventually leading to gender stereotypes and biased attitudes toward colors.

Historical Background

As stated earlier, if we look at the history of the link between colors and gender, there is no deep-rooted historical background. In her book, *Pink and Blue: Telling the Girls from the Boys*

in America, Jo B. Paoletti, a historian at the University of Maryland, shows that earlier, parents used to clad their children in white clothes. The reason behind this was practicality. White was easy to bleach and thus was used as a convenient option for children. At that time, parents were not concerned about expressing their children's gender through their clothing and the concept did not even exist in the society. The dependence on white clothes shifted right before World War I when blue and pink came to the scene and parents started to adopt it. Paoletti points out that gender was not the only deciding factor though, because blue clothes were thought to be "flattering for the blondes and pink was for brunettes or blue was for the blue-eyed babies and pink was for the brown-eyed ones" (19). Interestingly, at that period, blue was thought to be suitable for the girls and pink for the boys. Paoletti goes on to explain in her book that, in June 1918, an article from the trade publication *Earnshaw*'s *Infants' Department* stated,

> The generally accepted rule is pink for the boys, and blue for the girls. The reason is that pink, being a more decided and stronger color, is more suitable for the boy, while blue, which is more delicate and dainty, is prettier for the girl. (20)

This association was perhaps coming from the concept that "purple was regarded as the color of the royalty." In the early Christian era, purple was regarded as the royal color and common people were not allowed to wear it. The only reason was that the color purple was very expensive to acquire. It could only be found in the Phoenician trading city of Tyre, which is now in Lebanon. Fabric traders obtained the dye from a small mollusk that was only found in the Tyre region of the Mediterranean Sea. This dye was so expensive that sometimes even the royal families could not afford it. However, Emperors of Rome and Britain were famous for their usage of purple attire. Hence, the connection of pink "being a more decided and stronger color" becomes evident with the boys. In 1927, Time magazine printed a chart showing sex-appropriate colors for girls and boys according to the leading U.S. stores. Stores like Filene's, Best & Co., Halle's, and Marshall Field suggested to parents that pink was for boys and blue was fit for girls. This idea continued till the 1940s.

During World War II, the entire scenario of associating pink with boys and blue with girls changed and blue shifted to boys and pink to girls. According to Paoletti, this was the decision from the retailers and manufacturers and was set arbitrarily. During World War II, the Nazis introduced the "Pink Badge" for gay captives. It was that period when the perception of pink started to be regarded as more feminine, shameful, and less masculine. Later, when the LGBT Rights Movement began, pink regained its pride. During the '60s and '70s, there was an outgrowth in the women's rights movement and a rise of the Beat Generation[1] in the US. In that period, everyone, especially women, opposed the usage of gender-specific colors for their babies and rather dressed their girls in more masculine attires. They were against the notion of being feminine and frilly. The representation of sex was not welcomed by fashion catalogs at that time either. Paoletti delineates in her research that, in 1970, American fashion moguls like Sears and Roebuck did not feature any pink dressed baby girls in their catalogs for the following two years.

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1 The Beat Generation is an American literary movement which was initiated around the fifties by a group of young poets, writers, and artists who were sharp critics of post-WWII American politics, bureaucracy, and consumerism.

In the '80s, however, the fashion of gender-specific colors came back, and till date, with the growth of globalization and dependency on visual culture, this gender-specific color trend has been in full swing worldwide. The custom of labeling girls with pink and boys with blue has gradually taken a lead role in labeling genders even before a child is born. In a situation like this, the question of gender becomes more complex if we analyze the definition by Judith Butler, who says:

> We act as if that being of a man or that being of a woman is actually an internal reality or something that is simply true about us, a fact about us, but actually it's a phenomenon that is being produced all the time and reproduced all the time, so to say gender is performative is to say that nobody really is a gender from the start. (65)

According to this idea, gender is a performance that can be "produced" and "reproduced." Now, if we regard gender as a performance, then specifying colors for males and females from early childhood will eventually hinder the idea of the flexibility of genders and such functions will gradually lead to gender stereotypes.

The Representation of the Pink-Blue Trend

Nowadays, the colors pink and blue is used for gender-specific items in almost every aspect of the consumer world. This paper puts forward a few instances of the industries where the target consumers (both male and female) consciously and subconsciously indulge themselves in a world of gendered consumerism – that is to say, females are catered to with shades of pink and males are offered shades of blue. The following three sections give a brief account of industries like cosmetics, cinema posters, and cartoons where gender-specific colors are profusely used by the producers for their promotional activities and consequently are consumed by the buyers.

Cosmetics and Toiletries: From Unilever's world's number one fairness product, "Fair & Lovely" to Axe's body spray, the products which are targeted for women are pink or purple, whereas the same product targeted for men like "Fair & Handsome" or male body sprays carry the dark shades of grey/black/ blue. Perhaps, the best possible example of showing the color code would be perfumes. The international brands of perfume like Versace, Diana Vreeland, Channel, She, Antonio Banderas, Clinique, and New Yankees all have two sections. The female section is represented by several shades of pink and purple whereas the male section is displayed in a variation of blues.

The trend began in the '80s in the US, but it was not confined there. In time, this practice has permeated the borders and extended worldwide. As a result, consumer culture in Asia has also acquired the concept of stereotyping genders with color labels. For example, the fourth fastest growing consumer goods company in India is Dabur, and Dabur's beauty soap (Fem), Dabur Rose Water (Gulabari), and Dabur Facial Cream are all delivered in pink containers. Bangladesh is also not far behind in this gender-specific color trend. The leading local toiletries companies like Square Toiletries and Kohinoor Chemicals are following the footsteps of Western norms and introducing pink labelled products for female consumers even though in the Eastern culture there is no such cultural background of feminine or masculine colors.

Cinema Posters: The entertainment industry is another area where associating pink and blue with females and males is alarmingly common. Hollywood cinema posters are perhaps the best examples for the representations of the gendered color code. How subtly the entire idea of gender-specific colors is pervading the minds of the audience will be evident if we take a close look at a few cinema posters. From the 1960s box office blockbuster *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, with Audrey Hepburn's famous coy pose to the 2011 *Mean Girls* background, most of the movies with female central characters have posters in the shades of pink/purple/fushcia/magenta. A few examples include *Pretty in Pink* (1986), *Pretty Woman* (1990), *Never Been Kissed* (1999), *Legally Blonde* (2001), *Bend it like Beckham* (2002), *Bride Wars* (2009), *Confessions of a Shopaholic* (2009), *Bridesmaids* (2011), *Austenland* (2013), and *How to be Single* (2016).

In these posters, the backdrop or attire of the protagonist is pink, and sometimes the text is written in pink ink. The idea gets more problematic when specific words are written with bright pink to emphasize the feminine attributes of the respective connotations, such as in the titles of *It's a Boy Girl Thing* (2006) and *Suburban Girl* (2007) where the word "girl" is written in bright pink and the word "boy" is written in blue. In the poster of *Never Been Kissed*, the word "kissed" is written with bold pink which might proclaim the innocence and the "untouched essence" of a girl whereas the first two words are written in blue. On the other hand, if we look at the posters of action-based Hollywood cinemas with male central characters, like *Jaws* (1975), *Thor* (2011), *Wolverine* (2013), and *Guardians of the Galaxy* (2014), we see that they are all charged with dark shades of blue/black/fiery red. These two different kinds of posters solidify the impression that pink cannot be used for action or war movies but must be used in cases of feminine representations.

Though Bollywood (the Indian cinema industry) has fewer movies with female protagonists in comparison to Hollywood, the industry exhibits the same inclination towards pink through cinema posters. For example, the posters of Bollywood movies *Aisha* (2010), *Humpty Sharma Ki Dulhania* (2014), and *Ae Dil Hain Mushkil* (2016) each use a remarkable amount of pink/magenta color. The idea of using gender specific-color becomes critical when cinemas like *Gulab Gang* (2014) and *Queen* (2013), despite advocating for women's empowerment, make posters with arbitrary usages of pink. In the cinema poster of *Queen,* the first letter "Q" is written in magenta which emphasizes gender, and hence the color-coding.

The problem is that in the process of doing so, the stereotypical idea of gender-specific colors is being imprinted on the minds of contemporary society. Children and teenagers are most affected by such stereotyping, because they are easier to convince and thus can be manipulated by the marketing strategies of the corporate world, without their even realizing it.

Animation and Cartoon Characters: Associating colors with specific genders is becoming more common in children's entertainment too. With a biased representation of a gender-specific color through the cartoon characters and cinematography, the young audience becomes the most affected. As a result of such exposure, their childhood is not neutral anymore. From their early days, children know that there is a fixed color for males and for females. They grow up with

a specific idea of gender which will eventually result in nullifying Judith Butler's phenomenal idea that gender is a performance. For instance, popular female cartoon characters like *Hello Kitty (*Japanese series)*, Winx Club* (Italian series), *Power Puff Girls* (American series) are pink whereas the male characters in *Doraemon* (Japanese manga series) or *Phineas and Ferb* (American series), even though they are a cat and a platypus, are blue, which reinforces the association of blue with males. The cartoon series *Power Puff Girls* exhibits girls as saviors and heroes, and have three girls as the central characters. Though their costumes are not pink, their background screen where they emerge from and the text of the title are both pink. The same can be observed in the characters of *Winx Club,* where all the six focal characters are female, with magical powers. In this Italian series, the girls use their magic to rescue people in danger and, interestingly, there is an overwhelming use of pink in every background of the scenes. Presenting female characters in pink attire is common in other cartoons as well. For example, in *Dexter's Laboratory*, Dexter's annoying sister Dee Dee wears a pink skirt with pink socks and pink shoes. In *Phineas and Ferb*, Phineas and Ferb's sister Candace and their friend Isabella always wear pink dresses. In this same series, there is a secret agent, played by a platypus named Perry. Perry is a male secret agent and is ocean blue just like Doraemon is a male cat and perhaps therefore is blue.

Apart from these cartoon series, if the Disney princesses are scrutinized, it reveals that most of their outfits are also pink/purple, such as Rapunzel in *Tangled,* Megara in *Hercules,* Anna's cloak in *Frozen*. Even in *Pocahantas,* when the background writing was in yellow, a shade of pink was reflected on the last curve of every letter. These ideas are reinforced through the merchandise produced to market the movies of which children are becoming the active consumers. Toy companies are also promoting this idea of gendered consumerism. For example, Barbie's accessories come in all shades of pink: outfits, shoes, accessories. Even her houses are pink/purple. Another toy, the GI JOE (male representative of a war hero), is devoid of any shade of pink. All these representations in the hands of young people can lead to problems like gender stereotyping and sexism because, through these animations, toys and cartoon series, young people are clearly getting the idea that pink is meant for girls and blue is for boys. While analyzing young people as audience in their essay "The Young Audience," Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel states,

> Teenage entertainments play a cultural and educative role which commercial providers seem little aware of. Their symbols and fantasies have a strong hold upon the emotional commitment of the young at this stage in their development, and operate more powerfully in a situation where young people are tending to learn less from established institutions, such as the family, the school … They rely more on themselves and their own culture, and they are picking up signals all the time, especially from the generation just ahead. (63)

Such media exposure to color specific representations can thus work as agents of gender socialization. As a result of such stereotyping, a generation is going to foster these ideas and will associate colors with their own gender.

The Influence of the Color Code

As mentioned earlier, historians like J.B. Paoletti found that pink was used for boys and blue was for girls. Then around the 1980s, this trend was reversed, but the trend is still ongoing. Using gender specific color codes has almost become a prejudice where no one questions it and simply follow it. In their essay "The Young Audience," Hall and Whannel state, "we are dealing with the complex interaction between the attitudes of the young and what is provided for their consumption by the commercial world of entertainment"(61). Such "complex interaction" can trigger the prejudiced idea towards gender conditioning at a tender age and therefore might have the chance to aggravate the equal rights' scenario in the near future. Hall and Whannel also observe,

> … even if the trends are really set by a small minority and in the age of the mass media, these tensions communicate themselves much more rapidly from place to place, group to group. One of the special features of this media is speeding up the fashion cycle among the young. (63)

Hall and Whannel's essay was written before the advent of the social network on the internet, but they could sense something and traced the movement of the media in an absolutely impeccable way. At present, the influence of the fashion cycle is speeding in a way that Hall and Whannel perhaps could not even imagine because nowadays, the influence of any culture is always just one click away.

There might be an assumption that media representation cannot have any serious impact on consumer behavior. To delve deeper into the matter of color specific representation of gender, this researcher conducted an online survey among 200 Facebook users, their ages ranging from 18 to 30. These users were asked several questions regarding this issue. Despite the fact that more than 80% people thought pink and blue are perpetuating gender stereotypes, when they were asked more specific questions regarding the matter, the responses failed to support their notions. For example, there was a question on whether they think pink is more feminine than blue, 62.5% people agreed to this statement. Another question asked whether it would look odd if a male dormitory is painted pink. 45.7% agreed that any shade of pink would look odd.

This result shows that even though people know about the trends and tactics of stereotyping, they still fall for such stereotyped advertising or promotional strategies. This is more baffling because the consumers consider themselves aware buyers, but in their subconscious, they are taking the bait of the consumer culture and thus are lured by the marketing stratagems of the corporate world. Such labelling is working at the core level of the consciousness and gradually promoting the inclination towards the stereotyping without realizing that it is the invasion of corporate strategies.

Probable Solutions

The strategy of associating pink with girls and blue with boys started in the Western consumer world. This scenario has started to change, albeit gradually, in some superstores in the west through the adoption of alternative advertising strategies. In 2012, British toy store Harrods, and in 2015, American retail store Target removed the color labels (pink and blue) from their kids' zone. In an official statement Target states:

> Over the past year, guests have raised important questions about a handful of signs in our stores that offer product suggestions based on gender … we know that shopping

preferences and needs change and, as guests have pointed out, in some departments like Toys, Home or Entertainment, suggesting products by gender is unnecessary.

It is always easier to manipulate the consumers and mold their mindset in the way the corporate world and media want. Till now, the media hardly recognizes that these two are interrelated like a vicious circle. At present, consumers are inflicted with pink-blue stereotypes at both levels of their "consumer purchasing process" (Baack and Clow 83), where, at the first stage of "internal search/mental decision" (Baack and Clow 84), they are looking at the voluminous representations of gender-based colors at different stores, on the media/social media. At the second stage of the consumer search (during the "external search"), they are making the decisions in reality by evaluating the alternatives. Here, the consumers are presented with the alternatives that are of the same color, which means no variation is actually offered to them, but they do have the idea of a false autonomy while choosing from these stereotyped products. In a process like this, the consumers become puppets in the hands of the corporate world, where the strings are in the hands of the marketing stratagem that is giving them the illusion of options where all the options are of the same color in different shades. If consumers reject the trend of gender-specific color codes and abstain from buying the products which promote such stereotypes, the corporate world will be compelled to change their marketing strategies. As a result, new advertising strategies will be promoted through media and the consumer behavior will eventually change accordingly.

Apart from alternative advertising/marketing strategies, an androgynous approach towards gender can prove an effective solution while counteracting the color-specific gendered consumerism because there is no cultural or ancestral background for such usage of gender-specific colors. Regardless of the type of products, manufacturers can have present them in ways that denote neither masculinity nor femininity because, that way, a product will possibly have a common appeal to all as Woolf once said, "Some collaboration has to take place in the mind between the woman and the man before the act of creation can be accomplished" (87). Products consumed by specific genders may be promoted differently but a certain amount of blending is extremely necessary for products that are consumed by everyone in a massive scale. Otherwise, approaches like color fixation will lead to gender stereotypes and sexism. While analyzing popular culture, Lana F. Rakow, in her essay, "Feminist Approaches to Popular Culture: Giving Patriarchy its Due," states,

> One theme that runs through much of feminist cultural theory is that men and women live in two different spheres and have two different cultural experiences. Elizabeth Janeway has argued that this is socially determined, not innate or inevitable. Therefore, the goal should be not two, but one, androgynous culture. (286)

Following an androgynous approach while making advertisements and promotional activities can alleviate the slanted attitude towards any specific colors among the consumers. While purchasing, consumers also have to possess a critical mind with the ability to scrutinize the whole range of options given to her/him. Along with this, media literacy can be of help to read between the lines before any purchasing decision. A promotion may seem innocent enough, but if buyers look beneath the surface and question the representations of the product, then they would not be so easily duped by marketing strategies. Consumers must understand that colors are only colors.

Colors are not natural determiners of genders and they can never be so. More importantly, the commercial appropriation of childhood masculinity or femininity can have a detrimental impact on the growth of a child's psychology. Young people are more vulnerable to stereotypes and biased representations. Especially, for the young audience there has to be an equal usage of colors while representing animated characters because the concept of having a feminine and masculine color is problematic. Producers need to remember that colors are neutral, associating them with genders will not only hinder young people from having an impersonal view towards color but also it will create a biased idea about certain genders.

It is high time that the companies start exploring new ways to promote their products. If such a condition begins at the process of buying, then the corporate world would also be compelled to eradicate the stereotypes from their own products; but at the end of the day, the final responsibility comes down to the consumers, and leave them with the questions like whether they want to be labeled like the consumed products? Or do they want to be treated like human beings and have the choice to explore their choices and question them? The answer to this question might be the beginning of a new era of creative consumerism for the consumer culture of the entire world, where the consumers will have actual autonomy to select and question rather than an imposed one.

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Conor McPherson's *The Seafarer*: A Mythic Journey of Wretched Souls

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Abstract

The devil claiming a human soul is no more an unusual theme in today's literary world. And yet, when Conor McPherson made his national theater debut in 2006 with The Seafarer, *he caused a stir, and the next year he took the Broadways in a similar fashion. During the same time, Clare Wallace noticed that McPherson's on-stage feat made him popular with the audience and the "scholarly response has been a good deal more sluggish," even when he employs the quintessentially Irish storytelling tradition, infusing it with modern theater's "disruption of illusionism" (1). Now a more critically acclaimed playwright, McPherson calls his work "a fable about a struggle for redemption." What makes Conor McPherson's* Seafarer *an impressive feat is the epic or folkloric touch it provides to an otherwise ordinary modern day tale of crazy drunkenness and bawdy activities of some coastal town Irishmen. This paper attempts to read McPherson's play in the light of the Old English poem* The Seafarer *translated by Richard Hamer (used by McPherson). It is an exploration of the playwright's use of the Faustian and Christian elements and fusing them with the age-old Irish spirit of adventure to emphasize and extend a simple story of two brothers, Irish drunkenness, and Christmas magic into a complex tale of philosophical and psychological drama in the modern world.*

Keywords: sin, redemption, epic journey, darkness and light, dysfunctional relationships

> He knows not,
> Who lives most easily on land, how I
> Have spent my winter on the ice-cold sea,
> Wretched and anxious, in the paths of exile
> Lacking dear friends, hung round by icicles
> While hail flew past in showers …
>
> Anonymous. *The Seafarer*, (10-15) c. 755 AD,
> translated from Anglo-Saxon by Richard Hamer

Named after the Anglo-Saxon poem, the events in Conor McPherson's 2006 play *The Seafarer* occur in the house of Richard and Sharky Harkin at Baldoyle, a coastal settlement north of Dublin. Not a single character of the play is involved in seafaring and yet the acclaimed Irish playwright not only names his play *The Seafarer* but uses a section from the old poem for the epigraph as well. On the surface, the play is a twenty-first century version of the Faustian tale of the Devil and his attempt to claim a human soul. Aside from incorporating Faustian elements, McPherson refers to an old Irish story in which the Devil came to play poker at a tavern. The playwright also called his play "a fable about a struggle for redemption" (qtd. in media release, Broadway theater), and concurrently, he ties it to a very old poem over which scholars have their own debates. All of these elements tend to suggest that *The Seafarer* is not

a simple story of sin and redemption, or the Devil at Christmas, but much more. This paper attempts to read McPherson's play in the light of the Old English poem *The Seafarer* translated by Richard Hamer (used by McPherson), and explore how the playwright uses the Faustian and Christian elements, fusing them with the age-old Irish spirit of adventure to emphasize and extend a simple story of two brothers, Irish drunkenness, and Christmas magic into a complex tale of philosophical and psychological drama in the modern world.

The play begins on the day before Christmas in the household of two brothers, Richard and James Harkin (more known as Sharky). Richard is drunk most of the time, and an absurd accident (falling into a dumpster) has caused him temporary blindness. Sharky has come back home to take care of him though Richard always tries to imply that it is the other way round – andthat Sharky has returned because he has messed up his life. Then there is Ivan who prefers to linger around the brothers than to stay home with his wife and children. On Christmas Eve, an old acquaintance, Nicky Giblin (currently living with Sharky's ex-girlfriend), turns up with an affluent-looking stranger named Mr. Lockhart who in reality is the Devil, having come to win Sharky's soul. Some twenty-five years earlier, this stranger had helped Sharky to escape hanging for manslaughter, and extracted a promise of poker to possess his soul. They drink together and start playing cards. The Devil in the shape of Mr. Lockhart seems to win the last round of poker, but later it turns out that Richard and Ivan, one blind and the other half-blind man (Ivan, having lost his glasses) actually have won the game, Ivan seeing four 4s instead of four Aces. As a result, an astounded Devil leaves empty-handed.

Starting with an absurd display of drunken buddies whose only occupation seems to be drinking and slouching around,*The Seafarer* proceeds to weave a very intricate story. Even though Richard harasses Sharky all through the play, his partiality for his younger brother becomes evident when at the end he gets a Christmas present for him, or even in his willingness to buy Sharky out from Mr. Lockhart's grips. The apparently drunken, dazed, but often witty exchanges, prominent at the beginning, slowly give way to issues that are too intense to discuss. Furthermore, a realistic, almost mundane ambience becomes fused with the supernatural presence of the Devil, and this very element that McPherson employs in his play is quintessentially Irish, as Cassandra Csenscitz points out:

> His fantastical stories, inspired in part by a tradition of Irish myth and the richly idiomatic storytelling of his grandfather, suggest his openness to the unknown. … The recurring themes in McPherson's plays – the ghosts, the dissection of the masculine psyche, the hilarity of human folly and bawdiness, fraternity, violence, law-breaking and death – form his own branch of epistemology. (Csencsitz 38)

What might appear as fantastic and strange in another setting seems quite plausible in McPherson's *Seafarer*; for example, rather than questioning the presence of the Devil on Christmas Eve, the audience as well as Sharky (the only character who learns the truth about his identity), ponder on the immediate danger posed by his presence. At the same time, Lockhart is not only intriguing, he is also the most interesting character in the play. He is given the best lines even though Sharky is the modern Faustus. Whereas Sharky seems merely distressed, afraid, and sometimes desperate, Lockhart appears grand and almost tragic.

In an interview with Maddy Costa, Conor McPherson had claimed that in his *Seafarer*, he is all his characters in the play, but perhaps "most especially the disappointed demon, Lockhart, who envies the men among whom he moves." Now, why would the playwright identify more with the Devil than human beings? A close examination of Lockhart's character would reveal some basic characteristics of modern humans too – the existential loner, the bad son (Cain), jealous of and vengeful toward the good one favored by the father, and the defiant and morbidly proud anti-hero who refuses to back down even in the face of absolute defeat. His sense of loneliness is something mostly brought about by his own doing. Yet when he speaks about it, he displays a tremendous loss and despair as he cannot understand why God chose human beings over him. His longing for a human soul is an act of retaliation for his own loss of heaven and the love of God. Understandably, he wants the very humans, the cause of his eternal damnation to reside with him. His vengeance is more against mankind than God – like a bad son always trying his luck against the good one loved by the father. For McPherson's audience, the character of Lockhart is actually a key to understanding his human characters too – their frustration with life, living in a continuous void, the wretched drunkenness, which Ben Brantley, the *New York Times* reviewer, recognizes as a "blind drunkenness" that blurs the line between the real and unreal.

However, even though McPherson incorporates the age-old Christian myth of the Devil craving a human soul in the character of Lockhart, the latter is not the typical scheming superhuman creature that traditional scriptures and common knowledge depict him to be. First of all, though he takes a human form, he does not have any telltale sign, like a cleft-foot or horns, to be identified as a devil. The old Irish story, which provided the playwright with his inspiration for writing the play, had a cleft-footed devil which gave him away at the tavern where he had been lingering. Moreover, Lockhart does not seem to possess the supernatural power that the Devil is supposed to have. For example, he cannot win a simple game of cards against Sharky, even though he is supposed to be the king of tricksters. The twenty-first century version of the Devil created by McPherson is a very complex being with just as much awareness as a modern man. He does not even have any foreknowledge as to how to find a specific person in the human world. He sneers at the human body – the two balloon-like things (lungs), and a whistle (voice), that all men have, while he, being an immortal being, is far more powerful and great. However, when he abuses Sharky in rage because he cannot understand God's design, the tragic condition of the Devil is revealed – that in spite of all his greatness God has discarded him in favor of a puny, insect-like creature that is neither beautiful nor as powerful as he is. He is also frustrated because even though he has power over man, the fact that God has abandoned him gnaws continuously at his heart.

The question at this point is, why does McPherson name his play after an old Anglo-Saxon poem, and not something Faustian? The playwright here actually draws attention to a significant but often overlooked aspect of the Devil who, apart from being the bad son and the rebel, is also an exile. The fact that God has banished him from heaven connects Lockhart directly with the idea of exile – a central theme in Anglo-Saxon poetry, more so because of the epigraph that McPherson uses for his play. The Old English poem *The Seafarer* deals with a speaker at the center who relates his past voyages on the sea, the tremendous sufferings he went through as

an exile, and how he found peace later on through his faith in God. The theme and style of the poem has evoked a number of problems among critics. For years, scholars believed that there are two different speakers in the poem; the first being the one who relates his journey and perils on the sea, and the second, a speaker who abruptly starts talking about the importance of finding godly ways in life. Naturally, the scholars also assumed that the latter portion was added by the Christian monks who wrote down the oral poems for preservation. During the last sixty years, however, that attitude has become the subject of much speculation, and critics and scholars today conclude that it is one whole piece focusing on the problematic aspects of transient, earthly life, displaying how devotion towards God alters one's way of looking at life. The sudden change in the tone is, as I. L. Gordon observes in his article, "a characteristic of early Old English poetry, and especially of Christian elegy, where it seems to have been part of the poetic method to present themes familiar in secular poetry and then to expand them into a Christian significance" (9). Accordingly, the description of intense suffering on the sea becomes a metaphoric one – the agony of a sinner without the compassion and guidance of God. The poem thus can be connected to the McPherson play that is set in a very modern and secular world where religious values have lost much of their significance.

The poem begins in epic style: claiming his story as true, the speaker talks about his journey during which he went through extreme physical hardship and agonizing mental suffering. On many nights on the rolling sea he had to keep watch, "oppressed by cold" and his feet "bound by frost." Lockhart's description of hell to Sharky bears a stark similarity to this portrayal:

> You're locked in a space that's smaller than a coffin. And it's lying a thousand miles down, under the bed of a vast, icy, pitch-black sea. You're buried alive in there. And it's so cold that you can feel your angry tears freezing in your eye lashes and your very bones ache with deep perpetual agony …. (McPherson 77)

Reversing the traditional portrayal of hell as a fiery pit, McPherson makes his hell an ice-cold sphere devoid of God's compassion. He seems to have reverted back to Dante's portrayal of the Devil in the frozen ninth circle of hell. Biting cold, stark loneliness, "blistering shame," and "self-loathing" are the constant companions of the residents of this hell (McPherson 77). Both the speaker of the poem and Lockhart seem to smile grimly at the contentment of those who have never experienced such adversity. The section that McPherson borrows from the poem displays a touch of wistfulness and envy against those who have lived their entire lives on land in comfortable homes, never knowing "the paths of exile," never experiencing the pains of loneliness. The only sound in this isolated and lonely world comes from the gales and waves and the sea birds. It almost appears that during or after his journey the solitary adventurer from the *Seafarer* never had anybody to share his sorrows with. One possible reason could be that he was so distressed and cut off from his fellow sailors that he preferred loneness. Or perhaps he is one of the last survivors of a vanquished tribe that lost its lord.

One other significant similarity between the speaker of the Anglo-Saxon *Seafarer* and McPherson's Lockhart is that apart from the physical torments they go through, both are tortured by the vivid, happy memories of the past when they too were part of an actual community. The Old English protagonist remembers the feasts held in the mead hall of his lord among his peers when he says,

> Sometimes I made the song of the wild swans
> My pleasure, or the gannet's call, the cries
> Of curlews for the missing mirth of men,
> The singing gull instead of mead in hall.
>
> <div align="right">(The Seafarer 18-21)</div>

The "missing mirth of men" definitely holds a suggestion of the life at some mead hall of a Lord or King. Now compare this to Lockhart's description of paradise from where he too was exiled:

> At a certain point each day, music plays. It seems to emanate from the very sun itself. … It's so moving that you wonder how you could ever have doubted anything as you think back on this painful life which is just a sad distant memory. Time just slips away in heaven, Sharky. But not for you, no. (McPherson 78)

Reminiscent of the speaker in the poem, Lockhart remembers the beauty of heaven where pain is kind of nonexistent. Moreover, it is so beautiful and peaceful that the pains of another life only seem like the memories of a dream. All of these are again reminiscent of the Devil in Dante's *Inferno* where he is chained and buried to the hip in solid ice at the very bottom of Hell in the tenth circle – the ultimate exile. The sufferings may also refer to Mephistopheles, in Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, who claimed,

> Why, this is Hell, and nor am I out of it.
> Think'st thou that I who saw the face of God,
> And tasted the eternal joys of Heaven,
> Am not tormented with ten thousand hells,
> In being depriv'd of everlasting bliss? (I. iii. 78-82)

The basic idea is that hell or heaven does not depend on physical condition, but mental disposition. As a result, anyone can go through the afflictions of hell, and any place can transform into the pit of hell. When one is thrown out of the Grace of God, one suffers the harrows of hell. Through their experience as exiles, and suffering the existential loneliness the speaker of the poem, Mephistopheles and Lockhart become identical entities.

The theme of loneliness and exile would also lead to a central theme of *immrama* or "voyage genre" in Anglo-Saxon literature and culture. Colin Ireland, the acclaimed scholar of Irish and Gaelic folktales, elucidates the *peregrinus* or pilgrimage and punishment that often came in the shape of exile. A person guilty of murder or incest was supposed to cast himself adrift on a boat, his "feet fettered with an iron chain" and the key thrown away (Ireland 144). The basic idea is that the guilty person throws himself to the mercy of God, and his fate lies with the forces of nature. He would accept whatever God decided to do with him. The self-imposed form of exile later in the seventh century A.D. came to be known as "white martyrdom," and a number of holy men during the sixth and seventh century imposed this punishment on themselves (Ireland 145). There are instances in the *Seafarer* poem that suggest that the sufferings faced by the speaker might be self-imposed. For example, at one point he exclaims,

"And yet the heart's desires/ Incite me now that I myself should go/ On towering seas, among the salt waves' play" (*The Seafarer*, 32-34). The lines seem to imply that in spite of all his misery part of him looks forward to the journey. It almost appears that without the journey some aspects of his life would remain incomplete. The ancient saints and prophets felt this same urge to go beyond their worlds into the unknown lands to spread the word of God. However, in McPherson's secular world, the Devil certainly cannot have that urge even though he roams around the world in restlessness, and human beings flounder, not knowing what to do.

Another point of important similarity between the old poem and McPherson's play is that neither the protagonist of the poem, nor Lockhart ever mentions any other comrade who might have suffered with them. When Lockhart speaks of his sufferings in hell, he hardly refers to any of his fellow suffering fallen angels. Of course, he lets Sharky have a vision of what he has in store for him, but there is a sense of extreme loneness, intense pain, and misery that suggests that lack of companionship is simply another aspect of that affliction. The traditional story of the Devil and his fall from heaven includes a band of other rebel angels who fell along with him as they decided to disobey God, not being able to accept the superiority of humankind over angels. But when Lockhart describes hell, he makes it sound like a lonely, cold place, where there is no warmth of love or companionship. The suffering is so great in hell that one cannot think of anything but his own wretched and condemned soul. He presents a vision of a hopeless kind of isolation because God has removed Himself from the hearts of these damned souls. McPherson's Devil echoes this seclusion, and makes it clear that his exile was something he chose for himself, as he tells Sharky, "Because of what you did. And what you didn't do" (McPherson 78).

Conor McPherson has only too often claimed that one central theme of all his plays is the feeling of extreme loneliness that mankind is burdened with:

> All I can say is my work is a battle against loneliness. It's an acknowledgement that we all have a fundamental loneliness even though you may not be alone. But all that loneliness can be eased by admitting and sharing that fact. Having said that, it does not necessarily mean that my work is bleak. I don't think it is. I think it is quite optimistic because its intention is to make contact, to make connection." (qtd. in Wood 147)

At the initial stage of the play, McPherson's characters appear skittish, ill-tempered, and in discord with one another. However, as the action develops, a kind of bonding develops among them. Richard and Sharky show their brotherly disposition, and even Lockhart, with all his anger and menacing attitude toward humanity, leaves the stage in sorrowful acceptance of his defeat, longing for what he has lost because of his choice, and a grudging admiration for his opponent. Unlike his contemporary Irish playwrights such as Martin Macdonagh and Marina Carr who focus mostly on depraved human nature and dysfunctional relationships, McPherson truly believes that compassion for each other can bridge the gap, the tremendous loneliness human beings have faced through time. In his interview with Cassandra Csencsitz, he elucidates the necessity of Lockhart, "The devil, Lockhart, was a force of nature coming into the play," says McPherson. "He's scary, but he's also an agent of change for the characters.

He is the darkness we need in our lives to recognize" (Csencsitz 39). Sharky's quality of life may not change immensely as an aftermath of all these experiences. He will still get drunk, quarrel with his brother, and fight Nicky Giblin; yet he has been given a glimpse of how much worse things could be. He has been saved from the clutches of eternal damnation. When Richard tells him at the end of the play that he is at least alive, probably Sharky knows it better than anyone else on stage how much better that is. He also probably realizes that Richard appreciates and cares for him, along with the woman who sent him Christmas gifts, and that is indeed more than many people have had in life. Indeed it is more than what he had at the beginning of his journey in the play.

The lonely journey that Lockhart speaks of, therefore, is not his legacy alone; it is also a part of the human world. However, whereas the Devil is condemned to roam about alone until the end of eternity, the humans have a good possibility to claim each other in distress. McPherson's play begins in abject misery for his characters. Sharky appears as a complete loser in his fifties, has lost his last job, and has been beaten up in the streets. His older brother Richard, recently blinded in a stupid accident, is always drunk and has a fiery temper. His friend Ivan never seems to have a clear mind, and is always on the lookout for "poteen," the infamous Irish whiskey. Nicky might pride himself on his car and girlfriend (both of which used to belong to Sharky), and his sense of responsibility, but he is in no better condition than the rest. He constantly has to pretend about how well-off he is and what expensive clothes he dons, which of course, is not obvious to anyone. Each of them have been through the rugged journey of life, and at least at the beginning of the play, seem to be in the same boat with Lockhart. Actually, with his affluent looks, Lockhart appears to be better off than they are. But appearances can indeed be deceiving, as at the end of the play, Lockhart tells Richard and the rest, "I want what you fellas have. … Peace of mind" (101). Richard and Ivan burst out laughing as they cannot understand what he is talking about. But when Lockhart leaves the room, he is out again on his journey, whereas for at least Richard and Sharky, a part of their voyage has been accomplished. They may not have reached heaven, but without knowing what he has done, Richard has helped his brother from the clutches of the Devil. They have found companionship in each other. Both Sharky and Richard acknowledge their feelings for each other and that realization itself is like a homecoming and a new beginning.

The theme of the journey is further explored by McPherson in his use of the setting which is very much like a ship, the entrance to the house being above. The way the characters are always drinking, cursing, and swaying while moving also suggests a journey on board a ship. The use of the sacred heart as a lighting device plays a central role as in the beginning and throughout the play it continuously flickers. But as soon as Lockhart goes out of the house it blinks on. Moreover, the first light of dawn also streams into the room. Using light as a symbolic device, McPherson creates an atmosphere where it comes to signify the enlightenment of dark souls. In one of his interviews McPherson explicates the intricate device:

> The journey of *The Seafarer* was a long one for me. There's this monument in Ireland, not very big, a 5,000-year-old tomb called Newgrange. It's got a long tunnel with a little hole in the middle in it, and on the [winter solstice] each year, the sun shines

directly down that chamber and lights it up – on the darkest day of the year. That image was mind-blowing to me – so simple, spiritual, amazing. I wanted to write a play that had that moment. … that darkest moment, darkest day of the year, where at the end the light comes in. (Csencsitz 39)

Using the Devil or Lockhart as the dark force of nature, the playwright attempts to connect to the long lost family and country roots of the Irish tradition. In an age of "demythologizing" Ireland he tends to retain the traditions. Whereas the contemporary playwrights like Marina Carr and Martin MacDonagh focus on the dysfunctional relationships among family members as a statement on the estranged, disoriented state of Ireland and the modern world, McPherson uses similar materials to evoke a romantic and soul-searching vision where anything is possible. In that regard, he indeed is the kindred spirit of the Anglo-Saxon poet of *The Seafarer*.

Colin Ireland would like to believe that the Old English text "derives much of its power and appeal from its apparent realism and emotional intensity" (156). He also thinks that the poet of *The Seafarer* was very much aware of the metaphor that equates life with a sæfor, or sea journey, and therefore, full of "tumult of waves" (156). In his understanding of life and the Irish tradition, Conor McPherson employs these techniques. Set in a modern time, his play presents the very realistic atmosphere of a modern Irish household of two brothers, and until the appearance of Mr. Lockhart, everything seems ordinary and orderly. Even with Mr. Lockhart there is no supernatural or unreal incident involved. Though he claims to be the Devil, throughout the play Mr. Lockhart does nothing strange or supernatural, and yet both Sharky and the audience come to believe his claim of being the Devil. Putting together the very old and modern elements McPherson thus produces a magnificent piece which captures the Anglo-Saxon and Irish spirit together in a modern secular world.

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Love, Sex and the Body in *The Bell Jar* and *My Story*: A Feminist Reading

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Abstract

This paper seeks to explore the themes of love, sex, and the body in The Bell Jar *and* My Story, *two much-read autobiographical texts by Sylvia Plath and Kamala Das respectively, which reveal the writers' feminist "self." These books were published in the mid-twentieth century when women started fighting for their individual freedom by interrogating patriarchal hegemony responsible for delimiting women's familial, social, economic, educational, industrial, and political rights. Both Plath and Das possess unconventional approaches towards love, sex, and the body. Their texts come out as threats to the patriarchal practice which pushes women to "stay at home, cook meals, clean house and bear children" (Lamb 1). For these poets, the woman's body, which patriarchy mostly considers an object of sexual pleasure, is a significant tool for transgressing the dictums of patriarchy. The present study, therefore, aims at showing the themes of love, sex, and the body in the above mentioned texts as a means for the poets to interrogate patriarchal restraints and to create a new identity with self-esteem and self-worth. In this way, they refuse to accept the hegemonic role of oppression and assert their gender identity.*

Keywords: *love, sex, body,* The Bell Jar, My Story, *feminist reading*

Sylvia Plath (1932 -1963) and Kamala Das (1934-2009), considered iconoclasts for lashing out at patriarchy through their poetry as well as prose, hold an unconventional approach towards love, sex, and the body in *The Bell Jar* and *My Story* respectively. A woman's body, which patriarchy mostly considers an object of men's carnal pleasure, is a symbol for these two poets to express gender identity. They fight for women's freedom and identity by representing their gendered "self" though there are differences between the two poets in terms of caste, creed, religion, culture, and nationality. Their gender consciousness seems to make them social reformers determined to overthrow all restraints that delimit the power and individuality of women. By revealing their resentment against patriarchy, male-domination, and sexual violence, they not only announce their gender stance but also shatter predominant patriarchal norms and customs. Their life experiences lead to the realization that a woman in a patriarchal world is subjugated both as an individual and as a group. Hence, the present study is an attempt to explore how the themes of love, sex, and the body projected in *The Bell Jar* and *My Story* represent their feminist identity.

Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* was written in the late 1950s, a time when it was rarely possible for women to come out of the world of domesticity, when women were limited and confined to mundane chores such as to "have dinner ready, prepare yourself, prepare the children, minimize all noise, be happy to see him, listen to him, make the evening his" (Lamb 3). It was also a time when women began to realize that "there is something missing" (3) in their life.

In Plath's autobiographical novel *The Bell Jar*, the protagonist Esther Greenwood struggles to redefine her "self" by going against traditional patriarchal culture. Throughout the novel, the protagonist plays the role of a performer who comes on stage to fulfill a feminine agenda and rejects the "archetypes of femininity she sees around her" (Smith 34). The themes of love, sex, and the body are thus manifested in her feminist stance.

Esther Greenwood does not find any independent personality in her mother, Mrs. Greenwood. This is certainly one of the main reasons for having a damaged/unfulfilled mother-daughter relationship. Mrs. Greenwood who is a "paragon of parental indifference because she does not hear what Esther tells her, nor does she respond to Esther's needs in any meaningful way" (Martin 38), is a typical woman of her time since she conforms to patriarchal norms and customs. Her attitude towards love and marriage is conventional. Even the double standard of men towards sex does not affect her. Esther cannot love her mother for all these reasons. She states in *The Bell Jar:* "My mother took care never to tell me to do anything. She would only reason with me sweetly, like one mature person with another" (116) and she does not have "a gentle, intuitive touch" (121). Hence, the lack of motherly affection along with her mother's conformity towards convention-ridden norms and customs make the mother-daughter relationship an unhappy one. On the other hand, she loves Dr. Nolan, a psychiatrist who becomes a model of not only self-respect and self-worth but also motherly love and affection for Plath. Plath writes in *The Bell Jar*: "Doctor Nolan put her arm around me and hugged me like a mother" (203). She looks after Esther, acknowledges all her demands, and allows her to enjoy freedom. She does not allow visitors to meet Esther for "she understands that what Esther needs is freedom from outside expectations in a safe environment," and thus "does everything she can to support Esther's efforts to gain autonomy" (Blair 17, 18).

In *The Bell Jar*, Esther challenges the archetypal attitude of love and marriage. She is supposed to marry Buddy Willard and love him, as in the eyes of society he is the perfect match for Esther. Buddy, having social status with money and education, considers himself to be a hero, but to Esther, Buddy is a hypocrite. Buddy believes that an unmarried woman has to remain a virgin: "a girl should not sleep with anybody but her husband and then only after they were married" (76). But he seduces many girls including a waitress, thus showing his double standards and contradictory attitude. So she rejects the love that society settles for her. She refuses the marriage proposal from Buddy Willard saying "I'm never going to get married" (89), for "when you were married and had children it was like being brainwashed, and afterwards you went about numb as a slave in some private, totalitarian state" (81). The poet emphasizes that marriage leads a woman towards a slave-like life in a patriarchal world. So, Buddy Willard, a representative figure of the patriarchal world, is refused by Esther, a woman who tries to establish an identity which is distinct and beyond societal custom: "What I hate is the thought of being under a man's thumb" (212). Again, she does not want to be "the place the arrow shoots off from" (67), rather she considers herself to be the arrow, for she wants to possess her own world and hates the idea of serving men in any form. Esther also identifies herself with Doreen. She appreciates her confident sexuality and sophisticated personality. She praises this strong willed woman's adventurous attitude towards life which

is made possible by her sheer willpower. We see that Esther is unconventional in her attitude towards love and also in interactions with people around her. In every aspect of love and relationships, she values herself, enjoys her freedom, and listens to her inner psyche.

Plath's unconventional treatment of the theme of sex in *The Bell Jar* is a further illustration of her feminist stance. Throughout the novel, the protagonist shows a strong resolution in terms of having sex and also not having it. She always gives priority to her own feelings and desires, never yielding herself to please a man or to the force of male domination. She rejects the concept of purity or virginity prescribed by the male world. In *The Bell Jar*, we see that she refuses Buddy Willard when he tells her to be naked, though she agrees to see him naked. She does not agree to sleep with Buddy even though she refuses the idea of remaining a virgin or "pure" in life. Instead of sleeping with Buddy Willard, she wants to sleep with somebody else and wants to lose her virginity which seems to be a burden to her. To her, virginity indicates suffocation and confinement, because it is not equally treated in men and women. She believes that remaining a virgin suggests conformity to patriarchal norms, customs, and values. Esther points out in *The Bell Jar*: "I couldn't stand the idea of a woman having to have a single pure life and a man being able to have a double life, one pure and one not" (77). She opposes the notion that with regard to sex a man's world should be different from that of a woman's. Again, she does not want to submit herself to forced sex. So she fights against the brute sexual attack of Marco who is a "woman-hater" (102), and who tries to rape her: "It's happening, I thought. It's happening. If I just lie here and do nothing it will happen" (104). She, however, fights and saves herself with heavy blows. Esther protests against the rape attempt on her, not for fear of losing her virginity, but being conscious of her "self" identity. At one stage of her life, as we see in *The Bell Jar,* she loses her virginity by making love with Irwin whom, in fact, she seduces: "what I decided [is] to seduce him" (216). Losing her virginity, she feels empowered for she is "perfectly free" now (232). The tradition of the patriarchal society is thus challenged by her sexual intercourse with Irwin. She describes how she gains freedom and lashes out at patriarchal conventions when she says in *The Bell Jar*: "I wondered how much I would bleed, and lay down, nursing the towel. It occurred to me that the blood was my answer. I couldn't possibly be a virgin anymore. I smiled into the dark. I felt part of a great tradition" (219). Now, she becomes her "own woman" (213), so her mind is dancing saying, "I am, I am, I am" (233).

In *The Bell Jar*, the female body emerges as an agency. Esther takes absolute control over her body. In the 1950s, the female body was constructed as an object to fulfill man's carnal pleasure only, but Sylvia Plath in her only novel presents the body as a weapon for women to attain freedom and autonomy. The protagonist of the novel is a neurotic patient. Her illness is so severe that she behaves irrationally like a mad woman. Also she tries to commit suicide several times. Many chapters of the novel describe her hospitalized life. Plath's illness, madness, and neurosis help her to avoid the orthodox principles of patriarchy and act autonomously: "madness and illness enable the protagonist's every autonomous action" (Blair 9). Iga Helena Drobnik says that there is a close "relationship between Esther's diminished health and freedom of behaviour" (8), hence her suicide attempts through which she tortures her body are considered to be effective steps to set her free from the bell jar, or social confinement.

As an American woman, Esther fights against stereotypical roles, and her rebellious spirit helps her to overturn the shackles of social imprisonment. It is undeniable that Esther's insanity is the product of stereotypical social gender confinement and torture affecting both body and mind. At the same time, this insanity gives her the freedom to break the customary role of a woman and be relieved of the control of social convention, and thus she emerges as a threat to patriarchal norms and customs. In the novel, Plath writes about her insane suicide attempt: "What I wanted to kill wasn't in that skin or the thin blue pulse that jumped under my thumb, but somewhere else, deeper, more secret, and a whole lot harder to get at" (142). Thus, through attacking her body, she wants to kill the "self" which is delimited, which conforms to society and which is the barrier to her road to freedom, self-esteem, and self-worth. Her neurosis leads her to the world which is her own, where she can be her own master, where there is no depression. She further says: "I climbed up on the examination table, thinking: I am climbing to freedom, freedom from fear, freedom from marrying the wrong person, like Buddy Willard, just because of sex" (213). We see that the theme of the body is interwoven with the protagonist's madness, illness, and her attempt to commit suicide presents the body as an agency to fulfill the feminist agenda, and challenges the customary notion that "the body is the object and target in power relations, and the purpose is to discipline the body in order to ensure the continuity of society" (Sabanci 60).

Plath, in *The Bell Jar*, fictionalizes her life. Esther, the creation, and Sylvia Plath, the creator, are two beings having the same impulse and experiences. The novelist articulates what most women in 1950s America were experiencing. They began to think that the home was not the only place they need to be concerned with. So, *The Bell Jar* serves as a model for all women of the world who not only want to escape from the socially constructed gender hegemony but also create their own world of willpower. Women everywhere undergo the same treatment and so Plath proclaims in *The Bell Jar*: "Wherever I sat – on the deck of a ship, or at a street café in Paris or Bangkok – I would be sitting under the same glass bell jar, stewing in my own sour air" (178).

Like Plath, Kamala Das, being subjective in voice, confessional in tone, and autobiographical in nature, very boldly expresses the themes of love, sex, and the body in *My Story*. Though she is considered a confessional poet, she is much discussed for her autobiography, *My Story,* where she describes her life openly. She consciously demonstrates how she was psycho-sexually tortured and beaten by her husband and other patriarchal agencies as well. The themes of love, sex, and the body in *My Story* chiefly highlight how Kamala Das represents her feminist stance protesting against patriarchal oppression.

Das' *My Story* can be acclaimed as an account of her disastrous love-sex-relationship with her husband. In the poem "The Freaks" which is included in her anthology *Summer in Calcutta*, Das mourns that her husband, who maintains a routine-bound monotonous life, considers love to be only a mechanical act of fulfilling "skin's lazy hungers" (8). She writes how she was detached psychologically and how she was a victim of marital rape. Sex came to her as a symbol of pain and violence for "every penetrative sex is violent" (Rebecca 9). The author, however, tries to come out of this orbit through her own strategies. One of these strategies is

writing against the injustices of a patriarchal world towards women to create a new identity. Das in *My Story* portrays that her marriage turned her into a "victim of a young man's carnal hunger" *(*81), as her husband never cared for "loving words," "conversation," "companionship," or "warmth," which ultimately made her feel "lost and unhappy" (80). She exposes how her husband attacked her brutally on her wedding night: "Then without warning, he fell on me, surprising me by the extreme brutality of the attack" and "again and again throughout that unhappy night he hurt me" (84, 85). The love that she received from her husband was "purely physical" (105) and her condition "was like a house with all its lights put out" (98). The love between her and her husband was reduced to mechanical sex, turning her life distasteful and horrible. She writes in *My Story*: "The man threw himself down on my body with two strange groans. He smelt of stale liquor and under his weight my limbs became rigid and I wished to raise myself to vomit" (101). As sexual violence was an inevitable event in the life of Kamala Das, she did not have any alternative except to yield herself to her "furious husband" (122). She was forced to behave like a freak with a grand flamboyant lust though she "was never a nymphomaniac" (186). Many questions may arise such as why does the poet describe sexual violence in detail? Is this an individual experience? Is this a common scenario in the contemporary world? Does the author share everything from sheer disgust only? Does she articulate her revolutionary voice as an agent of matriarchy? Many critics including A.N. Dwivedi and Ann Juli James have pointed out that Das' delineation of sexual violence is a medium of sexual awakening; it is her endeavour to raise collective consciousness of women against sexual violence.

Both sexuality and the body function as an umbrella term in the works of Kamala Das. The image of sexuality that she portrays in *My Story* describes how she was psycho-physically tortured by her husband. Like any other woman of her time, torture on her, in fact, started at her father's house in her childhood. Das did not have any opportunity to cherish her desire at her father's house. When she was just eight, her father forced her to stop practicing dance though she was quite passionate about it. She felt heartbroken when her father dismissed her dance master. She also had to wear "Khadar saris" before her marriage on her father's orders. Once, when she wanted her father to buy a silk frock for her, he replied thus: "Whose child are you? You know your father and mother never wear silk. Learn from your mother – don't you know she wears only Khadar saris?" (*Childhood* 126). In *My Story*, she describes her father's house as a "house of cards," her father as an "autocrat" and her mother as "vague and indifferent." Before marriage, she was dominated by her father, and after marriage the authority went to her husband. Thus, marriage becomes nothing but an exchange of masters for her. Simone de Beauvoir's comment in *The Second Sex* echoes what happened to Kamala Das:

> There is unanimous agreement that getting a husband – or in some cases a "protector" – She will free herself from the paternal home, from her mother's hold, she will open up her future, not by active conquest but by delivering herself up, passive and docile into the hands of a new master. (352)

Das discloses every aspect of her life in her autobiography because she felt relief by doing so. She found people around her, particularly males, very critical of her feminist stance. So

she writes to challenge them, to fight back. Though patriarchy does not allow a woman to speak of taboo subjects, Das achieves this rebellion confidently and successfully. One of the prominent issues that Das describes in *My Story* is the breaking of the conventional approach to sex, i.e., remaining chaste and faithful towards one's husband by tolerating his psycho-physical torture, and accepting his extra-marital relationships with other women. She writes, "in the orbit of lawful sex, there is only crudeness and violence" (24). She again declares, "Whenever he found me alone in a room, he turned brutal and crude. His hands bruised my body and left blue and red marks on the skin" (79). However, though she lets him take her body every night and wound her soul in the hope that she can make an emotional attachment with him, her attempt is in vain. She, again and again, mentions her husband's crude sexuality in her autobiography: "He drew me to him as a serpent draws its dazed victim. I was his slave" (174). This kind of physical attack brings eternal suffering to the author. So she writes to be free from sexual violence, psychological trauma, man's lascivious desire, and the hegemonic gender oppression.

Das narrates both heterosexual and homosexual loves in her autobiography. As she fails to mentally communicate with her husband, she looks for a love out of the box because of her burning sense of revenge and disgust. Though her heterosexual love experience was not confined to her husband only, she discovered that all men possess the same attitude in terms of love, sex, and the female body. Every male who came into her life betrayed her and possessed the same flaws. Das discovered that, in every way, the male-dominated world subjugates women. Even in bed, the relationship between a man and a woman is mostly a relationship of power, for here the sole purpose of a man is "sexploitation." The ultimate result is that a woman is simply considered an object for sexual pleasure and production of children. Hence, Das could not satisfy her burning soul which she described in "The Dance of the Eunuch," the first poem of her *Summer in Calcutta* as: "She is now like a half-burnt log from/Funeral pyres" (7).

Some critics contend that Das promotes adultery; she is a woman of lust and amorality. However, A.N. Dwivedi in *Kamala Das and Her Poetry* argues that "when she speaks of love outside marriage, she does not necessarily propagate the institution of adultery or infidelity, but seems to be merely searching for a relationship which gives both genuine love and impenetrable security" (116). Dwivedi sounds quite logical because Das uses her extra-marital relation to break social customs and to come out of the shackles under which she is psychologically burnt like a "Sati." Her unconventional approach towards love is, in fact, an attempt to rediscover her "self" and to "subvert patriarchal stereotypes" (V.T. 5). She describes her heterosexual and homosexual relationship in *My Story* very openly, for "I knew then that if love was what I had looked for in marriage I would have to look for it outside its legal orbit. I wanted to be given an identity that was lovable" (90). The same stance of the poet is also presented in her poem "My Grandmother's House," one of the most renowned poems of her anthology *Summer in Calcutta*, thus: "I who have lost / My way and beg now at strangers' doors to / Receive love, at least in small change" (13). Das' unusual sexual activities throw a challenge to patriarchal tradition, question the heteronormative matrix and transgress patriarchal hegemony. In *My Story*, she describes her same-sex experience with a college girl in this way:

> She kissed my lips then, and whispered, you are so sweet, so very sweet, I have never met anyone so sweet, my darling, my little darling. … It was the first kiss of its kind in my life. Perhaps my mother may have kissed me while I was an infant but after that, no one, not even my grandmother, had bothered to kiss me. I was unnerved. I could hardly breathe. She kept stroking my hair and kissing my face and my throat all through that night. (90)

Das' homosexual yearning thus leads her to create a new identity which empowers her and allows her to overthrow patriarchal norms and customs that chiefly delimit the mobility of women: "like a phoenix, I rose from the ashes of my past" (164) and enters into a new world of being. Hence, "the same-sex desire in the work of Kamala Das does not operate along a hetero-homo divide, nor does it confer an identity as lesbian" (George 780), but rather it is a blow to the patriarchal oppression of women.

Kamala Das compares herself with the mythical character Radha who longs for the love of Krishna. In *My Story*, she expresses her desire for Krishna in this way: "I yearned for a change, a new life. I was looking for an ideal lover. I was looking for the one who went to Mathura and forgot to return to his Radha" (165). Radha, according to Hindu mythology, "relinquishes the ties of marriage in search of Lord Krishna, the true and eternal lover who is also the epitome of the fullest consciousness that a human being can contemplate" (James 67). She breaks family ties and meets Krishna to satisfy her "self," her psycho-physical thirst. Radha is not only a married woman, but also a common milkmaid, older than Krishna, the lover for whom she risks social acceptance, and her very life. However, she does not mourn for it because the new identity is more desirable than the earlier one. The poet's psychological identification with Radha, rather than Sita, is her way of inverting the ideologies, beliefs, and practices of patriarchy. As Radha is the symbol of self-love rather than self-denial, it is clear that Das "represents a kind of new awareness among her fraternity and reveals a deeply sustaining strength of her own identity as woman and artist" (Wadhwa 81).

It can be argued that the themes of love, sex, and the female body in Das' autobiography, *My Story*, are an essence of her protest against the heteropatriarchal matrix. Hence, it is one of the projects of her feminist agenda through which she aims to shatter patriarchal ideologies and thereby create a new identity.

To sum up, we can say that though Sylvia Plath and Kamala Das were born and brought up in two different societies, one being modern America, the other convention-ridden Indian Hindu society, though the setting and the time of their texts are different, though the individual experiences are distinct, at one point their experiences merge as the manifestation of gender consciousness. Both writers delineate the sufferings of heteropatriarchal delimitations. Hence, in terms of gender issues, they have identical experiences. They are both victims of patriarchal gendered norms and customs. So, both Das and Plath, in portraying unconventional attitudes towards love, sex, and the body, protest against sexual violence and gender discrimination. Both poets, therefore, assert their identity as the "New Woman" and fulfill a feminist agenda through their work.

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The Interface between Translation and Drama: Translating Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* from English into French

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Abstract

Translating a dramatic text is a daunting task. The challenge is rooted in the fact that the text is specifically written to be acted or performed on the stage. A dramatic text is written in acts, scenes, and contains dialogues spoken by the characters. Apart from this, translating a dramatic text from one language with a different cultural setting into another language requires high creativity to guarantee faithfulness in the target language and culture. This article analyzes the interface between translation and drama as well as the woes and possibilities of translating Wole Soyinka's The Lion and the Jewel *into French. The result of this research indicates that linguistic and cultural issues which are based on the shared knowledge of the original author and the readers are mostly problematic in translation and usually require the translator to do serious research to acquire the necessary background knowledge, and find out whether this background knowledge is at the target language readers' disposal; if not, to make it available to them through translations, expansions, explanations, and footnotes.*

Keywords: *translation, theatrical translation, French, Wole Soyinka*

Translation has been defined by many theorists in various ways and we will take a look at a few definitions just to have the knowledge of what translation means or what it entails. According to Crystal as cited by Shastri, "translation is a natural term used for all tasks where the meaning of the expressions in one language is turned into another whether the medium is spoken, written or signed" (3). Nida Eugene and Taber opine that "translation consists of reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style"(16). For them, translation involves giving the equivalent of the message of the source language in the target language. Catford was also of the same opinion when he defined translation as "the replacement of textual material in one language (source language) by the equivalent textual material in another language (target language)" (20). The main task of translation is finding the equivalent of the source language in the target language. This opinion was also corroborated by Bell as cited by Moruwawon when he considered translation as "a representation of a text in one language by a representation of an equivalent text in a second language" (181). However, Vinay and Darbelnet simply defined translation as "le passage d'une langue A à une langue B pour exprimer une même réalité" [The passage of language A into language B to express the same reality] (20). Translation involves replacement, substituting, reproducing, and transferring a message of a particular language into another language. Translation requires two languages, the source language (original language) and the target language.

This paper takes a close look at the translation of Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* into French by J. Chuto and Phillipe Laburthe-Tolra. Literary translation can be extremely tasking and is faced with several challenges. Translating dramatic texts generally has its share of challenges because languages are not all the same and when it comes to different types of translation, they also come with their own challenges due to the peculiarities of dramatic texts. Literary works like prose, poetry, and drama have their own peculiarities and characteristics that a translator has to consider before he can accurately translate these text-types. For our study, we are treating a dramatic text which is quite different from prose or poetry. This study seeks to analyze the challenges encountered by the translators, Chuto and Laburthe-Tolra, of Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* into French. Before the analysis, we will take a look at what the translation of a dramatic text entails and all that should be taken into consideration while translating such a text.

Translating a Dramatic Text

A drama text is written to be played, and every play is performed to correct the wrongs in society. Although some people believe that not all dramas are acted out, that some are just written to be read, this buttresses the point made by Butake as cited by Yong when he said "the ultimate aim of writing a play is usually to see it performed even though it is not always that a play script which is even published find its way on stage for a number of reasons" (43). However, Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* was actually first performed before it was published as a text. The text of drama is quite unique from prose or poetry. The characteristic feature of a drama text distinguishes it from other literary works. A drama is written in acts and scenes, and contains dialogues spoken by the characters. The stage directions included in a drama makes it performable, and this cannot be found in a prose work. A drama can also contain songs and mimes. And like every literary text, it is also imbedded in the culture of the author, that is to say some cultural elements are also included.

Zuber-Skerritt says that translating drama is the rendering of "one language and culture into another and the transposition of the original translated or adapted text onto the stage" (485). This reveals that translating a dramatic text is not just about translating it from one language into another language, it also involves the adaptation of a text for the stage. A dramatic text is seen as incomplete when it is not yet staged, and Bassnett corroborates this idea when she says, "… a theatre text is read differently. It is read as something *incomplete*, rather than a fully rounded unit, since it is only in performance that the full potential of the text is realized" (123). While translating a dramatic text from one language into another, the adaptability of that text on the stage should also be kept in mind. The adaptation of a dramatic text on the stage poses a challenge to the translator of such texts. The translator has to take into consideration the culture of the target audience and be involved in a form of rewriting in order to suit his target audience.

The complexity involved in translating a dramatic text cannot be overemphasized in the sense that a dramatic text is quite different from a prose text, and each of these has its own peculiarities which has to be taken into consideration while translating. A dramatic text contains some elements of orality. Bassnett affirmed that "since the play text is written for voices, the literary text contains also a set of *paralinguistic* systems, where pitch, intonation,

speed of delivery, accent, etc., are all signifiers" (134). A dramatic text has some distinctive features that make it peculiar, and a translator must have an adequate knowledge of these characteristics before he can faithfully translate a text from one language to another. A translator must recognize the fact that a dramatic text is written in dialogues and should be translated in like manner. He should also have knowledge of the structure of a dramatic text. The stage directions in a dramatic text should also be taken into account while translating, because mistranslating them will mislead the stage director of the play. Every gesture counts while translating a dramatic text because a gesture could have an implication; if it is not rightly rendered in translation, the actors would not be able to stage it appropriately. Punctuations should be accurately rendered while translating a dramatic text as well so that actors do not misread dialogues, for instance, giving emphasis where there is none. The setting, the costumes, and the characters are also features to be considered while translating. The final element of a play is the audience, and thus, the translator must take into consideration the culture of his target audience, and avoid offending them. This means he must have a deep knowledge of the culture of his target audience. He should be able to produce the same effect on his target audience as on the original. Zuber-Skerritt underlines this privilege position of the audience in a translated dramatic text when he states, "the translation of drama as a performing art is mainly dependent on the final production of the play on the stage and on the effectiveness of the play on the audience" (485).

As earlier stated, dramatic text contains some features which can pose a challenge to the translator, and Soyinka's work is no exception. Songs, cultural elements, proverbs, and dances are part of Soyinka's dramatic text. A translator should have clear understanding of these features before he can render them appropriately in the target language.

A Cursory Note on *The Lion and The Jewel*
The Lion and the Jewel was first performed at the Ibadan Arts Theatre in 1959, and the book was published in 1963 by Oxford University Press. The play is the first of many written by Wole Soyinka, a renowned Nigerian playwright. The play is a comedy of manners set in the small remote village of Ilujinle and centers around three main characters: Lakunle, Sidi, and Baroka. Lakunle, a village teacher who sees the tradition of the society as barbaric, is wooing Sidi, the village belle, who is the jewel referred to in the title. Lakunle wants to marry Sidi, but he is against the tradition of paying a bride price. At the time, Sidi is still a virgin and seen as the beauty of her village. She also becomes prominent when her pictures are published as the centerfold of a magazine by a foreign photographer. Baroka, the Bale of Ilujinle on the other end, a polygamist who wants a new wife added to his harem of wives, finds Sidi the best candidate and makes it known to his first wife, Sadiku, who takes it on herself to inform Sidi about the Bale's interest. Sidi is not interested because he is too old for her but later, she falls for his pranks when he informs Sadiku that he has become impotent, which news also reaches Sidi. In a bid to taunt him, she goes to Baroka, but is defeated by the lion, losing her virginity in the process. Lakunle is angry, but he still proposes marriage to Sidi since he knows she is no longer a virgin and so he can avoid paying the bride price. Sidi, however, finally marries Baroka to cover her shame.

The play is presented as a metaphor of present-day Africa that is torn between the old traditions and the modern way of life brought by the white men. Soyinka's theater technique is outstanding and efficient. His words are simple and very demonstrative. Since Soyinka is a typical Yoruba man, words in Yoruba language are found in this dramatic text, so the translator must understand Yoruba language and culture to a large extent. Asobele-Timothy pointed this out when he said "a serious minded translator of Soyinka's works needs to be initiated into the Yoruba language and more importantly into its rich cultural myths as well as its magico-religious inclinations" (15). The text is however very African in the sense that it is filled with elements like manners and customs, rites, marks of respect, songs, trees, animals, polygamy among others.

The Challenges in Translating *The Lion and the Jewel* into French
As earlier stated, Chuto and Laburthe-Tolra (hitherto referred to as "the translators") faced a number of problems during the translation of *The Lion and the Jewel*, ranging from linguistic to cultural challenges. For our analysis, we will be giving some extracts from both the source and the target text to clarify our points, and to avoid repetition, we will make use of these abbreviations to represent the two texts: **LTJ** for *The Lion and the Jewel* (English text) and **LLP** for *Le lion et la perle* (French version).

Linguistic Issues: Like other literary genres, a drama text contains linguistic terms that are pertinent to the style of the author which could be difficult to translate. In *The Lion and the Jewel*, Soyinka makes abundant use of Yoruba words in the text and the translators render them without translation:

> LTJ: A clearing on the edge of the market, dominated by an immense 'odan' tree (1).
> LLP: Une clairière en bordure d'un marché, dominée par un immense spécimen de l'arbre 'odan' (7).

From the above text, a Yoruba name given to the tree is retained in the French version. A drama text that is to be performed should be clear enough for the stage director. An equivalent of that tree in French should have been used. A director, who does not understand what an "odan" tree is or what it looks like, would only be confused in giving the right stage directions.

> LTJ: Yokolu Yokolu. Ko ha tan bi, Iyawogb'oko san' le, okoyo'ke … (44)
> LLP: Yokolou, yokolou. Ko ha tan bi, Iyawogb'oko san' le, okoyo'ke … (57)

Here, the song by Sidi is rendered word for word in the translated version though it is in Yoruba in the original version, only the first two words were transliterated to suit the French language. But the actors who would be performing a play like this will not understand what this song means, and they will not be able to pronounce these words very well since they are not Yoruba. The aim of a drama text is for it to be performed to the public, but when the actors are struggling with the words, how best will the audience receive the message?

We have instances where parts of the original text were rendered the same way in the translated version. A translation of a drama text should be able to adapt the words and places in order to suit the target audience. Those places or cities left unadapted would only pose a

challenge to the audience, the translator should have replaced them with the equivalent cities in the target language.

> LTJ: … in Lagos, that city of magic, in Badagry where Saro women bathe in gold. (5)
> LLP: … à Lagos, cette cité magique, à Badagry, où les femmes Sao se baignent dans l'or. (12)

Another instance where an equivalent could have been rendered in the target language is this:

> LTJ: … even in smaller towns less than twelve miles from here … (5)
> LLP: … et même au sein de plus petites villes, à moins de douze miles d'ici … (12)

Here, "miles" was translated as "miles" in French, whereas to have an equivalent effect in the target text, "kilomètre" could have been used as the measuring scale.

There is an instance of mistranslation by the translators in the text, which can result in misunderstanding by the target audience. Where the author had mentioned "the dead in the village," the translation reads "the village of the dead," which alters the meaning completely:

> LTJ: But you, you and the dead of this village trample it with feet of ignorance. (6)
> LLP: Mais toi, toi, ainsi que ce village de mort, tu le piétines avec les pieds de l'ignorance. (13)

The translators, however, do exhibit their literary prowess despite the challenges faced in translating Soyinka's works. They resorted to figurative expressions in order to pass their message across to the target audience, and they made use of these expressions in order to make their audience have an equivalent reaction to what was felt by the original audience. Here are a few of such instances:

> LTJ: That is part of what I say. (4)
> LLP: Tu apportes de l'eau à mon Moulin. (11)

The French expression literally means "you are adding weight to my argument." This was spoken when Lakunle and Sidi were arguing over the issue of women being the "weaker sex." The translators did justice to the translation of that sentence by choosing to express the idea figuratively.

> LTJ: For now, it is this village I shall turn inside out. (5)
> LLP: Pour l'instant, c'est ce village que je veux retourner comme une chaussette. (11)

Here, the translators use metaphors to make the statement more explicit to their audience, whereas the use of metaphor is absent in the original statement made by Lakunle.

The translators here reveal their aesthetic prowess by finding an equivalence for the rhyme in the target language. Rhymes could pose a challenge to literary translators, but they were able to overcome this challenge by finding an equivalent expression in the target language. Below is the extract to illustrate this point:

> LTJ: and you must chirrup like a cockatoo. (6)
> LLP: tu te mets à caqueter comme un cacatoès. (13)

Generally, linguistic issues tend to be a part of the challenges faced by translators. Languages differ, even when they are from the same origin, and it takes a deep knowledge of the two languages involved before one can accurately render a meaningful translation from one language to the other. Also, when the source text uses two languages, it can be more taxing, which is the case with Soyinka's play. It is hybrid in nature, written in English with Yoruba words scattered throughout. This is one of the challenges faced by the translators, and oftentimes in the text, they had to recourse to footnotes to explain what was meant after rendering the translation word for word in the French version. However, in some cases, the Yoruba words are left untranslated, and without meanings or explanations provided in footnotes. Here are a few instances from the text:

> LTJ: Food sellers enter with cooking-pots and foodstuffs set up their **'adogan'** or stone hearth and build a fire. (55)
> LLP: Des gargotiers entrent avec des marmites et des aliments, installent leur **adogan** (ou pierre de foyer), et allument un feu. (68)

The Translation of Yoruba Songs: Translation of songs in plays is seldom simple. When one deals with a text that will be set to music and sung, the translator has to take the liberty of making the song sound natural and appealing in the target language. Soyinka's translators, however, encounter woes in translating the song below into French due to existing linguistic patterns. Just as in translation, something is lost in the transfer of the song below, the result falls short of "faithfulness" to the target readers. The spirit of the original chant is lost in the target language.

> LTJ: Mo te' ni. Mo te' ni.
>   Mo te' ni. Mo te' ni
> Sun mo mi, we mo mi
>   Sun mo mi, fa mo mi
> Yarabi lo m'eyi t'o le d'omo … (64)

And also:

> Tolani Tolani
> T'emi ni T'emi ni Sun mo mi, we mo mi
> Sun mo mi, fa mo mi
> Yarabi lo m'eyi t'o le d'omo. (64)

These songs were borrowed into the target text with explanations in the footnotes. But dealing with a theater text with a different audience, it is expedient that the words to be uttered by the actors are pronounceable, otherwise they would not be able to communicate with their audience. But having a French actor/actress sing Yoruba songs would only amount to nothing but misinterpretation.

The Translation of Yoruba Proverbs: Every language has a link to the culture of the people that speaks it. For a literary text, it is always embedded in the culture of the author. Wole Soyinka being a typical Yoruba man, although he writes in English, imbeds his work with Yoruba cultural elements. In the words of Asobele-Timothy, "Wole Soyinka's plays offer numerous examples of

automatic translation of the linguistic habits of the Yorubas" (7). This reveals that Soyinka often translated some Yoruba sayings directly into English in his works, seen in many instances in *The Lion and the Jewel*. Therefore, a translator faced with this type of literary text will be challenged with the Yoruba expressions which have been literally translated by the author into the English language. The translator does have recourse to word for word translation, which might not be the equivalent in the target language/culture. The translation of Yoruba proverbs is part of the auto-translation approaches of Wole Soyinka. Below is an example of a proverb that was transposed from Yoruba into English in the text and the translators had to translate it directly:

> LTJ: The monkey sweats, it is only the hair upon his back which still deceives the world … (54)
> LLP: Le singe sue et seul le pelage sur son dos fait illusion au monde … (67)

The Yoruba expression is "obo nlagun, irun eyin re niko je kayemo," but the standard signifies "It takes time for good deeds to be recognized." Sometimes, Soyinka's use of this direct Yoruba to English translation of expressions is determined by the level of education of the speaker involved. The expression above was said by Baroka in the text. There are other examples of proverbial expressions in the text, and the translators were able to render the equivalence in the target language. For instance:

> LTJ: Charity, they say, begins at home. (5)
> LLP: Mais charité bien ordonnée, dit-on, commence par soi-même. (11)

The translation of this proverb by the translators reveals the linguistic and cultural knowledge of Yoruba language by the translators. They must have researched well into the language and culture before embarking on the work. Here is another example of an idiomatic expression found in the text:

> LTJ: If the snail finds splinters in his shell, he changes house. Why do you stay? (6)
> LLP: Si l'escargot trouve des échardes dans sa coquille, il déménage. Pourquoi t'incruster? (13)

Another culture related issue that can be challenging in the literary text generally is allusion or reference. Allusions are often the real untranslatables in translation work. Lefevere opined that allusions "usually involve some kind of cultural 'shorthand,' and with a word or phrase, which can evoke a situation that is symbolic for an emotion or state of affairs" (qtd. in MacLaren 43). Translators find allusions challenging because they are linked with culture. Soyinka's works often reflect his religious inclinations, like Christianity, and the traditional religious background. Oftentimes, his characters make reference to biblical sayings and Yoruba traditional gods. Here is an example of a biblical reference made by Lakunle in the text:

> LTJ: A prophet has honour except in his own home. (5)
> LLP: Nul n'est prophète en son pays. (12)

This allusion is not rendered well in the translated version. The biblical allusion is found in Luke 4:24 when Jesus was speaking to his people. The French King James version gave this statement as "aucun prophète n'est bien reçu dans sa patrie." This could have been used instead of the translation given by the translators. Another biblical reference made by Baroka is stated below:

> LTJ: Yesterday's wine alone is strong and blooded, child, and though the Christians' Holy book denies. The truth of this, old wine thrives best within a new bottle. (54)
>
> LLP: Seul le vin d'hier est fort et généreux, mon enfant, et malgré le livre saint des chrétiens qui dit le contraire, le vieux vin s'améliore davantage dans une bouteille neuve. (67)

Soyinka also makes reference to the small gods in the traditional Yoruba setting, and these gods are just rendered literally into the French language without explanation, the only adjustment in the translated version is that they were transliterated according to the French graphology.

> LTJ: **Ogun** has said the word. (50)
>
> LLP: **Ogoun** l'a décrété. (63)
>
> LTJ: Below the humming birds which smoke the face of **Sango** … (52)
>
> LLP: au-dessous des oiseaux mouches voltigeant autour de la face de **Shango** … (65)

Here, the translators could have given the equivalence of these small gods' names or better still given an explanation at the footnote of what they signify.

Transliteration is also used for some of the characters' names in order to suit the target language. "Sadiku" is rendered as "Sadikou" while "Lakunle" is rendered in the French version as "Lakounle." Names could also pose a challenge in the translation of Soyinka's text especially *The Lion and the Jewel* that is destined to be performed by different actors in the target language. This portrays the mind of MacLaren as she cited in her work that "the possible difficulty of pronunciation of foreign names should be taken into account for the performance text" (28). In translating Soyinka's play, the translators do take this into consideration by choosing the adaptation approach and adjusting the names to the target culture's rules of spelling and pronunciation.

Conclusion

Translating theatrical works from one language into another has problems which could be different from other kinds of translations. In translating *The Lion and the Jewel* into French, some challenges were encountered by the translators ranging from linguistic to cultural problems. The peculiarity of the author's text also poses some challenges to the translators. This article reveals some of the linguistic and cultural issues that were encountered, and how some of these issues were dealt with by the translators. From the study, it is revealed that the translators did a good job to a very large extent. In all, dramatic translators should always take into consideration the distinctive features of theatre texts, its performability while translating, and also the culture of the target audience.

The result of this research indicates that linguistic and cultural issues which are based on the shared knowledge of the original author and the readers are mostly problematic in the translation and usually demand that the translator do serious research to acquire the necessary background knowledge, and understand whether this background knowledge is at the target language readers' disposal. If not, it is their job to make it available to them through translations, expansions, explanations, and footnotes.

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Tess in Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*: The Other Self of Nature

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Abstract

Thomas Hardy's Tess of the d'Urbervilles *exhibits the life of Tess, a representative of the Victorian woman, who discovers herself in the midst of nature. She concurs with nature both physically and psychologically. Almost all the momentous incidents of her life have a close association with nature. The natural atmosphere, the landscape, the cycle of seasons, and the nocturnal animals introduced in the novel echo the inner rhythms of Tess. She, in fact, acts and reacts in a way that one can metaphorically relate her to nature. Her association with nature raises the question of whether she is a distinguished human being or a part of nature or just another self of nature. This paper, therefore, aims at addressing the metaphorical identity of Tess and reconsidering the relationship between nature and Tess in the light of ecocriticism.*

Keywords: *Ecocriticism, nature, relationship, Tess*

Tess, in Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, has a close association with nature. One notices the depiction of her gradual development and/or struggle to live under the close influence of nature. It shapes her lifestyle and remains in close contact in each phase of her life. Tess, likewise, accepts herself as a true self of nature, and finds herself almost always in nature's lap. The cycle of the seasons, for example, affiliates with the vicissitudes of her life, and, similarly, the disposition of the landscapes covertly concurs with the vital events of her life. In addition, she finds herself evidently associated with different animals, sometimes literally and sometimes figuratively. To be more specific, Tess finds herself merged with nature. Hence, this paper aims at addressing the relationship between Tess and nature in the light of ecocriticism that evaluates the prevalent human-nature connection in literature, and attempts to elucidate Tess metaphorically as the other self of nature.

One of the main qualities of Tess's character is her consistent concern for her family. Like nature, she takes care of her family. This care is, in fact, inevitable because she, as the elder child of her parents, finds herself responsible for the well-being of the family in critical situations, especially after the accidental death of the horse, Prince. Her strong sense of responsibility directs her to the physical and mental struggle that she faces throughout her life. Her sacrifice for her family is no less important than that of nature. Although nature provides human beings with the necessities of life, the latter exploits it by being disloyal. Similarly, Tess intends to do a lot for her family, but ironically, the wrong and overambitious decision of her parents pushes her towards the extreme anguish that she faces. She is a sharp contrast to her mother in ideology and temperament, because "[w]hen they were together the Jacobean and the Victorian ages were juxtaposed" (Hardy 29). These contrastive standpoints contribute a lot to push Tess towards an uncertain future. Tess is very much akin to nature, and receives maltreatment from human agents, just as nature is often mistreated by human beings. In contrast, Hazel Williams views Tess and nature as opposite to each other, and states that "Tess,

the protagonist, Nature, the antagonist, have fought a grim and deadly battle" (40) to win. He also finds that "Tess's struggle to maintain her decency against the forces of her environment is always the cycle of human destiny, a cycle in which man comes out the inevitable loser" (40). I do not concur with him, because they do not exist in contradictory positions, but are closely associated with each other. Tess, in a sense, is an organ of nature and possesses the same qualities as nature – even though sometimes metaphorically. Of course, she has been trying to prevail over her circumstances, and nature never entraps her. Rather it tries to protect her. On the contrary, it is the force of human law that entraps her, and gradually, thrusts her into a distressful and vulnerable situation. However, Tess, as a self of nature, attempts to spring back after every tragic incident in life, yet she fails every time because of the harsh treatment of human beings. Similarly, nature tries to surmount the ill-treatment it receives from human beings, but cannot. In this way, a unity between Tess and nature is established. To explain further, after every poignant incident, like the death of Prince, her seduction by Alec, the birth and death of her son, the desertion by Angel, the displacement of her house, she tries to start her life anew, but every time, human beings thwart her.

Elliott B. Gose, Jr. observes that Hardy, in the novel, "brings together the evolutionary view of man as a product of nature with the anthropological findings about early man's attempt to control nature through primitive rituals" (261). Unlike Gose's observation, my findings posit Tess in close contact with nature, though I support the first portion of the statement: Tess, as a human being, is a part of nature,but she never tries to control it. She tries to survive in the harsh situations that are neither her nor nature's doing. Alternatively, nature treats her as a true representative of itself, and, in response, she merges with nature, and becomes its true self.

An ecocritical interpretation of the relationship between Tess and nature show Tess as another self of nature. "As a critical stance," ecocriticism "has one foot in literature and the other on land; as a theoretical discourse, it negotiates between human and nonhuman" (Glotfelty xix). An ecocritical thought of this text, in a sense, provokes one to see Tess and nature as a surrogate of each other. Tess holds all the values of nature and expresses her nature-like identity throughout the novel. She is entirely devoted to her own identity and to other people, especially to her family members and Angel. Such dedication is, I think, one of the salient features of nature. The other characters, sometimes, admit Tess's strong sense of loyalty and responsibility. For example, Izz assures Angel that "[s]he would have laid down her life for 'ee'" (Hardy 289). Likewise, nature is responsible towards human beings who are, in fact, part of it. In this respect, J. Claude Evans mentions Taylor's belief that:

> the human species, along with all other species, are integral elements in a system of interdependence such that the survival of each living thing, as well as its chances of faring well or poorly, is determined not only by the physical conditions of its environment but also by its relations to other living things. (qtd. in Evans 84)

My understanding of the prevailing human-nature relationship in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, however, harmonizes with Taylor's opinion. Similarly, Donald A. Crosby, in his characterization of nature, opines, "[n]ature is metaphysically ultimate, that is, there is nothing outside, beyond,

or behind it. This statement includes human beings, who must be regarded as an integral part of nature" (21). In the light of this proclamation, I perceive a perfect picture of nature in Tess. Her every aspect of life has, in fact, a fusion with nature. All the natural circumstances – cycle of seasons, landscapes, and animals – bear a close resemblance with the happenings of her life. Among others, one of the direct references of Tess's association with nature is when she works as a field worker. Hardy equates her with the other workers where:

> she becomes part and parcel of outdoor nature, and is not merely an object set down therein as at ordinary times. A fieldman is a personality afield; a field-woman is a portion of the field; she has somehow lost her own margin, imbibed the essence of her surrounding, and assimilated herself with it. (Hardy 100)

Additionally, submissiveness and forgiveness are two of nature's important qualities, which are prevalent in Tess. For instance, in chapter thirty five, Tess pardons Angel for his past affair with someone else without any hesitation. However, when Angel's turn comes, he does not forgive her. Tess even prays, "'I will obey you, like your wretched slave, even if it is to lie down and die'" (Hardy 249). Seeing such references and perceiving Tess's inevitable attachment with the environment, one can question whether Hardy wants to posit Tess in the midst of nature. The question remains, however, why Tess's path is not smooth, and what the ending of Tess does suggest. In this regard, I find Crosby's comment worth mentioning. He reminds us that though "nature clearly is not utterly indifferent to the accomplishments, values, and prospects of human beings" (141) and takes care of them in every possible way, nature also reacts against the maltreatment it receives from human beings. "Nature," Crosby mentions, "also has a destructive side that we should not ignore" (21). The reproachful side includes nature's tendency to take revenge on its exploiters. If Tess is a part of nature, she possesses the quality to take revenge on her exploiters. The murder of Alec is, therefore, a demonstration of that revenge. Though nature endures mistreatment by humans a lot, the fortitude ends at one point. Likewise, Tess's patience ends and she reacts violently by killing Alec. Tess's reaction is similar to that of Moby Dick's. In Melville's *Moby Dick*, one notices that nature takes revenge by killing all the crew of the *Pequod*, except Ishmael, because of the maltreatment they have meted out towards Moby Dick, an agent of nature. In Frank Schatzing's *The Swarm*, nature punishes human civilization, because they destroy the marine ecosystem. Likewise, Tess, another form of nature, punishes Alec by killing him, because he is the main body who is responsible for her sufferings.

Throughout the novel, Tess has a strong association with the landscape. The natural places have an inescapable influence on many of the significant events in Tess's life. One of the most important and sad episodes of her life is her seduction by Alec. This incident occurs in the midst of nature. Like some other distressing incidents of her life, during this one, nature signals something menacing. Nature itself creates a gloomy atmosphere, and "the moon had quite gone down, and, partly on occount of the fog, The Chase was wrapped in thick darkness" (Hardy 82). The seduction is a landmark – though negative – in Tess's life, and leaves a long-lasting scar on her life. The components of nature witness the transition of Tess – from a virgin to a sexually experienced girl, and lament over this. As the narrator states, "[d]arkness and

silence ruled everywhere around. Above them rose the primeval yews and oaks of The Chase, in which were poised gentle roosting birds in their last nap; and about them stole the hopping rabbits and hares" (Hardy 82). Surrounding this incident, one notices no cheerful impression in nature, rather there prevails an all-encompassing obscurity. This dimness and stillness of nature, in a sense, represents Tess's own anguish. One can find an obvious relationship between this forced sexual incident and nature, by considering queer ecology, which asserts that:

> there is an ongoing relationship between sex and nature that exists institutionally, discursively, scientifically, spatially, politically, poetically, and ethically, and it is our task to interrogate that relationship in order to arrive at a more nuanced and effective sexual and environmental understanding. (Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson 5)

Therefore, the seduction scene asserts that Tess is really a part of nature. However, this is not the only case when nature bemoans Tess's sufferings. When Prince, the only means of their income, dies in an accident and Tess becomes pale in horror and regret, nature also showcases a depressing atmosphere. After the incident, the narrator states, "[t]he atmosphere turned pale, the birds shook themselves in the hedges, arose, and twittered: the lane showed all its white features, and Tess showed hers, still whiter" (Hardy 39). This attitude of nature is a clear indication of Tess's nature centeredness and vice versa – both Tess and nature have established a reciprocal relationship. Similarly, when Tess starts her journey to her in-laws' house, the landscape remains tranquil and colorful. It may be said that since she is going there to win her in-laws' heart, and is in a pleasant mood, nature remains in a fine mood. On the other hand, when she returns with a broken heart, the view of nature also changes.

This tendency – the association between nature and Tess – is prevalent in the text from the beginning. Marlott, Tess's birth place, according to Silverman, is a "'virgin territory'" (5). Silverman's interpretation depends on Hardy's description of the village:

> The village of Marlott lay amid the north-eastern undulations of the beautiful Vale of Blakemore or Blackmoor aforesaid– an engirdled and secluded region, for the most part untrodden as yet by tourist or landscape-painter, though within a four hours' journey from London. (18)

This description of the virgin landscape matches with Tess. When she is in Marlott, Tess remains a maid, and after leaving the village she loses her virginity. Though the question of whether or not the change of place has any direct connection with Tess's seduction may arise, the novel indicates a clear association between the incident and nature. One can think that the novelist tries to establish an inevitable bond between the aforementioned two through this narrative.

Talbothays, the dairy where Tess spends the most cheerful episode of her life, is another landscape which exhibits a close tie between Tess and nature. Tess enjoys her life there, and, in fact, no depressing events occur during her stay at Talbothays. She even dreams of beginning a new life with Angel and advances thereby. When she returns from Alec's house after the seduction, she realizes that she will never be happy in Marlott, and therefore, aspires for a

new place to live in; Talbothays is such a place, and she finds contentment here – though this happiness is momentary. However, my focus is on the inseparable bond that Tess has with the landscape. On the one hand, a soothing and pleasant atmosphere prevails here, and on the other hand this place is productive enough to support human beings: "the valley in which milk and butter grew to rankness, and were produced more profusely, if less delicately, than at her home – the verdant plain so well-watered by the river Var or Froom" (Hardy 118). Therefore, one can clearly notice that nature has a close bond with Tess's life. When she passes blissful days, nature also remains pleasant and vice versa.

However, as time passes, some crucial incidents – her marriage to Angel, her confession of the past, and her sad desertion by her husband – happen in Tess's life, and she now takes shelter in Flintcomb-Ash, another farm. Life in this farm is very hard because of the crude nature of the land. Here Tess finds herself in an unwelcome situation, both psychologically and physically. She can only think of her recent past happy days in Talbothays, but cannot experience that any more. One can find that the sufferings of Tess are inherent in nature also: the farm is sterile and very displeasing to live in. Marian rightly observes that it is a "starve-acre place" (Hardy 304). Tess stays here only to bypass her ongoing existential crisis. Flintcomb-Ash is a place that has a close association with Tess's current state.

Actually, nature wants a safe and pleasant position for Tess in the midst of it, and therefore, it teaches Angel a lesson for rejecting Tess. After abandoning Tess, Angel visits Brazil as an "emigrating agriculturist" (Hardy 280), and intends to set up a farm. He lies to his parents about the reason for discarding Tess, where they, specifically his mother, admit Tess as an element of nature: "there are few purer things in nature than an unsullied country maid" (Hardy 280). As he approaches Brazil, without thinking of forgiving his wife, he is "… drenched with thunderstorms and persecuted by other hardships" (Hardy 294). However, he cannot succeed there because of the harsh treatment of nature, and his health cannot endure the atmosphere of the environment. Nature, at this point, is unfriendly to him perhaps because he thrusts Tess towards an uncertain and insecure future. Gradually, a sort of transformation occurs in his mind, and he begins to realize that he has done an injustice to Tess. Through Angel's realization, one can comprehend the teaching of nature, and the association of nature with Tess. Though Angel has a very positive attitude towards nature – he wants to become a farmer, no matter what the inspiration was – nature does not entertain him because he has maltreated Tess, a wing of nature.

Another point worth making is the direct relationship of the cycle of seasons with almost all the important events in Tess's life. The way the landscapes of the novel have a close tie with Tess; in the same way, the seasons concur with Tess's existence. For example, in the summer she feels that her passion is at the highest level, while in the winter she falls in some inevitable problems, yet, in the spring she sees some hope of getting rid of the problems, and tries to do so accordingly. In this regard, Penny Boumelha rightly remarks that the "cycles of season and fertility are everywhere apparent" (xxv) in the novel, and to be more specific, these are prevalent in Tess's everyday life. In the eleventh chapter, Tess loses her maidenhood on a foggy and "chilly" (Hardy 81) September night. This incident shakes her world and she returns to her

native village. Now she lives in the broken world and sees no hope. During that winter, she stays in her parents' home and passes time in absolute depression. However, as time passes and a new season is about to come, this condition changes, and a hopeful feeling comes to her mind: "Tess felt the pulse of hopeful life still warm within her; she might be happy in some nook which had no memories. To escape the past and all that appertained thereto was to annihilate it; and to do that she would have to get away" (Hardy 112). Her optimistic sense to obliterate the sad past comes with a positive outcome in the following spring. She finds a way to forget the past and to live afresh. The narrator states,

> She waited a long time without finding opportunity for a new departure. A particularly fine *spring* came round, and the stir of germination was almost audible in the buds; it moved her as it moved the wild animals, and made her passionate to go. At last, one day in early May, a letter reached her ... a skilful milkmaid was required at a dairyhouse many miles to the southward, and that the dairyman would be glad to have her for the summer months. (112, my emphasis)

She joins the dairy and peacefully lives among other milkmaids for the entire season. This is the most pleasant time in her life. She adapts herself to the new setting and the landscape interiorizes her as well. She forgets her past and hopes to live with Angel in a place where her past is unknown. Her relationship with Angel begins to grow in this dairy. Her sense of love and passion grows high. In a sense, the contentment in Tess's life is now full to the brim. Likewise, the surrounding is also pleasant and compassionate to Tess. The narrator tells us; "Tess had never in her recent life been so happy as she was now, possibly never would be so happy again. She was, for one thing, physically and mentally suited among these new surroundings" (Hardy 144). However, this season changes and in the following winter Tess finds herself in the cruel Flintcomb-Ash, where she has to struggle both psychologically and physically to survive – in the meantime, Angel abandons her, and she falls in a hazardous situation. The nature of the season, in fact, echoes the present condition of Tess. In this respect, Hazel Williams appropriately observes that "[t]he story moves through the seasons, spring, summer, fall, and winter. As the seasons grow stormier, Tess's life also grows stormier" (54), and vice versa.

Tess's nature-centeredness is not limited only in the association with seasons and landscapes. Rather the novel presents Tess's connection with the animals as well. The portrayal of the animals, in fact, represents Tess's actual condition. For example, on her way to Flintcomb-Ash she finds many injured pheasants, feels pity for them, and tries to cease their agony by killing them. At that time, Tess is in a vulnerable position, because her husband has already abandoned her, and she has to support herself and her family. These wretched birds show the internal anguish of Tess, who comforts herself by comparing her plight to theirs:

> "Poor darlings – to suppose myself the most miserable being on earth in the sight o' such misery as yours!" she exclaimed, her tears running down as she killed the birds tenderly. "And not a twinge of bodily pain about me! I be not mangled, and I be not bleeding, and I have two hands to feed and clothe me." (Hardy 298)

Earlier, when in the eighth chapter, Tess tries helplessly to stop Alec from kissing her, one notices the semblance of an animal in her: "she cried at length, in desperation, her large eyes staring at him like those of a wild animal" (Hardy 61). Then there are moments when Tess wanders at night just like the nocturnal animals, "[w]alking among the sleeping birds in the hedges, watching the skipping rabbits on a moonlit warren, or standing under a pheasant-laden bough," in order to avoid the backbiting of people (Hardy 97). At that time, as the narrator comments, "[h]er flexuous and stealthy figure became an integral part of the scene" (Hardy 97).To be more specific, she becomes an essential part of nature. Likewise, in Talbothays, the most pleasing place for Tess, one finds that Tess "wore the look of a wary animal" (Hardy 212). There is a shadow of an animal in Tess's yawn also, and in one particular incident, Angel notices "the red interior of her mouth as if it had been a snake's" (Hardy 187). Besides these references, there are some additional indications of her nature-centeredness. For example, she is compared to "a fly on a billiard-table of indefinite length" (Hardy 120), which perfectly suits her situation. The aforementioned figurative relations between Tess and nature posit her as a true self of nature, and Angel, therefore, sees her as a "daughter of Nature" (Hardy 136).

Tess of the d'Urbervilles is replete with abundant references that indicate Tess's inseparable relationship with nature. She is just like another form of nature. The text displays Tess's association with nature at different levels: almost all the important incidents that happen in her life have a direct connection to nature; the natural landscapes concur with Tess in their attitude; the condition of her life changes with the change of the seasons; and she has an inevitable connection with the animals. Thus the paper tries to shed light on Hardy's representation of Tess not only as a mere component of nature but also as a metaphorical self of nature.

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Trauma and Fiction: Representational Crises and Modalities

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Abstract

Trauma involves a rupture in the temporal and symbolic orders at individual and collective levels. Fictional representation of trauma, therefore, is marked by a problem of referentiality, where mimesis fails and chronology breaks down. The article opens with a discussion on the disorientation in the co-ordinative links between the world, the self, and representational tools in the event of a traumatic experience, which results in the crisis of referentiality. The inadequacy of language as a representational medium on the one hand, and unacknowledgement of extreme events beyond "socially validated reality" on the other, constitute two of the major issues creative artists have to deal with. An extreme event leaves a mnemonic gap in the psyche of the traumatized individual, and the process of recovery involves the gap being filled in with narrative memory, suggesting an epistemological void. Narrative memory acts as the surrogate memory of the traumatic event, which is unavailable to willed recollection. This surrogate memory is compared to Jean Baudrillard's third order of simulation, where a false presence conceals the absence of any basic reality. Recognizing the referential and representational crises at work in rendering traumatic experiences in fiction, the article goes on to explore the ways of bypassing them and discuss the idea of indirect representation in Michael Rothberg's Traumatic Realism: The Demands of Holocaust Representation. *Rothberg believes that an oblique rendition of traumatic events in fiction may be an appropriate representational mode within the conflicting demands of the documentation of reality, meditation on the formal limits by the creative artist, and risky circulation of images in the globalized world. This leads to a deliberation on Anne Whitehead and Laurie Vickroy's idea of the emerging genre of "trauma fiction" with its thematic and stylistic concerns. The article ends with a summary of the representational techniques likely to feature in fictions written on violent events.*

Keywords: *trauma, fiction, referentiality, representation, traumatic realism*

Smile and others will smile back. Smile to show how transparent, how candid you are. Smile if you have nothing to say. Most of all, do not hide the fact you have nothing to say nor your total indifference to others. Let this emptiness, this profound indifference shine out spontaneously in your smile.

— Jean Baudrillard and Chris Turner (*America* 34)

Though many might believe that a faithful rendition of traumatic events should invest any narrative on catastrophe with credibility, there is something fundamentally wrong about trauma being represented in the realistic mode as extreme violence is characterized by a break in the temporal and symbolic orders. Eugene L. Arva shares this view of the extreme as unrepresentable in realistic terms:

Although realistic details may render images believable to readers, traditional realism usually stumbles at their transmission as reflections of rational, understandable

experiences. Slavery, colonialism, the Holocaust and war have constituted themselves as "histories" of extreme events hardly open to rational reflection or understanding. (9)

Psychoanalytically speaking, trauma is too overwhelming an experience to be grasped by the intellect and recorded by memory. It causes a void in time in which the coordination between the self and the world gets completely ruptured; and, a creative artist writing about a traumatic experience attempts to represent a world that has not been comprehended by the self and a self that has been alienated from the world. Mimesis obviously fails him/her as the connections in the representational chain – the world with the self and the self with creative tools (language, for example) break down. Survivors and bystanders of atrocity have often been observed to recount their extreme experiences in incoherent and/or fragmented narrative. This, again, implies a disturbed relationship between the world, the self, and representation, and points to the crisis of referentiality. This renders the linear narrative with causal and chronological links between events impossible. Consequently, realism has never been a preferred mode of the representation of calamity as most fictional works written on the apartheid, colonial oppression, the Holocaust, and the Partition of the Indian subcontinent explicitly exemplify. To be more specific, a traumatic experience causes a split within the self; the dissociated self is where images of violence lie, and these are inaccessible to the willed recollection of conscious self. Images of trauma have a haunting quality – they come back to the survivor or the witness like unlaid ghosts, whether in the form of flashback or nightmare or any other intrusive psychological element. Because of their resistance to willed recollection, these images do not lend themselves freely to verbal or written narrative.

Traumatic images are not two-dimensional; they have a third dimension as figures that dreams, for instance, are made of. Differing with Jacques Lacan who said that the unconscious is like language – a network of signs of endless difference and subject to slippage and spillage (Barry 106), Lyotard conceives of it rather as figural (Powell 20). Language being a two-dimensional system, its representation of extreme phenomena, therefore, tends to suppress some elements of trauma like screams in death camps which the Nazis would drown with loud music (Powell 20). Lyotard believes that any limit event, such as the Holocaust, should remain

> Immemorial – that it [should] remains [sic] being that which cannot be remembered – but also that which cannot be forgotten. Thus, any art attempting to represent the Holocaust should continue to haunt us with its inability to represent the unrepresentable, to say the unsayable. It should continue to haunt us with the feeling that there is something Other than representation. (qtd. in Powell 21)

Lyotard's concern is premised on a modified version of the Freudian concept of the unconscious, but trauma theory emphasizes that the (figural) images of any encounter with extreme violence lie in the dissociated or the split self, which the encounter has caused in the victim. Indeed, the inadequacy of language as a medium of representation has often been pointed out in trauma studies for reasons that are different from Lyotard's. A politico-historio-cultural medium, language falls short in representing trauma as it is an event larger than or beyond the scope of a reality validated by politics, history, culture, etc. It is a system of code that

follows certain rules fashioned by, again, politics, history and culture. Judith Herman's *Trauma and Recovery* gives an account of the development of trauma studies through about one and a half centuries, where she points to the "socially validated reality" as the most significant imperative for any discourse on trauma to occur (8). So, Lyotard as well as trauma theorists are right to underscore the representational crisis of trauma, and this may precisely be the reason why realistic techniques seemed inadequate to creative authors writing on the Partition in 1980s, who denounced it in favor of the more experimental and postmodernist techniques.

The denotative aspect of language – one that assumes an undisturbed connection of language with the external world or referent – is predominant in everyday communication as well as realistic literature, not to mention in scientific discourses. Postmodern literature in general and literature on trauma in particular, however, tend to be based on the connotative – on the multifarious implications of meaning rather than reference. This demands an active and vigilant reading, where the reader explores the multidimensional and connotative textual implications while, at the same time, remaining aware of the pressures of trauma to be suppressed in language from within. Also, the reading of trauma texts needs an intensive use of imagination so as to enable the reader to explore a world that has been out of bounds, a reality beyond the ordinary. Arva uses the term "traumatic imagination" to describe "an empathy-driven consciousness" by which the author transforms trauma into experimental-postmodernist literature (more particularly, Avra refers to the device of magic realism) (5), and the reader actively, though cautiously, steps into a world of unknown phenomena, leading to his/her development of empathy for the traumatized. Each postmodernist text, however, has a world of its own, operated by its own physics, metaphysics and logic, which may or may not have any resemblance to the *real* world. The gravity-defying magic carpet or the return of the dead to life in García Márquez's *Hundred Years of Solitude* should illustrate what being operated by the logic of the world of fiction implies. The world of Newton and the one Marquez creates in his novel do not, therefore, have a referential connection, and the reader needs to be conscious about it. It is necessary to note here that the type of reading being talked about does not aim at vicarious traumatization, but empathy.

The problems of having knowledge about trauma and representing it or the epistemological and representational crises involved in violent events, it would be argued, have an ontological origin, which can be appreciated once the means of recovery from traumatic symptoms are closely looked at. The recovery from trauma starts with a reconstruction by the traumatized individual of his/her violent experience in language, weaving the fragments into a coherent story that can function as surrogate memory for the gap trauma has left in the psyche. This surrogate memory is meant to produce an illusion of consistency in the events the survivor has encountered, thereby restoring some sort of normalcy. The point to emphasize here is that the narrative reconstruction does not require or claim to be the truth – it is just a trick that works. Indeed, survivors' accounts are notorious for their factual imperfection. So, the surrogate memory of the constructed story is in no way mimetic and, for the same reason, not referential. A curious analogy can be drawn between the recovery from trauma and Jean Baudrillard's third stage of simulation as described in his famous essay "Simulacra and

Simulation." At this stage, an image conceals the absence of any basic reality underneath it and is a simulation of some other simulation(s) (170). In other words, a fake presence of reality is feigned when there is none just as the coherent story of the surrogate memory is made up to conceal the absence of the event in the consciousness. This is not the same as saying that the event has never taken place; it undoubtedly has taken place, but has not been registered in memory due to its overwhelming effect on the traumatized. Its reality is manifested in the symptoms of trauma – flashbacks, nightmares, and other psychological intrusions – where the literal and undiluted presence of images of the event are found. The simultaneous presence and absence of the event forms the fundamental paradox of trauma. This puts the accounts of survivors and bystanders always-already in question: their stories attempt to fill in the mnemonic gap, and they do so by borrowing the metaphors and other linguistic tools popular or common in the discourse about such events in their respective cultures. "Madness," "fratricide," and sexual "purity" of women and its "loss," for example, are words and ideas commonly used in discussing the senseless communal violence during and after the Partition of British India in 1947. When a witness uses these words and ideas in his/her account, a story gets fabricated with tissues already present in the social discourse, a simulation takes place with materials from other simulations. Therefore, trauma involves a breaking down of links between the ontological, the epistemological and the representational; this, to repeat the point being made so far in this article, results in the crisis of referentiality. It is exactly here – the crisis of referentiality – that trauma studies and postmodernism intersect.

A related phenomenon, one that Fredric Jameson would lament and Baudrillard would passively describe as the "loss of the real" in the crowd of images that characterizes the postmodern culture (Barry 81), has to be mentioned here. The stakes are high when it comes to an empathic treatment of trauma, for the late capitalist market conditions might very well shape violence into packages of sensationalism as scenes of rapes in the majority of South Asian movies featuring them or extreme violence in high-definition virtual games would confirm. Sensationalist and prurient representation of trauma would fall into the second stage in Baudrillard's four-stage order of simulation, in which the basic reality is perverted (170).

But is there a way of representing violent events of the past in literature by evading the many referential/representational crises outlined above? Indeed, revisiting the atrocious past is one of the major preoccupations of postmodern novelists, examples of whom include Günter Grass, García Márquez, Salman Rusdie, Amitav Ghosh, and others. Each of these novelists apply a combination of techniques, formal devices, and ideas particular to each fiction, but none innocently assume a direct referential connection between the external world turned pell-mell by catastrophe, unmediated or untextualized knowledge about it, and its representation. They revisit the past traumatic events, in Umberto Eco's terms, "with irony" (67). The implications of Eco's "ironical" looking back at the time bygone remains unclear until he offers the following example:

> I think of the postmodern attitude as that of a man who loves a very cultivated woman and knows that he cannot say to her 'I love you madly', because he knows that she knows (and that she knows he knows) that these words have already been written by

Barbara Cartland. Still, there is a solution. He can say 'As Barbara Cartland would put it, I love you madly'. At this point, having avoided false innocence, having said clearly that it is no longer possible to speak innocently, he will nevertheless have said what he wanted to say to the woman: that he loves her in an age of lost innocence. If the woman goes along with this, she will have received a declaration of love all the same. Neither of the two speakers will feel innocent, both will have accepted the challenge of the past, of the already said, which cannot be eliminated; both will consciously and with pleasure play the game of irony … But both will have succeeded, once again, in speaking of love. (67-68)

Eco clearly points out the intertextuality at work in the postmodernist authors' knowledge about the past. Originally formulated by Julia Kristeva and denoting the relationship between texts, especially literary ones, the term "intertextuality" has been expanded and transformed ever since its coinage in 1966 by other theorists. Linda Hutcheon seems to share Eco's idea of it in that both of them view history as textually constructed. She draws a crucial distinction between "facts" and "events" where the latter is the objective reality of any occurrence of the past while the former refers to the textually mediated version of the event that (in)forms latter generations perception of it (89, 119). In this account, having any unmediated direct access to the past is impossible; all that is available is the textually constructed knowledge of it. Therefore, any new text about the past – historical or fictional – has to take an epistemological detour through textual mediations instead of having direct access to the event, which is what both Eco and Hutcheon understand by approaching the past with irony.

Other than the concept of approaching history with epistemological detour through intertextuality, there are other means of ironical or, more precisely, indirect representation, as demonstrated by Michael Rothberg with his concept of "traumatic realism" formulated out of his commentary on American cartoonist Art Spiegelman's contribution to the magazine *Tikkun* titled "Saying Goodbye to Maus." *Maus* is Spiegelman's famous graphic novel serialized from 1980 to 1991, notable for its postmodernist representation of races as animals: Jews as mice and Germans as cats. In this contribution, depicting the artist (who is a Jew and, therefore, a mouse-like figure) looking at a "real" mouse on his palms while the Micky Mouse forms the background, Rothberg detects a parallel of representational demands of the reality or the objective truth of trauma on the one hand and the presence of market forces of image circulation in a globalized world on the other. Also, the artist's meditation on the mouse on his palms implies his reflection on the representational tensions of traumatic events:

Fig. 1. Spiegelman, "Saying Goodbye to Maus." Tikkun (1992) 44-45

To be more specific, Rothberg points to three conflicting demands in the representation of trauma: "a demand for documentation, a demand for reflection on the formal limits of representation, and a demand for the risky public circulation of discourses on the events" (7). Acknowledging the crisis of referentiality and the inadequacy of realism, he still sees a

> possibility of *indirect* reference through the self-conscious staging of the conundrum of representing historical extremity. The mouse that the artist holds in his hands is not the real itself, but it is an object of knowledge and effect of the real that points toward the real's foundational absence from representation. The abject and unsightly body of the mouse *moves us* toward the sight of trauma. (103-104, italics original)

Rothberg recognizes the paradox of the simultaneous absence and presence at the core of any traumatic experience. He also agrees with what has already been discussed as Baudrillard's third stage of simulation: the fictionality of the surrogate memory and its formation from the prevalent cultural discursive materials. Rothberg finally arrives at the conclusion that Spiegelman's drawing demonstrates his formulation of traumatic realism, highlighting its dual commitment: "[I]t seeks to present the real by representing the fictionality of the realist contract; and it recognizes realist discourse's production of the real as an accidental effect of representation. As such, this drawing is an example of … traumatic realism" (105).

It is worthwhile at this point to discuss the new genre of trauma fiction and some of its representational modalities. To conceive of the idea of trauma fiction, according to Anne Whitehead, involves "a paradox or contradiction" (3); it refers to the fictionalizing and narrativizing of an event that is characterized by its epistemological and representational crises. However, the last three decades have seen an overwhelming interest in the violent past and its memory in academia as well as representational media. An important reason for this is the popular idea of the Holocaust as a unique "rupture" of human history and the demand to memorialize it (83). The Vietnam War and its consequences for the American society have also contributed to the so-called "memory boom" by creating an urgent political climate for ethical remembrance. All this has impacted the fictional medium, and Whitehead is right to identify the post-war legacy as one of the contributing factors for the proliferation of trauma fictions, the other two factors being postmodernism and postcolonialism.

In an attempt to "establish meaningful connections with the past," postmodern fiction undermines the metanarratives of history while appreciating the complex dynamics of memory as well (Whitehead 82). By pushing the limits of conventional narrative techniques, postmodernist narratives, especially trauma fiction, highlight the fragility of narrative conventions under the weight of trauma. On the other hand, trauma fiction shares with postcolonialism the urge to salvage the marginalized and repressed voices back to the public consciousness. According to Whitehead, "[W]ith an interior and private act of memory" or rather remembrance, heterogeneity of the accounts of the past replaces the often homogenous public memory (82).

Whitehead identifies a few stylistic features, namely "intertextuality, repetition and a dispersed or fragmented narrative voice," recurring in fictions on trauma (84). These features predominate among the formal devices, since they effectively mimic the symptoms of traumatic pathology in fiction. For instance, intertextual echoes between texts draw the audience away from the expressed to the repressed. In other words, a resurfacing of the previously silenced voices takes place through intertextuality. Another literary device almost invariably used in trauma fictions is repetition that may occur "at the levels of language, imagery or plot" investing a "symbolic aura" to whatever is repeated (86). This also mirrors the temporal disjunction at the core of any traumatic experience (86). The third strategy – a dispersed or fragmented narrative voice – signals the collective dimension of the experience of catastrophe; the multiplicity of narratorial voice suggests different experiential perspectives of trauma.

Laurie Vickroy characterizes trauma narratives (fictions, memoirs, etc.) in *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction* as not only the linguistic representations of traumatic events, but ones that internalize their rhythms, processes and uncertainties (3). This requires an engagement on the part of the audience with "personalized, experientially oriented means of narration" that expand their range of awareness of catastrophic events and their individual and collective implications vis-à-vis each other by luring them into "uncomfortable and alien material, sharing victims' pain with readers, shifting between what can and cannot be revealed" (3-4). Personalized narration of trauma necessarily integrates non-linear and fragmentary features of testimonies on the stylistic level, bearing witness to the past through individual viewpoints that ultimately results in a collective witnessing as readers are engaged empathically (5).

Vickroy mainly concerns herself with the modalities of representation that she believes help engage readers narratively and stylistically. One authorial approach, according to her, involves the creation of dialogical interaction between testimonial elements and multiple subject positionings (27). Multiple voices of characters and narrators bearing witness to traumatic pasts situate the reader within the struggle for accounts of and responses to oppression, the responsible remembrance, and defensive amnesia, thereby giving them a sense of being within the traumatic condition. The complex internal conflicts may illustrate "a multiple view of self in reaction to extraordinary circumstances" (28). Putting the reader in the disoriented positions similar to those of the victim's through frequent "shifts in time, memory, affect, and consciousness," the narrative reveals the chaotic world of trauma that remains unseen by the reader, who is lucky enough not having to experience it first hand (28).

In the final analysis, a summary of the representational modalities of fictions dealing with extreme events in the light of the theoretical discussion above may be warranted here. These modalities include fragmented narrative, disturbed temporality, localized or alternative view of history, traumatic realism, and intertextuality. Firstly, the dissociation of ego by a traumatic experience may be represented with fragmented or dispersed narratorial voices. Secondly, traumatic re-enactment may manifest in fiction through temporal disjunction. The devices of repetition and the figure of the ghost, for example, may be used to imply the insistent recurrence of the past in the present. Thirdly, a profound skepticism to metanarratives may result in the celebration of the provisional and contingent, consequences of which may include the representation of alternative histories and localized views of history. Fourthly, events in the fiction may be represented through indirect means rather than "realistically" in the traditional sense of the term. The narrative mode of traumatic realism requires the author to take the fact into consideration that the knowledge of the events being represented is mediated. And finally, intertexts may bring out the memories and histories that are repressed in the dominant discourses. There may be an underlining of the intertextual elements so as to make the reader conscious of the act of revisiting history in fiction with irony, but not innocence. Fiction writers might use any one or, more often than not, a set of these techniques outlined above to deal with the representational crises posed by traumatic events.

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Spaces and Sexuality in Ernest Hemingway's "A Very Short Story"

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Abstract

Ernest Hemingway is an influential writer of twentieth-century American literature. His personal experiences and involvement in the First World War have somehow emerged in many of his major works. "A Very Short Story," published as a chapter in the 1924 Paris edition titled In Our Time*, covers the same underlying war dimensions found abundantly in his other works. Despite the narrative brevity of it, the two page story might present a vast cartographic experience for the readers who, along with the characters, can travel from one place to another. All spaces – both public and private – are so fleetingly transiting here that they altogether generate a fragmentary vision of the war history. The story is centeredaround a nurse named Luz who has developed a romantic relationship with an unnamed soldier during World War I. The major concerns of the text – the war realities and aftermath of the psycho-physical struggle of these two individuals within the spatio-temporal settings – facilitate an introspective look into the text. The text particularly deals with a variety of spaces within the narrative; for example, some major cities of two countries – Italy and America. These spaces – interior and exterior – play a significant role to form a viable textual understanding because they construct the background of the protagonists' brief romance and the following submersion into a diseased and depressed sexuality. From this perspective, the paper will attempt to discuss the intertwined functionality of spaces and sexuality in this text of Hemingway's.*

Ernest Hemingway's "A Very Short Story" was published in 1924 and later reprinted in 1925. The story discusses an unsuccessful affair of a World War I soldier with a nurse named Luz. The war realities and its aftermath is the major focus of this narrative. It has also emphasized on the representation and effects of war psychology on the modern relationships between human beings. The spatial setting of the text are varied, and their significance on constructing the story play a role in interpreting it from critical viewpoints in which space and time affect the textual understanding of readers. The text particularly deals with a variety of spaces within the narrative; for example, some major cities of two countries– Italy and America– and a few interior spaces appear with a wartime dimension and restlessness that condition and affect the relationship of the protagonists. All the spaces, both public and private, interior and exterior, produce a narrative map in a two-page story, thereby placing the cartographic experiences through the narrative. In this regard, Robert Tally's words are helpful to understand such a strategy of all-embracing territorial inclusions in this text of Hemingway's:

> The act of writing itself might be considered a form of mapping or cartographic activity. Like the mapmaker, the writer must survey territory, determining which features of given landscape to include, to emphasize, or to diminish. ... The writer must establish the scale and the shape, no less of the narrative than of the places in it. (45)

The narrator's position, therefore, appears in the story as of a cartographer, sharing or

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recording or reporting the private life of two individuals being transformed and transforming themselves in different spaces. In this paper, I would like to explore how those spaces construct the background of a brief romance and its transformation into a diseased sexuality, that is, a sign of closure in their mutual quest for a place to reunite.

The text tends to display a journey of two characters from one space to the next where their lives are patterned and constructed in relation with the spatio-temporal conditions. For instance, the nights at the hospital where Luz stayed for three months (at a stretch) with her lover apparently refer to their intimate longing and deep commitment for each other; the three-month sacrifice of Luz's, especially, marks on the surface the strength of their bonding in this private space. Even though the hospital is not a designated place to affirm an affair and representsthe selfless love of a woman for a wounded soldier, their initial relationship status here transforms the stereotypical functionality of the space in the narrative, turning it into a breeding ground of hope and desire, not of sufferings and clichéd monotony of diseases.

However, it has also become a platform of repressed sexuality when the soldier's "thought of Luz in his bed" indicates an unfulfilled sexual yearning. The basic nature of a hospital does not suggest a romantic surrounding for lovers, and this repression, thus, might stem out as much from a personal ground as from unfavorability, though it is a social construct, of the place that might marginalize them as lovers and situate them in between the nurse-patient binary. The conflict lies between the normative social behavior and the pathological status of the place, inducing inescapable fear and anxiety in the soldier's unconscious:

> The world in which we are always situated is not of our own making, but our very essence (that is, existence itself) requires us to shape our world. The human condition is, as we saw earlier, fundamentally one of "not being at home," which calls to mind Lukac's assessment of modernity as a state of "transcendental homelessness." But this then invites a discussion of the ways in which the anxiety ridden person engages with the defamiliarized or uncanny space in which [s/he] finds [him]/herself. (Tally 67)

In addition, later it transpires to be a transit point from where they can decide to move on to a further level, namely, the church, an official institution to socialize the intimacy in an established way through marriage so that their uncannily over-romanticized feelings, generated in a hospital room, come to an end in a socially and culturally coded format.

From another viewpoint, Luz's sleepless nights to attend someone who is her lover but not a patient in that sense displays an aberration from professional morality, and this deviance portrays her more as a feminine personality rather than a professional nurse. She has been objectified towards male needs, being a private attendant of a man and appearing subserviently in his repressive unconscious/dream. Conversely, it might also suggest a deep influence of patriarchal authority over Luz's actions, and so when she acts, it seems that she is not an active agent determining what her role should be in that situation; rather, she seems to have felt an inescapable force of patriarchy/patriarchal expectations set onto her psyche. Firstly, her spending nights in that hospital room tends to manifest her unconscious feminine mind setup tending to live up to the expectation of a male society the idea of which comes

on to the surface while some "they" who are the "few patients" (no reference to their sexes in the narrative though) in that hospital are happy about her active feminine role. Secondly, she seems to be a passive recipient of the consequences, when some other "they" "were glad to let her" doher nursing duty as if this particular "they" have the authority to "let her" or not. While the first assumption suggests a bit of agency within her, the next points at male authority. Here, the deictic pronoun "they" could be a proper replacement of the male gaze that is constantly observing her performances and judging her gender roles according to male "standards."

In this case, she is positioned as a mother/wife, nursing a child/husband in time of necessity, especially when the safety of a nation is at stake. The war time responsibility of a woman is what Luz is performing at the very outset of the novel, that is, taking care of a wounded nation in the form of her lover, and which is what the patriarchy expects from women. According to Asha Sen, a postcolonial feminist writer, the sanctity and purity of middle-class women, be they white or colored, had been an integral part of the society in a way that the patriarch nation then decides to make a demarcation of social spaces into home and world and suggests to put its women into the"ghar" (or "home") while the "bahir" (or "world") is to be explored by the men (125). This idea stems from the nationalist point of view:

> The world is the external, the domain of the material; the home represents one's inner spiritual self, one's true identity. The world is a treacherous terrain of the pursuit of material interests, where practical considerations reign supreme. It is also typically the domain of the male. The home in its essence must remain unaffected by the profane activities of the material world – and woman is its representation. (Chatterjee 120)

However, the discourse seeks to hide, but unfortunately reflects, the sheer inability of a nation-state to give its women shelter outside of the "home," thereby delimiting their access to the "world." This sense of curtailed/limited freedom for women imposed by the normative nationalist discourse indirectly makes them vulnerable outside of the "ghar." It appears that when the nation-state itself does not prescribe "bahir" for its women, their sanctity faces risks outside of "ghar." "Home" is still a place where women are supposed to perform while the "world" is designed/considered as challenging and masculine in every sense. In one survey done by ONS analysis of research, it is found that British women still do more household chores and are involved in childcare more than men in England: "The Office for National Statistics said that, when it came to unpaid chores at home, women were doing almost 40% more than men on average" (BBC News). This number suggests that the hegemonic discourse of gender roles that comes from the patriarchal center is also practiced beyond the periphery of third world nations. Therefore, the category of women in the world universally slides into the portrayal of subjugation in the face of male-dominance. If the picture is so crude in the east, it seems rather subtle and thin in the west. The conflict, therefore, lies in between the center and periphery, and the entrapment of women is not only a political issue, as it seemed at first in the works of first wave feminists, but also a cultural and historical facticity.

Given this home/world binary discussed above, the representation of the hospital generates a picture of the "home" where Luz, like other women, takes care of her lover while the "world," a designated place for males, can, of course, be the "battlefield/front" where he should actively participate. Thus, the hospital and battlefield might work out as two metaphors for "home" and the "world" in the story, and if we put the metaphors into perspective, they might take the interpretation further towards the dichotomy of central and periphery, the same center and periphery state that draws a demarcation line between home and the world. Since the hospital represents the functionality of home, giving a different kind of bedroom image, it acts as a peripheral zone in the context of the story, marginalizing the romanticism of Luz that cannot grow or mature out of that diseased area. On the contrary, the battle front as a power symbol of male strength, and therefore of a nation, cannot respond to female emotions verbally put into letters, fifteen of which, thus, remain unheard and unanswered. In this way, the relationship ends up trapped in two different conflicting places which are gendered in either way.

A British geographer Doreen Massey writes in her book *Space, Place and Gender* that all places are inevitably gendered:

> Space and place, spaces and places, and our senses of them (and such related things as our degrees of mobility) are gendered through and through. Moreover, they are gendered in myriad different ways which vary between cultures and over time, and this gendering of space and place both reflects and has effects back on the ways in which gender is constructed and understood in the society in which we live. (185-186)

To reduce the possibility of entrapment in such oxymoronic gendered spaces, the protagonists both, therefore, go to church because "they wanted to get married, but there was not enough time for the banns, and neither of them had birth certificates" (65). The only way out of this spatial distances is to find out a neutral space for both, where they can socially acknowledge the affair and place it in an unbiased space. The attempt to search for that imagined space (which is an impossibility in the context of the story) has been an essential part of their commitment, a space called "home" where their "boy and girl affair" gets acknowledged and fulfillment through marriage, a normative social status.

Luz's attention to the "home," far from the real spaces involved in their life, stereotypes her gender role. The home she imagines makes a difference with the places in Italy she experiences at present, the places that could deny and suppress her sexuality. They might need a neutral space elsewhere, be it New York, far from Italy that allows her identity to shift from a lover to a wife, from marginalized section to center. In addition, the transformation becomes necessary to alleviate her status in the social hierarchy, and it has not been possible in war-torn spaces of Italy, so she wants to cross the border of the real spaces and plans to move to her imagined space where raising a family with a successful man with a job and financial security will facilitate desires traced to her female genetics.

However, the quest for the space has been more intensified in their journey by train from Padua to Milan. The Milan Station separates them; it is the separator like all other spaces

they belonged to earlier. Even though the desired home in New York could function as a connector, it cannot work out (he does not return there ever nor is there any mention of his return) in a good way either and it never appears in the narrative after that. Interestingly, the two separate places – Pordenone and Chicago – they go to from Milan are quite similar in what consequences they bring to life. Luz cannot marry the Major she meets in Pordenone, and the soldier contracts a sexual disease by mating a girl in a taxi cab at a Chicago loop. All their hopes and desires do not find fulfillment in any place whatsoever; rather, the uncanny representation and refusal tendency of all the spaces take them far away from constructing a utopian space essential for their relationship to sustain.

The apparent failure of the places in the text is more deeply connected with fragmented visons of their life that tend to survive the aftereffects of war. Their separation from each other is intensified through unfulfilled sexual/family bonding, and the impact of distressed spaces invite excruciating experiences of diseased sexuality and repressed desires in life. Thus, to make a family/home seems as impossible as to take refuge at a homely space, be that in United States or Italy. The void in between is of an engulfing kind – so much so that it might make the Chicago loop incident a palpable possibility. Therefore, the characters of Hemingway's story are entrapped eternally in an unfavorable time and space together from which no return has been possible. The narrative structure presents layers of different places that fleet so fast that their journey records the time of failure and the restlessness of modernity.

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Jason and Medea's Relationship in *Medea*: A Postcolonial Analysis

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Abstract

Medea in Euripides' Medea *murders her two sons to take revenge on her husband Jason who has married the Corinthian princess Glauce for royal power. However, little attention has been paid towards the cause behind the killing of her sons. This paper will examine the marital relationship between Medea and Jason from the perspective of the colonizer and the colonized and it will show Medea as the victim colonized who kills her brother and leaves her native land Colchis to marry Jason. Jason is presented as the oppressor colonizer who betrays Medea without whom he could have never achieved the Golden Fleece. The terms colonizer and colonized which are at the heart of the postcolonial theory are hardly applied with the play* Medea. *Therefore, analyzing this topic from the present-day postcolonial theory adds a new perspective to this Greek play.*

Keywords: *colonizer, colonized, postcolonialism, Medea, Jason*

Colonialism - Colonizer and Colonized

Colonialism is described by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin in *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* as "the specific form of cultural exploitation that developed with the expansion of Europe over the last 400 years" (45). It is also the implanting of settlements on a distant territory (122). Ania Loomba defines colonialism as the conquest and control of other people's land and goods (8). Many postcolonial critics have focused on the terms "colonizer" and "colonized" which are present at the heart of postcolonial theory. For example, Edward Said thinks that the west or the colonizer refers to the east or colonized as the "other" and it is inferior to the west (qtd. in Barry 193). John McLeod suggests that colonizers seize foreign land for settlement (7) and that they consider the colonized as savage (77). Also, the colonizers suffer from displacement and search for their identity (11-14). Here I would like to add that colonizers seek power and they dominate the powerless class barbarously like the British colonizers who ruled the Africans as well as the Indians.

Postcolonialism

Postcolonialism has been defined by various critics. Elleke Boehmer addresses it as the "historical, political, cultural and textual ramifications of the colonial encounter between the west and the non-west, dating from the sixteenth century to the present day" (qtd. in Waugh 340). For Hans Bertens, postcolonial theory emphasizes the tension between the metropolis and the former colonies (200). It questions the aggressively expansionist imperialism of the colonial powers and in particular the system of values that supported imperialism of the colonizing powers and that it sees as still dominant within the western world (200). Another notable characteristic of postcolonialism is that it analyzes literature produced by cultures that developed in response to colonial domination, from the first point of colonial contact to the present (Tyson 418). Importantly, John McLeod identifies three features of postcolonialism in a literary context:

1) Reading texts produced by writers from countries with a history of colonialism, primarily those texts concerned with the workings and legacy of colonialism in either the past or the present.
2) Reading texts produced by those that have migrated from countries with a history of colonialism, or those descended from migrant families, which deal in the main with diaspora experience and its main consequences.
3) In the light of theories and colonial discourses, re-reading texts produced during colonialism; both those that directly addresses the experiences of Empire, and those that seem not to. (33)

The rise of this theory takes place for several noteworthy reasons. The demise of former colonial powers at the end of the twentieth century led to the heyday of postcolonialism. South Africa, India, Ghana, Nigeria and Kenya got independence in the years 1931,1947,1957,1960, and 1963 respectively. The First World War and the Second World War lessened the powers of colonizers and thus colonialism came to an end. This led to outbursts of various sensitive voices from former colonized nations against colonialism.

The postcolonial theory mainly deals with various literary pieces which study the encounter between the colonizers (oppressors) and the colonized (oppressed). This theory also throws light on those voices which talk about the rights of the colonized subaltern class. Moreover, it expresses the inferiority of the colonized race whose lands are taken by the colonizers or those at the center of power. Aside from these areas, the hypocrisy as well as the corruption of the colonizers who exploit the colonized class is criticized in postcolonial theory. Edward Said in *Orientalism* argues that the relationship between the Occident and the Orient is a relationship of power, of domination (5) and it indicates western superiority over Oriental backwardness (7). Overall, the Oriental is looked down upon as irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, different. Thus, the European is rational, virtuous, mature, normal (40) and Orientalism is a western style for having authority over the Orient (88).

Another noteworthy idea in postcolonial discussion is the concept of the subaltern. This is a term adopted by the Marxist scholar Antonio Gramsci to refer to those groups in society who are subject to the hegemony of the ruling classes (qtd. in Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 215). As reported by Bertens, it is a term which categorizes those who are lower in position and lower in rank (212). Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak associates this term with women who are shadowy figures with no discourse (qtd. in McLeod 193). In the case of colonialism, the subalterns are the suppressed, powerless, and voiceless Africans who are always at the background or periphery.

Greece does not strictly fall into the idea of a colony. However, in the case of *Medea*, Euripides' famous play, written in 431 BC, we see the focus on the strained marital life of Jason and Medea that is akin to the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. According to Greek mythology, Medea, the enchantress of Colchis, marries Jason but years later he abandons her by marrying Glauce, the Corinthian Princess, for power. This angers Medea to such an extent that she murders Glauce and ultimately kills her two sons in order to punish Jason for his adultery.

Many critics focus on the colonizer-like cruel trait of Medea. Reid and Gillett call Medea a violent woman who follows vicious means like cruelty, hatred, jealousy, vindictiveness, callousness and greed in her life (20). Stuart Lawrence even goes to the extent of calling Medea a "barbarian and naturally passionate and therefore more likely to kill" (51). Other critics like Kitto throws light on the positive aspects of Medea who loves her children and Jason (192). Besides these views, Aristide Tessitore thinks that Medea is the "most glorious of Greek Heroes" because of her boldness and determination with which she cries out against Jason (595). One critic, Wertheim, has already defined Jason as a colonizer (338). This means that these critics are throwing light on the victimization of Medea.

A Postcolonial Analysis of *Medea*

In my paper, I will first analyze the character of Jason from a non-Eurocentric perspective which emphasizes his brutality and cunningness. I will then connect Medea with the concept of the Other, alterity and other lineaments of postcolonial theory. Finally, the terms of postcolonial theory like colonizer and colonized will be associated with Jason and Medea. Hence, the manifestation of Medea in this Greek play from the modern 20th century colonized postcolonial perspective as the subjugated and oppressed wife will remain the pivotal aspect of this paper.

I consider Medea as the representative of the colonized African people who are dominated and controlled by superior powers of white rulers although she successfully handles her revenge and mercilessly kills her two boys. Therefore, Jason emerges here as the brutal force of destruction and Medea a captive woman who fights for her authority like the Africans. So, Medea is the colonized and Jason is the colonizer.

To begin with, Medea is displaced from her home and must stay in Greece which is not her motherland. Her dislocation from her home connects her with the Other or the colonized people who are disassociated from their own root, ethnicity as well as race. Medea's displacement is more abject because she was not abducted or taken by force. She was beguiled and compelled to commit crimes that make her situation even more complicated. Jason becomes her identity for a short time but soon the colonizer Jason neglects Medea when greater prospects for capitalism appear in front of him. Jason also belittles Medea's Colchis as "barbarous" (25). Medea wants to commit suicide when Jason forsakes her, "If only I were dead!"(12). The outbursts of Medea like "O my father, my city, you I deserted" (14) and "I have no city" (16) reveals the psychological turmoil of Medea who has forsaken her native land for Jason.

Furthermore, Jason represents the occident as he believes in settlement and establishment in the land of Corinth. He renounces Medea because of her difference or inferior status but, in reality, it is his second marriage which shows his moral inferiority as well as degradation. His cruel nature makes him a mirror image of the whites who massacred the lives of the subordinate oriental people. To Jason, Medea is a woman whom he has brought from the "land of savages," (50) and who must be exiled though he used her before to obtain the Golden Fleece. The question that arises here is whether Medea is actually uncivilized. The

Eurocentric colonizers have always looked down upon those whom they have subdued. They criticize the subjects as harmful, wild, savage, and uncivilized. Postcolonial theory defines these allegations as false because Africans had a rich culture and language, and are not savages as the fabricated stories of the whites would have the world believe. In fact, it is the colonizers who have looted the rich wealth of the Africans. It is not Medea's uncivilized nature but it is her love for Jason which leads her to commit crimes. Jason used Medea to obtain the Golden Fleece and similarly, the Europeans used the Africans to enrich their own countries. Just like the West, Jason also supposes in a self-righteous manner that he has bestowed a great favor on Medea by bringing her from her savage land.

To look at things impartially, Jason owes his success to Medea, a native of Colchis, to a great extent. Medea stoops too low while she betrays her father, kills her brother, kills Jason's enemy to bestow the Golden Fleece on him. Without the help of Medea, it would have been quite impossible for Jason to rise in status. Shockingly, Jason gives all the credit for his successful voyage to Aphrodite. Similarly, the British colonizers who ruled over Africa as well as India were also indebted to the inhabitants of these places who helped them with land and welcomed the colonizers wholeheartedly. Ironically, Medea who is "mad with love for Jason" (9) is betrayed by Jason and this parallels her distress to the Africans who were tricked by the colonizers. Hence, Jason who marries "for a royal bed" (10) and wants his sons to prosper with "brothers of royal blood" (27) is out and out a colonizer. The text of *Medea* may very well fall into the category of postcolonial literature because this plot revolves around the character of Jason who hinges on Medea to obtain the Golden Fleece but later deceives her for economic enrichment. In this manner, he snatches the rights and space of Medea and turns her into a colonized entity. He appears as the dominant colonizer who hardly considered the tribulations of his wife. Postcolonial theories take into account those literary pieces where a human being or a whole race is dominated by another human being or an ethnic group. In *Medea*, Jason wants to control Medea and thus the play becomes a topic of study in postcolonial theory.

In addition, the triumph of Medea at the end of the play highlights the freedom and success of the colonized African over Jason or the colonizers. Just like the superior race, Jason considers Medea unintelligent, foolish, barbarous, and irrational. Jason identifies Medea's agony as stemming out of "sex-jealousy" (26). Medea frees herself from the mastery of Jason by committing the murders as she believes that "no one shall take my children from me" (33). So, she epitomizes the subservient selves who are emancipated after their long struggle against the occidental group.

Medea could have accepted Jason's second marriage if she desired wealth. But Jason's infidelity triggers her sheer fury. It crushes her heart, leading to her searing wretchedness. Along with this, she is also aware of the inferior position of her children under the authority and domain of a powerless father and an enemy state. This situation is just like the slave women of Africa who give birth to powerless children of their white masters. She fights for the identity, existence, honor, and rights of her children. Thus, she is the voice of all those colonized people who want independence from the supremacy of the whites.

Although we pity Jason when he is not permitted to touch the dead bodies of his two sons, we must remember that he is culpable for his own downfall. He deserves the deepest wound for his heinous misdeed. Medea is just when she accuses Jason as the shameless, unmanly, "filthy coward" (23) as it is he who deceives Medea by marrying secretly. It is the "treachery" (50) of Jason which leads to the unclean, abhorrent, vile gross pollution perpetrated by Medea's act of infanticide.

Turning to the play, we can notice that Jason evinces the sheer desire for political supremacy. He is too cautious about his own space, identity, and individuality. When Medea is the other or inferior, he seeks for more imperialistic power in Corinth. His marriage is only a political avenue to build his own territory. Jason is selfish in matters of power and he is greedy for wealth. To him, material gains become his pride. According to him, it is not a misdeed to suppress his wife for the sake of riches. He forgets about Medea with whose help he triumphantly bore away the Golden Fleece. Coupled with this, he thinks he has done a favor to Medea, the princess of a brutal race called Colchis, by bringing her to the civilized city of Greece. His ideas are the main features of the occidental beliefs which postcolonial theory discusses in detail.

Moving on to Medea who is a nonentity in Greece, it is seen that she sinks into despair as her identity of a wife is destroyed. She becomes an alter ego or the Other in the life of Jason as he marries for the second time. Cruelty of the occidental force as depicted by Jason makes Medea come face to face with the reality that she has been mistreated, her individuality has been ravaged, and her children will be marginalized in the future. Her rebellion is against those who have violated her and her children's rights. Therefore, Jason appears as a domineering husband who has stigmatized the loyalty of the marriage and has deprived Medea from her matrimonial privileges. She is a subaltern woman who becomes a subject as well as an object in the hands of Jason and Creon. Jason has seized her marital rights and this is her struggle to establish her individuality. This quest for identity, equality, as well as freedom from a restricted and chained world remains the indispensable feature of postcolonial theory.

Conclusion

All in all, it can be seen that Medea is not merely the oppressed woman whose husband has married another woman and decided to forsake her and her children. In leaving her motherland for her husband, Medea became the colonized woman who finds no security and status in her supposed master's abode, but at the same time, she is the embodiment of independence in her struggles to overcome her subordinate ranking. Jason seeks to dominate her like the colonizers by depriving her of her marital rights. And, in doing so, he also devalues his children and reduces them to a state of subordination. Medea's acts of rebellion, therefore, place her in the position of the rising colonized who pursued and gained freedom, albeit at a very high price.

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"WO"man of the People: Gender Roles, Nationhood, and National Identity in Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*

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Abstract

Gendered assumptions of nationalism have been an integral part of liberation and post-liberation theory and fiction resulting in the construction of disempowered national identities for women in the modern African states. The narratives of idealization and mythologizing sketch women in the developing literary canvas as symbolic or biological figures who had no active social or political roles or voices. This paper focuses on how gender roles in national identity and nation-building have evolved in the works of the major male African writer Chinua Achebe. It examines the narratives that have reinforced or challenged Achebe with particular focus on how the portrayal of women in his final novel stands him as a progressive in terms of a new vision of the role and space of women in modern Africa.

Keywords: gender roles, patriarchal ideology, liberation and post-liberation theory, national identity, mythologizing

Until fairly recently, most literature on African nationalism has generally been gender-blind. The rhetoric of liberation always appears to have been emphatically a rhetoric of unity and equality, especially for all who partook in the struggle for national liberation. However, the undeniable fact is that the concept of nation has ultimately been assumed and represented, both historically and globally, as the property of men. The obvious reason is perhaps that the "nation" itself has always been gendered as a feminized entity, and, as in the case of all other feminized entities, the claimants to ownership and control are men. These gendered assumptions of nationalism have been an integral part of liberation and post-liberation theory and fiction resulting in the construction of disempowered national identities for women in the modern African states. The focus of this paper is on how gender roles in national identity and nation-building have evolved in the works of the major male African writer Chinua Achebe with respect to the narratives that have reinforced or challenged him.

In a purely male traditional African world-view, women are mostly relegated to passive and supportive roles of wife and bearer of children to dynamic history-shaping men. At most, women are given the role of keepers of tradition and culture. As a consequence of this patriarchal division of gender roles, in the discourses of nationhood or nationalism (whether historical narratives or fictional ones) the tendency has always been to champion the male ideals of heroism and military prowess. In the early part of the spectrum of African literature, which was predominantly a male venture, women were portrayed as mythological goddesses, mother-earth figures or prophetesses who were valued for their powers of fertility or religious sanctity. The narratives of idealization and mythologizing sketch women in the developing literary canvas as symbolic or biological figures who had no active social or political roles or voices. To be fair to the early postcolonial writers, women were indeed ascribed these roles and the most significant social power a woman held (usually women beyond child-bearing age of

no other use to men) was as priestess or prophetess. Thus those who started writing with the aim of portraying historically accurate societies ended up portraying this patriarchal world order.

Although the pre-colonial societies might well have been dominated by male dynamism, they still had a place for women. Women shared social roles and, in the case of some matrilineal tribes, a significant amount of political roles. The advent of western colonialism brought about a drastic restructuring of socio-economic and political systems, while changing the dynamics of family structures. Colonialism, with its gendered hierarchy of society and culture, escalated the process of the marginalization of women, a process that seemed to have gained further impetus in the "postcolonial" period. As Elleke Boehmer observes,

> The feminization of the male colonized under empire had produced, as a kind of reflex, an aggressive masculinity … Nationalist movements encouraged their members, who were mostly male, to assert themselves as agents of their own history, as self-fashioning and in control. Women were not so encouraged. (224)

Although during the years of the struggle for liberation and post-independence nation-building, African women stood shoulder to shoulder with men to fight for and develop their nations. Regrettably, recognition of women for their active contributions and endowment of independent political and social identities have been extremely stunted in both historical and literary narratives. This, as Cynthia Enloe like Boehmer, points out, was a reaction to colonial disempowerment leading to nationalisms that "typically sprung from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation and masculinized hope" (44). Thus, during both colonial and postcolonial times, women were marginalized in both spheres of nationalist political activities and nationalist rhetoric.

The continued stereotypical and inadequate representation of women's roles and voices in the national struggles and even in the new intellectual modern societies was interrogated and contested by the first wave of female creative African writings from the late '60s and early '70s. This wave includes writers like Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta, and Ama Ata Aidoo, and theorists such as Ogundipe-Leslie. This new wave of female narratives that portrayed African women in contestatory ways debunked the hitherto dominant male ideology by foregrounding the contradictions, complexities, and ambiguities of women's histories. They brought into focus a new location of women within nationalist struggles. This body of African literature protested against the double subjugation of African women who might have been freed of foreign masculine imperial ideology but, even after national independence, were not granted a status above the fetters of native patriarchal ideology.

These female voices thus exposed and challenged the masculinist ways in which African women's struggles were represented. The Nigerian female writer Flora Nwapa contended that the early works of Nigerian writers like Chinua Achebe, Elechi Amadi, and Wole Soyinka had all, in their earlier works, played down the powerful role of women and portrayed them negatively or in subordinate positions (528). In his first four novels, Achebe's depiction of women is essentially traditional and stereotypical. The female characters are portrayed as wives, mothers, daughters, prophetesses or priestesses whose roles are either as self-

effacing, submissive complements to resilient and assertive males or as symbolic mother figures and custodians of tradition. The challenge thrown open by the contesting narratives of African women writers was that by delimiting women to static roles while ascribing their male counterparts the roles of so-called harbingers of change in the African landscape, male writers were guilty of nurturing, reproducing, and legitimizing those traditional African hegemonies, even if unconsciously. This new perspective seems to have forced Achebe to reevaluate the patriarchal assumptions in his writings.

By the early '70s, Achebe had progressed from his initial nationalist agenda to negate European colonial discourses and replace it with new African counter narratives that demystified the dominant mythologies of empire. His focus was now on fiction that represented the realities of post-independence populations, experimenting with new identities and redefining their roles in history, and in delineating the new intellectual culture. Achebe was now grappling with questions of how to represent and reinvent a still evolving national identity in the new African world order. He had realized that it no longer sufficed to merely seek or recover models, paradigms or signifiers from traditional African ideologies, and that valid representations of the new contemporary condition did indeed require new tropes that would transcend the old static social and gender binaries.

The premise upon which Achebe, then, had based his creative works were informed and reinforced by the contemporary and influential theories of Frantz Fanon and Amilcar Cabral. Both these theorists wrote at a juncture when the politics of national emergence and the problematics of constructing distinct African cultural and political identities had perhaps resulted in a predisposition to assume all liberation and post-liberation histories to be homogenous. Both theorists have been criticized for focusing on power struggles between colonizer-colonized, black-white, government-public, but overlooking the power struggles between men and women as insignificant and thereby keeping the gender hierarchies active.

Fanon's widely acclaimed liberation discourse in *The Wretched of the Earth* has also been widely criticized for barely alluding to women's agency and where it does, doing so from a patriarchal perspective which objectifies women by identifying them as a form of weapon in war. Fanon's description of women as hidden resources of the liberation struggle actually ends up undermining the idea of women's agency he might have intended to evoke. Marie Aimee Helie-Lucas accuses Fanon of creating a myth regarding women's actual involvement in liberation. McClintock points out the absence of women's agency in Fanon's writings. Nana Wilson-Tagoe contends,

> The likelihood that men may seek to subordinate women even within the revolutionary movement is certainly not a consideration in Fanon's major text … For Fanon, then, the possibility of a distinct history of women's agency (in terms of its sources, motivations and dynamics) is never fully theorised even though he recognises the heterogenity of national agency and the various temporalities within which national cultures are articulated. (223)

Thus Fanon falls short of theorizing and accounting for women's role and agency in the new historicalterrains of an independent African state.

Cabral's theory of identity with an emphasis on culture is no less gender-insensitive than Fanon's. Cabral endorsed the concept of a popular national cultural identity constructed from an amalgamation of positive values of different social groups derived from the experiences of national liberation. Again, the assumption of a generalized and collective history, with males as the norm, predominates. Though Cabral admits that conferring an inferior social identity to women might result in limiting this comprehensive cultural identity, he does not take up the issue as worthy of theorizing, leaving the burden of resolving gender imbalance to "the balances and solutions which society engenders to resolve conflicts" (61). Cabral seems to assume that women's liberation and national liberation are synonymous. He seems to take for granted that in the post-independent states, patriarchy or national liberation would naturally balance out unequal relationships within the nation and its people. Thus both Fanon and Cabral, while theorizing extensively on the relationship between identity and culture, chose to do so in terms of a masculinist liberation discourse undermining the perspectives of women's narratives. As the leading theorists of liberation, their positions and assumptions seem to ascribe theoretical validation to the patriarchal ideology of their contemporary male creative writers.

Chinua Achebe's fifth and last novel *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987), portraying a post-independence African state, marks his first attempts to finally accommodate his new vision of the role and space of women in his fictional narratives. In his preceding novel, *A Man of the People* (1966), which was also about the processes of building a newly independent African state, the exclusion of women in governance or other roles of power was glaring. That his next novel underscores a female character demarcates a radical turn in the perception and portrayal of women and their part in the process of nation-building. Achebe's Beatrice may well be labelled as a "woman of her people" for the active, political, and spiritual leadership roles she takes up in her transitional post-independence society. Flora Nwapa, who had earlier protested the subordinate roles that Achebe's female characters were given, applauded the portrayal of Beatrice, saying, "The heroine, Beatrice Nwanyibuife, is a liberated and powerful woman, leading one to surmise that she symbolizes perhaps a sudden awakening to the importance of woman-being" (528). This re-writing of a female narrative has since been widely hailed as an exemplification of "radical new thinking" (Kofi Owusu 469) and a culmination of an evolution in Achebe's female characters (Rose Acholonu 320).

Achebe himself is quite anxious to establish the fact that the character of Beatrice in *Anthills of the Savannah* was a product of his endeavor to amend the gender inequity of his early works. In the novel, Achebe has the character point herself out to her friend Ikem Osodi, editor of a local newspaper and creative writer, that, despite his open editorial protests against all sorts of political oppression and his play on the Women's War of 1929, he is blind to the fact that in all his political writing, "there is no clear role for women" (91). This accusation exposes a failing that is in itself a form of oppression as it promotes an exclusion of women from the political arena of governance. This indictment is in all probability one which Achebe found himself forced to address prior to writing *Anthills*, as none of his preceding novels had created a political space for women characters. Like Ikem, often perceived as the author's representative narrator in the novel, Achebe seems to agree that his thoughts on the role of modern women in society had hitherto been "unclear and reactionary" (96).

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Beatrice is educated, economically independent, politically conscious, and most significantly, an unmarried African woman who has finally overcome the subordinate roles prescribed to women by traditional culture. She has done this against a lot of odds, without the support of a man and despite the male chauvinism in her father's house which Beatrice describes as enough to last several lifetimes. She recounts how, even during her childhood, her activities such as falling off trees that she rebelliously climbed repeatedly were reprimanded by her authoritarian father who condemned her "boyish" activities with the derogatory title "female soldier," a title that was conferred with a ritual of three spanks. She had been born into a world that condemned her because of her gender, being guilty of arriving as the fifth daughter of parents who wanted nothing other than a son. Along with her Christian name, Beatrice was also given the African name Nwanyibuife meaning "a female is also something," a name which she seems to have spent all her life fortifying. Her attempts to not just be "something" but be "something else" in the male world are clear from her father repeatedly having to coerce her to act like a female and "sit like a female!" (87). That she has finally managed to find a niche to sit with authority in the all male world of the government as an official in the Ministry of Finance reveals the extent of her determination and moral fortitude.

Most importantly, Beatrice articulates a female voice that counters traditional male estimation that African women were incapable of surviving in society without male patronage. She asserts defiantly, "That every woman wants a man to complete her is a piece of male chauvinist bullshit" (88). However, Achebe is careful and conscious to not cast Beatrice as a mimic of western feminists by having her reject outright the notion that her resolve for an independent political identity and a career have anything to do with the Women's Lib that she came across during her stay in the West. This also fortifies her identity as a self-assured African woman who has not only transcended the local masculine political status quo but is critically opposed to aping the European models of female identity. One might rightly remain critical regarding the nature of change in the status quo that Beatrice represents as being more of an individual success story than a fundamental structural rupture. However, the story also reveals an awareness that progressive African women are quite capable of independently engaging in critical activities to demand changes and empower themselves without looking to the west for guidance. Elda Hungwe and Chipo Hungwe contend that,

> Through Beatrice, Achebe strives to affirm the moral strength and intellectual integrity of African women especially since the social conditions which have kept women down in the past era are now largely absent ... Achebe's newly envisioned female roles are to be expanded, articulated and secured by women themselves, and the modern African woman is doing just that. (3)

Beatrice's crusade is against the gender-based cultural backwardness of Nigerian society which has lingered from the traditional to the modern era and is evident even in the attitudes of progressive Nigerian intellectual males like Ikem, Chris, and Sam, who continue to assume male power as the norm. Beatrice's struggles to empower herself are explicitly articulated with Ikem and implicit in her dealings with Chris and Sam. She objects fiercely when she feels that Chris is positioning her role in his life only on a physical level instead of respecting her as

an intellectual and equal partner. Here she contrasts with Ikem's girlfriend Elewa with whom Ikem maintains a predominantly physical relationship. With Sam, a friend of her youth and now the President of the country, and thus her boss, Beatrice also wrangles to get the authority and respect that her status merits. She resents his sexist remarks and patronizing attempts to showcase her for cosmetic purposes in his government. Most importantly, she dares to challenge his authority by pointing out that his fetish for white western women makes him debase himself by humoring a common American female journalist who breaks all protocol by acting indecorously with a President and his top staff. Beatrice not only presents an astute political voice but her tone is almost combative when she questions Sam, "If I went to America today, to Washington DC, would I, could I, walk into a White House private dinner and take the American President hostage. And his Defence Chief and his Director of CIA?" (81).

Through the portrayal of Beatrice, Achebe calls attention to a systematic gender domination within the metropolis. Despite having achieved her status based on her education (the only person, male or female, in government service, with a first class honors degree in English from the University of London) and professional aptitude, Beatrice reveals a sense of being perceived and censured as an imposter in a male arena. As a result, she finds herself a target of many, including male colleagues, who affront her authority which they mock as "bottom power," and journalists, who in the hope of winning favors from new military rulers, represent her as a "latter-day Madame Pompadour who manipulated generals and patronized writers" (84). She is troubled when she is accusingly labelled as ambitious, a negative quality for a woman, suggesting that ambition is perceived only as a masculine quality.

Interestingly, when Ikem reads Beatrice's short fiction pieces, he also seems to be taken aback by what he labels as their "muscular" and "masculine" quality, which suggests that in her creative work too, Beatrice exhibits power and dynamism. Even Chris recognizes Beatrice's potential to write powerfully, telling her, "I don't know why you still haven't written a play. You would knock Ikem into a cocked hat" (116). What Achebe is clearly trying to expose is a mindset that has not overcome the traditional cultural construct and binaries of feminine and masculine qualities and capabilities. This mindset is symptomatic of a collective negation of women in power-holding roles such as active leaders or intellectual writers. It leads to a pattern of leaving women who have actively contributed to the process of nationhood as unacknowledged or omitted and ensuring the discouragement of other potentially "ambitious" women from following suit. Another point of interest is that by portraying Beatrice as an artist capable of producing powerful works of imagination, Achebe seems to empower Beatrice further through his belief that art has the potential to reinvent identity and transform reality. In his collection of essays, *Hopes and Impediments*, Achebe points out, "art is man's constant effort to create for himself a different order of reality from that which is given to him; an aspiration to provide himself with a second handle on experience through his imagination" (95-96). Ironically, this gendered formulation can also be applied to a woman's (Beatrice) constant creative efforts to create for herself a different order of reality from that which is given to her.

Through Beatrice, Achebe might attempt to valorize the status and role of women in the new nation, but he is now conscious to neither idealize them nor presume to speak on their behalf. Achebe realizes that women are capable of involving themselves directly in the struggle to

restructure society and point out where inequities linger. In *Anthills*, Ikem voices this awareness when he tells Beatrice,

> I can't tell you what the new role for women will be. I don't know. I should never have presumed to know. You have to tell us. We never asked you before. And perhaps because you've never been asked you may not have thought about it; you may not have the answer handy. But in that case everybody had better know who is now holding up the action. (98)

This is undoubtedly an open declaration of the need to accommodate and represent women's agency in the new nation. *Anthills* affirms that this representation must be undertaken by women themselves.

When Beatrice finally sits to narrate her present life, she finds she cannot begin until she puts into perspective her past history and experiences. She is caught up in a tumult of emotions as she takes on the challenge of bringing together what she terms as the "many broken pieces" of her "tragic history" (82). The desperation with which she takes up the task suggests that it is a restorative process that will rid her of an internalized sense of inferiority. She vacillates between the "undiminished elation" of finally starting and the "audacity of rushing in where angels would fear to tread" (83). She self-effacingly says, "I didn't set out to write my autobiography and I don't want to do so. Who am I that I should inflict my story on the world?" (87). Yet Beatrice also elucidates the necessity for women to reassess and represent themselves or otherwise accept misrepresentation, declaring, "[it is] this truly unjust presentation that's forcing me to expose my life on these pages to see if perhaps there are aspects of me I had successfully concealed even from myself" (84). This process demonstrates what Elleke Boehmer points out to be a replication of what the first generation of male nationalists went through "for a woman to tell her own story was to call into being an image of autonomous selfhood" (225). By interrogating herself as subject as well as confronting the ideologies that define and limit her, she seeks not only to articulate this alternate discourse of the African experience but also to legitimize it.

Achebe's portrayal of Beatrice is complex and multifaceted. He seeks to empower her not only on the level of a female character, but on various other levels – creative (as a creative writer), symbolic, mythological, and narrative (as a narrator). Beatrice is one of the three first person narrators in the novel along with Ikem and Chris, and an omniscient narrator. Chris and Ikem dominate the first five chapters as they narrate the stories of their active struggles against an authority that threatens their independence. Beatrice protests their masculinist and exclusionist attitude to the historical narrative, saying, "Well, you fellows, all three of you, are incredibly conceited. The story of this country, as far as you are concerned, is the story of the three of you …" (66). Through Beatrice, Achebe rightly admits the pitfalls of the male-centered rhetoric. Boehmer remarks, "The kinds of narrative chosen by writers at the time of independence reflected this male-centered vision of national destiny: the quest tale, often autobiographical, featuring an individualistic hero who embodies the process … the nostalgic reminiscence in which a mother-figure symbolizes the integrity of the past" (225).

However, when she starts her narrative in the sixth chapter, Beatrice seems to act more as a commentator on the actions of the three male characters Sam, Chris, and Ikem, and is both apologetic and defensive when narrating her life story. She appears as being less in control in defining her identity and role in her country than the men and is even characterized in their terms, as her father's "deplorable" soldier daughter, as Chris's "quiet demure damsel," and as Ikem's visionary "village priestess" (105). However, the story traces Beatrice moving on from "barely knowing who she was"and feeling alienated from the "traditions and legends of her people" (105), reeling confusedly in a tumult of emotions, "[i]ndignation, humiliation, outrage, sorrow, pity, anger, vindictiveness" (107) at Sam's treatment of her like a "disgraced soldier" (106) to a woman who picks up both the narrative thread and her role in the political and social sphere proactively. The truncated or fragmented and non-sequential form of her narrative gives a tentative but authentic voice to the tumult of emotions of the hitherto suppressed female voice. Beatrice's narrative voice then stands as what Edward Said calls "an opposing point of view, perspective, consciousness," which counters "the unitary web of vision" embedded in dominant discourse (240).

After all the men fail in their struggles, it is Beatrice who takes up the story and continues the struggle, and at the end of the novel, she identifies herself assertively, in complete contrast to her previous passivity, as "a captain whose leadership was sharpened more and more by sensitivity to the peculiar needs of her company" (229). The "company" that she is leading is a group of multi-ethnic and multi-religious people who meet regularly in her flat to discuss social and political issues. When she, after a period of introspective silence and mourning, resumes her narrative interrogation of the world around her, the author comments significantly, "It was not that Beatrice had spoken no words at all before that day … But in all this she had only used words that did not threaten to invade her thoughts and drag them into the profanity of the open air" (220). This period of mourning seems to represent a period of metamorphosis as well from which Beatrice emerges out of the mould of a private sphere into a public presence. The author thus seeks to empower Beatrice by moving her from a position of marginality to a more central position in terms of agency and authority as narrator. Also, the sharing of her narrative with the group that she leads functions as a platform for others seeking representation.

Beatrice rises above her initial elitist tendencies as she gradually realizes the need to not only acknowledge the vital roles that uneducated and underprivileged women play in her society but also to respect their right to have their voices heard. Her bonding with Elewa, a salesgirl, as well as Ikem's girlfriend, and her housemaid Agatha is indicative of her widening sensitivity to the need to reorient female power structures. This sisterhood that Beatrice forms facilitates a means of forging political solidarity. Beatrice embodies Achebe's vision of a new nationhood constructed on inclusiveness of gender and class. At the end of *Anthills*, Beatrice heads the naming ceremony of Ikem's daughter, traditionally a male role, and, more importantly, she and the baby's mother give the baby girl a boy's name. The acceptance by the child's wise grandfather of this new status quo that concedes to woman-power and subverts a patriarchal tradition is symbolic of a new world order with a space for women. He says,

> You have put the world where it should sit … My wife here was breaking her head looking for kolanuts, for alligator pepper, for honey and for bitter-leaf … And while she is cracking her head you people gather in this whiteman house and give the girl a boy's name … That is how to handle this world. (227)

These are undoubtedly the defining lines for the role of women in the modern post-independence African states. The name given to the girl, Amaechina meaning "May the path never close," heralds the opening of a new road to empowerment and recognition for women, a path that her father Ikem had envisaged before his death.

The discussion on the modern identity of African women in general, and Beatrice in particular, would be incomplete if the question of cultural identity is excluded. The objective of preserving and promoting African cultural values epitomize Achebe's works. However, as discussed earlier, Achebe had realized that an authentic modern cultural identity could not be represented by simply revamping traditional mythologies with all their stereotypical denotations. Achebe's portrayal of Beatrice aims to attune her to her cultural heritage and native people and yet give her modern character cultural legitimacy. This is achieved by creating new mythologies by weaving strands from traditional Igbo mythology, a process of de-mythologizing and re-mythologizing.

Traditional mythology saw women as keepers of tradition and also maintainers of morality and humanity in times of crisis. Beatrice is repeatedly referred to as a "village priestess" by Ikem (105), "Cherubim and Seraphim prophetess" and "priestess" by Chris (114, 115) and she even refers to herself as feeling like "Chielo," a character in Achebe's first novel *Things Fall Apart,* who functioned as a visionary prophetess of the hills and caves (114). The omniscient narrative parallels Beatrice with the goddess Idemili who, according to legend, was sent to oversee morality, moderate male desire for authority, and warn or punish over-reachers. Thus Achebe reconnects Beatrice with her African heritage and further empowers her as a judicious voice of moderation in a world of extremes. Her Christian name Beatrice also seems to have been chosen intentionally by Achebe. It carries symbolic import as it may well allude to Dante's Beatrice in *Divine Comedy*, who acts as a guide and source of strength to the lost Virgil in "Inferno." Both Dante's Beatrice and Achebe's Beatrice embody a source of redemption in a threatened world order. Also, on the symbolic level, Beatrice represents the proverbial anthill, referred to in the title of the novel that survives to narrate the tale of the drought (symbolizing a period of barren exclusionist politics). Achebe's Beatrice fractures masculine paradigms of power and paves the way for a new world order structured on evenly balanced gender identities and roles.

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Establishing Sisterhood: A Budding Poet's Responsibility in Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street*

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Abstract

This paper attempts to study Esperenza, the Chicana protagonist of Sandra Cisneros's novel The House on Mango Street*, who desires to establish her identity as a woman and a poet to represent the marginalized women of her community. She believes that she needs to come out of the role imposed on her by society to establish herself as a writer and to proclaim her true female identity. Esperanza searches for self-respect. In doing so, she discovers the reasons behind women's confinement and the sources of patriarchy's hold over women. She understands that social conditioning plays a vital role in holding women back. In her quest for identity as a Mexican American, she also tries to create a space in literary tradition as she feels a strong desire to speak out for those women of her community who cannot come out of their social imprisonment. She realizes that she must do something for them and finds that writing their untold stories could be a way of paying tribute to them. She has intensely observed their pain, suppression, and unfulfilled desires. So she takes the initiative to break the barriers of patriarchal control to ensure women's rights in her society. Thus she feels the necessity of establishing a sisterhood to break the patriarchal web and to give due credit to women's contributions to society, which would allow her and her fellow women to come out of internment and find the route to freedom.*

Weaving together a series of vignettes or literary sketches, *The House on Mango Street* tells the coming of age story of Esperanza Cordero, a pre-adolescent Mexican American girl who lives in the United States. The novel opens with the description of Cordero's small and cramped family house on Mango Street. Despite its limitations, the house is an improvement from the family's previous apartments. This is the first house the family has owned. However, Esperanza does not like her new house which is in the center of a crowded Latino neighborhood, because she feels threatened to identify herself with the shabby house as it clearly exposes her socio-economic condition. Initially, she does not want to stay in her new house and is ashamed of it. But as she matures, she realizes that Mango Street has been her home and the denial of living in the place means the denial of her own existence. While she grows up as a woman, she attempts to understand the place. She realizes that Mango Street is crowded with women who have different stories of hope and are desperate to narrate their stories. These untold and unheard stories are the inspiration for Esperanza to set out and achieve her goal of freedom for herself and for other women.

After moving to her new neighborhood, Esperanza matures in terms of age and experience. In the course of the novel we see that she develops friendship with teenage girls and scrutinizes them carefully for clues about becoming a woman. Unfortunately, most of the women she encounters in Mango Street are defeated, torn, and trapped under patriarchal authority. The hegemony of patriarchy is so deeply rooted in their psyche that they have never thought about

rebelling against men or calling for them to change. While searching for a perfect home and struggling to construct her identity, Esperanza feels that she has to take some responsibility for the confined women of her locality. She recognizes the importance of establishing a sisterhood to counter patriarchy. Esperanza promises that even if she leaves Mango Street, she will continue to take responsibility for the women in her neighborhood. She deeply feels the responsibility and finds writing as a way of fulfilling her promise.

In the forty-four vignettes of *The House on Mango Street* Cisneros presents haunting images of women in a Mexican community in America. We come across many trapped women: a young woman who is locked up in her own home because her husband fears she would run away as she is "too beautiful to look at" (79); a young girl who cannot come out of her home and goes to school with marks on her body because her father beats her, thinking she will elope; a young woman pursuing dreams of higher education with fears of "four-legged fur. And fathers" (32); and women who "sit their sadness on an elbow" (11) and wish for different lives. These stark realities of women living on Mango Street are shaped by male customs, behavior, and violence. Thus, through Esperanza, a young girl who lives in a working class Latino neighborhood in Chicago, Cisneros not only tells us of the sufferings of women in such a suffocating environment, she also shows vibrant women with imaginative and inventive attitudes who try to alter their reality and search for a new space. This sharp contrast observed by Esperanza as she grows up brings hope and creates scope in paving her path.

In an interview, Cisneros has said that in her work she writes against the stereotypes circulating about Latinas and focuses on the "fierce" nature of women who are strong despite adversity. She says:

> I have to say that the traditional role is kind of a myth. I think that the traditional Mexican woman is a fierce woman. There's a lot of victimization but we are also fierce. We are very fierce. Our mothers had been fierce. Our women may be victimized but they are still very, very fierce and very strong. I really do believe that. (Jussawalla and Dasenbrock 300)

Esperanza is one such "fierce woman," full of optimism but conscious of the limitations that the male-constructed society places around her and other women. In her continuous struggle to construct a new space and open up possibilities for herself, she speaks up for the confined women attempting to find routes to freedom.

Virginia Woolf, in *A Room of One's Own*, advised women to "think back through our mothers" (79) in order to establish a literary canon in women's literature. In her essay "The Bodily Encounter with the Mother," Luce Irigaray offers the same advice. She questions the validity of a culture and a society where people forget their mother's contribution and marginalize and suppress them. She also wonders about the social conditioning of a man that lets him forget his mother: "he should make progress, advance, go outside and forget her" (418). She questions the representation of mothers; in other words, the representation of women in western culture: "And the relationship with the placenta, the first house to surround us, whose halo we carry with us everywhere, like some child's security blanket, how is that represented in our culture?" (418).

Despite the patriarchal society's constant attempt to ignore our mothers' contribution, young Esperanza had found safety in her mother's lap. In the chapter "Hairs" in Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street,* while describing her family members' hair, she praises her mother's that looks like "little candy circles all curly and pretty because she pinned it in pin curls all day" (6). She breathes the sweet smell of her mother's hair when her mother holds her close: "holding you and you feel safe, is the warm smell of bread before you bake it, is the smell when she makes room for you on her side of the bed still warm with her skin" (6-7). She finds the space next to her mother the safest place in the world and gets her inspiration from it. Her subjective description of "I" becomes a collective "you" in the course of narration as a mother's lap is the most secure shelter for a child. She understands this universal truth before she becomes corrupted by the established male dominated socio-cultural norms.

Woolf's statement "think back through our mothers" (79) to establish a sisterhood surely encourages Cisneros and this encouragement is evident in the chapter "A Smart Cookie." By "mothers," Woolf means the neglected female poets and authors of the literary tradition. For Cisneros, these mothers are not only the poet or author-mothers that Woolf suggests but also the mothers she came into close contact with in her everyday life. Doyler says that "for both Alice Walker and Sandra Cisneros, these mothers include women outside the 'tradition'" (25). These anonymous mothers outside the "tradition" continuously "handed on the creative spark, the seed of the flower they themselves never hoped to see" (Walker 240).

Esperanza's mother's "encouragement" (Doyle 24) guided her development as an artist. "A Smart Cookie" opens with the mother's advice to her daughter: "I could have been somebody, you know?… Esperanza, you go to school. Study hard … Got to take care all your own" (Cisneros 90-91). Esperanza's mother wishes her to be somebody that she herself could not become. Esperanza's tribute to her mother starts with a list of her talents, "She can speak two languages. She can sing an opera. She knows how to fix a TV … She used to draw when she had time" (90) and ends with a list of her unfulfilled desires: "Some day she would like to go to the ballet. Some day she would like to see a play" (90). But in reality all her talents were wasted and culminated in the kitchen. She does not want her daughter to inherit her fate or the fates of her *comaders,* women like "Izaura whose husband left and Yolanda whose husband is dead" (91). Esperanza's mother's advice acts as a guiding force in shaping and developing her future. Esperanza's achievement of dreams is an extension and compensation of her mother's losses. The mother sees her daughter's success as an elaborate achievement of her own wasted talent.

Esperanza tries to link her rebellious desire of writing against the established social norms to represent the fate of women constrained by male brutality in her culture, echoing her great-grandmother's rebellion against her husband's forceful marriage and against the social conformity of women's confinement. The grandmother had rejected her marriage: "And the story goes she never forgave him. She looked out the window all her life" (Cisneros 11). Esperanza is named after this strong woman, her Mexican great-grandmother; she also inherits her rebellious spirit and is linked through her with her cultural past, "to her identity as a woman within a particular socio-cultural context" (Eysturoy 67). However, although her great-

grandmother was a strong and rebellious woman, she protested against her confinement silently and had to accept patriarchal control. This makes Esperanza conscious of the position she upholds as a woman in her cultural framework. She understands that this framework prevented her great-grandmother from being "all the things she wanted to be" (Cisneros 11). Esperanza is given her great-grandmother's name. However, she decides to be even more rebellious since she does not want to inherit her great-grandmother's fate. As she puts it, "Esperanza. I have inherited her name, but I don't want to inherit her place by the window" (11). Eysturoy notes "Esperanza links her great-grandmother's fate, her confinement, her sadness and lost hope, with her own name, that is, her self, making her name tantamount to her culture's definitions of gender roles" (67). Like her great-grandmother, she will not adapt the role that her culture fixes for her. She refuses to accept "a heritage of female confinement" (Eysturoy 67) and carries a legacy of rebellion against patriarchal confinement and control that prevent women from pursuing their dreams.

Another inspiration for Esperanza is her Aunt Guadalupe who encouraged her when she started writing as a young poet. She listened to every poem that Esperanza wrote, even if they were immature and childish. She understood the desire of this budding poet for freedom and was concerned about that her soul may become exhausted within the congested socio-economic conditions. Esperanza's tribute in "Born Bad" tells us that Aunt Lupe was once a swimmer whose strength she had admired before her aunt became paralyzed and blind: "Hard to imagine her legs once strong, the bones hard and parting water, clean sharp strokes, not bent wrinkled like a baby, not drawing under the sticky yellow light" (Cisneros 58). Even when she became very sick and almost blind, she would ask her niece and her friends to come and visit her. As Esperanza notes "We liked my aunt. She listened to our stories. She always asked us to come back" (60). Esperanza also liked to visit her as she could express her poetic self to Aunt Lupe without any fear of being criticized: "She listened to every book, every poem I read her. One day I read her one of my own" (60). Aunt Lupe cheered and complimented her "That's nice. That's very good" (61). Her advice to her young niece was to "keep writing. It will keep you free" (61). This inspiring advice helps her to focus on her poetic spirit. She confesses that at that moment she did not understand what her aunt had tried to say, but as Esperanza grew up, she found that her desire to tell stories and give shape to what she saw came from her aunt's inspiration. Aunt Lupe stimulated her inner spirit and she feels that it is her duty to write about her aunt, and to tell everybody how she found her bond of sisterhood with the women she would meet.

In her essay "The Bodily Encounter with the Mother" Luce Irigaray says that we must recall our "umbilical bond" (420) with our mothers: "if it respected the life of the mother – of the mother in all women, of the women in all mothers – reproduce the living bond with her" (420). She calls this process of remembering our bond with our mother as a "rebirth" (420), something she believes is necessary for every woman. Esperanza unknowingly did so by accepting her aunt's advice and expressing her gratitude through her writing. She finds it important to recall her relations with the women of her community. Not only did she strive to establish her "umbilical bond" (Irigaray 420) with her cultural mother and co-mothers in the

manner that Irigaray suggests, she also finds it necessary to talk for them and to acknowledge the sadness that they themselves could not talk about.

The friendship between Esperanza and Sally shown in *The House on Mango Street* helps Esperanza to explore the mythical lies of womanhood that prevent women's progress. Esperanza admires her friend Sally because she had "eyes like Egypt and nylons the color of smoke" (81). The adventure of having a different eye color which makes her look attractive becomes a dangerous obstacle for her life; as her father says, "to be this beautiful is trouble" (81). She is physically abused by her father. She endures the cruel gossip of the boys in the coatroom and has an unhappy marriage even before she reaches eighth grade. She elopes with a marshmallow salesman whom she met at a school bazaar. Though Sally says she is in love, sensible Esperanza guesses why she really eloped: "she did it to escape" (101). She understands her friend Sally more than Sally's father does his own daughter. She wishes Sally a beautiful home with flowers and windows where all the sky would come into her room. She would have Sally escape the cruel reality of Mango Street but not in the manner she has chosen. She knows that Sally's elopement could not help her to escape the kind of male brutality which she experienced in her father's home or enable her to acquire the freedom she longs for. Although Esperanza tries to help Sally, the latter refuses since she had already accepted the male-defined "women's function and social role" (Irigaray 415). When Sally refuses Esperanza's attempt to save her from Tito and his friends who have entrapped her in a situation where she must kiss each of them to get her key back, Esperanza feels betrayed. Doyle says "the grief-stricken Esperanza loses the Edenic innocence of her girlhood" (30):

> I looked at my feet in their socks and ugly round shoes. They seemed far away. They didn't seem to be my feet anymore. And the garden that had been such a good place to play didn't seem mine either. (Cisneros 98)

She understands that Sally has conceded to patriarchal domination and fallen into the trap of delusion projected by men.

Sally had wished for a fairytale escape where her marshmallow salesman prince would snatch her from her monstrous father, erasing her poverty and sadness. In contrast to Esperanza, Sally does not understand that such fairytales are basically concocted by men to dominate women. Sally falls into a trap; she allows Tito and his friends to take advantage of her and ends up marrying a person who does not allow her to talk on the phone or "let her look out the window" (Cisneros 101). The situation is quite ironic as Sally believes she is saving herself from a patriarch, forgetting that men share a common understanding of their authority.

As a close observer of the tension between social reality and women's conditions, Esperanza finds that "all the books and magazines, everything that told it wrong" (Cisneros 100). She understands at a very young age that the luck of women on Mango Street would never change as long as they believed in the false promises made by men about marriage and courtship. She recognizes that marriage could not be an escape from the harsh realities of Mango Street since she had seen her fellow women being trapped and emotionally buried by their husbands. Along with her friends and sister she had tried to be "Cinderella" by wearing high heels.

They had cheered "we are Cinderella because our feet fit exactly" (40), but their excitement turns into an unpleasant experience as a drunken "bum man" offers to kiss them for a dollar. They sense that something is not quite right as they are not yet old enough to understand the implications of the man's actions but they are relieved to be rid of the heels after this experience, perhaps unconsciously knowing that physical beauty offers nothing but the kind of sexual assurance which provides no freedom or space.

The male figures in most of Esperanza's story are either threatening or absent (Doyle 31). Either they perform their duties as guardians perfectly by keeping the women under control or evade their responsibilities, leaving their women to it. Sally's father beats her and makes sure she does not talk to the boys. Later, her husband forbids her from going out of the house without his permission. Rafael's husband keeps her under lock and key, allowing her to only look out through the window. None of them are allowed to socialize in the absence of their guardians who are either their fathers or husbands. On the contrary, Minerva's "mother raised her kids alone and it looks like her daughter will go that way too" (Cisneros 84). Minerva herself has two children and her husband "left and keeps leaving" (84). Edna's daughter Ruthie stays with her mother and sleeps on a couch in her living room. She says, "she's just visiting and next weekend her husband's gonna come back to take her home, but the weekends come and go and Ruthie stays" (69). One of Esperanza's godmothers' husbands had left and the other had died. Esperanza observes that these women are entrapped by patriarchal society and imprisoned by their so-called princes. She portrays the beastly nature of the "princes" and shows how they repress women. She feels it necessary to rethink the issue of violence done to women and to make them aware of their condition.

On Mango Street, "most of the women yearn for different endings" (Doyle 31). They long for a different life and try to find ways of escaping confinement. Minerva writes poems secretly when her children are asleep. She shows her poems, written on small pieces of paper, to Esperanza. She takes a short escape from her "unlucky" (Cisneros 84) life by writing them. From her locked room Rafaela lowers a paper shopping bag on the clothesline on Tuesdays so that children could send papaya or coconut juice up to her, not unlike Rapunzel. She wishes for a sweeter drink, "not bitter like an empty room, but sweet like the island, like the dance hall down the street where women much older than her throw green eyes easily like dice and open homes with keys" (80). Like Rapunzel's long hair, the shopping bag on the clothesline is her only way of communicating with the outer world. It allows her some consolation, some scope to meet "someone offering sweeter drinks" (80). Marin also wishes for a way out – a job downtown, nice clothes and "someone in the subway who might marry you and take you to live in a big house far away" (26).

Esperanza is very different from the other women represented in the novel. She has learnt from their conditions and is careful to avoid their mistakes. She refuses to be trapped and imprisoned like the women around her. Being different from these women, Esperanza understands that women's lives on Mango Street will never change until they themselves become aware of their condition and learn to fight for their rights. She feels that her act of writing can be a way of liberating the women around her from "the tyrannies of male houses

and male plots" (Doyle 33). In return for the women's love and company, she intends to ask for justice on their behalf. As a conscious observer and a budding writer, she realizes that she will get the ultimate autonomy only when she can spread the thirst for freedom among all women and make a collective move towards the desired destination.

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LANGUAGE AND APPLIED LINGUISTICS

Peer Conversation for Developing Speaking Skills: Perceptions from Students of a Public University

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine whether peer conversation in English improves speaking skills. The study also aims at finding how frequently students practice speaking in English with their peers. The data was collected from fifty participants (second year to Masters students) from an English Department at a public university. The data was collected through a close-ended questionnaire and analyzed through a quantitative research method. The collected data reveals that conversing with peers is a very effective way of improving speaking skills. The study also reveals that students who practice English conversation regularly are able to develop their speaking skills day by day. Besides, peer interaction is also helping them to be confident and to feel at ease while speaking in a public place or facing a viva voce. The study also shows that students are learning to choose the best words and express their feelings and attitudes more clearly through peer conversation.

***Keywords**: peer conversation, improve, quantitative, effective, confident*

Speaking is an essential skill that students must have in their academic and professional life. If students have good knowledge about their discipline but they cannot express that knowledge comfortably and fluently, all of their learning goes in vain. Unfortunately, this happens in most of the cases in Bangladesh. Students mostly concentrate on reading and writing skills, and are less motivated to speak because of shyness and the fear of making mistakes in public. In addition, language teachers often do not emphasize the development of students' oral skills. As a result, conversation practice always remains a neglected skill. To overcome this shortcoming, speaking with peers (friends, classmates, etc.) can be a very effective strategy as students often conduct such conversations mostly in Bengali. All they have to do is try to speak with their partners in English. This study aims to evaluate whether peer talk improves fluency and proficiency, whether it enhances language acquisition and promotes active learning in English. Researchers over the years contributed to establish peer talk as a technique to develop speaking but they did not consider the perceptions of the learners about peer talk. This study will cover this research gap.

Research Questions

  a. Does peer conversation help students acquire fluency and comfort in speaking?
  b. To what extent are students being benefitted by peer conversation practice?

Significance of the Study

Speaking skills, like listening skills, are often neglected in the classroom. Language teachers often teach reading and writing skills but ignore speaking skills. As a result, students may know grammar well but may not improve their speaking. In this situation, peer conversation is a good practice for developing speaking skills. Students can discuss new ideas, question one another,

perceive meanings, clarify their understandings, and make their ideas comprehensible to their partners. Their understanding grows as they talk with their partners. They can learn to be conversant in English. They can also develop fluency, clarity, and thus can be very effective and good speakers through peer conversation.

Literature Review

Previously, many authors have contributed to the research of peer conversation practice for developing speaking skills through their scholarly writing. In a study conducted by Ronald N. Cortright, Heidi L. Collins and Stephen E. DiCarlo (2005), it was found that peer interaction enhanced students' mastery of original course materials and the ability to solve novel problems in a physiology course. Although it is a physiology course, the peer talk strategy may show the same results in English language classes. So, conversing with peers is a good way to involve learners in the classroom and help them comprehend course contents. Similarly, C.H. Crouch and E. Mazur (2001) showed that student learning improved more with peer conversation than traditional lectures.In traditional lectures, teachers speak most of the time and the students remain mostly silent wheras in Crouch and Mazur's study (2001), it was noticed that students' learning enhanced as they themselves were involved in discussing the subject topics.

Similar findings are observed in the study by C. Doughty and T. Pica (1986). They found that peer activities provided opportunities for interaction and negotiation of meaning and more learners were actively engaged when peer activities were integrated into classroom instructions. The important point is that students' involvement in classroom activities increased due to using the peer conversation strategy. Apart from academic life, peer talk also leads to success in professional life. For instance, Edleston (1987) found that oral communication skills were at the head of a list related to job success. That is why Hynds and Rubin (1990) suggested that students must learn to talk to themselves, hold conversations, interviews, small group discussions, talk to teachers, parents, peers, and members of the community. They must learn how to change their talk for the appropriate situation and audience. Again, H. Loh (1993) observed that peer interaction showed improvement in learning, confidence, self-esteem, and leadership as well as an acquisition of group management and presentation skills. So, peer talk not only leads to language acquisition but also facilitates other social skills like self-respect, leadership, and making of new friends. In fact, friendships and relationships (between children) often depend on the ability to express feelings appropriately (Smith, 1993). Peer talk helps to express feelings more comfortably. Staab (1992) states, "I believe that oral language is important not only as a vital communication tool that empowers us in our daily lives but also as a valuable way to learn."

Hedge (2000) says that speaking in the classroom makes learners capable of coping with their lack of language knowledge; for example, students speaking slowly, repeating, or clarifying their ideas while talking together is regarded as negotiation of meaning (discussion to reach agreement) which aimed at making the output more comprehensible. Harmer (2001) argued that discussion with peers can be seen as the most useful and interesting form of oral practice in the classroom since it offers opportunities for students to exchange their opinions, talk

about their experiences, and express their views to develop their communicative ability when using the target language. Working with peer partners is widely reported within education, often to improve specific classroom skills. For example, Buzbee (2005) says that, in collaborative classrooms, peer coaching maximizes the natural learning environment for staff and pupils. Besides, Topping (2005) defined peer conversation as the acquisition of knowledge and skills through active helping and supporting among equals or matched companions. Small group interaction with peers offers several benefits for English language learners: repetition of key words and phrases; functional, context relevant-speech; rich feedback; and reduced student anxiety (Hill & Flynn, 2006, p. 56). Interaction makes the learners able to test their communicative success through exchanging information with the teacher or among the students themselves (as stated in Lyster, 2007, pp. 102-103). Learner-Learner interaction can occur either in groups or in pairs called peer interaction for the sake of giving students opportunities to speak and practice speaking skills in the classroom in order to receive feedback in the target language through correcting each other's errors or asking questions to each other when working in groups (Mackey, 2007, p. 30).

So, it is evident from past studies that peer conversation helps promote language learning. Students can learn to express themselves more appropriately and understand others when they speak. Besides, the previous studies also emphasize on practicing peer conversation in a language classroom in order to engage students in classroom activities and increase students' confidence and fluency in the target language.

Methodology

The study was conducted on fifty students who are currently studying at the Department of English in a public university in Dhaka. The students were from the second year to Masters class. The participants were selected by convenience sampling. Students who were available and willing to take part in the research were invited. The analysis was done using the quantitive method. The data was collected from the respondents by means of a close-ended questionnaire. A five-point Likert scale was used and attitudinal data was collected. The collected data was analyzed through simple percentage analysis. The research design for the study is co-relational. The relation between peer talk and improvement of speaking skills is analyzed. First, the frequency of peer conversation is analyzed and then students' improvement in speaking has been discussed.

Limitations of the Study

Only students' opinions about peer talk were taken in the present study. The participants were not tested orally to determine how fluent they have become through peer conversation practice. Again, students' improvement over a long period of time was not observed as it is a lengthy process and requires much time and resources. The researcher also did not observe the students while they conversed in English with their classmates or with the teacher in the classroom due to time constraints

Findings and Discussions

The researcher conducted the study on fifty students of the Department of English at a public university. The data was collected by means of a questionnaire. The study began with asking the participants whether they were fluent in speaking English and whether they were confident in their speech. They were also asked if they were able to express their feelings and choose appropriate words in English through peer conversation. The majority of the participants showed a positive attitude to peer conversation and supported the hypothesis that speaking with their classmates and friends really helps them become better speakers.

The findings are presented below:

How frequently do students speak in English?

Respondents were not asked if they spoke English as the study was conducted on students of the Department of English and they are required to speak in English in the class. Many of them have to converse in English with their classmates while doing assignments or discussing the topics covered in class. So, the survey began with asking the participants about the frequency of speaking; that is, how many times in a week they practiced their English with their peers. 16 participants out of fifty (32%) said that they converse in English every day with their classmates. These students continue peer

1. Frequency of Speaking in English

conversations regularly throughout the month. Again, 10 participants (20%) said that they speak four times in a week and so they practice English conversation sixteen times in a month. These students speak in English very often. Besides, 2 participants (4%) said that they speak three times in a week and so twelve times in a month. On the other hand, 12 participants (24%) said that they converse in English only two times a week or eight times a month. These students practiced speaking only sometimes. The rest 10 students (20%) said that they practice peer conversations once in week. These participants speak English very rarely. So, from the response of the students, it is seen that the majority of the students practice peer conversation in English.
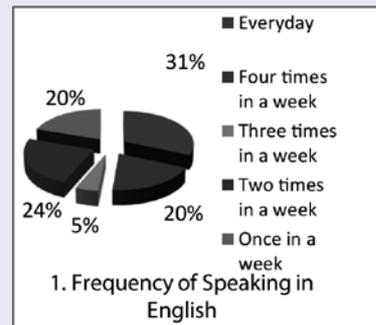
How long do students continue peer conversation?

Next, the researcher wanted to know the duration of the participants' conversation in English. 12 participants (24%) said that they continue the conversation for five minutes and 20 participants (40%) said they speak for ten minutes. Again, 8 respondents (16%) said that they talk for fifteen minutes and the rest 10 respondents (20%) said that they practice their speaking for half an hour. It is noticeable that none of the participants converses in English for one hour or more. The maximum duration of the students' conversation is thirty minutes and their number is low: 20% (10 students out of

2. Duration of Conversation

50). The collected data shows that 24% students continue their conversation for five minutes,
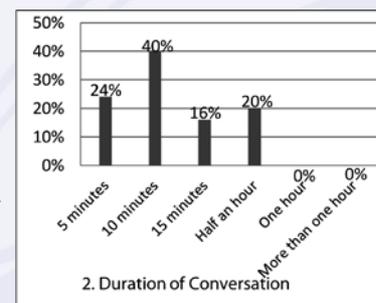
which is a very short time for developing one's speaking skills. However, students who practice for ten minutes (40%) and fifteen minutes (16%) can gradually improve their speaking skills. Again, conversing for half an hour is very good practice but the number of participants is only ten, that is just 20% of the total students.

Is peer conversation a good practice for developing speaking skills?

Participants were asked their opinions about peer conversation and whether they thought peer conversation is a good practice for developing speaking skills. 34 participants out of fifty (68%) said that they strongly agree and 16 participants (32%) said that they simply agree that peer conversation is a good strategy for improving speaking skills. None of the participants responded negatively to the question of whether peer conversation is a good way to practice speaking. So, it is clear from the analyzed data that peer conversation improves students' speaking skills.

3. Is peer coversation a good pratice?
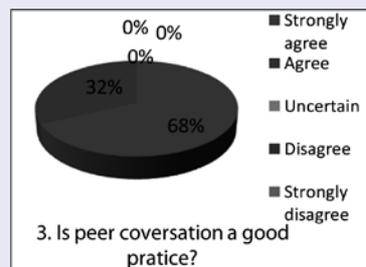
Are students becoming fluent in speaking?

The researcher wanted to know whether peer conversation is making students fluent in English. However, there was no scope to observe them for a long time and so they were only asked what they thought of their fluency. 24 respondents out of 50 (48%) said that they strongly agreed and 22 respondents (44%) said that they simply agreed that they were growing more fluent in speaking by conversing in English with their peers. However, 4 respondents (8%) were uncertain about their development of fluency in English. They could not determine their present state of fluency by themselves.

4. Fluency in speaking
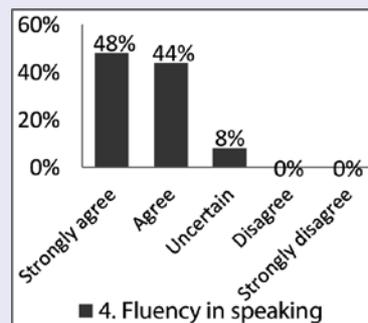
However, none of the participants denied their improvement in fluency as nobody disagreed with this statement. It is evident from the found data that 46 respondents out of 50 (92%), or the majority, are positive about being fluent in speaking through peer conversation.

Are students confident while speaking in a public place?

Practicing speaking usually makes learners confident about speaking in a public forum. So, to understand the confidence level of the study participants, the researcher asked them what they thought about how helpful peer conversations are in gaining the confidence to speak. 16 respondents out of 50 (32%) strongly agreed that through peer conversation they have grown confident about speaking in a public place. 20 respondents (40%) simply agreed about the rise in their confidence level. However, 4 respondents (8%) were uncertain

5. Students' confidence while speaking

about being confident. They do not know whether their confidence level is increasing or remaining the same. On the other hand, 10 participants (20%) disagreed that their confidence increased while speaking in a public place. Altogether, 72% students (36 participants out of 50)
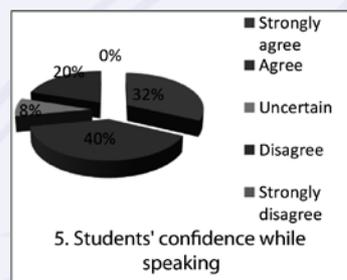
either simply agreed or strongly agreed about being confident in speaking in English through peer conversation. This implies that peer conversation helps language learners feel confident about speaking outside the classroom.

Does peer conversation help students feel at ease while speaking in the viva voce?

After understanding the confidence level of the students, the researcher wanted to know whether peer conversation helps students speak more comfortably in the *viva voce* exams. Not having accces to the viva board, the researcher simply asked the participants about this. 28 respondents out of 50 (56%) strongly agreed that peer conversation in English helped them speak at ease when they faced the *viva voce* board. Again, 20 respondents (40%) simply agreed about feeling at ease. On the other hand, 2 respondents (4%) were uncertain

6. Feeling at ease while speaking

about whether peer conversation helped them in the *viva voce*. In short, 96% participants (48 students out of 50) felt benefitted as a result of peer conversation and they could speak comfortably in their oral exam.
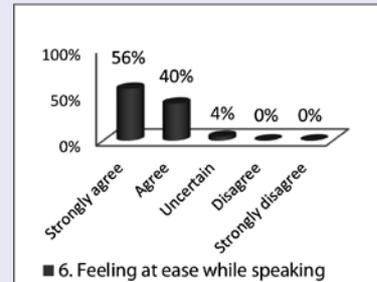
Can students express their feelings and attitudes clearly?

Students can easily express their feelings, emotions, opinions, and attitudes through their mother tongue. The researcher, however, wanted to know if the participants could express their feelings in English in the same way as in Bengali. 20 respondents out of 50 (40%) strongly agreed that they can express their opinions, attitudes, and feelings through practicing English with their peers. 22 participants (44%) simply agreed about the clear expression of opinions and feelings. On the other hand, 6 participants (12%) were

7. Expression of feelings and attitudes

uncertain and two participants (4%) disagreed, saying that they were not able to express their attitudes and feelings through peer conversation. Overall, 84% (40% + 44%) were able to express their opinions and feelings clearly through peer conversation.
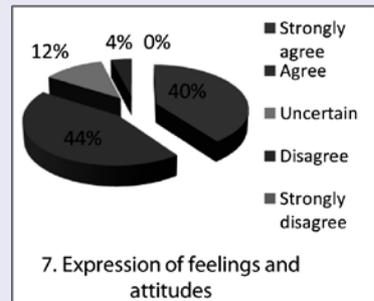
Can students choose the appropriate words through peer conversation?

Regular practice in speaking enables learners to choose the most appropriate words when they are engaged in speaking. Participants were asked whether they could choose appropriate words when they spoke. 56% of the participants (28 participants) agreed that peer conversation helps them choose appropriate words while 28% participants (14 participants) strongly agreed about choosing the correct words in conversation. However, 12% participants (6 students) were uncertain and 4% participants (2 students) disagreed about the opinion that peer conversation is helpful

8. Choosing the appropriate words
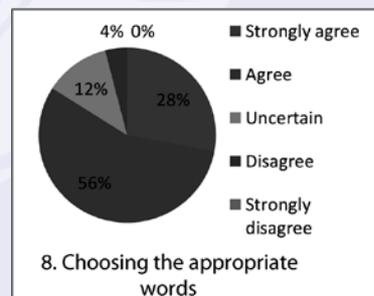
for choosing appropriate words. The data reveals that the majority of the participants (84%) are able to choose appropriate words when speaking with their peers. So it can be concluded that peer conversation is a good strategy to learn English.

Are the students' speaking skills improving?

Opinions	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	26 participants	52%
Agree	12 participants	48%
Uncertain	0 participants	0%
Disagree	0 participants	0%
Strongly disagree	0 participants	0%

The best way to measure students'speaking skills is to let them speak on any topic and assess their speaking by listening to their accent, pronunciation, and diction. However, the researcher chose not to use this method because most of the participants would feel shy to speak in front of someone they were unfamiliar with and this would make their speaking unnatural. The second option was to observe the students' conversation for several months which was not possible due to time constraints. So participants were simply asked what they thought about their speaking skills; whether their speaking skills were increasing from peer conversations or remained the same. 26 participants out of 50 (52%) strongly agreed and 24 participants (48%) simply agreed about their improvement of speaking skills. It is noticeable that 100% students (50 participants out of 50) agreed that they were developing their speaking skills through peer conversations and none of the students denied this improvement.

What is the participants' present level of speaking?

To determine students' present level of speaking is a little difficult. Participants were asked to assess themselves on speaking with options as "better, good, same, bad, and worse." 30 respondents out of 50 (60%) reported that their present level of speaking is better in comparison to their past. 20 respondents (40%) said that their present level is good. It is important to note that 100% participants (50 participants out of 50) said that their overall speaking skills are improving through peer conversation.

Recommendation

As peer conversation practice leads to students' fluency, language teachers should be encouraged to employ peer conversation activities in a language classroom. Students should be instructed to initiate peer conversations and group discussions in the class. In addition, students who want to practice their English skills outside their classroom should be encouraged to converse with their peers and thus become fluent speakers of the language.

Conclusion

Peer conversations in English is an effective way of enhancing language learning. Students learn to participate effectively in collaborative discussions and exchange ideas. They learn to

be fluent and confident in speaking. They can choose appropriate words and express their opinions and feelings clearly. Thus, students who practice peer conversation improve their speaking skills continuously.

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Appendix 1 (Questionnaire)

This questionnaire is prepared for the students who converse in English with their peers to develop their speaking skills. Please tick the answers that you think are correct.

1. I speak in English with my friends and classmates

Everyday	Four times a week	Three times a week	Two times a week	Once a week

2. I continue my peer conversation for

Five minutes	Ten minutes	Fifteen minutes	Half an hour	One hour	More than one hour

3. I think peer conversation is good practice for developing speaking skills.

Agree	Strongly agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree

4. I have become fluent by conversing with my peers.

Agree	Strongly agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree

5. I have become confident about speaking in a public place.

Agree	Strongly agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree

6. Peer conversation helps me to feel at ease when I am speaking in the viva voce.

Agree	Strongly agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree

7. By speaking with peers I can express my feelings and attitudes more clearly.

Agree	Strongly agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree

8. Peer conversation helps me to choose the appropriate words.

Agree	Strongly agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree

9. My speaking skills are improving day by day through peer conversation.

Agree	Strongly agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree

10. In comparison to my past level, my present level is-

Better	Good	Same	Bad	Worse

Thank you very much for your participation.

Perceptions of Teachers about Differentiated Instruction for English Language Teaching at the Tertiary Level in Bangladesh

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Abstract

Differentiated Instruction (DI) has become a very in fluential approach for the last few decades in the various arenas of education where teachers, instead of lecturing students or instructing in a one-size-fits-all approach, tailor their teaching strategies based on individual learner needs. This unique approach seems to be immensely beneficial as it makes learners independent, confident, enthusiastic, involved, and ultimately better achievers in examinations. The present paper explores the perceptions of tertiary level teachers of Bangladesh regarding DI and the use of this approach in teaching English. Data were collected from 33 English teachers from three private universities using a Likert-scale questionnaire followed by a semi-structured interview with 10 participants. The findings reveal that teachers are aware of DI and its benefits, but their classroom strategies are not congruent with the DI principles to a great extent. Although they create a friendly and non-threatening environment and allow students to choose classroom activities, they cannot differentiate the learning goals, the content, assessment tools, and evaluation for each learner. The paper ends with suggestions for creating a more conducive environment for learning by implementing Differentiated Instruction strategies in higher education in Bangladesh.

Contemporary classrooms are becoming more culturally and academically diversified. Even in cases of "shared culture or roughly compatible age ranges," there remains "a series of differences between the individual learners" with respect to their gender, experiences, aptitudes, and interests (Burke & Ray, 2008, p.7). Therefore, teachers face challenges now more than ever before to accommodate "diverse learners" and "meeting their unique educational aspiration" (Dosch & Zidon, 2014, p. 343). Traditionally, learners at tertiary level are more diverse due to their varied experiences and educational backgrounds. Unfortunately, it is a common scenario in universities that teachers are standing in front of the whole class and delivering lectures and learners are listening silently, sitting in rows. In fact, learners, even in higher education, are taught in a one-size-fits-all (McBride, 2004), "teacher centred, traditional model of lecture style teaching" system (Dosch & Zidon, 2014, p. 343) where "programmatically feeding learners quantities of knowledge" (Brown, 1994, p. 77) becomes the main motto of teaching. The diversity of learners is ignored and the same curriculum and teaching methods are applied to all learners, which ultimately lead to learners' failure (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007).

Children and "adults" (who are "above 18," Knowels, 1970, p. 46) acquire languages in different capacities (Ellis, 1986). There are many additional factors that pertain to adult learners than children, such as age, intelligence, motivation, attitudes, learning styles and strategies, and personality. Therefore a lot of researchers have emphasized different teaching strategies for adult learners and children. Otherwise, teaching in a single instructional method will bring nothing

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but learner dissatisfaction, frustration and poor performance (Forsten, Grant, and Hollas, 2002; McBride, 2004; McCoy and Ketterlin-Geller, 2004; Tomlinson, 2002; Fischer and Rose, 2001).

Considering the diversity among tertiary level learners and their unique individual needs, Differentiated Instruction (henceforth to be abbreviated as DI) has become an influential educational approach in higher education for the last few decades. Here "three diagnostic formative components" are utilized to understand each "learner's personal characteristics and academic skills: readiness, interest and learning profile" (Dosch & Zidon, 2014, p. 344). Readiness signifies learners' zone of proximal development, where, with necessary help and supervision, a learner becomes able to learn new material (Vygotsky, 1977). Next, learners' interest about the study is vitally important as it ensures the awakening of their intrinsic motivation which results in better performance of learners. Lastly, DI considers learner profile as a critical component of instructional planning which creates options for learners to express their acquired learning in their preferred way.

In fact, the DI model proposes a rethinking of the structure, management, and content of the classroom and different avenues to acquiring content, processing, constructing, or making sense of ideas has been proposed based on learner ability, intelligence, and learner profile (Tomlinson and Imbeau, 2010). Here,in this unique teaching theory, teachers, instead of following one teaching method, vary instructional approaches, provide multiple options for learners for taking in information and making sense of ideas, and modify their curriculum to the learners rather than expecting learners to adjust themselves to the curriculum.

In Bangladesh, after independence, a lot of measures have been taken to improve English language teaching and learning. Nevertheless, various problems inherent in the primary and secondary level education, e.g., the lack of qualified and trained English language teachers, the practice of using communicative language teaching (CLT) based books in grammar-translation method, and the dominance of teacher-centered learning methods fail to provide learners with sufficient English language skills (Mondal, 2012; Begum, 2011; Islam, 2011; Alam & Sinha, 2009). The problems are aggravated when learners move to college and university level. At the tertiary level, though specialized courses are offered to improve learners' English language skills, the courses are taught without any "need analysis" (Rahman, 2008, p. 43). Therefore, learners face challenges in adjusting to the system and their four years in undergraduate studies fail to equip them with adequate knowledge. Their knowledge remains insufficient and the extensive English language courses of private universities fail to provide learners with the ability to write correctly, let alone develop the skill of speaking (Ferdousy, 2013, p. 53).

In order to bring a change in the current scenario, the present study wishes to promote critical thinking among teachers about DI and want to understand their teaching strategies to investigate whether their strategies are consistent with DI or not. DI, as it has been proven by various researchers, can improve learners' performance; learners can connect better in when taught with the DI strategy as their readiness level, interests, and learning profiles are respected and valued. Again, DI ensures learners' personal growth and development (Anderson, 2007) and learning becomes interesting, pleasant, and more effective (Subban, 2006; Rose & Meyer, 2002).

It is universally acknowledged that the use of the correct method spurs learner motivation and facilitates effective learning. On the other hand, lack of correct teaching methods serves as an impediment to learning, creates expectation failure in the minds of learners, and undermines the entire process of learner motivation (Bain, 2004). Therefore, the present study wants to encourage the use of DI strategy in Bangladesh, which will pave the way for a better teaching and learning environment in tertiary level English language classes.

In Bangladesh, there is a significant lack of research on the use of DI strategies at the tertiary level English language classes. Therefore, the present research explores the following questions:

1. Are Bangladeshi English language teachers at the tertiary level aware of the DI approach?
2. If they are aware, to what extent do they use it in the five areas: content, process, product, environment, and evaluation?

The present study will fill an important gap in the literature on the use of DI in the ESL context of Bangladesh. Again, the study may encourage ELT teachers to examine their teaching practices, to find out whether the methods and materials they are using are suitable for tertiary level learners, and can give an important guideline for future implementation of DI in teaching English language in Bangladesh. The newly gained insights will inspire teachers to adopt a more suitable method and plan their lessons accordingly.

Literature Review

The approach to differentiation has been formed by the growing research on learning, drawing on the best practices from special education, gifted education, and multi-age classrooms as well as recent research on the brain and multiple intelligences. DI is, in fact, a challenge against the age-old traditional way of teaching by instructors who, standing up in front of the classroom, provide only lectures and students, in spite of their diversified cultural and academic backgrounds (Blake, 2007; Pham, 2012) listen passively, sitting passively in their chairs (Burke & Ray, 2008). With this kind of teaching strategy, though a handful of students achieve good grades, the majority fails or performs very poorly in the examinations. But, ironically, it is the learners who are held responsible for their poor performance.

DI is an organized, yet flexible way of proactively adjusting teaching and learning methods to accommodate each learner's learning needs and preferences in order to achieve his or her maximum growth as a learner. In the DI approach, no learner is considered as weak; rather, each learner is valued for his or her unique strengths, and everyone is offered opportunities to demonstrate skills through a variety of assessment techniques. DI is, in fact, a unique approach where avenues are created for learners to learn in their preferred learning styles, in their convenient environment, and they get the opportunity to decide their content, assignment topics, and other classroom activities.

DI has been criticized as it seems to be impossible to adjust teaching strategy to each and every learner in a large class within the limited time constraints. But the criticism against differentiated learning is based on the misunderstanding of the concept itself. In fact, in this strategy, teachers do not individualize everything for each learner but rather strive to have

several learning options, knowing that doing so will keep learners more engaged and feel motivated towards their learning.

There are various steps through which DI is implemented by the teachers with their learners:

1. Firstly, teachers have to take diagnostic tests to determine the level of readiness of learners. Determining readiness of learners is important as it reveals learners' zone of proximal development, which indicates the amount of help or supervision they need to understand new concepts or material (Vygotsky, 1977). By taking quizzes and interviews about their background knowledge, teachers can determine how much help the learners need.
2. In addition, teachers have to understand learners' interests. By conducting interviews with learners or by asking to write about their interests and preferences, teachers can gain knowledge about the learners.
3. Teachers have to identify learners' preferred learning styles and environments. Not all learners learn in the same way or they do not prefer the same environment. Teachers should identify each learner's learning style and the environment which will make him/her more productive.

Areas of Differentiated Instruction
Tomlinson (2000) has proposed four areas of differentiation: content, process, product and environment. Again, Gregory & Chapman (2007) and Chapman & King (2005) proposed for differentiation of assessment or evaluation that has been proved to be another important aspect of DI.

Content: In a differentiated classroom, teachers, rather than using one "fixed" textbook, must use multiple texts and modified materials to meet the needs of different learner groups of the classes. Again, teachers should vary the level of complexity of the content for learners and give them options to choose their learning materials. Teachers should also provide more direct instructions, and more concrete examples and opportunities for practice to the weak learners (Berger, 1991). Finally, teachers should present ideas through both auditory and visual means.

Process: In a differentiated classroom, firstly, teachers must provide options for learners to work alone or in groups. Sometimes teachers should divide tasks according to learners' common interests, abilities, or learning styles. Secondly, in the classroom, learners must get the opportunity to take part in various tasks like role play, simulation, and debates. Thirdly, teachers must encourage learners to share their experiences with others, actively involve them in activities, and help them to learn from each other. And finally, if learners face problems, teachers would provide additional hours.

Products: Teachers must give learners options of how to express the required learning (e.g., create a puppet show, write a letter, develop a mural with labels, or write an assignment). Teachers should also vary assignment topics and the length of time a learner may take to complete a task. They should provide additional support for struggling learners.

Environment: Classrooms should be made interesting to all learners. In his affective filter hypothesis, Krashen (1982) mentioned that learners' boredom works as a barrier to learning. Therefore, teachers must use humor and create a friendly, supportive, and relaxed classroom

to reduce language anxiety and so facilitate learning (Hermer, 2001). Teachers should provide materials that replicate a variety of cultures (Tomlinson, 2000), and references must be used from current issues.

Evaluation: Differentiated assessment is an ongoing process based on learners' gradual development through which teachers gather data before, during, and after instruction through multiple sources (Chapman & King, 2005). Teachers should grade students for their continual development, not only for the final product. Teachers should not grade one learner against others; one is graded against oneself, i.e., against one's own previous performances. With respect to providing feedback, teachers must always find the positive in learners and allow them to choose their assignment topics. The time allowed for learners to complete their assignments should also be varied.

Successful Implementation of DI in Higher Education

In a lot of higher education institutions, the DI approach has been used successfully and brought significant improvement in learners' quality of learning. Joseph et al. (2013) conducted a research among four hundred and thirty-four learners in two campuses through the span of one semester. Half of the learners were taught using the DI method and the rest experienced the traditional approach. The research revealed a major improvement in learners' performance, understanding, and learners' involvement with learning. 90% of participants reported higher levels of intellectual growth and interest in the subject.

Chamberlin & Powers (2010) conducted a quasi-experimental pre-test and post-test control group research design using DI in an undergraduate first-year mathematics course at two universities. The control group, who were taught with the DI approach, enjoyed their learning more and performed better than the group taught in the traditional method. Santangelo & Tomlinson (2009) conducted a research using a self-study qualitative approach in an introductory graduate education course to test the outcome of DI in higher education. They found that the DI approach can be utilized in a higher education course and it made a significant difference to learners' performance.

Livingston (2006) found success whenever he applied DI in his undergraduate courses and took feedback from 33 students. The students responded positively, became highly enthusiastic and involved in learning, and produced better work as options were given to them. The teachers also enjoyed and became more satisfied while teaching. Ernst & Ernst (2005) conducted an exploratory qualitative research study in an undergraduate political science course in which 35 learners were enrolled based on student and faculty feedback in an undergraduate public policy course. Learners performed better as their readiness level, interest, and learning preferences were taken as the key to instructional planning.

Canadian scholars researched the application and result of DI and found that it consistently produced positive results across a broad range of targeted groups (McQuarrie, McRae, & Stack-Cutler, 2008 cited by Huebner, 2010). Tieso (2005) examined 31 math teachers and 645 learners and found that DI was effective for keeping high-ability learners challenged. She opined that if teachers differentiate the curriculum, learners' achievement increases

significantly. Lawrence-Brown (2004) confirmed that DI spurs learner motivation and learning irrespective of their ability and intelligence.

Therefore, a lot of positive feedback can be traced to the use of DI strategies which motivated the present research to explore the scenario in Bangladesh. The DI approach makes learners independent where they can "set personal goals and can assess their progress according to those goals by themselves" (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 100). Again, DI makes people engaged with their learning and become enthusiastic so that learning becomes an enjoyable journey (Painter, 2009). Overall, the use of DI improves learner performance, satisfaction, and confidence.

In Bangladesh, there is a significant lack of investigation regarding the use of DI in classrooms in higher education. Again, no specific research has been found where teachers' perception and knowledge of DI have been sought. Only a few researchers have been found (Ferdousy, 2013; Ismail, 2010; Chaudhury, 2009; Jahan, 2008) who recorded teachers' information about their teaching strategies. Those researchers reveal that the teachers still teach students mainly through lectures, use similar content for all students, and evaluate learners in the same way. They do not think of varying the product or assignments for learners or allowing extra time for any learner.

The current poor status of learners' knowledge of English language, their inability to produce correct sentences, or the inability to speak English fluently even at tertiary level ((Mondal, 2012; Begum, 2011; Islam, 2011; Alam & Sinha, 2009), needs attention and demand a change in the current approaches that are adopted by teachers in universities. Therefore, the present research is conducted to raise awareness among teachers about the DI approach.

Theoretical Framework
Tomlinson's work has shown that the proposed four areas of differentiation is immensely beneficial for making learning more effective and interesting. Therefore, Tomlinson's proposed four areas of differentiation, content, process, product, and environment (2000), have been taken as the theoretical framework for the study. One more item is added: differentiation of assessment or evaluation (Gregory & Chapman, 2007; Chapman & King, 2005), which is another important proposition of DI.

Methodology
The study is an exploratory one based on the mixed method model. Considering the problem related to a questionnaire survey that it sometimes produces inaccurate data due to limited options available for the respondents, in the study, qualitative data have also been collected through interviews. The interview with some respondents gave opportunity to the researcher to explain vague or unclear questions to the interviewee, to ask leading questions, and to control and supervise easily (Wilkinson and Birmingham, 2003).

Instruments: The questionnaire used in the study to collect data has 38 questions with a Likert scale. Teachers chose their answers using the scale: always-sometimes-rarely-never. Among the 38 questions, the first thirteen questions were about teachers' teaching strategies and knowledge about their learners. The rest 25 questions were divided into five sections: content, process, product, environment, and assessment.

Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured telephone interviews with ten selected participants. In the interview, semi-structured questions were intended to solicit the information about teachers' use of DI strategies.

Subject/Samples: The subjects in this study were 33 English language teachers teaching English language courses at three private universities of Bangladesh. The subjects were selected purposely so that there was a good representation of both male (20) and female (13) teachers.

Procedure: The questionnaire was finally administered after modifying it several times according to the feedback from a pilot survey. The pilot survey was conducted among 5 teachers of Bangladesh who were excluded from the main study.

Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings
All the quantitative data in this survey is analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 16.0). For descriptive statistics frequencies, means and standard deviations are calculated for each item.

The qualitative data generated from telephone semi-structured interviews are analyzed by using strategies of coding and identifying common themes.

Discussion of the Findings of the Quantitative Data
Awareness of DI Strategies: The results in Table 1 shows that all the respondents (100%) are well aware that learners vary significantly in their level of intelligence and ability (item no. 1, M = 3) and they plan and vary their teaching methods accordingly. Again, nearly all the respondents (90.9%) believe that they should help learners to develop positive self-image (Item 6). Still, respondents seem to differ in their opinions regarding setting different objectives for different learners or adjusting curriculum to learners' ability. Yet, the majority of the respondents (72.6%) seem to be respectful about their learners and determined to build "positive self-image" (90.9%) and do not prefer to criticize them in front of their peers. Most of them believe that it is important to provide learners with a friendly, non-competitive environment in the class where, rather than completion, cooperation exists, and nobody faces criticism. The findings indicate that teachers are well aware about the principles of differentiated instruction and know the way of applying those strategies in the classes. The finding is quite consistent with the DI strategies propounded by Tomlinson (1999, 2000).

S/L No.	Statements	Always (3)	Sometimes (2)	Rarely (1)	Never (0)	Mean
1	I am aware that all learners are not of same level or same intelligence.	100	0	0	0	3.00
2	I should vary my teaching methods depending on the variety of learner learning styles, ability, and intelligence.	72.7	27.3	0	0	2.73
3	I should set different goals for different learners.	18.2	54.3	18.2	9.1	1.82

4	I should modify my curriculum to learners' needs rather than expect learners to adjust themselves to fit the curriculum.	36.4	54.5	9.1	0	2.24
5	I respect every learner's opinion, feelings, and emotion.	72.7	27.3	0	0	2.73
6	I should help each of my learners to develop positive self-image.	90.9	9.1	0	0	2.91
7	I should not criticize learners in front of the class.	72.7	0	9.1	18.2	2.27
8	I should develop a feeling of cooperation, not competition among learners.	72.7	27.3	0	0	2.73

Table 1. Questionnaire results: Teachers classroom strategies and awareness of differentiated learning

<u>Teachers Awareness of Differentiated Learning (special focus on teachers knowledge about their learners):</u> Table 2 shows that a large percentage (81.8%) of the respondents have good knowledge about their learners' backgrounds, interests, and preferred learning styles. Yet, most of the teachers do not conduct any pre-assessment quiz or test (Item 11). The finding is quite consistent with the finding of Ferdousy (2013) and Chaudhury (2009) who found that, at the university level, curriculum is designed without any "Need Analysis" of learners. The learners of Ismail's (2010) study were also found to be taught without any need analysis, which, according to the learners, is extremely necessary. Therefore, though teachers in the present study claim to have knowledge about learners, their teaching without needs analysis proves their inadequate knowledge and makes the application of DI strategies in their classrooms questionable.

S/L No.	Statements	Always (4)	Sometimes (3)	Rarely (2)	Never (1)	Mean
9	I know the level of competence of my learners.	81.8	18.2	0	0	2.82
10	I know about my learners' social, economic, and family background.	18.2	63.6	18.2	0	2.00
11	I take pre-assessment quizzes and tests to identify the slow and advanced learners of my class.	0	36.4	63.6	0	1.36
12	I know about the interests (inside and outside the classroom) of each of my learners.	0	90.9	9.1	0	1.91
13	I know about my learners' preferred learning styles.	9.1	63.6	27.3	0	1.82

Table 2. Questionnaire Results: Knowledge about Learners

<u>Content:</u> According to DI strategy, a teacher should use various types of materials and methods for teaching to show sensitivity to the diversity of the learners. Again, learners' diversity of experience can be used by the instructor as a rich resource for learning (Knowles, 1970). The results in Table 3

show that the majority of respondents do not always vary reading materials, they do it "sometimes" (81.8%). Regarding the use of audio-visuals, a considerable number of teachers use them as private universities provide that technical support. But it is striking to note that respondents do not always vary the complexity of reading materials according to various learners' ability. Classes are mostly teacher-centered where learners are taught mostly through lectures.

Islam (2011), in his study on tertiary level learners, found that learners are taught by a fixed textbook in the class. Ferdousy (2013) found that the practice of asking learners for selection of materials in the classroom is quite unusual in Bangladesh. Therefore, this study also complements the previous studies and reveals the lack of a proper teaching strategy in tertiary level classrooms.

S/L No.	Statements	Always (3)	Sometimes (2)	Rarely (1)	Never (0)	Mean
14	I mainly use a fixed textbook in the class.	0	81.8	0	18.2	2.82
15	I vary the sophistication, complexity, and difficulty of reading materials according to my learners' ability.	36.4	27.3	9.1	27.3	1.73
16	I teach various topics by delivering lectures only.	9.1	63.6	9.1	18.2	1.64
17	I use both audio tapes and visuals (video, multimedia) in my class.	9.1	90.9	0	0	0.09
18	I solicit learners' advice about what to teach in my course.	18.2	63.6	9.1	9.1	1.91

Table 3. Questionnaire Results: Content

Process: Table 4 shows that most of the respondents (81.1%, Item 19) arrange flexible groups according to learners' ability, interests, or intelligence. Again, nearly all teachers (90.9%, Item 21) encourage learners to share their ideas with their peers. In addition, a great number of teachers meet with small groups to re-teach ideas and even counsel individual learners about their personal problems. The findings contradict the findings of Ferdousy (2013) and Ismail (2011) who found that in the language classes, learners, rather than engaging in various activities, have to listen to the lectures of the teachers. But surprisingly, learners generally prefer teacher dominant information-transmission approach as they are used to this approach from their early school days.

S/L No.	Statements	Always (4)	Sometimes (3)	Rarely (2)	Never (1)	Mean
19	I divide learners into different groups according to their ability and interests.	0	81.8	9.1	9.1	1.73
20	Learners of my class learn by themselves through various activities organized by me.	27.3	63.6	0	9.1	2.09
21	I encourage learners to discuss and share their opinions in the class.	90.9	9.1	0	0	2.91

| 22 | I provide additional hours to help the slow learners of my classes. | 18.2 | 81.8 | 0 | 0 | 2.18 |
| 23 | I deal with learners personal problems that may be hindering their study | 27.3 | 63.6 | 9.1 | 0 | 2.18 |

Table 4. Questionnaire Results: Process

<u>Product:</u> The data in Table 5 show that only some of the respondents (18.2%) "always" vary their materials. Only a few of them give options to the learners to choose their assignment topics. Only a few of them (27.3%) seem to vary the complexity of tasks of their learners on a regular basis. Again, only a few respondents (27.3%, Item 27) vary the length of time given to learners according to learner ability. The finding contradicts the previous finding (Item 2) where respondents (72.7%) opined that they "should vary""teaching methods depending on the variety of learners' learning styles, ability and intelligence." Therefore, the present finding seems to indicate a gap between the belief and practice of differentiation in tertiary level classes by teachers.

Differentiated learning demands that teachers should vary "products" and must give learners tasks which they are able to do to save them from humiliation (Hermer, 2001). But in Bangladesh, teachers mostly give the same assignments, the same deadline, and similar support to every learner (Ferdousy, 2013). In fact, traditionally, in Bangladesh, the concept of varying the complexity of tasks among the learners of the same class or allowing somebody extra time for completion of the same task is unimaginable and unacceptable to institutions, learners, and parents (Jahan, 2008). This kind of behavior from any teacher can even lead to disasters in his/her (teacher's) professional life. So the problem is deeply rooted in the education policy of Bangladesh and teachers' responses bring forth this issue. The finding supports the finding of Ferdousy (2013) and Jahan (2008) who found that teachers rarely vary their tests or tasks and do not tailor their instruction strategies according to the proposition of DI. This disregard for learners' individuality will bring dissatisfaction and disappointment in learners (Knowles, 1970).

S/L No.	Statements	Always (4)	Sometimes (3)	Rarely (2)	Never (1)	Mean
24	Learners can choose their assignment topics according to their interest from various options provided by me.	18.2	54.5	18.2	9.1	1.82
25	I vary the complexity and difficulty of homework depending on learners' ability.	27.3	63.6	0	9.1	2.09
26	I provide different levels of hands-on-support for different learners of my class.	0	72.2	9.1	18.2	1.55

| 27 | I vary the length of time a learner may take to complete a task in order to provide additional support for a slow learner or to encourage an advanced learner to pursue a topic in greater depth. | 27.3 | 54.5 | 18.2 | 0 | 2.09 |
| 28 | I allow learners to do activities of their own interest. | 36.4 | 36.4 | 27.3 | 0 | 2.09 |

Table 5. Questionnaire Results: Product

Environment: Merriam and Brockett (2007) have divided the environment into three categories: physical, psychological, and social. In fact, adult learners deserve to get a class environment where they will find comfort, acceptance, and psychological stimulation. The data reveals that all teachers (100%) make their class enjoyable and encourage learners to talk in the class. The majority of the respondents (63%), however, do not select materials related to their culture and society, and they do not use materials related to the current issues either.

The finding is somewhat contradictory with the study of Moriam (2008) and Jahan (2008) where they found that learners feel frightened and anxious about English language learning in their classes. Jahan (2008) found in her study that a competitive environment exists in the language classes and this environment raises learners' anxiety levels and lessen their self-confidence.

S/L No.	Statements	Always (4)	Sometimes (3)	Rarely (2)	Never (1)	Mean
29	I make the class enjoyable for each and every learner.	81.8	18.2	0	0	2.82
30	I encourage my learners to talk in the class.	54.5	36.4	0	9.1	2.36
31	I use materials related to learners' culture and society.	18.2	18.2	45.5	18.2	1.36
32	I use references from current issues.	27.3	72.7	0	0	2.27
33	I help learners understand that some learners need to move around to learn, while others do better sitting quietly.	36.4	54.5	0	9.1	2.18

Table 6. Questionnaire Results: Environment

Evaluation: The teachers' responses regarding their assessment strategy are confusing and puzzling. Though the majority of the respondents revealed that they follow the same strategy to assess every learner (Item 34), in response to the next statement (Item 35) they answered that they vary the strategy of assessment. Again, a great number of teachers (81.2%) are found to be grading learners only on factual knowledge. Only a few of the teachers (27.3%) always grade learners based on their improvement.

In differentiated teaching, mistakes are tolerated and positively valued (Tomlinson, 2000; Heacox, 2002). The teacher does not criticize learners for their mistakes and evaluate learners

according to their personal growth. A majority of the teachers (63.6%), however, do not always find positive outcomes in learners' performance and adopt the traditional method of grading, which is frustrating for learners.

S/L No.	Statements	Always (4)	Sometimes (3)	Rarely (2)	Never (1)	Mean
34	I follow the same strategy to assess every learner's performance.	54.5	27.3	0	18.2	2.18
35	I vary the strategy of assessment depending on learners' ability.	45.5	45.5	0	9.1	2.27
36	I find the positive in every learners' performance.	36.4	0	0	63.6	2.36
37	I judge a learner considering his personal growth and success.	27.3	63.6	0	9.1	2.09
38	I grade learners only on factual knowledge.	36.4	55.5	81.2	0	2.18

Table 7. Questionnaire Results: Evaluation

Discussion of the Findings of the Qualitative Data

This part of the study will evaluate the data found from the interviews and these findings will be compared with teachers' beliefs about differentiation strategies as found in Items 1-13.

Teacher responses of the semi-structured telephone interview: As mentioned in the methodology section, a semi-structured telephone interview was conducted with ten respondents. Here, in order to maintain confidentiality, the teachers are identified simply as T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9, and T10.

Awareness of Differentiated Instruction strategies: The interview data (Q-1) conform to the survey finding that teachers know about DI strategies. Almost all the teachers informed the researcher that they are aware about the differences among learners in their level of intelligence and interest. One of the respondents said, "My class is filled with amazingly different learners in their nature and interest. Therefore, I have to apply various techniques in order to make them interested. Class environment is mostly friendly and approachable for my learners, and I know most of my learners know their family background and interests also"(T4).

Knowledge about learners: In response to the second part of Q-1, whether they are aware about the background and learning profile of their learners, almost all of the teachers answered positively. One of the respondents has said, "Though it is very tough within limited time span but I try my best to pay attention to them individually. As I am working here for last 4 years, I know almost all of them and aware about their family background, intelligence level, and skill" (T2). Therefore the survey finding and interview finding seem to be congruent and inform that teachers have sufficient knowledge about their learners.

Content: Again, in response to their use of learning material in the class (Q-2), the interview finding corroborates the survey finding. All of the teachers said that they use the same material for every learner. The reason behind this becomes clear through the response of one

respondent: "We use mainly the same text for every learner. I can't think of using different materials for my learners who belong to the same class. And this difference will not be accepted by my institutions and learners also" (T6).

In response to a question on their use of multimedia in the class (Q-4), all teachers unanimously said that they use it but sometimes they feel it is more convenient to teach through lectures or make students practice from the book.

Process: In response to their use of different strategies (Q-3) of teaching for different learners, teachers' interview finding seems to be similar with the survey finding. Teachers use the same materials in the class and ask learners to do classwork. They have revealed that they never thought of using different strategies for the different learners as there is no practice of doing that in the institution.

Product: Again, all teachers agreed that assignments are the same for all and learners get the same amount of time to accomplish their tasks. One teacher respondent said, "If I differ assignments, that means if we give somebody easy topics for assignment and others get difficult tasks, or if I give more time to somebody for doing their tasks, I will be in great trouble. Learners will evaluate me as unfair and they can complain to the authority that I am biased towards some of the learners and the authority may take action against me" (T6).

Environment: Questions related to class environment reveal that classes are mostly relaxing but teachers have to be strict also in order to maintain discipline. Learners remain in their seats for the whole class and complete their tasks following the same instructions.

Evaluation: About evaluation (Q-4), the interview data are consistent with the survey finding that teachers evaluate all learners in the same way. They sometimes scold learners as one of the respondents said, "The evaluation process is the same for all and we do it through class tests, mid-term examination, and final examination. There is no scope to use a different evaluation system for any particular learner. Again, we scold learners who are disobedient and inattentive" (T7).

The interviews revealed the various obstacles teachers face to implement DI in English language classrooms. They are afraid of being claimed as "unfair," and therefore they follow the same rules and regulations for every learner as well as the same evaluation method. The rules set by the institution/department restrict teachers' ability to think otherwise. Again, teachers, as they have gone through the traditional method of learning where teachers' duty was only to serve up the curriculum, they are unconsciously following that path and unable to do something different.

Suggestions for implementing DI in classrooms
During the final stage of the interviews, teachers were asked to give at least two suggestions regarding the process of implementing DI in place of the traditional teaching method. The majority of the teachers suggested that classes should be "small" in size, i.e., they suggested learners in a class should not be more than 25, which will pave the way for more effective teaching. Again, a number of teachers talked about the necessity for more workshops/seminars/training for sharing ideas among teachers and practical knowledge about

implementation of DI in classes. Teachers believe it is necessary to give them "more freedom" from the institution, and not be bound by a set syllabus or a single textbook or by the uniform examination and assessment policy.

Implications

The current study brings out some significant issues regarding the present picture of English language teaching in higher education in Bangladesh. In Bangladesh, at private universities, learners pay a lot of money in tuition fees, and yet, they do not attain the target skills in English language. But no approach will work if significant care is not taken of each individual learner and teaching strategies are not tailored to their needs. So teaching methods need to be altered and must be carefully designed keeping each individual learner in mind. Again, teachers should be provided with more freedom to work, and should be allowed to receive training related to effective teaching methods. Teachers should be given the opportunity to use the Internet in the classroom as teaching materials are quickly, cheaply, and readily available there.

The study may have good implications for all, including learners, teachers, and institutions involved in English language teaching in Bangladesh. Teachers of higher education, dealing with adult learners should take this investigation seriously and try to modify materials, teaching methods, activities, and above all, their roles in the classroom to reach every individual learner. Again, all English language teachers of a particular university can devise a unified lesson plan, incorporating differentiated learning into the five major areas. Teachers should maintain a good rapport with their learners as learners' perspectives about the teacher and the courses affect their success (Cook, 1991). Education policy makers and educational institutions can take this investigation sincerely and think about giving teachers freedom to devise their own evaluation strategies. Traditional attitudes towards evaluation and testing should be changed. Learners should take this investigation seriously and take initiatives to let teachers know their needs or learning preferences. They should fully co-operate with the teacher in activities organized for their benefit.

Conclusion

The present study indicates that teachers are aware of differentiated learning. To some extent, they also seem to be implementing some core propositions of it in their classrooms. The study reveals that teachers maintain a good relationship with their learners, but they fall short in applying some of the strategies in areas like content, process, product, environment, and assessment. In the content areas, most teachers follow a fixed textbook for all and mostly use the traditional lecture method. In the product and assessment areas, problems exist mainly due to traditional attitudes.In fact, teachers have to abide by rules set by the authority; they have to use the same content for all learners and the same evaluation method. For example, all students must take the sit-down examination on the same date, complete the same assignments and the same syllabus, which makes teachers unable to apply DI in their classrooms. It is, however, difficult to generalize that this is the common scenario in all private universities of Bangladesh. To verify this, a large scale survey including more universities of Bangladesh needs to be done. Another limitation of the current study is that only teachers' responses have been taken in account. If learners' responses were taken, then it would give a

more valid picture of the teaching strategies used in the classroom. Still, what is found from the research may provide some theoretical and practical guidance to language teachers and help them develop more efficient classroom strategies to improve the learning of learners.It may also provide some insight into the subject matter and, despite the limitations, may serve as a basis for further research.

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Appendix 1

The Questionnaire

Instructions: Respond to the following statements by using the rating scale: **Always—Sometimes—Rarely—Never**. Please put a tick mark in one box only for each answer. Remember, this is not a test; there is no trick question, no "right" or "wrong" answers. Some of the factors may be beyond your control; nevertheless, please let your answers reflect the ACTUAL situation in your class.

Gender: □ Male   **□ Female**

SECTION – A

S/LNo.	Statements	Always (4)	Sometimes (3)	Rarely (2)	Never (1)
1	I am aware that all learners are not of same level or same intelligence.				
2	I vary my teaching methods depending on the variety of learner learning styles, ability and intelligence.				
3	I should set different goals for different learners.				
4	I should adjust my curriculum to learners' needs rather than expect learners to modify themselves to fit the curriculum.				
5	I respect every learner's opinion, feelings and emotion.				
6	I should help each of my learners to develop positive self-image.				
7	I should not criticize learners negatively in front of the class.				
8	I should develop a feeling of cooperation not competition among learners				
9	I know the level of competence of my learners.				
10	I know about my learners' social, economic, and family background.				
11	I take pre-assessment quizzes and tests to identify the slow and advanced learners of my class.				
12	I know about the interests (inside and outside the classroom) of each and every learner.				

13	I know about my learners' preferred learning styles.				
14	I use a fixed textbook in the class.				
15	I vary the sophistication, complexity and difficulty of reading materials according to my learners' ability.				
16	I teach various topics by delivering lectures only.				
17	I use both audio tapes and visuals (video, multimedia) in my class.				
18	I solicit learners' advice about what to teach in this course.				
19	I divide learners into different groups according to their ability and interests.				
20	Learners of my class learn by themselves through various activities organized by me.				
21	I encourage learners to discuss and share their opinions in the class.				
22	I provide additional hours to help the slow learners of my classes.				
23	I deal with learners' personal problems which hinder their study.				
24	Learners can choose their topics from various options provided by me.				
25	I vary the complexity and difficulty of homework depending on learners' ability.				
26	I provide different level of support for my learners.				
27	I vary the length of time a learner may take to complete a task in order to provide additional support for a slow learner or to encourage an advanced learner to pursue a topic in greater depth.				
28	I allow learners to do activities of their own interest.				
29	I make the class enjoyable for each and every learner.				
30	I encourage my learners to talk in the class.				
31	I use materials related to their culture and society.				
32	I use references from current issues.				
33	I help learners understand that some learners need to move around to learn, while others do better sitting quietly.				
34	I follow the same strategy to asses every learner's performance.				
35	I vary the strategy of assessment depending on learners' ability.				
36	I always find positive in every learners performance.				
37	I judge a learner considering his personal growth and success.				
38	I grade learners only on factual knowledge.				

Appendix 2

Semi-structured interview questions for teachers:

S/L No.	Area of investigation	Questions
Teaching Practice		
1	Teachers' knowledge of differentiated instruction strategy	Are you aware that learners differ vastly in their ability and intelligence? Do you know about that diversity of your learners?
2	Materials	Do you use the same materials for each and every learner of your class? If you do so, give reasons for doing that. Do you use multimedia in the classroom?
3	Method	Do you use the same method for teaching all learners? Why?
4	Product	Do you assign the same task for each learner? Do you vary time span provided for each learner for doing their activities? Give reasons behind your activities.
5	Evaluation	Do you follow the same process to evaluate your learners' acquired learning? Do you criticize or scold the learners?
6	Environment	Do you create a friendly environment in the class?
7	Suggestion	Provide at least two suggestions how differentiated environment can be applied in the English language teaching classes.

The Need for "Needs Analysis":
A Tertiary Level EAP Course in Bangladesh

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Abstract

This study evaluates a tertiary-level English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course titled "Introduction to Academic Reading and Writing" (ENG 102) offered at a Bangladeshi private university. It begins with an "environment analysis" section identifying the possible constraints of the curriculum, followed by a "needs analysis" section. For the latter, a questionnaire survey has been developed for its various stakeholders, namely "language teachers," "content-area teachers," "students," and an administrator. The questionnaire addresses issues like "course goals," "expectations from the course," "learning and teaching of various reading and speaking sub-skills," and so on. In addition, test scores and students' writing samples have been analyzed to identify various writing issues faced by the students. Finally, all the data collected have been triangulated to shed light on them from various standpoints by the above-mentioned stakeholders, and thereby to avoid any perspectival bias. The results of the student questionnaire indicate that students need to improve reading sub-skills like "skimming" and "scanning," and writing sub-skills like writing a "topic sentence" or "thesis statement". The results of the language teacher questionnaire indicate that higher-order reading sub-skills like "inferring," "synthesizing," and "text organization," have not been adequately covered in the present curriculum. The results of the content teacher questionnaire are similar to those of the language teachers in terms of "inferring," and "text-organization" skills, whereas the results of the administrator's questionnaire are partially similar to those of both language and content teacher questionnaires, revealing that the present syllabus does not adequately cover either the lower or higher-order reading or writing sub-skills. In response to these findings, the present study proposes extensive revision of the existing curriculum in that it should emphasize the sub-skills that have been identified above. Moreover, the study highly recommends the use of a wide variety of local as well as foreign materials (both prepared and authentic) to meaningfully engage the students in various language-related activities.

In today's world, it is a reality that the scope of English for Specific Purposes (EAP) courses are not limited to the countries where English is the first language. With the global spread of English, EAP has emerged as quite an important addition to especially tertiary-level language curricula as a result of English being the medium of instruction for higher studies in many different countries around the world (Eslami, 2010). For example, Bangladesh, a country in the "outer circle" (Kachru, 1985, p. 11) among the three circles proposed by Kachru, considers English as "an official language in education and government" (Crystal, 2003). Therefore, proficiency in English is of utmost importance for its citizens to have access to higher education and the job market. In this regard, tertiary level students are considered to be the immediate beneficiaries of EAP courses as they help to prepare them for a relatively longer period of study in a chosen content area.

In many cases, one of the major reasons for students not being able to do well in different content areas is the lack of proficiency in English. One possible reason for such a situation could be the practice of developing an impressionistic or top-down curriculum without taking into account students' needs or abilities. In other words, the absence of systematic needs analysis may be one of the root causes behind the poor designing of the curricula. As Stufflebeam, McCormick, Brinkerhoff, and Nelson (1985) rightly point out, needs analysis is the process of "determining the things that are necessary or useful for the fulfillment of a defensible purpose" (p. 16).

However, despite a lot of serious theoretical discussions on how important needs analysis is, the actual practice of conducting needs analysis surveys is still a rarity as needs analysis is popularly considered to be a complex and time-consuming process in the reality of many educational contexts. The present context of the study, an EAP course titled ENG 102: Academic Reading and Writing, which is offered mandatorily across the departments of a private university, is no exception. The study reports the findings of a needs analysis survey that has been conducted amongst selected stakeholders pertaining to the course in question. It also reports the constraints to the needs analysis survey as identified through an environment analysis that was conducted earlier. The findings reveal the weaknesses of the present curriculum in that it does not amply focus on many of the problem areas of the students, and thereby recommends a revision of the curriculum. The general aim of the revised curriculum is to strengthen the academic reading and writing skills of the students through a meaningful synthesis between various reading and writing activities.

Review of the Literature

As indicated earlier, the process of curriculum design is time-consuming mainly because it involves a number of inter-related steps. Though different scholars and practitioners have suggested different steps, (Richards, 2001; Macalister & Nation, 2010; Litwack, 1979; Briggs, 1977; Nicholls, & Nicholls, 1972 etc.), almost all of them have agreed upon the following two steps:

1. Environment analysis
2. Needs analysis

1. ***Environment Analysis:*** Tessmer (1990, cited in Macalister & Nation, 2010) said, "Environment Analysis involves looking at the factors that will have a strong effect on decisions about the goals of the course, what to include in the course, and how to teach and assess it" (p. 14). Environment Analysis is also known as constraints analysis as every context has its own givens "facilitating or hindering a curriculum's success" (Paci, 2013, p. 426). That is why a thorough environment analysis may be a necessary pre-requisite to conducting a needs analysis. The findings will help a needs analyst not only to make informed decisions about how to approach the upcoming needs assessment but also about how to act upon them to rule out all the possible constraints.

2. ***Needs Analysis (Definition and Procedure):*** Needs assessment has been viewed as "a dialogue between people" (Graves. 2000, p. 98), and "people" may consist of "learners," "teachers," "administrators," and other stakeholders influencing the teaching-learning

decisions in classrooms. It helps teachers gather information about students' needs and abilities "in a manner that is appropriate, consistent, and conducive to learning" (Bailey, 1998, p. 2). Moreover, it helps teachers discover the gaps of current and desired states of the learners enabling them to help their students bridge the gaps (Graves, 2000, p. 101). Therefore, Brown (1995, p. 36) has suggested three basic steps of needs analysis:

    i.   Making basic decisions about the needs analysis
    ii.   Gathering information
    iii.   Using the information

i. Making basic decisions about the needs analysis: First, the decisions have to be made about who will be involved and what types of information should be gathered through needs assessment surveys. Brown (1995, p. 37) discusses four categories of people who may become involved in a needs analysis: a) the target group (people about whom information will be gathered), (b) the audience (people who will eventually act upon the analysis), (c) the needs analyst (people responsible for conducting the needs analysis), and (d) resource group (people who may serve as sources of information about the target group). The logical next step would be to decide on the approach or philosophy of the needs analysis. In this regard, Stufflebeam, McCormick, Brinkerhoff, & Nelson (1985) propose four different philosophies, which are (a) discrepancy philosophy (needs are viewed as differences or discrepancies), (b) democratic philosophy (any change desired by a majority of the group involved) (c) analytic philosophy (any change regarding what students will learn next based on what they already know), and (d) diagnostic philosophy (any necessary change the absence of which will be harmful for the students). However, these philosophies are not mutually exclusive as they may quite naturally interact with each other. A successful completion of the decision-making phase will lead to the next phase titled "gathering information."

ii. Gathering Information: Richards, Platt, and Weber (1985, p. 189) suggest that a needs assessment seeks information on:

    1.   The situations in which a language will be used (including *who* it will be used *with*)
    2.   The objectives and purposes for which the language is needed.
    3.   The types of communication that will be used (e.g., written, spoken, formal, informal)
    4.   The level of proficiency that will be required

The above list may not be exhaustive; however, it contains the type of information that are most important, and should be acted upon to develop an effective curriculum. Moreover, it is important to consider the types of questions to be used as Rossett (1982) identified five categories of questions that could be included to know the following: (a) problems (the ones experienced by the target people) (b) priorities (the skills that need to be prioritized) (c) abilities (skill sets of students to be determined by their test scores) (d) attitudes (students' feelings and attitudes towards the curriculum) and (e) solutions (how the problems/potential problems can be solved). At this point, it is important to decide on the types of instruments to be used to collect different types of information. Brown (1995, p. 48) suggests the following as instruments: (a) Tests, (b) Observations, (c) Interviews, (d) Meetings, and (e) Questionnaires

iii. Using the information: After all the necessary information has been collected, it is time to interpret them and eventually act upon them. Brown (1995), in this regard, points out that the data must be "analyzed, interpreted, and evaluated" before applying them to the practical realities of curriculum development (p. 55).

Methodology: Participants and Instruments

This section is divided into the following sections:

1. Learner Profile
2. Needs Analysis Survey

1. Learner Profile

The target population is a mixed ability group ranging from mid-to-upper intermediate level Bangladeshi students, who will be entering into their first year of tertiary level education on completion of their 12 year of pre-tertiary education. The learners are mostly linguistically homogenous with a few exceptions of indigenous students (1% or less). Therefore, almost all the students' L1 is Bangla except for the indigenous ones who speak different indigenous languages at home with their family and friends, but study Bangla in a second language setting (exposure to Bangla is available outside of classrooms) and English in a foreign language setting (exposure to English is limited to only classrooms). Therefore, the learners operated in a foreign language environment, which restrict their exposure to English.

As for the methodology of teaching English, it is important to remember the methodological shift that has taken place from the previous Grammar Translation Method to a weak version of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) with a view to "improving the quality of ELT" (Sarwar, 2008, para 22). However, there is still a great scarcity of CLT-trained teachers in the pre-tertiary level, and this may have resulted in ineffective classroom teaching. This, arguably, becomes largely responsible for the students' proficiency being miserably low.

2. Needs Analysis Survey

2.1 Why and how. The present paper documents the results of the needs analysis of the students of ENG 102, which is compulsory for all students of the university across the departments. The need for the course stems from the fact that students fail to demonstrate satisfactory academic reading and writing skills in different content areas as manifested in their poor average performance in those courses confirmed by the test scores of those courses. The content teachers advocate for a thorough needs analysis to determine the actual needs of the students so that students can be trained to implement those skills in their content areas. The researcher, as a former teacher of ENG 102, agrees with the content teachers in that a thorough needs analysis is necessary to revise the course content and thereby to make the course truly beneficial for the students.

2.2 Stakeholders. To increase the validity of the results, in addition to the students and teachers of the target course, teachers of various content courses, and an administrator took part in the survey. Therefore, the stakeholders who participated in the survey are:

(a) students of the 2 sections of the course (50)
(b) language teachers presently teaching the course (8)

(c) content teachers who teach in different content areas, (6)

(d) the Chair of the Department, who also taught the course several times (1)

Apart from the survey results, several test results and the results of an analysis of students' writing samples were also taken into account. Finally, all the data were triangulated to avoid any perspectival bias as an "attempt to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behavior by studying it from more than one standpoint" (Cohen and Manion, 2000, p. 254).

2.3 The structure of the needs analysis survey

2.3.1. Course Profile

2.3.2. Environment analysis

2.3.2.1. Possible constraints

2.3.2.2. The treatment of the constraints in the curriculum

2.3.3. Needs Analysis (instruments: questionnaire, test scores, students' writing samples)

2.3.3.1. Developing a questionnaire (MCQ and qualitative)

2.3.3.2. Doing a pilot study (with two students and one teacher)

2.3.3.3. Conducting the study (via emails with the students, teachers, and the administrators)

2.3.3.4. Summarizing the responses as found from the questionnaire (both quantitatively and qualitatively)

2.3.3.4.1. Student questionnaire responses

2.3.3.4.2. Language teacher questionnaire responses

2.3.3.4.3. Content teacher questionnaire responses

2.3.3.4.4 Administrator questionnaire responses

2.3.1 Course Profile

The course has 6 sections, each being taught by a different teacher. The course falls under EAP (English for Academic Purposes), which is a branch of ESP (English for Specific purposes). The teaching content is matched to the requirements of the learners as Robinson (1991) discusses a few critical features that EAP classes have:

- First, EAP is goal directed – the students are not learning English for the sake of it, but because they need to use the language;
- Second, EAP courses are based on needs analysis, which aims to specify as closely as possible exactly what it is that students have to do in English; and
- EAP learners tend to be adults rather than children. Most EAP students are over 18 and they will have made a difficult decision to study in an English medium university. (pp. 2-5)

Keeping the above-mentioned features in mind, and also what Brown (1995) said, "it is not humanly possible to gather *all* possible information on … needs" (p. 40), the needs analysis survey aims at analyzing the needs of the learners regarding a few selected issues which may affect everyday teaching of the course. It is hoped that the results will be used to address the identified needs of the learners in a more context-specific manner.

2.3.2 Environment Analysis

The researcher did an environment analysis to find out the possible constraints and suggest appropriate solutions. One added advantage of the researcher was his close familiarity with the environment since he had taught in this context earlier and was aware of the possible contextual issues. However, he consulted the teachers and the Chairperson of the department to come up with a list of possible constraints and discuss the solutions with them. The constraints, and possible solutions to those, that he came up with in consultation with all the concerned people are below:

2.3.2.1 Possible constraints

1. The teachers may not be well-trained in teaching an EFL course due to their background in literature. It was not too long ago when studying English meant studying only English literature. Since Applied Linguistics/TESOL has been introduced relatively recently, not all universities offer an MA in it. Therefore, the English departments are still literature-dominated and produce literature graduates who take up language teaching as a convenient profession on completion of their MA in English.
2. Learners tend to switch to Bangla in and outside class since speaking in English is unnecessary and sounds artificial as almost all of them speak Bangla as their L1.
3. There is an issue of linguistic and national pride, and many learners may be negative towards the use of English in a postcolonial setting.
4. A good number of learners may have a negative attitude towards the target language culture (it refers to the mainstream culture of USA, UK, and Australia) due to religious reasons.

2.3.2.2 The treatment of the constraints in the curriculum

1. Since it is impractical to expect a good number of well-trained language teachers as the universities in the country are not producing enough of them, the researcher would like to make it a requirement that the teachers take an in-house training course with an experienced faculty member so they can be trained to teach the course contents in a more pedagogically effective manner.
2. Learners may be encouraged to speak in English with their peers and teachers in and out of class while speaking their L1 with others, such as family members. In order to increase exposure to the target language, curriculum revision will be recommended, and one of the recommendations will be to form a conversation club and a book club in which, besides reading books, students will discuss in English various current issues and will be encouraged to write short responses to books or review a book.
3. Teachers may raise learners' awareness that their L1, under no circumstances, will be replaced by their L2. They need to learn English to be able to use it for national/international communication. This critical awareness about bilingualism will help the learners strike a balance between their L1 and L2.
4. To address the issue of cultural hegemony (target language culture dominating/ replacing the native language culture), the curriculum will make sure to use various

types of culture, including the local language culture, to drive the point home that English is not associated with the so-called "dominant western culture," but can be associated with many different cultures in which English is spoken.

2.3.3 Needs Analysis

2.3.3.1 Developing a questionnaire. The researcher conducted the needs analysis through a questionnaire. As Brown said, questionnaires are more efficient for gathering information on a large scale (1995, p. 50). Also, for the respondents, to fill in a structured questionnaire requires little time. The answers are relatively objective and easy to analyze and discuss (Best, 1977). Moreover, since during the time of the survey, the researcher was physically away from the target context, questionnaires may be the only feasible means to reach all the stakeholders given the logistic constraints. As for the structure of the questionnaire, it is not the same for all the stakeholders and adapted to extract as much information as possible from each type of stakeholder. A description of each of the questionnaires is below.

The students' questionnaire had four parts, namely part A, B, C, and D. Part A asked for their expectations from the course and how it will help them achieve their goals. Part B asks them to choose topics from a given list to know about their topical preferences. Part C is common for all the stakeholders that asks for their opinions about a set of sub-skills. Part D asks how they were taught reading and writing skills previously to build off of those skills.

The language teachers' questionnaire also had four parts. Part A asked the teachers if the curriculum adequately prepared the students for the target context, and if not, what else could be incorporated. Part B, C, and D are similar to the students' questionnaire.

The content teachers' questionnaire is relatively short and it has three parts. Part A is similar to part A of the language teachers' questionnaire. Part B is the statement tables, which is part C in the other questionnaires. Part C asks them to give an example of students' ability to demonstrate a given reading/writing skill.

The administrator's questionnaire is mostly the same as the teachers'.

In part C (part B in content teachers' questionnaire) in the questionnaire, a respondent had to tick an appropriate box from five options for each item. For analysis, the responses were converted into mathematical figures as follows: Entirely disagree=1, Disagree=2, Not sure=3, Agree=4, Entirely agree=5. Their responses to the use of strategy will be analyzed quantitatively.

2.3.3.2 Doing a pilot study. The researcher conducted a pilot study by emailing the student questionnaire to two selected students, and the teacher questionnaire to one teacher of a similar course of a different institution, requesting them to fill out the questionnaires. As he received the filled-in questionnaires after 3 days, the researcher realized that one of the students did not understand the word "scanning," so he decided to give a definition of the term and put the term in parenthesis. In the teacher questionnaire, the statements in the table (which are closed-ended) were in section D and the open-ended questions in section A, but the teacher to whom the survey questionnaire was emailed suggested that the researcher

put the closed-ended questions first so that participants can add any point to the open-ended questions. The researcher made both the changes as suggested.

2.3.3.3. Conducting the actual study. The researcher emailed the student questionnaire to two of his former colleagues to distribute them among the 50 students in each of their classes, and the questionnaire for the language teachers to 6 of their colleagues (including the 2 who distributed the questionnaires in their class). The questionnaire developed for the content teachers were given to 4 of the researcher's colleagues in the department of history, business administration, anthropology, and English literature. Also, he emailed the questionnaire developed for the administrator to the Chair of the English Department. In less than a week's time, he received all the completed questionnaires. From the students'questionnaires, only two were half-completed, and 3 were completed incorrectly. Therefore, only 45 of the student questionnaires were analyzed. The rest of the stakeholders completed their questionnaires properly.

2.3.3.4 Summarizing the responses as found from the questionnaire.

2.3.3.4.1 Student questionnaire responses: In the responses found in part A, B, and D (the responses in part C have been analyzed quantitatively), the researcher found that most of the students expected that the course would teach them an exhaustive list of academic skills related to reading and writing that they would need once they begin their degree in their chosen content area. Most of the students were taught reading skills through literary texts, and had to process higher order reading skills even though many of them lacked the lower order ones. Most of them said that they need to improve their ability to skim and scan a text (which they also said in part C). As for writing skills, they were mostly taught through the product approach, and there was no systematic teaching on how to develop various parts of an essay, for example. Almost all of them said that they need to improve their sense of a topic sentence and thesis statement. For the choice of topics, most of them picked "Family Issues and marriages," "Happiness,", "Media," and "Man and Woman."

2.3.3.4.2: Language teacher questionnaire responses: In response to part A, B, and D, most of the language teachers said that the present curriculum needed revision in that it did not adequately cover the reading sub-skills of "inferring," "synthesizing," and "text organization," which most of the students had problems with. They suggested incorporating more authentic materials, reiterating the importance of enough practice of the mentioned skills. As for the writing sub-skills, the teachers thought that the curriculum should emphasize teaching of various parts of an essay with a special focus on transition signals which were very important academic skills for the target context. For the choice of topics, most of the teachers found "Life and Death," "Media," "Happiness," and "Food and Eating Habits" interesting to teach.

2.3.3.4.3 Content teacher questionnaire response: In response to parts A and C, all the content teachers said that the course contents may need revision, and they agreed with the language teachers that most of the students were weak in the sub-skills of "inferring" and "text organization." They added that the course should teach the students how to

organize an academic essay using transition signals appropriately. Also, students should be taught how to cite various sources in their academic papers.

2.3.3.4.4 Administrator questionnaire response: The administrator agreed with the previous stakeholders in that students must improve their sub-skills of "skimming,""scanning," "inferring," and "text organization." Moreover, he added that as students are weak in activating their higher order skills, for example, "author's point of view" and "author's tone" should be used less since mastering the lower order skills were more important.

As for analyzing the quantitative part (part C; part B in the content teachers' questionnaire), the researcher decided to analyze the data in terms of mean scores since he is dealing with a good number of student/teacher participants. The survey results in terms of mean scores are presented in the following table format:

Results

SL.	Statements	Student questionnaire results (mean score)	Teacher questionnaire results (mean score)	Administrator questionnaire results (mean score)
1.	I/Students can identify the main ideas after reading a text	2.90	3.00	2.00
2.	I/Students can find specific information (scan) in the text	3.30	3.20	3.00
3.	I/Students can draw conclusions which are not explicit in a reading text based on the information given	2.80	2.75	2.00
4	I/Students can differentiate major/ essential information from the non-essential ones	3.15	2.70	2.00
5	I/Students can organize/synthesize information from a text	2.80	2.60	2.00
6	I/Students can distinguish facts from opinions	3.50	3.10	3.00
7	I/Students can successfully predict the content of a reading text from its title.	2.90	3.35	3.00
8	I/Students can summarize a text in a few sentences	3.20	3.10	3.00
9	I/Students can identify the author's tone (if it is ironic or sympathetic, for example) as I read a reading text	1.75	1.50	2.00
10	I/Students can re-order the paragraphs of a jumbled reading text	1.44	1.32	1.00
11	I/Students can state the main idea of a paragraph clearly in one sentence	2.10	2.00	2.00

12	I/Students can support the main idea of a paragraph by providing relevant supporting sentences in the same paragraph	2.10	2.25	2.00
13	I/Students can state the main idea of an essay (thesis statement) in the first paragraph of an essay	1.90	1.50	1.00
14	Each of my paragraphs in an essay is connected to the main idea of the text	2.00	2.15	2.00
15	I am/Students are skilled at organizing my ideas or expressing them logically using transition signals ("on the contrary,""however,""moreover," for example)	1.80	1.60	1.00
16	I/Students think of my intended audience and what they expect from me in my writing	2.10	2.00	2.00
17	I/Students know how to integrate references, or quotations from readings into my written assignments to support my opinions and/or ideas.	1.90	1.80	1.00
18	I/Students know how to integrate readings into my written assignments to support my opinions and/or ideas.	1.10	1.10	1.00
19	I/Students know how to use sources effectively in my written assignments (e.g., textbooks, journal articles, audio files, etc.)	1.45	1.35	1.00
20	I/Students can use punctuations (comma, semi-colon, etc.) confidently and correctly.	1.25	1.30	1.00

KEY (Teachers' and Students' Attitude):
1.00-2.20 = they are very weak in the sub-skills/strategies,
2.21-3.30 = they need extensive practice in the sub-skills,
3.31-4.31 = they are skilled users of the strategies, and
4.32-5.00 = they are expert users of the sub-skills/strategies

The results of the assessment table show that, for all of the sub-skills (except no. 6), students, teachers, and administrator's mean scores were below 3.30, which shows that students are weak in these skills and need extensive practice in them. Moreover, students in this course took several weekly and 1 monthly tests, the results of which show that students seriously lack the sub-skills of skimming, scanning, inferring, text organization, and synthesizing. On the other hand, they were quite good at summarizing and answering factual questions. Their writing samples demonstrated that they had problems encapsulating the theme of a paragraph in a

topic sentence and also the theme of an essay in a thesis statement. Many of them used the transition signals incorrectly, and a good number of them did not use any transition signals at all. But they had strengths too. As a product of the grammar translation method, they made few grammatical errors. Also, there were a very few mechanics-related errors (punctuation) errors in their writing.

Discussion

Triangulation of the data collected up to this point show that all the stakeholders who participated in the survey agreed that in (a) reading, students need to improve mostly on their ability to skim, scan, infer, organize a text, synthesize information from two texts, summarize a text, and in (b) writing, students need to learn how to write a topic sentence, a thesis statement, use transition signals, integrate reading materials into writing, and cite sources appropriately. The test results and a close examination of the writing samples confirmed students' lack of proficiency in the above-mentioned writing sub-skills. Therefore, it is very important that the curriculum address these reading and writing sub-skills of the learners to equip them best as they begin their content area courses.

As for the course materials and the medium of instruction, the study would not like to recommend any set textbook, but materials and tasks drawn from various local and international language-teaching resources. As for the use of L1, which, in the present context, is Bangla, the present curriculum suggests that Bangla be used judiciously, meaning that it could be used to explain a vocabulary or grammar item, but the medium of instruction and tasks should be in English. Finally, the study underscores that a more rigorous evaluation plan be devised to ensure a minimum level of proficiency for all students.

Conclusion

Since tertiary-level EAP courses are goal-directed and influence students' performance for a relatively longer period of time, it is essential that the curriculum of such courses be designed practically, addressing all the key communication issues faced by the students. In order to figure out the needs and challenges of the students, a systematic needs analysis is not only important but absolutely essential. Moreover, a pre-needs analysis environment analysis is equally important to tackle the anticipated constraints to be faced by the needs analyst. The findings of the needs analysis survey do not only help the curriculum designer as well as the teachers develop an understanding of the students and their problems, concerns, and expectations from the course, but also enable them to strike a balance accommodating the academic skills in terms of high and low priority.

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Using Generic Imagery and Groups to Encourage Student Dialogue

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Abstract

This paper evaluates the ongoing effectiveness of a set of EFL classroom materials for use in groups, which were developed to encourage student dialogue in Korean General English university classes. The analysis draws upon retrospective student surveys: two solely quantitative, and one having qualitative, components. This specific lesson was part of the regular curriculum, and taught in exactly the same procedural manner for each research period; utilizing time-efficient social group rotations in combination with innovative materials partially composed of conceptual artwork. By incorporating local culture into the artefacts' design, students were required to use language in context, and were able to personally relate to the topic through the process of combining concepts with their own funds of knowledge. The student data confirmed that this particular type of personally engaging process used at the beginning of the semester had overall positive effects on student confidence and speaking levels, along with showing evidence of learning. As such, a model is proposed with specific tasks and methodology that may inform English language teachers in other countries of an effective lesson and materials' design.

Keywords: CLT, EFL, speaking, group-work, materials-development, teacher-research

In EFL contexts it has often been noted that students are reluctant to speak in English during class, and situations where students have problems being unable to communicate effectively in English are common throughout the Asia-Pacific region (Littlewood, 2006; Ansarey, 2012; Talandis & Stout, 2015). Korean students arrive at university with usually ten years of prior English education, yet at this stage they have scarcely any confidence in either speaking or writing. Their past learning background, as with many other Asia-Pacific students, has mainly been one of passive rote memorization and grammar rules (McClintock, 2011; Lee, 2014; Brown and Muller, 2014; Amin, 2016), with material content in past courses originating from inner circle countries, drawing upon cultural models that are often based upon American and British imagery and not reflective of their own culture (Kachru, 2006; Lee, 2011; Kim, 2012; Song, 2013). It has also been noted that a Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) model has prevailed over Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) models throughout EFL countries (Waters, 2011).

Teachers using CLT globally, in order to encourage students' communicative competence, have struggled to develop locally relevant and engaging methods and materials (Butler, 2011; Okazaki, 2005). There have also been numerous calls for research concerning lessons that did not focus on the culture of English speaking countries (Fitzpatrick, 2010; Tomlinson, 2012; Amin, 2016). Sakai's (2012) overview of the problems with EFL textbooks in Japan also calls

for "templates" to be created that other teachers could follow. There is a significant shortage of methods that are presented in other than vague and general formats, without banks of models, detailed procedural instructions, and outlines. Without appropriate examples and resources, it is exceedingly difficult for large numbers of teachers to bring about changes in how their classes function, and what their students are able to benefit from.

Background

The authors have also encountered problems with prescribed teaching materials and have endeavoured to make our classes dialogic and suited more to the local setting, Korea, which is part of the expanding circle where English has no historical background, but still plays an important role as a lingua franca (Kachru, 2006). This research investigates an open-ended process, as opposed to the PPP model, based on its appropriateness for university level instruction. Korean students have arrived at university already possessing a large amount of vocabulary in many instances, and knowledge of many grammar rules; however, they have been mainly passive listeners in their past educational experiences and they lack what De Saussure termed "parole": practical knowledge of the way language is used in speaking and writing (Platt, 2006), or what Hymes (1984) termed "communicative competence": the understanding that there are "diverse ways of speaking any single language" (cited in Cazden, 1993, p. 203).

Korean students, with their absence of past speaking experiences, lack proficiency in using the forms of language they have been taught because they have not had the chance to develop them. The authors believe that it is within the dialogic classroom that students will acquire and internalize new vocabulary and language components, strengthen their overall English capabilities, and develop confidence in expressing their thoughts and opinions. In this paper the use of dialogue relates to several of Bakhtin's ideas regarding the "complexities of finding a voice" (Cazden, 1993, p. 203).

Bakhtin's concept of dialogue has begun to appear more now in SLA and is considered by some to be an essential element in the psychology of learning, and in pedagogy (Musa et al., 2012; Devlin, 2014). Lin and Luk's (2005) analysis of a Hong Kong English class case study also drew upon Bakhtin's ideas about the importance of acknowledging individual voices, as well as voices from the students' cultural world. By way of teacher-student dialogue, students were encouraged to voice their opinion. They responded to the dialogic approach and were engaged in the carnivalesque/light-hearted and entertaining atmosphere, which was a change from their past educational experiences of choral repetition and drills. In this research the authors also "helped to create a space for students to engage in such carnival creative work and laughter" (Lin and Luk, 2005, p. 89).

The overarching question that this paper addresses is: How do different groups of students react to a lesson that is dialogic and not culturally restrictive, that does not require them to translate, or complete decontextualized grammar exercises, but rather is personally engaging, and in what ways could a lesson utilizing generic images in groups be deemed to be pedagogically effective over time?

Method

The authors investigated how students reacted to a lesson that was not culturally located, utilized generic images, and had high personal engagement, by surveying student reflective attitudes both quantitatively and qualitatively in 2007, 2012, and 2015. The major difference between the first two research periods was that the 2007 survey only utilized basic quantitative questions, whereas the 2012 survey posed qualitative questions in order to include the students' voices. The 2015 survey ranked, through use of a Likert scale, references to areas that the students had made in the 2007 and 2012 surveys in order to ascertain overall levels of satisfaction with speaking in groups. All three research groups were from the same university with 76 students participating in the 2007 survey, 24 students participating in the 2012 survey, and 46 students participating in the 2015 survey. Surveys were carried out in follow-up classes. Moreover, all surveys were anonymous and voluntary and the students' informed consents to use the results were obtained.

The 2007 survey questions asked students to rank, in terms of "not at all," "a medium amount," or "a lot," their opinions of the overall process and whether they felt that it was helpful in terms of increases in vocabulary, grammar, and confidence.

The 2012 survey questions asked students to write their opinions concerning the following questions:

1. Describe what you did during the activity and how you felt about it.
2. What did you think of the old pictures of the movies? How were they useful for you in helping you think of things to say?
3. Did you talk about any real-life movies? How many were Korean movies? How many were from a different country? Can you list the names of the movies you mentioned?
4. How is this activity different from what you have done in other English classes?
5. What were some unusual, interesting or memorable things you heard today?

The 2015 Likert survey asked students to rank four areas that had been referred to by students in the 2007 and 2012 surveys. The question inquired into how useful speaking in groups about the topic before writing was, and asked students to rank the following areas from 1-10 (1 being not useful to 10 being very useful):

a. Making speaking easier
b. Grammar
c. Learning new vocabulary
d. Getting new ideas from other students

The authors wanted to see if there was some measure of consistency over time with respect to the students' reaction to this particular lesson in terms of their levels of confidence and speaking, and to learn what they believed was the most important part of the process being used in groups. The artefacts used were designed by the primary author in 2005 following a predictive evaluation (Ellis, 1997) of using something new, post teacher-reflection concerning perceived textbook inadequacies. Classes for all research periods went for 75 minutes and

were randomly selected. There was also randomness within the classes in that students were self-enrolled, not placed there by administration. In all research instances, students' English levels ranged from basic to high intermediate and they ranged in years from freshmen to seniors.

The Materials' Design and Methods

The movie artefacts were carefully designed worksheets specifically constructed to encourage student dialogue, and included generic images as well as questions and a structured layout for answering and noting their own and other students' answers. The students drew upon their own resources with which to convey their opinions. This can be challenging for students who are accustomed to being in institutions where silence is considered an educational virtue and where willingness to cooperate (WTC)/motivation is highly culturally influenced. Liu and Park (2012) observed that, with respect to Korean culture, "social evaluation plays an important role in one's self-value, and one's self-esteem is built upon the basis of others' evaluation" and "fear of being ridiculed by others" in English classes where they have more chance of making mistakes "may have a controlling effect on Koreans' behavior" (p. 49).

The authors believe that if educators are going to reduce anxiety levels, increase WTC, and encourage student dialogue it is essential to have teaching methods that include the creation of classroom processes and practices that lead to fully engaged classroom conversations. The authors have also noticed, over the course of a combined total of forty plus years of teaching experience, that as student confidence in speaking develops, more difficult lessons, in terms of linguistic complexity and subject matter, can be presented. Near the beginning of the semester these particular artefacts, such as those discussed in this paper, help students form ideas and also gave specific kinds of personally engaging questions aimed at drawing in their lives, their cultural contexts and their own opinions; their funds of knowledge (Singh and Han, 2010). At the beginning of the semester, when students are most worried about speaking in English, appropriate non-threatening topic selection is crucial.

The topic chosen for the classroom materials was movies. The authors found that movies included in textbooks become stale rather quickly with limited student dialogue potential, and thus decided not to present specific movies as examples. By not using "real" movies the generic images can be interpreted in any manner a student relates to them through his/her experiences. The illustrations are partly representational, partly symbolic, and most importantly, do not define/restrict the students' thinking. Furthermore, the images stimulate talking about movie genres, but students themselves bring their own experience-based knowledge to the discussions. For the first type of artefact, the movies marquee artefact (MA), the authors used three A4 sized pages and a collection of pictures from royalty-free clipart to create six different movie titles on each page that corresponded with movie genres, but were not actual movies. (See Appendix A for page one of the MA set.) They included imaginary titles such as "Cowzilla" with a picture of a cartoon cow stomping on buildings. These titles provided the symbolic or socially encoded elements of the process. The second artefact was a set of grids with questions and spaces for students to collect answers from their peers in the classroom conversations. (See Appendix B for student-to-student survey artefact.) In effect, the artefacts are tools for making an in-class qualitative survey fitted to a topic.

In all research periods the students were told that they were going to choose a movie from those playing at their local theater. The laminated pictures-with-titles handouts, allowing these materials to be recycled, represented what a person might actually see on a theater marquee. By way of contrast, in many textbooks students are given film reviews or receive detailed information about each movie. The artefacts used in this class provided no additional information. Instead, students were given three imaginary social situations where they would be going to the movies. These were: for a date, to pass the time alone, or with their parents. In this respect this process presented students with plausible real-life situations and encouraged them to come up with their own ideas. A person does not always have all of the information about something before they have to make decisions. The students had to make their choices based upon what they liked and what they believed other people might like based upon their personal experiences with these individuals. The students were told that they would be discussing three different sets of movies, and that they would be looking at all of them one group rotation at a time.

The authors then showed the MA artefacts and introduced the student-to-student survey artefact modelling what they should do. The first thing they would do is look at the movie page in their first group and see what movies were currently playing. They were then to fill out the section of the student artefact that pertained to them (Me) first. This would be the movie that they would see, the movie that they would see with their boyfriend or girlfriend, and finally the movie that they would see with their parents. Complete sentences in the "why" sections were not necessary. Prompt words that they could refer to later were sufficient.

After ensuring that everyone understood what they would be doing, the class was divided into groups of three and the students moved into their first triangle-shaped group (▼ students sit at the points and this is important as it best fits a natural, intimate, sociopetal/encouraging conversation group setting). The following chart (See Figure 1) and classroom diagram (See Figure 2) detail and illustrate the steps taken in running the class:
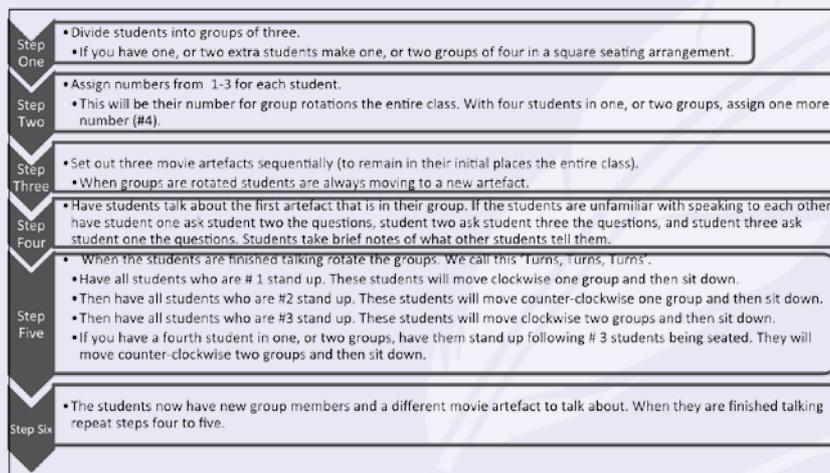

*Figure 1: Procedural Steps for Running the Class*
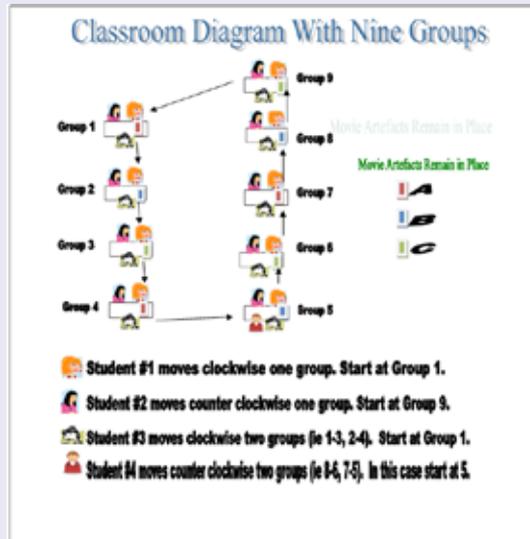
Figure 2: Classroom Diagram Noting Group Moves

With each new group, students had opportunities to recycle language that they had used before or had learned in past groups, with repetition of language being an accepted component of language acquisition. Notes are important not only for remembering new vocabulary, but also as a means to create active listening. Nunan (1997) noted that EFL students spend over 50% of their time in conversations on listening and that:

> there is evidence to suggest that listening, that is, making sense of what we hear, is a constructive process in which the learner is an active participant. In order to comprehend, listeners need to reconstruct the original intention of the speaker by making use of both bottom-up and top-down processing strategies, and by drawing on what they already know to make use of new knowledge (pp. 5, 6).

In the present study, notes were used for future writing assignments. During each rotation the teacher could easily walk from group to group, join in conversations, respond to questions about vocabulary, listen for possible pronunciation or syntax-grammar problems, and give students personalized assistance and chances for them to ask questions that they may have felt too uncomfortable posing in front of the entire class. The move into groups only took a few minutes and students have never had any problem quickly grasping the instructions. The average time per group rotation was 15 to 30 minutes with the faster moves being with students who lacked enough linguistic proficiency to extend group conversations, to the longer moves being with students who had fewer conversational problems.

2007 Findings and Discussion

In the authors' observations of the movies process, basic to low-intermediate learners provided one- or two-sentence responses with minimal conversation, and their group rotation lasted approximately 15 to 20 minutes. Upper-intermediate students provided more details and

carried out more elaborate conversations with average turns here being about 30 minutes. The authors noticed that the students talked about movies and almost everything related to them, including their families, their past experiences and what they wanted to do/see in the future. All students were engaged. Conversations from shortest to longest were animated. A "carnival type of laughter" (Lin and Luk, 2005, p. 89) erupted several times as humor was discerned on the movie artefacts, and further developed with references to their own culture and experiences. There were also smiles everywhere, which the authors interpreted as signs of student comfort, confidence, and satisfaction.

What was noticed were encounters throughout the class between different students as they each recounted their choices, which in turn had been mediated by the pictures of the movies, along with the cultural and psychological affordances inscribed into their conceptual designs. Moreover, their thoughts had to be expressed in English, thus stretching their conversational capabilities.

Student responses to the survey questions asking them to rank the following areas (overall interest level of the process, importance of speaking to other students, and vocabulary and grammar acquisition) were as follows. All students (N=76) reported some benefits from the process, albeit some more than others. Of the 76 students, almost ninety percent (N=68) reported that they were helped with their overall English abilities at least for a medium amount. Another question asked if the other students' comments were helpful for their English. In response, sixty percent (N=46) said that it gave them an average amount of help and twenty-five percent (N=19) noted that they had helped a lot. Students were also asked whether they felt they had gained in vocabulary, grammar, and confidence. Overall, eighty-eight percent (N=67) of the students noted that they had experienced gains in all areas.

The 2007 data revealed a mixture of reported benefits across all ability levels. The authors' qualitative research findings in the 2012 surveys drew in the students' reflective thoughts about the lesson's usefulness, and to ascertain whether the rather simple clipart was still sufficiently engaging for students who now had access to more engaging computer graphics and technology.

2012 Findings and Discussion
In 2012, following the lesson's introduction and putting students in their first group the authors noticed that there were a few moments when some students were quite serious as they introduced themselves to each other. However, during this same timeframe, it was noted that more electronic dictionaries were used, a noted difference from the 2007 research period when iPhones were unavailable. Soon there were the beginnings of quiet conversations and giggles related to one of the pictures. At one point, one student was heard to refer to "funny movies" and then self-correct to "fun movies," a syntax point that had been addressed two weeks prior to this class. While the authors did not tape the students' conversations, or take any photos during the class, the following are excerpts of intermediate level student responses to questions they were asked, jotted down in field notes while running the class, with significant references to the students' personal lives, including:

- "I wouldn't go to 'Rock Lives' with my parents because my parents enjoy classic music than rock."

- "I wouldn't like to take my parents to a documentary, but I might see it alone."
- "I wouldn't go to 'Until the Next Day' with my parents. My parents would like it, but my elder brother and I would sit with our arms crossed."
- "My mother especially doesn't like murder [mysteries]. She always wants to see beautiful scenery. My father wants to, but my mother is stronger in my family. She decides."

More semantic corrections were also made following hearing students make errors with such words as intimate, and the difference between "I'm scared" and "I'm scary." In both the 2007 and 2012 research periods, the authors noted significant cooperation between group members, with a lot of gesturing, engagement, and laughter. Hirschkop (1986) noted that laughter draws objects into positions where they can be examined with familiarity (p. 103 as cited in Vice, 1997, p. 81). In the authors' teaching situation, laughter also led to increased conversational length. Students made eye contact more often, smiled more, provided more detailed answers, and asked more follow-up questions.

In general, student responses to the follow-up qualitative survey revolved around the themes of experiencing increased confidence, linking the social setup of the class to being able to speak more, and the ability to draw upon numerous movies, both Western (American primarily) and Korean, that would appear to suggest greater freedom to choose what the students, themselves, wished to speak about. The authors also received data from student responses in terms of mediation and scaffolding.

With respect to question #2: "What do you think of the pictures of the movies? How were they useful for you in helping you think of things to say?" evidence of mediation was found in relation to the artefacts. More specifically, the pictures provided a focus for the sharing of ideas/experiences. Student 2 wrote that: "It helps me think about why I like it and why I hate it. The pictures gave a big example about thinking." When the student says that "It helps me think," it shows the scaffolding nature of the artefact. When the student says "think about why I like it and why I hate it," it illustrates the ordering of thoughts that the artefact brought about, and also the importance of thought being involved in the production of language in an EFL context.

The generic pictures engaged Student 2 through being drawn into the process of students having to think about not only what they personally liked/disliked, or what they hypothesized others they knew would like, but that, based upon this information, the students, such as Student 2, had to share personal thoughts regarding the posed questions in a social forum. In order to do this the students had to stretch their language abilities, find the words that they needed to express themselves as they desired (this would be seen numerous times in ongoing dictionary searches), and find satisfaction with what was said.

Other student comments included references to the usefulness of the artefacts:

- "I think that when I think of movie, the pictures of the movies very useful. They represent their character and I am easy to choose movie" (Student 6).
- "It is so helpful to me. Pictures are helping me think more detail" (Student 7).
- "Create my imagination" (Student 5).

Student 14's comments were both surprising and interesting. The student began by assessing the process somewhat negatively, but appeared to have a change of opinion later on. Initially, Student 14 stated, "I don't think this movie activity, 'what movie will I see?' is very good to us" and added that "If I have seen real movies name I could tell my experience more easily." Even though this student apparently preferred literal pictures, as did two other students who noted they liked movie posters, Student 14 noted that the social process and use of artefacts were also very useful:

> There are more group activities than before. I can talk about anything in English. At first, I was shy so I can't speak English well. However, as time goes and all people in this class talk with me, I can speak with more confidence (Student 14).

Perhaps Student 14's comment that the lesson was not very good for students was because it was not what they had been accustomed to in previous English classes. Nonetheless, Student 14's following comments were positive, and acknowledged that the pictures of the movies enabled the student to choose movies from their own culture and that this was more "stimulating." Stimulating could be taken to mean more interesting, but it could also mean more stimulating for generating conversations. Student 14's comments additionally show that the process enabled social interaction to occur, and that the opportunity to use material from the local culture appears to have been beneficial for students' English language usage. Student 14 reflected that:

> I watch so many kinds of real-life movies such as [three Korean titles supplied] etc. movies about real-life from more drastically and stimulating to people than other country [i.e. than movies from other countries] (Student 14).

Another student also gave simultaneous positive and negative feedback, in that "It really work! The pictures of the movies help me to describe my thinking but the picture is so old" (Student 1). Given that the clipart was over seven years old at this point and still engaged students is noteworthy. As with the research data from 2007, the class appealed to all levels with each student finding something about the process that they enjoyed or felt that they had benefitted from; however, in the process of writing this paper the authors still had questions about several areas that the students had mentioned, especially as they related to the importance of the students talking in groups.

2015 Findings and Discussion

Two classes (46 students) were surveyed to rank the usefulness of speaking in groups as the movie artefact's process could have easily been carried out with partners. The question inquired into how useful speaking in groups about the topic before writing was by ranking the following areas from 1-10 (1 being not useful to 10 being very useful): a. Making speaking easier; b. Grammar; c. Learning new vocabulary; and d. Getting new ideas from other students. As Figure 3 illustrates, the lowest ranking was afforded to "Grammar" (5.08 – an average amount) and as grammar was never directly taught teacher-to-class during the group discussions this is interesting and may indicate that the transmission of one teacher-correction given to one group to other groups by the students themselves. Similar rankings were given to "making speaking easier" (6.39 – a bit above average) and "learning new vocabulary" (6.43 – a

bit above average). Given that this class was carried out near the beginning of the semester it is understandable. The highest ranking, and one that clearly shows the social element of the classroom process, was in "getting new ideas" (7.54 – above average). This clearly shows the social component of using groups and as to the new ideas that the students received, they did so through using English.
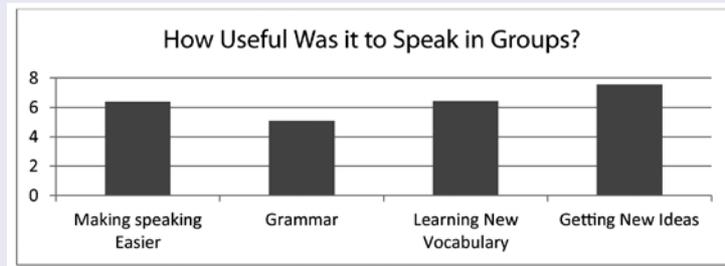

Figure 3: Usefulness of Speaking in Groups

Summary and Conclusion

This study evaluated the ongoing effectiveness, from 2007 to 2015, of a set of EFL classroom materials. By extending the research timeframe the authors examined what was happening in this particular lesson in greater detail and what was gleaned may act as a contribution to Sakai's (2012) call for CLT lesson templates, and be useful to ELT classes in other countries.

The mainly genre-symbolic movies' artefacts stimulated the students to mediate their own thoughts in English. Their intention was to be listened to and understood. Curiosity about what other students were thinking also played a significant role. The authors received evidence that the artefacts were the focus of the conversation, and held the students' focus both individually and in groups. The artefacts were not about facts and content, but had a social basis and brought in the students' own funds of knowledge. The question: "What movie would you take your parents to?" was not just about movies, but involved students reflecting upon, and then verbalizing, their understanding of their own culture's values, and as in the instance of Korean parents, probably traditional ones. However, when students were asked what movie they would take their boyfriend or girlfriend to they could reference contemporary popular culture, which in the case of Korea, is now reflecting European and American preferences in particular. Finally, when asked what movie they would see on their own and why, students were given the opportunity to express their own ideas and personalities. As Gu and Tong (2012) noted "Interactions in any given space are embedded in and draw meanings from larger linguistic, social, cultural and historical patterns" (p. 503). By allowing students to only focus on their own culture and personal experiences they were able to put their thoughts into words, and share them without having a foreign cultural perspective thrust upon them (Yim, 2003; Kachru, 2006).

This movie lesson also worked well with all groups, at various levels and over time, from the point of view that students were engaged in vigorous interlocutor conversations. The nature of the personally-directed questions created a space for students to use whatever movie they thought of, and the authors often heard references to Korean movies in English. Thus there was

no cultural dominance of Western movies as topics of choice. In the past it has always been difficult to find English movies that every student had seen/liked. The artefacts eliminated that problem entirely. The movies do not exist. Consequently, everyone was equal in their ignorance, and this thought is also represented in Bakhtin's carnivalesque in that: "carnival and carnivalesque create an alternative social space, characterised by freedom, equality and abundance. During carnival, rank … is abolished and everyone is equal" (Robinson, 2011). The questions allowed all students to speak freely about themselves, their families, and anyone else in their lives. Moreover, while the subject matter of their conversations differed as times and circumstances changed over the extended research period, the questions and artefacts still engaged students with the same degree of personalization and relevance.

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Appendix A
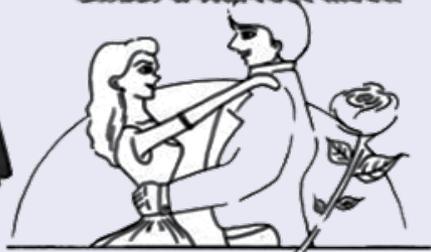
Source: Commissioned artwork, by Yuyi.

Appendix B

Student Movie Artefact

Questions:

1. You are going to the movies alone. Which movie will you see? Why do you want to see that movie?

2. __(person's name)_____,you are going to the movies with your boyfriend girlfriend. Which movie will you see? Why do you want to see that movie?

3. __(person's name)_____,you are going to the movies with your parents. Which movie will you see? Why do you want to see that movie?

First Group

Person	Movie	Why?
Me		
With my g f or b f		
With my parents		

Person	Movie	Why?
With their b f or g f		
With their parents		

Person	Movie	Why?
With their b f or g f		
With their parents		

Second Group

Person	Movie	Why?
Me		
With my b f or g f		
With my parents		

Person	Movie	Why?
With their b f or g f		
With their parents		

Person	Movie	Why?
With their b f or g f		
With their parents		

Third Group

Person	Movie	Why?
Me		
With my b f or g f		
With my parents		

Person	Movie	Why?
With their b f or g f		
With their parents		

Person	Movie	Why?
With their b f or g f		
With their parent		

Impact of World War I on the Language and Identity of German Australians

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Abstract

The motives that drove German immigration to Australia in the 1830s were essentially religious, economic, political, and social. Though shifted to another country, German Australians maintained strong ties with their German heritage up until World War I. But the reversal of this situation began with the rising tension between the British and the German Empire on the eve of the First World War. It is evident from a church periodical titled The Australian Lutheran, published from 1913 to 1921, that there was a dramatic language shift from German to English in the Australian Lutheran church as severe anti-German attitudes developed among the Australian people during the war. This anti-German attitude affected religious as well as cultural and ethnic identities of the German Australian community. This paper aims at exploring how the First World War impacted the language choice of the German Australian community in Australia and consequently how it crippled their identity.

Linguistically, Australia is a very resourceful country. There is an Australian national variety of English and other varieties of English, 150 aboriginal languages, 100 of which unfortunately have less than 100 speakers each, several aboriginal Creoles, and 75-100 immigrant tongues in Australia (Clyne, 1987, p. 1). The 1986 census indicates that other than English, eleven different languages were used in Australia. Among these, German was spoken by 111,276 people. The Australian language policy has been accommodating all these diverse languages and seeking ways for developing and facilitating the use of these languages. But this present scenario was largely absent at the time of World War I. Particularly, this sensitive war climate had a deadly effect on the German Australian community as their language, their cultural, and religious identities had faced continuous threats in Australia because Germans declared war against the British in 1914.

Language and identity have a complex relationship, and is a very well researched area in Sociology and Anthropology. Language has several functions beyond communication. Bourdieu argues that "the value ascribed to speech cannot be understood apart from the person who speaks and the persons who speak cannot be understood apart from a large network of relationships"(1977). Besides this social aspect, language controls reality and reaches the supernatural, e.g., the language of prayers; it is a vital tool for expressing identity (as we can see in Woods, 2004). So language bears the social, cultural, economic, religious, and the national identities of those people who speak it. Because of this interrelationship, if one is altered, then the other is automatically affected. Again, the pattern of language maintenance in an immigrant context is different from how it is maintained in a native context. Generally, "Diglossia" is an inevitable situation for the immigrant community as they want to integrate with the target language community socially and extract economic benefits from it. But they also expect the continuity of their mother tongue and culture. As Fishman observes, "Diglossia is a cultural posture whereby one language is reserved for one set of

ethno-culturally approved and essentially self-regulated functions (e.g., outside relations) and another language is reserved for another set (e.g., inside relations) (1991, p. 357). For instance, German Australians were a group of German born people who left Germany for religious, political, and economic reasons, and arrived in Australian colonies to seek a better life. In the 1830s, Old Lutherans faced persecution in Europe that led to their rejection of attempts by the King of Prussia to exercise state control over all churches. All Lutherans who revolted against this decision faced death penalties and traditional Lutheranism was declared illegal. So, these people left their homeland to pursue religious freedom. Beside this religious sect, the bitter economic experience of rural communities during 1844 and 1846 (Leske, 1996, p. 17) and also the rising nationalistic sentiment of the 1850s contributed to their desire to emigrate to a foreign land, thus form the German Australian community in Australia. This community, except the Lutherans, used English for official purposes but German inside the home. Lutherans used German for both "inside" and "outside" functions. When the war broke out, this German community became the subject of suspicion and animosity because of their German parentage and also for their language as Germany was one of the central opponents of the British Empire and its allies. So, driven by war fever, the Australian high ups and the ordinary Australians compelled and influenced the German Australians to shift from German to English. This forced language shift and other pressures were mortal blows to their identity. In the first section of this paper, the complex relationship between language and identity will be illustrated briefly (only to the extent it is required for the present discussion); then the political and ultra-patriotic zeal of the Australians which intensified anti-German attitudes will be highlighted; and in the final section some light will be thrown on the German Australians with particular reference to the Australian Lutheran church and Lutheran schools, and on the rising anti-German attitudes affecting various aspects of the German Australians' identity during the First World War.

Aims and Scope

Despite the fact that the study of national and religious identities is an enriched research area in Sociology and Anthropology, little attention has been given to related language matters. This paper thus aims at contributing to the research by providing examples from the German Australian immigrant context and also from the context of the Lutheran church in Australia during World War I by exploring the factors behind the language shift in this community. The aim of this paper is also to focus on the complex relationships between language and identity and to show how alteration of one affects the other. The scope of this paper is historical, with specific focus on growing anti-German attitudes of Australians in the wake of WWI, the pressure on the Lutheran church, and the effect of the war climate on German Australian identity.

Research Methodology

This study is based on qualitative analysis of some secondary data collected by retrieving the websites of Lutheran Archives and Queensland State Archives where the history of German Australians has been preserved. The researcher has also explored books and research articles dealing with German Australian history to portray the true picture of German Australians living in Australia during WWI. Excerpts have also been used from a church periodical titled *The*

Australian Lutheran published from 1913 to 1921 to identify language motives of the Lutheran church. In addition, some historical data have been presented to highlight the influence of the war situation in making English instead of German the language of German Australians, and the final conclusion is based on analysis of these data.

The Complex Relationship between Language and Identity

Language and identity are closely connected. Identity is socially constructed and language is one of the major mediums for expressing identity. According to Norton, "Every time language learners speak they are not only exchanging information with their interlocutors; they are also constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world"(1997, p. 410). Again, he uses the term "identity" to refer to "how people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space and how people understand their possibilities for future" (p. 410). Besides, language has symbolic power. For example, if a particular language is considered to be prestigious in a country, then the group of people who speak that variety will be privileged. So, automatically, other varieties as well as the people who speak in those varieties will be marginalized because social institutions such as schools, religious institutions, official institutions, and social clubs will encourage the former group and they will be able extract more benefits from these institutions than the latter groups. Thus, the former group will be socially, culturally, religiously, politically, and economically in a higher position than the latter group. In other words, as identity is socially attributed and negotiated, social institutions such as schools, churches, and clubs will play an influential role in the continuity of that identity because in these institutions people practice their own culture in their own language. For instance, since the very beginning of the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, the West Pakistanis who dominated East Pakistan made an effort to impose Urdu on the people of East Pakistan whose mother tongue was Bangla. Though their attempt was aborted, their aim was to deprive Bangalees linguistically, socially, economically, politically, and culturally. Urdu was made the state language, that is to say, the language of education, social interaction, cultural practices, and employment. The intention was to paralyze Bangalees and perpetuate their "Raj" by placing Urdu-speaking people in privileged positions. Their master plan was to erase Bengali identity by suppressing Bangla. It is obvious from this example that only by denying a particular language, perhaps, it is possible to rub out all signs of identity of a particular linguistic group. Again, as mentioned above, in an immigrant context, people maintain two varieties of languages, that is one for "outside relations" and the other for "inside relations" and thus ensure the "intergenerational" continuity of their language, culture as well as their identity. But, sometimes, in an immigrant context, because of political and societal pressures such practice may become problematic. In his book *After the Last Sky*, Edward Said captured the poignancy of displacement when he says: "Identity – who we are, where we come from, what we are – is difficult to maintain in exile … we are the other, an opposite, a flaw in the geometry of resettlement, an exodus" (1946, p. 16-17).

Said's concept of "otherness" indicates the peripheral and marginalized condition of people dislocated from their own country. Again "exile" of any kind, whether it is by choice or because of pressure from others torment, people move between their old identity and their new one, and become marginalized. German Australians thus had undergone the same fate during WWI.

In the following section, the specific historical and political reasons why German Australians were considered as "enemy aliens" (Fischer, 1989) in Australia though they were born and bred in Australia will be explicated.

Reasons behind Anti-German Attitudes

After they migrated to Australia, German Australians built churches and schools, known as German schools, and largely remained isolated from other settlers because of their language, religion, and distinct culture. Though they kept their traditional values and customs, they did not maintain patriotic and political ties with Germany (Leske, 1996, p. 145). Besides, the pastors of the Evangelical Lutheran Church made their position clear on the question of loyalty by saying: "We enjoy all rights and privileges of British subjects and therefore believe to owe complete and undivided patriotism to the government"(Fischer, 1989, p. 23).

Despite their loyalty to the Australian government, with the declaration of the war, this community became the object of suspicion and hatred, and underwent untold harassments. Again, the ultra-patriotic zeal of Australians during the Great War caused much suffering for German Australians. Because of Germany's involvement in WWI against the British Empire, Australians with German parentage became the most visible enemies for Australians. As Australia was besotted with war fever, common Australians were keen for ways to get involved in the war. Fischer explains, "attacking [Germans] made the distant war seem real and immediate; Australians could feel that they were fighting war at home" (1989).

The sinking of the German light cruiser SMS Emden by the Australian light cruiser HMAS Sydney in the Cocos Island was one of Australia's first actions in the war and excited the nation. The event created hysteria about possible German naval attack, thus establishing immediately cultural and national divisions within the community. Besides, after the release of the Bryce Report in 1915 on alleged atrocities, the sinking of the liner Lusitania by a German U-boat and the growing casualty lists from Gallipoli contributed to a hardening attitude against Germans. The real victims were the German Australians at the home front. As a reaction to those losses, Australians widened the process of internment. Moreover, anti-German sentiments were inflamed through nationalistic propaganda. These propaganda, newsreels, and posters were used to demonize the German Australian community.

This war hysteria was further intensified by Prime Minister "Billy" Hughes who told the Australians that "No German can be trusted" and made vitriolic attacks against them in the press. These patriotic presses poisoned the minds of Australians by giving them the impression that all Germans in Australia were agents of the Kaiser government. The best example of such xenophobia was the weekly *The Mail* published in Adelaide. This kind of "senseless xenophobia" fostered by unscrupulous propagandists made life terrible for most Lutherans and all Germans in Australia.

Because of these above mentioned reasons, German Australians were treated with violent fanaticism in their home country despite the fact that some of their family members had joined Australian Imperial Forces (AIF) and had embraced death for Australia.

Effect of the Anti-German Attitude on German Australians' Identity

When German Australians settled in Australia, they were treated with high esteem as they made significant contributions to Australian economy and other aspects of Australian life. These people valued their language, culture, and Lutheran identity highly. But, with the beginning of the WWI, that past belief was shattered. German Australians' identity, including their religious, political, economic identities, was at stake as the war-frenzied Australians took harsh steps to erase possible signs of "German-ness" from the Australian soil and wanted to do their bit against the German Australians. In his book *Internment at Trial Bay during World War One*, Gerhard Fischer pointed out the destructive motive of the Australians:

> The Australian government sought to destroy the German community as an autonomous, socio-cultural entity within Australian society … through many different avenues, the closing of German clubs, and Lutheran schools, the internment of the leaders, so as to deprive German Australians of their spokesmen, their representatives in the mainstream public sphere of the Australian society. Together with the destruction of what might be called the socio-cultural infrastructure of the community, this would have the effect – it was thought – of intimidating and keeping in check the rest of the community: it would lead to its disintegration and eventual disappearance (2005, p. 30).

From Fischer's comment, it is evident that World War I brought about catastrophic changes in the lives of German Australians. Other steps that affected their identity were also taken. Lutheran schools and churches were closed. Besides, during the First World War, 6890 people were interned (Fischer, 1989). In 1915, German and Austrians who were too old to join the army were put into German concentration camps across the continent. Others were carefully watched by police and neighbors. Under this constant surveillance, some lost their jobs and their businesses were destroyed. For example, Karl Fink, the owner of the Fink's Hotel, the largest hotel in Perth, fled to Sweden and it was confiscated by public trustees. Moreover, German music was banned and German literature was severely impacted. The government banned the import of all printed matter from Germany and prohibited the publication of papers and magazines in German language in Australia. Again, severe anti-German attitude was also expressed through changing of food and place names into British ones. For example, no one in Brisbane or Britain could buy local dairy products stamped "Bismark," and the name "Bismark" was changed into "Maclagan" to honor the British General in Gallipoli. Besides, place names like Blumberg became Birdwood, German Creek became Empire Bay, and Germanton became Holbrook.

In summary, because of the severe hatred shown towards the German Australians, the State and Commonwealth government took the above mentioned extreme steps. The First World War made the Australians hyperactive enough to want to destroy German Australian property and to torment them so badly that some German Australian families replaced their German

names with English ones. This anglicized naming is the extreme example of how they lost their German identity. The German Australians' identity crisis during the World War I can be compared with the abject socio-economic condition and identity crisis of Bihari communities in Bangladesh after the Liberation war of 1971. Like the German Australians, around one million Urdu-speaking Muslims from the Indian provinces of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan, now known as "Stranded Pakistani" or Bihari, migrated to East Pakistan immediately after the partition of British India in 1947 to escape communal bloodshed and to preserve their religious practices, that is, their Islamic way of life. But, unlike the German Australians , Biharis worked against the interest of the majority of Bangalees and collaborated with the West Pakistani regime in the freedom struggle of the Bangalees in 1971 as they were non-Bangalees and also because they enjoyed all the privileges of a Pakistani citizen. So when Bangalees achieved victory, this Bihari community became the object of hatred and also lost their Pakistani identity. They have now turned into "artificial minority" in Bangladesh as they are considered "a distinct group of people who are not part of Bangladesh, but yet living there as unwanted refugees"(Farzana, 2008, p. 1). For four decades, these people have been living a life of extreme poverty and do not have access to proper shelter, education, medical facilities, and employment. So, these people can identify themselves neither as Bangladeshis nor as Pakistanis. Similarly, even the naturalized German Australians could claim themselves neither as Australians nor as Germans. Moreover, history shows us that German Australians left their Fatherland to seek religious freedom as they refused to conform to the authority of their own state over the church and thus faced persecution. Though these churches were under the shadow of German identity in Australia, they were loyal to the British crown. But during WWI, they were accused of fostering "Germanism" and thus faced persecution. So it was an irony of fate that in Germany they were persecuted for being Lutheran and in Australia for being German. This is how their religious identity was threatened. Besides, to rub out the signs of German-ness, the Australian government took some covert policies to stop Lutheran education through German language in Lutheran schools which made the shift from German to English possible. Finally, the closure of Lutheran schools was catastrophic for the ethnic identity of the German Australian community as "religion and language can be important national identity markers and are essential components of ethno-national identity, along with presumed historical continuity and culture"(Safran, 2002, p. 154). By imposing a ban on German music and the importation of German literature and magazines, their cultural identity was threatened. Thus, German Australians became marginalized and were turned into suppressed "exodus" in Australia during the First World War.

Language Shift of the German Australians

In the previous section, I attempted to focus on the war-time political climate of Australia and the effect of the anti-German attitude on their identity. It is evident from the above discussion that the war-hysteric Australians made the lives of German Australians impossible in every possible way. They wanted the disappearance of "German-ness" from Australian soil by breaking down the socio-cultural infrastructure of the German community and by imposing English on them as the one and only language instead of German. As the German language was the bearer of their German identity so the anti-German sentiment was a mortal blow to that language. In that sensitive war period any

attempts to cling to German were considered as anti-Australian. Again, to escape harassments and sufferings, German Australians used German behind closed doors. Moreover, because of the government policy, they were compelled to switch their language from German to English. In the next section, I will throw some light on the language shift factors of German Australians by giving examples of the language choice of the Lutheran schools and Lutheran churches.

Lutheran schools and churches played a significant role in the education of the children of German Australian background. These schools and churches were solely conducted in German. Lutherans believed that education without religion is no education at all; and it was their belief that the Lutheran faith could only be expressed properly in German. The church paper "The Australian Lutheran" states that German "contains a wealth of theological lore, devotional writings, and hymns, not to be found in any other tongue" (1913, p. 2, cited in Hatoss, 2012, p. 103). So, Lutheran schools and churches were "crucial fortresses of the intergenerational continuity of the German language"(Clyne, 1968, 1970, 1988, 1994, 1997 as cited in Hatoss, 2012, p. 103). These schools had the triple aim of imparting religious education, language maintenance, and general education (Schule der Deutschen Sprache e. v.,1991, p. 12, cited in Hatoss, 2012, p .100). These schools were monolingual up to the 1850s, but from 1870s they started teaching English as a second language by considering the practical use of it as they lived in an English country. But priority was given to German. By 1916, there were 60 bilingual German English schools run by Lutheran churches, including 49 in South Australia, 10 in Victoria, and 1 in New South Wales (Hatoss, 2012, p. 101). Before the war set in, the Lutheran churches in Australia decided to carry out their work mostly in English in response to the need of the Anglicized younger generation and the rapid language shift of the broader German background community. The church recognized that transition from German to English was inevitable and English was increasingly becoming the language of the young people "despite all efforts, entreaties, and admonitions" (*The Australian Lutheran*, 1913, p. 2 cited in Hatoss, 2012, p. 102). Again, the church's decision to shift from German to English was seen necessary, "not only on account of the Anglicized children of the Church, but also because intermarriage had become common phenomenon and the English speaking partners showed a desire to affiliate with the Lutheran Church" (*The Australian Lutheran*, 1913, p. 3 as cited in Hatoss, 2012, p. 102). So, during this time there was no external pressure on the Lutheran church to accept English as the church language; rather, they accepted it to appeal to a wider audience, though they felt the threat of losing German. But the First World War accelerated this language shift by exercising pressure on these churches and Lutheran schools. During the War, these schools and churches became objects of suspicion for their retention of German. Though, time and again, the pastors of these churches made their position clear by saying that they used German only for their religious teaching and language was their secondary consideration, there were doubts about their loyalty to the British and to Australia. It was thought "the pastors never lose an opportunity of sowing seeds of disloyalty to the British Crown among Australian Germans ... The German pastors are the emissaries of sedition and rebellion. The reason for the retention of the German schools in South Australia is because German influence can be exercised over children by these German pastors" (Wilson, 1916, as cited in Hatoss, 2012, p .107). Again, these schools were attacked for fostering "Germanism,"

which was believed to isolate German Australians from mainstream Australians. Due to these reasons, these schools were under serious pressure and gradually shifted increasingly towards English as the language of instruction. Pressure was exerted by the Commonwealth and the State governments to conform to Australian monolingual education. These covert policies led to the gradual decrease of German in schools. A South Australian school timetable from approximately 1896 shows a breakdown of two-fifths of the day in German, three-fifths in English, while other syllabi from 1910 to 1914 show lessons in German only before the morning recess, while the rest of the day was conducted in English (Volk, 1962, p. 5 as cited in Hatoss, 2012, p. 101). During the war, because of anti-German sentiment, the State Parliament decided in 1916 that English must be the only medium of instruction in schools, and in 1917, forty-one Lutheran schools were closed by an act of parliament in South Australia (Hatoss, 2012, p. 107). The use of German came under threat not only in these schools and churches, but also in community life. Though the pastors and other Australians of German parentage distanced themselves from their German identity, they were interned due to the Australians' fanaticism. German Australians found that speaking German or even having German names accrued unrestrained vehemence. In short, Australian State and Federal government took some strict measures to erase all natural rights of German Australians, including political, economic, employment, cultural, and religious. To escape this situation, some German families were found to anglicize their names and they shifted to English from German even in the private sphere.

Conclusion

This paper has explored the perilous effect of World War One on German identity of the German Australian community. In the war-frenzied climate, out of jealousy and racial antagonism towards German Australians, Australians attempted to efface "Germanism" by shedding their heritage and by suppressing and oppressing their linguistic, cultural, and religious practices. The Australian State government and the Commonwealth government took extreme steps to close all those avenues of their lives which gave them recognition as a separate socio-cultural-religious-linguistic entity within Australian society and ensured their safety and security as "identity relates to desire – the desire for recognition; quest for visibility; the sense of being acknowledged; a deep desire for association – what Edward Said would call 'affiliation' and the desire for protection, safety and security" (West, 1992) and thus paved the way for the "eventual disappearance" of the German heritage from Australian soil.

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Interactive Reading Activities

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Abstract

Instructors of English courses and students alike tend to view reading as a mostly solitary activity with interaction limited to reader and text. Classroom interaction with reading texts is often limited to the teacher eliciting answers to comprehension and vocabulary questions, and students calling out responses. Teachers sometimes fail to see how reading texts can be used in interactive activities that require spoken communication beyond questions and responses and incorporate a variety of skills. This article explores how reading and interaction influence language development and introduces a number of interactive reading activities teachers can take into their classrooms.

Keywords: *reading instruction, reading activities, interactive language teaching, English language teaching tasks*

The importance of interaction in language learning

Interaction is a fundamental part of second language acquisition. Input alone is not enough to develop language skills (Gass, Behney, and Plonsky, 2013). Language learners also need opportunities for output, which provide opportunities for interaction; under the umbrella of interaction, learners gain from negotiation of meaning, feedback, and attention to form. Many second language researchers (e.g., Artigal, 1992; Lantolf and Thorne, 2006; Swain, 2000; Vygotsky, 1987) have asserted that spoken interaction is an essential aspect of second language development. Interaction is not only important to the development of language skills. It fosters other important skills as well. According to Stahl (1995), studies on cooperative learning have shown that students who participated in cooperative learning groups generally had higher academic scores, higher self-esteem, better social skills, more openness and sensitivity to other races, and, typically had a better grasp of the subject matter and materials studied.

The importance of reading

Intuitively, instructors know that that reading is important for their students. They know that reading develops intellectual and academic growth, but exactly what are the benefits of amount of exposure to print, i.e., does more exposure result in better skills and higher achievement? Stanovich et al. conducted a number of empirical studies (Cunningham and Stanovich, 1998; Stanovich, 2000; Stanovich et al., 1996; Wagner and Stanovich, 1996) with students of different ages and levels of development in a variety of educational contexts. The results showed that there is a strong correlation between amount of exposure to print and reading skills, spelling, vocabulary development, and verbal fluency as well as cultural and general knowledge (Grabe, 2002). While these studies imply a certain amount of exposure to text that does not necessarily occur only within the realm of classroom activities, we can still ascertain from this the fundamental importance of reading. Knowing this, even in our oral communication courses, we can make reading a major part of the given input. Of course,

exposure to reading texts should not be limited to in-class interactive reading activities, but interactive reading activities can be a part of the reading regime.

A marriage of reading and interaction

Given that both reading and interaction are extremely important to language development, interactive reading activities can be a means of significant input through relevant reading texts as well as a means of significant output in the form of classroom interaction. Students gain not only from having the opportunity to practice language and the learning inherent in pair and small group work, such as learning to state one's ideas and listen to others, but also from obtaining the kind of knowledge they might encounter in a reading text. By working with their peers, students can develop a deeper understanding and more varied interpretation of a text (Rivers, 1987).

Common exercises related to a reading text and interactive reading activities

Common exercises related to reading texts include but are not limited to prediction, fill-in-the blanks, true/false statements, vocabulary exercises, comprehension questions, grammar exercises, summary activities, and discussion questions. These types of exercises can be valuable learning tools that can make a text more accessible to learners. However, these kinds of exercises do not necessarily provide the kind of interaction and practice students need to develop their spoken language skills (Rivers, 1981). Interactive reading activities are not meant as a replacement for the kinds of exercises we usually see with a reading text; rather, interactive reading activities are a means of using reading texts to practice reading-based skills, such as summarizing, skimming, and scanning through student-student interaction, i.e. oral communication. These activities can be used with or without common reading exercises. For example, students might do the "reading half a text" exercise as a means of practicing prediction and skimming skills. Afterwards, they might be given exercises that focus on vocabulary, comprehension, specific grammar points, etc.

Interactive Reading Activities

Skill practiced: All activities below are meant to incorporate oral communicative skills which by necessity include speaking and listening. Some activities also include a writing component. Some of the activities include all four main skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Activities might be adapted to include additional practice with other skills relevant to instructional objectives and curricular needs. For instance, after completing the jigsaw reading activity, students might be asked to provide a written summary of the text used in the activity. Some activities also practice other reading skills, such as skimming, scanning, or summarizing. Each instructor should use and adapt activities according to their teaching context and students' needs.

Choosing appropriate texts: The activities below can easily be used with whatever reading texts are used in the classroom – whether they are texts from course books, authentic texts, or other texts created for language learning. However, text length should be considered. Most of the activities below make use of short texts or parts of a text. Of course, instructors will also want to – to the extent possible – choose texts that engage and interest students.

Texts that students find boring or tedious will be less likely to be retained in the memory or to spark interest in conversation. However, most of these activities can be used even in situations where the teacher is required to strictly adhere to using certain reading passages, and can spice up a required reading that students might find dull. For instance, public school instructors in the Ivory Coast complain about having to teach a reading passage about Queen Elizabeth since this sort of reading is far removed from the students' current life situation in time and distance. However, using an activity such as "reading race" with such a reading could strongly motivate students to find the pertinent information in the article – to read the text without the tedium often associated with such required readings.

The activities listed below can be used with different levels of proficiency. Instructors simply need to choose level-appropriate texts; for instance, for the story strips activity, the instructor would choose a simple text – possibly all in the present tense and with only a few discourse markers – for beginners; and a more complex task – with tenses acquired at higher levels of proficiency and more and varied discourse makers – for advanced learners. While these activities can be adapted to different levels of proficiency, they all require a basic level of reading ability and so are not suitable for absolute beginners. Some activities require more facility with English, such as *Read, Tell, Listen, Tell*, and so are better suited for intermediate or advanced students.

It is important to note, too, that while fine literature is important to character and intellectual development, authentic literary passages may not be the most suitable choices for interactive reading activities. For instance, it would be fairly useless to have basic students try to interact with one another using passages from Chaucer or Shakespeare. As Papalia says, "If students are to acquire fluency in reading …, they need to be enticed to read materials for the same natural purposes as they read in their native language – for following instructions or recipes; for understanding headlines, news items, short plays, and so on, before being introduced to what are considered masterworks of the literary heritage" (Papalia as cited in Rivers, 1987, 75).

Disclaimer: There are many activities that are common staples in the world of English language teaching such as *Find Someone Who* or *Bingo*. Likewise, jigsaw reading activities typically have a degree of familiarity amongst ESL/EFL instructors. Some of the activities below I have learned from other ELT professionals I have worked with. I have duly given credit to those individuals. Where I have acquired the idea from a book, I have cited the source. The descriptions of the activities below, however, are mine.

Reading Half a Text (from Sara Denne-Bolton)
Skill practiced: skimming, prediction
Materials: A paragraph, story, or article, no longer than one page

All students will work with the same text. One copy is needed for each student. Fold the text in half vertically. Place the right side of the page face up. Give each student a copy of the text, making sure that they do not turn it over. Have students skim the text. Then ask yes/no questions and open-ended questions to get students to make predictions about the

content of the text. Predictions can be written on the board. Once students have finished their predictions, have them unfold their papers and read the entire text. Compare predictions with the actual content of the text. This activity helps students understand that they can gather a great deal of meaning from a text without reading every word of a text.

Read, Question, Answer, Check (from Shahid Islam Khan)
Materials: Two different paragraphs or short passages
Skills practiced: comprehension, question-formation, evaluation skills, giving feedback

Put students into groups of four. Then divide each four into pairs. One pair is A, and the other pair is B. Give each pair a text. A has one text and B has a different one.

Have each pair read their paragraph together and write two comprehension questions about the text (more advanced students can be asked to write more than two questions). Once the questions have been written, have A and B switch papers. Now, A must read the text it has been given from B and write answers to the questions. B reads the text it got from A and answers the questions. Once the questions have been answered, the texts are returned to the original owners. Each pair checks the other pair's answers to see if the questions have been answered satisfactorily and gives feedback to the other pair.

Variation: Students all read the same text. Students work in pairs or groups to write questions about the text. Each pair or group then asks their questions to another pair or group to check comprehension (Rivers, 1987).

Story strips
Materials: A text with enough sequencing clues that make it possible for a re-arranged story to be put in order.
Skill practiced: Sequencing, textual cohesion

Type out the story so that there is one sentence per line. Cut each story into strips so that there is only one sentence per strip. For each set, mix up the strips so that the sentences are in random order. Put students into pairs or groups. Give each pair or group a set of strips. Have students put the story in the correct order. When students have finished, the instructor can check and give approval or suggestions for change, or groups that finish early can check other groups' work. Finally, check for comprehension. As a follow-up activity, students can write their own story in the same genre as the strip story. For example, if the original story was a fable using animals, students can create their own stories with animal characters and a moral.

Variation 1: Have students put the lines from a dialogue in the correct order.
Variation 2: Have students put paragraphs from a story or article in the correct order.

Read, Tell, Listen, and Write (from *World Link,* level 2)
Materials: Two very short stories (about one paragraph in length)
Skills practiced: comprehension, summarizing, re-telling, memory re-call, speculation

Put students in pairs. One student is A and the other is B. A and B have different stories. Students read their stories to themselves. After reading, all students turn their stories over

or put them in a place where they cannot see them. Then, A tells B about their story while B listens and takes notes on guided questions, such as: 1. Who is the story about? 2. What happened? B then tells their story while A takes notes on the same questions. As a follow-up, you can have students discuss what might happen next in the stories.

Read, Tell, Listen, and Tell (from Sara Denne-Bolton)
Skills practiced: comprehension, summarizing, re-telling, memory re-call, clarification checks
Materials: Four different stories (should not be too long) or paragraphs

Put students into groups of four and name each student A, B, C, and D. Give each student a different text. Then put A and B together, and C and D together. All students read their texts silently. After reading, all students put their stories in a place where they cannot see them. Then A explains their story to B while B listens carefully, and C explains their story carefully while D listens. A and B and C and D switch roles and the process is repeated. A and B then come together with C and D. A tells the story heard from B to the entire group. B should listen carefully and make any necessary corrections. B tells the story heard from A to the entire group while A offers any needed corrections. C then tells D's story to the group, and D tells C's story with C and D both offering any necessary corrections.

Jigsaw
Materials: An article or story
Skills practiced: comprehension, summarizing, re-telling, memory re-call, collaboration

Cut up a text into equal parts so that each member of a group has one part of the text. For example, if students are in groups of three, there will be part A, part B, and part C. Each member reads their part silently without sharing information with group members. Then, students move to another group that has the same part: A's will be with A's, B's will be with B's, and so on. In their new groups, students work together to understand their section and make a summary of it. Students return to their original groups and give their summaries to recreate the text. As a follow-up, comprehension or discussion questions can be given.

Variation: A text is split in two. Students work in pairs. Students ask their partner questions to find out what is in their text. For lower-level students, the questions can be given.

Reading Race (from *Learning and Teaching English* by Cora Lindsay with Paul Knight)
Materials: Any text suitable to students' level of English
Skill practiced: Scanning

Make comprehension questions based on a text. You will need one set of questions per group.

Write each question on a strip of paper, for example:

What two events united the colonists against Britain?

Pass out one copy of the text to each group. One member of each group comes to you to get the first question and then returns to their group with the question. Together, the group finds the answer and writes it on the paper strip. The paper strip is then returned to you by another

member of the group. If the answer is correct, give the group member the next question. If the answer is incorrect, ask the group member to return to the group and try again. The first team to answer all the questions wins.

Conclusion

While most English teachers are accustomed to working with reading texts in their classes, they might be very much inclined to teach reading texts in a rather traditional manner. While there is certainly a place for use of traditional exercises in a reading class, such exercises alone are unlikely to offer sufficient practice in helping students develop the language skills they need to be proficient users of English. Interactive reading activities can provide learners with the kind of interaction they need to develop language proficiency as well as other important development skills. Interactive reading activities can also be a way to get students more interested in and engaged with reading passages, especially passages they might be required but reluctant to read.

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BOOK REVIEWS

What Jane Austen Ate and Charles Dickens Knew

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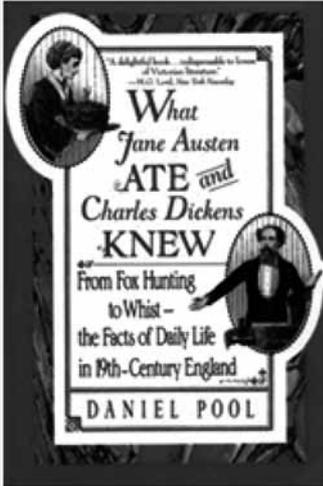
The novel was the most significant literary genre during 19th-century England. English novels of this period document social history from the perspective of the novelists. These novels also present disparities among genders, classes, and environments; these function as a driving force behind their characters' formation. The aristocrats enjoying remarkable achievements in the fields of science and education and, their negligence and injustice towards the underprivileged were the major issues dealt in them. However, bizarre customs and regulations, set by the powerful upon the weak, often breed insurmountable questions in readers' minds. Therefore, in order to fully comprehend the setting and background of 19th-century English novels, Daniel Pool's *What Jane Austen Ate and Charles Dickens Knew: From Fox Hunting to Whist – the Facts of Daily Life in 19th-Century England* serves as an essential guide for readers who are familiar with these novels but unfamiliar with the etiquettes, customs, and aspects of 19th century English society, marred by class division. In addition to that, it provides insights to the everyday struggles of characters that populate this world and their triumph over the socio-economical discrepancies and divergence.

The book is divided into two parts: the first part is narrative and the second part consists of a glossary. The first part starts with a description of the social conditions exhibited in the novels, with a basic introduction to currency, calendar, and units of measurement since these

are the prime factors to judge the living standards of that time. Then, locations where facts and fiction overlap are introduced. Novelists Jane Austen, the Brontë sisters, Thomas Hardy, and others wrote about countrysides but the city of London and the importance of the river Thames in its life were more successfully dealt with by Charles Dickens. Fancy areas in London were majestic; they represented a pleasure world of theaters, dances, card games like whist, and dinner parties. Remarkably, England had an extensive tax system which made it one of the most taxed countries in the world; by engaging in such luxury, the rich enjoyed the fruits of the poor's labor. There was tax on almost everything with the most obnoxious one being the window tax. "Even a hole cut in a wall for ventilation was counted as a window," the writer mentions (88). It resulted in dark houses for the poor who lived in slums, full of poverty and misery.

Nonetheless, among the upper classes, social hierarchy was prominent and people were known by their ranks. The dukes and the barons were the richest among general people. They possessed gigantic landed estates and their titles were bestowed by the monarch. Titles generally passed to the eldest sons, as a result of primogeniture and the rule of entailment. The knights, the gentry and the baronets, comprising the middle class, were next in line. This class was predominantly focused upon in the world of the novels. Traders were also middle-class people but trade lacked grandeur because sophistication and aristocracy never permit one to earn money by sweat and labor. "Hopeless display of inability" to do trivial everyday jobs was a sign of sophistication, the author remarks; as a result, there was a "growing reliance on servants" (47). The status of the servants came after the rank of the farmers, small traders, and sailors but before the working poor or laborers since they worked in affluent households. However, despite their long and difficult working hours, masters were cruel to servants. Servants slept away from the core household, in dark basements and were given only the minimum necessities to live on.

In a nutshell, it was a world of the strong manipulating the weak. Animals were also not free from upper class whims. Fox hunting was a favorite sport. In order to prove their masculinity, men hunted foxes with their hounds and brought their tails and fur as trophies. To be more specific, it was not just the upper class but the upper-class men or the patriarchs that ruled over nineteenth-century England. They regulated that young girls should be married by the age of thirty to avoid becoming wretched spinsters. They determined that women could not inherit property but the dowry she brought from her father became the property of her husband. Husbands could verbally abuse or physically torture their wives, and even confine her against her will as we see in *Jane Eyre;* Bertha Mason was held captive by her husband Rochester and was labeled insane*.* Moreover, courtship was a very serious matter for women; they were expected to have no sexual contact before marriage. Evangelicalism promoted sexual pleasure as distortion for them, though middle and upper-class men engaged in premarital sex with servants and prostitutes due to a lack of "nice girls" who did not engage in sex before marriage (181). Sometimes they kept governesses as their mistresses in secluded apartments around London. Being a governess was a suitable occupation for middle-class girls who needed to earn their own living but it was simultaneously a lonely and difficult task. Among the working

class, premarital sex was disapproved of but not prohibited; a considerable number of brides were pregnant on their wedding day. Eventually, marriages for all women often equated to constant pregnancies and early death during childbirth.

Comprehensively, the author describes 19th-century England as a "Grim World" with an argument that along with poor sanitation and a lack of medical service, women's deaths at childbirth gave rise to many parentless protagonists in these novels. These orphans, lodged in the workhouse, like Dickens's Oliver Twist, got very little food and a uniform, and had no personal belongings. They often served as sweepers brushing away the mud and dust from the street so that the genteel could cross them without getting their attire dirty. Children as young as four or five were sent crawling up the narrow chimneys of nice homes to clean out the soot. They were often tortured by the elders to complete the job.

Moreover, class distinction was so rife that even in educational institutions, the nobility wore distinctive clothes and sat at special tables. Scholarship students were commoners; they were publicly distinguished from their fellow students. Rich people introduced the workhouse and the debtor's prison, where family members of the poor were separated and became lesser than human. Nonetheless, industry, patronage, and education brought a considerable amount of changes. Many children worked as apprentices to surgeons, teachers, and lawyers. As we can see in *Great Expectations*, Pip made his own fortune by his hard work and his benefactor's kindness.

It must be remembered that every dimension of this century is not covered in the book as the focus is on only those issues that were dealt with in the fictions of the time; affairs that are not accurate. Pool has spent most of his adult life teaching and his research draws materials from various sources. This is why the book is written in the form of a commentary. Due to Pool's background in law, legal terms are more effectively discussed but comparatively with lesser reference from the novels. Furthermore, repetition is a major setback of the book. A lot of the same details are repeated, for example, that both men and women wore gloves. This information appears in pages 79, 215, and 217, redundantly. The book also does not give an account of why the novel became the most popular genre of literature in the nineteenth century because none of the sections comments on people's reading habits. The title suggests that book will talk about what the novelists did: "what Jane Austen ate and Charles Dickens knew," but ultimately,the focus is mostly on their fictional characters' activities.

In spite of these issues, the book is a joy to read for those who are curious about 19th-century English novels. Pool provides instances from the novels every time he introduces a new topic. Readers familiar with these texts will love the book because it aids in understanding the backdrop of the novels especially as the second part of the book contains a glossary, connotations of specific details explaining history and habits of the time in literature, and a bibliography that suggests further reading. These can be consulted while reading any 19th-century novel in order to understand archaic terms. Nevertheless, the first part of the book must be read after reading the novels in order to inter-relate the facts for thorough understanding.

What Jane Austen Ate and Charles Dickens Knew: From Fox Hunting to Whist – the Facts of Daily Life in 19th-Century England is a delightful book for readers who like to read 19th-century English novels and are eager to know about the facts of the daily affairs of the time. Though the book deals mostly with the conflicts of the era, the greatest lesson the book preaches is to fight the odds and emerge as strong. It was certainly a time of deprivation, injustice, and division but virile protagonists of the novels battled these difficulties with valor and courage. Pool's book elevates us by showing their efforts and intellect that transformed the English society over the ages.

Governmentality and Counter-Hegemony in Bangladesh

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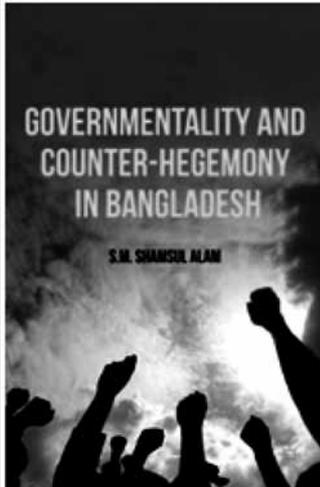
Perhaps a mere coincidence, yet I consider it a great intellectual benefit that while reading S.M. Shamsul Alam's *Governmentality and Counter-Hegemony in Bangladesh*, I was reading Rabindranath Tagore's *Ghare Baire* and Shaheen Akter's *Talash*. This simultaneous reading is beneficial since the texts, although in different forms and genres, interrogate the contested histories of Bengali nation, nationality, and the state, Bangladesh. Alam's main focus is the state. Divided into ten chapters, the book intricately taps Bangladesh's journey from the post-imperial "two nation" condition to its present democratic status into a neat theoretical framework. The theoretical framework, called "Governmentality and Counter-Hegemony" creates a dialogue between maverick political theorists, Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci.

The term "governmentality" is rather common in the neoliberal global and local conditions. Postmodern disciplinary methods such as constant surveillance and better management are rooted in this concept of "soft" power exercise. The "Introduction" of the book succinctly lays out the contour, context, limitation, and amalgamation of both the terms in this history of postcoloniality. The concept of "governmentality," as Alam argues, has been Foucault's theoretical tool to "make a shift in his own work from the individual context of power relations to the exercise of political sovereignty by the state over the entire population" (1). However powerful the state's nexus of sovereignty may be, it is vulnerable to resistance. Since Foucault sees power and resistance as inexorable, his theory lacks any robust articulation of resistance

against state-level governmentality. While Alam uses Gramsci's widely used concept of hegemony to compensate for Foucault's theoretical limitation, he does so with his own modification. If "hegemony" in its simplest form articulates the fraught relationship between "domination and subordination" (4), Alam's "counter-hegemony" pronounces that such an unequal relationship, even if controlled by the state's political governmentality, possesses the possibilities of protest and widespread revolutions. Alam sees the history of Bangladesh not as a continuation from colonial, postcolonial to an independent state, rather as a history of disjuncture between various forms of colonial/state-engineered governmentality and peoples' episodic involvement to counter the political hegemony.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Alam places the Mother Language Movement as the first culminated episode of Bengalis' counter-hegemony against West Pakistan's state governmentality. The first two analytical chapters, "Gorob O Asha: Language as Counter Governmentality," and "Conscious Spontaneity: The Antiauthoritarian Revolt of 1968-69" map out the pre-independence conflict between the Pakistani state and the subjects of East Bengal. Even if the book creates an impression of linearity of Bangladeshi history through chapters, within chapters such linearity is consciously manipulated. For example, in the "Gorob o Asha" chapter, before the author analyzes the contextual conflicts between Urdu and Bangla language, drawing on Homi Bhabha's theory of fetish, the author sees the symbol of the Shahid Minar as a fetish of Bengali nationalism, even if nationalism itself is an emotion of conflict and disavowal. The idea of hegemony (21-22) is effectively used to draw a link to language as a political tool of social transformation. The language movement turned into a tool of social (political) transformation because the movement, as the author persists, was not a Bengali middle-class revolt, rather its effect needs to be examined within the other counter-hegemonic projects (such as *Tebhaga and Tanko*) by various subaltern groups living in the territory of Bengal. The author analyzes the 1960s, a decade of various, sometimes related but often isolated, events of revolts and resistance, which cumulatively have given birth to a "radical subjectivity" (48) of people living in East Bengal against the despotic state, resulting in the 1971 War of Independence and the birth of Bangladesh.

The middle three chapters, "Nationalism as (Re)Governmentalization," "Military Authoritarian Governmentality and Its Displacement," and "Islamic Governmentality: The Taslima Nasrin Case," provide thorough and insightful analysis of the shifts in Bangladeshi state power and the changing strategies of hegemony in independent Bangladesh. The author's critique of nationalism includes the question of power, which, he argues, while nationalism in a colonial state can unify various subaltern groups to fight for freedom, the same collective emotion can be a source of exclusion and state governmentality in an independent state. Thus, right after the birth of the state, Bangladesh evolved through a bifurcated emotion of nationalism (Sonar Bangla) as state biopolitics. The nationalist homogenizing process faced resistance from within the factions of petty bourgeoisie vying for positions of state power and from various groups of religious, economic, and ethnic "others" occupying marginal positions in the overarching discourse of nationalism.

When examined through the lens of colonial continuity and postcolonial disjuncture – as the book's individual chapters takes us through – it only seems logical that in independent

Bangladesh "the emergence of an authoritarian governmentality [the decades of military dictatorship of the 1980s] is firmly rooted within the liberal governmentality" (78). "Passive Revolution," a Gramscian concept, allows the author to present a systematic analysis of the state-strategized development and administrative projects (such as, canal digging, establishment of upazillas and village sarkers) to construct a totalitarian governmentality in combination of Islamic religiosity and the 1980s' new socially powerful class complicit to the state's depoliticized rule.

The questions of gender, ethnicities, and violence occupy central spaces in the subsequent chapters of the book. At the expense of certain repetitions about the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Bangladesh, in the chapter, "Islamic Governmentality: The Taslima Nasrin Case," the author develops an understanding of the gendered practice of fatwa as an extreme means of biopolitics to control women's sexuality and subjectivities in Bangladesh. Women's "gendered subaltern narratives" (126) unsettles, if not disrupts, Islamist governmentality. The author returns to the discourse of women's body and violence in Chapter 8 ("On Rape and Revolt") to extend his thesis on "spontaneous act of counter-governmentality" (172) which, as the author suggests, bears the possibility of meaningful resistance against the state's governmentalization. It might have been useful if the chapters on fatwa and state-engineered violence against women were put together to examine women's vulnerable positions in patriarchal states. Chapter 7, "Ethnicization and (Counter) Governmentality in the Chittagong Hill Tracts" presents a historical and contemporary analysis of the political making of Chittagong Hill Tracts as "other" of Bengali national identity, and the struggle for power and resistance between the state and different indigenous communities.

The last two chapters shift the attention from national to global (counter) governmentality. It is justified to question, as Alex Johnson does in his review of the book, the rationale of taking a long leap from national to global. When globalization is settled and neoliberal policies have taken on political shapes in most capitalist countries, it is necessary to critically reflect on the soft yet ubiquitous discourses of "better management" of neoliberal biopolitics. For the author, the possibility of challenging and resisting the insipid neoliberal governmentality lies in developing what he calls "fragmentary citizenship" (196). While the book ends with a note of optimism that embracing fragmentary citizenship may create a "postgovernmentalized society," such causal optimism is hardly convincing. Rather, in a world wired with multiple sources of conflicting ideologies and reactions, mediated by transnational, national as well as local forces, one can only appreciate a book like Alam's that help us analyze the complex context of governmentality and counter-hegemony in postcolonial nation states.

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Johnson, Alex. "Book Review: Governmentality and Counter-Hegemony in Bangladesh by S.M. Shamsul Alam." *LSE Review of Books*, blogs.lse.ac.uk/lsereviewofbooks/2016/01/14/book-review-governmentality-and-counter-hegemony-in-bangladesh-by-s-m-shamsul-alam/.

Academic Language across Disciplines

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Building Academic Language: Meeting COMMON CORE Standards across Disciplines, Grades 5-12 by Jeff Zwiers is a much needed addition in the field of teaching and learning. In this text, the author reveals the importance of academic language and portrays the ways through which teachers in the classroom can help students build academic language skills in all disciplines. Though the text focuses on Common Core State Standards, the discussions on academic language and the ways to build competency in it are highly relevant for students and teachers studying and teaching in different settings. This review explores the possibilities of using the text as a tool to minimize the gap that exists between mainstream and nonmainstream students who bring with them very little academic language from schools and suffer all through their academic life.

Zwiers (2014), in the preface to his book, stateshow important it is to become equipped with academic language, the language that describes "abstract concepts, complex ideas and critical thinking" (ix). In every phase of academic life, especially when students move from primary to secondary and higher level, at every step of academic life, success depends on the ability to use academic language. The Common Core State Standards (2010) expects students to argue, synthesize, evaluate evidence, analyze complex texts and engage in academic discussions. Zwiers in the second edition of his book shows that the teachers, though aware of these expectations, find it very difficult to create classrooms where all these expectations are fulfilled.

One reason is that these classes consist of students who do not have any opportunity to experience and immerse themselves in academic thought or talk outside of the classroom. These students perform poorly in the classroom and in tests because they are not familiar with the academic language in different content areas and cannot use them properly to achieve success. Zwiers, from his rich experience of teaching in different levels from elementary to tertiary, has announced that students in every level – elementary, middle school, high school, and even in university courses – struggle with the "language of academic reading, writing and discussion" (10). However, these students are brilliant and creative. Zwiers portrays how they are marginalized and left behind because these students do not have social capital – rich interaction pattern or cultural capital that enriches one through travel, reading, and educated parents. Most importantly, they are deprived of knowledge and linguistic capital that are developed from rich conversation with parents and siblings, quality and quantity of language they are exposed to, and books at home. Mainstream students who are rich in all these can read, write, and speak according to the expectations of the teachers and the standards. This allows them to excel in the academic arena.

To explain the scenario, Zwiers brings in Bourdieu (1986). Just as money and property are unequally distributed in society, so are the less visible words, skills, and knowledge that give people advantage (Bourdieu, 1986). Those students who do not receive a fair amount of words, skills, and knowledge suffer all through their academic life. These students work hard and still fail to produce the desired result only because of their lack of expertise in academic language. They, unlike their mainstream peers coming from affluent, educated families, cannot read, write and discuss ideas using academic language and, as a result, suffer academically, socially, and emotionally.

To overcome the situation, to minimize the gap between mainstream and diverse students, Zwiers emphasizes on teaching academic language in the classroom. He points out that as students' do not pick up academic language as easily as they pick up other types of social language (Scarcella, 2003), it has to be taught with care in the classroom. Many educators also highlight the need for teachers to directly teach students how to use academic language in school settings (Bartolome, 1998; Delpit, 1995; Scarcella, 2003). As the teachers venture to teach academic language, they need knowledge, skills, and strategies. Most importantly, the teachers must have respect for these diverse students which Zwiers believes would naturally develop as soon as the teachers explore the struggling students and invest time and energy to find out more about their interests, cultures, and beliefs.

Zwiers, in the first few chapters, clarifies the concept of academic and school language. He uses the metaphor of Rico and Weed (2002), to whom academic language is a tool box, a set of thinking skills and language abilities to decode and encode complex concepts. The definition that Zwiers provides helps us to get rid of the common concept that academic language is just a list of words. Rather "it is the set of words, grammar and discourse strategies used to describe complex ideas, higher order thinking processes, and abstract concepts" (22). Zwiers also portrays how academic language is used to describe complexity, higher order thinking,

and abstraction. To carry out all these functions, the features that academic language uses, like figurative expressions, dependent clauses, passive voice, and nominalization are also discussed.

The need for teaching academic language in schools becomes evident throughout the book. Zwiers, along with creating the awareness to teach students academic language, focuses on the poor preparation the teachers have in teaching academic language in the classroom. Many students, as Cummins (1979) reports, enter into the mainstream classes as schools think they are academically proficient because they are fluent in social and everyday use of English. However, these students perform poorly not only because they lack academic language preparation but also that their teachers lack preparation to teach this language. The scenario has not changed much and it is still very true for many diverse students (Scarcella, 2003). Keeping that scenario in mind, Zwiers designs chapter three which talks about how to build academic language in the class. The most important aspect of this chapter is that it shows how teachers from different disciplines, by incorporating content terms and general academic terms, can explain content and help students build up academic language. It becomes clear that it is not only the responsibility of the language teacher to help the diverse students. Teachers from all disciplines need to intervene. The chapter is a wonderful resource for teachers as it shows, through examples, how to help students build connections, how to think, and express using appropriate language. Strategies like co-shaping conversation, rephrasing student responses, paraphrasing, conducting meta-discussions, and focusing on deeper levels of talk are all ways to build academic conversation.

Zwiers also discusses how important it is to do scaffolding while teaching academic language. However, this scaffolding (which also appears in feedback sessions) in teaching academic language suffers as teachers accept papers and presentations which are not academic in nature. Applebee (1984) reports that underperforming writers are given more personal, less academic assignments. Zwiers (2005) observes that less proficient speakers are given far less thoughtful feedback. While providing feedback to the struggling learners and speakers, teachers focus much more on mechanics. For proficient speakers, teachers provide positive comments, probing questions, and elaborate feedback. All these information clearly show the problem areas in teaching and assessment, and both future and practicing teachers need to be aware of these pitfalls.

Zwiers has already established the idea that all teachers are language teachers and all have a role in teaching academic language. Chapter 4 of the book shows how to build academic language in four school disciplines: science, language, math, and history. The tables that contain academic expressions for interpreting and argumentation in language arts and academic expressions for identifying cause and effects in language arts are highly useful for language teachers. Similar guidance is provided for science, math, and history teachers.

Leaving the content area, Zwiers starts exploring specific skills and in chapter 5, focuses on classroom discussion. The Common Core standards focus on listening and speaking standards. Listening is a skill which is rarely taught in the classroom. According to Lundsteen (1979),

listening is the process through which spoken language is converted to meaning in the mind. It requires thinking too. The students need to pay attention, organize what they think, and collect information into levels of importance, and diverse learners struggle here a lot, especially with interpreting intonation and nonverbal signals. Dictation discussion and note taking comes as an effective solution. This book repeatedly brings out the point that rich classroom discussion is vital to build thinking and academic language skills. Many teacher preparation programs fail to teach the ways to facilitate discussion in the classroom. The teachers who fail to learn the skill to conduct discussion in the class can take much help from conversation circles, radio talks, interview grids, prediction cafés, simulations, and structured academic controversy.

Chapter 6 revolves again around the discussion in the classroom. However, Zwiers here tries to help those diverse students who remain quiet and participate less during this whole class discussion. To help them, Zwiers immediately shifts to small group discussions as, when properly supported, these smaller scale discussions can be very effective to build thinking, academic language, and content understanding in all students (Cohen, 1994). The alarming part is that even in small groups, students work together to learn facts and do assignments. Zwiers regrets that it is rare to see activities that require students "to process the experience with other students, share opinions, disagree with each other, construct a meaning, and solve complex problems together" (153). To improve the situation, teachers need to train students how to work in groups, what language to use during the group work and how to report the findings and solutions. This training of how to interact with others in an academic way is especially important in grades 5 through 12 when students are expected to engage in meaningful discussions about a wider range of topics and concepts based on complex texts across disciplines (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010).

Zwiers in chapter 7 concentrates on reading skills. The author demonstrates here how to develop both the language of academic reading and the reading of academic language. Though Common Core State Standards put emphasis on building all students' abilities to comprehend grade-level complex texts (Engage NY, 2013), comprehension strategies like synthesizing, inferring, analyzing, summarizing, and figuring out words are not taught effectively in the classrooms. Teachers still focus more on learning content. To come out of this trend, the "Academic Discussion Role" can play an important role. When the students assume the roles of main idea sculptor, predictor, word detective, inferer, problem finder, prior knowledge connector, synthesizer, comparer, classifier, questioner, opinion generator, and summarizer, both the teachers and the students understand clearly that while reading a text, each person must do all these tasks simultaneously. Zwiers also draws teachers' attention to using textbooks as a great resource for teaching academic language. However, here too the teacher needs to guide students to navigate and notice academic language embedded in it.

Chapter 8 carries a lot of value. Here Zwiers brings in academic writing and it seems quite clear that many ideas discussed in earlier chapters reappear here to support the building of academic writing skills. As students move from primary to secondary and higher levels at school, they need to write expository papers that require arguments, reasoning, clarity, organization, and technical terms with varied sentence patterns. However, most students draw on oral, informal

language when they write and it is difficult to move them away from this practice. Zwiers says that the students need to see models and teachers have to train them how to analyze and incorporate these models in their writing. Most importantly, students need the opportunity to read and discuss before they write. The culminating chapters incorporate academic language in the lesson plan and assessment. The tests appear as a way not only to assess language but the way to teach language too.

Building Academic Language: Meeting COMMON CORE Standards across Disciplines, Grades 5-12 by Jeff Zwiers is an important addition in the field of language teaching. It is essential for pre-service as well as for practicing teachers from all disciplines, as the text provides ways to enhance academic language, a tool students must acquire to achieve academic success. This book is a road map for those teachers who feel alienated and search for ways to make changes in the lives of their students who appear in school with very little resources. The administrators, educators, and the policymakers can consult this text too as it aims to minimize the achievement gap between the mainstream and nonmainstream students.

Though Zwiers writes in the context of the USA, the struggle to master academic language exists in schools around the world. There too, especially in EFL classrooms, students discover that they lack academic capital to compete in the classroom and during tests. This book thus can have a universal appeal. Another area where this book can contribute much is in the parenting programs. Parents need to know how the home environment has an effect on their children. After reading this book, they will think twice before putting all the blame on the poor children for their academic failure.

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